PORTRAIT OF THE RAPPER AS A YOUNG MAN

ON HIS SECOND ALBUM, BIG FISH THEORY, VINCE STAPLES TURNS HIS GAZE FROM HIS LONG BEACH PAST TO HIS UNCERTAIN FUTURE

BY SARAH BENNETT
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DETAINED IN ERROR
An outdated federal database leads to unlawful detainment of U.S. citizens, according to motion in ACLU lawsuit

BY JASON MCGAHAN

When U.S. Immigration & Customs Enforcement agents want to detain someone being released from a local jail, they identify that person based on a database that is “outdated,” “antiquated,” “not updated appropriately” and erroneous 30 percent of the time, according to a federal motion filed in May by the ACLU of Southern California.

“The databases are so unreliable that a senior ICE official in Los Angeles twice wrote to ICE headquarters to complain that errors were ‘frequently’ causing ICE to find via agency database checks [individuals] to be removable, only to later discover that the person is a United States citizen,” the motion states.

“We’ve seen all kinds of cases of people who are naturalized citizens but the system didn’t update to account for their naturalization,” says Jennie Pasquarella, a senior staff attorney for the ACLU of Southern California.

The ACLU filed a lawsuit in 2012 to halt the program. Legal experts say that if the suit is successful, it could reduce the ability of federal immigration agents to take custody of detainees in local jails.

With the latest motion, the court will weigh whether additional investigatory steps beyond a database check should be required to satisfy probable cause before ICE can issue a detainer.

More than 70 percent of detainers issued by ICE agents in the Central District of California are issued solely on the basis of electronic databases, without agents ever interviewing the subject or conducting any other investigation, Pasquarella says.

Through a spokesperson, ICE declined to comment, citing a policy of not commenting on matters that are the subject of pending litigation.

Fingerprint technology powers the allegedly faulty database, and that technology became a mainstay of immigration enforcement when it was incorporated into a federal policy known as Secure Communities in 2008. Every local law enforcement agency in the nation was connected to the database by 2011, and the number of detainers issued nationwide peaked that year at 309,697.

ICE has issued nearly 2 million hold requests, known as detainers, in the past decade. Many local and state law enforcement agencies recently have refused to continue sharing certain data with federal authorities. But there has been little outcry over the federal mandate that local law enforcement share the fingerprints of people booked and arrested, which ICE then uses to identify people for removal from the country.

In Los Angeles County, the number of detainers issued has decreased every year since the ACLU filed its lawsuit, in 2012, according to data compiled by the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse at Syracuse University. Between May 2015 and February 2016, ICE booked only 21.5 percent of the subjects of detainers into its custody, according to data the ACLU published through discovery.

But because of President Trump’s policies on immigration and deportations, Pasquarella says, “I expect we will see dramatic increases in the number of detainers issued this year.”

Judge Beverly Reid O’Connell of the U.S. Central District of California will consider the motion at a hearing scheduled for July 24.

“The databases are so unreliable that a senior ICE official in Los Angeles twice wrote to ICE headquarters to complain.”

—A MOTION FILED IN MAY IN FEDERAL COURT
AN ASTONISHING TRUE STORY OF COURAGE AND TRIUMPH

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Vince Staples is not bringing back gangster rap. The 23-year-old might have struggled for survival as a teenager in North Long Beach, and sure, wisps of his street-life past come up in a few songs on his acclaimed 2015 full-length Def Jam debut, Summertime '06. But a few trunk-rattling beats and razor-sharp verses about the realities of life without economic options do not a gangster-rap resurgence make. “Motherfuckers say Summertime '06 was gangster rap, but that’s just whatever they say when they’ve never been [south of] the 10 freeway,” Staples notes, reclining on a leather couch at Hollywood’s EastWest Studios, where he recently finished recording his next album, Big Fish Theory, dropping June 23. “[Summertime] is not really that banged out to me, just to be real. Every nigger has lived that in the eyes of the people who like to call us ‘niggers’ when their door’s closed, so I don’t really care about that type of shit.”

Staples, dressed casually in a black hoodie and khaki-colored joggers and sipping on a cucumber-ginger limeade, spends the next few hours emphasizing how little he cares about what people think of his music in general, or his place in L.A.’s current hip-hop renaissance. He is not being coy about this indifference, either. He seems genuinely uninterested in how his music affects listeners or how it’s perceived by anyone once it leaves his hands. “I don’t think too much about it. You walk to the canvas and you paint,” he says with an unwavering stare. “Art is a selfish thing.”

Along with Kendrick Lamar, Staples emerged over the last seven years as a different kind of rapper. Since he started dropping flows as a fringe member of the Odd Future crew at age 15 (stealing the show with his cameo on Earl Sweatshirt’s “Hive”), Staples has collaborated with everyone from Common to Ghostface Killah to, most recently, Gorillaz. His early mixtapes, Shyne Coldchain Vol. 1, Shyne Coldchain II, Winter in Prague and Stolen Youth, showed a raw, promising talent, one almost stifled by the limits of his surroundings.

His manager, Corey Smyth, says Staples started to push past those limitations when money started coming in. “If you can wake up every day and know that rent is paid, and you don’t have to worry about where your next meal is coming from, and you know that if someone you love and care about asked you for something, you can give it to them, it changes perspective,” Smyth says. “Those are three things I know for sure he had to deal with that he doesn’t have to deal with now.”

It wasn’t until 2014’s Hell Can Wait EP, his first release on Def Jam, that Staples started to become the rapper recognizable today. On it, the 21-year-old positioned himself almost as an urban ethnographer, giving deadpan descriptions of his experiences and observations, often dropping facts and knowledge with a wryness that could easily go over the head of...
anyone outside his inner circle.

Summertime '06, released more than a year later, was a groundbreaking double disc of creaky No ID. and DJ Dalei that introduced the world to Long Beach's Ramona Park. It birthed anthems such as "Lift Me Up" and "Norf Norf," the latter an ode to the 10 square blocks that were most of his world until his family got evicted in 2014. Last summer’s Prima Donna EP was another departure for Staples, eschewing North Long Beach trauma for issues more pressing to an emerging hip-hop star (fame, fortune, fans) set to sub-bassy beats from British electronic producer James Blake.

Critics have tried to extrapolate all kinds of meaning from every line of Staples' oeuvre — that there’s no optimism in his reality checks, that he’s lonely now that he’s successful, that he’s beefing with every rapper out there, that he’s changed since he moved to L.A. Ask him what his songs are really about, though, and he swears it’s not that deep.

I was talking to [a] homie — he’s known me for 17 years. He said, ‘Niggas always thinking you’re making some gangbang shit, but your whole album was about girls.’” Staples says with a smirk of Summertime '06. “He’s right, too. That whole fucking CD is about girls.”

Instead of bringing back gangster rap, Staples would prefer these days to be seen as a rapper embarking on his own journey as an artist, one that might result in familiar-sounding music but actually combines the fuck-all informality of Basquiat, the consumerist references of Andy Warhol, the absurdist humor of dadaism and the semiautobiographical lilt of James Joyce’s Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man.

Consider Staples, then, as a human of indeterminate origins who is using rap as a medium to document whatever he’s going through at the moment, saying what he feels one day even if that changes the next, creating cerebral snippets in the process that get mixed, mastered and endlessly streamed as products of capitalism that take on meanings and lives of their own, refreshed by their creator’s intentions.

Since his days cranking out songs by the dozens while crashing on the couch at Syd Tha Kyd’s house almost a decade ago, Staples has grown into an obstinate young man whose opinions change daily, armed with an elephant’s memory, a love of contemporary art museums, an air of wisdom that can come across as arrogance and — now, after being granted the luxury of time and money — a vision of himself as an artist in the truest sense of the word.

“There’s no museum or gallery for music,” he explains, “so what I do is create that gallery through an album or through a music video to showcase the different bodies of work I created during a certain period of time — a period piece, if you will.”

It makes sense that Staples compares his work to an art gallery show rather than to any hip-hop forebear. He has long rejected the lifestyle that many associate with high-profile rappers; he’s never smoked weed and doesn’t drink alcohol. He operates as he always has, in a vacuum surrounded by a small circle of friends, independent of other musicians and the industry at large.

“Go to the MOCA and you’ll see a retrospective by a certain artist — all the works from this time to this time. That’s what an album is. Press play, listen to it, take from it what you want, and go fuck home... I said what I have to say in those 12 songs.”

Big Fish Theory starts with the whoosh of clouds rushing past your face, as if you’re soaring free, high above the concrete jungle of Summertime '06. Slowly, other elements drop into the soothing atmosphere: a skittish keyboard, a two-step beat, a woman’s voice, lasers. The record ends in a flurry of electronic raindrops and Celtic flutes, not midsentence like Summertime ‘06 but mid-everything; leaving you waiting for a beat to drop.

In between are the two previously released songs, “BagBak” and “Big Fish” (both summer-ready bangers with anthemic choruses built for large sound systems), and a half dozen other tracks that sonically veer so far from anything that’s come out of Staples’ mind before that you’d almost think it’s a different rapper’s name on the cover. Lyrics don’t take you back to Ramona Park, to the past; they reflect the reality of his current jet-set life (anxieties, esoteric struggles and all).

In fact, with glitchy-computer garage and fast-paced industrial wobble straight out of a 4 a.m. techno warehouse party, it’s hard to consider Big Fish Theory a rap album at all.

“If a photographer took the same picture over and over again, you’d call them crazy, right? If an architect built the same house, if a designer made the same clothes, if a painter made the same painting — we’d all discredit them,” Staples says of why he refuses to revisit old sounds.

“Then why do we expect musicians, and rappers specifically, to do the same thing over and over and over? It’s because they do not look at rap music as art. They like to say the word, but they’re not really holding anything to those standards.”

Ideas for new songs and albums, including Big Fish Theory, just appear in Staples’ head now. As he tells it, he wakes up one morning and the entire concept is there, lyrics and all, so he calls his manager, books some studio time and records.

Staples does not make beats or play any instruments. He doesn’t think in terms of genres (if you mention one, he’ll quickly say, “I don’t know what the fuck that is”), which would make for a very difficult writing process if not for his core group of longtime friends and confidants, all of whom wander in and out of the lounge at East West Studios as we talk.

There’s Tyler Benard, nicknamed Westside Ty, whose house off Pico Boulevard is where much of Staples’ Def Jam albums were conceived; and Zack Sekoff, a 21-year-old Yale student and multi-instrumentalist home on summer break, who first made a name for himself as a beatmaker working with Thundercat.

Together with a few others — all under 25, some friends since childhood — they help translate Staples’ spontaneous curatorial visions into actual, playful melodies and rhythms. Smyth, who works with everyone from Talib Kweli to Dave Chappelle, refers to the squad as “the kids.”

Big Fish Theory was crystallized through this process. It started with a nugget of a question: “What does a robot sound like?” and when Staples explained it in his own (genre-free) words, Benard was able to determine he was referring to the techno and house sounds of the ’90s, with which Sekoff had already experimented.

“He was talking a lot about techno and Detroit techno and how there’s something to be had in that aesthetic,” says Sekoff, who was studying in London at the time, listening to a lot of Burial and grime. “That there’s a city story to be told, it’s not just about festivals out in the desert somewhere.”

“I never know what the fuck I’m saying,” Staples adds. “They’ve all known me long enough to know what I’m talking about, and it’s like that.”
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snare is boof,’ I can think about what we’ve listened to or what our mutual acquaintances are listening to and know what he means. So often with music now, people are just put in the room together that don’t know each other. Not here.”

Once Staples and his friends finalize the first five or six songs for an album, he says, “The rest is easy.” With a reference point firmly in place, he invites other people down to the studio to hear the tracks and waits for more beats to float in.

Though I listened to Big Fish Theory in its entirety, no one would tell me the song titles, the producers who collaborated with Staples or whose voices I heard featured. Staples doesn’t want anyone to read about the record first and put it on a pedestal before they hear it; he wants his listeners to be in the moment and decide if they like it as music, not as “Vince Staples featuring whoever” music.

“All I can tell you is that it’s current. It’s tomorrow. It’s next Thursday,” Staples says, only half joking. “We’re making future music. It’s Afro-futurism. This is my Afro-futurism. There’s no other kind.”

Staples wasn’t always an artist this in control of his image and his music, nor did he always want to be. For a kid who admits that he never felt the urge to do anything—not school, not rapping, not even gang-banging—winding up with a major-label deal and the independence and resources to create without worrying about the consequences could seem like a fluke.

Lots of credit for getting Staples to where he is today should go to his manager, Smyth, who says he saw early potential in the young rapper.

To Smyth, it didn’t matter that the mixtapes Staples had at the time were poorly produced, that his cadence was nowhere near where it needed to be or the song structure was bad. After Smyth first heard the dry humor on an early track called “Matlock” and saw Staples perform onstage at SXSW, when the rapper was only 17, he knew the risk was worth taking.

“I thought he was hilarious. He jumped on a stage that had nothing to do with him—at the most hip-hopped-out show ever—and for 15 minutes he was there looking out at those kids like, ‘You don’t even know. This is over your head,’” Smyth says.

Credit, of course, should also go to Staples himself, who has used the comfort afforded him in the last three years to explore his own creativity, something he had never considered taking seriously before.

Financial security allowed Staples to treat his rap career like a real job, giving him the peace of mind to spread out and grow emotionally and artistically, a rarity for many musicians. For a young artist still trying to figure out who he is as he rolls into his early 20s, the flexibility is huge. It means his own perspective changes often, sometimes day to day, making it hard to relate to statements (or even music) made by some former self.

“I was a piece of shit when I was 21. I wouldn’t say I fully knew what I was talking about then,” Staples says after being asked to defend a quote from the Hell Can Wait era. “I wasn’t almost 24 working on a decent income and a decent understanding of what I want to be for the rest of my life. It’s just time. A lot of people don’t get time. Time heals all paths, they say.”

These days, Staples lives somewhere near where he is today should go to his manager. The Westside and spends most of his year on the road (up next: a set of summer shows with Gorillaz). The electronic-heavy Big Fish Theory drops at the end of this month and likely with it, confusion from those who once labeled him a gangster rapper.

But Staples isn’t concerned with what people think of him or of the music he felt like making this time around.

“The worst thing that can happen is people don’t like it. To me, that’s a win: Someone can’t see your music and not give you some money,” he says, getting up for a haircut in the main room of Studio 1. “The shit I come from, I’ll take that every time.”
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ERIKA JAYNE / BROOKE CANDY / STARLEY
SPENCER LUDWIG / TISH HYMAN / JESSE MØNTANA

Boulevard Stage

SATURDAY, JUNE 10
DJ PAULO / KRISTII / DJ WZRD / RICHIE SKYE
ROB.B / KANDIE / DJ BAD / BRE-Z
DJ SEDRICK / SEVYN STREEETER

SATURDAY, JUNE 11
DJ LALA / HYM THE RAPPER / KEVIYON
DJ CRYSTAL ELLIS / MICHA BLU / DJ B.WALKER
GEORGIA REIGN / DJ BEN / SHARAYA J
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SATURDAY, JUNE 10
CARMEN JARA / GRACIELA BELTRAN
MARIACHI ARCOIRIS / SELENA TRIBUTE BAND
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THE FATHER OF REINVENTION

Long Beach restaurant Padre has hired a Guadalajara chef with an unlikely background

BY BRIAN ADDISON

When restaurant owner Jay Krymis, the guy behind downtown L.A.’s Mezcalero and West Hollywood’s dirtiest queer bar, FUBAR, decided to move into Long Beach territory, he arrived with a bang: Padre in an area’s best guy who serves what is arguably the best tacos in town. Then Krymis brought on Guadalajara-born chef Manuel Bañuelos, the guy who serves what is arguably the area’s best torta ahogada, at Balam in Lynwood (which is still open and still good), and creates tacos filled with mole tinga masala and witty twists such as a lechada de chalote. “When I was in Oaxaca, the food there changed the way I approached cooking forever,” he says. “Butchering wasn’t left to the men, but if you wanted to really know the food, you had to talk to the women; the women ran it all. And they created these things that—what’s the word in English?—I want to say ‘complicated,’ but it’s more, well, complicated than that. There was so much going on in each dish, but everything had a simplicity, with really local flavors that couldn’t be replicated elsewhere.”

This experience brought about a shift in Bañuelos’ cuisine and in his thinking. He had a greater respect for ingredients’ sources; he had a more acute focus on saucers; and he had a newfound interest in reinventing classics without casting traditions that made it great.”

—MANUEL BAÑUELOS

Upon his return, Bañuelos did the precise opposite of traveling and vacationing; he volunteered, helping build homes in the most rural areas of Mexico. As a result, his presumptions about chef-driven food changed. He also was able to hone the skills he had learned abroad.

“Fifteen years ago, chef-driven Mexican food didn’t exist,” Bañuelos says. “And when I was young, I had this obsession with over-accessorizing—y’know, adding things on top of things because it made it ‘fancy.’ I didn’t know how bad that really was until I returned to Mexico” after a fine-dining stint in London.

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For example, there’s Bañuelos’ vegan take on ceviche: Chunky pieces of asparagus and hearts of palm are tossed with a bright, citrusy marinade of coconut milk, lemon basil and a lime-basil oil. This isn’t to say Bañuelos is purely experimental. His grilled panela and nopal (cow’s milk cheese and cactus) is a traditional dish. But his esquites (typically corn kernels covered in cotija, Tajín, lime juice and mayo) plays with the idea of nixtamal (dried corn kernels soaked or boiled in citrus liquid). Bañuelos takes fresh heirloom hominy and bastes the corn in broth, then tops the bowl with bone marrow, mayo and lime.

“There is no question Mexican food is going through a renaissance,” Bañuelos says. “But that doesn’t mean we make it inaccessible, that we shut out the traditions that made it great.”

—Brian Addison

LONG BEACH’S NEW TIKI BAR IS IN A MOBILE SHIPPING CONTAINER

Robert Molina, the guy behind the Latin-focused bar and grill that is Roxanne’s in Cal Heights, is a restless man. He introduced the craft cocktail scene to Long Beach by way of Roxanne’s and then created Long Beach’s first contemporary speakeasy, which operates in the back of Roxanne’s, accessible through a secret telephone booth.

His newest endeavor is even more groundbreaking. Molina is about to launch L.A.’s first portable tiki bar: Marie’s Tek-Tec. (Roxanne’s is named after his first daughter using her middle name; Marie’s is the same deal, for his second daughter.)

Just how is Molina accomplishing this? Taking a cue from North Long Beach’s lauded SteelCraft eat-and-drink hub, made almost entirely of shipping containers, Molina is using his own container and employing his own shipping company to move the makeshift tiki bar into action. When not at an event elsewhere, the tiki bar will live in the back lot of Roxanne’s.

“IT’S TIKI WITH A LATIN TWIST—SO THAT MEANS TAKING THE POLYNESIAN ROOTS OF THE TIKI COCKTAIL AND INFUSING AS MUCH AS WE CAN FROM PERU DOWNWARD,” Molina says. “We’re trying to blend the rich history of Mesoamerica—the myths, the deities, the art—into this bar.”

Molina has brought on Josh Daclan, from Honolulu’s famed Royal Hawaiian, and Kelvin Portillo, from Gin & Luck.

“We’re trying to take people on a trip through layers,” Portillo says. “Mixing agave spirits with sugarcane spirits creates fruity drinks with a kick.”

Daclan and Portillo are using fruits common to Central America—think nance, dragonfruit, guava and cashew fruit—and applying them to drinks paired with overproof rums, mezcal and tequilas. And the mixologists will work in a space that Molina can transport nearly anywhere, thanks to his M-Line Carrier trucking company.

Expected to be completed in two months, Marie’s Tek-Tec will unfold into a tiki paradise. The shipping container has a retractable roof, foldout dance floor, art by tiki legend Doug Home and hand carvings by none other than the legendary Tiki Diablo. With all of this, Molina hopes to achieve full immersion in a tropical world.

“I want to give people an escape, a place to enjoy the paradises that came out of the tiki bars,” Molina says. “And I want them to be able to experience it wherever they want to have it.”

—Brian Addison
How Do You Say "Taix"?

NO ONE KNOWS HOW TO PRONOUNCE THE NAME OF HISTORIC TAIX RESTAURANT

In 1927, Marius Taix Jr. — son of French immigrant and hotel magnate Marius Taix Sr. — opened the first iteration of Taix Restaurant in his father’s downtown L.A. hotel. Marius served 50-cent roast chicken dinners with table d’hôte, or communal, seating. (For the discreet and well-heeled diner, private booths were available for an additional 25 cents.)

In 1962, Marius Jr.’s sons and son-in-law opened a second iteration at Taix’s current location, under the name Les Freres Taix, meaning “the brothers Taix.” The original restaurant succumbed to an eminent domain claim a few years later, leaving Les Freres as the only Taix left standing. Soon after, the freres reclaimed the restaurant’s original name (apparently, “Les Freres” confused customers, who couldn’t find the restaurant under T in the phone book). Taix Restaurant became a beloved fixture of Echo Park, remaining so for decades even as the neighborhood has gentrified around it.

But not once in these nearly 90 years of history has there been consensus on how to pronounce this restaurant’s name.

“We have heard everything, from taxicab to toys,” says Michael Taix, current owner and fourth generation of the Taix family in L.A. “Toys is probably the most common, with toy-k’s and tex.”

I pronounce it toy-k’s — because if I use any other pronunciation, no one understands what restaurant I’m referring to. Most patrons, however, heatedly debate the two other common pronunciations, tex and toys. “I can’t tell you how many times I’ve had people approach us at the desk and tell me that the loser was going to pay for dinner,” Taix says. “I have either ruined their night or saved their night by pronouncing it tex.”

Tex is the pronunciation the Taix family has stood by since Marius Sr. According to Michael Taix, it’s the correct pronunciation when referring to the restaurant and the name of the family that has owned it for decades. Toy-ks, Taix kindly informs me, is not real French.

The confusion comes from a misunderstanding of a French grammatical rule that an “x” at the end of a word is silent. This rule actually applies only to common names and words, such as the word for peace, “paix,” which is pronounced pays. When a proper name ends in “x,” a French speaker enunciates that final consonant. Taix’s French cousins pronounce their name with the “x,” and when French tourists find their way to Taix Restaurant they know to call it tex.

“The most adamant folks that insist that it’s tays are the ones that know some French. Like the old story, a little bit of knowledge is dangerous,” Taix says. “I’ll get in arguments with people about my last name!”

Early menus provided a pronunciation guide; nearly every review of the restaurant does so as well, from Rachel Kushner’s mention of Taix’s in The Los Angeles issue of Lucky Peach, back to L.A. Weekly’s 1999 restaurant review.

Michael Taix doesn’t sweat the widespread mispronunciation of his restaurant’s name. “The controversy is a great thing,” he says. “It keeps you top of mind. It’s a subject of conversation.”
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The Newly Expanded Spoke Bicycle Cafe Is Now Open in Frogtown

At first, Spoke Bicycle Cafe was a simple operation: a small bike shop and stand selling coffee and juice for folks walking and cycling along the L.A. River at its prettiest stretch through Frogtown. But eventually, owners Laurie Winston and Richard Latronica realized it could be much more. So they closed up shop and launched an ambitious expansion that has transformed the cafe into a full-scale restaurant. After a week being soft-open, the new version of Spoke Bicycle Cafe had its official opening May 23.

The new menu, which includes breakfast, lunch and early dinner options, is from chef Laura Parsley-Gonzales, who used to work at Kitchen Mouse in Highland Park. It includes sweet and savory breakfast items, sandwiches, salads, bowls and sides. Everything is priced fairly reasonably, from $6 to $14.50.

There’s a 100 percent local beer list, and a short wine list. There’s also a cider kombucha spritzer, presumably so New Yorkers who come here have something to make fun of. (L.A. is so L.A.)

In terms of the space, the large patio that fronts the river’s bike path is undoubtedly the most important feature, and there will be live music there on the weekends. It’s an order-at-the-counter operation, with seating at communal and individual tables, some of them with custom-made banquets with slats that allow bikes to be parked in the furniture. Spoke Bike Shop and bike rental is located at the far end of the patio, manned by bike expert Dane Larson.

This month, the restaurant will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday. I’m told we can expect later dinner hours sometime in the coming weeks. —Catie Disabato

Yamashiro Farmers Market Is Back for Summer 2017

The farmers market at Hollywood landmark Yamashiro is one of the better summer event series in Los Angeles, and the fact that it doesn’t happen every year only adds to its appeal. But it looks like 2017 is going to be a little more romantic and magical than we thought: The Yamashiro Farmers Market is back, baby.

The market isn’t a traditional one — there are produce vendors, but most of the stalls are occupied by sellers of prepared food. Which makes sense: It’s an evening market, and that perfect hilltop view, with the sparkling lights of Los Angeles laid out below, is a great place for dinner.

According to a press release, the market vendors include Acapulco Pico, Dolce Monachelli’s, Hillside Farms, the Original Scratch BBQ, Me Gusta Thai Chicken, Fanciful Gourmet, Intentional Illumination and Glendale Soap. There will be live music and a free shuttle service from the bottom of the hill. (Alternately, you can pay to valet.)

Yamashiro was built in 1914 as a private residence and has been a brothel and a movie set. It is now a restaurant, and though the food isn’t incredible, it’s worth going for the setting and the view. The bar and restaurant will be open during market hours, so here’s the plan of attack: Hit the bar for a cocktail, then head down to the market, buy some fruit and eat dinner at the outdoor tables. Back to the bar for another drink, then take the shuttle to the bottom of the hill and call Lyft. There’s no better Wednesday night in Hollywood.

The farmers market opens Wednesday, May 24, and will continue every Wednesday from 5 to 9 p.m. through Sept. 6. —Katherine Spiers


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Restaurant Openings

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**FRI 6/2**

**COMEDY**

**Day by Dayquan**  
Police brutality is no laughing matter, but the sketch show *Who Shot Dayquan?* manages to find the humor in one of the biggest social issues of our time. Comedy troupe the Edgeucation have not performed for almost a decade since their last sketch show, 2008’s *History of the Black Man*. Here, the story revolves around fictional, 17-year-old Dayquan Mitchell, who’s killed by an LAPD officer, though the audience is left to determine who’s responsible: Dayquan or the police? Directed by Kamal Abdul-Jabbar, cast members Kareem Grimes, Sarah Barton, Dion Lack, Kyle Erby, Vertina Love, Mike Wyman, Dave Lease and Dominique Purdy appear in 14 skits — even a musical number — that satirize not only the Black Lives Matter movement but also politicians, warfare, gangs and deadbeat dads. 

**ACME Comedy Theatre, 135 N. La Brea Ave., Fairfax; Fri.-Sat., June 2-3, 8 p.m. (through June 24); $25. (323) 525-0202, acmetheatres.org. —Siran Babayan**

**MUSIC**

**Big Harp**  
The harp is normally the gentlest of all musical instruments, its soft plucking of strings evoking the languid ripple of water in a pond and other pastoral melodies by everyone from Ludwig van Beethoven and Philip Glass to Lana Wyman, Dave Lease and Dominique Purdy appear in 14 skits — even a musical number — that satirize not only the Black Lives Matter movement but also politicians, warfare, gangs and deadbeat dads. 

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**SAT 6/3**

**ARTS & CULTURE**

**Three Is the Magic Number**  
Culture and technology converge at the debut of 13 Arts Fest, which takes over three venues in downtown L.A. Featuring enormous and responsive art installations, Grand Park temporarily turns into Interaction Park, and a progressive concert experience transforms Grand Performances into Innovation Plaza. Meanwhile, Pershing Square takes the form of Immersion Square, hosting the female-centric 13 Arts Fest Art Car Ball starring Burning Man creation Charlie the Unicorn. Works by more than 30 artists will be on display at the two-day, multidisciplinary celebration, which delivers a wide range of experimental art happenings in what hopefully will become an annual affair. 

**Various locations downtown; Sat., June 3 (also Fri., June 2); free, $35-$150 for 13 Arts Fest Art Car Ball. 13artsfest.com. —Tanja M. Ladden**

**SUN 6/4**

**FOOD & DRINK**

**Proof Perfect**  
The Los Angeles Bread Festival is back for the third year, and the organizers are putting on that famous butter-churning workout, too. It’s the last event of both days: working up a sweat while you churn some butter the old-fashioned way. The whole weekend is free, and if you want to swing by Grand Central Market just to admire some loaves, that’s perfectly fine. You can also buy some or attend some of the sessions, which include challah-, pita- and bialy-making demonstrations and talks about refined flours. Plus, there will be plenty of samples. Grand Central Market, 317 S. Broadway, downtown; Sat.-Sun., June 3-4, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; free. grandcentralmarket.com/events/932/3rd-annual-los-angeles-bread-festival-at-grand-central-market. —Katherine Spiers

**MON 6/5**

**COMEDY**

**The Shape of Things**  
Julio Torres’ name may not sound familiar, but his comedy should. Originally from El Salvador, the Brooklyn-based comedian writes for Saturday Night Live, including such recent sketches and digital shorts as “Melania Moments” and “Wells for Boys,” in which a lonely, introspective boy plays with a Fisher-Price toy that looks like a well. For a second time at UCB, Torres hosts *Julio Torres: My Favorite Shapes*. In it, Torres sits at a table and plays with knick-
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knacks and other small-scale objects of various shapes: squares, triangles, spheres. Torres tells funny stories inspired by the shapes — something that remind him of celebrities, including Melania Trump, Ivanka Trump, Tilda Swinton and Eddie Redmayne — while he projects the entire performance on a screen. Torres is taking his show to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe and will star in his own stand-up special on Comedy Central in the fall. UCB Sunset, 5419 W. Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Mon., June 5, 10:30 p.m.; $7. (323) 908-8702, sunset.ucbtheatre.com. —Siran Babayan

LGBT

Rainbow Connection
In 1969, a brutal police raid on the Stonewall Inn in Manhattan’s Greenwich Village ignited the gay liberation movement, and a year later, nonprofit advocacy group Christopher Street West helped put together the world’s first government-sanctioned gay pride parade. Today, the same organization is behind L.A. Pride Week, which features a series of events designed to bring more visibility to LGBTQ rights. Included are a Women’s Party, Trans Party, LGBT Night at Dodger Stadium, the weekend-long L.A. Pride Festival and #ResistMarch, which aims to call attention to not only LGBTQ rights but also human rights worldwide. Various locations; Mon., June 5-Sun., June 11; various prices. lapride.org. —Tanja M. Laden

COMEDY

Gale Force
Comedian Chris Fleming is a refreshing reminder that not all YouTube celebrities are talentless millennial a-holes with webcams, too many opinions and way too much time on their hands. Fleming rose to internet prominence playing a title character, Gayle, in a series of webisodes about a Type-A suburban mom on the rampage. He’s since gone on to delight fans with genuinely funny YouTube rants about anxiety, his gender (he’s a dude who just happens to have long hair) and hooking up with gender (he’s a dude who just happens to have long hair) and hooking up with men. He’s recently been up to after almost 20 years, Audible launches the 15-episode Dr. Katz: The Audio Files Live!, with Katz, Laura Silverman and special guests. Cinefamily, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Beverly Grove; Tue., June 6, 7:30 p.m.; $25. (323) 330-4412, cinefamily.org. —Siran Babayan

House of Mouse
Before he launched one of the biggest global brands, Walt Disney had far more humble beginnings as a young animator in Los Angeles. Disney and his brother, Roy, set up the Disney Bros. Cartoon Studio at 4649 and 4651 Kingswell Ave. in Los Feliz, and later at 2719 Hyperion Ave., where Mickey Mouse was created and the first full-length animated feature film, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, was released. Hosted by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association and Hollywood Heritage Museum, Evening @ the Barn: Walt’s Dream Factory looks at the early history of the Disney studio, including its current location in Burbank, which opened in 1940. Jim Fanning, author of 2015’s The Disney Book: A Celebration of the World of Disney, uses rare photographs and clips to explore the studio’s backlot, soundstages and buildings from the 1940s to the ‘80s. The program includes a raffle and display of Disney memorabilia. Hollywood Heritage Museum, 2100 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood Hills; Wed., June 7, 7:30-10 p.m.; $15. (323) 874-4005, hollywoodheritage.org. —Siran Babayan

FILM FESTS

The Big Hola
Although Mexican filmmakers have received a good deal of international attention recently, most of the focus has been on the “Three Amigos of Cinema”: Guillermo del Toro, Alfonso Cuarón and Alejandro González Iñárritu. There is a lot more going on in contemporary Mexican cinema, however, than films by
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these three influential, crossover directors. The largest showcase of Mexican film outside of Mexico, the Hola Mexico Film Festival offers a glimpse at the current crop of emerging Mexico auteurs, screening 20 new movies over five days. The diverse offerings include La Carga, a lush, reimagined Western set against the backdrop of the Spanish conquest; Somos Lengua, a documentary on Mexican hip-hop; and Emiliano Rocha Minter’s phantasmagoric, post-apocalyptic horror film Tenemos la Carne. Most screenings are at Regal L.A. Live, 800 W. Olympic Blvd., downtown; Wed.-Sun., June 7-11. $12 regular screenings. holamexicoff.com. —Matt Stromberg

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THE DARK SIDE OF STAND-UP ON THE STRIP

BY JENNIFER SWANN

ike most comics, Al Madrigal knows what it’s like to have a bad set. While headlining the Palm Beach Improv one night several years ago, he was attempting to work the crowd when he learned that a table of about 35 people had just been laid off — which may have explained why they weren’t exactly in the mood to laugh at his jokes. On another occasion, just last year, the comic who gave Madrigal’s introduction at an L.A. club told the audience to go have a cigarette and take a bathroom break just before Madrigal was about to go on. The former Daily Show correspondent, who’s been doing stand-up for nearly two decades, was so enraged that he chased the former correspondent, Daily Show executive producer on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, out of the club matriarch Goldie Herschlag presents a fictionalized version of the Comedy Store’s scene in 1973 — but it’s as good as real after debuted as the lead in the NBC series I’m Dying Up Here.

The new Showtime series I’m Dying Up Here

The writers drew material not just from the book but also from the lived experiences of Carrey, Madrigal and consultant Tom Dreesen, another ’70s Comedy Store staple. In one scene, struggling comic Bill Hobbs (played by real-life stand-up Andrew Santino) lashes out at a group of women in the audience who had just been underscored by Madrigal’s anecdote, but the fallout was taken of how much pain tends to follow this of how much pain tends to follow this plot of the show is also the one whose parallels between the two eras and I think as an audience, you’re thinking of tragedy to draw from, including rising comedy star Freddie Prinz’se 1977 death from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

“We’re not there to celebrate that, but we’re there to sort of acknowledge that and take that into account in our storytelling.”

But the dramatized TV adaptation doesn’t include any characters named Freddie Prinz, nor are there any juicy details about the romance between Boosler and Kaufman — though two of the show’s main characters certainly evoke it — or Letterman and Leno’s legendary feud, which is detailed at length in the book. Instead, series creator David Flebotte, a former stand-up comedian and a writer for The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, prefers to think of her performance as “creative license,” Leo declares of the event, it’s fascinating to me. She really made the first comedy club, and I will believe that until the day I die.”

Today, the Comedy Store is experiencing something of a revival — Madrigal still considers it the best stand-up venue in the country — and comedians are once again at the forefront of popular culture. Only now, rather than having to rely on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson to launch their careers, they’re being courted by any number of untraditional platforms, from Netflix and Seeso to Amazon and Hulu. Aguilar credits stand-ups like Hannibal Buress, Zach Galifianakis, Amy Schumer and Tig Notaro for ushering in a new golden age of comedy. But he also says the political climate may have boosted Americans’ desires to laugh at and make sense of the absurdity of current events. “There were certain times when comedy maybe broke through a little more ... unfortunately it’s usually not the happiest times.”

—MICHAEL AGUAR

“THERE WERE CERTAIN TIMES WHEN COMEDY MAYBE BROKE THROUGH A LITTLE MORE ... UNFORTUNATELY IT’S USUALLY NOT THE HAPPIEST TIMES.”

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One reason for the choice was “creative freedom,” Flebotte says, and the other is that he felt the giants of the 1970s comedy scene were too idiosyncratic and too beloved to be able to translate believably into television characters.

“If it was like, ‘Let’s cast Richard Pryor and Richard Lewis and whoever we’re to win a Golden Globe for his portrayal

Carrey himself, who began his career as an impressionist but famously went on to win a Golden Globe for his portrayal

of Kaufman, among other serious movie roles. Premiering June 4, I’m Dying Up Here comes on the heels of a wave of semi-autobiographical TV and film projects that delve into the darker, sometimes morbidly unfunny struggles involved in trying to make it as a comedian: Mike Birbiglia’s 2016 indie comedy feature Don’t Think Twice; Pete Holmes’ recent HBO show Crashing; TV Land’s new Melissa McCarthy– and Ben Falcone–produced series Nobodies.

Different from those projects, I’m Dying Up Here is based on the 2009 nonfiction book of the same name, which chronicles the revolutionary early days of West Hollywood institution the Comedy Store. Penned by former L.A. Times writer William Knoedelseder, the book offers plenty of tragedy to draw from, including rising comedy star Freddie Prinz’se 1977 death from a self-inflicted gunshot wound.

“People who have been around comedy know it, but I think people still aren’t aware of how much pain tends to follow this world and how much darkness kind of is in this world,” says Michael Aguilar, a co-executive producer on I’m Dying Up Here. “We’re not there to celebrate that, but we’re there to sort of acknowledge that and take that into account in our storytelling.”

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“If it was like, ‘Let’s cast Richard Pryor and Richard Lewis and whoever we’re talking about, I think as an audience, you’re going to spend half the time going, ‘I don’t know if that’s Richard Lewis,’” Aguilar says. “It just felt like the only way to really explore relationships and friendships and different ways of telling stories of the early-’70s comedy explosion was not to be shackled by telling this story perfectly.”

The writers drew material not just from the book but also from the lived experiences of Carrey, Madrigal and consultant Tom Dreesen, another ’70s Comedy Store staple. In one scene, struggling comic Bill Hobbs (played by real-life stand-up Andrew Santino) lashes out at a group of women in the audience who had just been disinhibited.

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“If it was like, ‘Let’s cast Richard Pryor and Richard Lewis and whoever we’re talking about, I think as an audience, you’re going to spend half the time going, ‘I don’t know if that’s Richard Lewis,’” Aguilar says. “It just felt like the only way to really explore relationships and friendships and different ways of telling stories of the early-’70s comedy explosion was not to be shackled by telling this story perfectly.”

The writers drew material not just from the book but also from the lived experiences of Carrey, Madrigal and consultant Tom Dreesen, another ’70s Comedy Store staple. In one scene, struggling comic Bill Hobbs (played by real-life stand-up Andrew Santino) lashes out at a group of women in the audience who had just been disinhibited.

“There were certain times when comedy maybe broke through a little more ... unfortunately it’s usually not the happiest times.”

—MICHAEL AGUAR

I was attempting to work the crowd when he learned that a table of about 35 people had just been laid off — which may have explained why they weren’t exactly in the mood to laugh at his jokes. On another occasion, just last year, the comic who gave Madrigal’s introduction at an L.A. club told the audience to go have a cigarette and take a bathroom break just before Madrigal was about to go on. The former Daily Show correspondent, who’s been doing stand-up for nearly two decades, was so enraged that he chased the former correspondent, Daily Show executive producer on The Tonight Show Starring Johnny Carson, out of the club matriarch Goldie Herschlag presents a fictionalized version of the Comedy Store’s scene in 1973 — but it’s as good as real.

The new Showtime series I’m Dying Up Here

The writers drew material not just from the book but also from the lived experiences of Carrey, Madrigal and consultant Tom Dreesen, another ’70s Comedy Store staple. In one scene, struggling comic Bill Hobbs (played by real-life stand-up Andrew Santino) lashes out at a group of women in the audience who had just been disinhibited.

“They’re not there to celebrate that, but we’re there to sort of acknowledge that and take that into account in our storytelling.”

But the dramatized TV adaptation doesn’t include any characters named Freddie Prinz, nor are there any juicy details about the romance between Boosler and Kaufman — though two of the show’s main characters certainly evoke it — or Letterman and Leno’s legendary feud, which is detailed at length in the book. Instead, series creator David Flebotte, a former stand-up comedian and a writer for Showtime series Masters of Sex, opted to craft composite characters using traits and quirks lifted from real-life comedians.

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The video, playing on a loop in group show “Paratextual” at Samuel Freeman, shows how the red desert is used often in films to portray an empty frontier (Jordan is a densely populated country, Brewer points out). Then we see many versions of Chastain’s concerned face as she tries to keep track of Bin Laden, reunite with her father or rescue Matt Damon, whom she’s accidentally left on Mars. Her character, while strong and stoic, always relies on or fixates on a male figure. Within this context but never outside of it, she succeeds.

Does God vote Republican?

In “The Happiest People on Earth,” her show at Honor Fraser, Rosson Crow satirizes the modern-day Wild West. Her large, glossy and intentionally messy canvases depict cacti and other desert plants on sandy ground. Sometimes neon green and hot pink, the paintings look washed out, like photographs left in the sun for too long. Pages from the National Enquirer, sarcastic signage and catchy, questionable bumper stickers appear throughout, caught on cactus arms or plastered on decorated planters. “Smile, you’re in shooting range,” says one sign. “God Votes Republican,” reads a sticker plastered to a fence in a painting Crow titled Enduring Displays of American Exceptionalism. 2622 La Cienega Blvd., Mid-City; through June 15. (310) 837-0191, honorfraser.com.

Army of delicate pink intestines

Matthew Ronay’s Thermal Organ Apparatus, one of the many small, strange sculptures in his show “Surds” at Marc Foxx, looks like the kind of instrument you might find in Willy Wonka’s factory. Candy-colored and anthropomorphic, it’s crafted from dyed basswood. Little purple feet hold up a yellow rectangle with a bumpy finger-like thing protruding from a red hole. The rectangle has a neck, upon which rests a quaint, hot-pink, double-sided megaphone. Ronay’s sculpture is like an army of little pink intestines hovering above a black-and-white checkerboard. Every object is gorgeously made and playfully confounding. 6150 Wilshire Blvd., Carthay; through June 6. (323) 857-5571, marcfoxx.com.

Strong women save men

Actress Jessica Chastain is a useful person, a woman who has learned to participate and serve the institution. She can work for NASA or the CIA and get the job done against impossible odds, ensuring the institution survives. So suggests Maura Brewer in her fantastic 12-minute video, The Surface of Mars, a close look at both the red desert of Wadi Rum, Jordan, and Chastain’s appearance in three films: The Martian, Interstellar and Zero Dark Thirty.

The video, playing on a loop in group show “Paratextual” at Samuel Freeman, shows how the red desert is used often in films to portray an empty frontier (Jordan is a densely populated country, Brewer points out). Then we see many versions of Chastain’s concerned face as she tries to keep track of Bin Laden, reunite with her father or rescue Matt Damon, whom she’s accidentally left on Mars. Her character, while strong and stoic, always relies on or fixates on a male figure. Within this context but never outside of it, she succeeds.

“Knowledges,” a two-day exhibition at the Mount Wilson Observatory in the San Gabriel Mountains, happened for the first time in 2012. Now, five years later, thanks in part to a grant from the local Mike Kelley Foundation, the exhibition is returning, organized again by artist-curator Christina Ondrus. Artists will host performances at the observatory’s various telescopes. For instance, Scott Benzel, who often works with sound, will stage a performance on the 100-inch telescope’s rotating deck. Ticketed micro-concerts by musicians including Tara Jane O’Neil and the band White Magic will also occur around the telescopes. Mount Wilson Observatory, Mount Wilson; Sat., June 3, 10 a.m.-1 a.m.; Sun., June 4, 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; $40. knowledges.org.

Pet Sounds to Dirt Sounds

Brian Wilson of The Beach Boys grew up in Hawthorne. Though his house is no longer there, artist-musicians Jeff Hassay and LeRoy Stevens went to the site in 2016, about 50 years after the release of Pet Sounds. Hassay made a 20-minute field recording — of dogs barking, wind blowing, cars driving by, planes flying overhead, lawn mowers humming, his breathing. The sound is scratchy but pleasantly pleasant. They also collected dirt from Wilson’s former yard, used that dirt and resin to make the 100 limited-edition records they call Dirt Sounds, their riff on and tribute to the iconic Beach Boys album. They release the record officially at Tif Sigfrids Gallery this week. 1507 Wilcox Ave., Hollywood; Tue., June 6, 7 p.m. smallworldmyinfo.info.
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IN BLACK AND WHITE

Lorraine Hansberry’s midcentury masterwork *Les Blancs* explores morality through the lens of colonialism in Africa

**BY DEBORAH KLUGMAN**

Lorraine Hansberry’s *Les Blancs* is set in colonial Africa sometime in the mid–20th century, and while much has changed since then, the play’s moral dilemmas and the racism and hypocrisy that give rise to them remain with us.

Writing on her deathbed, Hansberry dedicated her play to Angela Davis, George Jackson and the “Men of Attica, whose spirit is in these pages.” She died before finishing it, so the final version was put together by her ex-husband, producer Robert Nemiroff. It opened on Broadway in 1970 with James Earl Jones in the pivotal role of Tshembe Matoseh, a man asked to choose between a peaceful life with his wife and son in London and the responsibility of leading his people in their fight for freedom and against oppression in colonial Africa. Jones must have been wonderful. Happily, the current revival at Rogue Machine, directed by Gregg T. Daniel, is powered by a terrific lead performance from Desean Kevin Terry that goes a long way toward compensating for shortcomings elsewhere.

The play is set in a fictional African country, with events alternately taking place at a Christian mission that operates a hospital for the locals and at Tshembe’s humble dwelling. He’s come home after years abroad for the occasion of his father’s funeral to find great unrest within the tribe, as well as the unsettling discovery that one brother (Matt Orduna) has become a Roman Catholic priest while another (Aric Floyd), born of a white father, has taken to wearing women’s cosmetics to please an elderly white lover. A terrorist faction among the local populations has been attacking and murdering white settlers and the local army major, George Rice (Bill Brochrup), has been taking retaliatory action, which includes establishing a curfew and visiting the mission and attempting to intimidate the doctors there into divulging information about their staff.

Tshembe’s homecoming coincides with the arrival of an American journalist, Charlie Morris (Jason McBeth), who’s doing a piece on the mission and is full of white liberal opinions about race and politics: He believes in the possibility of a solution through political compromise, and in the fraternity of well-meaning men to transcend the ugly strife. Charlie makes overtures to Tshembe — a drink and a chat — but he’s met with hostility born of Tshembe’s understandable distrust of interposing white men with facile answers.

One of the weaknesses in this production is McBeth’s rather thin rendering of Charlie, who comes off as something of a hollow poseur, absent the intricate conflicts and complexities we see in Terry’s Tshembe, or in Floyd as his light-skinned brother, or in Amir Abdullah’s portrayal of Tshembe’s old friend, who acts the part of a groveling houseboy while secretly planning insurrection. And the production gains texture from Anne Gee Byrd as the wife of the reverend, now missing, who founded the mission, and who keeps its secrets close to her chest.

The play itself is check-full of subplots and chunky exposition in the way that dramas of that period tended to be, but it’s all there for a reason, which is to explore the painfully real entanglements and realities of colonialism and race. On opening night, a number of other performances besides McBeth’s needed refining, but the story moved forward despite the script’s talkiness, impelled by Terry’s intensity and charisma, drummer Jelani Blunt’s heart-quaking percussion throughout, and dancer Shari Gardener, who at intervals whirs up a storm (choreography by Joyce Guy) as the emblem of an angry people in transition.

**LES BLANCS** | Rogue Machine at the MET Theatre, 1089 N. Oxford Ave., East Hollywood | Through July 3 | roguemachinetheatre.net/les-blancs

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**LIFE AS ISLANDS**

Among the subtitless to *Archipelago*, Caridad Svich’s hauntingly enigmatic hallucination of a love story that is currently receiving its American premiere by Son of Semele Ensemble, are labels like “a memory play” and “a play on memory,” as well as “a dream of life.” These are all helpful to know before settling into a 2016 drama that is disorientingly stripped of the kind of reassur-

The current revival is powered by a terrific lead performance from Desean Kevin Terry that goes a long way toward compensating for shortcomings elsewhere.

It’s a vague and harrowingly tenuous place to spend 90 minutes. Rather than wasting words on the conventional who, what, where or whens of the genre, the bittersweet *Archipelago* unfolds almost entirely in the subjective blur of its two characters’ acts of remembering, Sarah Rosenberg and Michael Evans Lopez play star-crossed lovers whose existence is defined so exclusively in the ephemeral moment that concrete details are few. Even their names go unspoken until the final lines of the play.

The couple’s episodic, two-decade relationship unfolds as a series of long separations interrupted by intense encounters that together form a topography of isolated and fleeting connection — islands of emotional continuity in a world increasingly disrupted by the violence and uncertainties of the political strife around them. Clues, however, suggest an American woman and a possibly Middle Eastern man who meet as carefree and careless 20-some-

Sarah Rosenberg and Michael Evans Lopez are storm-tossed lovers in *Archipelago*.

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**PHOTO BY MAHAR DHAR**

Rosenberg and Lopez do an expert job at rooting Svich’s clipped lyricism and densely poetic arias in the familiar raptures, fits of pique and rueful regrets that punctuate any love affair. And Lopez is all the more impressive for ably navigating the script’s most forbidding passages — the powerful monologues Svich has written in the disjointed poetry of the aphasia that his character suffers after being wounded in the play’s political violence.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the actors’ considerable heat, with language so narrowly focused on interior states of mind and an external world pushed so deeply into the background, the proceedings begin to feel coldly distanced and frustratingly disengaged. Designer Meg Cunningham-ham’s set of benches and layered gauze curtains, which impressionistically depict the imagery of Kat Pagsolingan’s ethereal projections, only emphasizes the play’s dreamlike dimensions.

While that may be faithful to Svich’s intent, one soon begins to wish that director Barbara Kallir had countered the amorphousness of the play in a presentation more rigorously grounded in the physical than the single erotic “dance” sequence indifferently choreographed by Giovanni Ortega. In a production note, Svich recommends “a strong choreographic aesthetic,” and Kallir’s staging leaves one wistfully imagining how a bolder, dance-theater approach such as that of director Tina Kronis might better complement Svich’s airy lyricism. —Bill Raden

**ARCHIPELAGO** | Son of Semele Ensemble Theatre, 3301 Beverly Blvd., Westlake | Through June 18 | sonofsemele.org
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Perhaps Wonder Woman’s greatest superpower is enduring for the past 75 years as a wildly unstable signifier. Patty Jenkins’ Wonder Woman, starring Gal Gadot in the title role, further adds to this complicated, contradictory cluster of signs and symbols.

Forged from deeply feminist sympathies, the character debuted in All Star Comics, a predecessor of DC Comics, in 1941 (three years after Superman and two after Batman). She was the creation of William Moulton Marston, who, as Jill Lepore details in her spirited The Secret History of Wonder Woman (2014), proudly claimed that the Amazonian princess was meant to be “psychological propaganda for the new type of woman who ... should rule the world.”

After Marston’s death, in 1947, the superhero was forced to retreat into domesticity; the comic now featured supplements called “Marriage à la Mode.” The editors of Ms. restored her sisterly derring-do in the early 1970s, putting her on the cover of the first issue of the magazine under the banner “WONDER WOMAN FOR PRESIDENT.” Her second-wave revival continued, however, and diluted, in the Lynda Carter–headlining TV series that ran from 1975 to ’79.

The icon has been greeted more warily in this century. Jenkins’ movie (her first since Monster, 2003’s ripe Aileen Wuornos biopic) arrives six months after the TV series that ran from 1975 to ’79.

The icon has been greeted more warily in this century. Jenkins’ movie (her first since Monster, 2003’s ripe Aileen Wuornos biopic) arrives six months after the TV series that ran from 1975 to ’79.

The Amazon is a welcome, near-subversive display of body types and builds.

THE AMAZONS ARE A WELCOME, NEAR-SUBVERSIVE DISPLAY OF BODY TYPES AND BUILDS.

As a century earlier, of Wonder Woman and Steve Trevor (Chris Pine), an American soldier, standing on the Western Front. (Marston’s superhero premiered the same year that the United States entered World War II; Jenkins’ fights in World War I.)

That moment sends the narrative back further in time, to young Diana’s upbringing in the all-female enclave Themyscira, aka Paradise Island, a piece of land that could form an archipelago with the Isle of Lesbos and Cherry Grove. Led by Queen Hippolyta (Connie Nielsen), Diana’s mother, and the regent’s sister, Antiope (Robin Wright), the Amazons in Jenkins’ movie are not only of different races but also observe various forms of gender expression, from stone butch to soft femme — a welcome, near-subversive display of body types and builds.

But when the separatist compound must accommodate an interloper — Steve Trevor, fished out of the sea by Diana after his plane goes down — any hopes that Wonder Woman will sustain its appealing misandry are soon dashed. “Be careful in the world of men, Diana. They do not deserve you,” Hippolyta warns her daughter, who insists on sailing off with the Yankee soldier/spy to fulfill her tribe’s noble duty of protecting the defenseless from German mustard gas and other horrors. (That line is one of several uttered on Themyscira that could have been the title of a tract published in Off Our Backs, their potency watered down by the fact that Nielsen, like many actors in Wonder Woman, both on and off the island, delivers them in an inscrutable accent.)

Ma’s prophecy is right. Gadot must spend the rest of the movie as a kind of idiot savant: Diana may be able to translate Sumerian (one of the “hundreds of languages” Amazons can speak) and, when suited up, deflect bullets with her magic bracelets, but she has never seen snow, ice cream or Edwardian-era attire before, all of which must be deciphered to her by Steve. In short, the world must be, yes, mansplained to the superhero by a character played by an actor who exudes all the charm of a hedge-fund analyst at last call. That tedious parsing includes Steve’s defining of “no man’s land” as he and Diana survey the trenches in Belgium. During this scene — as in many others, especially the finale, when the warrior princess formulates her bellicose-cuddly philosophy (“Only love can save the world”) — I wished only for Diana to return to the literal no man’s land where she was reared.

WONDER WOMAN | Directed by Patty Jenkins
Written by Allan Heinberg | Warner Bros. | Citywide

SCENES FROM A MARRIAGE

I f Zoe Lister-Jones wrote, produced and directed her new film, Band Aid, to finally give herself a standout role, she succeeded. As the upright, grieving-in-all-the-wrong-ways Anna, she delivers many laugh lines, followed by moments of compelling vulnerability. And unlike many female characters in indies, Anna is every bit the equal of her male co-star, played by Adam Pally, who’s tender but believably caustic as Anna’s lazy designer husband, Ben.

The story follows this couple as they act out their frustrations — sniping about the dishes, the bills, the incessant drip in the sink — until they find they can shove all those unwieldy emotions into the songs they write, with choruses such as “I love you, but I don’t wanna fuck you.” Ditched by their therapist, adrift in a sea of their friends’ babies, the childless 30-some things smoke joint after joint to deal with a miscarriage — they can’t bring themselves to say the word. Anna has a “failed book deal” behind her and drives for Uber to pay the bills, while Ben eats pizza in his underwear and stars at a blank notebook. Despite their arguments, these two are more funny than annoying.

When creepy sex-addict neighbor Dave (Fred Armisen) joins their band as a drummer, the film’s tone misses a beat. It’s probably difficult to look at the dailies and see Armisen doing his 10-yard stares and weirdo stick and not want to include those scenes. But Armisen’s comedy plays against the realism, competing for attention. I like this couple. And their songs aren’t bad! Not so the gender-binary Mars-
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Hard and Heavy Tidings
ChurcHill Squanders History and An Ace Brian Cox Performance

By Chuck Wilson

Though the story of Winston Churchill is one that has been told many times, there is always room for a fresh perspective. In the film, Brian Cox delivers a powerful portrayal of the historic figure, bringing his own interpretation to the screen. The story takes place during a critical period in history, with events such as the D-Day invasion unfolding as the plot unfolds.

The Folks Behind Churchill Deserve the Grief They'll Get from WWII Purists.

Determined not to make the same mistake twice, Churchill scoffs when presented the D-Day plans by General Dwight D. Eisenhower (John Slattery) and England’s Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (Julian Wadhams), both of whom all but roll their eyes at the excitable prime minister. Conventional wisdom tells us these plans were years in the making, but the script — by first-time screenwriter Alex von Tunzelmann, a young historian who also writes regularly about the truth-fudging in historical dramas — suggests that Churchill is seeing them for the first time. Alarmed at the idea of a potentially disastrous amphibious assault (like Gallipoli), he orders his men to draw up plans for an Italian invasion, a command his staff, who treat the old boy like a doddering fool, ignores.

Movie critics are not historians (and shouldn't pretend to be), but it's hard not to doubt a film that depicts Churchill bad-mouthing the D-Day invasion three days out. And who knew that Churchill's wife (Miranda Richardson) felt so neglected in her marriage that, even with the invasion clock ticking, she packs her bags to leave? Or that she tried to slap Churchill to his senses? Or that it took a speech by a secretary (Ella Purnell) with a soldier fiancé to shame the clinically depressed leader into getting off his duff and doing his job?

And so it goes. The folks behind Churchill deserve the grief they're destined to get from WWII purists, but the film has at least one memorable moment (maybe two, if you include the bit with the hat). At midpoint, King George VI (James Purefoy) shows up to decline in person Churchill's invitation to witness the Normandy invasion from aboard a British warship. In real life, the king wrote the prime minister a letter (two letters, actually), but turning those words into a speech — beautifully delivered by Purefoy — is screenwriter fact-juggling at its most pleasing and most forgivable.

Cox’s delivery of Churchill’s “We will fight on the beaches” D-Day speech surely ranks among the best, but it's a problem when a narrative feature’s most powerful scenes are drawn from historical text. Cox deserves better, but he nonetheless cuts an imposing figure — and an oddly soothing one as well. Maybe it’s just me, but even a doubt-filled leader is preferable to a soulless one, which may be why Churchill, flaws and all, could be just the tonic America needs as this long, nerve-jangling summer begins.

Churchill | Directed by Jonathan Teplitzky | Written by Alex von Tunzelmann | Distributed by Cohen Media Group | Citywide

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**AARON'S BLOOD** Bloody when it needs to be yet genteel at its core, writer-director Tommy Stovall’s vampire flick, *Aaron’s Blood*, is a triumph. The filmmaker’s son, Trevor, plays Tate, a 12-year-old hemophiliac who lives in Sedona, Arizona, with his father, Aaron (James Martinez); both are grieving the recent death of Tate’s mother. The day after receiving a blood transfusion, Tate no longer needs glasses, lifts the school bully up by the neck, and, that night, bites the jugular of a man who has broken into the house, draining him dry. Yep, Tate is becoming a vampire. Determined to save his son, Aaron goes in search of the vampire who infected Tate, because only his (or her) blood can stop the boy’s transformation. This search leads to the first of several clever plot turns, many of which are downright goofy. `

**Sunday, June 4**

**Horror buffs don’t need to be told about Carnival of Souls,** the 1962 freakout made for pennies in Kansas by Herzog, but newbies might be inexplicably drawn to its morosely poetic, black-and-white imagery. The threadbare story centers on a church organist (Candace Hilligoss) who survives a drag race and is subsequently haunted by a horde of pasty-faced ghouls. This is one of those shoestringers in which the limited budget works brilliantly; the footage feels as cold and clammy as death itself. Hilligoss herself will be present. *Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., June 4, 8 p.m.*. **(123) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

**Tuesday, June 5**


**The Road Warrior** (1981) initially was widely regarded as a leaner, louder, more muscled do-over of George Miller’s *Mad Max*. Mel Gibson reprises his role as the rogue cop who finds himself defending, in the style of an old Western, a tight-knit community of post-nuclear desert dwellers against a pack of wheel-bound psychos. The *New Beverly* will pair it with the recent, universally lauded *Mad Max: Fury Road*. Miller’s belated fourth entry in the series, suitably supported by a kick-ass cast of characers, is a relentlessly exciting chase thriller that adds a potent feminist edge to this testosterone-fueled franchise. *New Beverly Cinema, 7165 Beverly Blvd., Fairfax; Fri-Sat., June 2-3, 7 p.m.*. **(323) 938-4638, newbev.com.

**DETECTED** - a documentary short- 

June 2-8, 2017  Fri, Sat, Mon, Wed & Thu at 3:00 pm
Sun at 3:55 pm, Tues at 1:30 pm

Ahrya Fine Arts
8556 Wilshire Blvd.  Beverly Hills, CA 90211
310-478-3836  laemmle.com

**WOODY’S ORDER** - a documentary short-

June 2-8, 2017  Daily at 1:00 pm
Laemmle’s Royal Theatre
11523 Santa Monica Blvd.  West L.A., CA 90025
310-478-3836  laemmle.com

**TANIA LIBRE** - a short-

June 2-8, 2017  Daily at 12:45 pm
Laemmle’s Royal Theatre
11523 Santa Monica Blvd.  West L.A., CA 90025
310-478-3836  laemmle.com

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**AARON'S BLOOD**... While watching horror thriller *Dark Signal*, I kept wondering if co-writer and director Edward Evers-Swindell (infestation) expected this to be his last film. Because he throws away all the shit he can into it — and I don’t mean to suggest that this is a good thing. Set in Evers-Swindell’s home country of Wales, the movie is about a single mom (Polish actress Joanna Ignaczewska, sounding like a female Tommy Wiseau) who serves as both lookout and getaway driver on a heist with her boyfriend (Duncan Pow). Their caper takes place on countryside property that’s haunted by the latest victim of the Wedlock Killer, a serial murderer whose calling card is snapping off the wedding fingers of his victims with bolt cutters. Not too far away, a ghost is also haunting a radio station, where a cynical DJ (Siwan Morris) and her guest, who coincidentally happens to be a psychic (Cinzia Monreale), try to communicate with the spirit on the air. As you’ve probably guessed, *Signal* is in that least promising of subgenres, the supernatural serial-killer movie — a combination that rarely works. (Fallen, anyone?) But Evers-Swindell also piles onto the stalk some Ken Loach-ish working-class melodrama. Both Ignaczewska’s and Morris’ characters are down-on-their-luck dames who don’t know when or their next dime is coming. With all this going on, it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the incoherent, mostly out-of-control *Dark Signal* is too damn much.

**Sunday, June 4**

**Horror buffs don’t need to be told about Carnival of Souls,** the 1962 freakout made for pennies in Kansas by Herzog, but newbies might be inexplicably drawn to its morosely poetic, black-and-white imagery. The threadbare story centers on a church organist (Candace Hilligoss) who survives a drag race and is subsequently haunted by a horde of pasty-faced ghouls. This is one of those shoestringers in which the limited budget works brilliantly; the footage feels as cold and clammy as death itself. Hilligoss herself will be present. *Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., June 4, 8 p.m.* **(123) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

**Tuesday, June 5**

a global film power has been that bigger budgets and larger audiences now are devoted to productions of stories from the country’s expansive history. Films set during China’s imperial dynasty era have been around for decades, but only recently have they rivaled in scope high-dollar Hollywood efforts. The latest of these, God of War (from Fist of Legend director Gordon Chan), is a sweeping war epic that on occasion veers into oddly personal territory. The year is 1557, and Japanese pirates (known as wokou) raid China’s coast with impunity. The Ming Dynasty’s attempts to dislodge them have failed, until a young general, Qi Jiguang (Vincent Zhao), takes over the campaign, introducing new tactics and recruiting soldiers who have a personal stake in the fight. Referred to as a “god of war” for his successes, Qi isn’t merely a skilled battlefield tactician; he’s also a legitimate inspiration to his troops. For this reason (and, you know, because he rid China of pirates), he would become a national hero. God of War’s political machinations become a bit hazy (one key early character simply disappears), and the bureaucratic intrigues drag somewhat. But the battles are wonderfully dynamic: They showcase all manner of weapons and fighting styles, and Chan gives them an extravagantly epic scope and an often startling intimacy. Zhao, a national wushu title holder in China, is understandably the focus of most of the kung-fu fighting, but the legendary Sammo Hung (as Qi’s superior, General Yu Dayou) gets to show his stuff in a scene with Zhao that serves as both a literal and a metaphorical passing of the torch. The athleticism on display shames much of Western action cinema’s quick-cut hand-to-hand editing, and the final swordfight between Qi and Japanese general Kumasawa (Shaw Brothers mainstay Yasuaki Kurata) ranks...
DEAR BASKETBALL
— an animated short

June 2-8, 2017  Daily at 1:10 pm
Laemmle’s Claremont 5
450 West 2nd Street  Claremont, CA 91710
310-478-3836  laemmle.com

CRUEL AND UNUSUAL
Q&A with filmmaker Vadim Jean, plus Albert Woodfox and Robert King of the Angola 3  June 3 at 7:10 pm
June 2-8, 2017  Daily at 1:50 4:30: 7:10 9:55
Monica Film Center
1332 2nd Street  Santa Monica, CA 90401
310-478-3836  laemmle.com

COURTARD holds a secret from his team. It turns out his new pal is a gentle soul who just happens to be the school team’s new star kicker, Ned assumes the kid will be dismissed as gay. That’s unfortunately not true, and the story begins with them older, gray-haired smart-ass Ned (Flinn O’Shea) — spends his days while attending an all-male boarding school, where he’s constantly targeted for not being as rugby-obsessed as everyone else. When his new roommate (Nicholas Galitzine) is a gentle soul who’s keeping a big secret from his team. If you haven’t guessed already, Devil is more about coming out than coming out of age. Writer-director John Butcher keeps things safe and light-hearted, making sure not to turn off insouciable viewers ready to run for the hills if two guys so much as look at each other for too long. I wish Butler had dared a few button-pushing moments. As the flick teeters between feel-good message movie and a burlesque of gay panic, the director scratches the surface in order to show how people rarely look beyond the surface of others. It all builds to a predictably triumphant climax (set to a Rufus Wainwright song), by the way, suggesting that Butler believes those still leery of LGBTQ folk are just one sweet drop of good away from getting it through their heads that, goddammit, they’re people, too. (Craig D. Lindsey)

LEGION OF BROTHERS
On The Walking Dead, Andrew Lincoln’s Rick Grimes has three standard questions he asks all newcomers in that overfake Southern accent of his. The second: “How many preeepie have you keeeeeded?” It’s a bit of a party foul, to say the least, to ask a soldier that in real life, but Legion of Brothers bluntly delivers what veterans often consider the correct answer: If you can keep count, it probably wasn’t enough. Afghanistan war documentaries have steadily hit theaters every year since 9/11, but most tend to be immediate, filmed in the months before release. With the hindsight of 16 years, CNN Films’ newest nonfiction film on the topic takes a longer view, using a familiar structure not unlike that of VH1’s Behind the Music. The Green Berets in those initial covert missions of the war racked up big successes very quickly — and on horseback, no less! — but over time, poor coordination led to trouble and tragedy. A simple mistake in targeting coordinates results in massive friendly-fire casualties; the Bush administration’s too-quick shift to Iraq does Afghanistan no favors. We know most of the men we follow onscreen will survive, as the story begins with them older, gray-haired smart-ass Ned (Flinn O’Shea) — spends his days while attending an all-male boarding school, where he’s constantly targeted for not being as rugby-obsessed as everyone else. When his new roommate (Nicholas Galitzine) is a gentle soul who’s keeping a big secret from his team. If you haven’t guessed already, Devil is more about coming out than coming out of age. Writer-director John Butcher keeps things safe and light-hearted, making sure not to turn off insouciable viewers ready to run for the hills if two guys so much as look at each other for too long. I wish Butler had dared a few button-pushing moments. As the flick teeters between feel-good message movie and a burlesque of gay panic, the director scratches the surface in order to show how people rarely look beyond the surface of others. It all builds to a predictably triumphant climax (set to a Rufus Wainwright song), by the way, suggesting that Butler believes those still leery of LGBTQ folk are just one sweet drop of good away from getting it through their heads that, goddammit, they’re people, too. (Craig D. Lindsey)

WAKEFIELD is in Robin Swicord’s Wheelfield, an adaptation of E.L. Doctorow’s short story of the same name, disillusioned lawyer Howard Wakefield (Bryan Cranston) chases a raccoon from his decrepit backhouse and … never returns. The story’s not science fiction; Howard doesn’t get swallowed by a black hole. He’s still among the living, though he prefers to keep his wife, Diana (Jennifer Garner), and children (Victoria Bruno and Ellery Sprayberry) in the dark on his whereabouts after a single night’s impromptu escape from reality stretches into a yearlong break of scrounging through the neighbors’ refuse for a meal. From his vantage point on the second floor of the backhouse, Howard spies on his family through a many-paned round window that appropriately re-sembles an eye. Imagine Rear Window, but instead of deconstructing a murder, Wakefield is deconstructing a marriage. The film is almost entirely set in this backhouse, like a one-man show driven by Cranston’s surprisingly subtle performance. Occasional flashbacks zip us into Howard and Diana’s turbulent relationship, revealing to the audience — though not to Howard — that it’s he who has been in the wrong all these years. Through voice-over, Howard muses about what he thinks his wife is saying or doing, accenting his irritations of Diana’s voice with an annoying up-pitch. His assumptions are cold and ridiculous: She must be flirting with that handsome, younger guy at the search-party get-together! Swicord turns what could be a dark or one-note premise into a sometimes charming, sometimes heartrending meditation on a man’s loss of self after having set out to conquer the job, wife, house and kids he thought would make him happy. (April Wolfe)
BY JEFF WEISS

You can’t make a playlist of perfect summer songs without “Tres Delinquentes.” That might seem like a mildly hot take to anyone who didn’t sweat through the L.A. heat wave of 1996, but you understand if you were there. Or just ask Dodgers outfielder Andre Ethier, who used it as his at-bat music for years.

That was the immortal season of “California Love,” “The Crossroads,” the Lakers stealing Shaq from Orlando, and the debut single from Norwalk’s Delinquent Habits. For months, their Spanish fusion of regional slang, lowriding Chicano culture and a Herb Alpert & the Tijuana Brass sample boomed at every intersection.

It was No. 1 on Power 106 and constantly played on MTV and The Box. It distilled the diversity and sabor of the city, especially when combined with the unforgettable video featuring mariachi bands, midget tossing, a vintage Ford Fairlane, and Mexican heritage moshing with ’90s L.A. rap aggression.


In the mid-’90s, artists were forced to rely almost entirely on terrestrial radio, MTV, print publications and big-box retailers for sustained relevance. You couldn’t just go on SoundCloud or YouTube.

“Part of it was circumstantial,” the group’s Kemo tells me two decades later. “Our label, PMP, was going under and our second album [in 1998] got no promo.”

He’s wearing a red and black Pendleton buttoned to the top. Aside from flecks of gray in his long black hair and goatee, he appears practically identical to the Kemo in the “Tres Delinquentes” video.

I ask if he believes the radio cold shoulder stemmed from subtle prejudices against Latin rappers. After a golden era including Mellow Man Ace, Kid Frost and Lighter Shade of Brown, apart from DH’s mentors Cypress Hill, Latin rappers essentially vanished from L.A. urban radio after the passage of the Telecommunications Act, which consolidated and homogenized the airwaves.

“I don’t know if you can call it discrimination, but as soon as you went a little deeper with the Latin thing, that shut off some of the airwaves,” Kemo says. “You saw the budgets weren’t the same. The majors weren’t putting any more dollars into West Coast Latin hip-hop.”

Fortunately getting a release for their eponymous debut was fraught with difficulty. After forming in 1991, the trio of Ives Irie, Kemo and then-producer O.G. Style got dropped by Ruffhouse and Geffen before signing to PMP, which partnered with Loud for distribution. Sen Dog of Cypress Hill helped broker each deal and executive produced their first two records.

It’s still slightly mystifying that “Western Ways Part 2,” their 1998 collaboration with The Beatnuts and Big Pun, never got more traction. Or that DH’s first indie record, 2001’s Merry Go Round, produced an underground hit, “Return of the Tres,” that mass media ignored.

After DH’s fourth album in 2003, Kemo went solo while Irie continued making music under the Delinquent Habits name. A reunion finally occurred in 2013, after Kemo was diagnosed with throat cancer, from which he’s since fully recovered. They’ve toured constantly ever since but finally dropped the strong comeback, It Could Be Round Two, in March — their first album together in a decade and a half.

“We’ve always made positive, uplifting music for underdogs,” Kemo says. “We got back for that same reason. We want to help people understand that you can’t give up, you have to grind it out. Everything is attainable but nothing is easy. You got to fight. You got to keep pushing. That’s our story.”

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.
Sara Santilli's original song perfectly blends pop and funk and reflects the multi-ethnic nature of Los Angeles. www.sarasantilli.com

UNLEASH MELANIA

I t's been minute to minute ever since comrade Trump went wheels-up for his first trip abroad. The upside of a multi-billion-dollar arms deal with Saudi Arabia is what exactly? Oh yeah, the country that supplied a majority of 9/11 terrorists will acquire tons of weapons because the world needs more ways for men and their egos to impulsively plot your demise.

The grinning death skulls at Lockheed Martin say the deal "will directly contribute to [Saudi Arabia's] Vision 2030 by opening the door for thousands of highly skilled jobs in new economic sectors." Is this part of making America great again, or making rich people richer again? How are you going to get such a job if you’re not highly skilled? Oh no! Bye, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi. Look up ahead, you see that? Know what it is? That’s right! Nothing. Even the past has left you behind. How are you going to keep your low-skilled job if you’re all blown up?

Saudi Arabia has been a great customer of USA-made murder goodies for years, so more is better, right? I mean, some of those billions are trickling their way to you right now, for sure.

This most recent deal with a country that practices Sharia law, hacks off hands, executes with great frequency and oppresses with ease is one of the signposts that the Homo sapiens show is coming to an end. Our days are numbered. It’s awful, but at the same time, since the species seems so intent on snuffing out all life as it terminates its own command, we might as well have a few laughs before we deregulate ourselves into extinction.

It is not surprising that Putin’s errand boy was given a warm welcome by Saudi royalty. They’re as sensitive to the plight of the less fortunate as wolverines, too, so they were bound to hit it off. Watching the comrade get that corny medal from King Salman was painful.

The end is nigh, and the signs are everywhere.

For example, in Zimbabwe, big-game hunter Theo van Boetje’s life came to an ironic end that smacks of Hemingway’s story The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber. Boetja, along with a group of hunters he had taken on a killing spree, were charged by a herd of elephants. One actually picked botha up with its trunk! One of the other hunters shot the elephant, which crushed botha when it hit the ground. The hunter got a twister with his double homicide. Sad about the elephant. Back in Saudi Arabia, Trump and his gang of ghouls pal around with other bloodless motherfuckers. Trump’s Shirley Temple courtesy to King Salman was pure draft dodger, cupcake, golf-cart warrior fawning. No doubt the hypocrisy of a man who has taken every possible opportunity to bash the Muslim world, including the civility President Obama expressed when he bowed to King Abdullah years ago, was lost on his dead-end supporters. It will be hilarious to hear them try to spin the travails of this caravan of grifters and incompetents into foreign-policy gold.

Like I said, we’re almost out of here. On his way to Israel, perhaps comrade Trump had some time to catch up with the super-exciting events happening in America. All’s not well here, and no matter how hard Fox News personalities play-act at being outraged about the Flynn thing, the Comey thing, the Mueller thing and the Russia thing, the ground is moving underneath their feet.

I have no confidence in wrongs being righted and the bad guys going down. None. I think Comey will disappoint, and Mueller will be neutralized. Why? Because comrade Trump is a sloughy thief, and he’s making the other, more skilful thieves look bad. He’s damaging the brand. They either toss him under the bus or circle the wagons to protect him so they can save their own, gerrymandered futures. I think they will choose the latter.

Is there a ray of sunlight in this otherwise dark, oligarchic nightmare? I believe there is. Our enigmatic first lady, Melania Trump, could be the inoculation of sanity this diseased body politic needs so badly.

OUR POOR FIRST LADY CAN NO LONGER HIDE HER DISGUST.

This poor woman can no longer hide her disgust. Recent photos of her are intense. Her eyes are raging! I admire her for staying away from Washington as much as she has. I am sorry it costs so much for her to live in NYC, but I think she’s staying there to protect her son. I bet she considers herself a mother of 9/11 terrorists will acquire tons of weapons because the world needs more ways for men and their egos to impulsively plot your demise.

The Column!
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**Wednesday • June 7 • 6 PM**
**GOAPELE**
The multi-talented Oakland-born singer, songwriter, producer, actress, and designer celebrates her new *Dreamseeker* EP with a live performance and signing at Amoeba!

**Monday • June 12 • 6 PM**
**NICK HAKIM**
Nick Hakim celebrates his new album, *Green Twins* (ATO Records), with a live set and signing at Amoeba.

**Tuesday • June 13 • 7 PM**
**MIKE HUCKABY DJ SET**

**Wednesday • June 14 • 5 PM**
**BETH DITTO SIGNING**

**Thursday • June 15 • 6 PM**
**KEVIN MORBY**

**Music Picks //**

**fri 6/2**

**Julietta Venegas**
**@ DOLBY THEATRE**
Julietta Venegas first came to attention when she was briefly a member of the subversive Mexican ska-punk band Tijuana No! in the early ‘90s. Before departing the group for her own solo career, the Long Beach native (who was raised in Tijuana) composed one of Tijuana No!’s biggest hits, the mysteriously enchanting “Pobre de Ti,” a song that manages to encompass jazzy psychedelia, prog-rock complexity, horn-pumped ska rhythms, pure pop vocals and punk intensity over the course of just 4½ minutes. Venegas has never rocked as hard since then, eschewing politics and rebellion for a more nuanced and gently lulling pop approach on such albums as 2000’s *Buenaventura* and 2006’s *Limón y Sal*. She mixes traces of electronica within her strains of accordan and guitar on her most recent full-length, 2015’s *Algo Suceder*. —Falling James

**Yngwie Malmsteen**
**@ THE SABAN**
Eddie Van Halen may have put the art of shredding on the map with 1978’s “Eruption,” but Yngwie Malmsteen spent the entire 1980s taking the blueprint, adding influences from 18th- and 19th-century classical music, and blowing the concept up into a grandiose display of guitar histrionics. The Swedish-born musician initially broke through as a teenage prodigy with early-’80s L.A. metal band Alcatrazz. Malmsteen’s guitar-hero status emerged with his Rising Force project in the years that followed. His neoclassical shred-guitar compositions took center stage and influenced a wave of musicians welding metallic loudness with over-the-top technicality, which continues to this day with modern acts such as L.A.’s own Exmortus. Malmsteen has at times become shorthand in metal circles for guitar excess, but when it’s done with a shamelessly bombastic as this, it’s all good. —Jason Roche

**Feral Ohms, Zig Zags**
**@ THE HI HAT**
Comets on Fire basically taught the mid-2000s the freeing power of transcendental rock shreddery. Now he’s back with his new outfit, Feral Ohms, one of those rare bands with a name that says it all. This is wild and electric stuff, with over-the-top technicality, which continues to this day with modern acts such as L.A.’s own Exmortus. Malmsteen has at times become shorthand in metal circles for guitar excess, but when it’s done with a shamelessly bombastic as this, it’s all good. —Jason Roche

**The Wailers**
**@ CANYON CLUB**
Bob Marley is such an iconic cultural presence that it’s easy to forget what a brilliant songwriter he was, as well as the fact that during the greatest era of live music, Bob Marley and the Wailers were among the most compelling live bands in the world. This current tour once again finds stalwart Marley sidemen Aston “Family Man” Barrett and Junior Marvin joined by their literal and musical progeny to celebrate Marley’s spirit and songbook. This date promises to be uniquely special, as Marvin joined the Wailers during sessions for Exodus, the band’s most enduring album, which will be celebrating the 40th anniversary of its release the same day. With a set list made up almost entirely of universally beloved Marley classics delivered with their signature vitality, The Wailers’ legendary fire still burns eternal. —Jackson Truax

**The Neptunas, Lawndale**
**@ FROG SPOT**
This early-evening bill is a reminder of those not-so-distant times in the late 1990s when Frogtown and adjoining neighborhoods Silver Lake and Echo Park were still relatively cheap, ethnically and culturally diverse places to make music and perform live. The Neptunas have been playing surf music at SoCal backyard barbecue and local dives since forming in 1994. The all-gal trio bash out classic surf instruments with a garage-rocking primitivism instead of a slick exactness. The Neptunas can get pretty sloppy, but just when everything sounds as if it’s about to fall apart, bassist Pamita Neptuna will coo an endearing garage-rock tune, and the day is saved again. Lawndale have a heavier surf sound that stretches out into grunge, punk and psychedelia. —Falling James

**Christian Scott**
**@ THE ROXY**
Christian Scott aTunde Adjahia is a jazz trumpeter who’s more than willing to let the booming thud of a Roland 808 punctuate a soaring trumpet solo. On *Ruler Rebel*, his most recent record and first in a trilogy of albums celebrating the centennial of recorded jazz music, Scott embraces the history of jazz, as well as the tradition of Southern hip-hop, from the current sounds of Atlanta trap producers like Metro Boomin, to peak Mannie Fresh bounce, and even Neptunes/Timbaland–style grooves. Scott’s interest in continuing the jazz tradition of expanding and pushing the sounds of popular music isn’t just a way of getting kids into jazz but is about getting jazzheads to respect and pay attention to what the kids have to say. —Sam Ribakoff

**Moon Honey, The Dead Ships, Swimm**
**@ THE ECHOPLEX**
This kicks off a monthlong residency at the Echoplex for L.A. psych-pop duo Moon Honey, who have been making waves in the local circuit with their vibrant stage personas and Jessica Ramsey’s off-kilter vocal style, punctuated by constant, delicate vibrato. They’re joined by two other L.A. powerhouses: garage-pop act The Dead Ships, who were raking in fans, thanks to uber-popular single “Big Quiet” (which spent five weeks in the No. 1 spot on KROQ’s Locals Only playlist) long before we selected them as 2016’s best band in L.A., and indie pop duo Swimm, who fill our ears with deliciously infectious anthems and our eyes with some of the most intriguing music videos to come out of
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Daniel Lanois, Rocco DeLuca
@ MASONIC LODGE
To many, Daniel Lanois is best known as the co-producer of U2’s career-defining The Joshua Tree and Achtung Baby albums, as well as the man behind reinvigorating late-career efforts from Bob Dylan, Neil Young and Emmylou Harris. Alongside those monster credits, the L.A.-based Canadian producer has quietly carved out a stellar career as a solo artist. Lanois’ latest record, Goodbye to Language, is a collaboration with Long Beach singer-songwriter Rocco DeLuca, a challenging sonic experience primarily based on their intertwined uses of lap and pedal steel guitars. Lanois’ eagerness to explore and unfurl new sounds and continuous evolution as a songwriter shows that the 65-year-old isn’t ready to quietly settle into his golden years just yet. —Daniel Kohn

Gothic Tropic
@ RESIDENT
Gothic Tropic purvey a style of music that isn’t really goth or tropical. Instead, the Echo Park group stir up a poppy sound that goes beyond such opposing forces of shadows and light on their new album, Fast or Feast (Old Flame Records). “You’ve been digging fossils, I’m stronger… Not gonna play your little P.C. game,” leader Cecilia Dellia Peruti coolly advises a lover over the rolling tom-toms and curt guitar chords of the self-affirmation anthem “Stronger.” Elsewhere, she muses on the meaning of it all over a sea of glassy dream-pop guitar (“How Life Works”), wraps herself in a cloak of sparkling keyboards (“Teenage Behavior”), filters her voice through a haze of electronics (“Chemical Trail”), rocks it up on a psychedelic interlude (“If It Had a Body”) and bares her heart (“Cry Like a Man”). —Falling James

Nina Diaz
@ THE SATELLITE
One of the truly great howlers in any kind of rock & roll, Texas singer-guitarist Nina Diaz brings to her recorded and live sets an almost fearsomely committed passion and a questioning vibe that demand her fans step up to the plate. Currently taking a break from her acclaimed punk-rock trio Girl in a Coma, several of whose albums were issued on the same like-minded Joan Jett’s Blackheart label, Diaz’s recent solo record The Beat Is Dead is a beautifully broadening blast of the charismatic Diaz’s attitude and rare-ish authenticity that extends her band’s Ramones/Bikini Kill/Smiths roots in both viciously feral rockers and a few bravely, sweetly vulner-
Charity Auction

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ALEX'S BAR: 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. Voodoo Glow Skulls, Pityla Protest, Punker in the Headlightings, Tagada Jones, Sat., June 3, 8 p.m., $12. Crimewave 5150, Asl Fui, Freeman's Dad, Sun., June 4, 8 p.m., $5. Tommy Guerrero, Tue., June 6, 7-10 p.m. $10.

Earthquakes, Montach, Flying Hair, Wed., June 7, 8 p.m., $18. Graves at Sea, Barghest, Recluse, Bury the Machines, Thu., June 8, 8 p.m., $15.

AMOeba MUSIC: 6400 Sunset Blvd. DJ Hosef, Fri., June 2, 9 p.m., free. Goapele, Wed., June 7, 6 p.m., free.

AMPLIFY: 5617 Melrose Ave. The Lovepoops, Scenic Underground, Electro Love Music, Fri., June 2, 7-45 p.m., $10. DVS, Muesu, Sat., June 3, 8 p.m., $17-$35. Ricky Fonte, Soul Bombery, Em Harris, Sun., June 4, $8, 8:30 p.m., $10.

BAR 20: 8462 W. Sunset Blvd. Westwood. Hippie, Thu., June 8, 9:30 p.m., free.


THE CAT & FIDDLE: 424 N. Hollywood Ave. Aaron Shaw, Tue., June 6, 6 p.m., $3. DJ Benny Shambles, Matt Masocco, Wed., June 7, 8 p.m. DJ Larry G., Thu., June 8, 9 p.m., $5.

CHARACTER PROJECTS: 6042 Monte Vista St. Stoney Child, LA Fog, Lucas Gorham, Fri., June 2, 8 p.m.

CODY'S WINE CANTINA: 900 Riverside Dr., Burbank. The Steve Woz, Fremont Rock All-Stars, Susan Ritter, June 23-7, 3:30 p.m., free. Pete Anderson, Tracy Towm Thompson, Lightnin' Willie, Sun., June 4, 6 p.m., free; Debra Lee & Trygve Happy, Sundays, 6:30 p.m., free. The Brombies, Mondays, 7-30 p.m., free. Jay Dee Maness, Cody Bryant, Skip Edwards, Ronnie Mack, free; Debra Lee & Trigger Happy, Sundays, 6:30 p.m., $13.

THE CATALYST: 1717 Silver Lake Blvd. Dream Phases, Elijah Ocean, Fleece, Mon., June 5, 9 p.m., free. Nina Diaz, See, Wed., June 8, 9 p.m., $12 (see Music Pick). Smokey Mountain Smith, Thu., June 9, $8, 8:30 p.m., $10.


THE ECHOPLEX: 1154 Glendale Blvd. The Primitives, Cruel Summer, Susan, Sun., June 4, 8 p.m., $20. Moon Honey, The Dead Ships, Swimwh, The Bomb, Mon., June 5, 8 p.m. (see Music Pick). Adalt, Sextile, Pod Botz, Thu., June 8, 8:30 p.m., $18.50 (see Music Pick).


THE FROG STOMP: 2825 Benedict St. The Neptunas, Lawndale, Mailmen, Devin O'Rourke, Sat., June 3, 5 p.m., $13 (see Music Pick).


THE H HAT: 5043 York Blvd., Highland Park. Feral Ghoms, Piss of Light, Fat Fingers, Fri., June 2, 8 p.m., $10 (see Music Pick). John Isaac Watters, Sat., June 3, 8 p.m., free; John Isaac Watters, Lazer Backgrounder, Robert Matt Taylor, Yadibynn, Sat., June 3, 8 p.m., free. Goon, Dead Soft, Young Jesus, Yeses, Sun., June 4, 4 p.m., $8. Former Faces, Greyscale, Ghost Pavilion, Mon., June 5, 8 p.m., $7. Mothlight, Rosechild, Raener, Lanterns, Tue., June 6, 8 p.m., $7. The Picturebooks, Mike Raylty, the New Rums, Wed., June 7, 8 p.m., $12. So Many Wizards, Roses, Thu., June 8, 8 p.m., $10.


THE HIGHLAND HAPPIES: 9628 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood. The Birthday Massacre, Army of the Universe, Ludovico Einaudi, Sat., June 3, 8:30 p.m., $10-$75.

THE HOPPERS: 6010 W. Pico Blvd. Andy Allo, Alice Hops, The Lovepools, Scenic House, 267 S. Main St. Graves at Sea, Graf Gates, Wed., June 7, 8 p.m., $13 (see Music Pick). Dermot Kennedy, Saint Mesa, Madame Gandhi, Kid Bloom, Tue., June 6, 8 p.m., $13 (see Music Pick). Derrmot Kennedy, Saint Mesa, Thu., June 7, 8 p.m., $13 (see Music Pick).
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THE BAKED POTATO: 7877 Cañada Ave. W. Studio City. Carlos Rodgran, Fri., June 2, 9:30 p.m., $20; The Baked Potato All-Stars, Sat., June 3, 9:30 p.m., $20. The Teryn Re Big Band, Sun., June 4, 9:30 p.m., $15, Donald Hayes, Wed., June 7, 9:30 p.m., $15.


CATALINA BAR & GRILL: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd. The Roy Hargrove Quintet, Fri., June 2, 8:30 p.m.; Sat., June 3, 8:30 & 10:30 p.m.; Sun., June 4, 7:30 & 9:30 p.m., $30.

DESSERT ROSE: 1700 Hillhurst Ave. The Mark 2 Stevens Trio, Saturdays, 7:11 p.m., free.

B.G. HIGHLAND PARK: 5630 N. Figueroa St., Highland Park. D.J. Cohen, Picktookrayphone, Maria Minerva, Thu., June 8, 9 p.m., $20.

COUNTRY & FOLK

BOULEVARD MUSIC: 4316 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City. Michael Chapdelaine, Sat., June 3, 8 p.m., $17.50.


THE ROY HARGROVE QUINTET: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd. The Roy Hargrove Quintet, Fri., June 2, 8:30 p.m.; Sat., June 3, 8:30 & 10:30 p.m.; Sun., June 4, 7:30 & 9:30 p.m., $30.

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