Actor, restaurateur, drug counselor, even Rose Parade float adornment — at 73, Danny Trejo shows no signs of slowing down.
TYMINSKI
Southern Gothic
One of the most intriguing, atmospheric records of the year, the Vermont-born artist combines indie electronics with Americana melodies and Southern Gothic themes.

11/8
CD

YELAWOLF
Trial by Fire
One of the few rappers who can truly lay claim to having a style all their own, Yelawolf meshes country, hip-hop, rock, pop, and blues.

11/8
CD

OPEN MIKE EAGLE
Brick Body Kids Still Daydream
Combines dusty samples with spacey, dubby synth noises and Eagle’s laconic raps. The low-key atmosphere is enlivened by the power of Eagle’s wit and vivid imagination.

12/8
CD

QUEENS OF THE STONE AGE
Villains
A testament to the myriad pleasures of boogie rock, featuring 70s-influenced production courtesy of mega producer Mark Ronson.

13/8
CD

TURNOVER
Good Nature
Lush and poetic; veers far from Turnover’s earlier emo/punk tinged efforts. Hazy, wistful dream pop in the vein of Wild Nothing, Real Estate, or DIIV.

13/8
CD

SEAL
Standards
The Grammy-winning soul and R&B singer lends his lush voice to a strong set of jazz and swing standards, delivering accomplished versions of timeless tunes.

13/8
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SPOON
Hot Thoughts
Spoon at their best! With their ability to write songs that are not only catchy but compelling, Spoon stand tall amongst the indie rock herd.

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KATHARINE MCPHEE
I Fall In Love Too Easily
An album of romantic standards from the former American Idol contestant & chart-topping pop star, featuring classics, such as “Night and Day” and “I’ll Be Seeing You.”

13/8
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JACK JOHNSON
All The Light Above It Too
A characteristically smooth collection of love songs and political musings, this album offers a bit more seasoned brooding with his trademark laid-back melodies.

IBEYI
Ash
A mixture of IDM rhythms, jazzy instrumentation, and African-influenced harmonies, Ash takes bits and pieces of what came before and reassembles it into distinctly modern music.

SHAWN MENDES
Illuminate
With Mendes’ nimble vocals and nods to influences like John Mayer and Jason Mraz, the album mixes chill soul with lively numbers and romantic ballads.

HANS ZIMMER
Blade Runner
Precise, evocative, and truly spectacular, Hans Zimmer’s score for Blade Runner 2049 is a worthy mirror for this thoughtful, breathtaking film.

TAYLOR SWIFT
Reputation
Serving up lyrics that address lust, jealousy, and public squabbles, Swift shows off her hip-hop and R&B influences, embracing bass drops and aggressive beats.

CECILE MCLORIN SALVANT
Dreams And Daggers
McLorin Savant has a dazzling voice, a cool confidence, and an artistic bent in the tradition of classic jazz singers like Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, and Ella Fitzgerald.

Various Artists
BABY DRIVER (Music From Motion Picture)
Packed with 30 carefully curated tracks drawn from indie, punk, hip-hop, funk, power pop, soul, R&B, and jazz – almost every track is a classic.

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Open letter to our community:

We have made numerous missteps in the transition of new leadership at L.A. Weekly. We acknowledge it. We own it. We apologize for it.

Our missteps have allowed rumor, conjecture and misinformation to eclipse fact. False narratives have snowballed in part because we have not adequately provided our vision and plan for the Weekly’s future to the public.

Our plan is straightforward: We want to sustain the L.A. Weekly and help bring its message to more people.

We are committed to inclusion, diversity and, above all, a free and independent press.

The Myths & The Truth

Over the last week, there have been a flurry of stories from several media outlets perpetuating the false narrative that we purchased the Weekly to turn it into a right-wing propaganda machine. Nothing could be further from the truth.

The new ownership is made up of people from many different backgrounds: progressive, conservative, African-American, Asian, Persian, Latino, Caucasian, gay, straight, immigrant. We believe our diversity gives us strength.

We are working to create an Editorial Advisory Board made up of veteran progressive Angeleno journalists to ensure that the Weekly preserves its progressive voice. Several reports have inaccurately stated that new ownership fired nearly all staff members. The reality is the majority of L.A. Weekly’s staff remains in place.

We wish we could have saved the entire editorial staff, but the sad reality is that revenues have declined more than 50 percent over the past five years and the publication was going broke. The company wouldn’t have been able to afford all of its full-time employees and, at the rate revenues were declining, the paper would have had to eventually lay off all employees and close its doors. We aren’t leaner because we want to be—it’s because we have to be.

Unfortunately, this is an all-too-common theme in media today.

One of the untold stories about the internal workings of the Weekly over the last few years is that the vast majority of the stories and all of the photographs in the Weekly have come from freelancers. We want to increase opportunities for freelance writers and photographers in L.A. in order to get a broader viewpoint of our beautiful city.

We are going to do so by expanding the number of paid freelance writers and thus the number of paid freelance pieces.

Some are spreading the false notion that we do not want to pay freelancers. The reality is we will pay our writers and photographers. It is saddening to hear stories from freelancers who are threatened with professional damage or blacklisting if they continue to work with the Weekly. We understand that frustration exists, but attempting to tear down an institution like the L.A. Weekly in its 40th year only hurts our staff, those who write for the paper and the community we serve.

We would like to have more full-time staff. We believe that will eventually become a reality. First and foremost, we are working to bring on additional editing help.

We are already talking with IAMAW and we will sit down with them in the coming weeks. We fully intend to support our staff’s desire to unionize.

Moving Forward

We want to sustain the Weekly’s legacy by challenging the status quo, empowering the marginalized and going where no other media outlets will go – literally and figuratively. If you think about it, many of the things the Weekly advocated for 40 years ago at its inception are now mainstream. The question that guides us is: What are the issues we should cover today to help bring them into the mainstream 10, 20, 30 or 40 years from now?

We want to push boundaries. We want to challenge our readers and, at times, make them uncomfortable. We want to cover the underground movements. We want to be the go-to place for activities and events in the city. We want more food coverage, more music coverage, more arts coverage and more entertainment coverage. We want to further the Weekly as the hub of L.A. culture.

It’s frustrating that our launch has gotten off to a rough start, but we are committed to the community, the city and the amazing staff here at the Weekly whom we’ve been working alongside this past month.

It’s disheartening that our intentions for purchasing the Weekly have been misrepresented and that so much misinformation about who we are has been spread.

But our hope is to create an environment of transparency so that journalists throughout Los Angeles can report accurate information as we rebuild our relationship and continue the profound legacy of L.A. Weekly. We understand that trust must be earned, and we will work hard to earn that trust from our community.

Brian Calle, Publisher

and

David Welch, General Counsel

*This Letter has been edited from its original version to reflect the suspension of Hillel Aron
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01·01·18

MedMen
You’re watching drag queen superstars Thorgy Thor, Phi Phi O’Hara, Ivy Winters, Manila Minch, Needles, Jinkx Monsoon, Ginger Monahan and Peppermint at L.A. drag! parsley, the former queer character, includes “Don’t you know how to knock, phlegm wass?” UCB’s comedy show pays homage to the Christmas movie, with one picking up where the previous one left off. What happens to the characters, including neglected Kevin, is anybody’s guess. UCB, 5419 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., Dec. 23, 10:30 p.m.; $7. (323) 908-8702, sunset.ucbtheatre.com.

Where’s Kevin? John Hughes’ Home Alone is one of the essential holiday films, right up there with It’s a Wonderful Life, Miracle on 34th Street and Elf. No doubt you’ve mimicked Macaulay Culkin’s face-slapping shriek or recited some of the movie’s lines, including, “Don’t you know how to knock, phlegm wass?” UCB’s comedy show Improvised Home Alone pays homage to the story of a boy, who, after being abandoned by his big family on Christmas, fends off two bungling burglars. Co-hosted by Beth Appel and Gregory Wallace, three teams of 24 comedians each improvise one act of the movie, with one picking up where the previous one left off. What happens to the characters, including neglected Kevin, is anybody’s guess. UCB, 5419 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., Dec. 23, 10:30 p.m.; $7. (323) 908-8702, sunset.ucbtheatre.com.

Sister Babayan

HOLIDAYS/MUSIC

Sing Along With Bing

There’ll be no orchestra today — no conductor or onstage musicians or vocalists — at Disney Hall. Instead, the only singers in the building will be you and the rest of the audience at two screenings of the 1954 musical White Christmas. The film will be shown in high-definition, and armchair vocalists can sing along to the subtitled lyrics. The plot involves Army buddies (Bing Crosby and Danny Kaye), who have returned home from WWII in Europe and decide to put on a show to save their former general’s (Dean Jagger) inn in Vermont. Singer Rosemary Clooney, dancer Vera-Ellen and even future honorary mayor of Hollywood Johnny Grant are all on hand to belt out “Sisters,” “The Old Man,” the title song and other tunes from the film. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., Dec. 23, 3 & 8 p.m.; $33-$68. (323) 850-2000, laphil.com.

Falling James

SLIP ‘N’ SLIDE

With ice skating rinks becoming increasingly rare in Southern California, holiday pop-ups like the Rink are a godsend for those who miss their faraway wintry homes or just want to exercise muscles that don’t get much of a workout the rest of the year. Beautiful downtown Burbank holds this year’s winter blunderland — face down, ice skating is hard — with lessons for everyone, new brooms sweeping clean with...
Hollywood Curling’s Sunday sporty and invigorating curling classes, and bright blue Tommy the Reindeer Skating Aids to be worn by those who’d rather skate than die. At corner of Third Street and Orange Grove Avenue, Burbank; Fri.-Sat., 10 a.m.-11:30 p.m.; Sun.-Thu., 10 a.m.-10 p.m. (through Jan. 7). $10 unlimited skating ($6 skate rental). (818) 806-8551, facebook.com/rinkindowntownburbank. —David Cotner

Crosscultural Christmas
Seven local dance companies join music and choral groups in the lineup for this season’s three-hour Music Center Holiday Celebration. Not only is the concert free, parking is free, too. Sponsored by the County Board of Supervisors, the groups showcase the area’s diversity with dance from Hawaii, China, Korea, West Africa, Mexico and a Nutcracker that draws on Duke Ellington’s swing version of Tchaikovsky’s score. Dance troupes include Daniel Ho & Halau Keali‘i o Nalani, JC Culture Foundation, Jung Im Lee Korean Dance Academy, Korean American Youth Performing Artists (KAYPA), Le Ballet Dembaya, Pacifico Dance Company and City Ballet of L.A. Musical contributors include Harmonic Bronze Handbell Ensemble, the L.A. Sheriff’s Department Band and Mostly Kosher. The show also will be televised on KOCE-PBS SoCal. Music Center, Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Sun., Dec. 24, 3-6 p.m.; free. musiccenter.org. —Ann Haskins

Nu, You Couldn’t Meet Someone?
As the Society for Young Jewish Professionals enters its fourth decade of matchmaking for Jewish singles, this year’s 31st annual Matzo Ball promises to be its swankiest yet, with hundreds gathering to see if the new year holds companionship and love or still more crushing loneliness and grating parental scrutiny. This year’s ball happens at a more expansive locale, which by its nature offers up more secluded places to enjoy everything from chit-chat to a tête-à-tête. At the very least, it’ll be a welcome break from the traditional litany of Chinese food and old movies. The Spare Room (inside the Roosevelt Hotel), 7000 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., Dec. 24, 9 p.m.; $33. (212) 389-9922, matzoball.org/our_events/matzoball-los-angeles/. —David Cotner

Can’t Kill McClane
That attack on Christmas that people keep freaking out about actually already happened: twice! Revel in the adventures of off-duty cop John McClane in this double bill of improbably coincidental consecutive Christmas terrorist attacks, “Die Hard” and “Die Hard 2.” Whether it’s stopping terrorist thieves in Century City (you’ll never look at that skyscraper the same
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We’re excited to offer LA Weekly readers the opportunity to win a pair of tickets to The Original Misfits at The Forum 12/30! Enter to win now!

Enter to win at laweekly.com/free/theoriginalmisfits
way again) or aggressive mercenaries in Chicago (you’ll never look at actor William Sadler the same way again), McClane is the greatest estranged father just trying do the right thing and/or come home in time for Christmas ever committed to celluloid. New Beverly Cinema, 7165 Beverly Blvd., Fairfax; Sun., Dec. 24, 6:30 p.m.; $8. (323) 938-4038, thenewbev.com. —David Cotner

HOLIDAYS/FILM
If I Were a Pitch Man
Raise the roof with tonight’s 10th annual Fiddler on the Roof Sing-Along, a tradition — tradition! — at which you’ll sing all the catchy tunes from the 1971 Norman Jewison musical, including “Sunrise, Sunset” and “If I Were a Rich Man.” Set in a Russian hamlet, “Fiddler” tells the story of milkman Tevye (Topol) and his travails as the father of five troublesome daughters. You’ll also experience a trivia contest, prizes galore and a cavalcade of CZarist cosplay. Get your tickets before they sell out, or you’ll suffer. Oh, how you’ll suffer. Laemmle’s Ahrya Fine Arts, Royal, NoHo 7, Playhouse, Town Center 5 and Claremont 5; Sun., Dec. 24, 7:30 p.m.; $18, $15 students & seniors. (310) 478-1041, laemmle.com/films/7698. —David Cotner

COMEDY
National Treasure
Throw all your other holiday party invites away, because the Merry Nic Cage and a Nic Cage New Year Party is going to surpass them all, forever, times infinity. While that might seem over-the-top, so is Nicolas Cage. This year’s exclusive pathway to Cage consciousness is yours to trod as he (played in this incarnation by comedian Kenny Stevenson) throws a party with all manner of assorted glitterati and maniacs to gab, gossip and otherwise let you in on Hollywood secrets that are ultimately totally worthless except for the fact that they are Nic Cage–adjacent. UCB Franklin, 5919 Franklin Ave., Hollywood Hills; Tue., Dec. 26, 9:30 p.m.; $8.50. (323) 908-8702, franklin.ucbtheatre.com. —David Cotner

HOLIDAYS/STAGE
Pagan Goodness
The old gods aren’t dead — and the Winter Solstice Pagan Holiday Show will prove it. It’s a show in which Aphrodite and Dionysus (gods of love and theater, respectively) gather at what’s left of their palace on Mount Olympus to honor religions throughout the history of human civilization — even the ones no one knows about yet. A cast of magicians, aerialists, comedians and oracles will take you back to a time without lousy cartoons or enforced holiday cheer; a time in which just surviving another winter was an almost godlike accomplishment. The Actors’ Gang Theater, 1st Substation, 9070 Venice Blvd., Culver City; Thu., Dec. 28, 8 p.m. (Thu.-Sat., 8 p.m., thru Jan. 15); $20-$35. (310) 838-4264, theactorsgang.com. —David Cotner

HOLIDAYS/FILM
Fun for the Whole Family
Instead of megaplexes showing the latest Disney or Pixar films, the Alex Film Society’s seventh annual Greatest Cartoons Ever offers kids an alternative: vintage animation. Co-hosted by animation director Frank Gladstone and author/cartoon authority Jerry Beck, the theatre’s holiday tradition screens nearly a dozen classic shorts from Disney, MGM and Warner Bros. from the ’30s to the ’50s, featuring Mickey, Superman, Popeye, Goofy and Donald Duck. The schedule includes 1942’s Horton Hatches the Egg, based on the Dr. Seuss story, and 1946’s All the Cats Join In, set to a swing score by Benny Goodman & His Orchestra, among others. Alex Theatre, 216 N. Brand Blvd., Glendale; Tue., Dec. 26, 2 & 7 p.m.; $15, $12 seniors, students & children. (818) 243-2539, alexetheatre.org. —Siran Babayan

Kwanzaa
Ready to Rap
Kick off this year’s week of Kwanzaa festivities with A Kwanzaa Rap Battle, your comedy gateway into a holiday that’s more about peace, love and understanding than about insults that really hit home. From umoja (unity) to ujamaa (cooperative economics) to imani (faith), hosts Zora Bikangaga and Shaun Fisher take those positive principles, fold them into a night of laughs writ large across the backdrop of interpersonal understanding really puts everything into proper perspective this time of year. UCB Franklin, 5919 Franklin Ave., Hollywood Hills; Tue., Dec. 26, 9:30 p.m.; $8.50. (323) 908-8702, franklin.ucbtheatre.com. —David Cotner

INTERACTIVE ART
Sugar Overload
Candytopia is the energetically ecstatic vision of master sweets fabricator Zac Hartog and Jackie Sorkin, host of TLC’s Candy Queen. An interactive exhibition of all things confectionery, remade into more than a dozen surrealistic dreamscapes, it includes everything from a marshmallow tsunami to flying unicorn pigs to a mirror moat guarded by a garigantuan candy dragon. Admittedly an incredibly tantalizing bummer for diabetics and those with food allergies, Candytopia exists as a personal, insistently imaginative tribute to the sweet little things in life — some of which you can take home as souvenirs. L.A. Hangar Studios, 3627 Medford St., Boyle Heights; Wed., Dec. 27, 11 a.m.-8:30 p.m. (daily through March 15); $30, $23 ages 4-12, free 3 & under. (888) 718-4253, candytopia.com. —David Cotner

COMEDY
The Actors’ Gang Theater, 1st Substation, 9070 Venice Blvd., Culver City; Thu., Dec. 28, 8 p.m. (Thu.-Sat., 8 p.m., thru Jan. 15); $20-$35. (310) 838-4264, theactorsgang.com. —David Cotner

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Most people in their 70s are enjoying their retirement, reading a book at home or relaxing at a quiet beach. Not Danny Trejo, who at 73 is still a badass, with a thriving acting career in film and television as well as six restaurants and a music label. In his spare time, Trejo is also a drug intervention counselor and is involved in numerous charities.

With such a busy schedule, you might think Trejo has drunk from the fountain of youth. In an exclusive interview with L.A. Weekly at the opening of his latest cantina/doughnut shop in Woodland Hills, he shared his secret for a healthy life.

“I feel great. I lift light weights, bench-press arms and legs and walk a lot,” he says. “I took a lot of carbs out of my diet and eliminated sugar. I like juicing vegetables. ... I love celery and carrots. Throw an apple in there for sweetness. But no kale! I hate it!”

“In fact, next I want to create an energy drink!” the L.A. native quips.

Trejo, who has appeared in more than 300 movies, is best known for roles in films such as Machete, Desperado and Spy Kids, all directed by Robert Rodriguez.

“I’ve been in so many, I don’t even know the names of them!” Trejo jokes. “I just read the scripts on the plane.”

Louis Iga, who recently directed Trejo in Murder in the Woods, calls the experience “a dream come true.”

“Danny is truly an artist and master of his craft,” Iga says. “You would never believe he is the villain he often portrays in films when you meet him in person. He is the nicest person in the world and is amazing to work with. His entrepreneurship, passion for growth and perseverance inspires me and gives me the confidence that hard work pays off.”

Next up for Trejo: a movie called The House Next Door. “It’s about vampires, with Mike Epps and Katt Williams and it is funnier than hell,” Trejo says excitedly. He also has a recurring role on The Flash, frequently is on Family Guy, hosts El Rey’s Man at Arms and just did an episode of Brooklyn Nine-Nine.

Not bad for a guy who once played Florence Henderson in a Snickers commercial.

Making bank

Trejo’s distinctive visage could well be one of the main reasons for the remarkable growth of his restaurant empire, which includes an ancillary business selling an assortment of Trejo-branded merchandise.

“Danny has a face that may scare grown men, but we made our Trejo’s Coffee and Donuts building pink to show his inner beauty,” co-owner Jeff Geordino says. “That irony is what makes us real.”

In a rather fickle L.A. foodie scene, Trejo’s growth is impressive.

From 2016 to the end of 2017, revenue from Trejo’s restaurants has quadrupled, Geordino notes. “We want to run with that momentum over the next few years and focus on bringing Danny’s branded merchandise to the mass market through retail. Things like hot sauce, beer and tortilla chips.”

From the day the restaurant
Danny Trejo is very accessible to his fans.

“I’ve been in so many (movies), I don’t even know the names of them! I just read the scripts on the plane.” —Danny Trejo

opened, people would steal the hot sauce from the table.

“I was angry, but Danny said every time they open their refrig..”

If you are a celeb...

“when asked why his businesses have had such success, Trejo says, “I think celebrity think they can just put their name on something because of their name and it will work. It will work once, because a fan will think they can just put their name on something because of their name and it will work.”

There are always thinking about ways to expand the menu. We’ll sit together and see what’s doing well,” Trejo says.

“Danny Trejo is very accessible to his fans.”

“Keeping it in the family
For all his acting, Trejo’s favorite role has been as devoted dad to his children.

“My son, Gilbert, just wrote and will be directing a script and I am acting in it, which has been an incredible experience,” Trejo says. Called From a Son, “It’s partly based on our family’s history with addiction.”

Trejo had an epiphany working with his son, “I always thought my dad hated me, as he was always angry with me. But after working on this film, I didn’t really realize that was my dad’s defense against me. The pain a parent feels when their kid is using drugs is unbelievable. You wake up in cold sweats thinking, ‘is he dead?’ Parents who have waited up for their kids will definitely understand this film.”

Education is an important mandate for Trejo. “When I was at San Quentin Prison, I was turned down for a job in the laundry because I didn’t have a high school diploma,” he says. “Education is truly the key to anything you want to do.”

As a big Los Angeles Rams fan, Trejo has a Christmas wish. “I would love to open a Trejo’s Cantina in their new stadium! It would be amazing to see my team go to the Super Bowl. And I would love the Rams to go to the Super Bowl! They are really doing great!”

Dinner and full bar menu at locations in Hollywood and Pasadena. “Along with co-owners Ash Shah and Jeff [Geordino], we are always thinking about ways to expand the menu. We’ll sit together and see what’s going well,” Trejo says.

“Trejo is a straight shooter, appreciating people who speak candidly.”

“I will bring in a few friends or family and have them order different items on the menu, and ask for their feedback. I never got one complaint. And they are not ‘yes’ people, they would tell me if this sucked! However, my daughter once said she didn’t like the horchata. I asked her what was wrong and she said it didn’t taste right. So she actually went to the kitchen to improve it. And now it’s delicious!”

“The more you know
Trejo’s Tacos recently opened at USC. “I’m so glad we’re opening here at USC Village in South L.A.,” Trejo says. “I was raised all over Los Angeles. I used to ride the streetcars around Hoover and Jefferson, so it really feels like home.”

Education is an important mandate for Trejo. “When I was at San Quentin Prison,
Gilbert has been clean for four years and Trejo is “very grateful” for his son’s sobriety.

“He’s great to be around. He will help me with the restaurant business and often goes on set with me as my assistant when I have to travel. I hate when people are in my trailer but I don’t mind him, as he is not intrusive at all and he knows whatever I need. He gets to meet different directors, and I love having him with me,” Trejo says.

Because of their closeness, father and son have learned many life lessons from each other.

“What I’ve learned from my son, more than anything, is to admit that he’s smarter than me. It’s really hard for a parent to do that,” Trejo says. “In the past 15 years, there’s no question that I can’t ask my son that he won’t know! Kids are becoming a lot more advanced and we have to listen to them.”

In being around his father, Gilbert has learned to be flexible and open, and to never make assumptions.

“It doesn’t matter what somebody’s preconceived notions about you is, it’s completely up to you to set their impressions of you. It doesn’t matter if somebody hears or thinks that, or makes up this huge assumption about who you are as a person — what you bring into the situation is representative of yourself,” Gilbert says.

Gilbert has seen many people make assumptions about his dad and his many tattoos.

“All of that is left shattered on the ground the minute he smiles, reaches out and shakes their hand,” Gilbert says. “To me that’s a really important lesson in life: You meet someone briefly and they have this idea of who you are going to be. ... That doesn’t have to pigeonhole you.”

Giving back

While he makes thousands of dollars acting, Trejo is just as happy giving food away to the homeless, helping veterans in need, and rescuing animals and just about anyone in need of assistance.

“I’m happiest when I can be of service. To be able to give back is very important. I live a blessed life.”

Trejo will be on a float with his rescue dogs for Pasadena’s Tournament of Roses parade as a guest of the Lucy Pet Foundation. The float, called Paws for Life, focuses on animals that have saved or enhanced human life. It will feature four soldiers in uniform on each side of the float with their dogs who have suffered from PTSD.

“This is the biggest honor I have ever had,” Trejo says. “It’s such a unique experience. I have the girls from my music label practicing Christmas carols in the backyard for this. We are all so excited.”

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THE BEST FOOD TRENDS OF 2017
Chinese food on the Westside — good Chinese food — and classic pies lead list

BY KAYVAN GABBAY

This has surely been a stellar year for L.A.’s restaurants, with the high-profile openings of not one but two tasting-menu-only restaurants, Vespertine and Dialogue, from acclaimed, trailblazing chefs. 2017 also has seen the rise of some wonderful trends affecting the diverse dining scene that makes up Los Angeles. For instance, 2017 saw the precipitous increase in quality Chinese restaurants in the Westside, which amounts to an incredible sea change from years before. The proliferation of gourmet Middle Eastern food is something that restaurant patrons were truly looking forward, as proved by the huge crowds flocking to upscale new restaurants such as Kismet and Mh Zh.

For decades, it truly seemed as if a craving for authentic Chinese cuisine meant an arduous pilgrimage (in interminable Los Angeles traffic, no less) to the San Gabriel Valley, the true Chinatown of Los Angeles, situated roughly 15 miles east of downtown. The Westside was littered with saccharinely sweet kung pao chicken and gloppy moo shu pork, but authenticity was clearly missing. However, this year saw a tidal change for Chinese food on the Westside. Many SGV-based chains finally made it out West. Popcorn Chicken in West L.A. opened, serving a fine Taiwanese beef noodle soup with a deeply soulful, mahogany-hued broth in addition to a variety of Taiwanese bar snacks. The nearby Tasty Noodle House in Sawtelle (also with a number of existing SGV locations) quietly opened recently, doling out super flaky scallion pancakes, greaseless fried pork buns and the eponymous homemade noodles. In tony Beverly Hills, Little Highness Bao has been serving steamed pork bao (overstuffed buns) as well as juicy yet delicate xiao long bao — the soup dumplings prized by diehard connoisseurs of the genre. These days Chinese on the Westside is no longer merely a laughable afterthought.

NFL tailgating

Without a professional football team to call their own for more than two decades (the sheer horror!), Los Angeles’ avid sports fans might have truly missed watching their games live. But for us hearty eaters, we missed just one thing: tailgating. Now that L.A. is the proud owner of not one but two NFL teams — the Chargers and the Rams — tailgating is officially back in the cards. Who can resist a quarter-pound bratwurst fresh off the Weber grill, or maybe four, while pouring down a six-pack of Budweiser on a warm, buoyant, all too leisurely Sunday afternoon in the height of fall football? Or perhaps a platter of griddled cheeseburgers passed among some of your closest friends, speaking to the true communal connection of why you’re there in the first place? Devouring some hearty, stick-to-your-ribs grub while leaning against the back of your battered F-550 must surely be as American as apple pie (though...
Firestone Walker Brewing Company’s Propagator pilot R&D brewhouse in Venice is the place for beer drinkers and locals to dine, hang out and sip on Firestone Walker’s latest creations.

The Propagator is the third location from Firestone Walker — which was created by brother-in-laws, David Walker (aka the Lion on the logo) and Adam Firestone (aka the Bear) — and it’s a unique experience from start to finish. Unlike the two other locations (the main brewery in Paso Robles and the Barrelworks wild ales facility in Buellton), The Propagator is a state-of-the-art small scale Kaspar Schulz brewhouse that operates as a hub of experimentation, setting the pace for what is next from Firestone Walker. Most recently, it has been the driver behind the brewery’s new Leo v. Ursus chronology of beers, as well as the Generation 1 IPA. In addition to Firestone Walker favorites, The Propagator offers one-off beers, and experimental beers that may or may not make it into the brand’s official lineup. The adjoining restaurant and bar feature pizzas (we’d try the Rustica Carnè complete with Italian sausage, brisket, pepperoni and mozzarella), burgers, tacos (like the Drunken Cauliflower) and of course desserts (like a seasonal berry cheesecake). Even better — at least in our opinion — is that The Propagator has a Beer Brunch that is to die for. It features two signature beers, as well as coffee and OJ, and lots of delicious brunch food options. Deep fried bacon PB&J anyone? Yes, it’s a real thing, and you need it in your life. What are you waiting for? The Propagator is calling and you should listen… drink up!
truth to tell, you’re more likely to be leaning against the trunk of your late-model Lexus. We have gone without an NFL tailgate for far too long.

Artisanal handmade pasta

In years past, even the top-echelon temples to Italian cuisine would import their pasta from Italy. These days preeminent chefs have taken to making their pastas the painstaking, laborious way: from scratch. At his immensely popular Felix, chef Evan Funke (late of Rustic Canyon and the now-defunct Bucato) pays artisanal devotion to handcrafting fresh pasta evocative of Italy on a daily basis in his on-site pasta laboratory. The Lilliputian, homespun, no-frills Pasta Sisters offers wonderful pasta made in-house by the owner’s mother (they hail from Padua) at more than reasonable made in-house by the owner’s mother (they hail from Padua) at more than reasonable prices, from simple tagliatelle Bolognese to the luxurious spaghetti bottarga (dried mullet roe). Uovo (by the successful proprietors of the Sugarfish/Kazunori empire) offers wonderful pasta in simple counter-service digs. These chefs/proprietors are definitely onto something — for decades we’ve been hankering and hungering for fresh handmade pastas made with fresh ingredients firmly situated in the locavore movement. And they delivered deliciously.

Classic pies

Perhaps nothing is as deeply satisfying and comforting as a slice of pie. Iconic West L.A. institution the Apple Pan (c. 1947) has been serving its justly famous banana cream pie and homey apple pie at its old-fashioned U-shaped counter for going on a half-century. (Caveat emptor: The pies are even better than the cheeseburgers.) Pasadena’s Pie n’ Burger also serves up comforting pies, including a stellar butterscotch pie. It’s only now, decades later, that we have a resurgent influx of classic pies in novel surroundings. The modern, minimalist Hi Ho Cheeseburger in Santa Monica (once again by the Sugarfish proprietors) offers a refreshingly light slice of blissfully not too sweet banana cream pie topped with what must be an quarter-inch-thick layer of softly whipped cream. This pie slice would not be out of place in the platonic ideal of a Midwestern diner of your gastronomic dreams. Across town, the Filipino-influenced Sari Sari Store, a

humble food stall located in historic Grand Central Market, came up with its rendition of buko pie: suave coconut custard loaded with chips of real, young coconut layered on top of a fendishly buttery crust. It’s just the best thing on the menu and quite possibly even more satisfying than a slab of old-fashioned coconut cream pie.

Middle Eastern cuisine

When you think of Middle Eastern food, usually what comes to mind are the prosaic falafel, hummus and shwarma. But there’s so much more to the cuisine than its most accessible eats. How could a culture going back thousands upon thousands of years not contain a bounty of culinary riches? Fast-forward to 2017, and L.A. has become a perpetual hot bed of gourmet Middle Eastern cuisine. Mh Zh (pronounced “meh moh”) has taken a predominantly Yotam Ottolenghi-inspired spin on primarily Israeli vegetarian food, with a heavy emphasis on organic, fresh herbs including a simply roasted potato, split in half, slicked with olive oil, salt and pepper. The successful innovation, laid-back atmosphere

and reasonable prices have drawn hordes of passionate, adventurous diners to this nondescript corner of Silver Lake. Suffice to say, hourlong waits are the norm. The aesthetically minimalist Kismet takes an upscale spin on the cuisine, with a lavish $80 rabbit spread for two in addition to sesame-inflected, fluffy Persian barbari bread served with tart house-made labneh (a dip that finds itself somewhere between yogurt and cheese). Farmers market produces dots most of the menu. With its warm, solicitous service and comfy surroundings you can see why Kismet is one of the toughest reservations around. Mizizla (formerly Simon’s Cafe) continues the fine tradition of home-style Moroccan cuisine with contemporary touches. Highlights include braised lamb tagine in a rustic earthenware pot or “Simon’s Famous,” coarsely ground beef and lamb merguez sausages tinged bright red with chili. These restaurants are merely a few examples of the continuous strides made in developing and innovating delicious updates to an ancient food that's less vital cuisine.

For the worst food trends of 2017, please go to laweekly.com.
In a sea of comedians who sport faded black T-shirts and ill-fitting jeans, Argus Hamilton stands out like a hajib at a Trump rally. He’s dressed to the nines in a tailored cream suit, button-up shirt and tie. Taking the stage with the gait of a well-born Southern gentleman, he looks more likely to deliver a sermon than a set.

Chances are, if you’ve been to the Comedy Store in the last 41 years, you’ve seen Hamilton. These days, he’s recognizable as the out-of-place, wizened stand-up comic who shouldn’t be able to relate to the millennial customers — but never fails to. You may have wondered, “How did this guy manage to get on the same bill as Joe Rogan and Ali Wong?”

But he didn’t break into their world; they invaded his. Like a prehistoric fish still swimming around the ocean today, Hamilton has survived the varied conditions from the beginning of (comedy’s) time.

Tonight’s show is sold out because of Rogan. The young, rowdy crowd looks skeptical of the elderly man, square by Rogan. The young, rowdy crowd looks at the beginning of (comedy’s) time.

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She Won’t Grow Up

Now or Neverland explores the psychological contradictions of victims of child abuse

By Bill Raden

Seeing childhood fantasy and its flights of imagination as a refuge from the real-world horrors of the adult world is a trope as old as children’s literature. But can it also be a fatal trap? That’s the question posed by Now or Neverland, playwright April Morrow’s harrowing and somewhat perplexing blend of Peter Pan and abject familial violence, now having its world premiere at Loft Ensemble.

Madiylin Sweeten is 17-year-old Nora, a high school outcast, whose odd manner has made her the target of a sadistic clique of bullying students who go by names like Curly (Dantz Debusk), Nibs (Sarah Nilsen) and Tootles (Joe Bills). Plagued by their merciless hazing, Nora’s only safe haven is the school library and the protection of its nurturing librarian, Mrs. Darling (Jennifer DeRosa).

But the librarian can do little to help the girl with an even more alarming predicament: Nora is also under assault by the inopportune appearances of Peter (Marc Leclerc), an impishly bedeviling figment of her imagination. In the midst of her studies — and increasingly in full view of fellow students and teachers — Peter’s disruptive manifestations are aimed at persuading Nora to return with him to Neverland, the fantasy world that Nora constructed as a child, using J.M. Barrie’s characters and adventures as a retreat from the unimaginably shocking traumas of what is revealed as a violently abusive home life. Now, ironically on the cusp of adulthood, her fantasies return like so many bad acid flashbacks to threaten her very grip on reality.

Morrow is not the first to have seen darker and more ominous gleanings in Barrie’s beloved allegory about the loss of childhood and the horror of growing up. Michael Luber’s Gothic-tinged Peter Pan: The Boy Who Hated Mothers, which played at the Blank Theatre in 2013, incorporated the tragic death of a child from the real-life family that served as the wellspring for Barrie’s gloomier, not-yet-Disneyfied 1904 play. Now or Neverland takes the tale into even more sordid terrain by seizing on the existential plight of Peter himself — a boy who not only wouldn’t grow up but who was effectively stranded in perennial pre-adolescence by a mother who literally barred the window against his return from his magical flights of fantasy — as the frame for its exploration of the confusion and psychological contradictions faced by victims of child abuse.

Morrow is most convincing when it comes to schematizing the parallels between Peter Pan and the emotional straits of a child caught between her loyalty to an abusive relative and her own mental and physical survival. The play is less plausible when it comes to its understanding of how public officials monitor and respond to students who exhibit potential signs of battering. Rather than picking up the phone and calling children’s services, for example, the teachers in Now or Neverland risibly take Nora at her word that a decade of broken bones and gruesome bruises on her confused face are the result of “softball practice.” The town’s juvenile cops prove just as unresponsive and gullible.

More unwieldy, however, is the poetic short circuit between the sobering clinical and forensic realities of child abuse and the whimsicality of director Bree Pavey’s colorfully anticipic staging (anchored by Sweeten and Joe Bills’ emblematic scenic paintings). Given the extremity of Nora’s emotional turmoil — a psychosis that includes schizophrenic-like arguments with unseen voices — and the girl’s exasperating refusal to accept help when it is finally offered, the choice to project her Neverland fantasies in more or less conventional children’s theater terms rather than as something more grotesquely distorted and psychosexually foreboding might be Now or Neverland’s most egregious theatrical missed opportunity.

Nevertheless, Sweeten manages to hold her own in a persuasive portrayal of what it means for a young girl to be hopelessly trapped in the most severe state of traumatic extremis. Leclerc likewise stands out, both for his athletic prowess as Peter Pan and as Nora’s protective but fatalistic older brother. (Leclerc also is credited for the production’s imaginatively choreographed and rhythmic, dancelike fight sequences, which emerge as a highpoint of the evening.) Jared Wilson, who is also fine doubling as the play’s Captain Hook, provides riveting support as Nora’s alcoholic and deeply conflicted abuser-dad.

Now or Neverland | Loft Ensemble Theater, 13442 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks | Through Jan. 28 | (818) 616-3150 | loftensemble.org

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disCOVERS, once he gets small, that a big little house filled with nothing gets pretty lonely. And then, after attending a Euro-glam molly party with a neighbor (Christoph Waltz), who is much more interesting than he, our naïf finally notices the immigrant cleaning crews who mop up the messes made by the dome’s happy buyers. The plot contrives … much too slowly — to open our hero’s eyes, to reveal to him the persistence of inequality, to teach him a new selflessness. But this is where the movie fails, miserably so. Any thinking person watching Downsizing is 10 steps ahead of Damon’s blinkered schlub, and watching him piece together the bare facts about how this future America works — and how our America works today — makes for a frustrating sit. The film’s lead is far and away its least interesting character, and Damon dialed back every watt of his charisma or wit.

As Downsizing wears on — and I do mean wears — what becomes dismally apparent is that Payne and his co-writer, Jim Taylor, have made a mistake quite like that of the tiny people they’re parodying. They’ve not brought fresh assumptions to a new age. They (or their producers and financiers) seem still to believe that the only way this story can connect with audiences is if it’s another Story of a White Dude Played by a Celebrity. At the midway point, they introduce a potentially fascinating new character, Hong Chau’s Ngoc Lan Tran, a Vietnamese dissident whose government shrank her. Now she works as a cleaning woman, living a long bus ride from the dome’s heart, in a tiny slum, where she treats the less able residents to leftover food from the Olive Gardens of the promised land.

Chau is the film’s most vital presence, and thoughtful Amour received and said, “You think you know what death is? It’s senseless and void of feeling or meaning.” Haneke imagines Georges not in his down-to-earth digs of Amour but in a cold, sterile mansion owned by his daughter, Anne (Isabelle Huppert), who’s struggling to keep the family’s construction firm afloat amid tragedies and a very bad accident. Anne’s brother, Thomas (Mathieu Kassovitz), and his wife, Anais (Laura Verlinden), also live in the mansion. Thomas’ daughter, Eve (Fantine Harduin), is constantly asked how old she is — 13 — and Haneke shows us through her eyes how adults seem obsessed with ages and numbers; magnifying a quotidian occurrence to examine its gravity has always been Haneke’s strength. When we ask someone’s age, are we not really asking them how close they are to death?

Georges and Eve are the heart and soul, the beginning and the end, of this story. They’re both acutely aware of how precious — and, conversely, futile — life is, while everyone else is going through its motions. The film drags when Haneke pulls focus to the other, duller characters, perhaps inevitably, as it seems his intention for them to lack interiority or thoughtful ness. — April Wolfe
HATE THE GAME, NOT THE PLAYERS

BY ALAN SCHERTUHL

It is unconscionable that as late as 2017, the United States has taken precisely zero substantive steps toward the prevention of Jumanji crises. These have come steadily, every couple of decades, since the 1981 publication of Chris Van Allsburg’s picture book, which warned — in glorious gray-toned, frozen-time illustrations that echo Pierre Roy in their domestic surrealism and anticipate Pixar in their plasticity — of the dangers of a vintage board game that could set rhinos and lions loose in your home. Then came the 1995 film, in which that game unleashes a zoo’s worth of jungle beasts to stampede through a mansion’s library and out into a cozy New Hampshire village, destroying books and lives and property values. And now, in 2017, the clausrophobic Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle reports that the terror has gone digital, no longer bound to last century’s game boards and dice rolls. As crowds gather this holiday season to behold the harrowing of yet another batch of young owds gather this holiday season to behold century’s game boards and dice rolls. As gone digital, no longer bound to last coo’s worth of jungle beasts to stampede zillion board game that could set rhinos and in theistic surrealism and anticipate Pixar...
HOSTILES Since his low-key, low-expectations debut, the Jeff Bridges diversion Crazy Heart (2009), Scott Cooper has specialized in thoughtful, actor-driven, for-adults Hollywood genre fare: a Deer Hunter-lite Rust Belt saga of brothers and blood (2013’s Out of the Furnace); a vicious tale of Boston gangsterdom (2015’s Black Mass). This is an underserved sphere. But Cooper has yet to elevate his sensibility beyond a choked, self-inhibiting intensity. Army Capt. Joseph Blocker (Christian Bale), the hero of Hostiles — which is set in 1892 — saddles him with a most unwelcome task: Escorting a cancer-stricken Cheyenne war chief, Yellow Hawk (Walsh Study), from New Mexico to the Valley of the Bears, in Montana. The threat of a slashed pension encourages Blocker to cooperate, but he’s enragèd by the assign- ment. Cooper at first leads viewers that the man hates Native Americans so much he would sooner shoot himself than sim- ply do his job. This surge of internal agony seems intended to pulse throughout the movie’s gruesome state-crossing trek, but Bale is much less caricature-adjective in the moments that hint at the monstrous Blocker’s possible redemption. The team comes across a homestead that has been attacked and burned nearby to ashes; inside is Rosalee Quaid (Rosamund Pike), the sole survivor, who still has two of her babies wrapped in blankets (“they’re sleeping,” she insists). Blocker tells his colleagues to quiet their footsteps in sleeping,” she insists). Blocker tells his

Chasing Coral In 2016, rising sea temperatures killed 22 percent of the Great Barrier Reef. In Jeff Orlowski’s Chasing Coral, scientist and reef specialist Charles Veron — born in 1945 — throws a pained look at a millenial marine biologist and signs, “I’m glad I’m not your age.” The oceans are warmer, of course, because our release of carbon dioxide has thickened the greenhouse gases in our at- mosphere, trapping heat that once would have bounced out into space. The seas absorb much of that heat, sparing those of us on land from radically increased temperatures — but not sparing coral, which after steeping in too-warm water blanches white and then dies. Rather than just a globe-trotting report on the crisis af- fecting our oceans, Chasing Coral is about an ad man’s efforts to find a way to focus us on the problem. Orloiwski (Chasing Ice) tracks a race to document rather than one of discovery, with a team of scientists and photographers traveling to endangered reefs to capture, with time-lapse cameras, the bleaching of coral and the death of the vibrant ecosystems that thrive around. (The scientists continually compare coral to forests and cities, the point being that marine life depends upon it — and our lives, too.) At first, Orlowski’s reliance on reality TV-style interviews about process and emotions struck me as indulgent pad- ding, but by film’s end their necessity is clear. We watch this crew emerge from the depths stunned and shaken, their hearts ripped open by their work: bearing witness to the slow death of a world. The film is a devastating success, moving in its beauty and wrenching when that beauty withers away. (Alan Scherstuhl)

 Downsizing' is enormously ambitious down its effort to find a way to focus us on the problem. Orlowski (Chasing Ice) tracks a race to document rather than one of discovery, with a team of scientists and photographers traveling to endangered reefs to capture, with time-lapse cameras, the bleaching of coral and the death of the vibrant ecosystems that thrive around it. (The scientists continually compare coral to forests and cities, the point being that marine life depends upon it — and our lives, too.) At first, Orlowski’s reliance on reality TV-style interviews about process and emotions struck me as indulgent padding, but by film’s end their necessity is clear. We watch this crew emerge from the depths stunned and shaken, their hearts ripped open by their work: bearing witness to the slow death of a world. The film is a devastating success, moving in its beauty and wrenching when that beauty withers away. (Alan Scherstuhl)

MOVIE Reviews

CALL ME BY YOUR NAME Luca Guadagnino’s romantic drama Call Me By Your Name sneaks up on you — by the end, it stings with the lingering ache of a late-summer sunburn. Adapted by James Ivory from Andre Aciman’s acclaimed novel, the story follows 17-year-old some- what introverted musician Elio (Timothée Chalamet) and 24-year-old doctoral student Oliver (Armie Hammer) through a long, frustrated summer of latent desire and thwarted courtship, culminating in a fervid if ephemeral affair. Guadagnino adeptly captures not just physicality of a burning love but also the emotional and intellectual components, and the film is all the more salient for careful, realistic interpretation. It’s the 1980s. Elio and his family reside in a palatial but rustic Italian villa in the northern countryside, where peaches and other succulent fruits dangle just within reach from the trees shading the family’s land. When Elio’s father’s new summer research assistant Oliver arrives, the sleepy house suddenly takes on new life. Elio, who slinks in and out of rooms to study the houseguest, at first takes offense at the new student’s “arrogant”

goodbyes (a casual “Later”) and then to his lingering hand on Elio’s bare back. But it’s really Elio’s burgeoning feelings for Oliver that allow these niggling annoy- ances to get at him. When Elio finally tells Oliver he’s attracted to him, the scene is grandly romantic, like a queer Casablanca or Last Year at Marienbad. When the men are together, endlessly teasing one anoth- er, the story sings and surprises. Chalamet is magnetic and unpredictable as Elio. It’s thrilling to watch this film and realize that the 21-year-old actor will be in many oth- ers. I’m looking forward to the era of the Chalamet leading man. (April Wolfe)

CHASING CORAL In 2016, rising sea temperatures killed 22 percent of the Great Barrier Reef. In Jeff Orlowski’s Chasing Coral, scientist and reef specialist Charles Veron — born in 1945 — throws a pained look at a millennial marine biologist and signs, “I’m glad I’m not your age.” The oceans are warmer, of course, because our release of carbon dioxide has thickened the greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, trapping heat that once would have bounced out into space. The seas absorb much of that heat, sparing those of us on land from radically increased temperatures — but not sparing coral, which after steeping in too-warm water blanches white and then dies. Rather than just a globe-trotting report on the crisis affecting our oceans, Chasing Coral is about an ad man’s efforts to find a way to focus us on the problem. Orlowski (Chasing Ice) tracks a race to document rather than one of discovery, with a team of scientists and photographers traveling to endangered reefs to capture, with time-lapse cameras, the bleaching of coral and the death of the vibrant ecosystems that thrive around. (The scientists continually compare coral to forests and cities, the point being that marine life depends upon it — and our lives, too.) At first, Orlowski’s reliance on reality TV-style interviews about process and emotions struck me as indulgent padding, but by film’s end their necessity is clear. We watch this crew emerge from the depths stunned and shaken, their hearts ripped open by their work: bearing witness to the slow death of a world. The film is a devastating success, moving in its beauty and wrenching when that beauty withers away. (Alan Scherstuhl)

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ANTE UP

Jessica Chastain takes the pot in Aaron Sorkin's poker drama Molly's Game

BY APRIL WOLFE

A ron Sorkin can be accused, rightly, of many things in his work — dialogue for the sake of dialogue, preposterous political diatribes, ceaseless nods to his hero Hunter S. Thompson — but appealing specifically to women is not one of them. Perhaps not until now, with his directorial feature debut, the "Poker Princess" biopic Molly's Game, starring Jessica Chastain. The film tells the true story of the rise and fall of the most powerful poker game runner in Los Angeles and New York — who happens to be a woman. Sorkin's politics and thoughts regarding women had been made public through the Sony hacks of 2014. An email he wrote to columnist Maureen Dowd, in part, read: "[T]he guy who wins the Oscar for Best Actor has a much higher bar to clear than the woman who wins Best Actress. Cate Blanchett" gave a terrific performance in Blue Jasmine but nothing close to the degree of difficulty for any of the five Best Actress nominees ... Helen Mirren and Meryl Streep can play with the boys but there just aren't that many tour-de-force roles out there for women."

I can buy that he avoided saying there are no good female actors outside of Mirren and Streep but rather that there are very few good parts for them that demand the grit and bravado of so many male roles. In that respect, I partly agree with Sorkin. The other half of me wants to yell at him for thinking it's easy for all these women to portray dynamic listening on-screen, as they so often have to do. Is it not also important to display acute emotional intelligence alongside the action and the self-important monologues?

But with Molly's Game, it's almost as though Sorkin heard me yelling that at him before the words even came to him, because his protagonist Molly Bloom is both powerfully verbose and cautiously thoughtful. Chastain seems at times to be both the lead and her own supporting actor in this story, as she oscillates between traditionally feminine and masculine modes of behavior, sometimes inhabiting both at once. Yes, there are some Sorkinian dialogical flourishes that I'll have you checking your watch, and — women in Sorkin's world — unecessary cleavage shots, but these demerits are made up for by Chastain's performance (and the absorbing charm of Idris Elba as lawyer Charlie Jaffery).

Sorkin has adapted the real Molly Bloom's autobiography, and her drift of mind is fascinating enough that the frequent voice-over narration is engaging, especially pertinent to Chastain. Bloom, in her first act, is a collection of giddy energy infuses both the film and Gerwig herself doesn't appear, of us have for the places that made us. Although Gerwig herself doesn't appear, her giddy energy infuses both the film and character. Gerwig's first act is a collection of funny, touching scenes of Catholic school life. She and her best friend, Julie (an excellent Beanie Feldstein) snack on communion wafers while giggling about masturbation. The movie is also keenly at

of plazas and bell towers outlined in Christmas lights. Imagine if Mexico City somehow sprawled upward, part Blade Runner and part offender altar, and then was populated entirely with high-spirited skeletons. As always, the hero must brave the unknown, need to find new paths, escape some dangers and learn that family matters most. Coco saga a little in its middle with the weight of the familiar. But the cavalcade of skeletons and extravagantly psychedelized alebrije spirit animals never stop dazzling, and Coco gets better and more resonant as it goes. When Pixar made me cry this time, it wasn't just for the characters on the screen. It was for the people I remember and the stories of others I hope will remember me. (Alan Scherstyn)

MOLLY'S GAME | Written and directed by Aaron Sorkin | STX Films | Citywide
tuned to the subtleties of American class; when Christine’s mother, Marion, played by the wonderful Laurie Metcalf, takes her shopping, they go to the thrift store. Lady Bird is in many ways Marion’s story, too, offering an insightful portrait of an intimate yet contentious mother-daughter relationship. Gerwig nails the ways weeks worth of argument and hostility can drift off like mist when, on a shopping excursion, mother and daughter both spot the right dress at the same time. (April Wolfe)

THREE BILLBOARDS OUTSIDE EBBING, MISSOURI At first, the prospect of Martin McDonagh (in Bruges, Seven Psychopaths) skewering some racist Missouri cops delighted me. Frances McDormand as Mildred, a grieving mother who taunts the local police for not solving her daughter’s rape and murder, is imperfect rage personified, a lady vengeance for the ages. But as McDonagh’s story turns toward the redemption of one very bad cop, Jason Dixon (Sam Rockwell), I found the Irishman McDonagh out of his league in handling uniquely American ills. McDonagh plainly talkingly humanizes a character we find has unapologetically tortured a black man in police custody. And then Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri seems to ask audiences to forgive and forget wrongs like police violence, domestic abuse and sexual assault without demonstrating a full understanding of the centuries-long toll these crimes have taken on victims in real life. Mildred pays the twopenny little ad man of Ebbing, Red Weby (Caleb Landry Jones), to raise up three successive billboards reading, “Raped while dying.” And still no arrests? “How come, Chief Willoughby?” Racist, incompetent cop Dixon flies a lid over this, threatening. Dixon is protective of the reputation of his boss Chief Willoughby (Woody Harrelson), enough to commit battery against Red. But as we quickly find out from the gossip of nearly every character in Ebbing, Dixon would rather be arresting and torturing black people. And yet despite the gaps I have with McDonagh’s handling of urgent matters, he has also created a character in Mildred who has inspired me to manaoaree. Mildred’s is with McDonagh’s projects, his wicked dialogue which wins my affection, and Mildred’s is one of the greatest, sharpest I’ve heard. (April Wolfe)

WONDER The modern family movie presents an interesting challenge. How do you tell a story in a way that’s clear and plainspoken enough for younger viewers while still finding ways to bring subtlety and depth to the material? Wonder, the story of a young boy with craniofacial disorder and the people around him, opts not for concealment of its themes but accumulation. It starts off as the portrait of a troubled child, but expands to become a film about community. His features under prosthetic makeup, Rowan’s Jacob Tremblay plays August Pullman, a 10-year-old who has had 27 surgeries on his face and has been homeschooled by his mom Isabel (Julia Roberts) through elementary school. Entering middle school isn’t easy for anyone, but it’s especially hard for Auggie. As he wanders helmet-free into school on his first day, with his mom murmuring, “It’s impossible not to feel exposed right along with him. Auggie narrates the early scenes of Wonder, but the movie isn’t just about him. Soon, the narration begins to jump from character to character, exploring the emotional ecosystem that’s developed around this young man. His older sister Via (Izabela Vidovic) has learned to love the boy the way he is and always be a lower priority for their parents. Her closest friend in the world, Miranda (Danielle Rose Russell), has suddenly stopped talking to her. And there’s a boy (Nadij Jeter) that she likes. The film expands even further with its perspectives. It’s also one of the quietest films I’ve seen this year. That may make it seem undernourished to some, but it speaks to a certain modesty — one that pays emotional dividends. (Bilig Ebrir)

WORMWOOD Errol Morris’s murky, evening-long epic Wormwood is the kind of true-crime documentary where you just know someone will pronounce, in the final hour or so, “For me, part of the story is that you can’t tell the story.” From the opening minutes, which imagine with a dreamer’s intensity the purported 1953 suicide of CIA operative Frank Olson, it’s clear that Morris and his interviewees will not come to any resolution. This is a story about cover-ups and conspiracy, one where mysteries can’t be illuminated without some fictionalization — but that fictionalization here too often takes over. Olson, a biochemist specializing in biological warfare, soared out a 10th-story window of Manhattan’s Hotel Stater in 1953. His death was ruled a suicide spurred by a nervous breakdown. Two decades later, a commission led by Nelson Rockefeller released a report about the intelligence community’s abuse of the public trust. Among its findings: The CIA’s Project MKUltra, a study in mind control, had dosed citizens and operatives with LSD. Officials soon cited the drug in Olson’s death, claiming a bad trip had inspired him to throw himself off the window. Morris’ film dramatizes Olson’s last days between interviews with Olson’s son Eric and journalists and lawyers who have taken the case as a cause. Over Wormwood’s four hours, a theory emerges: Eric Olson sees the MKUltra study as a cover-up of an execution. As always, Morris, a one-time private investigator, is a superb interviewer, and no documentarian so adeptly edits the testimony of his or her subjects. But his dramatics too often reveal little except how hard it can be to fill six streameradpung5 of 40-plus minutes each. (Alan Scherstuhl)
on a revived *The Gong Show*, the precursor to TV shows such as *America’s Got Talent*. Green Jelly didn’t get far in the competition, but they caused a ruckus and entertained the TV audience, and Manspeaker knew he was onto something.

He decided to relocate to Hollywood in 1987, formed a new version of Green Jelly and became quite a hit on the underground circuit thanks to some ludicrous, hilarious big rock anthems and a series of characters brought to life onstage in the form of papier mâché costumes. By denying his association with Manspeaker, mainman with cartoonish shock-rocker Green Jelly (eternally pronounced “Jello,” despite a lawsuit by Kraft Foods), is quite the experience. The man talks and talks, starting to answer a question before digesting into one partially relevant subject after another.

That’s great, by the way. Journalists love a chatty interviewee. But by the end, with masses of sound file to study, it’s tough to figure out if the guy is a business genius, or a stubborn bastard who has had more than his fair share of luck. As is usually the case, the truth is likely somewhere in the middle.

Green Jelly formed in 1981 in Buffalo, New York, when Manspeaker, desperate to join a band, realized that he couldn’t play any instruments and, in his words, couldn’t sing. He decided to form a punk band after hearing that Ramones and Sex Pistols songs were easy to play, but couldn’t do that either. So Manspeaker had a brainwave: Form a band that the members would self-proclaim was the worst band in the world.

He called his band Green Jelly, due to the fact that they played their first (impromptu) gig in the school canteen on the day that green Jell-O was being served, the motivation being that they could get the crowd of classmates to throw the sticky dessert at them.

“Frig figured out what day the school cafeteria was serving green Jell-O and I rented a PA,” Manspeaker says. “I dragged the PA in on a Wednesday and plugged it in real quick. We plugged in the instruments, I jumped on the table, pulled down my pants, and everybody started throwing green Jell-O at me. We’re playing the song, the principal comes in and shuts it down, I get suspended, and right then I knew — this is my life. I can have a career of causing a disturbance. You can survive being a spectacle.”

Manspeaker ran with that idea and took his band to California for an appearance

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“I’m playing shows, and one of my friends from Tower Records gets a job at a record company,” Manspeaker says. “He calls me up and says that he’s eating lunch with the president of the label — I should walk by like I haven’t seen him and he’ll introduce me to him. I go to the corner of Sunset and Vine, and there was a little strip court. It was next to the BMG building, across from Amoeba now. And the staff was there having lunch. My friend calls me over, and I tell them the story I just told you. He gives me a record contract right there on the spot without the record company hearing or seeing my band. Hollywood, man.”

At that time, Manspeaker was closely acquainted with Maynard James Keenan and Danny Carey, who, after hearing of Manspeaker’s $60,000 score, vowed to check the costumes and they come out with me. I don’t even know the names of the places or the addresses of where I’m playing. I just land at the airport, a band of locals come over and pick me up, they drive me to all three shows, and then they return me back to the airport and I’m home by noon on Sunday. I’ve been doing this for the last five years. The great part of this is, there’s no band for the band to get disgruntled. There’s no time to find out that Jimmy cheats on his wife or that AI is an alcoholic. I’m only with them for three days. Whatever drama happened in St. Louis last weekend, Minnesota don’t care.”

Further, there’s a new Green Jelly album coming out in 2018 called Garbage Band Kids, which has been entirely written by these various bands. Each song penned by a different version of Green Jelly. It’s so bizarre, it’s magnificent. Manspeaker just sits back and, as the songs roll in, he cherry-picks and then drops in the vocals. And it’s all done online.

“My record company is Facebook now,” Manspeaker says. “If I didn’t have Facebook, I’d be working at McDonald’s with the bass player from Warrant.”

All of which means that, when Green Jelly play the Whisky on Dec. 23, we have no idea what version of the band will show up — we have no idea what it will sound like — and neither does Manspeaker.

“This show will be a mega Jelly show,” he says. “It’s an open invitation to every Green Jelly member ever to come and play. There could be two or 20 or 200. I don’t even know. I won’t know how many guitar players and drummers until they all show up. Imagine this: A gigantic train-wreck coming down the middle of your street, crashing and destroying everything in its path, and every single person that lives in that town is out on the sidewalk with their jaws open, watching the train just topple the entire city down, and I am on top of the engine crunching everything. And at the end, everyone applauds because it was one hell of a show.”

Green Jelly play with Unstoppable Force and The Flood at 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 23, at the Whisky a Go Go, 8901 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; (310) 652-4202; $15; all ages.

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*A Band With 781 Members*

*Imagine your favorite band came to town and said you could be part of it. Green Jelly do just that*

**BY BRETT CALLWOOD**

A conversation with Bill Manspeaker, mainman with cartoonish shock-rockers Green Jelly (eternally pronounced “Jello,” despite a lawsuit by Kraft Foods), is quite the experience. The man talks and talks, starting to answer a question before digesting into one partially relevant subject after another.

That’s great, by the way. Journalists love a chatty interviewee. But by the end, with masses of sound file to study, it’s tough to figure out if the guy is a business genius, or a stubborn bastard who has had more than his fair share of luck. As is usually the case, the truth is likely somewhere in the middle.

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El Vez Merry MexMas Show
@ THE ECHO
While 1977’s punk-rock fireball scorched Western pop culture with staggering effect, it also left many of its practitioners stuck in a creative rut out of which only a choice few were able to climb. One of the unlikeliest was The Zeros’ banging rhythm guitarist/singer, Robert Lopez, who transformed himself into the wiggly, wild cross-cultural phenom known to the world as El Vez. This jumpsuit-clad, Presley-inspired showstopper is part crusader, part satirist and all-around brilliant entertainer, one who adroitly mixes penetrating social commentary with devilishly clever parodies and deftly crafted original material. Better yet, El Vez is renowned for his dedication to raising Merry MexMas Shows (Single redo “Brown Christmas” must be heard to be believed), so if you crave a really fine, freaky Feliz Navidad, this is it. —Jonny Whiteside

Fishbone
@ ROXY THEATRE
Perhaps L.A.’s ultimate should’ve-been-so-much-bigger story, Fishbone seriously stalled mainstream success at the turn of the 1990s: touring with Red Hot Chili Peppers and Beastie Boys, scoring a hit album with The Reality of My Surroundings and becoming Lollapalooza regulars. But while an ostensibly similar funk-punk-rock collision made the Chili Peppers stars, the deliberately eclectic, ultra-frenetic Fishbone almost had too much energy and too many ideas, their albums being stylistically ADHD moving targets that also embraced brass-buttressed ska, slickly produced heavy metal and succulent soul. Or maybe lacing their euphoric jams with left-leaning social commentary was just a party pooper for some listeners. But the influential octet have remained super-cred musicians’ musicians and, with more than half of their original 1979 lineup aboard (including irreplaceable frontman Angelo Moore), Fishbone’s annual “Crazy Glue XXX-mas” shows are uniquely frenzied seasonal celebrations. —Paul Rogers

The California Honeydrops
@ THE TROUBADOUR
Despite a name that evokes the Golden State, The California Honeydrops actually try to sound more like a band from New Orleans, with a deliberately retro approach that draws from vintage R&B, soul and the blues. Beau Bradwin unwinds funky, snaky bass lines underneath Lorenzo Loera’s barrelhouse piano on such tracks as “Like This, Like That,” but the overall vibe is more pleasantly grooving than anything seriously gritty or emotionally raw. That said, vocalist-trumpeter-guitarist Lech Wierzyński, a native of Poland who’s previously backed Dan Hicks and Muria Muldaur, draws the group’s original tunes and cover songs with a laidback, casual aplomb. The Oakland group’s 2015 release, A Higher Degree, is enlivened by ‘70s soul harmonies, traditional blues interludes and Johnny Bones’ cycling flurries of saxophone. —Falling James

Jonathan Wilson
@ MOROCCAN LOUNGE
Noted for his first officially released solo album was aptly titled Gentle Spirit, and the North Carolina native and L.A. resident has continued to explore various shades of mellow on his ensuing recordings. The folkie balladry is occasionally broken up by jangling pop-rock songs, such as the Dylan-ish “Love to Love,” from 2013’s Fanfare. Wilson’s upcoming album, Rare Birds (on Bella Union), features the muted glimmering of “Over the Midnight,” which burbles along with more of an electronic sheen than his earlier, ‘70s-style singer-songwriter affectations and yacht-rock narcotics. The singer is increasingly recognized just as much for his production work, helming recent releases by Karen Elson (Double Roses) and Father John Misty (Pure Comedy), and touring with Pink Floyd’s Roger Waters. —Falling James

Jane Monheit
@ CATALINA BAR & GRILL
Songbird Jane Monheit tends to alight at this pricey jazz club every December, and her languidly enchanting vocals are quickly becoming part of the traditional soundtrack for the SoCal holiday season. In recent years, the Long Island native has been pursuing her love of the music of Ella Fitzgerald, as documented on the 2016 album Songbook Sessions: Ella Fitzgerald. While Monheit doesn’t impart the same vocal grandeur and bluesy fire as Lady Ella, she finds nimble ways to pay tribute while maintaining her own coolly restrained personality as she breezily purrs through playful remakes of “Something’s Gotta Give” and “Where or When.” She has imbued records by Harold Mabern, David Benoit, Sara Gazarek and Terence Blanchard with the same graceful touch. She’ll likely pull out of her bag some of her distinctive, richly mournful Christmas ballads. Also Saturday, Dec. 23. —Falling James

Plague Vendor, Wild Wing, Band Aparte
@ HI HAT
Plague Vendor are here to wreck your holiday cheer with an overdose of urgently paranoid broadsides from their recent album, Bloodsweat (Epitaph). Brandon Blaine intones shadowy, claustrophobic rants such as “Jezebel” as Jay Rogers tries to drown him out with a surge of sinister guitar. “Ox Blood” is a slower, more momentous assemblage of steadily creeping hysteria, whereas the post-punk-style “ISUA” rides atop Michael Perez’s ominous bass and Rogers’ warped guitar shivers as Blaine pleads, “Give me life or give me death/Or give me something that I’ll soon want to forget.” Locals Wild Wing purvey a similarly unsettling sound, as punk guitars blend with eerie synthesizers under a fusillade of such cheery lyrics as “Stacks of bodies in the street/Children crying at my feet” on the grim prophecy “Decimation.” L.A. duo Band Aparte stir up more mysteriously melodic and gauze-shrouded reveries. —Falling James

Green Jelly
@ WHISKY A GO GO
It would be the understatement of the decade to say that one of the most violently catchy songs to come out of the second half of the last century was “Three Little Pigs” by jocular gross-out metallers Green Jelly. Formerly Green Jellÿ — it was always a matter of time until the lawsuit — Green Jellÿ were the vanguard of a musical movement that embraced fun, crude humor, crazy monster costumes and throw-
THU. DECEMBER 21 · 7 PM
ALMOST BROKE TOUR

SAT. DECEMBER 23 · 9 PM
THE PARANOIAS

FRI. DECEMBER 22 · 7 PM
BACK HOME TOUR: JUSTICE MONEY

SAT. DECEMBER 23 · 9 PM
MEGA CHRISTMAS BASHMENT

COMING SOON:
12/20 DESERT DWELLERS
12/30 KANYE LOVES KANYE: GLOW IN THE DARK PARTY
1/12 INOVATIF EVENTS PRESENTS: EZY & FRIENDS
1/13 ¡CUMBIALTRON!: CITY OF ANGELS
1/13 FRESH PRESENTS: OUTBURSTLA
1/20 CHURCH OF 8TH DAY PRESENTS: GASP, TRAPPIST, DEADBEAT, FRACUTED, HARM
1/25 YUNG GRAVY
1/29 NEON DREAMS
2/2 KRAAK & SMAAK (DJ SET)
2/2 SAVED BY THE 90S
2/3 DEEP PRESENTS: REMEMBER?
XL SERIES W/ LOUIE VEGA & MARQUES WYATT (ALL VINYL, ALL NIGHT)
JOLLOF N CHILL
3/10 KOTA THE FRIEND

SAT. DECEMBER 23 · 9 PM
MEGA CHRISTMAS BASHMENT

THU. DECEMBER 28
PROJECT BLOWED XXIII

SAT. DECEMBER 30 · 9 PM
STRICTLY THE BEST: TO DI WORLD

COMING SOON:
1/12 HIP HOP SHOWCASE
1/12 CLUB 90’S
1/13 KEAK'B X RAP SESSIONS
1/13 BRAH: BUTTA
1/16 THE MOTH
1/18 KRIZZ KALIKO
1/19 CLUB 90’S
1/26 CLUB 90’S
2/2 THE WIDOW’S SON ALBUM
3/8 THE WIDOW’S SON ALBUM

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TICKETS & INFO AT CLUBGLOBS.COM  /  CLUBGLOBS.COM  /  @CLUBGLOBS  /  @LOSGLOBOS
WAS! Plasmic, The Knitts
@ Hi Hat
WAS! close out their monthlong residency at the Hi Hat with a free post-Christmas show. The self-described “riot pop” duo of Jessie Meehan and Merlou Salazar first started playing together at Savana High School in Anaheim in a band called The Midol Poppers, writing “shitty punk songs about cafeteria food” before they arrived at their more fully developed sound as WAS!.
“I’ve been waiting for a place where my heart speaks whole and speaking up is a bastion of its own,” Salazar sings on the L.A. Pride homage “Pride.” She and Meehan take the energy of punk rock and infuse it with cheerily poppy new-wave keyboards for a sound that’s both provocative and catchy. Plasmic is Lauren Nicole Lusardi’s one-woman band, and she conjures ethereal synth-pop that’s distinguished by her airily arcy vocals. The Knitts crank out a more guitar-based brand of brash, punky garage rock. – Falling James

Cracker, Camper Van Beethoven
@ Teragram Ballroom
Cracker and Camper Van Beethoven are two eternally conjoined bands linked by a common lead singer, David Lowery. Rather than touring separately, the two groups often perform on the same bill as part of an extended family of musicians who interact with one another. Camper Van Beethoven came first, forming in Redlands in 1983 before relocating to Santa Cruz. They’re most often remembered for “Take the Skinheads Bowling,” which neatly eviscerated the hardcore-punk era’s prevailing macho attitude with a slyly sarcastic and overtly poppy charm. Subtly hypnotic tracks such as “Oh No!” contrasted ’80s mainstream rock trends with a low-key garage-rock unpretentiousness. When CVM dropped out of sight for much of the ’90s, Lowery started Cracker with guitarist Johnny Hickman and got a lot of airplay with the anemic video “Low,” which depicted Lowery famously losing a boxing match to comedian Sandra Bernhard. – Falling James

Sarah Reich’s Tap Music Project
@ Blue Whale
Though the feet can be dangerous weapons, they are also musical instruments. Tap dancer Sarah Reich often tours as a member of Postmodern Jukebox, but tonight she leads her own project, with backing by pianist Charles Rodgerman and his Rodgerman Band. Reich percutiously dances her way in and around various themes from the Star Wars films in a medley she calls “The Tap Awakens,” exchanging the brassy bombast of composer John William’s original melodies for an artful and cleverly jazzy arrangement. She deftly steps through other unusual covers and such original tunes as “It’s Tappening,” her fast-moving dancing blending with the drums as she weaves her way around the band’s jazzy pulsations. Some sloppy tap dancers can sound like a bunch of rocks falling down a staircase, but Reich maintains a rhythmic precision that is astonishing. – Falling James

The Original Wailers
@ The Belasco
The Original Wailers’ guitarist Al Anderson did five tours with Marley, played on Peter Tosh’s Legalize It and Equal Rights records, played lead guitar on Marley’s Survival and Uprising records, the latter boasting the smash fucking banger “Could You Be Loved?” The current incarnation — guitarist Adrian “AK” Cisneros, bassist Omar Lopez, singing guitarist Chet Samuel, drummer Howard Smith — tours incessantly, spreading the good word of the legacy of Bob Marley. They’re all basically reggae incarna, so if you miss this one, you might as well just burn your Tuff Gong Fan Club card. Raht’d! – David Cotner

David Cotner
NEW YEARS EVE
SUNDAY DECEMBER 31 2017

IN THE FUTURE, LEGENDS WILL BE TOLD OF THE 12-HOUR SETS THAT DJs USED TO PLAY "BACK IN THE DAY." WELL, THOSE DAYS ARE NOW AND YOU'LL BE A PART OF THAT LEGEND AS MARKUS SCHULZ RETURNS TO AVALON FOR ANOTHER OPENING TO CLOSING SET.

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Thu., Dec. 28, 9 p.m., $15 (see Music Pick).

**CATALINA BAR & GRILL:** 6725 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles. Jane Monheit, Fri.-Sat., Dec. 22-23, 8:30 p.m., 530 & 535 plus dinner-drink minimum (see Music Pick), Kirk Andrews Wilson, Thu., Dec. 28, 8:30 p.m.

**COLOMBO’S ITALIAN STEAKHOUSE & JAZZ CLUB:** 1833 Colorado Blvd., Eagle Rock. Steve Thompson, Fridays, 5:30 p.m., free. Ernie Draffen, Saturdays, 5:30 p.m., free. The Eric Ekstrand Trio, Mondays, 4:30 p.m., free. Trifecta, Thursdays, 7 p.m., free.

**DEL MONTE SPEAKEASY:** 52 Windward Ave., Venice. Katyalyn, Saturdays, 9 p.m., free.

**DESSERT ROSE:** 1700 Hillhurst Ave., Los Angeles. Mark Z. Stevens Trio, Saturdays, 7-11 p.m, free.

**THE DRESDEN:** 1780 N. Vermont Ave., Los Angeles. Marty & Elaine, Tuesdays-Saturdays, 9 p.m., free. The Readys, Sundays, 9 p.m.-midnight, free.

**GARDENIA RESTAURANT & LOUNGE:** 7066 Santa Monica Blvd., Los Angeles. Open Mic, hosted by Keri Kelsey, Tuesdays, 9 p.m., $5.

**GRIFFIN’S OF KINSALE:** 1007 Mission St., South Pasadena. Barry “Big B” Brenner, Thursdays, 8 p.m., free.

**HAVERLE’S SANTA MONICA:** 1432 Fourth St., Santa Monica. The Toledo Show, Sundays, 9:30 p.m., $10. The House of Vibe All-Stars, Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m., $5.

**IL PICCOLO VERDE:** 140 S. Barrington Pl., Los Angeles. David Marcus, Thursdays, 7 p.m.; Tuesdays, 7 p.m., free.

**INTO JAZZ:** 714 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles. Salsa Night, Fridays, 8 p.m.; Saturdays, 8 p.m., $10. Salsa & Bachata Tuesdays, Saturdays, 7 p.m.-3 a.m., $15. Salsa & Bachata Thursdays, Tuesdays, 9:30 p.m., $5. Bachata Thursdays, Fridays, 8 p.m., $5-$10.

**TIA CHUCHA’S CENTRO CULTURAL & BOOKSTORE:** 13197-A Gladstone Ave., Sylmar. Open Mic, Fridays, 9-10 p.m.

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**COUNTRY & FOLK**

**THE CINEMA BAR:** 3967 Sepulveda Blvd., Culver City. Cooper Walker, Fri., Dec. 22, 9 p.m., free, Roogjasm, Sat., Dec. 23, 9 p.m., free. The Drinkleheads, Thu., Dec. 28, 9 p.m., free.

**THREE ANGELS:** 2029 N. Lake Ave., Altadena. Ellen & Steve Stapenhorst, Thu., Dec. 28, 9 p.m., free.

**THE COWBOY PALACE SALOON:** 21635 Devonshire St., Chatsworth. The Rye Brothers, Fri., Dec. 22, 8 p.m., free, Justin Honsinger, Sat., Dec. 23, 8 p.m., free. Rob Staley, Sun., Dec. 24, 6 p.m., free, Lee Harper, Tue., Dec. 26, 8 p.m., free, Greg & The Gallows, Wed., Dec. 27, 8 p.m., free. The Just Dave Band, Thu., Dec. 28, 8 p.m., free.


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**DANCE CLUBS**

**THE AIRLINER:** 2419 N. Broadway, Los Angeles. The Rap Contest, presented by Sellasie, Tuesdays, 8 p.m.-1:30 a.m., $20. Low End Theory, with resident DJs Daddy Kev, Nobody, The Gaslamp Killer, D-Stylz, and MC Nocando, Wednesdays, 9:30 p.m.-1:30 a.m.

**AVALON HOLLYWOOD:** 1735 Vine St., Los Angeles. Whistle, Kayvian, Andy De Anda, Ryu, Fri., Dec. 22, 9:30 p.m. Berg, Jonathan Allyn, Trance Psyberia, Sat., Dec. 23, 10 p.m. TigerHeat, Thursdays, 10 p.m., $5.

**BOARDER’S:** 1652 N. Cherokee Ave., Los Angeles. The Nightmare Before Kinksmas, with Mistress Bella Bathory, Bettie Bondage, Vita Deviod, Sourcix Q., Sat., Dec. 23, 10 p.m. Bar Sinister, Saturdays, 10 p.m., $10-$20.

**CREATE NIGHTCLUB:** 6021 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles. Danny Avilla, Fri., Dec. 22, 10 p.m., $15 & $20, Swedish Egil, Sat., Dec. 23, 10 p.m., $5-$20.
**CONCERTS**

**FRIDAY, DEC. 22**

**12TH PLANET: 9 p.m.** The Fonda Theatre, 1234 3rd St., Hollywood. $29.50-$50. See GoLA.

**THE AGGREGATES: 8 p.m.** The Observatory, 3533 S. 1st St., Santa Ana. $23.50-$32. See GoLA.

**DOPE THE 21ST HARMONY: 11 p.m.** The Observatory, 3533 S. 1st St., Santa Ana.

**DAVE KOZ: 8 p.m.** $50-$595. Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Dr., Cerritos. $30. See GoLA.

**ERIC BELLINGER: 9 p.m.** El Rey Theatre, 5515 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles. $34. See GoLA.

**JOEY KOE: 8 p.m.** $25-$300. The Novo by Microsoft, 800 W. Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles. See GoLA.

**MAYA: 9 p.m.** $25-$45. The Observatory, 3533 S. 1st St., Santa Ana.

**MARTIN DRESSLER: 8 p.m.** $32. The Observatory, 3533 S. 1st St., Santa Ana.

**MUSIC BY THE MOVES: 8 p.m.** $35. The Observatory, 3533 S. 1st St., Santa Ana.

**NEW PATIENTS: 8 p.m.** $35. Nirvana Clinic, 4511 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90027, 323-663-4444.

**UPCOMING**

**DECEMBER**

**BIG BAD VODKA DADDY: Sun., Dec. 31, 8 p.m., $36-$81. Fred Kavli Theatre, Thousand Oaks Civic Arts Plaza.**

**BRYSSEN TILLER: Fri., Dec. 29, 7 p.m. & 11 p.m., $65. The Observatory.**

**CHERRY GLAZER: With Vagabon, Shannon Lay, Fri., Dec. 29, 8 p.m., $21. The Fonda Theatre.**

**DILLON FRANCIS: With Wheatus, Team EZY, Sun., Dec. 31, 9 p.m., $74-$125. Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall.**

**DITA VON TEESE’S NEW YEAR’S EVE GALA:**

**SNOW:** Sun., Dec. 31, 9 p.m., $69-$525. The Theatre at Ace Hotel. **THE DRAMATICS:** Sat., Dec. 30, 9 p.m., $48-$78. Saban Theatre.

**EDDIE MONEY:** Fri., Dec. 29, 9 p.m., $34-$54. Saban Theatre. **MAC SABBATH, DWARVES, 45 GRAVE:** Fri., Dec. 29, 7:30 p.m., $20. The Regent Theatre.

**NEW YEAR’S EVE FIREWORKS & GLOW PARTY:** Sun., Dec. 31, 7:30 p.m., TBA. Burton W. Chace Park. **THE ORIGINAL MISFITS:** With Alkaline Trio, Discharge, Rancid, Tue., Dec. 31, 9 p.m., $38-$50. The Observatory.

**SCOTT HILL:** Sun., Dec. 31, 8 p.m., $36-$40. The Observatory. **STEVE WINWOOD:** Sun., Dec. 31, 8 p.m., $50-$90. The Observatory.

**THE STUDENTS:** Sun., Dec. 31, 8 p.m., $75. The Arena at the Anaheim Stadium.

**TODD TUNDRUNNER:** Sun., Dec. 31, 9 p.m., $38-$58. Saban Theatre.

**UPCOMING**

**JANUARY**

**ANDREW SOLOMON:** Thu., Jan. 18, 8 p.m. The Theatre at Ace Hotel. **BOY 2 MEN:** With Jodeci, Jagged Edge, SWV, Sat., Jan. 13, 8 p.m., $87-$329.99. Microsoft Theatre.

**CAMERATA PACIFICA:** The Santa Barbara ensemble rides the angles of Beethoven’s Piano No. 26 in E-flat major, Op. 81a; Messiaen’s Appel interstellaire; Ligeti’s Trio for Violin Horn & Piano; Britten’s Suite for Violin & Piano, Op. 6; and Bartok’s Out of Doors, Thu., Jan. 11, 8 p.m., $56. The Colburn School of Music, Zipper Concert Hall Fri., Jan. 12, 7:30 p.m., $56. Hahn Hall, UC Santa Barbara. The Santa Barbara ensemble rides the angles of Beethoven’s Piano No. 26 in E-flat major, Op. 81a; Messiaen’s Appel interstellaire; Ligeti’s Trio for Violin Horn & Piano; Britten’s Suite for Violin & Piano, Op. 6; and Bartok’s Out of Doors, Tue., Jan. 16, 7:30 p.m., $56. Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens.

**GALAXY: Kelsey Grammer appears in L.A. Opera’s presentation of Leonard Bernstein’s operatic update of Voltaire’s satire, Sat., Jan. 27, 7:30 p.m.; Sat., Feb. 3, 7:30 p.m.; Thu., Feb. 8, 7:30 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 11, 2 p.m.; Thu., Feb. 15, 7:30 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 18, 2 p.m., $20-$300. Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.**

**GABRIEL KAHANE:** Sat., Jan. 20, 8 p.m. The Theatre at Ace Hotel. **HERBIE HANCOCK:** Sat., Jan. 27, 8 p.m. Walt Disney Concert Hall. **INARA GEORGE:** Fri., Jan. 19, 7 p.m., $20. Hollywood Forever Cemetery. **K-ART EARTH TOTALLY BIOS:** With Boy George, Adam Ant, The Bangles, Violent Femmes, Satt N Pepe, The Ramones, Tone Loc, A Flock of Seagulls, Dramarama, Grandmaster Flash & the Furious Five, The Sugarhill Gang, Nick Heyerdahl, Fri., Jan. 26, 6:30 p.m., $19-$55. The Fonda Theatre.

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