OFF THE ROAD

How the music industry uses a pervasive secret weapon to keep bands from freely touring

by Katie Bain
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FIELD OF NEGLECT

Critics say a Beverly Hills developer has held 3 acres of South L.A. “hostage”

By Jason McGahan

No other part of L.A. burned hotter during the 1992 riots than the commercial district near Vermont and Manchester. A Korean-owned swap meet at 84th and Vermont was among the first structures to go up in flames after a jury acquitted four LAPD officers of beating Rodney King. By the end of the violence, every business on the east side of that stretch of Vermont had been burned to the ground — and those on the west side didn’t fare much better. In all, 22 buildings in the Vermont and those on the west side didn’t fare much better. In all, 22 buildings in the Vermont district were gutted.

Historically, the stretch of Vermont Avenue between 83rd and Manchester Boulevard was one of L.A. County’s major commercial corridors. During its golden age, in the middle of last century, the area was home to dressmakers, hatters, tailors and shoestores. But it was twice burned by riots — in ’65 and ’92 — and for the past 25 years redevelopment has been stymied.

Basic amenities like fresh food, chain retail shops or a sit-down restaurant necessitate a trek outside the neighborhood.

Councilman Harris-Dawson says that when he took office in July 2015, there were homeless encampments on the lot at 84th and Vermont, that schoolchildren were playing inside the vacant Payless Shoes Sasson owned at Manchester and Vermont, and that one group of homeless people had broken into a vacant office and retail complex at 84th and Vermont.

“There were a couple dozen homeless people living in those buildings,” Harris-Dawson claims. “They had jack-wired some electricity. So the reason it’s boarded up now is because, again, we had to cite Mr. Sasson for the conditions of that building.”

The city has issued citations to Sasson from the fire department, Building & Safety and the Department of Water & Power.

Dueñas says Sassony got another citation from the city last week. “We cleaned up the weeds, cleaned up the trash, got rid of homeless population again, cleaned up the graffiti,” she says. “You can’t prevent it. Even if you’re going to board everything up, they’re going to keep entering.”

Sasson has demolished the building that housed the Payless Shoes, and he had the office and retail complex at 85th Street vacated — signs the developer is proceeding in good faith, Dueñas says. She says Sassony is reaching out to Harris-Dawson for support in renewing a lapsed permit.

Critics of Sasson’s say they have heard it all before. “I’ve been here 20 years in June, and he’s been showing this [plan] for 20 years,” says Aurea Montes-Rodriguez, executive vice president of Community Coalition of South L.A. “He’s a land prospector waiting for gentrification to hit this area so that he can make a lot of money.”

It is rare to see a clear stretch of commercially zoned property of this size in South L.A., where most of the commercial plots are small and individually owned — and where the process of assembling them can be painstaking and expensive.

Neighborhood advocates say Sasson’s vacant land has the potential to transform the neighborhood. The rarity of parcels that big in South L.A. has generated interest from investors.

Harris-Dawson says lack of interest from investors is not the issue. “Business interests call me on a routine basis saying can you help us get to the owner of that lot, because we’d love to do a movie theater, we’d love to do a drug store. And we just can’t ever make any headway.”

Field office of City Councilman Marqueece Harris-Dawson. The councilman calls the land a blight on the neighborhood.

“It’s dragging down the quality of life and property value and overall well-being of the community, holding those three acres hostage for this long,” Harris-Dawson says. “I keep trying in every possible way to impress upon Mr. Sasson how devastating it is to our community to have that parcel sitting there the way it is a full 25 years after the civil unrest.”

Sasson was unavailable to comment for this story.

Sasson’s Sassony Commercial Real Estate has periodically released renderings of proposed developments for the site. The most recent drawings were unveiled at a groundbreaking ceremony held by Sasson and then-Councilman Bernard Parks on the 23rd anniversary of the riots in 2015. Parks was widely quoted at the time remarking on how the neighborhood had “10 times more groundbreakings than ribbon cuttings.”

The rendering showed a Disney-like development on the site called Vermont Entertainment Village, a retail shopping and entertainment complex with a colossal atrium and banquet hall. It’s a far cry from the dreary blocks of stucco storefronts with tenants like 24-hour pawn shops, rehab centers, churches, money marts and an anger management center.

Two years have passed since the groundbreaking, and many job-hungry residents of the neighborhood remain as puzzled as ever about the fate of the project.

“They need to put a laundromat here,” says Wanda Dilworth, 58, a resident walking by the rusty perimeter fence at the edge of the vacant lot. Dilworth says she has to carry her laundry five blocks to the nearest laundromat at 79th and Vermont. Raymont Gardener, 58, seated beside the vacant lot at a pop-up tent, signing up other part of L.A.

The vacant lot at a pop-up tent, signing up passersby for free government cellphones, says the most activity he’s seen on the lot was a Bobcat clearing litter last week.

Jennifer M. Dueñas, chief operations officer for Sassony Commercial Real Estate Development, says the timing of the groundbreaking was premature, and that the construction delays are related to a legal dispute with the Community Redevelopment Agency of L.A. over the sale of three parcels within the area of the proposed development. “We’re still moving forward on this project,” Duenas says. “We haven’t owned [the land] for the past 30 years to not develop it.”

According to a 2008 story in the Los Angeles Times, Sasson lives in Beverly Hills, son’s South L.A. property is the district

The former site of the ABC Swap Meet on the 8400 block of Vermont Avenue in South L.A.

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In February, one of the most popular DJs in the scene played a set in downtown Los Angeles. While this artist sold out several dates in L.A. last fall, only a small percentage of his fans even knew the February show was happening, because his name wasn’t on the bill.

This wasn’t an oversight on the part of the promoter; it was a way for the artist to perform without breaking his contract with another (and more powerful) local promoter. The situation was a manifestation of one of live music industry’s most pervasive secret weapons: the radius clause.

A radius clause is a common component of the contracts artists sign when they agree to play a show, especially a major music festival. These clauses create restrictions on how long that artist must wait before and after that show to play in the same market, and how many miles outside of that market they must go to play another show within that time frame.

For example, a band may sign an L.A. festival set contract stipulating that they are not allowed to play within 150 miles of Los Angeles for two months before or after the event, which would prevent them from playing for four months in L.A., Palm Springs, San Diego and any other venue inside this geographic net. Mileage and time vary between promoters, with some particularly severe clauses extending hundreds of miles and a few covering entire regions of the United States. One Los Angeles–based festival stipulates that an artist is not even allowed to announce any other shows until the festival has sold out.

“The main reason is to protect the festival,” says a source familiar with festival talent acquisition at the corporate level, who would only comment on radius clauses on condition of anonymity. “Festivals are the biggest risk/reward venture you can possibly have in music. It’s huge volumes of money. If you win, you can win huge, but you can also lose huge.”

While radius clauses have long been standard, in the past few years promoters in Southern California and beyond have increased their scope as music festivals have become big business and a handful of corporations have taken primary control of the industry.

Radius clauses in Southern California function as they would in any other major U.S. market; the difference here is the number of major festivals taking place.
As we tried to book bigger artists and more bands as opposed to DJs, it was challenging because they were all playing the bigger festivals, who would block them from playing other fests.

—Jesse Flemming, Co-founder of the Do Lab, which puts on Lightning in a Bottle

Out talent and, in some cases, making it nearly impossible that other promoters book them. Last year, for example, LCD Soundsystem announced a reunion tour that included headlining sets at Coachella, FYF and Panorama, all festivals operated by AEG Live/Goldenvoice. The band later added shows at Pomona’s Fox Theater and Colorado’s AEG-operated Red Rocks Amphitheater, effectively announcing their initial tour dates via a single promoter. (Appearances at the Live Nation–controlled Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza were later announced.)

While this system can homogenize lineups across the country, it also ensures festivals that fall within one another’s radiuses will offer a largely unique collection of artists. Of the more than 200 acts that played EDC Las Vegas in 2016, only five of them also played Coachella that year. There was no overlap between last year’s EDC and HARD Summer, which insiders say have competing radius clauses despite being controlled by the same parent company, Live Nation. (Insomniac declined to comment for this story, and HARD did not respond to requests for comment.)

Other lineup comparisons tell similar stories. Consolidation can benefit headlining acts, who are able to demand millions of dollars and top billing in return for exclusivity. But for smaller bands that depend on touring revenue, agreeing to a radius clause means being excluded from markets for long periods of time and grinding harder to make ends meet, in exchange for the slim hope that a day-time slot at a mega-festival might make them the next Arcade Fire or Daft Punk.

“Smaller to mid-tier acts are one of the toughest things, because they need to be able to tour and make money out on of lineup curation, the impact can be stifling.”

“In the early years we always had difficulty navigating radius clauses, and it didn’t necessarily force us to go in a certain direction, but it didn’t allow us to go in the directions we really wanted to,” says Jesse Flemming, a co-founder of the Do LaB, which puts on boutique festival Lightning in a Bottle. “As we tried to book bigger artists and more bands as opposed to DJs, it was challenging because they were all playing the bigger festivals, who would block them from playing other fests.”

Since launching Lightning in a Bottle in 2004, the Do LaB has cultivated a relationship with Goldenvoice. Do LaB began hosting its own stage at Coachella in 2005, which, along with the company’s overall growth, has helped smooth the booking process for LiB.

“Do we got bigger and built more relationships with artists and other fests, we were able to navigate through it all a bit more,” Flemming says, “although some promoters still won’t budge and allow you to book an artist, even if they’re sold out and we’re not really competing.”

As for the artists themselves, and agents who represent them, they are often willing to deal with particularly restrictive clauses in exchange for fat paychecks. But this creates a vicious cycle, as promoters argue that increasing artist fees necessitate ever-more restrictive clauses.

“We have to use radius clauses because the agents want so much fucking money at this point,” says the source in talent acquisition. “They’ve leveraged everyone against each other, and artists are getting paid astronomical amounts. Festival budgets have doubled and tripled. These artists sell a thousand tickets [at a club] and agents think they can get $20,000 to $50,000 for a festival instead of $10,000.”

Schneider emphasizes that artists and agents are never forced to sign anything they’re not comfortable with, and that promoters often offer radius-clause exceptions in exchange for a lowered fee or a less restrictive time slot. But while agents and deep-pocketed festivals work it out among themselves, independent venues often take the biggest hit.

“Radius clauses hurt all independent promoters and in the end the artist, because instead of marketing their name, they’re co-branding on a festival,” says Mitchell Frank, president of Spaceland Presents, which has been doing shows in L.A. since 1995.

Frank says his company, which runs the Echo, Echoplex and Regent Theater, has lost hundreds of bookings because of festival radius clauses. (All three of Spaceland’s main venues will host Coachella bands during Localchella this year. A representative for Frank and Spaceland declined to comment on how these shows were booked, but a source close to Spaceland confirmed that Goldenvoice sometimes allows artists to play non-Goldenvoice venues once Coachella is sold out.)

Even the city of Los Angeles itself has become competition. Frank says downtown’s Pershing Square has a six-figure budget for its free concert series, and that organizers have maintained a hard line against any plays during their radius clause.

“So the city of L.A. that I pay [tax money to] is competing for talent at excessive pricing,” Frank says. “But also, the city is now restricting local promoters’ purchases due to city radius clauses.”

While promoters are often left with their hands tied, for artists the solution is often to play under the radar. Secret sets, for which artists are unannounced until the day of the show or the moment they take the stage, have become increasingly common, particularly in the electronic world.

Los Angeles party promoter Space Yacht teases the names of secret guests by putting on their fliers the same number of question marks as there are characters in that artist’s name. In 2015, the manager for one of L.A.’s busiest rappers demanded the artist be cut out of the event’s recap video so fewer people would find out he had been there.

As acrimonious as the power dynamics between festivals and local promoters can sometimes be, the fiercest competition is between the festivals themselves. Most agents can list the distances between arbitrary cities off the top of their heads as they try to book their artists as many shows as possible, and a less attractive time slot. But while agents and promoters are not uncommon as companies scramble to curate the most innovative and exclusive lineups each season.

“Remember,” Schneider says, “people’s mortgages are on the line with these festivals.”
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#LABURGERS
 Josef Centeno’s P.Y.T. is L.A.’s best restaurant for vegetarian, vegan and vegetable-focused food

BY BESHA RODELL

When it comes to vegetables, Josef Centeno was ahead of his time. When most chefs were still building menus with boring salad offered as a grudging concession to the idea that not everything must be draped in lardo, Centeno was dedicating whole sections of his menus to bright and creative vegetable combinations.

When I originally read about Bäco Mercat, the first of Centeno’s growing family of restaurants downtown, I understood that I should be excited for the oxtail hash and the rest into P.Y.T. The restaurant isn’t in the former Pete’s Cafe space, which Centeno took over in 2014 and opened as Ledlow. Late last year, he cleaved that space in two, leaving the northern corner as P.Y.T. and the southern as Bäco Mercat.

The restaurant isn’t entirely vegetarian or vegan, although the majority of the food is meat-free. When considering Centeno’s other restaurants, I’ve struggled with the question: Why wouldn’t you just go to Bäco Mercat? That seems especially relevant here, given all of the above — the vegetable dishes at Bäco are some of the best in town.

This ethos makes for food that’s presented in a slightly simpler format, and dishes that are built around produce that Centeno obviously chooses carefully, perhaps even obsessively. The meal starts with an amuse that’s usually a green vegetable, cooked simply, presented with a little salt and citrus. One day it was broccoli rabe with grilled lemon for squeezing; another evening it was lightly cooked sugar snap peas served with sweet mandarin orange. These dishes prepare you for what’s to come by encouraging you to really taste the produce itself, rather than the will and creativity of the chef.

That isn’t to say there’s a lack of creativity at P.Y.T., just that it’s a slightly different brand of creativity from what you see at Centeno’s other restaurants, one that’s built on trying to tease out and highlight the essence of these vegetables.

This was perhaps best evidenced with a dish Centeno served early on, in which he figured out how to get the most turnip-y flavor from a turnip by wrapping it in a hoja santa leaf and baking it for hours in a salt dough crust. He’d bring the whole thing to the table and crack it open in front of you, cut the turnip into pieces, and drizzle it with some shiso-infused chimichurri. The essence of hoja santa that had lightly infused the vegetable and the shiso in the sauce brought out the turnip’s wilder, more anise-adjacent qualities, while the hours in the oven turned its sugars in upon themselves. It was like turnip squared; turnip to the power of turnip.

Many dishes are set up in this manner, with contrasting ingredients used to amplify the main ingredient’s best qualities. Roasted Japanese sweet potato comes with slivers of tart apple and nori butter shot through with piri piri and topped with an egg yolk. Centeno’s P.Y.T. is with piri piri and topped with an egg yolk. Centeno’s P.Y.T.

The drink tastes like celery, like the essence of the aggressive, vegetal fibrous stalks. It turns out tequila might be a better companion to celery than peanut butter or cream cheese.

I have two main quibbles with the restaurant. One is desserts — I wish Centeno was as playful and creative with the sweeter produce of the season as he is with the savory section of the menu. As it stands, there’s a lovely peanut pudding and a chocolate cake that’s almost too sweet, but none of the offerings makes enough use of fruit in the same way the chef approaches vegetables.

The other is pricing. I realize that the sourcing here is immaculate, and there’s perhaps a convincing argument to be made that you should pay just as much for these vegetable dishes as you would for meaty small plates. But $32 seems like an awful lot for one soft-shell crab (the one nonvegetarian dish I tried; there are always one or two on the menu), even with a large pile of greens beside it. A very small plate of crispy rice flavored with piri piri and topped with an egg costs $15. You can easily spend $60 for two people at brunch or lunch with no drinks and walk away hungry.

But the main takeaway from P.Y.T. is that one of our city’s most innovative chefs has found another dimension to his relationship with fresh produce. It is unsurprising, I suppose, that among this new wave of vegetable-focused restaurants, Josef Centeno’s is by far the best.

P.Y.T. | 400 S. Main St., downtown | (213) 687-7015 | pytlosangeles.com | Dinner: Tue.-Thu., 5:30-10 p.m.; Fri.-Sat., 5:30-11 p.m. Lunch: Mon.-Fri., 11:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. Brunch: Sat.-Sun., 11 a.m.-2 p.m. | Plates, $10-$39 | Full bar | Valet (dinner only), street and nearby lot parking
In L.A.’s community of coffee enthusiasts, there is some whispering about Tyler Wells. He was one of the founders of Handsome Coffee Roasters, the downtown coffee spot that was purchased by Blue Bottle and phased out of existence, to the woe of many. (Well, many of the crowd who care about such things.)

Wells had already left Handsome when this all went down, and there was talk of a forthcoming coffee shop of his own (with help from financial partners) in the Arts District. But that was three years ago.

There were undoubtedly twists and turns, but on April 14 Wells opened his new project: Nice Coffee, an open-air coffee bar in City National Plaza.

The coffee will be from 49th Parallel, the laminated pastries from Sugarbloom. There will be house-made doughnuts, as well as sandwiches and small breakfast items. The coffee and tea menu will remain fairly small, with an additional seasonal drinks menu.

Nice also operates as a physical iteration of Wells’ hospitality consulting company. So the architecture of the place, with its roll-up windows and wood trim around steel, is impressive. But even more notable is the emphasis on service. Old-fashioned, patient, non-snobby service that’s essentially the opposite of what is expected of trendy independent (even independent-ish) coffee houses these days.

The end of the press release announcing Nice’s opening reads, in bold, “All baristas will be nice at all times and ready to serve.”

It’s shocking, but it just might work.

—Katherine Spiers
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Nancy Zaslavsky, Culinary Historian/Author.
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The restaurant serves Alsatian food, with Salt’s Cure alumnus Alex McGroarty creating what is perhaps Long Beach’s best bacon, bratwurst and boudin blanc. But Fourth & Olive’s most impressive accomplishment might be something harder to see immediately: Tapia will prioritize hiring veterans and the disabled. “As much I hate Valley-ing it, people see veterans differently—not just disabled veterans but veterans as a whole,” Tapia says. When he was discharged from the Navy after serving for more than six years, he was injured but had not yet had the accident that left him in need of a cane. His experience trying to find work as a vet left an impression. “Employers don’t want to hire them. They’re afraid because it’s a different culture, someone who experienced something they didn’t. They view veterans as disabled, whether they are or they’re not. Those who are disabled are fully capable, but you just have to go to bat for them a bit different.”

“We all know that our society has developed a not-so-pretty picture of vets,” says Alvin Stams II, one of the kitchen staff members who hails from the Air Force. “In previous jobs, I was given the choice of my job or my [doctor’s] appointment. Just that choice. So I missed quite a few appointments. Here, management takes into consideration upcoming appointments for us, which allows us to continue our treatment at the VA, which relieves a lot of stress off us veterans; which makes us better employees.”

“I enjoy working here because we incorporate what it’s like to be part of a team and we hold ourselves to a higher standard because being part of the military, we know about integrity, honor and loyalty,” says Jennifer Contreras, one of the bartenders and an Army vet.

These standards are, according to Tapia, the same needed to be a good employee. He sees an overlap in the demands of restaurant work and military work. “Ultimately, if we’re doing well in this restaurant, that reflects on the outside,” Tapia says. “If they see us kicking ass with vets working hard, they’re going to want to hire vets, too. And that’s the endgame: for me to run out of veterans to hire and I have to go back to civilians.”

—Brian Addison

743 E. Fourth St., Long Beach; (562) 286-0731, fourthandolive.com.

L.A. County’s Most Surprising Chinese Buffet
Throughout Middle America, Chinese food is often synonymous with buffets. In many smaller and medium-sized cities, in particular, the Chinese buffet is an especially attractive option for restaurant owners due to lower labor costs and a perceived lack of sophistication about Chinese food, which permits serving simpler, low-cost dishes. This model is particularly effective east of the Mississippi River, where a plentiful supply of restaurant workers and owners originally from Fujian province in China has radiated out from Manhattan’s Chinatown. In contrast, in the Los Angeles area, Chinese buffets appear to be a comparative rarity, perhaps due to a higher degree of sophistication about Chinese food relative to other parts of the United States.

In areas like the Westside and the San Fernando Valley, no more than a handful of Chinese buffets are to be found. There is something of a concentration of Chinese buffets in the San Gabriel Valley—and not just for the obvious reason. But probably there are not even a dozen there.

Having said that, the number of Chinese buffet restaurants around Los Angeles is actually quite a bit higher than one might guess, because most Chinese buffets in Los Angeles have Japanese names, and are often described as Japanese buffets. (Indeed, I am aware of only one buffet restaurant in the Los Angeles area with a Japanese name that actually serves predominantly Japanese food.)

One may wonder why most Chinese buffets use Japanese names such as Hokkaido, Sumo, Hibachi, Minato, Kyoto, Kami and Ichiban, instead of something that is obviously Chinese. The most likely explanation is that the primary draw for most of these buffets is the sushi, despite the fact that, aside from an occasional teriyaki or tempura dish, the Japanese food selection stops with the sushi. So the Japanese name really just serves as a reminder that there’s sushi inside.

All of which brings us to the recently opened Fuji Buffet and Grill, located in Glendale near the intersection of the Ventura and Glendale freeways. Fuji Buffet took the place late last year of another Chinese buffet, Osaka Seafood Buffet.

Most local “Chinese” buffets serve a combination of sushi, Americanized Chinese food, rudimentary factory-made dim sum, chicken wings, fruit and desserts. It’s what one would expect from Fuji, but a surprise awaits. The dim sum section contains standard dim sum selections such as BBQ pork buns and taro buns, but there are many other items one might not expect to see. Chicken feet? Cantonese dim sum-style spare ribs in black bean sauce? Xiao long bao? Zhong zi (glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo leaves)? Chinese beef balls? Stu mai with fish roe? Who knew?

Over in the soup section, you’ll find Fujian fish balls (filled with ground pork) in broth and fish maw soup. There is a wood ear fungus salad, grilled whole mackerel, salt-and-pepper shrimp and chopped whole yellow croaker, a San Gabriel Valley favorite. Entrees include sweet-and-sour fish fillets, steamed sole black bean sauce and marinated dry bean fillets, salt-and-pepper squid and clams in sweet-and-sour fish fillets, steamed sole black bean sauce? who appreciated an occasional Chinese buffet, Fuji Buffet and Grill might rocket to the top of your list. —David Chan

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HISTORY

Order of the Phoenix
Known as the Ambassador of Americana, Charles Phoenix has turned nostalgia into a cottage industry that has come to include tours, books and, of course, his signature slideshows. This evening at Union Station, he presents Charles Phoenix: Southern Californialand, a slideshow that explores the region’s “undiscovered, underrated and misunderstood midcentury architectural gems.” Phoenix puts to good use his exhaustive knowledge of the Southland’s kitschiest landmarks, from Googie bowling alleys to dingbat apartment buildings and, in particular, a very famous drive-through bakeshop in La Puente that looks like a big-ass doughnut. “Festive” dress is encouraged (think a mustard-yellow and ketchup-red tuxedo, like the host’s). Union Station, 800 N. Alameda St., downtown; Fri., April 21, 8:30-10 p.m. (doors open 8 p.m.); free (seating is first come, first served; unionstationla.com/happenings/metro-art-presents-or-charles-phoenix-southern-californialand. —Gwynedd Stuart

DOCUMENTARIES

The Cure for What Ails You
April 21 is Robert Smith’s birthday and there’s no better way to celebrate this most hallowed day on the goth calendar than with The Cure in Orange. Filmed at the Roman Theatre of Orange in 1986, the film captures the legendary British group a year after the release of classic album The Head on the Door and just months after retrospective singles compilation Standing on a Beach. This is The Cure in their prime, with Smith and the gang performing fan favorites such as “Charlotte Sometimes” along with then-current hits like “The Walk” and “Close to Me,” on an ancient, smoke-filled stage. While The Cure in Orange is this band’s quintessential concert film, it’s been out of print for ages. Fortunately, Cinematik Void has a 35mm print. And they have Lol Tolhurst, former keyboardist for The Cure, for a Q&A and signing of his memoir, Cured: The Tale of Two Imaginary Boys. Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Fri., April 21, 7:30 p.m.; $15. (313) 461-2020, americancinemathequecalendar.com. —Liz Ohanesian

ACTIVISM

Down to a Science
Sure, we hated chemistry class in high school — really, do we need to memorize the atomic weights of elements? — but never in our wildest, angiest teen dreams could we have imagined we’d have an adult baby president who, like, for real hates science. Alas, here we are — marching in defense of something that should need defending because of you, scientists. In honor of Earth Day, the resistance takes to the streets again for the Los Angeles March for Science, one of many such events taking place across the U.S. It may not enlighten Washington on climate change, but at least a few thousand Angelenos will be on foot instead of driving. Pershing Square, 532 S. Olive St., downtown; Sat., April 22, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.; free. facebook.com/events/1199770880137011/?active_tab=about. —Gwynedd Stuart

DANCE

All in the Family
It’s definitely a family affair as the Washington Family Concert affirms the power of education and celebrates Southwest College’s 50th anniversary. Celebrated choreographer Lula Washington assembles her talented dance family and musical in-laws, including husband-producer Erwin Washington, daughter-choreographer-dancer Tamika Washington-Miller and son-in-law/composer/drummer Marcus L. Miller. Composers/musicians Rickey Washington-ton and Kamasi Washington are joined by 10-piece band The Next Step playing music from their hit CD The Epic, plus art and emcee contributions from four more of their cousins. Several members of the family are Southwest grads and, as alumni, welcomed the chance to jam with new choreography and live music for this golden anniversary. L.A. Southwest College, Little Theater, 1600 W. Imperial Hwy., Athens; Sat., April 22, 8 p.m., $50-$100. (323) 241-5401, lasc.edu/50. —Ann Haskins

BOOKS

Cover to Cover
The Los Angeles Times Festival of Books is L.A.’s Bookchella for bibliophiles and the world’s largest literary festival. In its 22nd year, the fest features appearances by more than 500 literary heavyweights and celebrity authors, including Joyce Carol Oates, Margaret Atwood, Chuck Palahniuk, Michael Eric Dyson, Roxane Gay, Luis J. Rodriguez, Chris Hayes, Dave Grohl, Bryan Cranston, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Cheech Marin, Wil Wheaton, Tippi Hedren, Danica McKellar, Cesar Millan, Keith Morris and Michael Ovitz. The two-day schedule features 10 stages offering cooking demonstrations, travel workshops, poetry and children’s readings, in addition to hundreds of vendors, live music, a performance of songs from Into the Woods by the Center Theatre Group and, of course, food trucks. USC, Bing Theatre, 3500 Watt Way, University Park; Sat., April 22, 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., April 23, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; free (paid tickets required for some events). (213) 740-5656, latimes.com/festivalofbooks. —Siran Babayan

OUTDOORS

Take a Bike
The 20th City of Angels Fun Ride is cyclists’ key to a city that’s even more beautiful when it unfolds in real time as they travel through it on two wheels. Starting and ending at UCLA, the ride — not a race — spans either 33 or 62 miles, depending on how leisurely riders want to take their Sunday exercise, and culminates with lunch, a blood drive and aaffle. Registration fees go to the UCLA Blood & Platelet
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**COMMUNITY**

**Listen Up**

KPCC In Person hosts *Unheard L.A.: The Stories of Where You Live*, a three-part, neighborhood-centric storytelling series emceed by Watts Village Theater Company artistic director Bruce A. Lemon Jr. Whittier, the city named for poet John Greenleaf Whittier — and the childhood home of Richard Nixon — is the backdrop for the first installment, which features Erik Benjamins, Nancy Do, Stephanie Sajor and Eddy M. Gana Jr. (Steady), Brenda Gonzalez, Michael Jaime-Becerra, Aeden Keffelew, Joshua Rigsby, Jonathon Rios and members of Cornerstone Theater Company performing spoken word and songs about their experiences as Angelenos. Future events take place downtown (April 30) and in Hollywood (May 13), and each show is followed by a mixer with the cast. Ruth & Shannon Center for the Performing Arts, 6760 Painter Ave., Whittier; Sun., April 23, 5:30-7 p.m.; free (reservation required): scpr.org. —Siran Babayan

**LIVE LIT**

**Best Served Cold**

A rumble can be as much a gut feeling as it is a battle between two forces — even if those forces are being presented within the framework of a light-hearted live-lit night. Such chortlesome studies are front-runners at The Rumble: A Storytelling Show. Tonight’s theme is “revenge,” and your hosts — American Dad *writer Nicole Shabtai and Alec Baldwin’s Love Ride* writer Laura Willcox — plumb the depths of shame and self-loathing to encourage stand-ups Halley Feiffer, Jon Gabrus and Casey Wilson to face their fears onstage and transform those feelings into something that won’t make them puke into the audience. UCB Sunset, 5419 Sunset Blvd., East Hollywood; Mon., April 24, 7 p.m.; $7. (323) 908-8702, sunset.ucbtheatre.com/performance/53897. —David Cotner

**EXPERIMENTAL FILM**

**Fly’s-Eye View**

The camera in Ernie Gehr’s films acts as a fly on the wall, but this cinematic voyeur isn’t usually interested in documenting people or their romantic assignations. Instead, the experimental filmmaker focuses on overlooked elements — urban cityscapes, the sides of buildings, the interplay of light — which are soberly observed from unusual angles and unexpected perspectives. Such 16mm films as *Side/Walk/Shuttle* (1991) and *Serene Velocity* (1970) are free of plot or any other pretense of storytelling and instead work as moody tone poems in which the only ostensible subject is the medium of film itself. Tonight, Gehr presents recent digital films including *A Commuter’s Life (What a Life!)* and *Creatures of the Night*. REDCAT, 631 W. Second St, downtown; Mon., April 24, 8:30 p.m.; $11. (213) 237-2800, redcat.org. —Falling James

**BOOKS**

**Here Comes Trouble**

In 2015, John Waters delivered the commencement speech at the Rhode Island School of Design, the alma mater of James Franco, Seth MacFarlane and other celebrity alumni. Tonight, he signs his latest book, *Make Trouble*, featuring drawings by Eric Hanson; it’s essentially a transcript of his speech, which begins: “I should say right off that I am really qualified to be your commencement speaker. I was suspended from high school, then kicked out of college in the first marijuana scandal ever on a university campus. I’ve been arrested several times.” Though pocket-sized, Waters’ manifesto is filled with the kind of witty and subversive wisdom and advice you’d expect one of the filthiest directors in filmdom to give to college graduates, parents and all creative people, chief among them: “Go out in the world and fuck it up beautifully.” He appears for a signing tonight. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Tue., April 25, 7 p.m.; book is $14.95 (purchase mandatory). (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com. —Siran Babayan

**COMEDY**

**Liar, Liar**

Reading *Kelly Oxford’s* books is like having a conversation with a sharp-witted friend who notices every bit of humiliating behavior occurring around her but nonetheless takes almost nothing seriously. Based now in L.A., the Canadian screenwriter took the mundane details of living in Edmonton and transformed them into her first book of essays, *Everything Is Perfect When You’re a Liar* (2013), cataloging and ruthlessly dissecting the quirks of her family’s personal lives. In her new follow-up, *When You Find Out the World Is Against You: And Other Funny Memories About Awful Moments*, Oxford juxtaposes her childhood ambition of learning to make out at camp with the responsibilities of being a parent. She discusses the new book with like-minded sarcastic actor Busy Philipps (*Freaks and Geeks, Cougar Town*), *Ann & Jerry Moss Theater, New Roads School, 321 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica*; Wed., April 26, 8 p.m.; $20 & $46. (310) 828-5582, livetalksla.org/events/kelly-oxford. —Falling James

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the movies. You may even be familiar with the 1976 porn film Alice in Wonderland: An X-Rated Musical Comedy. Now watch Second City’s political satire Alice in Trumperland, the theater’s latest musical spoof, directed by Tom Seidman. The cast sing their way through the famous story, with a twist: It’s 2009, and Alicia, a Hispanic DREAMer, falls down the rabbit hole and into a fantasy future populated by bizarre characters that look eerily similar to certain politicians. Think Bernie Sanders as the Cheshire Cat, Steve Bannon as the Mad Hatter and Donald Trump as the Red Queen.

Second City Studio Theater, 6560 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Wed., April 26, 9 p.m. (also Wed., May 10); $10. (323) 464-8542, secondcity.com. —Siran Babayan

MUSIC

Simon Says

Following its run at the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland in 2014, an expanded version of “Paul Simon: Words & Music” opens at the Skirball Cultural Center. Organized into themed sections, the display spotlights the singer, songwriter, musician and two-time Hall of Famer’s life and music, especially his partnership with Art Garfunkel in the 1950s and ’60s, and his solo career, beginning in 1971, which produced the mega-selling 1986 album Graceland. Highlights include photographs, instruments, awards and costumes, as well as handwritten lyrics to “Mrs. Robinson,” “Mother and Child Reunion” and “50 Ways to Leave Your Lover” and music sheets for “Bridge Over Troubled Water.” The exhibit also offers an interactive music lab, featuring a communal drum circle and mixing equipment. Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Brentwood; opens Thu., April 27, noon-5 p.m. (through Sept. 3); $12, $9 seniors and students, $7 children, free under 2. (310) 440-4500, skirball.org. —Siran Babayan

COMEDY

Hearing Double

People generally like to think they’re originals — one-of-a-kind, mold-broken, etc. — so it’s refreshing to find two people who take joy in their similarities. In tonight’s program of hearing double, Vocal Doppelgänger, comedians Ophira Eisenberg and Jackie Kashian perform entirely separate stand-up sets with speaking voices that sound the same, even if their individual artistic voices are as different as night and day. Blindfolds are available in case you’d like to take part in this especially dualistic Pepsi challenge of comedy — but you just might find what they have to say eye-opening.

Nerdist Showroom at Meltdown Comics, 7522 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Thu., April 27, 7-8:30 p.m.; $10. (323) 851-7223, nerdmeltla.com. —David Cotner
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FISH OUT OF WATER

French street artist and L.A. transplant Sebastien Walker’s exhibit “The Smoking Fish” has turned a Fairfax gallery into a mad artist’s workspace

BY TRINA CALDERÓN

Rain was splintering the L.A. sunlight when I met painter Sebastien Walker in the alley behind the Seventh Letter Gallery on Fairfax. Late the previous night he’d moved in several large canvases and all of his personal studio tools and ephemera, and was so tired when he left that he inadvertently locked himself out. On the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank the morning we met, the code wasn’t inadvertently locked himself out. On the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank the morning we met, the code wasn’t enough to open the door, so we drank.

Walker is a laid-back guy. He grew up skateboarding and writing graffiti in the Ninth Arrondissement of Paris, the youngest child of a concert pianist and an opera singer. He’s been in Los Angeles for 10 years to the day of the opening of his first solo show, “The Smoking Fish,” which features new paintings and a larger, personal collection of art that is normally part of his studio.

When I ask why an artist would leave Paris for Los Angeles, he replies, “L.A. is where it is happening. I see [French] artists I was admiring as I was just starting graffiti as a teen that are still struggling or simply disappeared. The level is really good in France, but the market and interest is really small compared to here — 60 million people versus 360 million, the American dream in some sort of way.”

“The Smoking Fish” is a character in Walker’s comedic and subversive universe. At 11 years old, he discovered dirty French comics on a flight from Paris to Corsica. “The guy sitting next to me was reading a comic book full of big-chested, beautiful women. He saw how I kept peeking during the whole flight and gave it to me once we landed.” Comics like Fluide Glacial and its precursor Heavy Metal influenced not only his style but his storytelling. His colorful characters drink beer, fight, smoke, crack jokes and are totally shameless. “I tend to speak to the dirty-minded child in all of us,” he says.

Walker studied graphic design and briefly worked in advertising (which he hated) in Paris, while painting walls around the city with friends. Once in L.A., he went to Otis for his master’s degree, but hated that, too.

Fortunately, he was enriched by a night class at Art Center taught by California-based artists the Clayton Brothers, but for the most part his work “wasn’t Otis,” he says, citing the disparity between his progression as an artist and graphic design.

He befriended local artists, but an opportunity to paint at Mr. Brainwash’s warehouse mega-show on La Brea in 2011 altered his experience significantly, particularly when he met DAME from the Seventh Letter crew.

Joining that family of artists has been integral to being able to launch such a large exhibit now. “Being recognized by my peers changed everything: If it wasn’t for Casey [Zoltan] and the family of talented and good humans he has built around him, I would most likely have stopped painting, at least on walls, or just not shown my work, do it as a hobby and work a 9-to-5,” Walker says. “Being surrounded by people you admire only brings the best out of you. I am learning from the best, to slowly become better than I thought I could ever be. It is said that steel sharpens steel, right?”

Once we finally got inside the gallery space, we could barely walk through. Stacks and stacks of canvases waited to be hung. Part of his personal collection of artwork from his home studio began to fill one of the larger white walls. The influence of artists like Banksy, Estevan Oriol and RETNA is present in his work’s DNA.

Walker’s desk, easel and piles of sketches and personal things were transplanted — he’s essentially installed a replica of his studio in the back gallery, and will be working from the space for the entire month of April.

After a few late-night visits, I can see the shape of things to come. With sketches tacked up all over and his easel set with a canvas in progress, the space is starting to feel alive. The bold line work he uses in his drawings of everything from animals to children and even a humble self-portrait jumps off the walls.

After the installation’s first week — during which Walker was only locked out one other time — the show had crept into every space of the gallery. When I arrived at the opening, the bright, colorful characters of Walker’s world were all there.

The exhibit runs through April, and Walker will spend the month painting in his studio, in the gallery. People are encouraged to drop by during the gallery’s business hours to visit.

Waiting 10 years to show may not be the norm, but Walker isn’t fazed: “I wanted to do it well, make a statement, not have a show just to have a party, but make my entrance in the art world properly; how I want it, with the people I want to work with, showing work I am proud of in a place where people I respect showed their work. ‘Slow is smooth, smooth is fast.’”

“THE SMOKING FISH” | The Seventh Letter Gallery, 346 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax | Through April 30 | theseventhletter.com/collections/sebastien-walker
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There are limitations to the confidentiality of email communications. Do not include any sensitive health information if you choose to contact the study team via email.
Tous or to impose any narrative structure done little to make her film seem portentous. The dancers’ intricate costumes and colors and brightness of video games but still finds abstract, tightly crafted objects more seductive than cartoon characters. Since the 1980s and now based in Bali, say-
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ing that there is power in these communal acts by indigenous Americans at this moment in history. 1201 S. La Brea Ave., Mid-Wilshire; through May 13. (310) 586-6886, kaynegallery.com.

**Rose-petal pink plastic**

Pink plastic shopping bags have been among Maren Hassinger’s key materials for more than 30 years. At the Landing, a large circle made of her inflated pink bags fills a back wall. It looks both cheap and seductively voluminous, the bags all bulging in different ways. The installation is part of a group show, “Signifying Form,” featuring work by black female artists in Los Angeles. The oldest sculpture dates back to 1935, though most of the art has a weathered maturity that makes it hard to think of the works in terms of new and old. 5118 W. Jefferson Blvd., West Adams; through June 3. (323) 272-3194, thelanding.com.

**Powwow seeker**

Miami-based artist Dara Friedman placed an ad on Powwows.com, an online calendar of the Native American gatherings, to find actors for her film *Mother Drum*. Then she traveled to the Swinomish Reservation in Washington, Coeur d’Alene Reservation in Idaho and Crow Reservation in Montana to meet and film those who responded. The drum circles and dancing depicted in her film, currently playing at Kayne Griffin Corcoran, were just for her camera, separate from any larger gatherings happening at the same time. Still, the footage has a documentary feel. The dancers’ intricate costumes and long braids contrast with their relatively mundane surroundings, but Friedman has done little to make her film seem portentous or to impose any narrative structure on its actors. She seems just to be acknowledging that there is power in these communal acts by indigenous Americans at this moment in history. 1201 S. La Brea Ave., Mid-Wilshire; through May 13. (310) 586-6886, kaynegallery.com.

**Mirror, mirror**

A magic mirror separates the two sides of Isabella Spengler’s installation at the Los Angeles Museum of Art (LAMOA), the 14-by-9-foot museum that artist Alice Könitz built in 2012. Spengler divided the mobile museum, which has lived at Occidental College since 2015 but will leave the campus after this show, into a light half and a dark half. Each half has its own entrance and shabby-chic decor. On opening night, Spengler held court before the mirror on the dark side, holding a flashlight up to her face when people on the light side leaned close to the glass. They’d catch a glimpse of her then, and often react with surprise. A film Spengler made plays on a small monitor in a glass case on the dark side. Its protagonist, a former actress in glittering clothes, lives alone in a small, romantic hut in the woods in Southern France and goes by the name Starlight. She wears a fantastic blue-green sleep mask even while awake. 1600 Campus Road, Eagle Rock; through May 8. losangelesmuseumofart.org.

**Fighting again**

“We are all fighting against the same unfair system that prefers we compete against each other,” artist Grace Hwang read as collaborator Heise Chung-Matheu used a projection of a TV screen as if it were a laser pointer to highlight the faces of various protesters from the 1992 L.A. Riots. These faces appeared on a large screen behind Hwang and Chung-Matheu, who were performing at the Hammer in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the riots, making parallels between their parents’ experience of racial injustice and their own. “I hope you can consider this: The American Dream is not only for your children,” Hwang said, addressing her immigrant parents. At the Women’s Center for Creative Work, Hwang and Chung-Matheu will talk about remembering rebellion and resistance of the past, and how it can help us resist political oppression in the present. 2425 Glover Place, Elysian Valley; Mon., April 24, 7:30-9:30 p.m. womenscenterforcreativework.com.

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**BY CATHERINE WAGLEY**

"Sluttier than what?" But certainly, these pander to the kind of viewer who likes the ingratiating, color-soaked sexual work that just panders to the viewer.” One wonders, “Sluttier than what?” But certainly, these pander to the kind of viewer who likes the colors and brightness of video games but still finds abstract, tightly crafted objects more seductive than cartoon characters. Ashley Bickerton created for “Wall-Wall,” hanging in Thibault & Sunder’s new space in Arlington Heights, look like miniature mashups of arcade games and climbing walls. Neon-colored resin rocks bulge out of fluorescent rectangular backgrounds. The press release quotes Bickerton, active of his art since the 1980s and now based in Bali, say-
ing he just wants “to make sluttier, smaller, and dancing depicted in her film, currently playing at Kayne Griffin Corcoran, were just for her camera, separate from any larger gatherings happening at the same time. Still, the footage has a documentary feel. The dancers’ intricate costumes and colors and brightness of video games but still finds abstract, tightly crafted objects more seductive than cartoon charac-

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HERE COMES THE MCBRIDE

A straight guy turns to drag for dough in the charming comedy The Legend of Georgia McBride

BY DEBORAH KLUGMAN

The Legend of Georgia McBride is one of those rare charmers, a sweet story about nice people that manages to be neither syrupy nor cloying. Directed by Mike Donahue at the Geffen Playhouse, the production features a strong ensemble that brings heft and heart to a very amiable comedy.

Matthew Lopez’s amusing script revolves around a straight guy who, like Dustin Hoffman’s character in Tootsie and Jack Lemmon’s in Some Like It Hot, is impelled by circumstance to dress in drag. A young blue-collar dude in Panama City, Florida, Casey (Andrew Burnap) builds his identity around two things: his Elvis impersonation, which he regularly performs to a sparse crowd at a run-down dive near the beach, and his happy marriage to Jo (Nija Okoro), a warm and loving but practical-minded person who, unlike Casey, understands how important it is to pay the rent before splurging on pizza or flashy new outfits for his act.

Jo’s frustration with her husband takes on new urgency when she discovers that she’s pregnant; he’s delighted whereas she, facing eviction and a stack of unpaid bills, worries seriously about their future.

One night he gets the inspired idea to remake his Elvis costume — and presto, the inimitable country music drag queen Georgia McBride is born.

Things change radically for Casey with the arrival, at work, of his employer’s cousin, a drag queen named Miss Tracy Mills (Matt McGrath), and her partner, Miss Rexy (Larry Powell). Only then does his boss, Eddie (Nick Searcy), inform him that his Elvis act has been dropped for lack of an audience. Casey is kept on as bartender until one evening, when Rexy flakes, he’s called upon to quick-change into a dress and lip-sync an Edith Piaf impersonation on the stage. Uncomfortable, he protests, but then the tips start rolling in, and suddenly a lot of his financial problems are solved. One night he gets the inspired idea to remake his Elvis costume — and presto, the inimitable country music drag queen Georgia McBride is born.

That The Legend of Georgia McBride clicks from the start rests in part on Burnap’s charm and even more so on the two-pronged appeal of Burnap and Okoro. Together they depict a young couple much in love, teetering on the brink of homelessness. So often portrayals of this sort seem forced, but here you buy 100 percent into this pair’s caring intimacy, and the reasons Jo forgives Casey his careless irresponsibility. Part of this comes from the script, part from Donahue’s sensitive direction, and a lot from the fine work of these skilled actors.

Still, this early scene is part of the prelude. The comedy really takes off after the entrance of the imposing Miss Tracy. McGrath, who created the role when the show premiered in New York in 2015, has lost none of his edge, and he is as effectively commanding the stage in one of Brooks’ fabulous gowns. As his sulking sidekick, Powell is also spot-on; neither of these performers resorts to the mugging typical of drag-queen depictions. And as the down-to-earth Eddie, Searcy wears the character’s world-weary practicality like a glove.

Other kudos go to Paul McGill for the rollicking choreography, Tiphanie Grace for the comic wigs and makeup, Donyale Werle for the clever set and Josh Epstein for the complicated in-set lighting. While it’s true the plot swivels on some shaky contrivances, the sum talent employed in its telling makes up for that in spades.

THE LEGEND OF GEORGIA MCBRIDE
| Geffen Playhouse, 10886 Le Conte Ave., Westwood | Through May 31 | (310) 208-5454 | geffenplayhouse.org

GRADING

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HOW DO YOU DOCUMENT A MASSACRE WITHOUT LOOKING LIKE YOU’RE A MISSIONARY?

It’s a compelling premise for a documentary: What do you make of a city’s pain when it gets silenced in order to make it useful to the future? The answers to that question are explored in Let It Fall, a new film by the creators of Showtime’s LA 92, about the 1992 Los Angeles riots.

In crisp, purposeful montage, Let It Fall shows us Angelenos across the city, gapping and weeping, spitting out anguished prayers and stunned “Oh, God!”s; LA 92 uses similar footage but denies us the responses to the jury’s decision. (The directors made the excellent Undefeated.) They open with the city already in flames, with Watts riots of 1965. “It was the most widespread, the most destructive racial violence in American history,” a newsmen at the time tells us; since the film is assembled entirely from archival footage, it’s left to the viewer to query that sensational claim — what about slavery, you yutz? The directors hinge their narrative on a Frederick Douglass quote: “We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the future.”

But their approach fails Douglass. Their movie mostly offers raw footage and shrill media accounts of people shouting, shouting, looting, bleeding, with little sense of what built to this. Both films show us that heart-rending footage of black teens stomping on the white drivers of trucks stalled at Florence and Normandie, but only Let It Fall bothers to cover the drivers being rescued by other young black men.

Both films devote a good stretch of time to a Simi Valley jury’s absurd decision in the trial of the officers who beat King, but only Let It Fall digs deeply into how and why the case was moved from L.A. to a county where only 2 percent of the population is black. Let It Fall lets us hear from a juror and from prosecutor Terry White; LA 92, like most of America at that time, relies on TV news. Some of Lindsay and Martin’s footage proves involving and rewarding, of course, especially an extended argument between a white man and a black man outside the courthouse as the press awaited the verdict. But nothing better captures the difference between the films than the responses to the jury’s decision.

In crisp, purposeful montage, Let It Fall shows us Angelenos across the city, gapping and weeping, spitting out anguished prayers and stunned “Oh, God!”s; LA 92 uses similar footage but denies us the people’s actual voices, instead layering on prayers and weeping, spitting out anguished prayers and stunned “Oh, God!”s; LA 92 uses similar footage but denies us the people’s actual voices, instead layering on

Films

LOST IN THE FIRE

25 years later, Let It Fall and LA 92 look back on a city in flames

BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL

How do you document in a film the crack-up of something as complex as a city — a quarter-century past? A pair of new documentaries about the Los Angeles riots of April 1992 take wildly different approaches — and produce wildly different results. In the vigorous and illuminating Let It Fall: Los Angeles 1982-1992, writer-director John Ridley (the creator of ABC’s American Crime and Showtime’s Guerrilla) weaves familiar news clips and on-the-street videos with many thorough interviews with men and women whose lives were invariably broken in two by what Ridley’s film calls “the uprising.” No matter their specific circumstances, these residents and police officers found their lives before the city burnt fully sundered from what came next seemed inevitable.

In those days after the misbegotten verdict in the trial of the four police officers who kicked and beat Rodney King, these Angelenos discovered what they and their neighbors were capable of. Ridley’s patient, humane approach allows us over his film’s 145 minutes, to discover it, too.

He takes pains (and time) to track the climate that made the storm inevitable: Let It Fall opens with a précis on how outrage over many (mostly black) deaths led the (mostly white) LAPD to abandon its chokehold techniques for the whaling of nightsticks — the term alone, so casually phallic, suggests the ugly issues of race, power and masculine rage involved in that weapon’s usage. Then come sober treatments of infamous shootings, some gang-related, and the cops’ and the justice system’s disproportionate responses. After college student Karen Toshima died in the crossfire of a gang shooting in Westwood, police chief Daryl Gates’ Operation Hammer gang “sweeps” arrested hundreds of black residents a night in South Central on pretexts; when store-owner Soon Ja Du shot 15-year-old Latasha Harlins in the back of the head over a misunderstanding about orange juice, the killer was convicted on a charge of voluntary manslaughter but not even sentenced to jail time.

Let It Fall contextualizes this familiar history with the testimony of people who lived it. Here are friends and relatives of Harlins and Du, their wounds still raw, speaking plainly about how everything got bad enough for that to happen — and how what came next seemed inevitable.

Inevitability, too, seems to be the lesson of Dan Lindsay and TJ Martin’s more explosive LA 92, a wearying and dispiriting film. (The directors made the excellent high-school football doc Undefeated.) They open with the city already in flames, with the Watts riots of 1965. “It was the most widespread, the most destructive racial violence in American history,” a newsmen at the time tells us; since the film is assembled entirely from archival footage, it’s left to the viewer to query that sensational claim — what about slavery, you yutz? The directors hinge their narrative on a Frederick Douglass quote: “We have to do with the past only as we can make it useful to the future.”

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The Happiest Day in the Life of Olli Mäki

Finnish dudes blow off steam by tooling around in the sauna. Olli Mäki isn’t a knockout, but it does go the distance. —Michael Nordine
**Film**

**POETIC JUSTICE**

REACHING FOR THE TRUTH OF EMILY DICKINSON

**BY MELISSA ANDERSON**

The sole authenticated photograph of Emily Dickinson (1830–86) was taken when she was 16 years old: The Daguerreotype revealing a slight young woman with a searching gaze and hint of a smile as she holds a floral spray on her lap stands as one of the most famous portraits of an American writer. Paradoxically, this instantly recognizable image depicts a home-grown genius about whom so little is verifiable — and one who rarely traveled past the grounds of her family’s home. How could such a life be dramatized for the screen? (Onstage, the Julie Harris–starring one-woman show *The Belle of Amherst* opened on Broadway in 1976; the actress toured with and revived the production into the ‘00s.)

In his compassionate and intelligent Dickinson biopic *A Quiet Passion*, Terence Davies honors his subject by remaining true to this observation from the poet herself: “To live is so startling, it leaves but little room for other occupations.” Lucidly portrayed by Cynthia Nixon, Dickinson in Davies’ film, even in the writer’s more anguished later decades, is ever alert and ablaze, sustained by family, friends and her own feverish mind. However circumscribed she was physically, Dickinson constantly exceeded boundaries.

Her contentious spirit is highlighted in the opening scene, as adolescent Emily (Emma Bell, who inhabits the role for the film’s first 20 minutes), surrounded by a dozen or so of her classmates at Mount Holyoke Female Seminary, dares to defy the school’s pious founder during an exercise meant to emphasize spiritual well-being: “I am not even awakened yet — how can I even repent?” The response, at once brash and reasonable, typifies Dickinson’s exchanges with her interlocutors in *A Quiet Passion*; no convention or bit of received wisdom goes unchallenged. But this most outspoken of young women, the middle of three children, was also an exceptionally devoted daughter and sibling. “I only want my family life to be perfect. It is not paradise. But it is far better than anything I could know,” adult Emily tells a similarly forthright friend, Vryling Buffam (Catherine Bailey), an incorrigible coquette whose barbs and bons mots seem to anticipate Oscar Wilde’s a few decades later (“Going to church is like going to Boston. You only enjoy it after you’ve gone home”). More than just a graceful exhibition devoted to the writer, *A Quiet Passion* provides the title of an exquisite portrait of an American writer. The textured examination of Dickinson, mostly presented rhythmically in Nixon’s reading of Dickinson’s nearly 1,800 poems or engaged in badinage with a sibling or friend, Nixon is quick to reveal the wonder the writer saw all around her, worlds that only she could summon.

That élan shines through especially in Nixon’s reading of Dickinson’s poems, mostly presented in voice-over, though one of her best-known lines of verse — “I’m nobody! Who are you?” — serves as Emily’s words of greeting to her infant nephew. That line also provides the title of an exquisite exhibition devoted to the writer currently on view through May 28 at the Morgan Library and Museum. Among the many treasures of the show, which I saw a week after viewing *A Quiet Passion*: a lock of Dickinson’s hair, a bright auburn Lock intertwined with a silk ribbon, and a working-class Catho-

**NIXON IS QUICK TO REVEAL THE WONDER THE WRITER SAW ALL AROUND HER.**

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**DEADLINE, Pete Hammond**

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**THE PROMISE**

Empires fall. Love survives.

STARTS FRIDAY, APRIL 21
THE PROMISE SETS HOLLYWOOD TECHNIQUE AGAINST THE TERROR OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Terry George’s The Promise, a handsome but lumpish film whose creators are too conscious of their obvious heroism, has the rare good fortune of turning up in theaters just weeks after another film showed how necessary a movie like this is. The second star-driven war-adventure film of 2017 to set a cross-cultural love triangle necessary a movie like this is, The Promise would outclass its runner-up, The Ottoman Lieutenant, even if it weren’t manifestly better in its story and acting.

George and Robin Swicord also build their screenplay around three conflicted lovers (played by Oscar Isaac, Charlotte Le Bon and Christian Bale), but here the history (thankfully) overwhelms the romance. Nobody in The Promise has to point out that their love problems don’t amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world, because that crazy world is forever trying to kill them and everyone they care about. Rather than sweat over who’s crushing on whom, the protagonists endeavor to survive, offer aid to refugees and tell the world the truth about a campaign of mass murder of 1.5 million Armenians.

As drama and spectacle, it’s not quite first-rate — I rarely feared for these characters or believed that I knew their souls, and George is too much of a humanist to wring real-life tragedy for cinemapecx suspense. But as a moral corrective and a call to decency, it moved me. How rare is it that so much movie money has been spent on not killing, on demonstrating — here through a corny yet moving coda — that, in a crisis, acts of kindness shape the world for the better for generations to come.

— Alan Scherstuhl

THE PROMISE | Directed by Terry George | Written by Terry George and Robin Swicord | Open Road | Citywide

Finding Oscar, a documentary seeking to do just that. Looking back to Guatemala’s 1982 Dos Erres massacre, director Ryan Suf ern focuses not on the nearly 250 villagers who were murdered by commandos working for the government but on a child who is said to have survived and been raised by one of the soldiers who carried out the atrocities. This was one of many bloody events in Guatemala’s decades-long civil war (started, of course, with an assist from the United States), the effects of which are still being felt today. Throughout Guatemala, murals depicting similar incidents serve as graphic reminders of the untold dead, bringing to mind a line from playwright Griselda Gambaro’s 1985 Antigone update Antigona Furosa, written about the Argentinean Dirty War that likewise saw thousands of citizens disappear: “The living are the great sepulchre of the dead.” A mix of archival footage and interviews with surviving family members of the victims guides the way toward Oscar, not just the search is easy; still, you don’t call your movie Finding Oscar if you never actually do so. Suff ern strikes a respectful, not entirely hopeless tone throughout, allowing those affected by the civil war in general and the Dos Erres massacre in particular to speak at length about their experiences. Their words are often more powerful than the filmmaking, but Suff ern wisely allows them to do most of the talking. (Michael Nordine)

FREE FIRE Nasty, brutish and not short enough, Ben Wheatley’s Free Fire has a simple — and ultimately simpliminded premise: to protract what would normally be a brief shootout scene to the majority of the movie’s 90-minute running time. On the surface, this reducto ad absurdum has a kind of pleasing conceptual-art clarity; Free Fire’s animating idea could serve as the prompt for a performance piece, one that’s all climax, no denouement. But Wheatley’s gallows humor has flimsy scaffolding: Only the spectators hang. Free Fire finds Wheatley — who co-wrote and co-edited the film with his regular collaborator (and spouse), Amy Jump — returning to the 1970s, the same era of his previous feature, last year’s botched J.G. Ballard adaptation High-Rise. Like that earlier movie, which was confined to a 40-story Brutalist tower, an edifice in which the tenants descend deeper into savagery, Free Fire takes place almost entirely in one building, a derelict warehouse in Boston where bodies start to pile up. Wheatley’s films once were full of the individual heroism, has the rare good fortune of turning the head chef gig at the revamped Tavern on the Green a few years back, after spending many years living a life of quiet leisure overseas. The movie features interviews from friends and admirers, including Martha Stewart, Mario Batali and Anthony Bourdain (who also is an executive producer). The dreamy, well-done Magnificent will inevitably be compared with Jino Dreams of Sushi, that other doc about an obsessive, perfectionist chef. But more compelling is the vibe it shares with Man on Wire: Just like high-wire showman Philippe Petit, Tower is a brilliant, dedicated artist who has spent most of his life wowing people with his talents — but is ultimately always out there by himself. (Craig D. Lindsey)
The truth survived in one little boy, and African-American neighbors on a block full of wacky and sometimes political characters is still there, the steady hand of the original auteur is not. French director Luc Amnest has ambitions we can applaud, in trying to make a comedy about race relations on a contemporary New Orleans street — he tries to skewer all sides. But we can laud the idea and fault the execution. In the end, this tale of a barbershop employee who accidentally starts a mini race war — by falling for the sister of a pathologically violent rage case in a goofy white afro — trades more on cheap shock humor than legitimate insight. A scene in which helium-voiced Klansmen debate the details of potty-training a dog is genuine comic genius, but alas, most of the rest of the film relies on jokes about pubic hair and ketamine. If you’re going to use the recurring image of a naked black man with a bag over his head running for his freedom across a bayou, your satire A-game needs to be more than good enough; it needs to be crucial to the story. (Kenji Fujishima)

**TOMORROW (Demain)** The can-do optimism of **Tomorrow** sets it apart from other documentaries about the environmental crisis. Prompted by a 2012 report in Nature, which predicted that the catastrophic effects of climate change will hit sooner than previously calculated, co-directors Mélanie Laurent (Breathe) and Cyril Dion sought out creative problem-solving around the world and in their native France, where their film won a César Award. Laurent and Dion don’t resort to eco-shaming anyone, but an unspoken plea underscores their utopian survey: Why can’t we all live like this? Written by Dion, **Tomorrow** is constructed as a conversation between curious amateurs who prompt one another to further investigation. In four sections (agriculture, economy, education, democracy), the co-directors explore systems that affect our environment and find local solutions to global problems. Some stories are familiar, such as the French paper-mill owner who’s made every aspect of his business part of a recycling loop. Other segments reflect shifting attitudes, such as the one about the Finnish school whose principal uses every possible resource to help students develop into capable independent thinkers. Completed in 2015, **Tomorrow** misses major recent events including Brexit, which could affect several of the English cities profiled, whose governments have issued alternate currency to stimulate regional investment. There’s also a dose of oversimplification: When discussing urban farming in abandoned areas of Detroit, the filmmakers cite the auto industry’s contraction but ignore white flight to the suburbs. What Laurent and Dion do best is present pockets of progressive change as blueprints for idealism in action. (Serena Donadoni)

**WINNER**

**GASPARILLA FILM FESTIVAL**

GRAND JURY BEST DOCUMENTARY FEATURE

**BOSTON FILM FESTIVAL**

BEST DOCUMENTARY, DIRECTOR, & EDITING

**FINDING SOMEWHERE BEAUTIFUL**

**TELLURIDE FILM FESTIVAL**

**MILL VALLEY FILM FESTIVAL**

**MIFF**

**SOMEBODY ELSE'S**

**IRISH FILM FESTIVAL**

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**BEST DOCUMENTARY**

**WEST LOS ANGELES**

**THE LAST MASTICATES**

**THE LOST CITY OF Z**

**THE LOST CITY OF Z**

“I’ve been trained for this.” Those words — or some variation — come up several times throughout James Gray’s **The Lost City of Z**, and they serve as one key to this strange, sprawling, major film. In adapting David Grann’s 2009 nonfiction book to tell a linear story about the life of the obsessed British explorer Percy Fawcett (played here with striking melancholy by Charlie Hunnam), who
In heaven everything is fine. That’s the promise of *Eraserhead*, David Lynch’s self-styled “dream of dark and troubling things,” which introduced moviegoers to a singular cinematic mind who’s been haunting us ever since. Cinematically pays tribute to Lynch in conjunction with *The Art Life*, a documentary about his life and career and; and there’s no better way to (re)acquaint yourself with Lynch than his feature debut, Cinematically/Silent Movie Theatre, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax; Fri., April 21, 10:10 a.m.; $12. (323) 655-2510, cinemafilm.org.

Back in 2006, *Idiocracy* predicted it would take some 500 years for Americans to turn our country into a dumbed-down dystopia. Eleven years later, the electorate responded with a collective “Hold my beer.” The all-too-timely comedy screens at midnight, offering the now-optimistic vision of a president who, though completely out of his depth, actually seeks out intelligent people to solve the nation’s most urgent problems. Talk about unrealistic, Quartet Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A.; Fri., April 21, 11:59 p.m.; $11. (310) 473-8630, laquartetheatres.com.

Locarno in Los Angeles, a weekend-long event presenting the L.A. premieres of 10 films that first debuted at the vaunted Swiss festival, begins with *Hermia & Helena*. Matias Piñeiro once again uses Shakespeare (in this case, *A Midsummer’s Night Dream*) as the loose basis for a story he ends up making all his own in his latest work, which will be followed by the opening-night party. Also screening throughout the weekend: Dark Skull, The Dreamed Path, Rat Film and more. Downtown Independent, 251 S. Main St.; Fri., April 21, 8:30 p.m.; $12. (213) 617-1033, locamoinchicago.com.

**Saturday, April 22**

Sometimes you need to watch a movie about an adorable seal that becomes two brothers’ best friend. *Sammy, the Way-Out Seal*. Alfonso Cuarón’s best film came after all. One thing is beyond dispute after watching it: *Idiocracy*’s plausibility often hits too close to home. Set in a near-future where women are infertile and humanity could cease to exist in a few generations, *Children of Men* shows a world that’s lost hope without being hopeless itself. Just the kind of light viewing our uncertain times demand. ArcLight Hollywood, 6360 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., April 22, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

**Monday, April 24**

Elsewhere in frightful visions of the future, check out *Children of Men*. Alfonso Cuarón’s best film came after *Harry Potter* and the *Prisoner of Azkaban* and before *Gravity*, and like *Idiocracy* its plausibility often hits too close to home. Set in a near-future where women are infertile and the future of humanity is called into question. ArcLight Hollywood, 6360 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Mon., April 24, 5 p.m.; $17.75. (213) 464-1478, arclightcinemas.com. –Michael Nordine

disappeared with his son in the Amazon in 1925, Gray has created something very much his own: a look at how society trains us to know our place in it and how a confrontation with the unknown can completely upend our understanding of the world. What made many of Gray’s other films so compelling was the patience, precision and elegance he brought to what were otherwise gritty stories; it was as if a latter-day Visconti had found himself in Brighton Beach. Now, helming an honest-to-god historical epic, Gray proudly lets his classicist flag fly. The ordered world Fawcett knew and navigated for so many years blows its own brains out on the fields of World War I. Compared to the mechanized slaughterhouse of modern warfare, the supposed hostility of the jungle might actually be somewhat welcome, a source of serenity. And as Hunnam’s sad-eyed man goes from ambitious officer to reluctant explorer to wounded cynic to full-on obsessive convinced he can find the great lost city, we get a life’s journey that builds toward dissolution. Gradually, the old-world meticulousness of Gray’s filmmaking gives way to something more abstract, a drifting impermanence, as if the director were trying to capture the wide, beautiful unknowability of existence. (Bilge Ebiri)

**Their Finest**

The comforting analog clack of typewriter keys is a leitmotif in *Their Finest*, Lone Scherfig’s slight but appealing adaptation of Lisa Evans’ novel *Their Finest Hour and a Half* (who knows why the subject of the original title was confusingly cast aside). In this tale of British filmmaking during World War II, Gemma Arterton plays Catrin Cole, a plucky young woman who finds work as a propagandist for film screenwriter. The task of writing these scripts is presented grudgingly; Catrin receives the directive “We need a story to inspire a nation.” Stories to inspire a nation have long made up a sizable percentage of Hollywood schlock, and *Their Finest* deserves credit for exploring a woman’s role in such an effort, as too many WWII films are strictly masculine stories in which women exist as quick-study love interests. Catrin is more than that, though; her romantic trajectory is utterly predictable. A woman screenwriter at this time was considered a novelty, and while the film addresses this (she’s hired to capture “the feminine experience”), Catrin’s struggles never play like struggles. Typewriter keys get clicked, a paper of two is balled up in frustration and soon enough — poof! — a script appears. The combined charms of Britishness and nostalgia often prove a potent blend for American moviemakers, but *Their Finest* could have delivered something more. The lead screenwriter, Tom Buckley (Sam Dolan), is bespectacled and sensitive, and he and Catrin engage in workplace banter that inevitably leads to a kiss. The fruit of their labor may not be particularly good, but a late scene in which Catrin finally watches her film with an adoring crowd is surprisingly poignant. (Abby Bender)
FUNKY BOSSES

AFTER A QUARTER-CENTURY, BEASTIE BOYS’ CHECK YOUR HEAD REMAINS ONE OF THE FEW RAP-ROCK RECORDS WORTH LISTENING TO

BY JEFF WEISS

Is rap-rock the worst genre ever made? Other rivals vie for that ignominious throne (screamo, hick-hop, nu-metal, adult contemporary, smooth jazz), but rap-rocks only legitimate rival might be Christian rap-rock.

Rap-rock sounds like a great idea. Rap and rock are inherently good things. Except when they’re mixed together, it’s like a Nutella and avocado sandwich.

This is a long way to explain why Beastie Boys’ Check Your Head, celebrating its 25th anniversary this week, is a masterpiece.

MCs rhymed over rock riffs during the first Bronx block parties. On the most iconic old-school single, “White Lines,” Melle Mel spit over a bass line from no-wave legends Liquid Liquid. I guess people liked that Aerosmith and Run-D.M.C. MTV monstrosity.

But until 1992’s Check Your Head, no one had artfully weaved hardcore punk, turntablist scratching, ’70s funk, ’80s rap, Biz Markie and Ted Nugent into a definitive statement — one that would have pointed toward the future of rap if it wasn’t so impossible to replicate.

It’s testament to the genius of Mike D, Ad-Rock and MCA that the late ’90s and early 2000s were glutted with bands attempting a similar fusion but invariably coming off like nookie-less fuckboys (Rage Against the Machine being the sole exception).

The Beasties were the exception to every rule. Their charm, humor and brilliant collage sensibilities made up for the fact that they could be crude and juvenile, and allowed Mike D to rhyme, “Everybody’s rappin’ like it’s a commercial/Actin’ like life is a big commercial.” (It took a decade for people to learn that the second verse was supposed to say “rehearsal”; the group’s two Adams, Yauch and Horovitz, kept the mistake to fuck with their partner.)

Check Your Head’s genesis begins with the commercial failure of the Beasties’ sophomore effort, 1989’s Paul’s Boutique. Despite critical acclaim and eventual canonical inclusion, most people considered the Beasties washed up by the turn of the decade. The president of Capitol Records allegedly told them that he couldn’t focus on their next album because he had the new Donny Osmond to worry about.

Having relocated to L.A. a few years prior, they rented out the old Atwater Village Community Center and converted it into G-Son Studios, complete with a skate ramp and half-court basketball hoop. Recruiting Mark “Money Mark” Nishita for keyboards and impromptu carpentry work, the Beasties picked up their instruments seriously for the first time since their downtown punk-rock days (MCA on bass, Ad-Rock on guitar, Mike D on drums).

It was part inspiration, part financial necessity. The sample-delic bricolage of Paul’s Boutique reportedly cost a quarter million dollars to clear. So during a leisurely two-year recording process, the Beasties channeled an eclectic array of influences (Jimmy Smith, Bad Brains, Richard “Groove” Holmes) and sprung for a few meticulously selected, high-priced samples (Bob Dylan, Jimi Hendrix, Sly Stone). They named the album after a check mark that Money Mark randomly put on the head of a Desert Storm trading card of General Norman Schwarzkopf.

With ferocious scratches from the Adams, the album is grounded in hip-hop but also the genre’s 70s roots.

An L.A. native, Jeff Weiss edits Passion of the Weiss and hosts the Bizarre Ride show on RBMA Radio. Follow him on Twitter @passionweiss.
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HAPPY BIRTHDAY, IGGY POP

Tomorrow is Friday, the best day of the week. It’s also Iggy Pop’s birthday. The Undisputed Heavyweight Champion of Rock & Roll will have prevailed for 70 years.

In these throw-in-your-mouth times, I’m always on the lookout for something to celebrate. It’s a way to push back against that which is pushing against you. Defiance with a backbeat is a great way to land hard on the bad guys and feel good doing it.

And there is a lot to land on these days. It’s truly obscene how casually comrade Trump makes checkers moves on the global chessboard. How do you deploy 59 Tomahawk missiles to the Shayrat Airbase in Syria and not totally destroy it? Ask your dumbfuck-in-chief.

I think it was a distraction op with a whole-lotta-millions-dollar price tag. Poor ol’ Raytheon will have to shoulder the burden of a stick he just took to the next trillion-dollar exercise ordered up by the executive suite. And in the days after his zero-potency arrival, Ron took over on bass and James Williamson on guitar) detonated next: Raw Power, Just this fan’s opinion, but if there is ever the occasion where every country had to represent itself in the rock genre with a single album, throwing down for the USA, it would have to be this one.

In April 2011, I was in Ann Arbor, Michigan, to check out The Stooges, whose remaining members included Scott Asheton, James Williamson, Steve Mackay and Iggy. It was a special show to pay tribute to the departed Ron Asheton. I knew this was going to be one not to miss.

I got to band practice a day before the show and immediately noticed Jim Jarmusch and a small crew documenting the proceedings. I think the man is interesting as hell, so I asked him what he was up to and he told me that he had been doing a lot of on-camera interviews with Iggy. I asked what was going to come of it and he said he wasn’t exactly sure yet, but something would make its presence known at some point. I marveled at the combination of these two forces and reckoned it was a perfect fit.

The show was incredible. The Stooges turned it inside out. As a very special treat, the band did a short set of early material with Deniz Tek on guitar. The Radio Birdmaninterface confirmed that for the last time I saw Scott.

Last year, Mr. Jarmusch’s patient and meticulous work, which tells the story of the band’s start and subsequent journey into obliteration, made its way to the screen in a you-really-gotta-see-it documentary called Gimme Danger.

Combining interviews with band members, the man who brought them to Elektra, Danny Fields, The MGS’s Wayne Kramer, Ron and Scott’s sister Kathy and others, along with live footage and photographs, the film tells a story that is not only gripping but emotionally wrenching over and over. It’s a tough story anyway, but the way Jarmusch tells it is as exquisite and fitting as the ride was rough.

At this time, only two of the core members, James Williamson and Iggy, remain. In Gimme Danger, you feel the passing of the others.

Ultimately, the music won the day. The Stooges’ return to the stage in 2003 wasn’t so much a reunion as the songs pulling the members back together to brutalize them one more time in several laps around the world. The band were greeted with a hero’s welcome wherever they turned up. Nothing like the first time around.

If any of these men did nothing else in their lives, they were in The Stooges. When you listen to the records, you have to conclude that was plenty.

It was always a perfect lesson in humility to hear these songs as a young person and know, without a doubt, that no matter what my fellow bandmates and I did, no amount of monastic dedication, deprivation, tempering or experience would allow us to get close to that level of sheer violent truth. The Stooges made me understand that music was a force to be served, and by serving it well, it will break you. If it did not, it is only because you flinched and tried to survive instead of giving up all hope and going all in. We gave it everything we had.

Happy birthday to the street-walkin’ cheetah with a heart full of napalm!
THU. APRIL 20

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THU. APRIL 20

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Cait Brennan
@ MOLLY MALONE’S
Renaissance woman of indie rock Cait Brennan’s second album, ironically titled Third, is a subversive glam-rock masterpiece that will hopefully strengthen the transgendered singer-songwriter’s burgeoning career. It’s a pleasure to hear a new album that wears its David Bowie, Velvet Underground, Big Star and Queen influences so boldly on its sleeve while still serving as its own original, satisfying statement. Get there early, because Brennan actually goes on first, followed by her collaborator, multi-instrumentalist, producer and millennial answer to Todd Rundgren, Fernando Perdomo. Another of Brennan’s collaborators, Chris Price, producer of last year’s Emitt Rhodes album, wraps up an incredible lineup.
—Jackson Truax

Frederick Hodges, Richard Dowling
@ OLD TOWN MUSIC HALL
Throw away those corny 12-tone serial records and come on down for an afternoon of multiple modern classics as sharp-dressed maestros Richard Dowling and Frederick Hodges offer up dueling piano renditions of favorites by Gershwin, Joplin, Rossini and Sousa. Some of the many popular toe-tappers they’ve got planned include Rossini’s “William Tell Overture,” as well as Gershwin’s original, two-piano version of “Rhapsody in Blue,” back when it was called “American Rhapsody”—an interpretation not often performed, even though the song remains wildly popular in its altered, less expansive version. In case you were wondering who would fill that Ferrante & Teicher–sized hole in your easy-listening heart, Dowling and Hodges are here to give you the dulcet delivery for which you have so ardently waited.
—David Cotner

Wrekmeister Harmonies
@ THE ECHOPLEX
Wrekmeister Harmonies emanated out of Chicago in 2006 dedicated to searching for sounds beyond the conventional. Led by guitarist-vocalist JR Robinson, the eclectic collective have refined a sensually inviting take on the doom genre in a series of records that shift in shape and sonic embrace, entwining contemporary classical, art-rock and blackest metal textures in drony works that probe the mystical qualities of time. The band’s numbers have swelled to include collaborators such as Alexander Hacke of Einstürzende Neubauten, free-improv cellist Fred Lonberg-Holm and Chris Brokaw of Codeine. The recent Light Falls (Thrill Jockey) finds Robinson joined by three members of the almighty Godspeed...
Balkan Beat Box
@ THE TROUBADOUR
“A new prophet has got a new flow,” Balkan Beat Box singer Tomer Yosef declares on “Chin Chin,” from the New York band’s fifth album, Shout It Out. He could be describing the group’s restless combination of disparate musical styles, from traditional Eastern European and Jewish folk to hard, electronic hip-hop rhythms and jazzy experimentation. Drummer Tamir Muskat used to play with Firewater, as did saxophonist Ori Kaplan, who was also in Gogol Bordello for a spell, but they take off into an even more madly eclectic combination of influences in Balkan Beat Box. An eerie cut like “Mad Dog (Chaser)” comes off more like an atmospheric, austere soundscape compared with the group’s typically busy mélange of funky beats and interplay of sassy horns. —Falling James

DMX, Too Short
@ THE OBSERVATORY
Look past the substance-abuse jokes and the memes, and you can see DMX as kind of The Ramones of hip-hop. Totally not politically correct, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, of The Ramones of hip-hop. Totally not politically correct, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic, oftentimes offensive, DMX crushed an expensive and commercially unapologetic. Also Thursday, April 27. —Paul Rogers

Vieux Farka Touré
@ THE ECHOPLEX
Vieux Farka Touré has an unusual style of guitar playing in which slithering, slippery riffs are threaded into a rich tapestry made of pure molten sunlight. The Malian singer-guitarist chants his vocals against a hypnotizing backdrop of intricately shimmering guitar, which sometimes evokes the exotic musical interplay of his compatriot Tinariwen. Unlike Tinariwen, Touré is more likely to draw upon straightforward elements of blues and rock & roll instead of relying only on the unique Malian style of guitar playing. Touré has steadily made a name for himself and emerged from the potentially smothering shadow of his legendary father, the late Ali Farka Touré. The son’s new album, Samba, is a typically idiosyncratic combination of African, reggae and Latin rhythms. —Falling James

Lusine, Geotic
@ THE ECHOPLEX
This show is for the Ghostly International heads, those who are continually enamored by the record label that, since 1999, has teetered on the cutting edge of synth-heavy indie pop and dance music. Seattle-based Lusine has long been affiliated with the label’s eclectic, forward-minded electronic aesthetic. His latest album, Sensorimotor, which dropped via Ghostly in early March, is packed with chilled jams. “Slow Motion” lives up to its name with a powerful, creeping rhythm that is as hypnotic and dramatic as a stretched-out action sequence. Lusine builds and releases through the album, leaving the listener on a car chase–like high with the energetic “The Lift.” Opening the night is Geotic, an alias for Baths mastermind Will Wiesenfeld. As Geotic, Wiesenfeld recently released Abyssma on Ghostly. The collection is moody, atmospheric and still retains enough of a dance-floor beat to warm up the crowd. —Lisa Chanesian
**UNION NIGHTCLUB:**

*MAKING WAVES*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

*Over the Wires*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE TROUBADOR:**

*MIDNIGHT BOSS*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE REDWOOD BAR & GRILL:**

*The Alarm*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THESE ARE THE TIMES:**

*Sauron*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE THROBBING HEART:**

*Shawn of the Dead*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**TREASURE ISLAND:**

*The Dead Kennedys*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**TRUE TALENTS:**

*The Notwist*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**VITELLO’S ITALIAN RESTAURANT:**

*Peter & the Wolf*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**BAR FEDORA:**

*The Giants*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**BOULEVARD MUSIC:**

*The Doors*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**CATALINA BAR & GRILL:**

*The Bluebeaters*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE CD CENTRAL:**

*The Cardigans*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE DECISION:**

*The Deciders*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE DRAGS:**

*The Drag**: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**GREYHOUND:**

*The Greyhounds*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE FRENCH HOUSE:**

*The Frenchies*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE HONEYCOMB:**

*The Honeycombers*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE HOLLANDER:**

*The Hollander*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE IRIS:**

*The Iris*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**JOE’S GREAT AMERICAN BAR & GRILL:**

*The Joe’s Great American Band*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**JUNIPER:**

*The Junip*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE KICKS:**

*The Kicks*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE KICKS:**

*The Kick!* Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE KNOT:**

*The Knot*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE KNIGHTS:**

*The Knights*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE LOCATION:**

*The Location*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE MANNION:**

*The Mannion*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**NEW RIVER:**

*The New River*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE OASIS:**

*The Oasis*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE ORIOLES:**

*The Orioles*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE OWL:**

*The Owl*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE PAGODA:**

*The Pagoda*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE PALLADIUM:**

*The Palladium*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE PARISH:**

*The Parish*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE PEARL ORCHID:**

*The Pearl Orchid*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE PEARL:**

*The Pearl*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

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*The Queen*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE ROCKWELL:**

*The Rockwell*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE ROYAL PALM:**

*The Royal Palm*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SALOON:**

*The Saloon*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SHOOTER:**

*The Shooter*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SIGN:**

*The Sign*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SCHOOL HOUSE:**

*The School House*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SHELTER:**

*The Shelter*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SIMON:**

*The Simon*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SISTERS:**

*The Sisters*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE STATES:**

*The States*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE STUDIO BAR:**

*The Studio Bar*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SUNSET:**

*The Sunset*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SUNSET PLAYHOUSE:**

*The Sunset Playhouse*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE SWIFT:**

*The Swift*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE TOWER:**

*The Tower*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE TWIST:**

*The Twist*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE WICKED:**

*The Wicked*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE WOODS:**

*The Woods*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE ZEN:**

*The Zen*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.

**THE ZIPPY:**

*The Zippy*: Fri., April 21, 9 p.m., $15.
For more listings, please go to laweekly.com.

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**CONCERTS**

**FRIDAY, APRIL 21**

**COACHELLA VALLEY MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL:** With Radiohead, The xx, Travis Scott, Father John Misty, Empire of the Sun, Dillon Francis, Mac Miller, Steve Angello, Glass Animals, Phantogram, Mac DeMarco, Little Dragon and others, 12 p.m., $399-$599. Empire Polo Club, 81-800 Avenue 51, Indio.

**DONELL JONES:** With Dynasty, Sydney Castillo, 9 p.m., $40-$60. The Regent Theater, 448 S. Main St., L.A.

**FLOATING POINTS:** With Sun Araw, 9 p.m., $20. El Rey Theatre, 926 Wilshire Blvd. (See Music Pick.)

**GORDON GOODWIN’S BIG PHAT BAND:** 6 p.m., free. LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.

**HIGH TIMES U.S. CANNABIS CUP:** 3:30 p.m., $55-$520. National Orange Show Events Center, 808 S. “E” St., San Bernardino. Also Sat-Sun.

**JOHN MAYER:** With LANY, 7:30 p.m., $45-$120. The Forum, 800 W. Manchester Blvd., Inglewood.

**LIL WAYNE:** 7 p.m., $59.50. Hollywood Palladium, 6215 N. Figueroa St., L.A.

**MEGAN HILTY & BRIAN STOKES:** 8 p.m., $35-$195. Renee & Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, 600 Town Center Drive, Costa Mesa.

**MIGUEL ROSE:** 6:30 p.m., $39-$155. The Greek Theatre, 2780 N. Vermont Ave., L.A.

**ROSÉN MYRPH:** With Honey Dijon, 9 p.m. The Fonda Theatre, 6126 Hollywood Blvd., L.A.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 22**

**ANTHRAS, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE:** With The Devils Wear Prada, Code Orange, 6 p.m., $35. The Wiltern, 3790 S. Figueroa St., L.A.

**COACHELLA VALLEY MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL:** With Lady Gaga, Bon Iver, Future, DJ Snake, Martin Garrix, Schoolboy Q, Gucci Mane, The Head & the Heart, Two Door Cinema Club, Syco, Röyksopp, Local Natives, Majid Jordan, Dreamcar, Four Tet, Chicano Batman, Autograf and others, 12 p.m., $399-$899. Empire Polo Club, 81-800 Avenue 51, Indio.

**DMX, TOO SHORT, YING YANG TWINS, SUGA:** FREE: 6 p.m., $35. The Observatory, 350 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

**PIXIES:** With Public Access TV, 8 p.m., $39.50-$79.50. The Theatre at Ace Hotel, 929 S. Broadway, L.A.

**THURSDAY, APRIL 27**

**THE 1975:** With Wall Pave Waves, 7:30 p.m., $29-$50, $50. Greek Theatre, 2780 N. Vermont Ave., L.A.

**DMX, TOO SHORT, YING YANG TWINS, SUGA:** 6 p.m., $39.50-$49.50. The Novo by Microsoft, 800 W. Third St., L.A.

**KANSAS:** 7 p.m., $39.50-$125. The Wiltern, 3790 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.

**PIXIES:** With Public Access TV, 8 p.m., $39.50-$79.50. The Theatre at Ace Hotel, 929 S. Broadway, L.A.

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**FALLING JAMES**

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566 Legal Notices

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brary, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court.

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gal Services Web site: (www.LegalHelpCalifor-
nia.org) or the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courts.ca.gov/self-help), by contacting your local court or county bar association
NOTE: The court has a stat-
tuary lien for waived fees and costs on any settle-
ment or arbitration award of $10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case.

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The name and address of the court is: Superior Court of California Hall of Justice 400 County Center, Red-
wood City, CA 94003
The name, address, and telephone number of plaintiff's attorney is, or plaintiff without an attor-
ney is: MICHAEL B. ALLEN LAW GROUP, INC. 520 S. El Camino Real. Ste.

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La Weekly Bulletin

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