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BY EVE BARLOW
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The Los Cerritos Community News once was showered with acclaim. Now it faces a libel suit and accusations that the newspaper is a tool for carrying out its owner’s vendettas.

BY HILLEL ARON

One of the biggest financial fraud cases in the history of Los Angeles County government was first uncovered by a little community newspaper based in Cerritos, a city of 49,000 tucked away in the southeast corner of the county, best known regionally for its massive auto center—“the world’s largest selection of new and pre-owned vehicles,” or so they say.

Los Cerritos Community News’ 2012 story, about county assessor John Noguez’s alleged practice of lowering the assessed value of properties owned by people who’d contributed to his campaign, was confirmed, days later, by the Los Angeles Times and other media outlets, and led to the resignation and arrest of Noguez (five years later, he’s still awaiting trial).

“Just because you come from a small newspaper doesn’t mean you can’t do national-quality journalism,” says Randy Economy, the reporter who broke the story, still brimming with pride.

The reputation of Los Cerritos Community News was catapulted from that of a run-of-the-mill community newspaper—a free weekly unceremoniously tossed onto driveways—to a hard-hitting investigative paper, a scrappy underdog that had scooped the Times. At the Los Angeles Press Club Awards the next year, Economy and the paper’s editor-publisher-owner, Brian Hews, took home the award for “Best Investigative Series” for a newspaper with a circulation of under 50,000.

Since then, Los Cerritos Community News has won a number of other Press Club awards, and Hews has leveraged that respectability into something quite different from traditional journalism. He has built a highly partisan newspaper chain, one that—according to its fans and critics—alleges itself with certain politicians and aims to destroy others. It is, in the eyes of some, less a newspaper and more a weapon.

“Brian has a lot of good alliances,” says Ron Beilke, a former city councilmember in nearby Pico Rivera, who has received favorable coverage from Hews. “And does he highlight certain things? Sure. It’s a small paper.”

Or, as Hews put it in a written statement relayed by his attorney, Scott Talkov: “A reporter is not doing his or her job unless half the community is angry at them, and the other half loves them.”

Talkov compares his client’s newspaper to partisan television networks such as Fox News or MSNBC. “Fox News is colluding with the Republicans to produce news,” he says. “And that is a part of journalism.”

That view, that it’s OK for a news organization to be biased because every side can have its own media organ, has become more and more accepted in today’s polarized political climate. One man’s Breitbart is another’s Vox. One man’s must-read is another’s fake news. But that view leaves out the potential harm that certain news stories can cause, even if they’re published by a small community newspaper.

A growing number of local politicians in the southeast part of L.A. County are speaking out against Hews—and a few are fighting back against what they claim is a newspaper with a mission not to tell the truth but to carry out a warped vendetta.

“They act like they’re these good-government reformers,” says Leo Briones, a political consultant. “I don’t think any of their editorial content has anything to do with that. I think it just has to do with relationships and people they like.”

“He was taking the paper into yellow journalism, and I don’t believe in that,” says Jerry Bernstein, a longtime newspaper reporter who served as editor of the Los Cerritos Community News until he quit in 2013. “The story itself should be objective. Brian doesn’t do that. His stories are just full of innuendos. If he likes you, fine. But when he goes after you, he will use innuendos, he will falsify, exaggerate, you name it. He does it without substantiation. That, to me, is not reporting.”

Hews is facing a libel lawsuit, filed in April by Central Basin Municipal Water District director Leticia Vasquez. The suit claims Hews printed allegations about Vasquez that were “made up out of thin air,” and that “Mr. Hews is engaged in a conspiracy with certain of [Vasquez’s] political adversaries to ruin Ms. Vasquez’s public and political reputation and to destroy her electability as a public official.”

Another elected official, Andrew Sarega, a La Mirada city councilmember, also is suing Hews, claiming that another one of Hews’ newspapers, La Mirada Lamplighter, should not be allowed to run the city’s legal ads—which could cost the publication tens of thousands of dollars a year in revenue.

Hews declined to be interviewed for this story, explaining in a terse email: “I am very busy, one-man show here. I write, sell, design the paper, collect bills, send out bills, IT, customer service, distribution manager.” As for the lawsuits, he wrote: “Both are ongoing lawsuits I cannot comment, but I will say why they are suing me ... its [sic] obvious ... good ole [8]
“Talkov says, “and it is a shame that there are gates the inner workings of government,” First Amendment and thoroughly investigates the inner workings of government,” Hews wrote."

People who’ve worked with him claim he single outs his enemies and relentlessly targets them in the pages of his newspapers, which in addition to Los Cerritos Community News include La Mirada Lamplighter and the Downey Beat.

And how does he choose his foes?

“If you don’t advertise with him,” Bernstein says, “you’re automatically an enemy.”

After Chuong Vo, a Torrance police officer and a former Cerritos city councilmember, refused to buy an ad in Los Cerritos Community News, Hews wrote several stories critical of Vo, saying in one that he’d received campaign contributions from “very suspect individuals.” Vo lost his recent re-election bid by a few dozen votes.

“If he didn’t write those things about me, I probably would have won,” Vo says.

Campaign finance records show that two of Vo’s opponents did buy ads in the Los Cerritos Community News: Frank Yokoyama (who spent $660) and Grace Hu (who spent $2,300). Both have received mostly positive or neutral coverage from the paper. Both were re-elected.

According to several local elected officials and community members, Hews is quick to make enemies — especially when he feels threatened financially.

In February 2013, Los Cerritos Community News ran an advertisement attacking Cerritos city councilmember Carol Chen, who was then running for re-election. The full-page ad showed a drawing of Chen’s face, from the neck up, alongside Mao Zedong, Josef Stalin, Vladimir Lenin, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, all lined up like some kind of communist Mount Rushmore against a crimson background. Above the drawing, yellow bold letters declared: “CAROL CHEN IS AN AGENT OF COMMUNIST CHINA.”

The ad made reference to an earlier news story in Los Cerritos Community News about a trip to China and Japan taken by a group of elected officials in the county, including Chen, who later said the trip was paid for out of her own pocket.

“It’s unbelievable that someone would use that kind of racism,” Chen says. “To still have people using that as a way to depict a person — it’s unbelievable.”

According to California election law, political ads must state the name of the campaign paying for the ad. If the campaign is independent from a candidate, it also must state who the biggest donor to that outside group is. This ad stated: “Paid for by your local SEIU.”

That alone would have been an infraction. But the ad was not actually paid for by anyone’s local SEIU, as lawyers from the service workers union were all too eager to point out. When confronted with this, Hews told the Long Beach Press-Telegram, “It’s a complete misunderstanding. … It was a production error. The people who came in here (to pay for the ad) represented unions and I just assumed it was the local SEIU.”

In fact, the ad had been paid for by an independent expenditure committee calling itself “Citizens for a Clean and Honest Government.” Campaign finance forms, filed later, showed the committee to have been controlled and paid for by Hews himself.

In 2014, Hews was fined $5,000 by the state’s Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC). Los Cerritos Community News, of course, depends on advertising revenue. Campaign ads, which can be bought for a few hundred dollars, are a small part of this. The publication makes far more money from legal advertising — public notices for things like public hearings that cities must, by law, place in adjudicated newspapers.

In 2011, in order to close a budget deficit, the Cerritos City Council voted to cut its budget for legal advertising. This, says Chen, is what really earned her Hews’ enmity.

“IT was getting [emails] from him saying, ‘This is your way of eliminating the budget for my newspaper, and on and on,'” Chen says. “Then when I ran for re-election [in 2013], I got attacked by him. He sees we’re cutting out his livelihood.”

According to information obtained by the L.A. Weekly through public records act requests, Los Cerritos Community News has made more than $400,000 from advertisements placed by the city of Cerritos since 2010. In the first five months of this year, the city has paid the newspaper more than $45,000.

The paper has received smaller sums from other cities and jurisdictions. Since 2010, it’s gotten $146,000 from Artesia (including $45,000 in the first half of 2017); $128,000 from the city of Hawaiian Gardens; $94,000 from La Mirada; $33,000 from the Water Replenishment District of Southern California; $27,000 from the Montebello Unified School District; $17,000 from the city of Norwalk, and so on.

Since 2010, Los Cerritos Community News has received at least $975,000 from local cities, school districts and water boards.

That may help explain why Hews has clashed with publishers of two other local community papers, who compete with him for legal ads. He’s filed a lawsuit against Downey Patriot publisher Jennifer DeKay, challenging her publication’s qualifications to run legal ads. And he’s filed an FPCC complaint against Gateway Guardian publisher Melinda Kimsey. He also has written a number of stories critical of the two women.

Kimsey used to work for Hews, who has written stories accusing her of lying about her circulation numbers, of being in cahoots with Chen and of “falsely accusing [a] teacher of pedophilia.”

As a teacher in the Bellflower Unified School District, Kimsey had accused a teacher of sexual harassment. In a complaint against the school district, she also alleged the teacher had sexually abused students. The district fought her; the case dragged on. Finally, as part of the settlement, Kimsey agreed to retract her accusations.

“To print something you know is a lie or out of context to strictly hurt someone, that’s wrong on certain levels,” Kimsey says.

Hews has sent numerous text messages (screenshots of which were provided to the Weekly) to Kimsey and Bernstein, his old editor, who now serves as the Gateway Guardian’s editor emeritus. In one, he asks Kimsey, “Have you falsely accused anybody of pedophilia or sexual harassment lately?”

More recently, he texted, “You guys are walking cluster eff.”

Bernstein responded: “Don’t U have anything better to do?”

Hews answered: “Of course I do but I love poking you amateurs in the eye all the time.”

“There is a lot of money over legal ads,” Talkov admits, “and there’s a lot of fighting over the turf.”

State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon has a name for Southeast L.A. County: “the corridor of corruption.” According to the Sacramento Bee, more than a dozen city officials from just five cities in Rendon’s district — Maywood, Bell, Cudahy, South Gate and Lynwood — have gone to jail or prison in the last 11 years, including the seven officials from the city of Bell, who were convicted of corruption and graft.

Most of the cities in the southeast region are small and poor. Many of their residents are immigrants. Voter turnout is low. There’s little news coverage, save for small community newspapers and the occasional story in the Times. Politics here is no-holds-barred and personal. Public officials sue each other. They threaten one another. Whole families dive into elected office. Dynasties take root. Cronyism is the norm. Most positions are part-time; politicians do consulting work on the side, at times shilling for contractors who bid on government contracts.

All this has been on full display at the Central Basin Municipal Water District, a water wholesaler that provides imported water to 1.7 million people living in a 227-square-mile area. State As-
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Semblably, Tom Calderon was once a paid consultant for the district. He also was working for a water management company, Water2Save, and helped it secure a lucrative contract with the water district. Last year, Calderon was sentenced to a year in federal prison after pleading guilty to charges that he laundered bribes taken by his brother, Ron, who himself was sentenced to 42 months in prison after pleading guilty to federal corruption charges.

A state audit found Central Basin to have “often inaccurately circumvented its competitive bidding process when it awarded contracts to vendors,” among other acts of malfeasance.

In 2012, Leticia Vasquez ran for a seat on the Central Basin Municipal Water District’s board of directors as a reformer. She was, practically from the moment she took office, attacked by Los Cerritos Community News.

“It probably took me about three months story wrong. She has to prove that Hews knowingly printed false information, or at least that he did so with “a reckless disregard” for the truth. In her attempt to prove that, Vasquez has what she believes is an ace in the hole: a written declaration from Economy, who quit Los Cerritos Community News in 2014.

In his declaration (which was written before Vasquez filed her lawsuit and has been filed as an exhibit), Economy states that he and Hews would regularly meet with Chacon and Hawkins at the Commerce Casino, across the street from the Central Basin Water District’s headquarters.

“The purpose of these numerous meetings,” Economy writes, “was to discuss general and specific strategies and actions that we could take to discredit, defame, embarrass, belittle, smear and otherwise destroy the reputation and standing of the new Board Members including Roybal, Vasquez and Apodaca. ... As a result, we all agreed in that space of patronage politics,” says Richard economis, who, when he was arrested for a DUI in 2011, told police and prosecutors that he was his brother Hector, a political consultant and Montebello Unified School Board member. The faction includes their sister, Leticia Chacon, also a political consultant; her half-brother Hugo Argumedo, a Commerce city councilmember; and Fernando Chacon, who recently lost a race for Montebello City Council.

In 2012, the Los Angeles Times wrote of the Chacon family: “In the bruising world of Southeast L.A. County ... they are the go-to campaign gurus, political gatekeepers with checkered pasts whom candidates hire when they want to break into politics — or bat down a challenge from an upstart.”

“When the Calendars got in all their problems, it left a vacuum for the Chacon family to get in that space of patronage politics,” says Brokes, the political consultant. “And that space is clearly there.”

Economy says he noticed that, over time, Hews “became more beholden to the interest of the Chacons.”

When asked about Hews’ sources, his attorney Talkov says, “Brian Hews has excellent sources at the highest levels of government that provide him with information that has repeatedly proven to be accurate that the public would not otherwise know about. These are treasured sources that reporters throughout this country wish they had.”

He adds, “Does Brian Hews have a relationship with [Philip] Hawkins and [Art] Chacon? Yes. Do they give him information? Yes. I don’t think Brian Hews is letting them shadow-write his stories.”

Los Cerritos Community News has never written a critical story about Art Chacon, who, when he was arrested for a DUI in 2011, told police and prosecutors that he was his brother Hector (the judge went on for four years, until Hector came forward to clear things up). In 2014, the Whittier Daily News’ Mike Sprague reported that Art Chacon was collecting $597 a month from the Water District for an automobile allowance, despite not having had a valid driver’s license since 2003. Neither of those stories appeared in Los Cerritos Community News.

Instead, Hews wrote a story about how Sprague was “harassing” Chacon’s 80-year-old mother by “hanging” on Chacon’s front door, looking for comment on his story. The only source quoted in the article was Art Chacon.

The publisher followed that up with a 1,200-word editorial blasting Sprague for publishing “several questionable stories aimed at discrediting Central Basin Water District (CB) Director Art Chacon, while ignoring ethics and monetary violations of other CB Directors.”

After Sprague asked Hews why the publisher had filed an FPPC complaint against La Mirada city councilmember Andrew Serrette, Los Cerritos Community News ran a story headlined: “Whittier Daily News Reporter Sides With Corrupt Politicians.”

The unbylined piece quoted Hews at length. Sprague isn’t the only journalist targeted by Hews. In 2016, Los Angeles Times reporter Adam Elmahrek was researching a story on Hews and tried to meet with him, writing in an email dated Sept. 13 (and forwarded to the Weekly by Talkov), “I am trying my best to give you a fair opportunity to present your side in this story.”

Hews declined the invitation. Instead, on that same day, Hews published a story about Elmahrek, accusing the Times reporter of “making frivolous, burdensome and large’ public records requests that are costing taxpayers thousands of dollars,” and that charge up with quotes from anonymous county officials. (Hews himself makes numerous public records requests.)

The article went on to cite bloggers criticizing Elmahrek’s pre-Times work at the Voice of OC and quoted another anonymous “high-ranking official,” who recounted a story of Elmahrek being “very rude and condescending” to a school board member.

The piece made no mention of Elmahrek’s investigation into Hews, which to date has still not been published.

The vast majority of Hews’ targets are part-time politicians with other full-time jobs. Vasquez, for example, teaches political science at El Camino College Compton Center. A few years ago, she applied for a tenure-track position. She believes that the administrators reviewing applicants Googled her and were put off by the stories written by Hews.

“To be quite honest with you, I was gonna resign” from the water board, she says. “It was impacting my employment.”

In her lawsuit, Vasquez alleges that Hews’ articles exposed her to “hatred, contempt, ridicule, disgrace.”

[before] I saw that there was a pattern,” Vasquez says. The paper was critical of her and two other directors, James Roybal and Robert Apodaca. The other two directors, Art Chacon and Phillip Hawkins, were left alone. “I realized [Hews] was using the newspaper to try to influence the decisions we were making on the board,” she says.

In June 2016, a headline in Los Cerritos Community News read: “SOURCES: Central Basin Director Leticia Vasquez and Montebello Councilwoman Vanessa Delgadillo Attempted to Extort Money From Cook Hills [sic] Officials.” The story claims that Vasquez met with a developer, Cook Hill, and asked for campaign contributions in exchange for approving a project. The story cites two unnamed sources, who claimed they were told of the meeting by Central Basin Municipal Water District’s general manager, Kevin Hunt.

Vasquez says the two unnamed sources are her fellow board members, Chacon and Hawkins, who she says despise her. She says the story was the last straw that and in fact did create and publish numerous news stories in the Los Cerritos Community Newspaper about the new Board Members that were either inaccurate, false or otherwise misleading and otherwise gave a negative impression of Board Members Roybal, Vasquez and Apodaca.

Shortly before Vasquez took office, the water board voted to hire a new general manager, Chuck Fuentes, and a new special assistant to the general manager, Beilke, the former Pico Rivera city councilmember. Both appointments were made over the objection of the newly elected but not yet sworn in Vasquez.

According to Economy’s declaration, Beilke also began attending the Commerce Casino meetings. He writes: “Many of the stories were actually written by Mr. Beilke, and Mr. Hews authorized their publication in his newspaper.”

Neither Chacon nor Hawkins returned phone calls requesting comment on this story. Beilke did, and he confirmed the regular casino meetings, which he describes as “guys getting together bullshitting. And he doesn’t exactly deny ghostwriting stories in Los Cerritos Community News.

“I remember going to the office, looking over Randy’s shoulder, saying, ‘You gotta be kidding me,’” Beilke says. “I would say, ‘Put this in there.’ He’d say, ‘Yeah, good idea.’ For Randy to say I wrote stuff... if there’s press awards he wants to give me, fine.”

Beilke sees Economy’s declaration as a betrayal.

“I don’t think he has any credibility,” Beilke says. “I think he changes his opinion and loyalties just because someone pays him. ... This is what Randy does. When he crosses someone, he goes to the other side.”

Economy, a devout Catholic, says cooperating with Vasquez’s lawsuit is an act of absolution. “Are you kidding?” he says. “I’ve had to get absolved from my sins by a Catholic priest.”

But what really bothered Economy, he says now, was Hews’ growing tendency to side with the political faction led by Art Chacon’s brother, Hector, a political consultant and Montebello Unified School Board member. The faction includes their sister, Leticia Chacon, also a political consultant; her half-brother Hugo Argumedo, a Commerce city councilmember; and Fernando Chacon, who recently lost a race for Montebello City Council.

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MAMA MIA

Ricardo Zarate is back with Rosalìnë, a West Hollywood stunner named for his mother.

BY BESHA RODELL

The Best New, Rising Star, Young Gun, Freshest, Most BabyFaced Chef in America Award is a monster with a greedy hunger that can't be satiated. It won't be stopped or even slowed — it yearns for ever-younger, ever-newer blood. It is an integral part of the symbiotic relationship between restaurants and food media. Readers love Best New Anything stories, and there's no doubt this recognition creates business for the restaurants and chefs named. But there's a dark side to this rolling froth of accolades, including a group of chefs whose lives have been upended by so much attention. The recognition creates business for the Anything stories, and there's no doubt it can't be satiated. It won't be stopped or even slowed — it yearns for ever-younger, ever-newer blood. It is an integral part of the symbiotic relationship between restaurants and food media. Readers love Best New Anything stories, and there's no doubt this recognition creates business for the restaurants and chefs named. But there's a dark side to this rolling froth of accolades, including a group of chefs whose lives have been upended by so much attention.

One such chef is Ricardo Zarate, a guy who quietly opened a Peruvian food stall named Mo-Chica in Mercado La Paloma in 2009 and two years later was on the cover of Food & Wine, the recipient of its coveted Best New Chef award. In a world where these types of awards go overwhelmingly to white chefs and in which the food of immigrants is often only recognized when it’s been co-opted by non-immigrants, Zarate's meteoric rise could only be seen as a good thing. Here was a guy cooking the food of his homeland — and cooking it with a raucous sense of inventiveness but also with precision and nuance. Within a couple of years, he had joined forces with some of the most prolific restauranteurs in town and had three restaurants spread across L.A. and in Santa Barbara. It felt head-spinning to watch from a distance; I can't imagine how it must have felt to be at the center of such a frenzied ascension.

As fast as Zarate's career took off, it crashed even quicker. In 2014, Mo-Chica — which had moved from its humble Mercado La Paloma birthplace to a bigger, flashier location downtown — closed its doors, and his projects with other investors either closed or removed his name from the masthead, so to speak. The reasons for Zarate's tumble from grace were different depending on whom you asked; the chef himself has since said that while several factors were involved (including the death of his brother), much of it had to do with all the attention he got from that Food & Wine award and the resultant responsibilities and pressure.

Three years later, Zarate is back with Rosalìnë, a West Hollywood restaurant named for his mother. The scale of the place is more moderate than some of the huge, sprawling restaurants he headed before, and it feels more personal as a result. Windows in the front open onto Melrose Avenue, and the back half of the dining room is a glass-roofed greenhouse lined in white tile and festooned with hanging potted plants. All that tile makes for a rather shouty/deafening dining experience, but it sure looks pretty.

THE TALENT THAT SHOT ZARATE TO SUCCESS IN THE FIRST PLACE IS ON FULL DISPLAY AT ROSALÌNE.

The talent that shot Zarate to success in the first place is on full display at Rosalìnë, and fans of his past cooking will recognize the format and the flavors: so much to choose from, so much brightness, a deft mix of traditional Peruvian dishes and ingredients, and the vivid, fresh, meat-for-sharing aesthetic upon which L.A. dining thrives (an aesthetic that, it could be argued, Zarate had a hand in creating).

S облата de Chancho: pork ossobuco, adobo, garbanzo soft tamale, hard-boiled egg, wrapped in banana leaf

PHOTO BY ANNE FISHBEIN

CRITIC'S RATING
★★★
★ ★ ★ ★ ★ = World-Class
★ ★ ★ ★ = Excellent
★ ★ ★ = Good
★★★ = Very Good
★ ★ = Fair
★★ = Poor

Here are the bracing ceviches, zapped with acid and tempered with creaminess, or sweetness, or a shot of umami, or all three of those things. Maybe it's sliced scallop daubed with uni, floating in leche de tigre, accompanied by a tiny pile of silvered garlic cooked to a jerky chew, or four lovely curls of sea bass from Ensenada bathed in a tamari-yuzu-walnut dressing, prinkled with Amazonian charquiura (often cited as the world's most expensive chili).

Zarate has always had an affinity for ingredients that turn flavors to maximum volume — for a while at Mo-Chica's second iteration this tendency had him relying on truffle oil and other questionable crutches — but at Rosalìnë it's hard to fault the easy clout of feta cheese, used to punch up skewers of steakly beef heart, or yuzu, which shows up all over the menu and turns the expected lime notes in Peruvian food slightly upside down. Padron peppers get hit with miso and also a pile of shimmering, quivering bonito, and somehow the three aggressive flavors work in electrifying harmony. This is not food you can eat casually, without much thought; it demands your attention.

There are instances, though rare, where Zarate's penchant for that bam-bam-bam layering of flavors gets him in trouble. A causa that comes in a glass jar is meant to highlight eggplant, but the extra sweetness that pervades the layers of potato and avocado and eggplant overwhelms and distracts from the more subtle (and lovely) sweetness of the eggplant itself. The pancetta and sausage and fermented fish condiment bagoong that flavor the Peruvian paella border on salty, meaty overkill, even with fat prawns dotting the rice as well. The dish is decent, but it lacks the dynamic thrill of Zarate's other efforts.

If you’re in the mood for rice, instead go for the arroz con mariscos, a dish that uses that piling on of similar elements to great effect. In this case, it’s all manner of seafood in a creamy heap of rice bound by a sauce that tastes a lot like liquid sea urchin. The rice is soft and the dish is almost soupy, but to me there’s nothing in this world more comforting than rice, glop. All the better if it tastes like the soul of the ocean.

Rosalìnë was a long time in the making — I started getting “sneak preview” PR pitches a full year before the place opened its doors — and I’d like to think the delays were partly due to Zarate taking his time for once, making sure he wasn’t rushing into another overwhelming situation. That’s a nice fantasy, but it’s more likely to have been regular city/buildout/licensing issues, and a few days before Rosalìnë finally launched, Zarate opened another restaurant, a fast-casual joint in Hollywood called Mamacita. That’s all good and well, but if I have one plea for Zarate, it’s this: Don’t push too hard. One restaurant as good as Rosalìnë is far better than five you can’t handle.
TRAVIS LETT’S IZAKAYA MTN OPENS IN VENICE

Got your Highly Anticipated Westside Restaurant Opening bingo card handy? OK, let’s see...

* Is located in a building that could double as an art installation.
* Has oddly vague website and vaguely odd social media.
* Opened recently with little fanfare yet fills up almost immediately.
* Gets a writeup after one visit from writer on fourth day of service.

But of course, ceci n’est pas une critique de restaurant. The restaurant in question is MTN (pronounced “mountain”). It is located on trendy Abbot Kinney in Venice, in a building with a craggy facade that could pass for a cliff face, perhaps the inspiration for the name. Its website is minimalist—a menu is not posted—and its Instagram feed contains a smattering of vaguely relevant images with one-word captions.

Yet despite being open for barely a week, and with nearly no advance press, the walk-in only (for now) izakaya has been fairly busy from the start. That’s not surprising, since the culinary mind behind MTN is Travis Lett of Gjelina/Gjusta fame.

The menu is organized into vegetable, sashimi and grilled dishes, with fairly traditional takes on classic izakaya fare: shishito peppers and pickled veggies, snapper and mackerel sashimi, meat or veggie gyoza, grilled whole squid and chicken wings.

Of course there’s ramen, in three varieties: Peads & Barnetts pork bone shio, Jidori chicken & yuzu, and for vegetarians, kombu shiitake. And yes, the bowls are $18 to $20, but the pricing is not out of place for Abbot Kinney.

Details on Lett & Co.’s future plans for MTN are hard to come by; as they are not doing press, “AS WE LIKE THE FOOD, SPACE AND PEOPLE TO SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES” (from an email response to our inquiry). Early diners seem pleased with the food, which is already changing on a daily basis. The space is smaller inside than it looks from the outside, with the glassed-off kitchen prominently in display.

Service is pleasant but a bit off-kilter. You’re asked for your phone number at the host stand, and if you’ve ever made a reservation at Gjelina using your digits before, you’re greeted by name. (Assume they’ll ask your name if you’re not already in their system.) The servers then make an effort to use your name frequently; it’s an interesting touch that takes some getting used to.

MTN is using a 20 percent mandatory service charge, pretax, in lieu of tipping, which is distributed among all hourly staff.

Time will tell how MTN weathers when plenty of good izakaya joints at lower price points abound: Musha and Takuma in Santa Monica, others around Sawtelle/Japantown and those in Little Tokyo and the South Bay. It certainly seems hip enough for the neighborhood so far. —Peter Cheng


Tacos, Tubs of Guacamole and History Lessons at a Boyle Heights Gem

The popular conception of L.A.-style tacos is that they’re fairly pared down: You’re served meat in a tortilla, and you add your own accoutrements, usually salsas, onions and cilantro. The tacos at Los Cinco Puntos, though, are different creatures: They start with thick tortillas, and then there’s the meat. Then there’s the guacamole, and the salsa. And the nopalies. There’s a reason people eat them with forks.

But these monster tacos are only one of a multitude of reasons to visit Los Cinco Puntos. Another reason is the huge quantities of food you can order to-go for pretty reasonable prices. Want to be the hero of
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L.A.’s Deepest Pakistani Menu Is in the Valley

There aren’t many restaurants around L.A. that focus on Pakistani cuisine. If you’re looking for one of the largest Pakistani menus, you’ll need to head to a strip mall in Northridge, where you’ll find Red Chili Halal Restaurant.

While the food of Pakistan shares some traits with its neighbor, India, there are significant differences. Most can be traced to the fact that Pakistan is predominantly Muslim. Thus Pakistani cuisine is very meat-centric, with the meat of choice being beef. It also means food and drink adhere to halal preparation and dietary standards.

One of the staple Pakistani dishes you’ll find at Red Chili is nihari, slow-cooked beef shanks in a spicy, curry gravy. There are times when nearly every table will have an order of nihari atop it.

Long-simmered curry stews also are available: paya, a curry stew often made from lamb or goat hooves but here made using cow trotters/hooves, and haleem, a thick stew of beef, grain and lentils that seems made to go with naan bread.

One regional favorite at Red Chili is Lahori chargha, Pakistan’s version of fried chicken. Spices and yogurt are used as a marinade on the chicken. Red Chili serves it either as a whole or half bird.

The menu also features a wide selection of kebabs, including a Karachi-style bun kebab, which is a meat patty served on a bun. There are biryani dishes featuring goat, lamb or beef and a range of kabsa dishes, so named for the woklike cooking utensil the curries are prepared in.

On Sundays and weekend brunches, halwa poori is available. It’s a traditional breakfast of chickpea and potato curry, served along with a sweet and a fried bread. —Jim Thurman

Red Chili Halal Restaurant, 18108 Parthenia St., Northridge; (818) 775-0733, redchillinorthridge.com.

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**Year of the Cat**

There are few creatures in the animal kingdom as indifferent to our collective existence as the domesticated cat — so it only makes sense that human beings would perpetuate the long-standing tradition of worshipping their every whisker.

**CatCon** returns to the Pasadena Convention Center for the third year with more cat celebrities, another round of the CatCon Video Fest and, for the first time ever, the CatCon Awards, featuring awards like “ Freshest Loaf” and “Biggest Newcomer” (hot guy Ian Somerhalder also appears). Meet-and-greets with Lil Bub, Pudge and Oskar the Blind Cat are sold out, but there are plenty of other celeb cats and catlike celeb humans (Julie Newman, for instance) to visit with, plus seminars, 100 booths full of cat merch and, naturally, an adoption lounge full of cats who are ready to be fawned over and Instagrammed.

**Pasadena Convention Center, 300 E. Green St., Pasadena; Sat., Aug. 12, 9 a.m.-6 p.m.; Sun., Aug. 13, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; $15-$100. catconworldwide.com. — Gwynedd Stuart**

**Music**

**For the Record**

Sales of vinyl albums have spiked in recent years because, among other reasons, people still value the aesthetics of buying music. “ **Createdigger Vol. 2**” is a nod to the art of the record sleeve. Last year’s “Createdigger” featured artistic renderings of album covers of both real and imagined bands and singers, including Michael Jackson, Prince, Led Zeppelin, Iron Maiden, The Cure, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Radiohead, Rihanna and The Notorious B.I.G. Particularly popular were covers of “ The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust, Never Mind the Bollocks, Here’s the Sex Pistols and The Great Ottis Redding Sings Soul Ballads.”

Curated by Jason Ostro of Gabba Gallery, which recently displayed Val Kilmer’s paintings, this year’s exhibit gathers nearly 100 international artists who created more designs on 12-by-12-inch canvases that pay tribute to Pink Floyd, The Who, The Doors, Bob Marley and Tupac Shakur. DJ Jonathan Williams spins at tonight’s open-reception. Gabba Gallery, 3126 Beverly Blvd., Westlake; Sat., Aug. 12, 7-11 p.m. (runs through Aug. 26); free. (310) 498-2697, gabbagallery.com. — Siran Babayan

**Dance**

**Thoroughly Modern**

L.A.-based choreographer Raiford Rogers takes advantage of high-quality dancers on hiatus during the summer to assemble his **Raiford Rogers Modern Ballet**, including familiar faces from Los Angeles Ballet such as Kate Hichstreit, Liz Walker and Chelsea Paige Johnston. Also returning is the commanding Bobby Briscoe. This time Rogers’ architectural choreography enjoys live music from the Jacaranda Chamber Orchestra playing Stravinsky’s Concerto in D for Strings, Zbnek Mateju’s *Still Life* and a new work set to Matejů’s *Joshua Tree Symphony*. Rogers has been on hiatus for more than a year. This concert is a welcome return for him and some striking dancers before a scheduled tour to the Czech Republic next year. Luckman Fine Arts Complex, Cal State University Los Angeles, 5151 State University Drive, East L.A.; Sat., Aug. 12, 8 p.m.; $40-$60, $25 students. (323) 343-6600, luckmanarts.org. — Ann Haskins

**Film**

**Kahn Job**

Based on the board game, the 1985 movie *Clue* wasn’t a big hit when it was released. Featuring Tim Curry, Lesley Ann Warren, Madeline Kahn, Christopher Lloyd, Michael McKean, Martin Mull, Eileen Brennan, Colleen Camp and Fear singer Lee Ving, the plot revolved around six guests involved in a murder mystery at a mansion. More than 30 years later, the whodunit screwball comedy has been reborn as a cult classic, replete with secret passageways, alternate endings, double entendres, jiggling breasts, Jane Wiedlin of The Go-Go’s as a singing telegram girl and some of Kahn’s best lines (“Life after death is as improbable as sex after marriage.”). What’s not to love? There’s even a death is as improbable as sex after marriage.”). What’s not to love? There’s even a...
Oaxacan crafts, and a docent-led tour of the museum’s galleries. Colorful clothes encouraged but currency exchange not necessary. Museum of Latin American Art, 628 Alamitos Ave., Long Beach; Sun., Aug. 13, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; free. (562) 437-1689, molaa.org. –Gwynedd Stuart

mon 8/14

BOOKS
Who’s Jomny?
Jonathan Sun is a Ph.D. student at MIT and a fellow at Harvard’s Berkman Klein Center. On Twitter, he’s Jomny Sun, an “aliebn confused abo humann langauge,” with nearly a half-million followers. Sun’s online alter ego inspired his new book, *Everyone’s a Aliebn When Ur a Aliebn Too*, which he signs tonight. The story follows a confused, sad alien sent to study Earth, where he has funny, heartfelt, almost philosophical (and often misspelled) exchanges about loneliness, friendship and self-esteem with everything from stars, flowers and grass to animals and eggs. For example, a conversation with a tree reads: “A friend is anyone or anything that shares a life with u that you would never be able to experience without them.” The Last Bookstore, 453 S. Spring St., downtown; Mon., Aug. 14, 7:30 p.m.; free. (213) 488-0599, lastbookstorela.com. –Siran Babayan

COMEDY
Laugh All the Way to Burbank
Among the 250 comedians appearing at Flappers Comedy Club’s fourth annual Burbank Comedy Festival are both veteran and emerging performers. Headliners Jeff Garlin, Kevin Pollak, Jamie Kennedy, Christopher Titus, Carol Leifer, Mary Lynn Rajskub, Hal Sparks, Jimmy Pardo and Jimmy Dore share the stage with up-and-coming comics throughout the weeklong festival, which features stand-up acts, podcasts and resident club shows with names like *Jokes for Jews, Lame of Thrones* and *Chicks With Schticks*. The schedule also offers after-parties at nearby venues; workshops on such topics as social media for comedians, writing for late-night TV and working the college market; and panels with industry insiders such as director David Zucker (*Airplane!, The Naked Gun*). Flappers Comedy Club Burbank, 102 E. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank; Mon.-Sat., Aug. 14-19, 9 a.m.-10 p.m.; prices vary. burbankcomedyfestival.com. –Siran Babayan

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**Arts // Art Picks //**

**GLORY BE**

A SHOW IN CARTHAY CELEBRATES THE BRAVERY OF LGBT ARTISTS

**BY CATHERINE WAGLEY**

This week, flags figure prominently in two L.A. shows, as summer group exhibitions give artists a chance to grapple with power and patriotism.

**Shirtless Tony Curtis**

“I want to cum in your heart,” reads the white text on John Giorno’s rainbow-colored painting. The 80-year-old artist has a way of giving his jabs a positive twist. He’s part of group show “Over the Rainbow” at Praz Delavallade, curated by its co-founder Rene-Julien Praz. The show “pays tribute to all the brave artists who defend the human rights of all people.” Human rights, as portrayed here, are colorful, sen- 

tual and occasionally exuberant. A shiny, shirtless Tony Curtis stands on a sailboat power and patriotism.

**Shirtless Tony Curtis**

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**So many colors**

While “Artists of Color,” a show attempting to diversify our understanding of color field in art, is up at the Underground Museum, “black is a color” is up at Charlie James. “What would it mean to see pink on the wall and name it black?” curator Essence Harden asks in the press release. How does color in art help us understand place, lineage, ownership? Azizive Mohammed built something of a shrine in the back gallery, where quaint knick-knacks (a black Jesus, a black cherub, a grayish dog and an off-white cat named Anita) and lamps line two shelves. The lamps light a series of three T-shirts, each with the airbrushed face of a woman (or, in one case, a 7-year-old girl) shot by police. Sadie Barnette pinned a photograph of a 7-year-old girl (one case, a 7-year-old girl) shot by police. Sadie Barnette pinned a photograph of a 7-year-old girl (one case, a 7-year-old girl) shot by police. Sadie Barnette pinned a photograph of a 7-year-old girl. The film plays in Chateau Shatto’s Crime Park, with an awning that looked, at first, “almost like if you did a mullet on the front of your face.” The lights on either side of the awning look like earrings, so then they decided that, maybe, the awning was a towel worn by a woman who’d just arrived at a nude beach “but decided to keep her earrings on.” Adam rated the shop sad; Ben and guest star Becky rated it rad. It’s a game meant for vernacular architecture lovers, the kind of people who see a doughnut shop and feel entitled to opinions about the paint job.

**Too antsy**

Carol Rama’s small drawing Totem (2000) could depict a few things: Maybe it’s thighs and buttocks leaning into each other. Maybe it’s two sets of rocks. Either way, it has an endearingly lost quality. This piece by the late artist hangs in “Hurts to Laugh,” organized by writer-curateur Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer for Various Small Fires. Claude Wampler’s film of artist Mike Kelley has the same title as the show. Jay Heikes’ Assisted Living (2017), a wax-coated skeleton, balances on the floor, a marionette puppet controller hovering above its head. Lee Revis’ light, thin wood sculptures — all of which look like 3-D line drawings — protrude from walls or tilt across the floor. They’re still for now but seem too antsy to stay put.

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This study is for HIV-positive people who are taking antiretroviral therapy and are interested in strategies to reduce heart disease.

UCLA Meth Clinical Trial

Is Meth driving you insane?

Leaving you foggy in the brain?

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

Are you interested in trying to improve the way your brain works?

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

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

To join you must be:
• 18 years of age or older
• HIV-positive with an undetectable viral load
• Have had a HIV-associated neurocognitive disorder within 45 days prior to study entry

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

These are limitations to the confidentiality of email communications. Do not include any sensitive health information if you choose to contact the study team via email.
DREAM A LITTLE DREAMER
Undocumented writer-actor Alex Alpharaoh’s DACA journey is a nail-biter of a one-man show

BY BILL RADEN

After nearly a century of losing audiences to the convenience of more viewer-friendly forms of dramatic narrative, the theater’s existential survival has boiled down to a single defining question: What can the stage still deliver that movies, Netflix, video gaming or the cyber entertainment of the future cannot?

One answer, as writer-performer Alex Alpharaoh compellingly demonstrates in WET: A DACAmented Journey, is the unmediated authenticity of the live storyteller. Alpharaoh’s 90-minute solo performance is a singularly moving chronicle of the threat posed by the election of Donald Trump to the country’s 750,000 young immigrants called DREAMers. It’s a stirring autobiographical account of personal heroism in the face of everyday bigotry, and an act of courage in itself.

In what is perhaps the evening’s most trenchant irony, Alpharah matter-of-factly announces that merely by turning up at the theater, he has put himself in legal harm’s way. It’s not hyperbole. Though the White House announced in June that Trump had indefinitely put on hold his campaign pledge to immediately terminate Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), the Obama program that gives temporary work permits and deportation protection to children smuggled into the United States by their parents, Trump’s Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents have in the past singled out for arrest DACA holders who’ve spoken or been critical of U.S. immigration policy.

Alpharaoh’s harrowing revelations of what it means to live one’s entire existence in a day-to-day, fugitive twilight of nail-biting uncertainty are as expertly ratcheted as any Hitchcockian suspense thriller. His journey begins as a 3-month-old infant when he is carried by his then-15-year-old mother on a near-fatal, epic trek from Guatemala to San Ysidro; it’s an astonishing profile in courage. In Los Angeles, they join his father and settle into the precarious routine of Angelenos struggling to scrape a living in the underground economy. His father becomes a manual laborer. His mother pursues sweatshop work in L.A.’s Garment District. And Alpharaoh undergoes the wrenching childhood rites of passage that come with growing up under the stigma of second-class citizenship.

It is when he is studying acting at UC Irvine in June 2012, and Obama unveils the DACA program, that the show kicks into high gear. That’s when Alpharah enters the maddening bureaucratic maze of an application process that demands the kind of evidence of his illegal residency that the actor had spent so much of his life concealing. It’s a tribute to Alpharaoh’s storytelling skills that administrative chores taken for granted by birthright Americans, such as applying for a Social Security number, are imbued with an unnerving anxiety that, with Trump’s stunning election upset, flares into pulse-pounding terror.

There are still some rough edges to director Kevin Comartin’s otherwise focused staging on designer Amanda Knehans’ attractive framework set. But in an odd way, that awkwardness only helps to heighten the evening’s sense of emotional truth and — more importantly — its affecting lessons on the connection between fundamental human dignity and full legal rights.


““A BOLDLY INVENTIVE WORK. SMART, ORIGINAL AND BRIMMING WITH HUMANITY, IT ARRIVES IN LOS ANGELES WITH ITS MAGIC INTACT.”

—THE HOLLYWOOD REPORTER

THE TONY®-WINNING BROADWAY PHENOMENON
The National Theatre production of

THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF THE DOG IN THE NIGHT-TIME

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REPART, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The Trip to Spain feasts upon its stars’ fear of obsolescence

BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL

Once more, into the brie — or, in this case, the manchego. For the third time, now, for Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon, it’s the feast as improv proving ground, the sumptuous meal as arena of competitive discernment: Who can better parse and parody the particularities of some beloved British film actor? And, most crucially, Michael Winterbottom’s The Trip to Spain is a breezy study of aging men afraid they’ve lost their potency, their command of life, their once-certain enshrinement in the culture. It is at once a desperate echo of long-gone glories and a glory itself.

As Coogan and Brydon, again playing fictionalized versions of themselves, chew up and down Spain’s Mediterranean coast, striving to find new crowd-pleasing bits to perform over lunch, the film continually reminds us that these men haven’t quite become all that they expected to. They pant and puff on an uphill bike ride; Coogan takes phone calls from his new American agent, to whom he is an afterthought; they sing from Man of La Mancha with what seems to be personal understanding of Don Quixote’s failure to achieve heroic greatness. Sometimes they evince awareness that such heroism is an impossible dream, for anyone, but they still look a little glum about having persisted into their 50s without becoming whatever one thing more it is that wealthy film and TV stars (and writers) aspire to.

They bite into delicacies, just as they always have, and seem to wonder, “Is this all there is?” And audiences either laugh along or scream “Isn’t it enough, you yutzes?” or, in my case, both.

Like its predecessors, this culinary/comedy travelogue has been cut into a film from an episodic TV series. This elegiac third entry in the series finds our heroes adrift in life, only certain of who they are and why they matter when engaged in the shtick of a Trip movie. They’re a pair of aging white dudes trying to make sense of a world where they’re not necessarily the center of everything; the irony, of course, is that they are in the fluke hits of The Trips. Their trouble is that Hollywood believes that people want to see them joke over meals rather than do the things men do in big movies: Hook up with younger women and kick the asses of supervillains. (Younger women, of course, are a thread in these films.)

THEY’RE A PAIR OF AGING WHITE DUDES TRYING TO MAKE SENSE OF A WORLD WHERE THEY’RE NOT NECESSARILY THE CENTER OF EVERYTHING.

They pick at each other’s vanities, Coogan playing the role here of both Quixote and the Slightly More Important Star, needling Brydon for not being quite as famous. One quite funny scene here finds the men discussing, with some shock, the fact that David Bowie knew who they were. And what a relief it is when they hit upon the idea of impersonating Roger Moore, that courtsy ham of a Bond who I hope got to enjoy this ribbing before his death in May. As with the duo’s competing impressions of Michael Caine, their Moores reveal a lifetime of attentive, affectionate study — and also something of their own yearning. Wouldn’t they love to have been viewed with the world as men of such smooth self-possession, to be so well known that less famous celebrities roast them?

Instead, they’re best known for touring the world’s great restaurants, sleeping in rustic hotels, volleying quips between sips of wine. They pick at each other in a most sumptuous sort of Purgatory. This latest Trip seems crafted and performed with an overriding awareness of the laws of sequels and diminishing returns. Of course, it can’t ever be as fresh and funny as the original film, though it does manage often to be — as their Caine might say — quite funny indeed. Then, when it’s not as funny, when the men seem adrift or reduced to calling each other “dinosaur,” The Trip to Spain proves surprisingly rich. Despite their paydays, and the pleasure of their repasts, the versions of themselves that they’re playing seem to believe that doing a third one of these films is in its way a defeat. (The film even builds to a note of despair and one last botch of a joke that doesn’t quite work, and is certain to weigh heavily over the meal you have afterward.)

There are a million troubles worth worrying over on this planet before we get to whether movie stars are satisfied in their wildly successful franchises. It’s worth remembering: Ginger Rogers felt, for many reasons, that she should break free of musicals in order to focus on serious drama. She earned that Kitty Foyle Oscar, of course, but what film fan alive today doesn’t wish she had paired up with Fred Astaire for just one more RKO musical?

THE TRIP TO SPAIN | Directed by Michael Winterbottom | IFC Films | Landmark
Queens Streets

THE SAFDIES’ GRITTY-CITY THROWBACK HONORS THE WRONG ELEMENTS OF TOUGH-GUY NYC MOVIES

BY APRIL WOLFE

Since it premiered at Cannes earlier this year, the Safdie brothers’ man-on-the-run, darkly comedic thriller Good Time has been hailed as something of a return to classic New York movies, i.e., from before the Giuliani cleanup, when Martin Scorsese was experimenting with cinema on the streets. In this film, Ben Safdie plays mentally challenged Nick Nikas, and Robert Pattinson affects a Queens accent to play Nick’s brother Connie Nikas in a kind of mashup of After Hours and Of Mice and Men. Most of the story takes place within a tense 24-hour period, as the characters — Connie, especially — race through his borough, interacting with its inhabitants. These people — an African-born security guard, a Jamaican grandmother, a hospitalized drug dealer — are shorthand for the “real” New York, and just as in so many other “classic New York movies,” the Safdies shine a grimy bare-bulb light on them. But if the real NYC is that diverse, how is it that Mean Streets cinema is always led by manipulative and violent men?

Pattinson is nearly unrecognizable under a scrappily beard and greasy mop of hair, with the nervous charisma of a street hustler. After a botched bank robbery, Connie gets caught up in a long succession of detours and coincidences on his way to bail his bro out of jail. Whenever he’s cornered, Connie’s eyes dew up and jitter — he’s like a fight-or-flight chihuahua in a big-dog park.

Connie even confesses to a girl, Crystal (Taliah Webster), that he believes he was a dog in a past life. A detail like this usually is intended to activate sympathy for a character, in this case to suggest his innocence and that he only acts with aggression when under attack. The Safdie bros have said that Connie is a good guy because he’s often using his brain instead of guns, but the victims of his horsepower are a lot of women and people of color who are portrayed as dumb punch lines and entirely dispensable.

When I hear the term “classic New York movie,” I think of gritty streets, in-too-deep detectives and colorful characters, but most of all, I think of men. These films usually feature a man who must find the courage to “beat” the city or perish in the effort. Think Death Wish, Taxi Driver, The Warriors, Midnight Cowboy, Serpico, The French Connection. Female-led classic New York dramas are much more rare, like Bette Gordon’s Variety, and even that film is about navigating a city that belongs to men.

Good Time, like so many other films of its ilk, revels in its ugly male characters. The Safdie brothers try to squeeze dark humor from these guys but also seem to have no awareness of how repulsive they’ve made their lead. We’re supposed to laugh when 30-something Connie kisses 15-year-old Crystal and tries to fuck her just to distract her from his mug shot on the TV — do I have to remind people that statutory rape is rape? That Crystal happens to be black and that the filmmakers chose to over-sexualize her was not lost on me. We’re also supposed to laugh when Connie beats the shit out of a security guard (Barkhad Abdi), who is also black, before Connie’s partner in crime for the night (Buddy Duress) dumps a pop bottle of LSD in his mouth. Every punch and every dude yelling nonsensically just to be loud and disorienting tried my patience.

And with a relentless synth score from Onechrix Point Never, which pummels you from start to finish, the film is screaming in our faces, “Yo, can you even HANDLE this REALISM, bro? We’re so AUTHENTIC! We’re so LOUD!” Silence is golden and also mostly absent from this movie. As is a character we can root for. Fuck. Is this classic New York?

THE SAFDIE BROTHERS TRY TO SQUEEZE DARK HUMOR FROM THESE GUYS BUT ALSO SEEM TO HAVE NO AWARENESS OF HOW REPULSIVE THEY’VE MADE THEIR LEAD.

GOOD TIME | Directed by Josh and Benny Safdie | Written by Ronald Bronstein and Josh Safdie A24 | ArcLight Hollywood, Landmark
La France profonde
director Jérôme Reybaud's debut
narrates "Parthenay, Écuisses, Issoire," that dutiful
granular French geography. "Staying Vertical
most recent, suggests an affinity with
carnal pairings and provincial settings,
whether by happenstance or via app, of
on his odyssey south, he meets people,
in his white Alfa Romeo during an aimless
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(323) 464-4226 arclightcinemas.com
ArcLight Cinemas At Sunset & Vine
11523 Santa Monica Blvd.
MATT WALSH,
BY DAVID
THE BIG C
CRAY WALTERS
CARY STAYS IN THE PICTURE
In Experimenter, a rough sketch compared with polished
expression and camera work, the film this month in which the female pro-
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-8 — Alan Scherstuhl
prove much more simple-minded than the flashbacks.
— Alan Scherstuhl
THE GLASS CASTLE | Directed by Destin Daniel Cretton
Written by Cretton and Andrew Lanham
Lionsgate | Citywide

SIMPLIFIED ON SCREEN, THE GLASS CASTLE AT LEAST BOASTS STRONG PERFORMANCES
The dictates of Hollywood screenwriting can’t quite constrain the wildness of Jeannette Walls’ family and her best-selling memoir. Despite a tidy resolu-
tion, too many scenes whose shapes are immediately familiar from other movies, and an absurd climax that
dramatizes the conflict between a daughter and her
father through the wheezy beats of a romantic comedy, Destin Daniel Cretton’s adaptation of Walls’ The Glass
Castle just often enough bursts to raucous life. Here’s an itinerant dreamer/drink of a dad (Woody Harrelson)
blasting the station wagon across desert scrub to teach his kids the lesson that they’ll learn more from him than
they will in any school. Here’s a hippie-painter mother (Naomi Watts) dash-
ing out of the car to sit before a tree and capture it on
canvas, certain that her four children will be just fine
camping tentless in the wilderness. Here’s that dad, again, tenderly removing bandages from tiny Jeannette
(played in flashbacks by a succession of actresses), revealing skin she burned while cooking hot dogs in
the house they had been squatting in. The family’s on the
lam, fleeing social workers, but what could be better
than the campfire and the silent horizons? What could
be better than Harrelson’s Rex Walls calling Jeannette
“Mountain Goat”?
At its best, this Glass Castle brushes up against the
rich complexity of lived experience. It’s the rare star-
driven crowd-pleaser smart enough to present
more than one idea on screen at a time, a pareanese
but also warning against cussedness that manages
to exhibit some of its own. But later scenes, set in 1989,
prove much more simple-minded than the flashbacks.
— Alan Scherstuhl

KNOCK-ON-WOOD

WIN A PAIR OF TICKETS TO BODY WORLDS: PULSE!

UNO A UNO
a documentary short
August 11-17, 2017 at 2:45 pm
Monica Film Center
1332 2nd St. Santa Monica, CA 90401
310-478-3836 ♦ laemmle.com

KNIFE SKILLS
a documentary short
August 11-17, 2017 ♦ Daily at 12:30 pm (Except Tuesday at 12:00 pm)
Laemmle’s Royal Theatre
11523 Santa Monica Blvd. ♦ West L.A., CA 90025
310-478-3836 ♦ laemmle.com

THE GLASS CASTLE
In this Corner of the World
Location is everything: Sunao Katabuchi’s anime
This Corner of the World is about a young
woman named Suzu (Non), who in 1944 moves
to live with her husband’s family in
the city of Kure, some 10 miles from
Hiroshima. Though Kure is home to
the dockyard from whence the (sea, not
space) battleship Yamato was launched,
his citizens are largely unaffected by
the war until they aren’t. The subtitled
date-stamps notably speed up as August
1945 approaches, though the inevitable
Hiroshima explosion isn’t the end
of Suzu’s story, or even necessarily
the most traumatic thing that happens to
her. Though this is a far gentler film,
This Corner of the World has thematic similari-
ties to The Iru Drum, of all things. Like
Dum’s pint-sized protagonist, Suzu is
facing a world at war in a similar (though
unintentional) state of arrested develop-
ment; she’s small for her age at 18 and,
as is often observed, far from the sharp-
est knife in the drawer, even getting lost
to the way home from the market. After
The Girl Without Hands, This Corner of
the World also has the curious distinction
of being the second animated foreign
film this month in which the female pro-
tagonist loses one or both of her hands.
What a fun trend! (Sherilyn Connelly)

THE PULITZER AT 100
This slick new doc

A pleasingly discursive
MOONEY
by Jérôme Reybaud’s debut narra-
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THE PULITZER AT 100
This slick new doc

A pleasingly discursive
YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DO LIST

Check Out Rarely Seen Limite or Sinful Davey

**Friday, Aug. 11**
A guilty pleasure, and a high point of the 1980s sword-and-soorcery craze, *Conan the Barbarian* provided Arnold Schwarzenegger with one of his beefiest roles. Scripted by director John Milius and Oliver Stone from a series of pulp fantasy stories by Weird Tales scribe Robert E. Howard, the film is arguably too self-aware to qualify as camp, but that doesn’t mean you can’t have a chuckle at its expense. The NuArt is breaking out a 35mm print for its long-running *Cine Insomnia* series. NuArt Theatre, 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., West L.A.; Sat., Aug. 11, 11:59 p.m.; $12. (310) 473-8530, landmarktheatres.com.

**Saturday, Aug. 12**
John Waters’ legendary cult flick *Pink Flamingos* — about the contest for the title of the Filthiest Person Alive — virtually resists description. Like its star, the drag queen known as Divine, it must be seen to be believed, preferably at the stroke of midnight, when it was originally unleashed on an unsuspecting public in 1972. Cinéfamily screens it as part of series *The History of the Midnight Movie*, so you can gag in unison with a crowd at the Vista, Vista Theatre, 4473 Sunset Blvd., Los Feliz; Sat., Aug. 12, 11:59 p.m.; $12. (323) 486-3456, lafilmforum.org.

**Sunday, Aug. 13**
Mário Peixoto was only 22 years old when he made *Limite*, a landmark experimental feature that offers an intensely subjective vision of two men and a woman lost at sea. It was the first Brazilian film of distinction and one of the hardest to see until the Film Foundation’s recent restoration. Los Angeles Filmforum screens this silent poetic reverie — perhaps for the first time ever in this city — at the Spielberg Theatre. You may agree with Sergei Eisenstein’s two-word assessment: “very beautiful.” Spielberg Theatre at the Egyptian, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., Aug. 13, 7:30 p.m.; $10. (323) 466-3456, lafilmforum.org.

John Huston had wanted to film *The Man Who Would Be King* ever since he was a young man, but only a seasoned pro could have brought out the world-weary-inherent in Rudyard Kipling’s tale of a colonialist adventure gone awry. Huston’s saggacy expands and enriches the story of two British soldiers (Sean Connery and Michael Caine, both at the top of their game) who embark on a mission to establish themselves as rulers of a remote civilization. This action classic will be followed by *Sinful Davey*, a bawdy comedy in the vein of *Tom Jones* (and one of the biggest flops of Huston’s career). UCLA’s Billy Wilder Theater, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Sun., Aug. 13, 7 p.m.; $10. (310) 206-8013, cinema.ucla.edu.

**Tuesday, Aug. 15**
LACMA’s *Tuesday Matinees* series continues its commitment to Golden Age Hollywood with a screening of *Easter Parade*. Shot in bright, splashy Technicolor, it was the biggest hit of both Judy Garland and Fred Astaire’s careers. The nominal plot exists solely as a clothesline on which to hang a multitude of Irving Berlin numbers, including the memorable title song’s, LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Tue., Aug. 15, 1 p.m.; $4. (323) 857-6000, lacma.org.

**Wednesday, Aug. 16**
Louis Malle’s *Murmur of the Heart* is the director’s most autobiographical feature and one of his most successful. It’s a sensuous journey of self-discovery told from the perspective of a French adolescent of aristocratic stock, and the details of his sexual initiation are by turns playful and shocking. It screens in Laemmle’s *Anniversary Classics*, Laemmle Royal (also at the Playhouse 7 and Town Center 5), 11272 Santa Monica Blvd., Sawtelle, Thu., Aug. 16, 7:30 p.m.; $11. (310) 478-3836, laemmle.com. —Nathaniel Bell
Neighborhood Movie Guide

HOLLYWOOD & VICTORY

ARENA CINELOUNGE SUNSET 6464
Sunset Boulevard (323) 244-1644
Sediplexed

THE GROVE DR., THIRD & FAIRFAX
Hollywood Blvd. (323) 461-3331

7674
HOOVER ST. (213) 748-6321

Sunset Boulevard (323) 654-2217

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

EurOpera HD: Rigoletto - Liceu Barcelona

RiffTrax Live: Doctor Who - The Five Doctors

REGAL CINEMAS L.A. LIVE STADIUM

CGV CINEMAS LA

TCL CHINESE THEATRE IMAX

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AMC LEWISVILLE CINEMPLEX

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Wilstien Blvd. (310) 274-6969

Antique (Daed of Sarone) 12 noon, 2:40, 4:50, 7:20, 9:55 p.m.

WESLEY ST., WEST LA

AMC CINERama 15 10030 Santa Monica Blvd. (310) 446-4513

The Hitman’s Bodyguard Thurs., 7, 9:45 p.m.

BATMAN AND HARLEY QUINN Mon., 7:30 p.m.

Bonnie and Clyde 50th Anniversary (1967)

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON Sat., 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30 p.m.

AMC SANTA MONICA 7 3130 Third Street Promenade (310) 395-3030

AERO THEATRE 1328 Montana Ave. (323) 466-4513

Call theater for schedule.

AMC LEWISVILLE 4-PLEX 1332
Second St. (310) 478-3836

In This Corner of the World (Kono sekai no katasumi ni)

Seated Fri., 11 a.m., 1:40, 4:10, 6:40, 9:10 p.m.

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

LAEMMLE’S TOWN CENTER 5 17200 Ventura Blvd., (818) 982-9811

The Royal Ballet: Jewels Mon., 7:30 p.m., Tues., 1 p.m.

MURDER OF THE HEART (Le Souffle au Coeur)

Wed., 7 p.m.

PASADENA & VICINITY

ACADEMY 6 1003 E. Colorado Blvd. (626) 476-8888

Annabelle: Creation Fri., 11:35 a.m., 4:35, 7:55, 10:55 p.m.

PACIFIC THEATRES PASADENA 42 Miller Ave (626) 639-2290

The Hitman’s Bodyguard Thurs., 7:30 p.m.

AMC Presented by TCM Sat., 12:15, 2:45, 5:15, 7:45, 10:15 p.m.

PACIFIC’S SHERMAN OAKS 5 1332 Creek Road (310) 456-6990

The Nut Job 2: Nutty By Nature Fri., 4:30, 7:30, 10 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 16 1805 Windham Ave. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Mon., 7:30 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 24 1180 E. Colorado Blvd. (626) 639-2290

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 30 1180 East Colorado Blvd. (626) 639-2290

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 11 a.m., 1:35, 4, 6, 9 pm.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 12:30, 2:30, 4:30, 6:30, 8:30 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 36 1005 Amherst Ave. (626) 387-6350

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:20, 4:30, 6:45, 9:15 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11 a.m., 1:35, 4, 6, 9 pm.

AMC THEATRES 42 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 50 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 58 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 66 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 74 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 82 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.

AMC THEATRES 90 1200 Orange Grove Rd. (626) 257-0101

Doctor Who - The Five Doctors: 8 p.m.

THE WALKING DEAD

Fri., 5, 6:15, 7:30, 9 p.m.

MUNE: GUARDIAN OF THE MOON

Sat., 11:15 a.m., 2:15, 5, 7, 9:45 p.m.
Simple (Jacob Latimore) duck inside to get away from the violence in the streets. Any sense of safety is short-lived, however, after the police and the National Guard respond to what they think are gunfire shots fired at them from the motel. They blast their way in, looking for the shootouts. What ensues is close to a relentless, extended torture sequence, as the officers — led by a wild-eyed cop called Krauss — force these men and women against a wall and take turns taking suspects into another room and, supposedly in an attempt to get the others to talk, pretend to kill them, one by one. Bigelow allows the sequence to go on and on and on, for what may well be 90 minutes of raw, stomach-gnawing tension. The length and intensity of this sequence, and the structural chaos it creates for the film, allow us to feel some of the trauma of the event. The fragmented, distracted quality of later scenes suggests that the film is suffering from its own kind of shell-shock. (Bilge Ebiri)

Dunkirk suggests that the film is suffering from its distracted quality of later scenes sugersting that the trauma of the event. The fragmented, distracted quality of later scenes suggests that the film is suffering from its own form of shell-shock. (Bilge Ebiri)

The 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 nesting doll 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 increasing and collapsing timelines that expand and contract and collide. And somehow, it’s also uncharacteristically intimate. It tells the story of the evacuation by cutting among three perspectives, each with its own specific time frame: one week following a British soldier (Fionn Whitehead) on the beach at Dunkirk, as he tries to find a way off this huge, doomed stretch of land; 24 hours on the small wooden yacht Moonstone, manned by Mr. Dawson (Mark Rylance) and two teenagers as they head across the roaring English Channel to aid in the rescue effort on the other side; one hour in the cockpit with RAF Spitfire pilot Farrier (Tom Hardy, his face once again totally covered) as he battles the Germans bombing the stranded army below. The film’s setup may sound confusing, but onscreen titles inform us of the film’s variable timeframes early on. 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. (Bilge Ebiri)

THE FARDEST
12 BILLION MILES AND COUNTING...

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CRAWL OF THE WILD

Glam-punks Starcrawler are on a mission to make rock feel dangerous again

BY EVE BARLOW

It’s sundown at the MOCA parking lot and a group of four misfits (one yet to finish high school) launch into their song “Pussy Tower.” (“It’s about giving head, whatever,” shrugged Starcrawler’s frontperson Arrow de Wilde, 18, at a sushi joint earlier.) Once the song gets underway, de Wilde disappears from view, then re-emerges and spews blood over the audience. Some scream, others laugh. It’s some party trick.

Earlier in the set, de Wilde ran amok onstage in a hospital gown, offering crazed facial expressions cribbed from studying footage of schizophrenics. Her onstage persona is like a fictitious escapee from Arkham Asylum, or the spawn of Nick Cave and PJ Harvey. Beneath the hospital gown are sparkly Y-fronts. Eventually she strips down to them and flaps her arms like a bat — perhaps mimicking the one her hero Ozzy Osbourne once bit into.

Starcrawler have been gigging around L.A. for a year, often with fellow glam-punk revivalists The Lemon Twigs. Chances are you’ll hear about their fluid-secreting rock & roll before you see them and a group of four misfits wage war with their instruments. Eventually drummer Austin Smith, 22, breaks his nose onstage and didn’t realize it until he saw his disfigured face at a photo shoot the next day.

When he was in preschool, he had a way of Cameron Crowe’s Almost Famous. He rode in the mesh pit as her bandmates wage war with their instruments. Eventually, drummer Austin Smith, 22, throws his sticks into the crowd. “Thank you very much. Fuck you all,” adds guitarist Henri Cash, 16.

Together with bassist Tim Franco, 20, Starcrawler are tonight’s opening act. The other bands may as well go home.


Starcrawler are tonight’s opening act. Smith, the eldest, carries the air of a Venice skater but grew up in Hollywood. His rhythmic partner, Franco, is the quiet one. “I thought I looked like a prick [at first],” Cash says. “But he’s the nicest guy.”

If ever there was an attack on Starcrawler, de Wilde assures that the rhythm section would defend them. “They’ve got the guns,” she says.

Cash pipes up. “Have you seen that video of Keith Richards hitting a dude coming after Mick Jagger onstage with his guitar?” He looks to the others. “We gotta rehearse that.”

De Wilde was born into Echo Park arts community royalty, the daughter of drummer Aaron Sperske (Beachwood Sparks, Ariel Pink) and photographer Autumn de Wilde. Elliott Smith would hang around when she was a kid. She has modeled for Teen Vogue and had appeared in a Bleachers video directed by Lena Dunham by the age of 16.

Starcrawler began two years ago when de Wilde and Smith connected via Facebook and started jamming. “We hung out a few times and thought, ‘You’re not terrible,’” Smith explains. De Wilde found Cash at the East L.A. performing arts school they both attended. She spotted him carrying a tuba case and asked if he played guitar. Franco was the only person de Wilde knew who played bass. He rode to his first rehearsal on his bike and arrived dripping in sweat. “Was he eager?” “I was late,” he says, deadpan.

The band played their first show last spring at a space on Sunset that de Wilde describes as “a closet.” They packed 40 people in, another dozen peering in from outside through the window. “We were the first band on. Everyone left right after,” Smith remembers, laughing. “The other bands were so annoyed. I was like, ‘Don’t you guys have friends?’”

De Wilde thinks bands are “boring” nowadays. She prefers immersing herself in past mythology. “You’d wonder what [rock stars] would do backstage, what they were like,” she says. “Now [bands] don’t seem any higher than you. There’s no mystery.”

Thus, both de Wilde and Cash dress for the occasion. The hospital gown is one of two costumes she wears. Cash opts for a red shirt with black blazer. “Like The Beatles, man,” he says. “The Beatles and Ramones had a uniform. Now bands are just hipsters in hats with guitars.”

On Twitter, Starcrawler’s byline is, “We will kill you.” “We will!” Cash says.

“We people get shocked and scared at our shows. I didn’t know that was still possible,” de Wilde says. “They get angry. I like it.” Less enthusiastic onlookers have described them as “sick.” “They think we’re anorexic drug addicts, that we’re disrespecting women,” Cash scoffs. He reads out some hate mail he received today on the band’s Instagram. De Wilde is usually the target. This message concludes: “There is nothing appealing about any female who looks like this, it is not OK to be a public figure and pretty much promote anorexia.”

Fired up, Cash points at de Wilde’s plate of tempura. “She’s not anorexic. She eats! She’s 6 foot 2! If you look at pictures of her mom at her age, it’s the same thing.”

“I don’t care,” de Wilde says. “I’ve been getting the anorexic thing for [a long time]. I don’t want people to pity me. I could speak up about it but I know that if I bring it up to the public I’ll just be more ...” She struggles to find the right words to respond.

The band are disappointed that de Wilde is attacked by self-described “body-positive feminists,” particularly given her onstage remit. “I don’t wanna be considered this amazing woman frontperson,” she says. “I just wanna be a frontperson, the same as any other.”

Her antics are inspired in equal parts by The Runaways and Ozzy Osbourne. Her affections for the latter run deep. “I heard Blizzard of Ozz and knew it was the best album I’d ever heard in my life. Then I watched every YouTube video, every interview. I read his book. My love for him is not romantic. Steven Tyler is fucking annoying now, but Ozzy doesn’t try to wear the Spandex outfit he wore in the ’80s. He’s just so classy.”

When it comes to their music, Starcrawler are so conscientious that, in a bid to “look pro,” they recorded their first single, “Ants,” and its B-side, “Used to Know,” before even playing a gig. “Ants” is a literal anthem about the summer ant infestation that plagues Cash’s house annually. It’s fast, furious and was written as quickly as it plays out. “I was angry,” Cash says.

“Ants” was played on Beats 1 radio by Elton John. “It’s funny ‘cause people were like, ‘Elton John’s playing your song,’” Cash says. “And I was like, ’Yes! Now I have to do this math test.’”

Starcrawler have found a kindred guide in singer-songwriter Ryan Adams, who recorded their forthcoming debut LP on analog tape at his Pax-Am Studio in Hollywood. It’s out next year via Rough Trade. Adams discovered the band while following de Wilde’s mom Autumn on Instagram; like many rock musicians, Adams has been photographed by the elder de Wilde. When mom passed the message along to Arrow, her response was like someone hearing of a long-lost uncle: “Ryan Adams? I hadn’t heard that name in years.”

Asked to describe the album or the intentions behind it, Starcrawler keep tight-lipped. “Let us be your drug,” Cash says. The way he says it, it sounds like a threat. 
Music // Bizarre Ride //

STRING THEORY
SUDAN ARCHIVES’ MUSIC WILL MAKE YOU HEAR THE VIOLIN IN A WHOLE NEW LIGHT

BY JEFF WEISS

It’s historically difficult to make the violin seem cool. It’s a gorgeous instrument but one that never lent itself to pop culture cachet. There was that corny attempt to anoint the “hip-hop violinist,” that one guy in Dave Matthews Band, the tweedy Andrew Bird, and innumerable anonymous session musicians grafted onto tracks for symphonic gravitas. (Shout-out to Xzibit’s “Paparazzi.”)

So give Sudan Archives credit for disrupting decades of awkward collisions between the classical, commercial and experimental music worlds. Her self-titled Stones Throw debut might be the best violin-centered fusion since Jean-Luc Ponty and George Duke.

“I was always messing around … experimenting with different equipment, trying to figure out what sounds best with the violin in it,” the Cincinnati-raised L.A. transplant says when we meet at a cafe near Stones Throw headquarters. She wears a striped shirt and black pants, and slightly resembles a young Lauryn Hill.

“At first it was just all on my iPhone, but then I started working at Forever 21 and McDonald’s and buying new gear slowly.”

“It’s as difficult to imagine Archives surrounded by McDoubles as it is to consider her birth name, Brittney Parks. Her music is shrouded in an inherent mystery, an orphic swirl of strings and loop pedals, warped electronic and hip-hop beats, and vocals that sound as weightless and extraterrestrial as an classified NASA experiment.

Suffice to say, she’s not a Brittney, which her mother recognized when she was a teenager, rechristening her Sudan, a nod to her predilection for African-style necklaces and patterns. The nickname seemed prophetic later when, still a teen, she discovered Sudanese and West African fiddle music and incorporated these ancient, glistening rhythms into her own sound. The Archives surname arrived later, an ode to her passion for ethnomusicology, which she’s currently studying at Pasadena City College.

Her arrival in Highland Park and at the legendarily freewheeling Stones Throw is a longer tale, one that starts with her picking up the violin in the fourth grade after being enraptured by a squad of fiddle players. Raised in an ultra-religious household, she attended church three times a week in a Holy Ghost-type congregation where people occasionally spoke in tongues.

By 17, a rebellious streak emerged, which didn’t blend well with her stepfather’s attempts to launch Archives and her twin sister as a pop duo. A music executive who had discovered L.A. Reid and Babyface and helped launch LaFace Records, he’d envisioned them as a Top 40 juggernaut.

“He made us perform for Babyface, but I just wasn’t into the pop ballads we made. I’d just be thinking, ‘I’m not feeling this, but I don’t know why,’” Archives says. “I remember looking at the producer and envying him, like, ‘I wanna be in that chair, making the music.”

After getting kicked out of her house, she saved up enough for a plane ticket out to L.A. and subsequently enrolled in college, worked as a barista, and began sputuring bass-heavy MPC beats with gosamer R&B and primeval fiddle music.

IN HER TEENS, SHE DISCOVERED SUDANESE AND WEST AFRICAN FIDDLE MUSIC.

After she met Stones Throw A&R and Leaving Records boss Matthew david at a Low End Theory night, Archives’ music made its way to Peanut Butter Wolf, who quickly signed her. One of the most original and best records of the year, Sudan Archives expands and reimagines the possibilities of the violin, a difficult thing to do in a postmodern world in which everything seems to have been done.

“I started out making music on my iPad. You don’t need lessons or money to do this, you just have to have the desire and make it a reality.” Archives says. “There are no rules to anything now, so just do whatever you wanna do.”

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.
I'm at the airport in Hamburg, waiting to board the first of two flights back to America. Just climbed out of the three performances at the Wacken Festival, the first European shows I've done in the age of Trump. I understand that I was in front of young music fans, but just mentioning his name elicited a reaction completely antithetical to the desperation-sets-in pep rally he flopped through in West Virginia a few days ago. I don't want to be like Sean Spicer and get attendance numbers wrong, but over three nights, a lot of people wandered into my tent, and if they are in any way demonstrative of Germany's youth, comrade Trump might not want to visit his non-friend Chancellor Merkel anytime soon.

I've been trying to figure out what's behind comrade Trump's recent flailing. Keeping his Putin First policy on display when he complained about having to put further sanctions on Russia was interesting but hardly surprising. He has to act out for his handlers in Moscow, I get it, but when he says that he is disappointed in the sanctions because they limit his dealmaking latitude with Putin, it shows that his head is still in the private sector, where he has failed over and over.

I wonder if Trump understands that the bill he signed prohibits him from lifting any sanctions without congressional review. Any move he makes to serve his Russian keepers will be immediate front-page news and all the ingredients for a perfect political firestorm. His own party is trying to contain him.

I would like to know what Trump understands about the very real storm gathering around him. Publicly, he says all this Russia business is nothing but a proverbial witch hunt. I don't think that's true, but I don't think Trump is necessarily lying, as far as he knows, when he says that. Judging from his clueless remarks about almost every issue, from the Paris Agreement to NATO, I get the idea that, while he might not be stupid, he isn't all that interested in the fine or even medium print on what his job entails shows up in his tweets, his hiring and his increasingly bizarre statements.

What keeps coming to my mind is that it's possible he's so easily played that, no matter what evidence you showed him that his interactions with Russian operatives and shady businessmen disadvantaged him, he wouldn't understand or allow himself to admit he was a sucker. If you're going to turn someone, the last person who should know is the one you're turning. Comrade Trump is in so many ways the perfect mark. You loan him money he'll never be able to pay back and compliment his greatness and he hops into your boat, unaware of the hook in his mouth, thinking you're lucky he's giving you the time of day.

Could it be that Trump's detractors are giving him far too much credit, and what they're really witnessing is the takedown of a man whose hubris and inability to see outside of his lackey-packed perimeter will cause him to be the last person in the room who finally gets it?

If Trump thought he could be in trouble, wouldn't he, like his son-in-law Jared, hire much better legal help than what he has around him presently? What if comrade Trump has resisted showing his tax returns not because they will reveal some highly shady financial movements but because they will show that he's not nearly as rich as he tells us, is in debt to foreign lenders, and that he's fucked? What if all the branch-shaking of Robert Mueller's investigation actually renders Trump, his stacks of cordwood kids and truly odd son-in-law as mere dupes, and throws the hot light on Paul Manafort, a man who actually knows how all this shit works?

I don't know what Robert Mueller will find in his investigation, but I'm sure whatever's there, he'll bring it to light. I don't know if Trump is a frog in a pot of ever-warming water or just a man about to hit the history books as America's greatest elected failure.

While comrade Trump enjoys his 17-day vacation in New Jersey, things in Washington are moving right along. Forget Robert Mueller’s Operation Relentless Justice for a second and consider that the Republican-stacked Senate just blocked Trump from making any recess appointments, should he want to knock Attorney General Jeff Sessions off his perch and attempt to remove Mueller. If that’s not writing Trump’s own party is now trying to contain him. I don’t know what is.

It could be that, post-vacation, Trump will return to a GOP that is showing more and more that it digs him less and less. Froggy’s water might be getting hotter.

Many hours later, I’m at my desk in L.A. The almost 11-hour flight was blessed with an extra three-plus hours of sitting on the ground while the plane had repairs. Zooming all over the world for work reads like a lot of bending and folding, and it — even more now, considering how unfun airports have become. But as I drag myself through these multicontinent showtunes, I conclude that it’s always worth it.

I have spent a lot of my life getting to and from places, often not being in one location for longer than 24 hours, for weeks at a time. The older I get, slowing down seems like the most dangerous idea. Having more past than future, it’s equivalent to stopping, which is, at this point, capitulation and resignation to mediocrity. I’m not running from my life. I’m chasing it.
HYDRAFORM

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Tuesday • August 16 • 6 PM
HENRY & GLENN FOREVER & EVER BOOK LAUNCH EVENT!

Wednesday • August 16 • 6 PM
MADONNA BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION
Amoeba’s own DJ MATERIAL BOY will be spinning a tribute set, PLUS enter to win Madonna goodies! Enjoy 20% Off ALL Madonna music and merchandise all day/night long.

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Music Picks

**Fri 8/11**

**Hans Zimmer**
SHRINE AUDITORIUM
8/11
Hans Zimmer’s handful of shows in North America earlier this year — including the much-talked-about appearances at Coachella — were so well received that the award-winning composer has hit the road again for a solid month of live performances. Zimmer’s instantly recognizable scores for such films as the recent Dunkirk, Batman v. Superman, Interstellar, Inception, and The Da Vinci Code, to mention just a few, make his emotive, orchestral music accessible to audiences whose responses to the live experience have been visceral. Zimmer himself plays a multitude of instruments throughout the show, fitting in as one of the most dexterous musicians rather than a conductor. Custom lighting design and elaborate, original visuals complete the sensory experience, which is sure to leave attendees reeling. —Lily Moayeri

**Tracy Bryant, Matt Lamkin**
THE ECHO
8/11
Here are two local boys making good. Tracy Bryant is a founding member of the influential Echo Park band Corners, destined for a favorable place in history, but he’s making a little history on his own now, too. His recent “Parachute” 7-inch for Volar adds relentless, Wipers-style rhythm action (and alienation) to Rain Parade paisley-punk guitar. Matt Lamkin was the deadpan singer of much-missed Echo Park band The Soft Pack, and his Where I’m Matt solo LP, also for Volar last year, is a proudly idiosyncratic personality piece that comes off like a Psychedelic Furs B-sides compilation as recorded by R. Stevie Moore on a beach in Mexico. (Where it sorta was recorded, actually.) With the mysterious Vanilla from Anaheim and committed Clean fans Smoke-screen.

**Sat 8/12**

**The B-52s**
PERSHING SQUARE
8/12
In 1979, after their first show at a Valentine’s party, The B-52s continue to be an unashamedly fun, energetic band in concert. They’re still fronted by a triumvirate of three distinctively spacey and charismatic vocalists — with Fred Schneider’s punky, nasal barking contrasting the serene, otherworldly keening of Cindy Wilson and Kate Pierson — but much of their onstage power comes from guitarist Keith Strickland. When Cindy’s guitarist-brother Ricky Wilson — the architect of the Athens, Georgia, group’s stop-and-start, funky sound — died in 1985, founding drummer Strickland moved over to guitar and became the primary composer of The B-52s’ music. It’s a shame that they haven’t released a new album since 2008’s Fplements, an underrated assortment of clever, catchy tunes such as “Juliet of the Spirits” and “Love in the Year 3000.” —Falling James

**Deep Purple, Alice Cooper, Edgar Winter**
@ GREEK THEATRE
8/12
Here’s a classic-rock bill that looks great on paper, but how much do these performers have left these days? While vaguely implying that this might be their last tour, Deep Purple sound surprisingly assured and momentous on their most recent studio release, Infinite, with longtime vocalist Ian Gillan surveying a semi-apocalyptic landscape of Roger Glover’s rumbling bass, Ian Paice’s almost stately demarcations of cymbals and snare, Steve Morse’s hard guitar riffs and Don Airey’s cycling keyboards. Alice Cooper has had only a fluidly engaging solo career since leaving behind his original backup group in the mid-1970s, but there are encouraging signs of his old seedy allure on new record Paranormal, which features a couple of intriguing tracks with his early bandmates. Edgar Winter, meanwhile, remains a reliably flashy and dexterous keyboardist. —Falling James

**Mon 8/14**

**The Alarm**
@ THE ROSE
8/14
Welsh new-wave band The Alarm formed as The Trolls in 1978, but it was a wise name change and the masterpiece Declaration, their 1984 debut album featuring single “Sixty Eight Guns,” that put them on the musical map. Commercially, it didn’t really get any better than that for main man Mike Peters, but The Alarm are still around and he continues to have his fun. In 2004, Peters successfully gate-crashed the British singles chart with a song credited to The Poppy Fields — in fact, Alarm recordings lipsynched by teen boys. Having proven beyond doubt that ageism is rampant in the music industry, Peters has gone back to touring with The Alarm, pulling a set list from a 40-year career. Also Wednesday, Aug. 16, at the Coach House and Thursday, Aug. 17, at the Canyon Club.

—Brett Callwood

**Incubus**
@ HOLLYWOOD BOWL
8/14
If nu-metal was a full sleeve tattoo, Incubus have been an ever-changing henna design. While they’ve counted the likes of Korn and Limp Bizkit as tourmates, the Calabasas quintet have made a career out of being mild-mannered misfits with sufficient musicality to survive in genre-ambiguous black holes that would swallow lesser bands whole. Since their Chili Peppers-y early-’90s beginnings, they’ve traversed alt-metal, rap-rock, post-grunge and even trip-hop, earning massive commercial success despite undulating critical response. While many of their peers were confrontational, Incubus soon added contemplative introspection to their emotional repertoire, with pinup frontman Brandon Boyd eloquently exploring himself on turn-of-the-millennium mega-hits like “Drive” and “Wish You Were Here.” Nonetheless, their live shows still whip up some good-natured audience-shoulder-banging, with spunky beats, expansive hooks and Boyd’s semi-shamanic stage persona. —Paul Rogers
Kavita Shah
@ BLUEWHALE
This New York native of Indian heritage majored in Latin American studies at Harvard, spending a portion of her college career living in Brazil and Peru. She is fluent in Spanish, Portuguese and French, but Kavita Shah is especially eloquent in the American language of jazz. Having sung in Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center in an all-star youth choir, Shah could never quite shake the music bug, ultimately plunging into it headlong and pairing her real-world knowledge with sage mentorship from masters including Sheila Jordan, Greg Osby and Lionel Loueke, who produced her debut album. That result, Visions, is a multicultural palette of sounds, textures, groove and language, led by Shah's masterful, delightful singing throughout, a triumph for the future of jazz and the American ideal. Shah's high-powered band includes pianist Julian Shore, bassist François Moutin and drummer Ferenc Nemeth. —Gary Fukushima

Pokey LaFarge
@ THE TROUBADOUR
At 34, Pokey LaFarge is part of a burgeoning movement of songwriters crafting original work influenced by the musical traditions of our country's rich cultural history. What makes LaFarge a singular presence among Americana artists is that while the subgenre is often associated with bluegrass- and folk-flavored roots sounds, LaFarge's music is equally infused with the style and spirit of country blues, Western swing and ragtime jazz. The resulting phenomena are eight studio albums and a live show that resembles the O Brother, Where Art Thou? soundtrack as performed by Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band. LaFarge's latest album, the freshly released Manic Revelations, perfectly encapsulates his signature hootenanny fervor, most notably on the opening track "Riot in the Streets." Also Wednesday, Aug. 16. —Jackson Truax

Royal Blood
@ THE WILTERN
One's a bit taken aback by the massive attack Brighton boys Royal Blood create together, seeing as how it's just two fellas making all the noise. Bassist-vocalist Mike Kerr, drummer Ben Thatcher and no bloody guitarist made a sizable splash with their eponymous 2014 debut album, which hit No. 1 in the U.K. charts and Top 20 in 12 countries, to date selling more than a million copies and copping a BRIT Award for Best British Band in 2015. Boasting superbly melodic songs and their trademarked full-spectrum sound — augmented with Kerr’s array of effects on his bass and Thatcher’s small collection of triggers/samplers, though equally indebted to the explosive dynamic these two generate when in close proximity to each other — their recent follow-up, How Did We Get So Dark?, again showcases the band’s tunefully thunderous joy. —John Payne

Go Betty Go, The Two Tens, The Katellas
@ THE SATELLITE
Even at their fastest and most aggressive, Go Betty Go always crank out their songs with an uplifting sense of joy. Much of that spirit comes from the way that singer Nicolette Vilar contrasts the relentless buzz of Betty Cisneros’ guitar with a cheerily poppy melodicism — but the entire group, which includes Vilar’s sister Aixa (drums) and Michelle Rangel (bass), pound out tracks from their 2015 EP, Reboot, with an infectious energy. Local duo The Two Tens celebrate the release of their sophomore album, On Repeat, a 14-song set that ranges from the hard-driving, straight-ahead punk intensity of the title track to Adam Bones’ urgently romantic vocals and chiming power-pop guitars on “Keeping Hope Alive.” Make sure to arrive early for the juiced-up punk & roll of The Katellas. —Falling James

Warpaint
@ SANTA MONICA PIER
So many summer bookings in parks and other outdoor places tend to center on older, familiar classic-rock performers, tribute acts, soft-rocking jam bands and pop-reggae revivalists, so it will be refreshing to hear the invigorating and arty new sounds of Warpaint wafting over the roller coaster at the pier. The local quartet’s third album, Heads Up, is an often engrossing collision of Jenny Lee Lindberg’s intricately rooted bass lines, Stella Mozgawa’s post-punk drum patterns, and Emily Kokal’s and Theresa Wayman’s interwoven guitar riffs and languorous vocals. Tracks like the electronically-pumped “New Song” alternate with the moody, soothing dub dreaminess of “Whiteout” and the sparse echoes of “The Stall.” “Dre” is another shifting electronic soundscape filled with fog, whereas “Today Dear” is a stark acoustic idyll. —Falling James
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8/11: Jonny Lang
8/12: Nite Jewel
Geneva Jacuzzi, Harriet Brown
8/16: Neon Indian
8/18: Brazilian Girls
The Soft White Sixties
8/19: Jake Davis, Emily C. Browning, Elise Trouw
8/24: Tobacco
8/28: Mark Lanegan Band
8/29: San Cisco
8/30: Flthy Friends
8/31: sold out Thie Oh Sees
9/1: Hunny
9/2: Watch What Crappens
9/3: Kina Grannis
9/7: Doyle Bramhall II
9/8: D.D. Dumbo
9/9: Quicksand
9/12: Ian Hunter & The Rant Band
9/13: sold out Cigarettes After Sex
9/15: James Supercave + The Seshen
9/16: GoGo Penguin
9/17: Vanessa De Mata
9/19: Jojo Mayer /Nerve
9/21: sold out Kevin Morby
9/22: Deerhoof
9/23: Dan Croll
9/24: Swervedriver

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8/19: Deerhoof
8/21: Dan Croll
8/22: Swervedriver
8/23: sold out Kevin Morby
8/24: sold out Cigarettes After Sex
8/25: sold out James Supercave + The Seshen
8/26: GoGo Penguin
8/27: Vanessa De Mata
8/28: Jojo Mayer /Nerve
8/29: Kevin Morby
8/30: Deerhoof
8/31: Dan Croll
9/1: Swervedriver
9/2: sold out Kevin Morby
9/3: sold out Cigarettes After Sex
9/4: sold out James Supercave + The Seshen
9/6: GoGo Penguin
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9/28 - THE BARGAIN BASTARDS - 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
9/29 - THE POP Rocks - 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
9/30 - STEVE N. SONS - THE MARILYN YEARS 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
10/1 - THE BARGAIN BASTARDS - 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
10/2 - THE POP Rocks - 20TH ANNIVERSARY TOUR
Dancer, Dr. Doctor, Thu., Aug. 17, 8:30 p.m., $12.
Harmless, Wed., Aug. 16, 8:30 p.m., $12.
Mt. Joy, Avid
Tue., Aug. 15, 8:30 p.m., $8.
Ki: Theory, Cannons, Gems, Cassandra,
Sun., Aug. 13, 8 p.m., $8.
Brian Hill
Wave, Dasher, Rad Payoff, Clown Sounds, Sat., Aug. 12, 9 p.m.
The Neighborhood Thieves,
Black Widows, Mecolodiacs, Uncle Winkles, Trilobite,
Snowman, Natia, Mon., Aug. 14, 9:30 p.m., free & $5.
11, Cypress Moreno, Ralfy the Plug, Frosty the Caudle, Shiny Ribs, I See Hawks in L.A., Ruby Force,
Fri., Aug. 11, 8:30 p.m., $10 (see Music Pick).
Caleb Lamkin & the Confirmations, Vanilla, Smokescreens,
Monica. Dead Rock West, Fri., Aug. 11, 8 p.m., $20.
8 p.m., $12.
Mugen Hoso, Thu., Aug. 17, 8 p.m., $7.
Hardship Anchors, Sun., Aug. 13, 2 p.m., $15; The
Beach Dub Allstars, Thicker Than Thieves, Bodegas,
Fri., Aug. 11, 6:30 p.m., $10. Pontea, Thu., Aug. 17, 8 p.m., $10.
78, Thu., Aug. 17, 8 p.m., free.
30, Thu., Aug. 17, 8 p.m., $20.
James Manning, DW3, Ollie Gabriel, Evan Hawk,
Aug. 12, 9:30 p.m., TBA.
Pete Anderson,
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O-Town, Sat., Aug. 12, 9 p.m., $25.
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DANCE CLUBS
Hop Party, with Smiles Davis, DJ Cam Tang, DJ Stevie
7 p.m., $20.
2:30 p.m., $20; Incendio, David Correa, Sat., Aug. 12,
Fri., Aug. 11, 8 p.m., $15. The Licata Brothers, Chad
Ave., Altadena. Corrina Carter, Michael McNevin,
Pavilion Pasadena. See Music Pick.
Mon., Aug. 14, 8 p.m., $49.50-$179.50. The Forum.
8 p.m., free. Slap, Thu., Aug. 17, 9 p.m., free.
Joe Finkle & the 7/10 Splits, Wed., Aug. 16, 9 p.m.,
free. The Starlite Sisters, Tue., Aug. 15, 9 p.m., free.
The Deep Cuts, Sun., Aug. 13, 8 p.m., free.
Magnolia Blvd., Burbank. Eli Locke, Fri., Aug. 11, 9
p.m., $20. Benefit Barnhart Quintet, Fri., Aug. 11, 9 p.m., $20. Benefit
Corrina Carter, Michael McNevin, Pavilion Pasadena. See Music Pick.
At MacArthur Park, 2230 W. Sixth St.
8:30 p.m., $29-$72. Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave.
7:30 p.m., free. Levitt Pavilion at Pershing Square, 532
S. Olive St. See Music Pick.
8 p.m., $1-$154. Conductor Bramwell Tovey presides
over a program of music by George Gershwin and
Duke Ellington. Pianist Aaron Diehl steps up with
over a program of music by George Gershwin and
Duke Ellington. Pianist Aaron Diehl steps up with
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