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On a warm weekday afternoon in late June, a couple of young radicals with handmade protest signs were resting in the shade of the kiosk in Mariachi Plaza. They were coming from one anti-gentrification protest in Boyle Heights and would soon be heading to another.

The young man was a ponytailed 21-year-old, serious and circumspect, who gave his name as “Anonymous.” The woman, with a Bettie Page haircut and a septum piercing, was 18-year-old Marisol García.

García held up a square piece of cardboard and flipped it around. “No Coffee” was painted on one side and “People Over Profit” on the other. The first side was for picketing a hipster coffee shop that had opened the week before on Cesar Chavez Boulevard, the other for protesting the eviction of mariachis and other low-income tenants from an apartment building on Second Street.

García, who has lived in Boyle Heights all her life, says the issue underlying the protests is the same: gentrification. “We’re being colonized,” she says. “It’s like we’re supposed to adapt to what’s becoming their neighborhood.”

“It’s urban colonialism,” Anonymous added from his seat on the next step. “They move in, we move out because of the rising prices here in the local economy.”

Words such as “colonist,” “sellout,” “scab,” “collaborator” and even “coconut” (referring to someone who is “brown on the outside and white on the inside”) are common currency among gentrification foes in Boyle Heights. They are words as a means of apportioning blame, and anyone who buys a cold-brewed iced coffee at Weird Wave on Cesar Chavez or attends an art opening on Anderson Street (“a hipster playground for future gentrifiers”) is liable to hear them.

Many of the protesters wear masks at demonstrations, and according to Newsweek, one breakaway group reportedly went into the new gallery district and threw detergent on people attending an art opening. Protesters have driven one art gallery out of the neighborhood and recently forced another gallery to relocate its free concert to a venue outside the area. La Opinión has compared the protesters to the Zapatistas.

García and Anonymous said they aren’t with one of the headline groups, ad hoc coalitions such as Boyle Heights Against Artwashing and Displacement, or Defend Boyle Heights. They are part of a new group, they said, sounding almost shy. “We’re a big group of friends trying to inform the community the best we can,” García said.

The eviction protest was about to start, and as they stood up to resume their protesting, Anonymous turned around the sign from the side that said “Gentrification Is Urban Colonialism” to the one that read “Boyle Heights No Se Vende” (Boyle Heights is not for sale).

They crossed First Street, where the Victorian-era Boyle Hotel rose before the downtown skyline, pretty as a postcard. They took a shortcut down an alley that connects First and Second, passing by a vacant lot on the corner that city officials recently awarded to a developer of affordable housing.

The strings and trumpet of a mariachi band sounded at their approach.
Boyle Heights has become the front line in the battle against the rising costs and threats of displacement caused by gentrification. Activists have railed against the “art-washing” of Boyle Heights, converging on the art galleries that populate the industrial district by the river and calling for supposed gentrifying businesses to withdraw from the neighborhood.

No other community in Los Angeles has resorted to such aggressive tactics to stop (or at least slow down) the approach of urban revitalization. Some real estate analysts say the guerrilla tactics are discouraging conflict-averse investors. “The negative response from the surrounding neighborhood is a downer,” says Joseph Borda, a property manager for seven years in the neighborhood. “The land will be developed but probably slower than we expect because of it.”

Or as David, the real estate agent responsible for the pink “We Buy Homes [for?] Cash” signs on the telephone poles (he declined to give his last name), puts it: “It’s just the mentality, the culture of being in Boyle Heights — there are a lot of revolutionary-ies. It’s going to push a few investors out. Some people just don’t want to deal with the headaches.”

Dana Cuff, a professor of architecture, urban design and urban planning at UCLA, says what sets Boyle Heights apart from other gentrifying areas is that residents are speaking up before it is too late. “I think they are slowing things down there,” Cuff says. “I think they’re actually making their voices clear. And I think people, development interests and gentrifiers, have to listen.”

Others, like Fernando Arevalos, a native son and owner of the T-shirt and accessory label Boyle Heights Area Brand, are more skeptical of the ability of protestors to slow gentrification. “You can win some battles but you can’t stop the whole thing. It’ll be Echo Park here in 15 years.”

Perhaps never before in the up-and-down history of Boyle Heights has the neighborhood garnered so much interest from investors. Driven by rising property values elsewhere in the city, developers are eyeing what historically has been one of Los Angeles’s most neglected neighborhoods.

“We’ve run out of room; it’s just pure economics,” Borda says. “You’re seeing more yuppies, Caucasians coming in, and they’re willing to pay the higher prices for rent. As a result, it’s going to wreak havoc on the existing community.”

Property values in Boyle Heights have been trending upward for years, aided by the area’s timeless Victorian-era architecture and desirable location across the river from downtown’s burgeoning Arts District. According to the real estate website Trulia, the median value of a single-family home in Boyle Heights has increased 35 percent over the past three years. That’s a faster rate than Silver Lake (28 percent), Echo Park (32 percent) and L.A. County as a whole (22 percent), though it’s less than the city’s poster child for gentrification, Highland Park (41 percent).

The fact that the median sale price for a single-family home in Boyle Heights is $215,000 less than the median value for all of L.A. County suggests the upward trend will continue.

Major developments in the neighborhood’s more d erect south end likely will contribute to the continued rise: The Sears Building, a long-vacant art deco landmark on Olympic Boulevard, is being gut-renovated for 1,028 new units of market-rate housing and 99,000 square feet of ground-floor retail. A few blocks away on Olympic, the Depression-era Wyvernwood Garden Apartments will see 1,187 existing rent-controlled units on the property demolished and replaced with 4,400 condominiums and apartments with 300,000 square feet of retail and office space.

In recent years, the city also has been making investments in Boyle Heights: The Metro Gold Line’s Eastside extension in 2009 opened stations at Soto Street, Mariachi Plaza and Pico Aliso, and the planned $500 million Sixth Street Viaduct will provide yet another connection for the neighborhood to downtown by 2020 (with a 12-acre park below). Even the concrete tangle of freeways that has long divided the landscape of Boyle Heights is a kind of selling point to more affluent new residents seeking proximity to the highway.

With the housing-cost crisis in L.A. showing no signs of abating and so much money at stake, how long will it be before Boyle Heights reaches a tipping point?

Carlos Esparza filled a glass with cold draft beer and put more popcorn in the bowl on the bar. Esparza, 45, earlier this year opened Pizza Beer and Wings on Soto Street, across from the Gold Line station. “People grow up here, they raise their children here, they stay here,” he says of Boyle Heights. “There’s a lot of pride in the neighborhood. It’s tight-knit and family-oriented. Places like this need to be invested in.”

According to historian Ricardo Romo, author of East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio, the bonds of family and community in Boyle Heights are exceptional in Los Angeles, a city he calls the “fragmented metropolis par excellence.” Romo pegged the emergence of the Mexican identity in the area to the 1930s, the result of a racially discriminatory policy that prohibited many Mexicans from owning or renting homes in other parts of the city and restricted them to areas “east of the river.”

Once known as the Ellis Island of the West Coast, Boyle Heights was, in the 1930s and ‘40s, the heart of L.A.’s Jewish community and home to large numbers of Japanese, Russian and Serbian residents. After the construction of the freeways that appropriated 10 percent of the 6 square miles of the neighborhood, land values plummeted in the ‘50s, ‘60s and ‘70s — and the era of white flight began in earnest. In subsequent years, Boyle Heights transformed into the mostly low-income Mexican neighborhood it is today, a community made famous in films such as Stand and Deliver, Born in East L.A. and American Me, all of which were filmed there.

Of the 92,000 people who live in Boyle Heights today, 81 percent have Mexican ancestry and 94 percent are Latino, making it one of a handful of ethnically monolithic communities in L.A. County.

“There’s a lot of history here,” says Carlos Montes, a member of the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council and a former Brown Beret. “In the ‘50s you have the fight against police brutality and the election of Edward Roybal, the first Latino congressman from California in the 20th century. Then in the ‘60s you’ve got the East L.A. walkouts, the Chicano Moratorium against the war in Vietnam, the Chicano Power Decade, the Brown Berets.”

Montes says the neighborhood activism of the past was focused on fighting a public policy of neglect. Community-led efforts rolled back plans to install a toxic-waste incinerator downhill from Boyle Heights in 1990 and stopped the construction of a state prison in nearby East L.A. in 1992.

Arevalos remembers the ‘90s as an era when Boyle Heights was marred by gang violence. “For four years we slept on the floor of the living room every night, because every night there were drive-bys,” Arevalos says. “Gentrification is what will stop violence in the neighborhood.”

One of the comforts of home for Kenny Sanchez is the view of the downtown skyline from the front porch of his house perched on the crest of a hill in Boyle Heights. From the window of his living room upstairs, he can watch the postgame fireworks at Dodger Stadium.

“I live in the good part of Boyle Heights,” he says, which I learn is an inside joke. Everyone in Boyle Heights thinks...
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Kenny Sanchez
in front of his 
multifamily Boyle 
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> Sanchez has an interesting résumé. He was a jockey who raced thoroughbred horses for two decades. He lives in a part of Boyle Heights where several of the houses, including his own, are turn-of-the-century Victorians designated by the city as historic properties. Some of them look as though they haven’t been painted in this century. “A lot of homes haven’t been upgraded,” he says. “They’re falling apart.”

The condition of the houses does not discourage admirers. People stop their cars to gawk at the houses, which have what a real estate blurb might describe as good bones. Sometimes the admirers get out and take pictures. For most of the 20 years he has lived there, he says, Boyle Heights was more notorious than sought-after. He appreciates the attention.

As if given the signal from Sanchez, a tour guide on a bicycle leads a peloton of cyclists around the bend. Several of them scan the house as they pass by. Cyclists in Spandex riding gear used to be a novelty on Pleasant Avenue. Now he sees them all the time, more often than graffiti taggers.

Sanchez shows me the most recent flyer a real estate broker put in his mailbox. The headline is a screamer: “Prices of Properties Are Rising!!!” It also says, “We have several buyers wanting to invest in property in your area. ... We have more buyers than properties for sale.”

There are photos of a few houses in the neighborhood that sold recently and their sale price. “A car wreck knocked that one off the foundation,” Sanchez says, pointing at one of the photos. “Owner sold it for $450,000 and they tore down the house. The duplex next to that sold for $880,000.”

Houses on Pleasant Avenue are flipping like flapjacks. Real estate records confirm what Sanchez senses all around him. According to the real estate database ProspectNow, 10 of his neighbors have sold since last March. That’s nearly a quarter of the 43 residential properties in the three-block area — and more houses than have sold there in the previous 10 years combined.

“We knew it was going to change,” Sanchez says, “but not this much.”

The Victorian next door to Sanchez’s is a historic home built in 1875, with a sagging roof and paint chipped off the wood paneling and trim. The owner, a furtive man in his 60s who declined to give his name, told me he inherited the house from an elderly aunt and that he sold it that week for $430,000 (the median home price in the city is $629,900). It all happened so quickly, he says, the second visitor to the house offered the asking price. There wasn’t even time to put a For Sale sign in the yard.

According to real estate brokers in Boyle Heights, many of the homes in the neighborhood are too far gone for their owners to afford repairs. Many take what they can get.

Boyle Heights ranks in the bottom 10 percent of L.A. neighborhoods in terms of median household income. Sanchez says he is holding on tight to his house. Strips of wood molding rest on the porch behind him, and the buzz of an electric drill drifts up from one of the downstairs apartments. When Sanchez’s mother bought the house in 1980, she divided it into four units.

Many commercial and residential buildings in Boyle Heights have belonged to the same families since far back as the 1940s. Many owners have kept the rents low, which is why the mostly working-class residents can afford to live and run businesses there. The relationship between landlord and tenant can go back generations on both sides. But market pressure from outside the neighborhood is building.

“The [residents of] other East L.A. neighborhoods are getting priced out,” says Nicole Deflorian, a commercial realtor who has worked to transform the York and Figueroa corridors of Highland Park. “Investors are looking to buy, and a lot of areas are over priced.”

She says of Boyle Heights: “That’s the one area on the Eastside that’s still decently priced as far as purchasing goes.”

Jorge Tello, a tailor who has sewn mariachi suits or charro costumes for the likes of Anthony Quinn, Carlos Santana and Plácido Domingo, has run La Casa del Mariachi in...
Boyle Heights since 1982. But business isn’t what it used to be, and he says that once a month a gaggle of white people in suits comes in to ask who owns the building.

Hardly any of the proprietors on First Street even have a lease, Tello says, and the owners can ask them to leave at a month’s notice. The owner of Tello’s building is 75-year-old Pedro Prieto, who operates the sporting goods store next door. Prieto tells Tello he won’t sell. “But if he gets a multimillion-dollar offer ... as we say in Spanish, con dinero bailo el perro,” Tello says.

Prieto is an former welterweight prize-fighter from Mexico who moved to Boyle Heights at age 19 on a boxing visa. He says in-the-know people in the neighborhood have told him it’s too early to sell. “Investors have come and offered to buy,” he says, “but I don’t need the money and I haven’t sold.”

Dr. Feliciano Serrano, a nephrologist from Huntington Park, paid $4 million for the building next door. (He could not be reached for comment.) “We were given until January doesn’t know when, but things in Boyle Heights are changing quickly. “It’s already happening,” he says. “I already see it just driving around. Everybody’s getting priced out of downtown — residential and commercial buyers. You wouldn’t believe the people coming into Boyle Heights.”

Tenants of the apartment building at 3815 E. Second St. went on rent strike on June 28. The windows on one side of the apartment building are covered with handmade protest signs. “I got $800 rent hike,” says one sign. “The landlord BJ Turner doesn’t care about us.”

Frank “BJ” Turner is one example of what affordable-housing advocates say is a growing trend among new buyers of Boyle Heights apartment buildings. He bought the building earlier this year, and tenants say he put in central air conditioning and a washer-dryer, and at the entrance installed an accent wall and accent lighting, along with a privacy fence and a row of potted succulents. Tenants say their rents immediately increased between 60 and 80 percent, and they complain about problems not addressed by the improvements: water damage from a leaky roof, dark mold on a shower ceiling, rusted and filthy bedroom vents, a door partially devoured by termites.

“This is not an increase, it’s an outrage,” says a 62-year-old tenant named...
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> 11) Pedro Zúñiga, who got a letter from Turner’s property management firm in January informing him of a 60 percent rent increase, to $1,495 from $945, on the one-bedroom apartment he shares with his wife and teenage daughter.

Zúñiga is one of 10 mariachis who live in the building. Living a block from Mariachi Plaza is “extremely important” to his livelihood, he says. “It’s where the customers know they can find mariachis. It’s where one mariachi comes to hire another mariachi to join him on a job. You won’t get that work if you live far away.”

The activists say that, adding insult to injury, they recently came across an advertisement for the building on Craigslist; it has been rebranded as “affordable luxury apartments” and rechristened in an online advertisement as “Mariachi Crossing.”

The tenants, who are members of the Boyle Heights-based affordable-housing advocacy group Unión de Vecinos, say they have con-

continued to pay rent in the previous amount while they attempt to meet with Turner to negotiate a more affordable rent increase. Turner has declined to meet with them, and in late June he filed in court to have them evicted. (Turner did not respond to a request for comment for this story. A representative from Turner’s property manager, Crescent Canyon Management, said: “All I can tell you is that we have no comment at this time, but thank you for calling.”)

According to real estate website Zillow, Boyle Heights ranked 11th in terms of rent increases among L.A. neighborhoods from January 2015 to May 2017. The median rent for an apartment in Boyle Heights has risen by more than 40 percent in the past three years.

The rise in rents is impressive considering that 88 percent of the renters in Boyle Heights are protected by city rent-control laws, according to City Councilman José Huizar’s office — meaning that by law landlords usually cannot raise the rent on those units any more than 3 percent a year.

According to Elizabeth Blaney, co-director of Unión de Vecinos, landlords are resorting to more aggressive means to pressure tenants to vacate. Blaney says landlords are known to offer “cash for keys” or two months rent-free to entice tenants to move out, as well as ignoring requests for repairs to rent-controlled units and in some cases even threatening to call U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and have tenants deported.

Larry Gross, founder of the L.A. tenants rights organization Coalition for Economic Survival, points out that rental units in L.A. built after 1978, including the mariachis’ building, have no rent control — and so the landlord has the right to raise the rent without reason. “They’re in a rowboat in rough seas without a lifesaver,” he says. “Thus it becomes a straight political public pressure fight to get a landlord to back off without rent control.”

“EVERYBODY’S GETTING PRICED OUT OF DOWNTOWN — RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL BUYERS. YOU WOULDN’T BELIEVE THE PEOPLE COMING INTO BOYLE HEIGHTS.”—REAL ESTATE DEVELOPER SONNY ROUEL

“Gentrification is a process — it’s not a single person,” said one of the marchers, Melissa Castro, a recent graduate of Mills College who lives at her parents’ home in the neighborhood. “How do we get our public officials to come out in person publicly and say they do not support what is happening? We all want to see Boyle Heights become a more beautiful place,” she continues. “The problem is they haven’t done that for us in the last 50 years. So now we have to wonder who they’re making it pretty for, and will we be here in five or 10 years to enjoy it.”
MORE BÄCOSHOPS, PLEASE
Josef Centeno’s fast-casual eatery should proliferate across the country

BY BESHA RODELL

It’s wonderful that we now have so many amazing food options, at almost every price point, in almost every American city. In that sphere, the food revolution has arrived and has done its job, and the resulting deliciousness is likely here to stay.

The suburbs and small towns and rest stops and airports of America also have benefited from the country’s widening and improving taste in food, but it’s still not uncommon to find yourself on a long drive — or between flights, or on the outskirts of some major city somewhere — without many decent dining options. If you’re a lover of fast food, this kind of scenario might serve as a good excuse to indulge. But maybe you don’t want to eat something unhealthy. Maybe you’re a vegetarian. Maybe you don’t like fast food at all.

And I admit to being enough of a disgusting food snob that in situations like this, I generally pray for a Chipotle, which I can stomach, or I force down a tasteless sandwich from Starbucks, because at least it’s not soaked in grease.

But now I have hope for a better solution. It involves someone giving Josef Centeno a whole ton of money to proliferate BäcoShops all over the country. BäcoShop, which Centeno opened in March in downtown Culver City, is his first foray beyond downtown, where his five other restaurants dominate the couple of blocks where Main and Fourth streets meet.

This separation is probably a good thing, given that BäcoShop is so very different from Centeno’s other spots, even though it is based on the food item that defines Bäco Mercat, his original downtown restaurant. The bäco — a Centeno-invented folded flatbread that is part sandwich, part taco — makes a seamless transition from Bäco Mercat’s trendy sit-down dining room to BäcoShop’s fast-casual setup. Are they a little less nuanced in this new setting? Is the bread a little tougher, the composition a little blunter? Sure. But they’re also perfectly suited to mass replication: simple, versatile, adaptable.

Like Chipotle, the format at BäcoShop is a choose-your-own-adventure menu: You choose a protein, maybe chile shrimp or slow-roasted pork, and then decide if you want it served as a bäco, a bäcorrito (like a bäco but in burrito rather than taco form) or a bowl. There are a ton of creative vegetable sides to choose from, and you can get any three of them as a plate for $12.

The thing that impresses me most about BäcoShop is how hard Centeno and co. have thought about all the things that are missing from the usual fast-casual experience. Vegetables, yes, but also decent beer and wine, desserts you’d actually want to eat, and solutions for busy families. The shop now serves “Bäco packs” after 5 p.m., in which you can get two, four or eight Bäcos with sides and cookies. It’s a quick and easy dinner that’s not terribly unhealthy, that tastes better than most other quick solutions, and that’s pretty affordable (a four-pack, meant to feed four people, is $45).

As I sat eating my slow-roasted pork bäco and my salad of eggplant and chickpeas, I envisioned a future in which this might be an option at the airport, or beside the highway in the middle of nowhere, or in a suburban shopping center. I’m glad it’s in Culver City for now, but BäcoShop is a concept that deserves to multiply.

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Eating Like Texans
L.A.’s Restaurant Scene Is Taking on a Texas Twang

Everyone in Texas tells the same horror story about L.A. food: It’s a barren wasteland entirely devoid of Texan favorites. I heard plenty of versions of it before I made my move here from Austin in 2014. My aunt pulled me aside and told me, “They don’t have queso,” in the same frightened whisper that you might use to tell someone that your neighbors’ son has killed and is thinking about doing it again. My dad told me that people in California knew not of barbecue brisket, for instead they worshipped at the altar of something called “tri-tip.” I could’ve sworn I saw his hands tremble at the thought.

But when I finally made the move, I discovered that most of the warnings I’d heard were wrong, because people like Briana Valdez were rewriting the horror stories to have happy endings. In 2013, Valdez opened HomeState, a Los Feliz breakfast and lunch spot that serves exclusively Texas favorites, including breakfast tacos, queso that my aunt would love and brisket sandwiches. The opening lit a culinary Bat signal for Texans living in L.A. “In the beginning it was way more Texans that were coming to check it out to see if it met their expectations,” said owner (and fellow relocated Texan) Valdez. “I’d say now it’s a really good mix. L.A. in general is really excited about breakfast tacos.”

The same year HomeState opened, Wade McElroy and Russell Malixi (also former Texans) opened Horse Thief BBQ, a Texas-style barbecue joint in downtown’s Grand Central Market. That same year, Compton barbecue darling Bludso’s BBQ expanded up north to an upscale gastropub-ish space on La Brea and Melrose. Bludso’s pitmaster Kevin Bludso hails from Corsicana, Texas.

I don’t know what was in the L.A. water in 2013, but for little ol’ me, it certainly felt as if the Texan Illuminati was rolling out the red carpet when I moved here in 2014.

“I had seen in other cities where guys from Texas had opened barbecue restaurants,” McElroy said. “And I was like, that’s
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Three things are certain for Texpats: death, taxes (Texas doesn’t have a state income tax, so that’s always a surprise when we move) and wanting a food from home that we can’t have. I wanted a kolache, a Czech pastry that came (along with its people) to Texas in the mid-1800s. The Texas version comes in two primary varieties: sweet, round with a divot in the middle to hold fruit or cream cheese; and savory, where the same dough encloses a filling of sausage and cheese. Some people might call the savory ones klobasneks, and they’d be right, but as with most things, Texans like to keep things super simple even if it means being wrong.

I lived in the throes of kolache-less horror for almost two and a half years until I happened across something interesting on my Instagram Explore page: a picture of some beautiful kolaches created by Morning Boys, an L.A. bakery started by Texan brothers Mark and James Morales. Started as a catering operation in 2014, the brothers made the move to a delivery/pop-up model earlier this year.

After moving to L.A. to pursue music and fatty, smoked beef. Even if those reasons are melted cheese or sour cream, these restaurants have done a good job of showing L.A. some of the reasons why. Super special.” Texas is super special, and really realize those things that make it unique. “Until you come out of Texas, you don’t know the full extent of their abilities.”

HomeState’s Valdez called the friendliness and ease of ordering “very Texan.”

The kolaches themselves live up to my memories and expectations, though the boys of Morning Boys have made some concessions to the L.A. market. One egg-filled kolache, called the Artistic Type, has feta and pesto, while a vegetarian option uses soyrizo.

The Texas invasion does not stop there. Hopdoddy, the Austin-based craft burger and beer joint, opened up a pair of locations in Playa Vista and El Segundo in 2015. Alamo Drafthouse is set to finally open an L.A. location of the famed dine-in cinema chain in 2018. And last year, jumping on the trend, the owners of Big Wangs opened El Tejano, a Texas-themed bar in North Hollywood, which represents the “everything is bigger in” side of Texas with giant 2-for-1 margaritas at all times.

These Texas places weren’t just opening but gaining a lot of attention from the average non-Texan L.A. resident. Said Valdez: “Until you come out of Texas, you don’t realize those things that make it super special.” Texas is super special, and these restaurants have done a good job of showing L.A. some of the reasons why.

Even if those reasons are melted cheese and fatty, smoked beef.

—Reid O’Connor
**FILM**

**Jesus Freaks**

To coincide with a run of famed Chilean director Alejandro Jodorowsky’s latest film, *Endless Poetry*, the Nuart is screening his classic works throughout the month of July. Tonight the Westside movie house’s midnight presentation is Jodorowsky’s 1973 *The Holy Mountain*. The film is a product of its time, a psychodelic, spiritual trip seemingly made for little more than the love of making art itself. Yet it resonates today as a celebration of all that is bizarre and wonderful, a collection of WTF images ready to be reblogged on Tumblr. It’s beautiful, intense and NSFW. Nuart Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., Sawtelle; Fri., July 21, 11:59 p.m.; $12; (310) 473-8530, landmarktheatres.com. —Liz Ohanesian

**DANCE**

**FLAX Machine**

Otherwise known as FLAX, France Los Angeles Exchange is a local nonprofit that facilitates cultural exchange between L.A.-based artists and those living in France. In this free event, French video and performance artist Lola Gonzalez teams up with L.A.-based composer Paul Chavez and choreographer-dancer Oguri for an immersive, site-specific dance presentation featuring 60 performers. Curated by Anna Milone, *The distance is beautiful. La distance la plus courte entre deux points n’est pas une ligne droite* is both a performance and an experience that takes audiences on an interactive journey through the streets of L.A., via France. Grand Park, 300 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., July 22, 7:30 p.m.; free. raxfoundation.org. —Tanja M. Laden

**MUSIC**

**Music Man**

Noted stage director James Lapine, who has a long history of working with musical-theater giant Stephen Sondheim, in 2010 directed the Broadway debut of his musical revue, *Sondheim on Sondheim*. Tonight’s revival, directed by Lapine’s niece Sarna Lapine, features such memorable tunes as “Ever After” and the inevitable “Send in the Clowns.” Actor-singer Vanessa Williams returns from the original Broadway production alongside Jonathan Groff, Sarah Uriarte Berry, Ruthie Ann Miles and Jesse Tyler Ferguson. Conductor Gustavo Dudamel’s deft touch with the L.A. Phil should give these merry songs even more emotional resonance. Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; Sun., July 23, 7:30 p.m.; $14-$189; (323) 850-2000, hollywoodbowl.com. —Falling James

**CULTURE**

**Zoot Your Own Horn**

Mexican-American guitarist and singer Lalo Guerrero is widely considered the “Father of Chicano Music,” and his boleros, corridos and humorous parodies influenced generations of Latinx musicians. Guerrero recorded more than 700 songs in his nearly seven-decade career, including the music for Luis Valdez’s 1979 play *Zoot Suit* and contributions to Ry Cooder’s *Chavez Ravine* album in 2005. Hosted by Guerrero’s son Dan, *Lalopolooza: A Chicanofest Celebrating Lalo Guerrero* features performances from Tres Souls, Lindas Mexicanas and The Wise Guys Big Band, plus a zoot suit fashion show and a lowrider car show. LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes, 501 N. Main Street, downtown; Sun., July 23, 4 p.m.; free. lapca.org. —Matt Stromberg

**TELEVISION**

**In the Year 3000**

*Mystery Science Theater 3000 Live* brings to goofy life the beloved cult TV series’ story of a human host and his robot chums trapped aboard a satellite and forced by their captor to watch really cheesy, B-grade sci-fi flicks. Perfervidly faithful fan geeks will gather to cheer on the series’ creator, Joel Hodgson, and new host Jonah Heston (Jonah Ray) as they spar live onstage with jokemeister robot companions Crow (Hampton Yount), Tom Servo and Gypsy, plus surveillance squad members Kings...
Forrester (Felicia Day) and Frank (Patton Oswalt). Two separate shows, Eegah at 4 p.m. and a “secret surprise film” at 8. The Theatre at Ace Hotel, 929 S. Broadway, downtown; Sun., July 23, 4 & 8 p.m.; $39.50-$299. (213) 235-9614. —John Payne

**BOOKS**

**A Tangled Webb**

The Cake and the Rain is songwriter Jimmy Webb’s rendition of his storied life (in book form), covering 1955 through 1970, and all the adventures and hit writing he managed to cram into those years. You know his songs — “Up, Up and Away,” “The Highwayman” and “MacArthur Park” — and the incisively insightful Webb explains their genesis and the crazy antics he got up to in the wake of their massive success. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Mon., July 24, 7 p.m.; free. (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com. —David Cotner

**ART**

**Check Marc**

LACMA’s upcoming “Chagall: Fantasies for the Stage” looks at the role music and theater played in Marc Chagall’s art. Among the 145 items on display are costumes and preparatory sketches — in addition to film footage, musical accompaniment and a selection of well-known paintings — that Chagall created between 1942 and 1967 for the ballets Aleko, The Firebird and Daphnis and Chloé (for the Ballet of New York, now American Ballet Theater, and Paris Opera Ballet) and opera The Magic Flute (for the Metropolitan Opera House). In anticipation of the July 31 opening, LACMA senior curator of modern art Stephanie Barron moderates a conversation with Chagall’s granddaughters Meret and Bella Meyer. LACMA, Bing Theater, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Tue., July 25, 7 p.m.; free with RSVP. (323) 857-6010, lacma.org. —Siran Babayan

**COMEDY**

**Bureaucratic Republic**

Staying on top of the comedy scene in a city as big as L.A. isn’t easy, which is why, in 2010, Jake Kroeger launched the comedy aggregator website the Comedy Bureau. A stand-up comic, Kroeger not only writes about the big news stories happening in film, TV and digital but also compiles perhaps the most comprehensive list of live events throughout L.A. County, from theaters and vaunted clubs to coffee shops, living rooms and backyards. Kroeger even hosts nightly comedy tag-alongs as part of Airbnb Experiences. Applying his expertise, Kroeger hosts APB: The Comedy Bureau’s Most Wanted List, a curated night of stand-up by more than a dozen local comics. Comedy Central Stage at the Hudson, 8539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Wed., July 26, 8 p.m.; free with RSVP. comedycentralstage.com. —Tanja M. Laden

**FOOD & DRINK**

**Cruising Colorado**

Pasadena’s Playhouse District is the area around Colorado Boulevard just east of Old Town Pasadena. It’s a hyper-specific designation, sure, but it has a neighborhood association of its very own, one that’s hard at work putting on events and promoting restaurants. One such event, Dine the District, provides a chance to sample eats from restaurants in the neighborhood. A single ticket is $25, or a package of four for $75 — add $10 per person for a wine tasting from Monopole Wine. Participating restaurants include El Portal, the Stand Pasadena, Roy’s, Braise & Crumble, Foodie Cube, Round’s Burgers, Zona Rosa Caffe and the Next Chapter. Pasadena Playhouse, 39 S. El Molino Ave., Pasadena; Thu., July 27, 5:30-8:30 p.m.; $25-$75. playhousedistrict.org. —Katherine Spiers
OUT OF THE PLAYPEN
Polly Borland’s photos reveal the weird and wonderful world of adult babies

BY CATHERINE WOMACK

The first time Australian photographer Polly Borland heard about the Babies, she thought, “No, that couldn’t exist.” Her friend assured her it did. There were secretive clubs in England where adult men spent weekends dressing up as babies, napping in cribs, wearing and soiling diapers and sometimes even suckling a surrogate mother’s teat.

Borland, who says she has always been fascinated by the “weird and wonderful,” was instantly intrigued. She was living in England at the time and, in addition to her fashion and editorial work, had done some photojournalism projects on a wide range of subjects (nudists, Trekkies, wrestlers, etc.). She loved photographing people who inhabited the margins outside traditional norms. She had to know more about these adult babies.

It was the early ’90s, so Googling wasn’t an option. Instead, Borland picked up some fetish magazines from the top shelves of a newsstand and dug through the back pages until she found an ad for the Hush-a-Bye Baby Club in Kent, England. The ad listed a phone number for Mummy Hazel. Borland called, and accepted Hazel’s invitation to visit her home/Adult Baby nursery.

Soon, Borland and a reporter from the Independent were sitting in Hazel’s living room, gathering information and images for a story that would run in the paper’s weekend magazine.

“We were sitting there chatting with Hazel and there was literally just a big man in a nappy crawling around on the floor,” Borland recalls. “I thought I’d died and gone to heaven. It was a combination of weird, surreal and sort of psychologically disturbing. It fascinated me because it was so visually arresting. It was like a weird, adult Alice in Wonderland situation.”

After her piece ran in the Independent, Borland continued to visit the Babies at Mummy Hazel’s. She went there for weekend trips, photographing them as they went in and out of role-playing, sometimes crying for their mummy to change a poopy diaper, sometimes taking a break to drink a beer or take a phone call from work. The Babies accepted Borland’s presence and warmed up to her camera. “I think that as a nonjudgmental observer, I gave them validation and permission to exist as they were. They are. And it’s what makes them so visually arresting. It was like a weird, surreal and sort of psychologically disturbing. It fascinated me because it was so visually arresting. It was like a weird, adult Alice in Wonderland situation.”

This summer, for the first time in more than 15 years, all of the images from The Babies will be on display. The show, which opens at Mier Gallery on July 22 and runs through Aug. 19, marks Borland’s first solo show in Los Angeles, where the photographer now lives and works.

“I think it’s gutsy for Nino Mier to show this work,” Borland says. “I don’t know what it is about this work but people find it creepy.”

IT IS EASY TO CREATE PRETTY PICTURES. BUT FOR ME, I WANT TO BE CHALLENGED ON SOME LEVEL.”
—POLY BORLAND

It can be an uncomfortable experience to look at the Babies. The lighting is harsh and revealing, and Borland’s lens zooms in unapologetically on the flabby, blotchy, pale skin of her subjects. An unattractive pink hue dominates, appearing on faded plastic shower curtains, oversized nighties and the diaper-rashed skin of exposed asses and scrotas.

“Close is ugly. Adult is ugly, when compared to the perfections of the recently born,” Sontag writes in her introduction to the book.

The disturbing things. The ugly things. That is where Borland focuses her camera’s lens. Where others would aver their eyes, her gaze lingers.

“It is easy to create pretty pictures,” Borland explains. “I can do that. I’ve done fashion. I’ve done beautiful portraits of beautiful women. But for me, when I look at work, I want to be challenged on some level. I like the idea that I don’t necessarily provide all the answers. People have to think about what they’re looking at.”

Sitting in her sparse and airy Arts District studio loft, Borland talks about her photographer heroes — Diane Arbus and Larry Clark — and how she was inspired by them to capture images of the bizarre, darker slices of the world that many people prefer to ignore.

She recalls the first time she was affected viscerally by a disturbing image. “It was around my early 20s. I was studying art in Melbourne and my tutor took our class to a little gallery. On the walls were pinned photos from Larry Clark’s ‘Tulsa’ and ‘Teenage Lust’ series. They had scratch marks all over them and there were images of young boys with erections and needles in their arms. I experienced a physical reaction. It was a transcendental, inspirational moment. I suddenly realized that it is important to feel, to experience things that I don’t understand or that I find uncomfortable. That is what keeps us from going through life sleepwalking.”

Recently, Borland has experimented with transforming some of her photographs into tapestries, and a selection of these works will fill the smaller gallery.

The tapestries on display are all drawn from one image — an iconic photo of Queen Elizabeth II that Borland took as part of a portrait commission from the Palace. (“They must not have done their research on me,” she jokes, noting that she took this photo after The Babies was published.)

To create the tapestries, Borland had a cross-stitch pattern made of her Queen Elizabeth portrait, which she then sent to an English nonprofit called Fine Cell Work, which trains and pays prisoners to create handcrafted needlepoints. Several prisoners — a Mr. Stewart, a Mr. Pink and a Mr. Hawkins among them — then stitched the image by hand. Borland notes that they did so while living in Her Majesty’s Prison Service.

Because each prisoner used the same original image and pattern, the tapestries look identical on the front. It’s the messier backsides of these pieces that interest Borland, and it is that side that will be on display in the Mier galleries.

Borland’s backward tapestries are slyly subversive. On one side, they’re simple needlepoints of a beautiful, Palace-approved photo of the Queen. But their impact is heightened because their underbellies are put on display, their backstories are loaded and they are hung just a room away from images of naked, middle-aged Englishmen sucking on pacifiers and drooling on bibs.

Borland smiles as she runs her hands across the brightly colored wool. “The Queens are kind of scary in their own way, aren’t they?” she says.

They are. And it’s what makes them distinctly Borland-esque.
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Photo by Nigel Parry/CPI
IT’S NOT EASY BEING YEES
A daughter grapples with her father’s obsession with their family name in King of the Yees

BY DEBORAH KLUGMAN

The many pleasures of King of the Yees, directed by Joshua Kahan Brody at the Mark Taper Forum, emerge not from playwright Lauren Yee’s rambling, unfocused script but from the abundant talents of its versatile ensemble and the production’s colorful staging.

An import from the Goodman Theatre in Chicago, Yee’s autographically inspired play turns on the playwright’s relationship with her father, Larry, played with amiable charm by Francis Jue. Brought up in San Francisco’s Chinatown, Larry is a devotee of his community’s traditional culture, represented by the Yee Fung Toy Family Association, a social club for men that developed in the 19th century. Larry’s big push for Leland’s promotion (to California Secretary of State) ends abruptly when, at the end of the first act, the politician is found guilty of bribery and corruption (a real-life event) and Larry disappears, either to nurse his grief or elude legal culpability, or perhaps both.

The rest of the play tracks Laurens’s search for her dad, which involves a journey through tropes of Chinese-American culture, including a chorus of Chinese-American senior citizens (Angela Lin, Daniel Smith and Rammel Chan), a smirky seller of contraband whiskey (Lin) and a long-white-bearded practitioner of Chinese medicine (Chan). And scattered about both acts are duologues between Smith and Lin as Asian-American actors, the most hilarious of which has one (Smith) instructing the other (Lin) in a Chinese accent (essential for auditions).

The almost childishly trusting Larry finds a foil in his Yale-educated daughter, playwright Lauren (Stephenie Soohyun Park), who’s married and lives in New York and is about to move to Berlin. Lauren feels little connection with her roots; she speaks no Cantonese and pooh-poohs her father’s celebration of the family. Most significantly, she’s not sure she wants to have kids. Her attitudes, especially about children, wound her father but, gentle soul that he is, he responds with sorrow rather than anger.

Act 1 putt-putts to a slow start, but eventually takes off, propelled by Jue’s beguiling performance as Larry, who actively seeks support for his opinions from the audience, and at one point even passes out voter registration forms to front-row patrons in his drive for universal citizens’ franchise.

Many of these riffs and gags would not pass muster in terms of political correctness were they not written and performed by Asian-Americans — rather like Jewish comedians getting away with Jewish jokes that would be offensive if employed by anyone else. (The play references a parallel between the two cultures.) Playwright Yee seems to have tossed most everything she could think of into a comic stew, and the result is a hodgepodge in which the point of the narrative is rather lost until the end.

While this may be frustrating, and while you may mourn, as I did, the loss of Larry as a pivotal presence, the comic vitality asserted by Lin, Smith and Chan keeps one continuously diverted. Heather Gilbert’s lighting, Mikhail Fiksel’s sound and (most entertaining of all) Mike Tutaj’s projections help make for a festive evening that, despite its circuitous route, ends up touching one’s heart after all.

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A TRIUMPH ABOUT DEFEAT

Dunkirk is the movie Christopher Nolan was born to make

BY BILGE EBIRI

he nerve-racking war thriller Dunkirk is the movie Christopher Nolan’s entire career has been building up to, in ways that even he may not have realized. He’s taken the British Expeditionary Force’s 1940 evacuation from France, early in World War II — a moment of heroism-in-defeat that has become an integral part of Britain’s vision of itself — and turned it into a nestling dol of increasingly breathless, ticking-clock narratives. Some filmgoers might be expecting a sprawling, grandiose war epic. Instead, Nolan gives us one of the leanest, most ingenious studio films in quite a while: an intercutting montage of competing timelines that expand and contract and collide in ways both inevitable and surprising. And somehow, it’s also uncharacteristically intimate.

Nolan doesn’t get enough credit for the experimentalism of his filmmaking. His final Batman picture, The Dark Knight Rises (2012), had extended passages that interlaced suspense set pieces with time-condensing montages, two modes that require totally different kinds of pacing; that the director would cross streams that require totally different kinds of pacing; that the director would cross streams so flamboyantly in a superhero flick is little shocking when a character from one storyline shows up in another, at an earlier point in his arc — which in turn sheds additional light on his psychology. Nolan and editor Lee Smith juggle these timelines with verve but also with compassion. As he did with his Jess-ackwards thriller, Inception (2010), in which the reverse narrative replicated the protagonist’s amnesia, the director has found a structure that enhances the film’s subjectivity. Spending seven days on the beach brings home the agony of the soldiers’ wait. Spending a full day on the boat reflects the surprising difficulty of getting from England to Dunkirk. The hour on the Spitfire relays the urgency of the vessel’s dwindling fuel and the daunting task of a handful of planes defending hundreds of thousands of soldiers. And as these stories converge, odd things happen. About a third of the way through one major set piece, we realize we’re watching the scene out of order, that we ourselves have become consumed by the chaos of the moment. Meanwhile, Hoyte van Hoytema’s ridiculously immersive IMAX cinematography ensures that we’re never pulled out of the experience.

Nolan has learned the value of understatement: The death of one major player happens off-screen, and its discovery is heartbreaking in muted. In another scene, as a boat slams against a pier, a sole, distant scream suggests that a man has been crushed between the two. Nolan’s films are filled with haunted figures — flamboyantly, operatically haunted ones — but here, the brooding feels organic, quiet, part of the landscape, whether it’s Rylance’s soft-spoken, tenderhearted boat captain or Kenneth Branagh’s lonely Commander Bolton, forlornly standing on a breakwater as he oversees the critical aftermath of a monumental military humiliation.

Which brings us to Dunkirk’s most interesting trick. At first, I was a little peeved that the enemy was never called out by name; nobody says the word “Nazi” in this movie, which seems like a misstep in our unexpectedly Nazi-laden times. But the film itself is a testament to the value of loss — to the idea that life, honor and triumph wait on the far side of failure. That was of course the gist of newly appointed Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s resounding speech delivered in the wake of the retreat. (“We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets.”) In the end, Dunkirk suggests that how you handle the most deflating existential defeat may well be the very thing that saves you. We all kind of need to be reminded of that these days.

DUNKIRK | Directed and written by Christopher Nolan | Warner Bros. | Citywide

JENNY SLATE DAZZLES IN LANDLINE, A ’90S-SET COMEDY ABOUT GROWING UP DISAPPOINTED

Jenny Slate’s daughter comes out in a wild gush, as though she’s been shaken and uncorced, the sound somehow puppyishly sweet and punkishly impolite. Her characters, cherry cynics, often fall to quite match the mood of a room, so their amus ed eruptions can hurt feelings, stir laughter, inspire the ol’ Crinkled eye from the stiffs worth laughing at. In Landline, Gillian Robespierre’s warm yet prickly comedy, Slate’s uncertain Dana shakes off her jitters about her engagement to a cab driver (Jay Duplass) by smoking a joint with a foxy alpha (Finn Wittrock) she used to hook up with in college. It’s 1995, and they’re at a dead-serious drone-guitar performance in a dingy Lower Manhattan club. Almost immediately, Dana’s joyous cackles — plus her jokes and belches and thoughts about the tightness of Helen Hunt’s Mad About You pants — prove too much for the venue. Much of the film asks whether this world offers a right place for women like Dana and her teenage sister, Ali (superb newcomer Abby Quinn), to be their truest selves — whether they’re always going to be too noisy, too opinionated, too open about wanting more.

The sisters’ relationship is caustic and com- bative but genuine. Libr (Tom Hardy, his face totally covered, once again singing solely with his eyes) as he battles the German Messerschmitts bombing the stranded army below.

As the film makes clear, the beach at Dunkirk was uniquely treacherous. Large ships couldn’t approach the shallow waters; to board any boats, soldiers had to crowd onto a long, narrow pier, making them sitting ducks for enemy planes and bombs. On a clear day you could pretty much see the South of England; some men killed themselves simply by walking into the water, thinking they could swim across. It’s the kind of irony that clearly inspires Nolan, whose movies are often fugues built around opposing variations of an idea. The Dark Knight Rises, hope was used as a weapon; in his sci-fi epic Interstellar (2014), humanity’s own survival instinct came very close to killing off the species. Now, in Dunkirk, the closeness of home resonates. Here are more than 300,000 soldiers out in the open, in plain sight of the enemy was never called out by name; nobody says the word “Nazi” in this movie, which seems like a misstep in our unexpectedly Nazi-laden times. But the film itself is a testament to the value of loss — to the idea that life, honor and triumph wait on the far side of failure. That was of course the gist of newly appointed Prime Minister Winston Churchill’s resounding speech delivered in the wake of the retreat. (“We shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets.”) In the end, Dunkirk suggests that how you handle the most deflating existential defeat may well be the very thing that saves you. We all kind of need to be reminded of that these days.

Jenny Slate, left, and Abby Quinn

COURTESY AMAZON STUDIOS

The love story here is of the sisters discovering that one can give love and that one deserves it back, even if she wakes up hungover, her pillow soaked in vomit. — Alan Scherstuhl

LANDLINE | Directed by Gillian Robespierre | Written by Elisabeth Holm and Gillian Robespierre | Amazon Studios | Landmark, ArcLight Hollywood
**ROARING IN THE FILTH**

**YOU’LL NEED TO BE HOUSED OFF AFTER FLYING LOTUS’ HILARIOUS GROSS-OUT HORROR SPREE, KUSO**

**BY APRIL WOLFE**

It’s nearly impossible to categorize the first feature-length film by Steven Ellison (aka Flying Lotus, the experimental beatmaster, music producer and rapper). Made up of multiple, wildly varied vignettes that intersect and revolve around the theme of a chaotic, post-apocalyptic Los Angeles, where every surviving human is covered in grotesquely bubbled sores, *Kuso* is an astounding feat of animation, humor and practical effects. Also, George Clinton plays a Svengali doctor who can cure all your ailments... as soon as you lure the crustacean from his ass with a song — a cappella or with fresh beats, whichever you prefer. It might sound like what’s become known as “body horror,” but what’s unsettling here isn’t limited to the sores and fleshy gore. So thoroughly conceived that it demands appreciation if not quite love, *Kuso* offers gross-out Afro-future horror — and ideas — for the dank-memes generation.

Ellison’s influences are immediately evident. Vintage and contemporary Japanese video game art, with explosions of color from every direction, pervades his animations, though with the adult themes of hentai — witness a cave jam-packed with blood-squirting breasts and writhing tentacles. These omnipresent vulgarities come to seem less gross and offensive as they avalanche over us, more indicative of the dreamlike, free-associative logic of meme culture than they are a considered provocation. (They’re certainly not meant to be sexy.) The animation, in fact, takes on a warped, psychedelic, Deep-Dream quality. Down this rabbit hole, every visual element is a Freudian archetype. Everyday things — especially body parts — become primal, menacing.

**KUSO IS AN ASTOUNDING FEAT OF ANIMATION, HUMOR AND PRACTICAL EFFECTS.**

David Firth, the British animator known for his cult, flash-animated Salad Fingers and his chill-inducing frail character voices (like ASMR gone very wrong), collaborates with Ellison on multiple segments, and their aesthetics sync up: The first *Salad Fingers* features a lettuce-digited man whispering about how much he likes to touch rusty spoons — which feels disgusting, even if you can’t identify exactly why.

Ellison pairs his beautiful, bizarre creep-out experiments with excellent live-action storylines that are at times furiously funny, in the darkest way imaginable. The Buttress, a Los Angeles rapper, plays a captive woman who, with her milky-white eyes, suggests the witch from *The Evil Dead*. Her captors? Two lazy, multicolored mop monsters — voiced by Hannibal Buress and Donnell Rawlings. Buttress, impregnated by a guy who lives in the toilet (Tim Heidecker), has to get an abortion. At the clinic, the paperwork she’s handed is simply a sheet of paper with various pictures of wire hangers — she has to choose one. Jokes like this seem as if they could have been crafted over too much wine at one of my all-lady potlucks, but even I laughed about restrictive abortion laws; Adult Swim’s white male-centric bumpers and shows traffic in similar non sequitur gross-out humor, but *Kuso* possesses an outsider’s POVs.

There is no shortage of references here, from *Donnie Darko* to the best of J-horror, and keeping up with them can be a joy for those knowledgeable in genre-film history. The production design of a lush magical forest evokes *Space Is the Place*, the low-fi video aesthetic of a sitcom set reeks of urban-horror classics like *Def by Temptation*, some twisted humor is ripped from *Tales From the Hood*, and the puppets and gory makeup pull from the best of Joe Dante and cult classics such as *Joe’s Apartment*. One of my favorite elements has to be the fake commercials Albert Clinton (Clinton) stars in, boasting the cheesy psychedelic animation of the Y2K era. Ellison seems to have found inspiration everywhere. *Kuso* doesn’t so much seem to have been directed by him as to have erupted from him, in one spontaneous, 90-minute burst of pressurized nightmares.

**KUSO | Directed by Steven Ellison**

Written by David Firth and Ellison Shudder | Cinematography and streaming on Shudder
Nuns or Devils, Take Your Pick Saturday, July 22
1912 marked the beginning of a golden period for cinema pioneer D.W. Griffith. Among the several dozen short films he produced for the Biograph Company that year is The Girl and Her Trust, a 15-minute masterpiece about a woman (Dorothy Bernard) who finds herself besieged by a mob trying to plunder a lonely telegraph station. Retroformat, which is dedicated to screening silents on 8mm or 16mm with live musical accompaniment, will show this landmark suspense exercise along with a few other goodies from the same pivotal year, including The Female of the Species, The Goddess of Sagebrush Gulch and The Lesser from the Shade. Spielberg Theatre at the Egyptian, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., July 22, 7:30 p.m.; $12. (323) 466-3456, lafilmforum.org.

Sunday, July 23
Apart from having the best worst title of any sequel produced in the 1990s, Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit has the distinction of being the most winceful film about religious devotion since Bresson’s Les Anges du péché. (Or at least since the original Sister Act.) Cinefamily presents this featherweight blockbuster comedy as part of its Nunday Funday series, held every Sunday in July. It hearkens back to a gentler, simpler time when the economy was in full swing and Whoopi Goldberg was known more for her acting than her views on The View. Cinefamily/Silent Movie Theatre, 611 N. Fairfax Ave., Fairfax; Sun., July 23, 2 p.m.; $12. (323) 655-2510, cinefamily.org.

Speaking of nuns, Ken Russell’s The Devils remains every bit the cinematic gut punch it was back in 1971. Inspired by true events that transpired in 17th-century France, the film’s content was potent enough to earn the controversial X rating here. (Warner Bros., its U.S. distributor, still hasn’t released it digitally.) Critical opinion differs sharply on its merits; but two things most will agree upon are Derek Jarman’s stunning, sepulchral sets and Oliver Reed’s superb performance as the sensual, young-stud magnet. (Melissa Anderson)

Thursday, July 27
Peter O’Toole’s Oscar-nominated performance as a pickled, aging, Errol Flynn-ish matinee idol is the highlight of Richard Benjamin’s warmly affectionate My Favorite Year. Aliconadoes of the Golden Age of television probably will appreciate the jokes the most, but the broad comic strokes are for everyone. The 1982 film screens as part of Laemmle’s Anniversary Classics series. Benjamin and supporting actor Lanie Kazan are scheduled for a Q&A. Laemmle Royal, 11523 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A., Thu., July 27, 7:30 p.m.; $15. (310) 478-3836, laemmle.com.

Vertigo, Alfred Hitchcock’s enduring masterpiece of male sexual obsession shot in glistening Technicolor, is the gift that keeps on giving. You discover new things — an ingenious touch, a revealing detail — every time you watch it. Audiences and critics were slow to embrace Vertigo with Eat/See/Hear. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

Wednesday, July 26
Desert Hearts, based on Jane Rule’s novel Desert of the Heart, is an irredescently feminine take on the love that dare not speak its name (at least not in the 1950s). The film observes the thawing out of a tightly wound professor of English (Helen Shaver) who departs New York to obtain a divorce in Reno and slowly, inexorably falls for the charms of a bartending cowgirl (Patricia Charbonneau). Director Donna Deitch interprets their growing attraction as a series of conversations and rationalizations, providing an intellectual counterbalance to the unruly feelings that bubble beneath the surface. It’s part of Rack Focus, an American Cinematheque initiative focusing on women’s contributions to the film industry. Stay in your seat for a post-movie discussion with Deitch, moderated by Samantha Shada. Aero Theatre, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Sat., July 26, 7:30 p.m.; $12. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.

false confessions / confidences

Confidences) As we were reminded last fall — the high season of Isabelle Huppert, whose triumphs Elle and Things to Come were released within weeks of each other — the tiny thing can transform the most seemingly banal activity into an event. In Luc Bondy’s largely inert False Confessions, the tedious is broken by the actress’s outfits, and by the way she moves in them. Bondy, a theater and opera director, filmed part of his adaptation of Marivaux’s 1737 comedy of deception and dissembling at Paris’ Théâtre de l’Odéon during daylight; at night, Huppert and her castmate in the film performed the same roles onstage at the Odéon. Despite the diurnal setting, several scenes are distractingly overt, the actors enlivened by a honey glaze. Serving as its own source of luminescence is the loose white satin ensemble that Huppert’s character, Araminte, a moneyed widow, is wearing when we first see her, practicing tai chi on a balcony. She may be doing the meditative exercises to prepare for what comes next: a series of byzantine machinations set in motion by Dorante (Louis Garrel), newly employed by Araminte as her accountant and long in love with her — feelings that he wants to keep concealed. Some of Bondy’s troupe members, blustering and posturing asides as the material demands, are more aware than others that they need play only for the camera and not to the back of the house. All are upstaged by the gold-lame tracksuit Araminte rocks while doing light cardio on a treadmill. (Melissa Anderson)

First Kill: Remember when Bruce Willis used to be in good shit? I don’t know what made your favorite smart-ass action hero decide to go the Nicolas Cage route and slum through straight-to-VOD shick. Maybe dude has house payments. But years of witnessing this decline have taught me to wince every time I see his name. In First Kill, he plays an orner, small-town police chief who springs into action when a bank is robbed and a dead cop’s body is located in the woods. Also involved is a Wall Street broker (Hayden Christensen) who has returned to his hometown with his family, looking to teach his son (Ty Shelton) how to be a young-stud magnet. (Melissa Anderson)

Landline

1995: When people were harder to reach. //  July 21 - 27, 2017 //  www.laweekly.com

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Q&A’s with JENNY SLATE, EDIE FALCO and ABBY QUINN at the ArcLight Cinerama Dome //  July 21 & 27

LA WEEKLY     2 COL (3.55w) x 7”     THUR 7/20
we drive them further into the hands of loathsome politicians they already adore. But hey, scary rural Australians are still fair game! It’s been a long time since Crocodile Dundee painted the Outback-survivalist archetype as pleasantly PG; here, a couple on a camping trip stop at a pub, ask the wrong person for directions and before long are targeted by an aggressively nervous sexual predator and his all-business, leave-no-evidence gun-slinging partner. It’s standard Texas Chain Saw Massacre formula, but first-time feature director Damien Power mixes things up, literally, by telling the first part of the story from three different perspectives, out of chronologically order. There’s the nice couple, there’s the pair of killers, and there’s a family of four who’ve chosen the same camping site. Eventually the timelines converge, things get nasty, and you learn really fast that this is one of those “realistic” horror movies that wallows in seriously ugly acts. What the film does do, much to its credit, is make the killers into charismatically “cool” villains. Just as serial killers in real life tend to be awkward dorks when caught, these are bad guys who’d be utterly pathetic if they didn’t bitterly cling to their guns, so to speak. Thankfully, despite his realistic tone, Power isn’t about to pull a Michael Haneke and deprive you of the catharsis you expect. He just makes getting there a brutal drive. (Luke Y. Thompson)

**THE MIDWIFE (SAGE FEMME)** Not a whole lot happens in *The Midwife*, but there’s never a dull moment, thanks to the opposing yet equally stellar performances by the two Catherines in lead. Catherine Frot plays Claire, a timid, middle-aged midwife whose mundane day-to-day is disrupted when a figure from her past comes back into her life. That would be Catherine Deneuve’s Béatrice, the ex-lover of Claire’s late father. Béatrice, recently diagnosed with a brain tumor, wants to make things right, but it’s too little too late — Claire’s father, stricken with depression when Béatrice left him, committed suicide years ago. Claire’s polite demeanor, worn down with resentment, resurfaces with Béatrice’s return. Deneuve gives the firecracker performance to Frot’s more understated one, as a woman who remains stubborn until her dying day, who refuses to give up the good things in life; even with her health deteriorating, Béatrice eats red meat with red wine. It all builds to a turning point — that should be no surprise — when Claire and Béatrice find common ground and start to enjoy each other’s company. Director Martin Provost doesn’t do this with a showy aho moment. Rather, he illustrates the shift with subtle behavior. There’s a later scene when Claire, who usually doesn’t put much effort into her appearance, is seen applying lipstick and perfume before a date, mirroring an earlier scene in which Béatrice does the same. Béatrice may be a tornado of a presence, but her influence teaches Claire to live a little, too. (Kristen Yoonsoo Kim)

**SWIM TEAM** Since the 1960s, when the Kennedys first worked to expand and popularize the Special Olympics, serious competition among athletes with intellectual disabilities has come to be seen as an uplifting endeavor — and not just for the athletes. Lara Stolman covers that ground in her documentary about a YMCA swim team, the Jersey Hammerheads of Perth Amboy, New Jersey, whose members are all diagnosed with autism. Swim Team doesn’t delve into many specifics about the disorder — it’s a wide-ranging spectrum of challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and communication — or the particulars of how it affects the three young men in focus. Stolman spends her time with the swimmers and their families, including Coach Mike and his wife, Maria, who taught their young son to swim out of safety concerns around their pool, despite warnings from doctors that he likely wouldn’t ever talk or be able to put on his own pants. Mikey, as a senior in high school, defied that diagnosis, not least as a top swimmer. For teammate Kelvin, who has Tourette’s syndrome, swimming proves better than medicine at controlling his tics, but waiting around between events is stressful enough to cause them. Unlike Mikey, Robert, who swims on two main-stream teams and the Hammerheads, isn’t aware of what makes him different from other kids. Despite its sticking to the surface, Swim Team is edifying. It’s a portrait of heartbreak, frustration and triumph, sometimes for the swimmers, and sometimes for their parents. (Daphne Howland)

**VALERIAN AND THE CITY OF A THOUSAND PLANETS** It must be nice being Luc Besson, stuck at the age of 14 for the past 44 years. With the notable exception of his 2014 sci-fi action flick, *Lucy*, Besson’s later career hasn’t had quite the same glow as its start: the deep-sea worlds of *The Big Blue* (1988) and *Atlantis* (1991), and the stylishly submerged, subterranean universe of *Subway* (1985). But the central dynamic in his work remains true. Character and complexity continue to elude him. Other filmmakers might dwell on “What happens next?” and “What does it mean?” Besson answers the child’s eternal question: “What’s it like?” This phenomenon pretty much defines *Valerian and the City of a Thousand Planets*, a film of overwhelming vision and silliness that Besson has apparently been wanting to make since he was 10 — actually, literally 10 — and first discovered Pierre Christin and Jean-Claude Mézières’ groundbreaking French comics *Valerian and Laureline*. Few other directors could show you how it feels to be a purple-gray alien waking up beside a beach on the far side of the universe, to stretch in the morning light of a strange planet’s many suns and wash your face in a bowl of space pearls. He connects on that level rather than through story-telling: When those aliens are engulfed in cataclysm, we still don’t know much about them, but we mourn the cornea-excaressing beauty of what Besson has just shown us and then snatched away. Valerian is at times so mind-meltingly beautiful and strange that I’m still not sure I didn’t just dream it all. As for characters and story, there isn’t a whole hell of a lot to say. (Bilge Ebiri)
BY ART TAVANA

He looks more like a mountain man than a record executive. With a Led Zeppelin T-shirt and blondish white hair, he gives me a stone-cold stare, followed by an awkward pause. “I don’t do very many interviews,” he finally says.

Inside his 250-year-old historic home, surrounded by paintings of the Founding Fathers, Tom Zutaut, the former Geffen Records executive who signed Guns N’ Roses to a record deal in 1986, is holding an LP as if it were the Constitution. “I’ve held back doing this for 30 years. Saved it an LP as if it were the Constitution.” He gingerly removes the plastic wrap from a first pressing of GNR’s debut, Appetite for Destruction, released 30 years ago this week. The skull-and-crossbones decal falls onto his Persian rug. He plays the virgin LP through a hi-fi stereo and four booming speakers and Slash’s bladelike opening riff slices through the thickness of the room.

Now retired to the rolling Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia, Zutaut has agreed to do an exclusive interview to discuss the best-selling debut album of all time, his greatest accomplishment as an A&R mastermind who reshaped rock & roll in the ’80s.

What follows are highlights from our conversation. To read the full interview, go to LAWeekly.com.

TOM ZUTAUT: These first pressing stampers were made entirely at Sterling Sound with George Marino. And this was the only one you could get, initially, with the DMM [direct metal mastering] stamped on the inner grooves [and] with the banned “robot rape” artwork.

L.A. WEEKLY: How did the Robert Williams artwork land on the original cover?

Axl showed me a card with the Williams painting and said, “You realize … this is the future.” Then he pointed to the woman: “This is the victim; this is the media, and above them is the monster that the media creates.” He predicted, in 1986, that we were going to live in a world of “fake news,” where we’d feed on tragedy. It depicted human nature and the ugly need we have for an appetite for destruction. Axl told me that CNN was going to change the world by feeding that appetite. He saw the future in that painting.

What’s your relationship like with Axl today?

I wish we had put “Reckless Life” on it. But that was an argument I lost. I think it might have had to do with the fact that Chris Weber co-wrote it and it would have led to a publishing issue. But that song belonged on the record.

In hindsight, is there anything about Appetite that you’d change?

This was rock & roll. Not metal, not hard rock. Which is the key to the origins of this record. This is a rock & roll record by a band that I predicted would be bigger than Led Zeppelin, which is what I told David Geffen [when I] put my ass on the line and requested a $75,000 advance to sign GNR in 72 hours.

What’s your personal favorite track off the record?

You know, I’ve never told anyone this, but my personal favorite is “Think About You,” and I fought to have that one to be the second track on side two. I also pushed to have the acoustic guitars mixed at the center, really loud, jangling in the foreground. To me, that was their greatest post-punk-rock Rolling Stones moment. I grew up a Stones fan in the world of Beatles versus Stones.

Before recording Appetite, you predicted to David Geffen that the record would sell at least 10 million copies. How did you have the balls to make that kind of prediction?

I believed they were going to be the biggest band in the world after hearing them play just two songs at the Troubadour. Just listen to it on the record. Slash was this 19-year-old kid who could give Jimmy Page a run for his money. Slash at 19 was better than Page at the same age.

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How does Appetite stack up against music today?

There aren’t any more rock stars. It’s about celebrity, not art. Music as an art form is mostly lost, and it’s been replaced by a giant hit-making machine where Bruno Mars, Katy Perry and Beyoncé, who don’t write their own songs, are now the new “rock stars” in the same vein as the TMZ-fueled non-musicians like the Kardashians.

Appetite for Destruction was one of the last times, if not the last time, rock & roll was real with a budget for exposure. It was the last time major-label rock record-making was funded as an art form. That’s why teenagers today are rediscovering GNR. That is why it doesn’t just stack up against today’s music … it crushes it.

“THIS WAS THE LAST GREAT HARD-ROCK RECORD MADE ENTIRELY BY HAND.”

—TOM ZUTAUT

Thirty years later and you’re listening to this record for the first time in years. How does it sound?

This was the last great hard-rock record made entirely by hand. No computer assistance or automated faders. It’s a piece of imperfect art that will stand the test of time because it was made manually on a console. It captured lightening in a bottle.

How involved were you, beyond A&R duties at Geffen, in the actual creation of the record?

GNR were always on the verge of imploding. Geffen, in the actual creation of the record? How involved were you, beyond A&R duties at Geffen, in the actual creation of the record?

How involved were you, beyond A&R duties at Geffen, in the actual creation of the record? GNR were always on the verge of imploding, so I had to be very hands-on. A lot of it had to do with drugs the band abused, and I was naive to that at the time. But I remember inviting the band to my house in Hollywood to listen to a bunch of records, like UFO and Aerosmith’s Get Your Wings, and pick and choose what we liked, or didn’t like. The one thing we found consensus on was that UFO’s Strangers in the Night was the best live record ever made. It took us about a year and a half before we went into the studio from that point.

What took so long?

They were writing, and I kept telling them that they needed that one song that would define them and take them to the top. They kept asking me what that was, and I said I’d know it when I heard it. I couldn’t help them write it, but as an A&R person, you always have a lot of say on the first album.

Which song ended up being the one?

“Sweet Child O’ Mine.” I knew right away that it was the missing song before booking them studio time. And it worked because it wasn’t a traditional, formulaic power-ballad. It was seven minutes long and nobody saw it as a formulaic power-ballad. It was seven minutes long and nobody saw it as a formless monolith. Axl understood that better than anyone. He wanted GNR to start off with a record executive record and requested a $75,000 advance to sign GNR in 72 hours.

What’s your personal favorite track off the record?

You know, I’ve never told anyone this, but my personal favorite is “Think About You,” and I fought to have that one to be the second track on side two. I also pushed to have the acoustic guitars mixed at the center, really loud, jangling in the foreground. To me, that was their greatest post-punk-rock Rolling Stones moment. I grew up a Stones fan in the world of Beatles versus Stones.

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What’s your relationship like with Axl today?

We haven’t talked in years. But I love him like a brother and I hope he can forgive and look beyond whatever our differences were. I’ve only done my best to help him and the band. I loved Chinese Democracy. I worked on it for a year with him, and it is a brilliant record, but I believe it was ultimately more of an Axl solo record.

In hindsight, is there anything about Appetite that you’d change?

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THU. JULY 20

CLUB VISA
KELEMO DURAND, MORGAN, MARZ LEON (LIVE), NESS KID, SUGA SHAY

FRI. JULY 21

HARDRUSH 5
MACKS WOLF, D-OLITE, AMONERO, RYAN KONE, OXTOUR, MC NUGGET

FRI. JULY 21

TRAP KARAOKE: L.A. EDITION

FRI. JULY 21

WORLD TOUR 2017

SAT. JULY 22

BRÜT LA
DAN DARLINGTON • SHANE STEIL

SAT. JULY 22

CLUB VISA
KELMAN DURAN, MORRIS, MARZ LEON (LIVE), NESS KID, SUGA SHAY

SUN. JULY 23

YOGI STARDUST
A DAVID BOWIE THEMED YOGA CLASS

SUN. JULY 23

WELCOME TO TRENCHTOWN: THIRD WORLD DON LISTENING PARTY

COMING SOON:

7/20 XXXTRA SAUCE
7/21 TRAP KARAOKE: L.A. EDITION
7/21 FIRE EX.
7/21 HARDRUSH 5, MACKS WOLF
7/22 BRÜT LA
7/23 NAMASDRAKE: A DRAKE THEMED YOGA CLASS
7/23 YOGI STARDUST
7/23 THE CHILL
7/23 BLACK + WHITE AFFAIR
7/25 TACO TUESDAYS
7/25 WELCOME TO TRENCHTOWN: THIRD WORLD DON LISTENING PARTY
7/27 LA VIBE
7/27 BANJEE BALL
7/28 BIDIBIDI BANDA
7/29 MARRINATE

7/29 SUBCON PRESENTS SHELLEING SEASON
FEAT. SHIVERZ DA BUTCHER (UK) & OBEY (NE)
7/29 HARDSTYLE ARENA: DYSTOPIA
7/30 ELECTRIC SOUND GARDEN
7/30 HENNY ROSE
7/30 YOUNG BACA PRESENTS CAKE
8/1 LA FEMME POP
8/1 TACO TUESDAYS
8/2 UNSAME
8/3 AFRO KARAOKE
8/4 LEGEND OF THE MOON!
8/13 WOMAN’S MASS
8/17 DESTROY LOS ANGELES WITH ETC!ETC!
8/18 MARDUK, INCANTATION, ABYSMAL DAWN
8/24 AURELIO VOLTAIRE
8/26 HOSTILE
8/26 BLACK ASTEROID, AVARCARA, 138
8/15 KENNY LARKIN AND JOHN TEJADA
10/4 P.O.S. F/W 2017 RAP TOUR

COMING SOON:

8/7 COAST 2 COAST LIVE!
8/8 NEON KROSS
8/10 NU-DIRECTION
8/10 LA GOT ALÔHA’S 5 YEAR ANNIVERSARY
8/12 SMASH IT LIVE PRESENTS: WAYNE WONDER
8/17 MO LOWDA & THE HUMBLE
8/27 WEST COAST AWARDS BALL
8/27 CHAINE SERVICE
9/15 OH!
9/20 WITCHTRAP
9/23 (MANY)DAY
10/27 AURA NOIR
Frank Yeah Fest

Even on a Lineup As Impressive as FYF’s, Frank Ocean Stands Out

By Jeff Weiss

For the second straight year, FYF Fest has assembled arguably America’s most impressive festival lineup. Its poster reads like a best-case psychedelic hallucination, featuring Missy Elliot, Björk, Nine Inch Nails, Iggy Pop, Erykah Badu, Anderson .Paak, A Tribe Called Quest, Flying Lotus and Run the Jewels.

But judging from conversations I’ve had about the festival, you’d think only one artist was booked: Saturday night’s headliner, Frank Ocean. It’s an understandable obsession, considering the orphic crooner’s brief, asymmetrical career has already included detours into techno, acoustic singer-songwriter votives in the vein of Elliott Smith, Coldplay covers and the odd carpentry stint.

We spoke once by telephone in 2011, one of his first and last interviews, given shortly before he adopted his monastic sensibilities. I was struck not just by his intelligence but also by how sharply limned his vision already was. His commitment to innovation was unyielding, but he refused to shy away from nostalgia. He’d already realized the artistic perils of letting self-esteem be dependent on critical acclaim. He understood himself as a lyricist and storyteller, a writer dedicated to refining phrases without forsaking emotional complexity.

To the strains, Ocean’s catalog can be slightly overrated. While he’s frequently brilliant (“Pink and White,” “Novacane,” “Pyramids”), the peripatetic car collector is prone to inconsistent experimentation (almost the entirety of Endless), and his minimalist inclinations can lead to writing insubstantial sketches. He’s full of interesting ideas, but not all reach melodic climax.

But all artists need the creative freedom to fail, and even at his most refractory, Ocean fearlessly refuses to accept conventional logic. Whether via his now-iconic Tumblr post about his sexuality or his refusal to submit songs for consideration at last year’s Grammys, he’s an archetypal modern rebel.

There’s a subtlety to his actions that seems perennially anachronistic. Rather than live in L.A. and be devoured by the music industry, he’s opted for a nomadic existence, temporarily haunting motels and unfurnished rooms, dropping songs without warning, eschewing social media and backing out of performances on a whim. When his Def Jam contract expired, he opted to remain independent and bought back his publishing and masters at a steep personal cost.

After his vanishing act, he’s remained active through the last 12 months, collaborating with Calvin Harris, A$AP Rocky, Migos and his sometime Odd Future kindred spirit, Tyler, the Creator.

Frank Ocean Stands Out

For a Generation Doomed to Overshare, Ocean Remains Aloof.

If a guiding undercurrent to his actions exists, it might be his brief aside during our lone conversation: “I’m all about taste.” You can see that on his Blonded Radio shows and Spotify playlist, which included Burial, Dâm-Funk, Caribou and Memphis rap legend Shawty Pimp.

For a generation doomed to overshare, Ocean has mastered the terrain of the shadows, offering scraps of information to sustain permanent intrigue but remaining so aloof as to burnish his mystique. It’s unclear whether it’s intentional savvy or an aversion to celebrity (most likely both), but Ocean does what so many of us wish we could do: Disappear at the first migraine warning, eschewing social media and unfurnished rooms, dropping songs without forsaking emotional complexity.

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.
Mr. Trump’s Wild Ride

When comrade Trump became president, I wondered what it was going to be like when he went abroad. I knew the world would see him and his base differently than they see themselves, and from that, the world would see America differently. Any goodwill or benefit of a doubt that had been previously afforded America would evaporate seconds after Trump opened his mouth in front of a live microphone on foreign soil.

I was also interested in the outcome of the comrade’s first date with his dominant top, Vladimir Putin. Sure, they’ve flirted on the phone but until only a few days ago, they had never been able to gaze into each other’s eyes and have their magic moment.

However, things got interesting well before. In Warsaw, Poland, where people were bused in to fill up the photos for Trump’s odd and hard-to-endure speech, Trump appeared at a press conference with Polish president Andrzej Duda. Trump made statements that were so tangled, I had to listen to them a few times to make sense of the Kafka smoke bomb he deployed.

In a confusing exchange with NBC reporter Hallie Jackson, she asked him twice about Russia’s interference in the 2016 presidential election.

Jackson: “Will you once and for all, yes or no, definitively say that Russia interfered in the 2016 election?”

Trump: “Well, I think it was Russia, and I think it could have been other people in other countries. It could have been a lot of people interfered.”

Trump then talked about President Obama’s handling of the information given to him by the CIA and how he did nothing about it because he thought Hillary Clinton was going to win. Ms. Jackson followed up.

Jackson: “You again said you think it was Russia. Your intelligence agencies have been far more definitive. They say it was Russia. Why won’t you agree with them and say it was?”

This is where Trump liquifies logic and goes full diaper on the world stage.

Trump: “I agree, I think it was Russia, but I think it was probably other people and/or countries, and I see nothing wrong with that statement. Nobody really knows for sure. I remember when I was sitting back listening about Iraq. Weapons of mass destruction. How everybody was 100 percent sure that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction. Guess what—that led to one big mess. They were wrong.”

I watched this exchange over and over online. Some of the postings underneath included, “The journal-whore at the end! What a bitch!” “Holy shit that chick at the end needed to shut the fuck up.”

This was obfuscation on a level that not even George W. Bush could construct. It was Cheneyesque in denial and almost Rumsfeldian in its WTF-ness. It could almost be considered brilliant, if Trump was in any control whatsoever of what he was saying.

He kind of Mr. Magoo’s way through a paragraph, a word salad à la Sarah Palin, if she had been forced to live in Midtown Manhattan for a few years and the rapid pace of intellectual exchange had neutralized some of her faux homespun, no-clutch gear-grinding.

If you are truly in the “America first” camp, wouldn’t you want to know if any country had the temerity to in any way interfere with any election in America? What if it was Germany trying to push the election toward Clinton — would Trump supporters act the same way?

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What took Trump, Putin and Drillerson approximately 136 minutes to talk about? According to the secretary of state, a lot, just not much about hacking. From what Sec. D said, Trump asked, Putin denied, and it was on to the next order of business. OK, so there’s nothing to see here — if you can crane your neck around all the meetings with Russians that J-Kush, Don “Baby D” Trump Jr. and others associated with the Trump Crime Family had leading up to the election.

Putin was Yo-Yo Ma and Trump was a 1733 Montagnana cello. No president in your lifetime has been played so well by a Russian leader. At least Trump’s severely challenged base has that. Since comrade Trump was “honored” to be with Putin, a lying, murderous fuck, and Putin was “delighted” to meet with Trump, the base must fall in line.

Thanks to Trump’s recent visit to the G19, the term “red state” will never be the same again. In fact, it’s already started. I was listening on the radio days ago to crackers talking about how they agreed with Putin’s values on marriage and the right to bear arms. One person said that if you put Russians and red staters in a room together, they would get along just fine. Y’all commies now!

Now, I know that some squishy libtard snowflakes are still butt-hurt about crooked Hill’s loss. They think that Putin invaded and partitioned off Crimea, blah blah blah. That’s just alpha manspreading, cupcake! As to all the journalists critical of Putin who just happened to have died in Russia over the last several years, they needed to shut the fuck up and someone took care of it. All you need to know is that these journalists said a lot of words and it was great and huge things are gonna happen. The past? Well, we’re not gonna relitigate that.
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FYF Fest
@ EXPOSITION PARK
This year, FYF Fest packs more of a sonic wallop than some of the bigger festivals such as Coachella and Lollapalooza. Whereas Coachella remains a virtual boys’ club, Friday alone at FYF is helmed by two radical and disparate women. An apparently revitalized Missy Elliott brags, “He watching my body like he watchin’ Scandal!” on her recent single “I’m Better,” whereas the ever-demonstrative Björk has risen from the ashes of romantic disappointment and reinvented herself yet again on her latest album, Vulnicura.
The feminine mystique continues on Saturday with hip-hop soothsayer Erykah Badu, preceding the soulful ruminations of Frank Ocean. Sunday culminates with a triumvirate of testosterone-fueled aggression, from the brutal rap intensity of Run the Jewels and the stark industrial clangor of Nine Inch Nails to the bare-chested savagery of the seemingly indestructible Iggy Pop. Also Saturday-Sunday, July 22-23.

Paul Oakenfold: COMING SOON! 8-2, Distant Cousins
SAT 10.21

Janiva Magness
@ MCCABE’S GUITAR SHOP
Janiva Magness knew all about the blues even before she started performing onstage. The Detroit native bounced around among a series of foster homes after each of her parents committed suicide, and at age 18 had to give up her baby daughter for adoption. Even after she discovered her voice, she’s continued working for and supporting foster-care awareness throughout her adult life. Magness was already a well-respected interpreter of blues classics, but she evolved into a legitimate songwriting force with her 2014 record, Original, and she expands her range even further on her latest release, Blue Again. She still can break your heart with intuitive blues balladry (“I Love You More Than You’ll Ever Know”), but she also rocks hard (“Tired of Walking”) and thrills with sassy, soulful assurance (“If I Can’t Have You”).—Falling James

Fushitsusha, 75 Dollar Bill
@ ZEBULON
For more than 45 years, Keiji Haino has been carving a singular path through the art of sound. Regarded as a godfather of Japan’s noise-music scene, Haino creates deeply personal — to understate it—forms of expression that explore the hollow (i.e., full) center of himself as it feels in the here and now. His vast catalog of recordings tangles and obliterated rock, spontaneous composition, garage psychedelia, minimalism, drone and the aforementioned noise. His concept was, he says, inspired by the disparate though somehow connected likes of Antonin Artaud, Marlene Dietrich, The Doors, Blind Lemon Jefferson and the Japanese musical concept known as “ma,” or the silence between the sounds. Among Haino’s most powerful units is his trio Fushitsusha, appearing tonight in L.A. for the first time in 18 years. Also much-praised NYC avant/jazz/most-of-the-above band 75 Dollar Bill. —John Payne

Dustin Lovelis, Gospelbeach
@ THE BOOTLEG
Dustin Lovelis’ 2015 solo debut, Dimensions, was the slo-mo grower of that summer: an independent musician making pop that came from a bleak but beautiful space somewhere between Big Star’s Third and the dreamiest moments of The Pixies or The Jesus and Mary Chain. Lovelis is in residency at the Bootleg all July in preparation for the late-August release of his sophomore effort, Been Hit Before, an ably self-produced full-length that sounds hazier, happier and hookier
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Blackberry Smoke
@ THE FONDA THEATRE
Dripping with Southern charm and snake-skin, minus the redneck bullshit, Atlanta, Georgia rock & roll troupe Blackberry Smoke have opened for the likes of Gov’t Mule, the Zac Brown Band, ZZ Top and, understandably, Lynyrd Skynyrd during their 17 years of existence. In the process they’ve seen their stock rise with fans of bluesy, country-influenced hard rock. This is sweet and sexy stuff with a welcome element of sleaze — as influenced by Guns N’ Roses and The Black Crowes as by The Allman Brothers. Last year’s Like an Arrow, the band’s fifth album, is arguably their best yet, with a title track that’s haunting and dark in a Sons of Anarchy sort of way. Gritty and poetic, this is a band that more people need to know about, and this show is a great opportunity for newcomers to get acquainted. —Brett Callwood

Buddy Guy
@ CANYON CLUB
“I grew up real fast, and I’ve traveled very far/One damn thing for sure, I was born to play the guitar,” Buddy Guy declares on the title track of his latest album, Born to Play Guitar. The title and sentiment might sound like typical rock-star hyperbole, but every word of it is as true and exacting as the Louisiana native’s sting- ing and incisive blues licks. Mainstream music fans are still catching up to Guy’s blistering solos and casual dexterity, but he’s been long recognized by fellow guitarists as a supreme inspiration after he moved to Chicago in the late 1950s. At this point in his career, Guy can do anything he wants, and he nimbly trades licks with ZZ Top’s Billy Gibbons and The Fabulous Thunderbirds’ Kim Wilson on the recent record before sharing the mic with Van Morrison. Also at the Coach- house, Tuesday, July 25, and the Saban, Thursday, July 27. —Falling James

Thee Commons
@ LEVITT PAVILION
Latin soul isn’t some safely nostalgic and escapist reverie when it’s cooked up by Thee Commons. “Milk and Honey,” from the local trio’s second and latest album, Paleta Sonora, initially floats by like an unusually poppy and dreamy plea for romantic togetherness, before singer-gui- tarist David Pacheco switches to a Sam the Sham–style rap, snarling in a gruff voice about the latest adventures of “Little Red Riding Hood … riding through East L.A.” It’s this casually daft ability to shift from cumbia and garage rock into psychedelic-punk strangeness that makes Thee Commons’ original music so uncommon. David’s brother Rene Pacheco plays drums with a straightforward directness, but with a quick roll of his toms, he can take the group into outer space. —Falling James

Jeremih
@ THE NOVO
Jeremih is a working-class singer and songwriter — not in the sense that he’s a social realist writing about the trials of the working poor but in the sense that he’s constantly writing, for himself or for other artists, strong songs with memorable, sweet melodies and hooks that deserve to make him more of a household name then he currently is. He has penned and performed pop and R&B music for himself and other artists that playfully brings into modern pop music the sweet falsetto soul of the 1970s, the catchiness of the Motown greats and the sexy allure of ’90s R&B, always accentuating the essential romance of soul music. At the Novo, the “Birthday Sex” singer is bound to bring out collaborators and friends to share the stage. —Jonny Whiteside

For almost two decades, Dub Club has been the prime dub club setting and be assailed by the thunderous rhythms of Sly Dunbar and Robbie Shakespeare, amplified to such a level that the fillings in your teeth vibrate. Robbie Shakespeare, amplified to such a thunderous rhythms of Sly Dunbar and tom Chasteen and Boss Harmony have

unstintingly provided such experiences, bringing in the most crucial Jamaican artists, spinning the finest platters and creating an ideal context that has established close, long-term bonds with performers and audiences alike. Tonight’s free, 17th-anniversary ball promises boundless delights, with performances by the influential vocalist and DJ Sister Nancy, the great dancehall outlaw Josey Wales, and the promise of special guests who will, more likely than not, turn out to be peerless, world-class talents. —Jonny Whiteside
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BARDOT HOLLYWOOD: 1737 N. Vine St. Brett, Night Drive, Starcrawler, Yungblud, Mon., July 24, 8 p.m.

BEYOND BAROQUE LITERARY ARTS CENTER: 681 Venice Blvd., Venice. Chris D., with the Flesh Eaters vocalist reading from his various novels and other books, Fri., July 21, 8 p.m., $10. Suzy Williams, Sat., July 22, 8 p.m., $20.


CANYON CLUB: 28912 Roadside Dr., Agoura Hills. Orgy, Fri., July 21, 9 p.m., TBA. Buddy Guy, Quinn Sullivan, Thu., July 27, 9 p.m., TBA.


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LOS GLOBOS: 3040 W. Sunset Blvd. Karkaza, Sun., July 23, 9 p.m. Allan Kingdom, Wed., July 26, 9 p.m., TBA. Kabaka Pyramid, Thu., July 27, 9 p.m., TBA.


OHM NIGHTCLUB: 6801 Hollywood Blvd. Trey Songz, Fabolous, Thu., July 27, 9 p.m., TBA.


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ZEBULON: 2478 Fletcher Dr. Fusihitsusha, 75 Dollar Bill, Sat., July 22, 8 p.m., $5 (see Music Pick). The Renderers, Charalambides, Sun., July 23, 8 p.m., $10. Sudan Archives, Mon., July 24, 8 p.m., free. Reggie Watts & Karen, Tue., July 25, 9 p.m., $10. Nakata, Olga, Metal Rouge, Unica3, Thu., July 27, 8 p.m., $10.

—Falling James

JAZZ & BLUES


Catalina Bar & Grill: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd. Barbara Morrison, July 21-22, 8:30 p.m., $25. Mandy Harvey, Sun., July 23, 7:30 p.m., $30. TBA. Natalie Douglas, Tue., July 25, 8:30 p.m., $30. TBA. The Fernando Pullum Community Arts Center, Wed., July 26, 8:30 p.m., $8. Rayford Griffin, Thu., July 27, 8:30 p.m., TBA.

THE EDISON: 108 W. Second St. The Jennifer Leitham Trio, Thu., July 27, 8 p.m.
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40

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