SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER
How director Ava DuVernay’s South L.A. roots helped her shatter the film industry’s glass ceiling
BY APRIL WOLFE
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SPEAKING TRUTH TO POWER ... 11 Director Ava DuVernay’s South L.A. roots helped her shatter the film industry’s glass ceiling.

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A QUIET IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWN

Will the L.A. Sheriff’s Department break with city officials and cooperate with Trump’s deportation efforts?

BY JASON MCGAHAN

Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell’s silence on the issue of protecting undocumented immigrants from deportation has grown more conspicuous lately. That silence has been amplified by L.A. Mayor Eric Garcetti and Police Chief Charlie Beck’s recent statements reassuring the city’s immigrant communities that police in L.A. are not responsible for carrying out a more draconian enforcement of federal immigration law promised by President-elect Donald Trump.

Sheriff McDonnell has issued no such statement. “His silence now does not surprise us, but it is reprehensible nonetheless,” says Jorge-Mario Cabrera, communications director for the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles. “Right now, the Sheriff’s Department is the agency that is most culpable in apprehending immigrants and leading them into the hands of ICE.”

At issue are the many undocumented immigrants living in the unincorporated areas of East and South L.A. and the Valley. The L.A. County Board of Supervisors approved a plan last week to protect the data and identities of undocumented county residents who may be adversely affected by changes to federal immigration policy. The plan also requests that McDonnell report back to a public meeting of the board within 30 days, explaining his department’s policies concerning cooperation with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

“The Sheriff’s Department has contact with more undocumented immigrants than the LAPD,” Cabrera says. “The concern is that they can be stopped for a minor infraction, but the individual then is forwarded to a county jail where they need to post bail but can’t. And that’s when ICE gets hold of them.”

Immigrant advocates in L.A. have long warned that law enforcement risks losing the trust of the city’s multiethnic communities if it is perceived as the local arm of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Sheriff McDonnell has had his differences with the more liberal supervisors on the county board on this issue. Last year, supervisors Hilda Solis and Sheila Kuehl approved a plan last week to protect the data and identities of undocumented immigrants living in the unincorporated areas of East and South L.A. and the Valley.

The L.A. County Board of Supervisors on Dec. 5, top Democratic lawmakers in California proposed sweeping legislation to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation. The proposals include offering free legal help to undocumented immigrants in deportation proceedings, and prohibiting all state and local law enforcement from responding to requests from immigration authorities.

“TRUMP WILL INHERIT THAT MACHINERY. HE COULD START ISSUING DETAINERS FOR ANYBODY THAT’S ARRESTED FOR ANY REASON.”

—ATTORNEY JESSICA BAN SAL

with one another,” the report states. “It is the department’s aim to balance and reconcile these provisions, while also keeping foremost in mind the needs, safety and vitally important trust of our community.”

The Sheriff’s Department’s policy grants ICE broad access to inmates and databases in county jails. The National Lawyers Guild of Los Angeles has deemed the access “excessive” and “beyond that required by PEP or endorsed by the Board of Supervisors.”

Jessica Bansal, an attorney representing immigrants in a class action suit against the Sheriff’s Department, says discretion over the type of crime that warrants deportation rests with the president. President Obama, for example, made it a priority to deport undocumented immigrants for gang affiliation, although that too has been problematic.

“Trump will inherit that machinery,” Bansal says. “He could change those priorities. He could start issuing detainers for anybody that’s arrested for any reason.”

The question is, will the new liberal super-majority on the Board of Supervisors approve new restrictions on the Sheriff’s Department’s agreement with ICE?

Jessie Gomez, communications director for Supervisor Solis, says the board is asking the Sheriff’s Department for a report to clarify “what they have in place when it comes to immigrant residents or mass deportations in general if the president-elect decides to move forward on that promise.”

More than 170 people spoke at the Dec. 6 supervisors meeting in favor of the board’s motion to protect immigrants, Gomez says, which passed by a 4-0 vote.

On Dec. 5, top Democratic lawmakers in California proposed sweeping legislation to protect undocumented immigrants from deportation. The proposals include offering free legal help to undocumented immigrants in deportation proceedings, and prohibiting all state and local law enforcement from responding to requests from immigration authorities.

Erika Pinheiro, an attorney for the Central American Resource Center in L.A., says she hopes the actions of state lawmakers will serve to guide the efforts of the Board of Supervisors. Pinheiro has been meeting with policymakers and speaking to groups of undocumented immigrants in L.A.

“I think the state has the right idea: Protect due process,” Pinheiro says. “A lot of this ‘We don’t cooperate’ stuff is political posturing. It’s not realistic. They do cooperate and will continue to cooperate. Within that context, what can we do to ensure [undocumented immigrants’] rights are protected?”
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It’s 8 a.m. in Santa Clarita and Ava DuVernay is thinking about fate. We’re on the set of Disney’s A Wrinkle in Time, the film adaptation of the much-loved fantasy story that she’s directing. Here in DuVernay’s trailer, a framed photo of James Baldwin below the television stares out to the couch where we are sitting. She wonders aloud if it’s possible to be “meant for something.” Then, muted commercials for Queen Sugar appear on the flat-screen TV, coincidentally promoting the recent television series the director created for Oprah Winfrey’s OWN channel.

“I believe in fate,” she says in her confident rasp.

DuVernay’s breakthrough 2014 film, Selma, earned her a Golden Globe nomination for Best Director, the first for a female African-American auteur. And she says fate connected her to British Nigerian actor David Oyelowo, the lead in her film portraying the life of Martin Luther King Jr. DuVernay gets animated telling the story, adjusting and readjusting her legs on the couch.

“He’s on this plane next to someone who happens to have one of my scripts [Middle of Nowhere] and asks David — since he’s an actor — if he should invest in this independent film.”

She explains that Oyelowo had seen DuVernay on CNN talking about her small distribution company, Array, the week before. Then he read the script while on that flight and immediately called DuVernay for a part. “That doesn’t just happen by coincidence!” she laughs.

That kind of kismet in the film world is a distant long shot, an impossibility, even — but the story is true.

On the phone from New York City, Oyelowo later told me that the connection he had with DuVernay was immediate and unspoken. Before they even met, he felt they shared a bond. “When I read Middle of Nowhere, there was something so unashamedly complex, nuanced and poetically lyrical about her writing. You can’t write like that without having a vision for the thing you’re trying to make.”

In that film, a woman, Ruby (Emayatzy Corinealdi), navigates life in Compton after her husband goes to prison; Oyelowo plays the bus driver who tries to woo her. Aside from telling a vital story about the women left behind in the African-American incarceration crisis, Middle of Nowhere exhibits bold flourishes and artistic confidence. Compton is also where DuVernay grew up.

After Middle of Nowhere, Oyelowo was cast in Selma, fulfilling an actual dream he had years ago that he would play MLK. He brought DuVernay on to direct. She reworked the script for Selma, slimming the glorification of LBJ and granting more emotional weight to Oyelowo’s character — exactly as he had envisioned he would play MLK. The speeches DuVernay crafted for Oyelowo are so breathtaking that even people who actually marched with the civil rights leader thought they were the original words.

While fate played a role in DuVernay’s relatively swift ascendency in
“I was driving to work this morning, and that song that I never liked that goes, ‘It’s gonna be a bright, sunshine-y day,’ is on. But this morning I was listening to it — ‘I can see clearly now, the rain is gone’ — and that line made me think about my father. Six months ago, I could have never imagined this day, where I’m going to work feeling good, having a conversation, functioning.

“You just have to go through the moment, piece by piece, and if I’d stayed in that past, I’d get bogged down. You’re supposed to move through it, move past, keep going.”

“But she doesn’t want to keep the past at bay.”

Today, DuVernay says, she decided to wear a pink-and-blue striped sweater to pop songs. Seniors get the good seats in the bleachers, where they can stomp their hearts out, and one by one every girl on the floor is hoisted up to dance — solo — to thunderous applause.

“See that girl with the microphone, leading the show?” St. Joseph’s principal Terri Mendoza whispers. “That would have been Ava.”

St. Joseph is a private, Catholic all-girls high school 10 miles east of Compton, in Lakewood, with an idyllic garden setting and a little chapel the sisters encourage students to use for daily peace. DuVernay came from a working-class family — her father laid carpets and was on his hands and knees every day of his life — and the relative wealth and privilege of students at St. Joseph was in stark contrast to that.

A thousand girls in plaid skirts scream at the tops of their lungs to win the Jester "spirit jug." The St. Joseph High School gym is packed for a pep rally, a sea of pre-\-chial-school-blue and white undulating from the 1990s she bought at the Gap when she first started at UCLA — and felt so cosmopolitan, coming from Compton.

She says wearing the sweater is a rare instance of looking backward, of reflecting on her own history, rather than the collective history that has informed her movies, like her Netflix documentary 13th, on the prison industrial complex and modern black slavery.

“Honestly, I don’t have a good memory. I’m so busy living in the present. And I don’t remember my dreams. Oprah told me, ‘That’s not great.’ But I think personal memory — finding your history — is a muscle,” she says. “And I’m going to try to make a point to exercise it now.”

A thousand girls in plaid skirts scream at the tops of their lungs to win the Jester “spirit jug.”

When DuVernay was a student there, she was the first black homecoming queen and first black student body president. Today, there’s a hand-painted banner on the administration desks greeting you when you walk in the front doors. It reads: “We Love Our Jester Sister Ava DuVernay.”

Mendoza pulls out an old yearbook and points out a photo of DuVernay stacking cans of food. “She organized food drives,” Mendoza says. “She just saw a need and did it herself.”

There’s a general sentiment from the women and sisters who take turns stepping away from the rally to speak with me. DuVernay was so good, so passionate about everything she did, that they often took her for granted.

Celine Figueroa, a former classmate of DuVernay’s, says the two used to go to the movies all the time. They argued so passionately about their favorites that Figueroa’s mom told them she wouldn’t drive them to the theater anymore. When Figueroa wrote a script as a teenager, DuVernay read it and immediately went into production mode. “Here we are, 16 years old, and she’s sitting me down, giving me serious casting advice.”

Mendoza shows me the quote beneath DuVernay’s senior yearbook photo. Typed in Times New Roman on a pink background, it reads: “In dreams & love there are no impossibilities.”

DuVernay, now 44, still has a seemingly boundless work ethic that helps overcome impossibilities. She divides her time almost equally between her creative pursuits and her civic-minded aspirations.

At her distribution company, Array, DuVernay and her team try to make films into important conversation starters. They’ve teamed up with the Broad museum in Los Angeles to screen overlooked African-American classics, one of many initiatives they’re working on to bring cinema to the people. DuVernay says that, in Compton, there wasn’t a theater to see Straight Outta Compton. In Selma, Alabama, where her dad marched with King, there was no theater for Selma. The same goes for marginalized communities in New York, Chicago, everywhere. She says she doesn’t have the time or resources to open these theaters herself, but she can do these pop-up events.

“If you show someone who would be a true film lover at heart a film of the kind they’ve never seen before, it becomes a drug.” DuVernay says. “They will seek it out. Show someone who’s never seen a film with subtitles or never seen a film directed by a woman — and that’s a reality if you’re just looking at studio films that play at the mall — that might open their minds.”

DuVernay may not reflect on her personal history often, but maybe that’s because she hasn’t changed much. That girl leading the pep rally? She’s now charged with lifting the spirits of millions.

“I don’t want to put too much of a burden on Ava’s shoulders,” Chaz Ebert says on the phone from the rogerebert.com offices in Chicago, “but I think what she is doing will transcend the world..."
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of film and TV. I think that she is one of the people who will actually help bring more empathy and compassion into this world.”

Chaz met DuVernay through her husband, the late critic Roger Ebert, who championed DuVernay’s earliest feature, *I Will Follow*, in the documentary *Life Itself*, which chronicles Roger’s last years, DuVernay testifies to his warmth and humanity.

Chaz was moved by DuVernay’s speech at Roger’s funeral: “She said he was a force of goodness, always reaching out to all people, no matter your color. But I think about that now, and that’s Ava, too.”

Every person I talk to for this story uses words like “a force” to describe DuVernay. Sometimes it seems her status as an inspirational figure might overshadow the artistic integrity of her work.

In most interviews, journalists ask about African-American culture, about philosophy, about everything but the act of making films. Few ask her about actual filmmaking, like how she approaches actors, or whether she blocks out scenes with intense rehearsing or chooses a more organic approach. That’s why she hosts a podcast, *The Call-In*, where she dials up African-American filmmakers and asks the questions they never get asked. This shoptalk fills a void, a receptacle for the knowledge held by marginalized artists.

“In terms of black directors, I can pick up the phone and call almost everyone,” DuVernay says. “It’s not a very big community. Sometimes with the older crew, you hear stories that there would only be one or two spots for black women, so they couldn’t be friends. But I didn’t come from the industry. I’m from indies, and I’m not competing.”

Julie Dash, a native New Yorker and leading light of the L.A. Rebellion film movement, says she saw from the start that there was something special about DuVernay’s films. Dash would know; she’s a pioneer of lyrical black cinematic stories from women’s perspectives, exemplified in her now-remastered, Sundance award–winning feature *Daughters of the Dust* (1991).

“I just happened to be in the audience when *Middle of Nowhere* was screening at Sundance,” Dash says. “I was overwhelmed by her confidence — you can tell when a director is confident from how they take their time and let a scene unfold. I usually don’t say anything at these public screenings, but I was the first person to grab my mic, and I said, ‘You’re my hero. This film is brilliant.’”

One scene of *Middle of Nowhere* returns to me often: Ruby’s lying down on the bed, rolled over on her side. In the background, there’s a blurry movement, as if someone is behind her, but we’ve already seen she’s alone in the room. This is the specter of the imprisoned man she loves, a literal shadow of his former self forever living only in her memory. DuVernay’s portrayal of that emotional burden through abstraction shows confidence as a director, and it’s why the film took honors at Sundance: She’s a director who takes chances.

Samantha Sheppard, a professor of cinema and media studies at Cornell University, says DuVernay avoided the pitfalls of “tokenized diversity,” that tendency of Hollywood’s to see one black woman director as the black woman director, shutting out others even as they patted themselves on the back for hiring her.

“Ava actually became the entry point to discover this wealth of black female filmmaking,” Sheppard says. “She points back — both with her filmmaking and advocacy — even as she continues to move her own work forward. She’s shining a light on all these people who’ve tried to see black lives in a valuable way.”

DuVernay also is actively getting jobs for women and people of color. Every episode of *Queen Sugar* — even those advertised on this trailer’s TV — is directed by a woman. (That choice prompted the producers of Netflix’s *Jessica Jones* to fill their director slate with women, too.) She says that after enjoying the independence of indies, she walked into Disney with a “you’re-not-gonna-take-my-soul” attitude.” But she was pleasantly surprised that the people she saw in her first meetings were people she actually knew, a rarity for a black woman from Compton who doesn’t travel in the same...
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DuVernay cocks her head back, her eyes looking to a barren corner of the trailer, as if she’s trying to find something, but she’s mining her memory. She says she remembers emotions more than details, but this story sticks in her head. The pained look on her face is one of someone who has traveled back in time, who’s reliving a memory to learn from it again. After all, memory is the tesseract, the place that transcends time and space. It’s where you find yourself. “And I get it now,” she says. “That’s who raised me, that woman, who made me face to face with this that I don’t want to think about.”

DuVernay’s phone buzzes. She picks it up and announces that she has to dash out of the room. “It’s gonna be OK.”

She had worked with them in the indie trenches. “It was a big lightbulb moment for me, because I realized this is what a lot of my white male counterparts have, this ease, the familiarity. They seem really easy to work with because they feel good about it — because they know each other.” She says she didn’t have a “legacy” as a black female director, nobody who’d been through the process with a studio whom she could call for advice.

But now, DuVernay is that legacy. Is that a lot of weight on her shoulders? She shrugs, unfazed.

Two years ago, when she was screening Selma, DuVernay got calls from both the Smithsonian and Netflix to make movies. On her weekends, she discreetly made a 22-minute short for the Smithsonian called August 28: A Day in the Life of the People, starring Don Cheadle, Angela Bassett, Oyelowo and Lupita Nyong’o. In her free time, when she wasn’t prepping for A Wrinkle in Time, she made 13th.

Lisa Nishimura, head of Netflix Originals, says DuVernay’s ability to break down big subjects into easily digestible, beautiful bites is unrivaled. “I told her to think about her free time, when she wasn’t prepping with her A Wrinkle in Time key crew, she made 13th. She had worked with them in the indie trenches, and she said, ‘You’re gonna be OK.’”

DuVernay’s interview subjects in the film include thinkers like Van Jones, who shares her read of the history, but also the likes of Newt Gingrich, who gleefully recounts how he stomped out “soft liberals” with policies that militarized our police. DuVernay says she’s “curious” about Gingrich’s thinking and was never angry or rattled by his words, just “fascinated” she’d get to ask him any question she wanted — and he’d answer. And sometimes he said something that surprised her, like when he stated that he thought crack and cocaine should have been treated as equal drug offenses. But to get that answer, she had to sit across from him, look him in the eyes, and say, “What do you think?”

“My mother taught me empathy,” DuVernay says. “I remember once when a boy broke into our house when my mother was home. The police went and caught the guy and brought him back to the house in the back of a cruiser. They asked my mom if it was him, and she said, ‘Yes.’ But then she went to the window, tapped on it, and the boy looked at her, and she said, ‘You’re gonna be OK.’”

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“My mother taught me empathy,” DuVernay says. “I remember once when a boy broke into our house when my mother was home. The police went and caught the guy and brought him back to the house in the back of a cruiser. They asked my mom if it was him, and she said, ‘Yes.’ But then she went to the window, tapped on it, and the boy looked at her, and she said, ‘You’re gonna be OK.’”

DuVernay’s phone buzzes. She picks it up and announces that she has to dash to the set, asks if I have everything I need, ever hospitable and thoughtful. In the short time we’ve been chatting in her trailer, texts and voicemails have been pouring in. Ava DuVernay is direly needed — everywhere, it turns out.
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1ST WAVE (choice of)
Wild arugula, manchego, freekeh, persimmon, pistachios, dates, pomegranate vinaigrette
Lemonfish ceviche tostada, chile puya aioli, pickled onion
Blackened ahi tuna, avocado crema, charred green bean-trumpet mushroom salad
Warm salad of chicken oyster confit, chicken skin “chicharron”, blood orange, jicama, spicy greens

2ND WAVE (choice of)
Oaxaca especial mole enchilada, butternut squash, queso fresco, crispy spinach
Mesquite grilled crispy skin salmon, pickled beet and cucumber salad, horseradish-lemon crema
Grilled octopus aguachile stuffed avocado, Granny Smith apple, serrano chile
Crispy sope, oxtail chilorio, refried beans, cotija cheese, pickled cabbage

3RD WAVE (choice of)
(only available for late seating)
Crispy sope, sautéed mushrooms, caramelized onions, cotija cheese, black bean sauce
Green cocel with shrimp and crab, cucumber, tomato, lime
Seared scallops, corn-poblano “polenta”, chorizo stew
Crispy duck, foie gras, piloncillo braised endive, sesame mole rojo

TIDAL WAVE (choice of)
Whole ½ head of cauliflower, pine nuts, dates, pomegranate, salsa de guajillo-bell pepper
Pepita crusted black cod, roasted heirloom carrots, forbidden black rice, sauce of carrot, coconut and verbena
Molcajete 7 Mares - Ridgeback shrimp, stone crab claws, clams, bay scallops, smoked pepper-saffron broth
Grilled lamb chops, barbacoa “pozole”, sweet potato flan
Roasted Mangalitsa pork loin, chipotle-bacon marmalade, roasted yams, hibiscus roasted Brussel sprouts
Grilled New York loin, crispy cheesy mash, grilled portobello, caramelized onion, red wine-oxtail jus

DULCES (choice of)
Banana flambé, dulce de leche, peanut and coconut “palanqueta”, yogurt ice cream
Key lime and macadamia nut pie, passion fruit and mezcal sorbet
Warm ooey gooey chocolate cake, vanilla bean-chocolate swirl ice cream
Vanilla bean tres leches cake, cocoa tuile, fresh raspberries
LOSING ITS LUSTER
Once a paragon of fine dining, Patina struggles with relevance and quality

BY BESHA RODELL

How long would you wait for a cocktail at a restaurant before standing up, flipping the table, shouting “A POX ON YOUR HOUSE!” and trashing your business elsewhere? What if it was a very expensive restaurant, where the cheapest menu option is three courses for $85, and one of those courses has already come and gone, and your drink is nowhere to be found? It hasn’t been forgotten — the waiter keeps saying it’s coming — but he appears to be lying. The answer to this question, for me, is longer than 40 minutes. I know this because that’s the amount of time I waited for my cocktail on a recent evening at Patina. Failures of this sort are frustrating anywhere, but they rise to the level of shocking here, where it’s hard to spend less than $400 for two people if drinks are involved, and where one of the main justifications for that price tag is the promise of smooth, superlative professionalism from the service staff.

Things go wrong in every restaurant at one point or another, but the acceptable margin of error shrinks in direct proportion to the depth of the dent in your wallet, and at this particular restaurant, that dent is more like a crater. Patina occupies an odd position in the dining landscape of Los Angeles. On one hand, the restaurant looms large as a fine-dining standard-bearer, its name practically synonymous with luxury and quality. Its patriarch, chef Joachim Splichal, holds the kind of esteem reserved for legends. People who have worked there are automatically assumed to have immense talent, and indeed many of the city’s best chefs have Patina on their résumés. On the other hand, it tends to go ignored in the general food conversation, popping up occasionally when the management decides to do something particularly extravagant — such as hiring a water sommelier — but mainly going ignored by local and national media, despite its supposed excellence.

Splichal opened Patina’s original iteration in 1989 in Hollywood, and moved it in 2003 to its current downtown home, tucked under the glorious metal swooshes of Walt Disney Concert Hall. There was a time when Patina vied for the title of most important restaurant in the city, and as the flagship for the ever-growing Patina Restaurant Group, its reputation has spawned an empire of eateries and catering operations all over the country. So why doesn’t anyone talk about it? Are we all so distracted by everything shiny and new, we’re overlooking something genuinely exceptional?

I believe that if you ate at Patina on the exact right night, and ordered the exact right things, and had enough wealth that the cost didn’t sting quite so much, a truly exceptional experience might be possible. But I have never managed to accomplish that feat.

All of the components are there. The room is hushed, the staff is suited and formal. Patina’s current executive chef, Paul Lee, has an impressive résumé working under other legends, including Joel Robuchon. At Patina, Lee serves a three-course menu for $85 and a six-course tasting for $125, both with the option of pricey supplements. They even send you home with chocolates. From a distance, it looks very much like the other high-rent, tasting-menu restaurants in town.

Some of the food is on par with the offerings at those other restaurants. Tiny, delicate kohlrabi squash agnolotti come nestled in the center of a dramatic curved white bowl, their sweet creamy centers offset by amaretto (it sounds cloying but it works) and the barely perceptible but wonderful crunch of pork rinds. The amuse-bouche we were given one night — a frothy, creamy chestnut velouté — would have been lovely were it not for the truffle oil that overwhelmed the chestnut’s delicate sweetness.

There’s no doubt that Lee and his crew know how to cook; easy-to-mess-up proteins often are handled perfectly, such as squash that arrived scattered across the plate, its flesh deeply rosy with a lacquered, crisp skin. Dover sole, served with grapes and fennel, was a reminder of what a treat that sweet, white-fleshed fish can be when handled with skill.

But a lamb belly dish was almost dried out, its accompaniment of figs and a wafer of falafel hardly groundbreaking but also not classic in the slightest. An appetizer of Dungeness crab comes tinged green — according to the menu thanks to kohlrabi, Granny Smith apple, dill and horseradish — but the final outcome feels less like a treat than like delusion and apathy. No wonder we turn away from the genre — the gamble is too big, especially when there’s now so much very good food to be had, almost everywhere you look, for a fraction of the cost. We’re in danger of falling into a system wherein fancy food is designated as such simply because it’s so very expensive, and not for any quantitative reason having to do with care or quality.

Patina works with some ingredients that are hard to find elsewhere, and there’s no doubt there’s skill involved in cooking squash so very perfectly. But there are far too many dishes that fall flat, or rely too heavily on a brand of creativity that’s now commonplace. Grapes with the fish is no longer a particularly electrifying combination. There are plenty of chefs who might pair lamb belly with figs and falafel, and I can think of more than a few who might cook that lamb belly more lovingly, too.

Where’s the thrill? A restaurant charging these prices with this reputation ought to deliver more than nice ingredients on big plates in a quiet room. If there’s a danger that a cocktail order will make the wheels of the place screech to a halt, or that fetching wine from the cellar is too big, especially when there’s now so much very good food to be had, almost everywhere you look, for a fraction of the cost. We’re in danger of falling into a system wherein fancy food is designated as such simply because it’s so very expensive, and not for any quantitative reason having to do with care or quality.

It’s possible Patina could go on for years to come, with L.A. sort of ignoring and sort of lauding it, a figurehead for a company that has mainly turned its attention elsewhere, a myth that all of us have heard about but few have experienced. The very wealthy could continue to come here and feel swaddled by its hushed opulence; the L.A. Philharmonic season ticket holders could continue to rush through meals squeezed in before concerts. In fact, it probably will do just that. But if Patina was my first experience of spending $400 on dinner, it would also almost certainly be my last.

Patina | Walt Disney Concert Hall, 141 S. Grand Ave., downtown | (213) 972-3331 patina@roup.com/patina-restaurant | Tue.-Sat., 5-9 p.m.; Sun., 4-8 p.m. | Menus start at $85 per person | Full bar | Valet parking

CRITIC’S RATING
★★★★★ World-Class
★★★★ Very Good
★★★ Good
★★ Fair
★ Zero Poor

A Dungeness crab appetizer with kohlrabi, Granny Smith apple, dill and horseradish

PHOTO BY ANNE FISHBEIN
Palm Springs is Los Angeles’ treasured vacation town, known for the stunning Mount San Jacinto, soaring wind turbines, hotels made for booze-soaked weekends and convenient proximity to the Coachella and Stagecoach festivals. But what many don’t realize while sipping spicy margaritas poolside is that people actually live there — grow up there, even. With its year-round population of about 46,000, Palm Springs’ young natives commonly leave the desert after graduating high school, promising only to return for the holidays. But Palm Springs’ small-town story has taken a turn. As a result of its decadelong transformation from a retiree oasis to a hipster haven, Coachella Valley millennials are seeing potential in their hometown, and moving back to start their own businesses. Three of the city’s most innovative bars and restaurants are owned by four members of Palm Springs High School’s class of 2002.

Christine Soto, co-owner of the high-concept beer and wine bar Dead or Alive, moved to L.A. after graduation. After completing international development studies at UCLA, living in Chile for a bit and exploring various career paths, she found herself back in the desert more than a decade later.

“I swore to never come back. I grew up here in the ’90s — post-spring break shutdown, so Palm Springs was dead to young people,” Soto says, referring to regulations enacted in 1991, such as a ban on poolside drinking after 11 p.m., that essentially shut down tourism for the under-30s. “After I left for college was when Coachella got popular and the Ace Hotel opened.”

In 2013, Soto had an opportunity to run a new Palm Springs hotel, leading her back to her hometown. “I’d lived in L.A. for 11 years and thought, why not? Palm Springs is cool now. However, that gig fell through and I found myself in Palm Springs with no job, kind of a nightmare scenario.”

Soto and Dead or Alive co-owner/designer Anthony Cioffi collaborated on several projects, ranging from a wallpaper concept to various other one-offs, before pulling the trigger on Dead or Alive in December 2015.

The dark and provocative beer and wine bar just off the main drag, Palm Canyon Drive, offers a small, thoughtful list of beers and varietals, including the new house wine, Dead or Alive Pinot Noir. It’s an experiential concept in design and service where customers are encouraged to learn about what they’re drinking.

Dead or Alive was designed by Cioffi, who left Palm Springs High to study at Art Center College of Design. The transportation design graduate fabricated virtually every detail, from the luminescent bar top to the hand-corded chairs and custom-molded ceramic beer mugs. A giant, glowing sun looms over the space, illuminating it with ever-changing colors that melt into the bar top. An ambiance unique for any city, let alone midcentury modern Palm Springs.

In September 2016, Soto began a partnership with Los Angeles sommelier Matthew Kaner, owner of Los Feliz’s Bar Covell and Sherman Oaks’ Augustine Wine Bar.

“My first visit to Dead or Alive [was] back in March of this year. I loved it. Loved the design, the boundary-pushing wine selections, the dedication to small-producing breweries,” Kaner says.

“The city of Palm Springs seems to be very pro-business, which is a great tool for people being able to open new businesses,” he adds. “I see Dead or Alive continuing to push boundaries in the wine scene to elevate the everyday wines people are drinking and have access to. It’s been great to see importer and distributor friends finding ways to make their wines accessible to the Palm Springs area now that they
realize there are more and more outlets to sell to.”

Two years before designing Dead or Alive, Cioffi also designed Bar, the whiskey tavern that greets drivers with its striking snake mural (which has drawn some complaints for cultural insensitivity) at the north end of downtown Palm Springs. The large space offers a full bar with whiskey and beer cocktails and a menu of salads, sandwiches and bar bites. It’s a hangout for the young Palm Springs set looking to play ping-pong somewhere other than the Ace Hotel. Owner Donovan Funkey moved back to the desert from San Diego shortly after his family opened the popular Italian restaurant Giuseppe’s in Palm Springs.

“I left Palm Springs to go to college in San Diego. There was no family business to come home to [at the time], so I didn’t plan on coming back,” Funkey says.

“My family opened the first restaurant in 2008, and I still didn’t have any desire to move back. But then after about a year of the restaurant being open, something just kind of clicked in my mind along the lines of, ‘Why work for the man when I have the opportunity to go work for myself and with my family?’”

Bar opened in February 2013 and, at the time, was the only bar of its kind in the area.

“When we opened Bar, it was good timing. There weren’t a lot of places doing decent cocktails or focusing on whiskey, so we filled that niche, which was nice,” Funkey says. “That’s also part of the reason for opening in Palm Springs. It was easier to be ahead of the curve out here, and it’s significantly cheaper to open a bar out here. But mainly it was still a family venture and I decided I did want to stay in Palm Springs and put down some roots again. There’s a ton of great people out here and it’s nice because the industry is pretty small and tight.”

But starting a businesses in a quickly developing resort town presents its own challenges. A multimillion-dollar revitalization of downtown Palm Springs is currently underway, affecting businesses on
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the main drag of Palm Canyon. A six-story Kimpton Hotel complex is currently being constructed on the north end.

“The future of Bar is actually pretty uncertain right now,” Funkey says. “The property was bought about a year and a half ago and they plan to tear everything down to build a new hotel. But regardless, [Bar] still could be around for another year or so — then we will find another project that should be pretty similar.”

Patrick Service, owner of contemporary deli Appetito, has a similarly family-driven story. After earning degrees at USC and Cornell University, Service gained field experience under New York restaurateur Danny Meyer, playing a key role in opening Manhattan’s Maialino and revitalizing Union Square Cafe. It was a far cry from the slow and steady lifestyle of Palm Springs.

But while Service gained valuable knowledge on the East Coast, he, too, wanted to enter the Palm Springs restaurant business, where his grandparents founded Las Casuelas, one of the desert’s oldest and most successful restaurant chains.

“The experience in New York was fantastic, but I always knew I would be back, but not as early as I had. With everything that was happening in Palm Springs at the time, the timing felt right. I’m so glad I came when I did. The combination of being a part of something new and learning from something as special and established as Las Casuelas Terraza was the clincher. Appetito was a natural extension of my experience in New York City and what I felt passionate about.”

Appetito, a sleek bar/cafe/deli located across from the Ace Hotel, opened in 2014. The menu offers house-made pastas such as braise lamb malfatti and spaghetti with “Sunday sauce,” as well as starters like wild mushroom arancini. The mains include a smoked brisket platter and a pork chop stuffed with prosciutto. And there’s a Negroni bar, should visitors want to escape the scorching desert sun.

Despite Palm Springs’ constant redevelopments, these business owners are among a cohort earnestly changing the city’s food and drink landscape by cultivating what they’ve learned in the larger metro areas, and bringing it all back home.

“Appetito was a natural extension of my experience in New York and what I felt passionate about.”

Catch the Christmas Spirit at Tam O’Shanter

Christmas in Los Angeles is anything you want it to be — tamales on the beach, say, or dim sum in Pasadena or a hike in Malibu. This breadth of choices is the best thing about L.A. any time of year. And sometimes it’s fun, in a holiday season, to indulge in the most cheeseball, the most stereotypical and British of Christmas tropes: tinsel, garland, boughs of holly, heavy foods, warm boozy drinks, fireplaces and, yes, carolers. Atwater’s Tam O’Shanter goes all in on that for the entire month of December, and it is a delight.

Tam O’Shanter was built in 1922 by carpenters who normally built movie studio sets. The architectural style is called “Sto-
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**Comedy**

**Happy New Year?**
Around this time last year, UCB hosted the 2015 It Suck Awards and we were all like, “Yeah, ugh, 2015 — what a shitty year! Can’t wait till 2016! Surely that will be a better year in which to be alive!” Holy shit, were we kidding ourselves. From Bowie to Miss Cleo, just about every cool famous person died; a reality TV star with a Twitter addiction became president; the list truly goes on. With only the symbolism of a new calendar year to put an end to this chapter of relentless misery, we may look back and have a laugh. At the 2016 It Suck Awards, hosts Devin Field and Marcella Arguello and a slate of comedians separate the truly terrible from the actual worst of the worst in an awards-style show. We have a feeling they’ll need all three performances to cover everything. UCB Sunset, 5419 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Fri.–Sun., Dec. 16–18, 9 p.m.; $10. sunset.ucbtheatre.com. —Gwynedd Stuart

**Film**

**Do Stop Believin’**
If you’re tired of waging a War on Christmas but still want to engage in some kind of conflict, tonight’s 18th annual Nihilist Film Fest is your recommended dose of noise, nonsense and the belief in nothing. Two hours of short and disquieting films regarding nihilism will be screened courtesy of festival organizer Elisha Shapiro, who, for the past 40 years has furthered the cause of nihilism, crystallized most trenchantly with the 1984 Nihilist Olympics, which included the Lazlo Toth Art Defacing Marathon and the Johanna Went Projectile Vomiting Marathon. Get there early, because at 8:15, Shapiro conducts the Annual Blessing of the Televisions — and that’s not nothin’. (Bring your own TV.) Echo Park Film Center, 1200 N. Alvarado St., Echo Park; Fri., Dec. 16, 8 p.m.; free. (213) 484-8846, echoparkfilmcenter.org/events/2016-nihilist-film-fest. —David Cotner

**Fandom**

**Let It Glow**
Good or evil, which shall prevail? Glow Sword Battle L.A. 2016 is a colossal battle royale that shall determine once and for all the ultimate fate of our city, our country, indeed our very universe. Participants choose sides and fight it out wielding safe, plastic lightsabers in this ultimate nightfall knockout (and relatively inexpensive psychotherapy session) produced by alternative public events group Newmindspace, whose admirable aim is to redefine public spaces via “living installations” using favorite childhood activities and super-massive gatherings of people. (Sword fetishists: Each glow sword changes up to six colors and is approximately three feet long.) Pershing Square, 532 S. Olive St., downtown; Fri., Dec. 16, 8-11 p.m.; free. glowbattletour.com/collections/los-angeles. —John Payne

**Drag**

**Carol of the Belles**
On Christmas Queens 2, Michelle Visage and RuPaul’s Drag Race season-eight contestant Thorgy Thor, a violinist, team up for an “O Holy Night” that’s ready for midnight mass in a Gothic cathedral. It’s gorgeous and almost shockingly traditional, considering the Christmas Queens albums are filled with double entendres and campy sendups of holiday songs. No doubt this year’s Christmas Queens event will be an eclectic mix of glamour and wit, with Visage and Thor performing alongside fan favorites Katya, Manila Luzon, Sharon Needles, Detox, Jiggly Caliente and Ginger Minj. Expect everything from contestant Thorgy Thor, a violinist, team up for an “O Holy Night” that’s ready for midnight mass in a Gothic cathedral. It’s gorgeous and almost shockingly traditional, considering the Christmas Queens albums are filled with double entendres and campy sendups of holiday songs. No doubt this year’s Christmas Queens event will be an eclectic mix of glamour and wit, with Visage and Thor performing alongside fan favorites Katya, Manila Luzon, Sharon Needles, Detox, Jiggly Caliente and Ginger Minj. Expect everything from synth-heavy dance to old school–influenced hip-hop originals to time-honored seasonal favorites. The Noy by Microsoft, 800 W. Olympic Blvd., downtown; Sat., Dec. 17, 8 p.m.; $39.50. (888) 929-7849, christmasqueens.net. —Liz Ohanesian

**Art**

**Get Surreal**
Things look more mysterious when they’re underwater, as images become dreamlike when light is filtered translucently through a liquid veil. At Corey Helford Gallery’s final group exhibition of the year, “Beneath the New Waves: An Exploration of Underwater Reality and Surreality,” more than two dozen artists are lured by sirens to plunge beneath the surface and pursue the often-mythical and fantastic creatures that lurk offshore. The art ranges from Scott Musgrove’s bronze sculpture of an octopus bearing lanterns and Lara Dann’s colorfully glowing painting of an underwater nymph to The London Police’s fanciful rendition of a cyborg mermaid. Bay Area painter Eric Joyner revels in his favorite totemic obsessions — doughnuts and robots — by placing them deep in a watery tableau. Corey Helford Gallery, 571 S. Anderson St., downtown; reception Sat., Dec. 17, 7-11 p.m.; exhibit runs through Sat., Jan. 14; free. (310) 287-2340, coreyhelfordgallery.com. —James Moreland

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Baked Goods Do Good
The bake sale is an easy and delicious way to raise money for a good cause, whether it’s a high school debate club or your local animal shelter. The Depressed Cake Shop was launched in 2013 as a way to spread awareness and raise funds for mental health issues by offering sad cookies, melancholy cupcakes and despondent pies. Its L.A. pop-up, organized by Art Against Assault, will feature forlorn delicacies — mostly grey-toned with a hint of hopeful color — from 20 local bakers. All proceeds will go to the Los Angeles LGBT Center’s Mental Health Services Program, benefiting the queer community, for whom the holidays can be an especially trying time. The Hive Gallery, 729 S. Spring St., downtown; Sun., Dec. 18, 1-5 p.m.; free. la.smorgasburg.com.

—Katherine Spiers

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Reviving the illicit allure of the latenight beverage establishments of the 1920s, Lost Angels: Winter Solstice
Darkest Night is a swanky-chic speakeasy held in a très élégant wine cellar. A fully immersive theatrical nightlife experience and art salon taking place downtown once a month, Lost Angels this night offers fine wines, small-batch spirits and plates of “decadent charcuterie” to warm the cockles of your heart as you watch or interact with Lost Angels characters and performances wising in and out of the venue unannounced. Featured artists: La Dulcinea, Elle L. Faunterley, Eric Malcolm Schreek, Sir Fin and Victoria Lane. Dress code strictly enforced; “dark haute couture encouraged.” The Overlook, 210 W. Fifth St., downtown; Sun., Dec. 18, 9 p.m.; $15, $12 in advance. facebook.com/events/162640713817781/.

—John Payne

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—John Payne

Nightlife
HOLholidays on Air

Don’t Mean a Thing

For those of you who may be experiencing varying levels of nausea, cynicism and depression because of the holiday season, comedian Jane Lynch launches her new album, A Swingin’ Little Christmas!, along with some renditions of the songs on the record by Lynch with Kate Flannery and Tim Davis, backed by The Tony Guerrero Quintet. Flannery (Meredith on The Office) and Davis (former Glee vocal arranger) operate in comedic counterpoint to Lynch, whose gift to you this horrible year is a kind of empathy that really swings. Largo at the Coronet, 366 N. La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Grove; Wed., Dec. 21, 8 p.m. (doors 7 p.m.); $30. (310) 855-0350, largo-la.com/event/1281629-jane-lynchs-swingin-little-los-angeles. –David Cotner

Sweeter Than Honey

Sweet Honey in the Rock: Celebrating the Holidays features the Grammy-nominated vocal ensemble in a program of songs chosen to lift us sky-high and chase away the wintertime blues. The all-woman African-American a cappella group is an electric powerhouse of athletic singing skills, wondrous musicality and superb taste in repertoire — and a gale force for good in a world that could use a little uplift and affirmation right about now. So: Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa or whatever’s your thing, Sweet Honey in the Rock are bringing the gifts. Arrive early for holiday treats, seasonal cocktails and photo booth. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Wed., Dec. 21, 8 p.m.; $37-$97. (323) 440-7300, getty.edu

Buck Up, Buttercup

For all the banal and boring horrors of ‘80s popular culture, deep within those piles of awful offal shine constitutionally beautiful films such as The Princess Bride. On the cusp of its 30th anniversary, tonight the swoonable glamourpuss who played the hero Dread Pirate Roberts — Cary Elswes himself — will sign his memoir, As You Wish: Inconceivable Tales From the Making of The Princess Bride ($16, Touchstone). You’ll also get to watch the film, which showcases the entire cast at its finest, including Christopher Guest as Count Tyrone, a role that doubtless drew on his own experience as actual nobility. Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Thu., Dec. 22, 7:30 p.m.; $11, $9 seniors and students, $7 kids. (323) 461-2020, americancinemathequecalendar.com. –David Cotner
**Sharon Ellis’ Paintings Are So Precise They Look Like They Were Produced Digitally**

**BY CATHERINE WAGLEY**

This week, painted fantasies of jungle animals hang in Beverly Hills, and an artist explores the complexities of seeking asylum in a Los Feliz performance.

**Precision dreams**

Sharon Ellis’ paintings must be seen in person. In photographs, you could easily mistake them for psychedelic digital creations, impressive but not handmade. In person, it’s still difficult to believe they’re hand-painted with layer upon layer of translucent paint, since details are so precise and even idiosyncrasies seem planned. Ellis’ current show at Christopher Grimes Gallery, “Intimate Terrain,” includes paintings of fireflies at twilight, a red and blue fire burning in front of a glowing sky, and a bouquet growing heavenward during a supernatural desert sunset. The scenes all have a magical quality, the colors and details as vivid as they might be if the viewer was on LSD. The magic makes Ellis’ flawless technique seem aspirational, as if she’s constructed a fantasy so carefully that it has to come true. 916 Colorado Ave., Santa Monica; through Jan. 7. (310) 587-3373, cgrimes.com.

**Scrapy protest**

Portland, Oregon–based artist Blair Saxon-Hill constructed a protester for her current show at Joan, using a rusty metal chair, flattened and misshapen but still standing, and holding a faded flag. There’s no doubt that the protester, weathered and dogged, will keep on keeping on, rain or shine. Every sculpture in Saxon-Hill’s show, called “to no ending except ourselves,” consists of salvaged material. A wall-hanging woman has one breast, a photographed right arm resting on her cloth hip and a tube and hanger standing in for her left arm. These figures, all a bit defiant, make up a scrappy army that seems to be fighting normalcy and complacency more than anything else. 4300 W. Jefferson Blvd., #1, West Adams; through Jan. 29. (323) 644-0454, Joanlosangeles.org.

**Trying to stay**

This weekend at Barnsdall Park, artist and writer Gelare Khoshgozaran, who works in L.A. but was born and raised in Tehran, will collaborate with dancer taisha paggett on a performance called UNdocumentary. Khoshgozaran will read aloud a document she wrote, declaration for seeking asylum in the U.S. As she reads, a video projected behind her will show panoramic images of Tehran, all of them sourced from Google Earth. In the past, when she has done versions of this performance, Khoshgozaran has invited audience members up to read her declaration aloud for her and has distributed copies of the I-589 Application for Asylum and Withholding of Removal, the document asylum seekers must file with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. It’s a way to grapple with the complexities and limitations of the process that determines who can safely stay here. 4800 Hollywood Blvd., East Hollywood; Fri., Dec. 16, 6 p.m. (323) 644-8209, lamag.org.

**Animals in the apartment**

An elephant rides a turtle and a Komodo dragon lurks in an ethereal, pastel-colored landscape in Zurich-based artist Urban Zellweger’s current show, “Where am I Reptile,” at Karma L.A. Zellweger’s paintings of nature, romantic and subtly absurd, hang alongside a few paintings of domestic settings: a record player and a wrap-around couch in a carpeted room, or an urban window. One painting depicts a green couch with an ambiguous mammal swimming beside it, a literal take on creature comforts. 9615 Brighton Way, #426, Beverly Hills; through Dec. 31. (323) 888-9798, karmainternational.org.
To join you must be:
• 18 years of age or older
• HIV-positive with an undetectable viral load
• Have had a HIV-associated neurocognitive disorder within 45 days prior to study entry

If yes, you may be able to join a study where you add FDA-approved medication(s) to your HIV-regimen to improve neurocognitive performance.

This study is for HIV-positive people who also have HIV-associated neurocognitive disorder (HAND) as defined by the Frascati criteria. It will help us to identify if adding Maraviroc (MVC) and/or Dolutegravir (DTG) to their current antiretroviral therapy will improve neurocognitive performance. Participants will be enrolled in this study for about 96 weeks. Compensation will be provided.

For more information contact the UCLA CARE Center at careoutreach@mednet.ucla.edu or via phone 310-557-9062

There are limitations to the confidentiality of email communications. Do not include any sensitive health information if you choose to contact the UCLA CARE Center via email.

CHEKHOV, PLEASE
Spotty performances drag down a broad adaptation of Anton Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard*

**BY DEBORAH KLUGMAN**

Writers and directors are famously at odds, and there is perhaps no more celebrated example than the clash between Anton Chekhov and Konstantin Stanislavski over *The Cherry Orchard*, which Chekhov deemed a comedy but Stanislavski staged with an eye to the work’s unhappy implications. Perhaps one reason they differed is that Chekhov was more interested in character than plot, and perceived his characters and their often self-deceiving foibles as more real than any story line. His aim was to satirize the social class they belonged to, rather than mourn its imminent collapse, as the play’s ending suggests.

Adapter-director Jared Wilson seems to have taken these sentiments to heart; he’s written an extraordinarily broad adaptation that tracks the events of the original but encourages the ensemble to express their onstage personas in offbeat and wacky ways. Some of the acting is so broad and loose that, watching it, I thought perhaps large portions of the goings-on were improvised, but this turns out not to be the case. Rather, multiple comedic ploys, such as the transformation of monied landowner Boris into Bill (Tor Brown), a swaggering Texan with cowboy boots, have been written in by playwright Wilson, dialogue and all. There’s also a Harold and Maude, May-December liaison between two other characters that is awkward and unsettling. A lot of the shtick isn’t that funny — how many yuks are there in one person circling the stage boozing from a bottle? — but it might have been more effective if the performances had been better. Instead, one gets the impression of earnest students expanding their boundaries in an acting class.

The most acceptable work comes from those who hew closest to tradition — understudy Jennifer Christina DeRosa does best in the pivotal role of Renee (Chekhov’s Mme. Ranevskaya), a likable but financially irresponsible lady about to lose her land; Ainsley Peace, as her somber eldest daughter, also is good. DeRosa compensates for a lack of depth with a sympathetic naturalness. As Lenny, the up-and-coming businessman who tries to help her, Maxwell Marsh’s antics begin to grow on you as he energetically rides the narrative to its conclusion.

Bree Pavey’s set design is abstract, simple and effective, and Brown’s lighting design — a change in hue for each successive scene — adds much-needed ambiance.

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- On antiretroviral therapy for at least 6 months
- T-cell count at or above 100

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UCLA Meth Clinical Trial

We all have secrets...

Would you like to stop or reduce your Meth use? A UCLA meth clinical trial may be able to help. UCLA is conducting a clinical trial to find out if an anti-inflammatory medication can help patients to stop or reduce their meth use, and improve mental functioning, by reducing toxic brain inflammation caused by meth.

Counseling, study medication, and compensation are included in this 18-week outpatient clinical trial. Interested in learning more?

If you are 18 years or older, using crystal meth, and looking to stop, call our research clinic in Hollywood (866) 449-UCLA or visit www.uclabam.org/meth

UCLA Meth Clinical Trial is being conducted by the UCLA Department of Family Medicine (FFM) Research Office. Proprietary No Personal Sponsors Drug Approval

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THE HORROR, THE HORROR

L.A. Weekly critic April Wolfe’s top films of 2016

BY APRIL WOLFE

In this, the harrowing year of 2016, I could jump into the Oscars talk. I could pick groundbreaking films that reminded me time and again that movies are alive and more vital than ever, like the heartbreaking Moonlight, the soul-stirring Queen of Katwe, the force-of-goodness Elle or the punch-in-the-emotional-gut that is Fences — all of which should be on Top 10 lists (see what I did there?). But what I’ll look back on and remember most this year is the horror of it all. Frankly, I’m scared.

The Invitation

Karyn Kusama’s film about a handful of old friends invited under false pretenses to a Hollywood Hills dinner party is flat-out chilling, a testament to how many blood-red flags people will overlook in the service of niceties. Kusama unearthed something deep and scary about the ways that cult figures test boundaries, who say or do something outrageous and then walk it back and call you crazy for thinking they might have an ulterior motive. It’s a tightrope walk right up to the heart-bursting final image.

Green Room

Nazi punks fuck off, indeed. Jeremy Saulnier’s PacNW-set violent shocker pits a good-natured punk band against the white supremacists who try to get rid of them after they witness a murder. Despite the machetes, guns and trained attack dogs, the focus is only half on the gore. Saulnier is also an impressively visual director, and physical toll that other people’s hate takes on everyone else — even the dogs.

The Eyes of My Mother

What is scary is often unseen. Nicolas Pesce takes this take to the Nth level, crafting an aural masterpiece, where Foley work and sound design sharply hint at violence, while the B&W imagery has so much texture and depth that the red of blood isn’t even missed. The lonely daughter of a murdered mother grows into a curious, quiet and good-natured punk band against the wing. The release schedule these days, a veteran doc cinematographer, has shot over the course of her career. Both works sound like aural masterpieces, where Foley work and sound design sharply hint at violence.

The Love Witch

Anna Biller is at the top of my list of filmmakers I want to corner at parties to talk about all things psychedelic Italian giallo horror. The Love Witch is faithful to the genre in terms of precise production design, makeup and costuming, but Biller also subverts tropes at every turn, making her heroine into a case study for uncomfortable but revelatory discussions about feminism. If that sounds dry, the movie’s not. It’s a total romp about a spell-casting woman whose men keep crying and dying on her. Is she a murderer? Are the men just weak? It’s all part of the grand, alluring mystery!

Evolution

Lucie Hadžihalilović’s Evolution hit me like a bolt of lightning. An extremely slow-moving bolt, but the jolt was just the same. She explores the sexual awakening of boys raised on a remote island by mysterious, alien-like women. These teens’ depth and vulnerability are rare for male characters. This sci-fi tale offers some fantastic gender-flipping — what if men evolved to be pet. As a woman, she comes to be more and more like the man who ruined her life.

Under the Shadow

Horror filmmakers have a beautiful habit of crafting allegories for contemporary social issues. Babak Anvari takes a less subtle route with this tale set amid the 1980s Iran-Iraq war: A woman is denied re-entry to medical school for practicing “left-wing” ideology and is repeatedly admonished for not wearing her hijab, all while she stubbornly refuses to take her daughter away from her. Her refusal to see the spirits or the coming attacks, even when they’re right in front of her; obsessive denial is dangerous in a hostile political climate.

Demon

Marin Wrona’s tale of a happy Polish groom who’s suddenly possessed by the spirit of a murdered Jewish girl is a vivid and haunting depiction of mental illness, but it also exemplifies the real horrors that seemingly good people can inflict when riled up by a dangerous demagogue. Wrona, who died before the film’s theatrical release, researched a dark spot on Poland’s past during WWII and made the story into a gorgeous, elegiac piece with flourishes of the darkest humor imaginable.
shouldn’t have to explain why Fences, the August Wilson play set in the 1950s and now adapted for the screen, is important. If you’ve stepped anywhere near the theater — and I mean the playhouse here — you’ve read, seen or heard about it. Wilson, who didn’t study theater in school, tuned his ear by listening to the cadence and diction of the people in his working-class neighborhood of Pittsburgh’s Hill District, where most of his plays are set. When Fences premiered in 1985, the language was a welcome breath of smoggy, industrial air in the pristine, over-enunciated theater, and it remains one of the U.S.’ most frequently produced scripts.

Fences puts black lives in the center of their own stories. But for as much as we theater nerds know and love the play, the fact remains that most African-Americans have not felt invited to the theater to see it. This screen adaptation, a wide release starring and directed by Denzel Washington, one of this country’s last true movie stars, is vital because it has the potential to reach marginalized communities. But it also stands as an aching, lyrical, performance-driven masterpiece in its own right, a film so intense and engrossing that movie theaters really should screen it with an intermission.

Washington plays Troy, a 50-something garbage collector who’s jovial and entertaining, as he holds court on the job and after work with his best friend, Bono (Stephen Henderson). Walking home, then hanging around in Troy’s backyard, Bono and Bono share a bottle of booze and Bono shares a bottle of booze and Bono shares a bottle of booze around in Troy’s backyard, Troy is chasing imaginary demons away. The film has a kind of magic at the end — no matter how terrible Troy gets, audiences can’t help but still feel love for him and sympathy for his pain. Washington’s portrayal is harsher than many stage Troys. Here, as the years pass, Troy says dumber and more hurtful things to Rose until she finally breaks and lashes out, tears and snot flowing freely down her face — Davis at that moment becomes the people’s champion.

And because, as the film nears its end, Washington chooses to focus his camera so attentively on Rose, she slowly becomes the central figure in this Fences, not Troy. There’s no bitter laughter that will endure to him this time, just a raging fire burning in Rose, siphoning all the oxygen for her flame. In some ways, Fences parallels Ava DuVernay’s documentary 13th, which draws a kind of road map for how African-Americans were disenfranchised and incarcerated after the abolition of slavery, with repercussions spanning generations — and the hurt cycle keeps spinning. Wilson’s tale is an enduring story without easy answers or false triumphs, one that gets more complicated as it goes along, all the questions about today’s America still have their echoes in Fences.
ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

Directed by Gareth Edwards | Written by Chris Weitz and Tony Gilroy | Walt Disney Pictures | Citywide

The Ataxian documents the plantation worked by 50 black orphans because he felt a need to push himself proving to people that Friedreich's ataxia can be. It is thus a symbolic canonization of its subject. Bryant says he participated in this monumental race because he felt a need to push himself to crazier athletic heights as his way of proving to people that Friedreich's ataxia could be beaten. It is thus a symbolic gesture — and alas, that is exactly the way Schlanser and Bennett treat Bryant himself: as symbol first, human being second. (Kenji Fujishima)

BOY 23: THE FORGOTTEN BOYS OF BRAZIL

A rule of the fascists: If you can’t eliminate a threat, institutionalize it. Belisario Franca’s documentary Boy 23: The Forgotten Boys of Brazil exposes the pre-World War II story of a Nazi plantation worked by 50 black orphans essentially as slaves. Two survivors reluctantly reflect on the childhood that was taken from them, recounting their harrowing experiences. Franca dives back into Brazil’s fascist history, explaining that it was the last Western nation to abolish slavery and that the rise of Hitler overseas inspired the local government’s adoption of eugenics. Boy 23 dredges up chilling archival footage to illustrate Brazil’s most racist period: One clip features a pageant of adorable, crying white babies being analyzed by judges to be perfect specimens. The film opens not with a history lesson but with a local farmer recounting a surprising discovery. The man digs up a brick and scrapes off mud to reveal a hidden Nazi insignia. Decades earlier he tried to share what he found but was dismissed by locals who viewed the old plantation owners as philanthropists and wanted to brush the past away. These thriller-like close-ups of trying to uncover a conspiracy invigorate the documentary. That said, Boy 23 overplays its hand with too many stylized re-enactments, all shot in slow motion, black-and-white and ultra close-up. Franca’s film is at its most arresting when it parallels America’s own racial unrest. We’ve grown all too familiar with the public ignoring transgressions of powerful individuals who purport to be on the right side. (Brian Weik)
COLLATERAL BEAUTY: Here’s a promise few movies can make: if you sink two hours into Collateral Beauty now, it’s guaranteed that for the rest of your life, when conversation stalls, you can save the night by asking, “Did you ever see that movie where Will Smith plays an ad executive so shut down with grief over the death of his daughter that his business partners—played by Edward Norton, Kate Winslet and Michael Peña—hire actors to confront him in public in the roles of Death, Time and Love, the abstract concepts to whom he has been penning and mailing angry letters?” Maybe you’ll be at a dinner. Maybe nobody will believe you. You’ll continue. “Helen Mirren plays the actress who plays Death. And Keira Knightley plays Love. But that’s not the weirdest part. The business partners want the Will Smith character to step aside, so they set it up so that he believes that nobody but he can see Death, Time and Love, even when he’s shouting at them on the streets.” There will be silence. “This was a dark comedy, right?” someone might ask. “What if you only had two weeks left to live?”

THE HOLLOW POINT: A KIND OF MURDER: There’s nothing wrong with adapting hoary literary properties for the screen (except perhaps inserting the undead into the works of Jane Austen). But when the source material is a 60-year-old thriller responsible for many of today’s genre conventions, don’t be surprised if the result is as predictable as Andy Goddard’s A Kind of Murder. Walter Stockhouse (Patrick Wilson) is an architect enjoying the good life in early 1960s New York, sharing a house of his own design with wife Clara (Jessica Biel). Of course, if movies have taught us anything, it’s that appearances among the upper class tend to be deceiving. Clara is deeply unhappy, attempting suicide, and Walter, whose true passion is for writing pulpy crime fiction, becomes obsessed with the unsolved murder of Helen Kimeli, convincing himself that her husband (Eddie Marsan) is guilty, and that maybe Walter could get away with offing the bothersome Clara. The film is based on The Blunderer, a 1954 Patricia Highsmith novel. Her title still fits, as Kartheiser delivers as a haughty NYPD detective. (Goddard directed several episodes of Mad Men, which he still feels passion despite the fact that he’s kept her locked away in France for 10 long years. As 1986’s The Lion in Winter— which is enjoying a 4k digital restoration and re release — opens, it is 1183, and Henry summons Eleanor to “Christmas court,” where few gifts will be exchanged but many nefarious plots will be hatched, all with the goal of confirming an heir to Henry’s throne. (The eldest son has died.) The king has big plans for his youngest, the idiot John (Nigel Ferrer), while Eleanor favors Richard (Anthony Hopkins, in his film debut), even as the neglected middle son, Geoffrey (John Castle), waits for his parents and siblings to destroy one another so he can step into the breach. The Lion in Winter is a classic film, but not a great one. It’s clunky and overlong, as costume dramas with Shakespearean pretensions tend to be, especially back in the day. No matter. The movies we take to our hearts are usually imperfect, and all that’s ever mattered is that — an exemplar of the VHS era, Michael Coney’s horror film isn’t exactly regarded as a holiday classic—while others are sure to relish the opportunity to see both the director and star Scott McDonald in person following this momentous occasion. Holiday horror may not be for everybody, but a little counter- programming never hurt anyone. "Anyone enamored of Cabaret, All That Jazz and Star 80 looking for a chance to explore Bob Fosse’s back catalog will have the chance to do just that thanks to LACMA, where Sweet Charity screens early in the afternoon. Based on Fosse’s musical of the same name (which was itself based on Fellini’s screenplay for Nights of Cabiria), it stars Shirley MacLaine in the title role of a taxi dancer for whom little is going as planned but hope springs eternal nonetheless. We should all be so lucky."

YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DO LIST

Deck the Halls With Santa Claus: The Movie or Jack Frost

Friday, Dec. 16

Is Deckard a replicant? Will next year’s sequel starring Ryan Gosling be any good? Ponder these and other unanswerable questions during the Aero’s screening of Blade Runner, Ridley Scott’s sci-fi neo-noir. Harrison Ford is the hardboiled detective circa 1989, forced, as his sort so often are, to come out of retirement and track down a gang of rogue robots who are indistinguishable from their human counterparts. Scott’s vision of 21st-century Los Angeles is as striking now, as we approach the year in which it’s actually set, as it was when Blade Runner first came out in 1982. Aero Theatre, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Fri., Dec. 16, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequcalendar.com.

For something more seasonally appropriate, head to Old Town Music Hall’s Christmas Festival. Gather round The Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ, watch classic comedy shorts, sing Christmas carols and settle in for 1913’s Soroge, a silent adaptation of A Christmas Carol that’s rarely screened. Old Town Music Hall, 140 Richmond St., El Segundo; Fri., Dec. 16, 8:15 p.m.; Sat., Dec. 17, 2:30 & 8:15 p.m.; Sun., Dec. 18, 2:30 p.m.; $10. (310) 322-2592, oldtownmusicHall.com.

Saturday, Dec. 17

Elsewhere in wholesome entertainments, the New Beverly offers up Santa Claus: The Movie as a kiddie matinee. Not to be confused with Tim Allen’s Santa Clause, Jeanneot Zwazr’s holiday adventure is like an origin story for St. Nick that attempts to answer all our burning questions about how he came to reside in the North Pole and why it is that reindeers are able to fly. David Huddleston plays Santa, with Dudley Moore as an elf and John Lithgow as an evil toy-maker. New Beverly Cinema, 7165 Beverly Blvd, Fairfax; Sat-Sun., Dec. 17-18, 2 p.m.; $6. (323) 938-4038, theNewBev.com.

Sunday, Dec. 18

There’s little glamour in the world of professional wrestling outside of WWE. Documentary and noted mark Robert Greene explores an especially lo-fi promotion in his second documentary, Fake It So Real, which is currently receiving its Los Angeles premiere nearly five years after its initial release thanks to Acropolis Cinema and Cinemafilia. A post-screening discussion will be moderated by special guest referee David Shoemaker, perhaps the preeminent pro wrestling journalist of our time. Cinemafilia/Silent Movie Theatre, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax; Sun. Dec. 18, 4 p.m.; $14, (232) 655-2510, cinemafilia.org.

Tuesday, Dec. 20

Anyone enamored of Cabaret, All That Jazz and Star 80 looking for a chance to explore Bob Fosse’s back catalog will have the chance to do just that thanks to LACMA, where Sweet Charity screens early in the afternoon. Based on Fosse’s musical of the same name (which was itself based on Fellini’s screenplay for Nights of Cabiria), it stars Shirley MacLaine in the title role of a taxi dancer for whom little is going as planned but hope springs eternal nonetheless. We should all be so lucky.
LDF How often has a mainstream film tackled the real-life anxieties of the kind of questioning teens who turn to Tumblr and Reddit-like message boards to learn the facts of life? Mostly because it’s complicated and uncharted territory, a lot of adults just don’t get it. The flourishing variety of gender and sexual-preference labels allows these kids to choose identities on their own terms. Writer-director Clay Liford, in his endearing comedy Slash, explores these identity crises through the burgeoning world of fandom. Comi-McCarte as he faces the real-life and online hardships of being a teen today. And it’s both funny and enlightening, a nuanced yet sometimes brash look at how teens see themselves, not how adults would like to see them.

High schooler Neil (Michael Johnston) might be gay. Or bi. Or something else. But he indulges his fantasies by writing, directing and starring in a slavish re-creation — the kind of mimesis that sinks Larraín’s recently released, baffling biohazard Jackie — for a remote location and two top-of-their-game actresses. With flourishes suggesting Robert Altman’s camerawork, she shows us her co-stars verbatim whittling each other down to raw nerve and the sign of sanity left. Somehow, Takal makes this a statement on the confines the entertainment industry places on women, always at the whim of men who will make their careers if only they’ll show a little nip.

Hunt for the Wilderpeople True, this isn’t horror. But let’s make room for the light at the end of the tunnel. Taika Waititi’s under-the-radar gem of a family film is one I’ve recommended to every person I’ve met — no matter their age or tastes. Sam Neill and newcomer Julian Dennison light up for a bush adventure that is emotional as it is funny, wry and hilarious. (Nic Schager)

SLASHburst. (April Wolfe) felt, whip-smart performances, but Ennis portrays teens with a rare, full-bodied kind of questioning teens who turn to literature and iconicity. (Melissa Anderson)

Two Weeks to Go Two Weeks to Go is what happens when you strip a film of a plot, a script, actors, a cinematographer, a score and any semblance of purpose or direction. Making YouTube’s original-content “stars” seem like Daniel Day-Lewis by comparison, Cameron Paziardh produces, directs and stars in this “story” of a nameless man who, given two weeks to live because of some ill-defined “condition in my brain,” opts to record his final days via vlog entries. Completely improvised by both Day-Lewis (who’s the sole cast member) and shot on an iPhone and MacBook Pro, the action involves Paziardh rambling about God, the meaning of life and his inability to comprehend any of it in extended monologues that take place in his apartment, near the beach and in a mall. He correctly states that he knows nothing, and his father is empty even on topics such as movies and happiness. Even at a scant 56 minutes, Two Weeks to Go — whose production company imagines it as “content that speaks to millennials” — seems to go on for an eternity. When the filmmaker’s computer fan eventually begins whirring angrily and uncontrollably, it’s as if the very technology that’s allowed such an amateurish lo-fi project to exist is actively objecting to its creation. (Nick Schager)

ON GOING

OFFICE CHRISTMAS PARTY As dull and impersonal as a sheet of open-enrollment insurance forms, Office Christmas Party brings together — and underutilizes — several funny performers from TV shows (Silicon Valley, Veep, SNL) that pinpoint what this dim comedy does not: the specifics of workplace environments and their particular pathologies and joys. Under orders from interim CEO Carol Vanstone (Jennifer Aniston, pinched and stiff), the Chicago division of software firm Zenotek will have to record his final days via vlog entries. Completely improvised by both Day-Lewis (who’s the sole cast member) and shot on an iPhone and MacBook Pro, the action involves Paziardh rambling about God, the meaning of life and his inability to comprehend any of it in extended monologues that take place in his apartment, near the beach and in a mall. He correctly states that he knows nothing, and his father is empty even on topics such as movies and happiness. Even at a scant 56 minutes, Two Weeks to Go — whose production company imagines it as “content that speaks to millennials” — seems to go on for an eternity. When the filmmaker’s computer fan eventually begins whirring angrily and uncontrollably, it’s as if the very technology that’s allowed such an amateurish lo-fi project to exist is actively objecting to its creation. (Nick Schager)

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### Neighborhood Movie Guide

**Hollywood & Vicinity**

**ARCADE**

- **Hollywood Boulevard**: (323) 461-3331
  - **Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them in 3D**
  - **Office Christmas Party**
  - **Jackie**
  - **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story**
  - **Sing**
  - **Silence**

- **Virtual Cinema**: (222) 666-1234
  - **La La Land**
  - **Collateral Beauty**
  - **Moana**
  - **One More Time With Feeling 3D**

- **LAEMMLE’S MUSICAL HALL 3**: (213) 686-1069
  - **Hummmus! The Movie**

**Westwood, West L.A.**

- **AMC CENTURY CITY 15**: (310) 888-AMC (262)
  - **Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them**
  - **Office Christmas Party**
  - **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story**
  - **Sing 3D**

### Hollywood & Vicinity Showtimes

- **HOLLYWOOD & VICINITY**

  - **2:25, 4:35, 7:10, 9:20 p.m., 12:10 a.m.; Sat., 8, 9:15, 11:15 a.m., 12:45, 2:30, 5, 7:15, 8:15, 8:45, 10, 11:15, 11:45 p.m., 12:45, 1 a.m.**

- **7:05, 10:55 p.m.; Sun., 12:30, 3:50, 7:10, 10:40 p.m.; Sun., 1:50, 5, 8:10, 11:15 p.m., 12:15, 1, 1:30, 2:15, 3, 4:15, 5:15, 6, 7:15, 8, 9:30, 10, 11:15 p.m., 12:45, 1 a.m.**

- **11:30 a.m., 2:45, 6:35, 10:35 p.m.; Sat., 9:30 a.m., 12:25, 3:40, 6:45, 9:50 p.m.; Sun., 1:50, 5, 8:10, 11:15 p.m., 12:15, 1, 1:30, 2:15, 3, 4:15, 5:15, 6, 7:15, 8, 9:30, 10, 11:15 p.m., 12:45, 1 a.m.**

- **5:30, 8:30 p.m.; Mon., 10:50 a.m., 1:35, 4:25, 7:10, 10 p.m.**

- **Fri.-Wed., 11 a.m., 1:30, 3:45, 6:30, 9:15 p.m.**

- **Fri.-Sun., 9:35 a.m., 12:20, 3:20, 6:20, 9:10 p.m.**

- **Fri.-Sat., 12:15, 6:15 p.m.; Sun., 12:10, 6:15 p.m.**

- **5:35, 8:35 p.m.**

- **7:30 p.m.; Tues., 1 p.m.**

- **Fri., 5, 8:10, 11:25 p.m.; Sat., 1, 4, 7:30, 10:15 p.m.; Sun., 1:50, 5, 8:10, 11:15 p.m., 12:15, 1, 1:30, 2:15, 3, 4:15, 5:15, 6, 7:15, 8, 9:30, 10, 11:15 p.m., 12:45, 1 a.m.**

- **11:45 a.m., 2, 3, 3:45, 5:15, 6:15, 9:30, 10:30 p.m.; Sat., 11 a.m., 2, 3, 5:15 p.m.; Sun., 11 a.m., 2, 3 p.m.; Mon.-Tues., 1:45, 5:15, 8:45 p.m.; Wed., 5:30 p.m., 12 mid.; Thurs., 5:30 p.m.**

- **5:05, 7:20, 9:15 p.m.**

- **Fri.-Mon., 9:50 a.m., 12:30, 3, 5:30, 8:20, 10:15 p.m.**

- **Fri.-Sun., 10, 10:20, 10:50, 11:25 a.m., 12:50, 1:20, 2, 3, 3:30, 4:10, 5, 6:30, 7:15, 8, 9, 10:15 p.m.; Thurs., 11 a.m., 12:30, 1:05, 2, 3, 3:30, 4:10, 5, 7:15, 8, 10:15 p.m.**

- **11 a.m., 1:45, 4:30, 7:15, 9:55 p.m.**

- **Lion 11, L: 4, 4:30, 7:15, 9:55 p.m.**

- **Manchester by the Sea**

- **CINEMAS 20**

- **The Metropolitan Opera: L’Amour de Loin**

- **VISTA**

- **LA LEAGSIDE**

### Downtown, S. Los Angeles

- **DOWNTOWN INDEPENDENT**

  - **2:25, 4:15, 7, 9:45 p.m.; Fri.-Mon., 11:55 a.m., 2:35, 5:25, 8:20 p.m., 12:05 a.m.**

  - **5:05, 7:20, 9:15 p.m.**

  - **Fri.-Mon., 9:50 a.m., 12:30, 3, 5:30, 8:20, 10:15 p.m.**

- **NEW MALIBU THEATER**

  - **No Texting**

- **AMC SANTA MONICA 7**

- **SANTA MONICA, MALIBU**

### Pacific Coast

- **PACIFIC CULTURAL VILLAGE 12**

  - **Cinemas 12**

  - **No Texting**

### Beaches

- **BEACHES**

  - **Santa Monica, Malibu**

  - **AMC SANTA MONICA 7**

  - **3130 Third Street Promenade (310) 396-3030

  - **Sing 2**

  - **No Texting**

  - **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story 3D**

  - **5:30, 8:30 p.m.; Mon., 11:25 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 10 p.m.**

  - **No Texting**

### Other Locations

- **ARCADE**

- **LAEMMLE’S AHRYA FINE ARTS THEATRE**

  - **9300 Wilshire Boulevard**

  - **Royal Shakespeare Company: King Lear**

- **SUMICE SUNSET CINEMA 8000**

- **WEST HOLLYWOOD, CEDAR GROVE**

- **ARCADE)**

- **LAEMMLE’S MUSICAL HALL 3**: (213) 686-1069

- **AMC CENTURY CITY 15**: (310) 888-AMC (262)

- **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story**

- **Sing 3D**

- **AMC SANTA MONICA 7**

- **AMC WESTWOOD 7**

- **CREEK ROAD**: (310) 456-6990

### Schedules are subject to change; please call ahead to confirm showtimes. See Film & Video Events for other programs.
ABSTRACT HEART
Bisexual rapper-singer Kevin Abstract wants to “speak for people who can’t speak” on his emotive new album, American Boyfriend

BY ARTEMIS THOMAS-HANSARD

I n the minutes leading up to his Nov. 12 performance at Camp Flog Gnaw, the Tyler, the Creator–curated music festival and carnival at Exposition Park, Kevin Abstract stands in a black hoodie, checkered shorts, a headband, prescription glasses and mismatched shoes, his face contemplative beneath his curly, rose-tinted hair. With the slightest smile, he flashes me a peace sign. I ask him if he’s nervous. He says yes.

Just outside his private world of anxiety, Abstract’s friends buzz and mingle around him backstage. Most are members of his hip-hop collective, Brockhampton, a self-described “boy band” he helped assemble online while living in his hometown of Corpus Christi, Texas. Their debut album, All-American Trash, is among the most underappreciated independent hip-hop records to come out this year.

Some female friends of the all-male group are dressed as cheerleaders in their Nov. 12 performance at Camp Flog Gnaw. The lat-

“The more I do this, the easier it is for someone who’s struggling.”

invited to play a festival put on by one of his heroes. “All these black superheroes that I grew up with … they spoke up, and then it allowed me to have this interview with you, it allowed me to perform here.” I’m just thankful for that. And that’s why it’s such a big issue for me to make sure my music is getting out to people who need it right now.”

Lyrical, American Boyfriend touches on topics ranging from drugs, depression and broken homes to love, insecurity and the current state of the world. On album opener “Empty,” Abstract lists off the things he hates about himself and the various places he can’t seem to quite fit in. On closing track “Echo,” he eulogizes himself as a bad son, helplessly watching the mistakes of his past unfold. The format of the album — its initial self-loathing expanding outward to the world around him, then retreating back to internal anguish — follows the same circular format as many of Abstract’s favorite coming-of-age films, such as Palo Alto and American Honey. The latter film’s story reminds him of Brockhampton’s journey from Texas to South Central L.A. this year.

“The film is about this group of kids who are driving around the U.S. and selling magazines — the most random thing — but it’s a passion, a weird passion,” he says. “But it’s also because they had no other way out, really.”

For Abstract, music is “way out.” His art is freedom from a judgmental world and the confusions of youth. “It comes from just dealing with sexuality, identity and trying to figure out who you are at a young age, when a lot of people that are supposed to be in your corner and backing you are telling you that’s not the way to go.”

Kevin Abstract is no longer the teenager he was when he began working on American Boyfriend, but he plans to continue writing from the perspective of that part of his life. “You don’t stop feeling like this once you reach a certain age, you know?” he says. “Those memories are always there, and it just kind of keeps going.”

Abstract’s ability to put poetic words and beautiful music to those emotions is what makes him a gifted artist. His ability to do it in a way that makes people think is what gives him the potential to be a voice for his generation. “Someone told me earlier, when people are watching my set, half the time they’re [lost in thought], because they’ve never seen anything like it,” he says. And it’s true: Those in the crowd at his Flog Gnaw set not singing along to his every word are staring up at Abstract and the choir of friends with mouths agape, trying to piece together the image of an upside-down flag with the words flashing on the screen behind him: “Helmet Boy” — Abstract’s Twitter handle — “is nervous … Helmet Boy is anxious … Helmet Boy is scary.”

“I’d rather you think about it for a little while, rather than just put it in a box,” he says. “No matter how long it takes for this to catch on, it’s something that happened and it exists. And it makes me — I don’t want to say comfortable, but it makes me a little bit more comfortable about my art. Not my position [in the world] but just my art.”
TRUMP HAPPENS

I am backstage at Largo. I will be onstage in a couple of hours, the second night in a run of eight shows here.

On my way to the venue, I listened to the president-elect make his “thank you” speech in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The crowd-pleasing mountain of opaque promises drew massive applause. As I listened, I made a list of things he said would happen and tried to make the numbers work. He said that branches of the military will be getting new equipment, because apparently the military is “depleted.”

This was what he said about all the new gear: “[W]e’re gonna have to have the finest equipment in the world. It’s gonna be new. it’s gonna be modern, it’s gonna be clean, it’s gonna be the best. That’s what we’re gonna have.” What else are we going to have? A president who says “gonna.”

With an increase of spending for an overhauled military, tax cuts for those who have a lot of money already and a promise to rebuild America’s infrastructure, I wonder if Trump is cheerleading from the land of magical thinking.

The PEOTUS fed red, white and blue meat to the rabid faithful: “We love our flag, right? We love our flag and we don’t like it when we see people ripping up our flag and burning our flag. We don’t like it, and we’ll see what we’re gonna do about that, OK?” Meanwhile, as I was transcribing this off of the internet, the feed on the right side of the screen was filling with posts: “kick all the monkey flies out of this man’s mouth as if it’s trying to escape, there is no way Trump will get anyone to fall into the adulation of those devoted enough to stuff themselves into some arena to witness his massive majesty.

Those who tout the “not my president” line need to wake up. This is your soon-to-be-president, and this is your country.

I have been thinking a lot about the line that has been said millions of times now, “Make America great again.” Several months ago, when I first heard it, it occurred to me that the better statement would have been “Make America great,” allowing everyone to pitch in. Making it great again implies that someone took the greatness, making Trump’s campaign slogan accusatory, something that could be aimed and fired, something that could be used to cut and slash.

Finding someone to blame would be no problem. You start with President Obama and Hillary Clinton, and go from there to the media (biased), the voting system (rigged, with millions of illegal people voting for Clinton), to almost anyone or anything else, and it’s fine.

Of Trump’s baby-man Twitter fails, House Speaker Paul Ryan stated on 60 Minutes, “Who cares what he tweeted, you know, on some Thursday night, if we fix this country’s big problems?” Cool! So, what the president says doesn’t matter, and by that am I to infer that I don’t have to care about what Ryan says, either? Noted.

The controlling elite of white America was perhaps at its most free and unfettered in the times of slavery. The land, people and livestock they purchased and owned were theirs, fair and square. After 1865, things got tricky and far more compromised when equality started to intrude upon this otherwise brutal utopia, where everyone knew their place.

From then to now, businesses big and small have been at odds with the American worker. If a corporation can’t make a slave out of you here, it simply goes somewhere else. It is a form of slavery, far enough away from America’s shores to hide the stench, that makes many of the products that fill shopping malls and grocery stores.

I wonder if this is what the president-elect is talking about when he promises this return to greatness. It sounds as if you have to be either wealthy or in the military to get any benefits from his unplanned plans. What will happen to millions of other Americans? We’ll all just have to bide our time to find out.

THOSE WHO TOUT THE “NOT MY PRESIDENT” LINE NEED TO WAKE UP.

I think the prez-to-be has figured out that he doesn’t want to, nor can he be, all that presidential, so he is doing what millions of us do every day — he’s being himself. Instead of reading security briefings and taking crash courses in U.S. Government 101, he’s making speeches that are not unlike his campaign blather, full of yuge promises and not a single bit of hard information as to how he’s going to get ‘er done.

All of his campaign rhetoric was at times funny, when it wasn’t pathetic, badly aimed and poorly executed. Alec Baldwin’s impersonation of him was good to the point of being depressing, but all that’s behind us now and everything is turning very serious, very quickly.

Listening to Trump earlier, it was painfully obvious that he hasn’t any idea of what he’s doing and is hiding in the adulation of those devoted enough to stuff themselves into some arena to witness his massive majesty. You can call it what you want, but it’s denial.

With the sheer tonnage of crap that fairly flies out of this man’s mouth as if it’s trying to escape, there is no way Trump will get anyone who didn’t like him previously to change their minds. A speech like this one in Fayetteville makes that completely impossible. Those who side with him will no doubt stand their ground and dig themselves in deeper. They have come too far to turn back now.

I am not all that surprised that Trump won the election and even less surprised that Clinton won the popular vote by so many. What may be the least surprising is how bad things could very well get.
### COMING SOON:

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### COMING SOON: 2017 NYE EVENTS

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**UNION EVENTS**

- **FRI. DECEMBER 16**
  - HEAVY DUB FT. THE OTHERS, KRIMER
  - AFROBEAT END OF THE YEAR PARTY

- **SAT. DECEMBER 17**
  - GLOW’D UP: LA EDITION
  - XCELLERATED: HOLIDAY TOY DRIVE FT. TAXMAN

- **WED. DECEMBER 21**
  - STATE // CAPITALS, ANSON LJ, RIDE THE WAVE
  - DJ MODERN ROMANCE CHRISTMAS / BIRTHDAY / DJ RETIREMENT PARTY

- **SUN. DECEMBER 18**
  - GHOST NOISE

**Los Globos Events**

- **FRI. DECEMBER 16**
  - UNDERGROUND RISING FT. MEDUSA THE GANGSTA GODDESS

- **SAT. DECEMBER 17**
  - TEMPLE OF CHAOS 2016 FINALE

- **SUN. DECEMBER 18**
  - HOUSE PARTY LA DEATH TRAP, GIANNI LEE, DJ SUGA SHAY & DJ TIGER

- **WED. DECEMBER 21**
  - CIERRA RAMIREZ

**I HEART COMIX PRESENTS: L.A. GIVES BACK**

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January 14, 2017

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UNLESS WE DEVELOP SOME *Men in Black* technology to blissfully erase it from memory, 2016 will limp to the finish as one of the bleaker years in recorded history. It’s safe to say that the only true victors of the last 12 months were Anderson .Paak, YG and Gucci Mane. And even then, the Atlanta trap pioneer was locked up for half of it.

G Perico, Kadhja Bonet and Cam & China dropped some of the best official debuts of the decade. Local underground heroes DJ Dodger Stadium somehow wound up being the hidden soul of Kanye’s *The Life of Pablo*. And if nothing else, we’ll always have “Fuck Donald Trump” to scream while speeding on the freeway, protesting or staring Stuart Trump—like in the mirror— as a minor victory amidst madness.

Smalley–like in the mirror— a minor victory amidst madness.

If there’s a drought here Gangsta rap can’t die Except a South Central G

Except a South Central G

Like Too $hort meets Quik

An L.A. native, Jeff Weiss edits *Passion* and hosts the Bizarre Ride show on RBMA Radio. Follow him on Twitter @passionweiss.
The Dandy Warhols
@ THE FONDA THEATRE

Distortland, the ninth studio album from The Dandy Warhols, lives up to its name. It opens with “Search Party,” a nod back to ‘90s shoegaze, with vocals as incomprehensible and soothing as the windy hum of a seashell. The songs build gradually into something more conventionally pop, coming to a peak seven tracks in with lead single “You Are Killing Me,” where the crunch of guitars adds an upbeat bounce to lyrics that mix blame with self-deprecation. Later on, they sooth back into psychdelia with the blissful “Doves.” Twenty-two years into their existence, the Portland, Oregon–based band retain that mix of indie rock and psychdelia that won them a cult following in the first place. Telegram and Warbly Jets open.

—Liz Ohanesian

Nudist Priest
@ TERAGRAM BALLROOM

If you’re going to be in a tribute band these days, you’ve got to have a good gimmick. Dread Zeppelin were likely one of the best groups to move beyond slavish mimicry of others’ music with their reggae versions of Led Zeppelin oldies sung by an Elvis impersonator. More recently, Mac Sabbath have stood out from the endless legions of Black Sabbath wannabes by dressing up those ancient Geezer Butler ditties with sarcastic new lyrics and McDonald’s costumes. Appearing tonight in the flesh (literally) for the first time in nine years, local revisionists Nudist Priest make the pun in their name real by stripping naked to perform Judas Priest covers. It’s not clear what the real Rob Halford would think of these less-than-sculpted bodies, but Golden Rulers singer-guitarist John Ramirez plays it straight with deadpan savagery.

—Falling James

Tribute to Leonard Cohen
@ COFFEE GALLERY BACKSTAGE

For Southern California and the world at large, the next year promises to be appropriately abundant with various tributes to singer-songwriter-poet Leonard Cohen. A variety of factors makes this show special, including the participation of Cohen’s collaborators, and the embracing, homespun setting of the Coffee Gallery Backstage in Altadena. Participants include musician-journalist Paul Zollo, credited by Cohen with doing “one of the best interviews with me ever,” and Sarah Kramer, whom Cohen affectionately referred to as “my trumpet player.” Also on hand will be Valley-area music fixtures Chad Watson and Pam Loe, whose recent gigs include singing backup vocals for a performing lineup of Leonard Cohen. The show will benefit the Mount Baldy Zen Center, where Cohen lived and practiced for years.

—Jackson Truax

Power of the Riff Festival
@ THE REGENCY THEATER

After a two-year hiatus, this celebration of all riffs heavy returns for a two-day takeover that will test the structural integrity of the Regent Theater. Saturday will feature the Northwest black-metal collective Wolves in the Throne Room, whose preference for minimal stage lighting will ensure that the audience’s focus remains solely on the riff. Other highlights that evening include a rare L.A. appearance from East Coast death-metal legends Incantation, and Midwest instrumental post-metallers Pelican will prove harsh vocals are not needed to overwhelm ears with musical heaviness. Sunday headliners Neurosis bolstered their reputation for apocalyptic doom-metal soundscapes with their latest record, Fires Within Fires. Other sources of sonic discord are Oxnard nihilist hardcore greats Nails — whose latest, You Will Never Be One of Us, is on many metal bloggers’ year-end lists — and the punk-rock chaos of L.A.’s own Obliterations. Also Sunday, Dec. 18. —Jason Roche

Big Daddy Kane @ LOS GLOBOS

Big Daddy Kane is one of the most influential MCs in rap history. His decisive, coolly assured “rhymes of strength and power” have drawn the praise of acolytes from East (Kool Moe Dee) to West (Ice-T). Since coming out of Brooklyn in the mid-1980s, the former Anthony Hardy helped Jay Z refine his vision and has collaborated with Public Enemy, Tupac Shakur, Patti LaBelle, Ice Cube and Quincy Jones. “I’m the authentic poet to get lyrical/For you to beat me, it’s gonna take a miracle,” he declared accurately enough on the 1988 single “Ain’t No Half-Steppin’.” As Big Daddy Kane announced a year later on “Smooth Operator,” he is “for real, shooting lyrics like a harpoon.” He hasn’t released a full album since 1998’s Veteranz Day, although he did appear earlier this year in the film Exposed.

—Falling James

A Positive Spin
@ THE ROXY

It’s always great to see artists and musicians dedicate some time to a charity or nonprofit they really care about, especially when it’s a group of producers and DJs from the world of dance music, a genre often maligned as purely hedonistic. This event’s big lineup of diverse DJs and producers, including house and EDM stars AC Slater, Mat Zo and Nadastrom, genre-shifter MachineDrum and Chicago footwork representatives Taso, is a benefit for Inner City Arts, an arts education nonprofit on Skid Row, which does great work providing arts education and workshops to underprivileged L.A. youth. Not only is it a great cause, it’s also a great excuse to go out and dance on a Sunday night.

—Sam Ribakoff
Serotonin
@ BLUE WHALE

Sure, bluewhale is ground zero for cutting-edge jazz, but if you’re not paying attention, you might not have noticed the surreptitious increase of other kinds of creative original music happening there. Composer Ted Case, in point, cites songwriters Margaret Glaspy, Emily King and Blake Mills as influences for his band, Serotonin. “The purpose of this project was to feel the joy of writing music for these musicians [in the band], and serotonin is the neurotransmitter associated with joy,” says Case, who, puzzlingly chose that name over “Massages, Chocolate & Instagram Kittens.” Serotonin’s piano-driven grooves are anchored by two standout singers, Amber Navran and Michael Mayo, the latter of whom is without a doubt the best young male jazz singer in Los Angeles. Their honeyed voices will make you forget all about that little bottle of Zoloft in your glove compartment.
—Gary Fukushima

**wed 12/21**

The Bomb, Stars at Night
@ THE ECHO

Rachel Fannan has a powerful set of lungs, which comes in handy when the former Sleepy Sun vocalist is howling over the loud waves of sound cranked out by such musical partners as Mike Watt and The Mars Volta’s Cedric Bixler-Zavala. With her latest project, The Bomb, Fannan wails like a wraith over her own grungy guitar chords, backed by a no-nonsense power trio on the upcoming EP Everybody’s Famous. East L.A. quartet Stars at Night are another band with a heavy guitar sound, although tracks like “Your Destiny” are more punk, as lead singer Irene Quiles chants her fiery proclamations like Bikini Kill-era Kathleen Hanna. At other times, guitarist Seleste Diaz combines her Black Sabbath–style riffage with bassist Elizabeth Banuelos and drummer Joana Rubio’s fast tempos to bracing effect.
—Falling James

**thu 12/22**

Arturo Sandoval Big Band
@ WALT DISNEY CONCERT HALL

So much holiday music is full of empty calories — cheery, yes, but often blandly sentimental and lightened with sugary melodies that are more vanilla than soulful. But renowned trumpeter Arturo Sandoval decks Disney Hall tonight with his Swinging Christmas show, in which he pumps up such standards as “Jingle Bells” with percussive flair and brassy arrangements. The Cuban-born maestro and multi-Grammy winner knows how to make even the corniest tune swing, especially when he feeds his nimble big band and uncorks wild squeals of ear-piercing high notes on his horn. Before defecting to the United States in the 1990s, Sandoval was championed and inspired by his hero Dizzy Gillespie, who not only showed his fellow trumpeter a path out of Cuba but also paved the way musically with his own vibrant and rhythmic expressiveness.
—Falling James
ACEROGAMI: 228 W. Second St., Pomona. Sedtile, Second Still, Unblloom, Fri., Dec. 16, 10 p.m., $5.


BACKSTAGE BAR & GRILL: 10400 Culver Blvd., Culver City. King Chris & the Groove Thang, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., free.


BOARDER’S: 1565 N. Cherokee Ave., Los Angeles. Anthony Jones, Monica Richards, Sat., Dec. 17, 10 p.m., $30-$60.


CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF ABNORMAL ARTS (C.I.A.): 11334 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. Circus Secrets, with The Zulu All Quartet, AtomNuke, EroV3o, Nat the Lioness, Alyssa Bishop plus sideshow performers, Fri., Dec. 16, 8:30 p.m., $10. Marquis & the Rhythm Howlers, the Cosmic Jetties, The Rhythm Coffin, Gatto da Morte, RIP the Undertaker, Sat., Dec. 17, 8 p.m., TBA.

CANYON CLUB: 29912 Riverside Drive, Agoura Hills, Berlin, Fri., Dec. 16, 9 p.m., $24-$38. Smash Mouth, Sat., Dec. 17, 9 p.m., $28-$38.

CLIFTON’S CAFETERIA: 648 S. Broadway, LA. Benefit for Midnight Mission, Sun., Dec. 18, 1-4 p.m., TBA.

CODY’S VIVA CANTINA: 900 Riverside Drive, Burbank. The Woody James Big Band, Fridays, 1-3 p.m., free; Lovel Dove, D’Animal, PANDA, King Cotton, Aggravation, Fri., Dec. 16, 7 p.m., free. 3 Balls of Fire, free; LoveyDove, D’Animal, PANDA, King Cotton, Free Aggression, The Generators, Pesklik, Let Rage, Abactive Ramen, Fri., Dec. 16, 7:30-9:30 p.m., $10. Nate Cole, D’Wing, Misch James, Sat., Dec. 17, 12-2 a.m., free. Matt Mayhall, MAST, INGA, Sun., Dec. 18, 8 p.m., $10. (See Music Pick.) Facial, Fakers, QuinQ, Tue., Dec. 20, 8 p.m., free. NELA Winter Shelter for the Homeless Benefit, Wed., Dec. 21, 8 p.m., $5. Stand With Standing Rock Benefit, Thu., Dec. 22, 8 p.m., TBA.


THE KIBBITZ ROOM: 419 N. Fairfax Ave., Los Angeles. Spookee Ruben, Sundays, 3 p.m., free. The Fockrs, Tuesdays, 9 p.m., free.


THE LOVE SONG: 450 S. Main St., Los Angeles. Spain, Tuesdays, 8:30 p.m., free. Thu. Dec. 27, free.

MAL’S BAR: 2331 S. Hill St., Los Angeles. Go Betty Go, Sat., Dec. 17, 9 p.m., $5.


THE TROUBADOUR:

THE TERAGRAM BALLROOM:

SWING HOUSE:

SOL VENUE:

SASSAFRAS SALOON:

SAINT ROCKE:

THE ROSE:

THE REDWOOD BAR & GRILL:

POP OBSCURE RECORDS:

THE PIKE BAR & FISH GRILL:

PALADINO'S:

OYSTER HOUSE SALOON:

MRS. FISH:

Audra Mae, Mon., Dec. 19, 9 p.m., free. Club Foxes,


PAPA & HARRIET'S PIONEERTOWN PALACE:

LAS HADAS:

HARVELLE'S SANTA MONICA:

CULVER HOTEL:

BLUEWHALE:

ARCADIA BLUES CLUB:

WHISKY A GO-GO:

THE VIPER ROOM:

VAMPIRE LOUNGE & TASTING ROOM:

JAZZ & BLUES

ARCADIA BLUES CLUB: 16 E. Huntington Drive, Arcadia. Teddy Lee Hooker, Downtown Rulers, Bobby Bluehouse.

LA WEEKLY

12122 Kagel Canyon Dr., Granada Hills. The Brothers Bobby Bluehouse, Sat., Dec. 17, 8 p.m., $25.


BURBANK MOOSE LODGE: 1001 W. Burbank Blvd., Burbank. Pete Anderson, Mondays, 8 p.m., free.

CATAINA BAR & GRILL: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. The Mike Stern Quartet, Fri., Dec. 16, 8:30 p.m., Sat., Dec. 17, 8:30 & 10:30 p.m.; Sun., Dec. 18, 7:30 & 9:30 p.m.; Mon., Dec. 19, 9 p.m.; Wed., Dec. 21, 7:30 p.m., $5-$15.

COLOMBOS: 13383 Colorado Blvd., Eagle Rock. Steve Thompson, Fridays, 5:30-9 p.m., free. The Eric Ekstrand Trio, Mondays, 4:30 p.m., free. Tom Armbuster, Tuesdays, 9:30 p.m., free. Karen Hernandez & Jimmy Spencer, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., free. Trinfecta, Thursdays, 7 p.m., free.

CULVER HOTEL: 1400 Culver Blvd., Culver City, Strangerons on a Saturday Night, Wednesdays, 7:30 p.m., free.

DESERT ROSE: 1700 Hillhurst Ave., Los Angeles. John Atman, Jon Mayer & Jeff Takiguchi, Sat., Dec. 17, 7 p.m., free; The Mark Z. Stevens Trio, Saturdays, 7-11 p.m., free.

THE DRESDEN: 1760 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. The Readyys, Sundays, 9 p.m., midnight, free. Marty & Elayne, Tuesdays-Saturdays, 9 p.m., free.

GRIFFINS OF KINSALE: 1007 Mission St., South Pasadena. Barry "Big B" Brenner, Thursdays, 8 p.m., free.


HARVELLE'S LONG BEACH: 201 E. Broadway, Long Beach. Alonzo Music, Fri., Dec. 16, 9 p.m., $10. The Big Rig Doll House, Sat., Dec. 17, 8 p.m., $10. The Rockers' Bar & Grill, 12122 Kagg Canyon Road, Sylmar. The Sufle Brothers Blues Jam, Sundays, 4-8 p.m., free.

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SUNFLOWER: 1259 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Flamenco Dinner Show, Fridays, 7:30 p.m.; Sundays, 6 p.m., $20 & $35.

EL FLORIDITA: 1259 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Flamenco Dinner Show, Fridays, 7:30 p.m.; Sundays, 6 p.m., $20 & $35.

THE CHANCELLOR HOUSE: 2135 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles. The Tujunga Social Club Orchestra, Mondays, 7:30 p.m., free. THE GRAND: 2135 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles. The Tujunga Social Club Orchestra, Mondays, 7:30 p.m., free.

RIVERSCOURS: 2135 S. La Brea Ave., Los Angeles. The Tujunga Social Club Orchestra, Mondays, 7:30 p.m., free.
SATURDAY, DEC. 18

Megan Hilty: With The Word Alive, Assuming We Survive, Capsize, 8:30 p.m., $25. The Observatory, 3553 S. Broadway, Los Angeles.

Black Tiger Sex Machine, Kaki Wachi, Ript: 9 p.m., $17.50-$45. The Rey Theatre, 5515 W. Willow St., Long Beach.

Bryan SETZMANN, THE BELLFURIES: 8 p.m., $40-$109.50. Microsoft Theater, 777 Chick Hearn Court, Los Angeles.


Christmas Queens: 8 p.m. The Novo by Microsoft, 800 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles. See GoLA.

Cousin Stizz: 11 p.m. The Observatory, 3553 S. Broadway, Los Angeles.

Ekali: 11 p.m. The Observatory, 3503 S. Broadway, Los Angeles.

Gold: 7 p.m. The Observatory, 3503 S. Broadway, Los Angeles.

Jenny Whiteside

THURSDAY, DEC. 22

The Arturo Sandoval Big Band: 8 p.m., $37-$59. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 301 N. Grand Ave., Los Angeles. See GoLA.

Gucci Mane: 8 p.m., $55. The Observatory, 3553 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

The Klematics: 8 p.m., $59 & up. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Dr., Costa Mesa.

Kodaline Black: 8:30 p.m., $29.50. The Novo by Microsoft, 800 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles.


Jenny Whiteside

CLASSICAL & NEW MUSIC

ALMANOVA: The flute-guitar duo is accompanied by tenor Abrahim Pollakoff on holiday tunes by Piazzolla, Leoncavallo, and other virtuosos. Almer Imasonvic, Sun., Dec. 17, 8 p.m., $20. Sierra Madre Playhouse, 87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd., Sierra Madre.

Andreas Chorale: John Sutton conducts a singalong-concert solo, Sat., Dec. 17, 11:30 a.m. & 2:30 p.m., $15-$35. TBA, Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

Aulos Ensemble: soprano Juliane Baird visits the early music specialists for “A Baroque Christmas” in the ornate Pompeian Room, Fri., Dec. 16, 8 p.m., $50 & $80. Doheny Mansion, 10 Chester Place, Los Angeles.

Christmas Festival: The group performs a holiday program, Tue., Dec. 20, 8 p.m., TBA. Wallace Company, 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

Christmas Joy Concert: Sat., Dec. 17, 4 p.m., free. First United Methodist Church of Pasadena, 500 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena.

Claremont Symphony Orchestra: Robert Sage leads the audience in a sing-along version of George Frideric Handel’s Messiah, Sun., Dec. 17, 8 p.m., $15 & $20. Pomona College, Bridges Hall of Music, College Ave., Fourth St., Claremont.

The Dilijan Chamber Music Concert: Sun., Dec. 18, 3 p.m., free. The College of St. John of theDrivers, School of Music, Zipper Concert Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

Gay Men’s Chorus of Los Angeles: Cheyenne Jackson drops by for the choir’s Cool Yule holiday show, Sat., Dec. 17, 8 p.m.; Dec. 17-18, 2 p.m. & 4 p.m., free. Pomona College, Bridges Hall of Music, College Ave., Fourth St., Claremont.

Handel’s Messiah: The concert features vocalists Katrina Selby, mezzo-soprano Ann Hallenberg, tenor Allan Clayton and tenor Jon Lee Keenan are backed by the chamber ensemble and augmented by choreographer Grety Gryzswana’s dancers for an introspective version of Handel’s Messiah, Fri., Dec. 16, 8 p.m., $50. Westerbeck Hall, Pasaden County College, 1570 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena.


Jocelyn Suzuki: The local violinist unchains Paul Hindemith’s Sonate No. 2 and is accompanied by clarinetist James Sullivan and cellist Derek Stein on Ingo Dahls Concerto a Tre, Wed., Dec. 21, noon, free. Glendale Central Adventist Church, 610 E. California Ave., Los Angeles.

The Kaleidoscope Trio: The group performs holiday music, Sat., Dec. 17, 6:30 p.m., free. Brand Library & Art Center, 1601 W. Mountain St., Glendale.

L.A. Master Chorale: Grant Gershon conducts a sing-along version of Handel’s perennial Messiah, Sun., Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m., $29 & up. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

L.A. Philharmonic: Bernard Labadie conducts Handel’s reverent homage Messiah, which features soprano Karin Mushegain and tenor Jon Lee Keenan as soloists, Sat., Dec. 17, 8 p.m. at the Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica.

New Year’s Eve: The Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica. See Music Pick.

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The Long Beach Camera Singers: the choir exudes Christmas tunes and other seasonal music, Sat., Dec. 17, 3 p.m., $40. Los Altos United Methodist Church, 5950 E. Willow St., Long Beach.

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Leslie Leighton presents the world premiere of a new chamber opera for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa.

MUSICA ANGELICA: Sat., Dec. 17, 7 p.m., $40-$50. Center Theater, 300 E. Ocean Blvd., Long Beach Convention & Entertainment Center, Long Beach. Music director Martin Haselböck hands down two oratorios, and a cantata and other Christmas music by Bach, Sun., Dec. 18, 7:30 p.m., TBA. The Colburn School of Music, Zipper Concert Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., Los Angeles.

The National Children’s Chorus: Sun., Dec. 18, 11 a.m., $7 & $9. Segerstrom Center for the Arts, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa.

PACIFIC CHORALE: The chorus is joined by members of Pacific Symphony and the Southern California Children’s Chorus for a program of Christmas music, Sun., Dec. 18, 3 p.m., $20 & $25. The Ahmanson, 1350 W. 1st St., Los Angeles.

The National Children’s Chorus: Sun., Dec. 18, 2 & 4 p.m., $35-$59. Schonenberg Hall, UCL, 445 Charles E. Young Dr., Room 1100, Los Angeles.

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