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BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT
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**Celine Dion Becomes Focus of Musical Parody Titanic**

**May 18 - 24, 2018**

**Ukraine**

**DANCE**

L.A.'s Take on the Supper Club

Drag-friendly variety shows are big business these days, and with good reason. But under the radar of moments like DragCon, it’s worth appreciating the charms of the intimate variety shows that gave rise to the cultural phenom. One such is Omeroshow: Deluxe Assortment, as Isabel Omero (producer of Zulu Lounge) makes her first independent foray into the classic supper-club experience with a night of magic, music, exotic hooping, bellydancing, comedy and camp. One update to the night’s old-timey style: Your two-item minimum could be an old-school mixology dinner, but there’s the option to grab tasty raw/vegan bites from host Âu Lac L.A. instead — for variety.

**National Ballet of Ukraine dances Sleeping Beauty: See Friday.**

**5/18**

**DRAG**

L.A.’s Take on the Supper Club

**From Ukraine With Love**

The 150-year-old National Ballet of Ukraine opens its 11-city debut U.S. tour with two technically demanding full-length performances, Sleeping Beauty (Friday) and Don Quixote (Saturday). Based in Kiev, the company is a bastion of Russian classical ballet boasting more than 150 dancers and a history of producing international stars such as Alina Cojocaru (the Royal Ballet) and American Ballet Theater veterans Vladimir Malakhov, Maxim Beloserkovsky and Irina Dvorovenko. The company frequently tours Europe but has never made it stateside — until now. The choice of the Orpheum Theater, one of downtown’s magnificent old movie palaces, is in keeping with the grand opera house the company is used to at home. Orpheum Theatre, 842 S. Broadway, downtown; Fri., May 18, 8 p.m.; Sat., May 19, 7 p.m.; $38-$415; laorpheum.com/events. —Siran Babayan

**DANCE**

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**An Unsinkable Production**

After more than 20 years of driving us crazy, Celine Dion’s “My Heart Will Go On” has been us into submission. In fact, director Tye Blue is so fond of the song and her theme song to the 1997 blockbuster Titanic that he created a musical parody completely inspired by her. With musical direction by Nicholas Connell, Titanic re-enzacts key moments from the plot and features Jack Dawson (Constantine Rousouli) and Rose DeWitt (Alex Ellis), with the addition of Dion (Marla Mindelle), who not only narrates the spoof but pops up everywhere in the show. Who knew Canada’s greatest chanteuse was a passenger for one of the most historic disasters ever? Backed by a live band, the cast sings Dion’s biggest hit, as well as other familiar tunes, including “The Power of Love,” “It’s All Coming Back to Me Now” and “A New Day Has Come.” Dynasty TypeWriter, 2511 Wilshire Blvd., Westlake; Fri., May 18, 8-10 p.m.; $40. dynastytypewriter.com. —Saran Babayan

**Festival**

Letting the Kids Lead the Way

You’ve been around the block a few times — now bring your hard-earned wisdom to the Pico Block Party. “Empowering Youth Voices” is the theme of today’s family-friendly festival of kindness and creation, and there’s a plethora of kids leading workshops, giving performances, mobbing food trucks and otherwise showing you what’s what when it comes to the changes rocking your world lately. An adjunct to the 18th Street Arts Center’s bilingual neighborhood oral history initiative, Culture Mapping, it shows you just how involved in activism the kids are these days, and what you can do to better your community alongside them. Activities include art workshops, artists’ open studios, exhibitions on view, live music and food trucks. 18th Street Arts Center, 1639 18th St., Santa Monica; Sat., May 19, 3-6 p.m.; free. 18thstreet.org/event/pico-block-party-empowering-youth-voices. —David Cotner

**BOOKS**

Literary Heaven

LitFest Pasadena has been a free, communitywide literary gathering for the past seven years, spotlighting local scribes and others. Among the 200-plus writers and performers scheduled to appear this year are Jerry Stahl, Janet Fitch, Lisa Teasley, Naomi Hirahara, Erin Aubry Kaplan, Michelle Huneven, Laurie Kilmartin, Sholeh Wolpe, Congressman Adam Schiff, Assemblymember Laura Friedman and Pasadena Mayor Terry Tornek. Daylong activities taking place in and around landmark venues such as the Pasadena Playhouse and Vroman’s Bookstore include readings, poetry, art exhibits, walking tours, kids activities and the Roswell Award, which honors science fiction writers. There will be panel talks on such topics as “Combichella: Normalizing Natural Hair Through Literature,” “The Border as a Character: Storytelling About Fences, Walls and the People They Shape” and “Getting Off: Sex, Porn & Female Sexuality.” A highlight is L.A. Times food critic — and Pasadena resident— Jonathan Gold, who discusses “Writing About Home Cooking” with chef Nadine Levy Redzepi.

**From the Streets**

DIY: The History of Creative Culture in Skateboarding presents a survey of the artistic side of skate culture that goes way beyond deck art and into the adjacent realms of street art and photography, along with aspects of fashion, zine-making, design and a kind of crazy-inventor engineering and adaptive re-functionality in the use of architecture, such as empty pools transformed into painting pits and athletic courses. That’s the spirit of the culture, and “do it yourself” is not only an emblematic creative impulse, it’s something of a motto, celebrating the independence and resourcefulness you’d expect to find in such an amped-up world. “DIY” is curated and created by Jürgen Blümlein of FauxAmi Exhibitions and the Skateboard Museum (Berlin), Todd Huber of Skatelab and the Skateboarding Hall of Fame, and FACT. Subliminal Projects, 1321 W. Sunset Blvd., Echo Park; Reception Sat., May 19, 7-10 p.m.; exhibit Wed.-Sat., noon-6 p.m., through June 16; free. subliminalprojects.com/exhibitions/diy/. —Shana Nys Dambrot

**ART/NATURE**

Avant-Garden

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**MUSIC/Food**

**Havana in L.A.**

The second annual Cuban American Music Festival celebrates that Caribbean jewel’s immeasurable rich culture with a horde of local Cuban artists, food, drinks, vendors and, yes, singers. The real focus is, of course, music and dancing, with such formidable orchestras de baile as La Charanga Cubana, Calixto & Timba L.A. and Las Chikas, but the stunning jewel in the crown of an already impressive lineup is a rare local appearance by Cuban singer Benny Moré, “El Bárbaro del Ritmo,” with accompaniment from local Cuban swingers ARP Big Band. It’s bound to be a deliciously dreamy experience. LA Culture & Arts, 501 N Main St., downtown, Sun., May 20, noon-8 p.m.; $25-$60, 21 and older. cubanamericannmusicfestival.net/festival. —Jonny Whiteside

**MUSIC**

**True Harmony**

Prepare to get chills at A Place for Us — A Symphonic and Choral Performance. In conjunction with its current exhibit “Leonard Bernstein at 100,” the Skirball Museum hosts a concert with the Harmony Project orchestra and the Urban Voices Project choir, who’ll perform their rendition of the Bernstein/Sondheim classic “Somewhere” from West Side Story, one of Broadway’s most oft-covered songs. Each group will perform additional music by Jason Mraz, Tito Puente, Carly Rae Jepsen and Kirk Franklin, as well as “It’s Quiet Uptown” from another famous musical, Hamilton, followed by a Q&A with Myka Miller. Harmony Project is a nonprofit that provides music lessons to thousands of low-income students in L.A., while Urban Voices Project, a collaboration between the Colburn School and John Wesley Health Centers, comprises homeless artists from Skid Row. Skirball Cultural Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Brentwood; Sun., May 20, 2 p.m.; $12, $9 seniors & students, $7 children. (310) 440-4500, skirball.org. —Siran Babayan

**BOOKS**

**Parsing Schism and Unity**

Are Ordinary Virtues More Powerful Than Universal Values? The eighth annual Zócalo Book Prize Lecture aims to answer this paltry civic dilemma in which abstract, platonically idealistic concepts of human rights and ordinary virtues of politeness, trust and forgiveness are...
somehow mutually exclusive. Central European University president Michael Ignatieff — also the winner of this year’s Zócalo Book Prize for The Ordinary Virtues: Moral Order in a Divided World ($28, Harvard University Press) — lays it on you and massages your cognitive dissonance to show you that pleasant community standards really might just save us in these fractured, fractious times. National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, 369 E. First St., downtown; Tue., May 22, 7:30 p.m.; free (RSVP required). (213) 625-0414, zocalopublicsquare.org/event/ordinary-virtues-powerful-universal-values/ — David Cotner

—wed 5/23—

MUSIC

Sonic Swarm

The work of French electronic-music visionary Éliane Radigue is so subtle and slowly shifting that it sometimes masks her outsized importance as an influential composer and sonic inventor. Ironically, even though she created experimental music on synthesizers years before anybody else, Radigue has been composing more pieces for acoustic instruments in the past two decades. This evening, in a Monday Evening Concerts presentation billed as “a special season postlude,” trumpeter Nate Wooley calls up the momentously foreboding cloud of Radigue’s Occam X, and sound projectionist Michael Pisaro unfolds the wallowing swarm of sound known as L’île re-sonante. LAXART, 7000 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood; Wed., May 23, 8 p.m.; free (RSVP required). (213) 260-1632, mondaysundayconcerts.org.

—thu 5/24—

FILM

Same Zombies, New Tunes

Half a century later and 1968’s Night of the Living Dead is still the greatest zombie flick of all time. Just as director George A. Romero changed the horror-movie genre, so has Film Independent at LACMA’s Bring the Noise changed the way we listen to movies. Launched in 2016, the museum’s series has invited artists such as Jack Antonoff, Kinky, YACHT, Seth Bogart, Daniel Ash and Kevin Haskins to create and perform original scores to such titles as Alien, Weird Science, The Breakfast Club and Welcome to the Dollhouse. For tonight’s Bring the Noise: Night of the Living Dead, L.A. garage-punk four-piece The Paranoyds play their unique soundtrack to a screening of the classic film about a group of strangers hiding out in a farmhouse while trying to kill flesh-eating ghouls who’ve risen from the dead. LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Thu., May 24, 7:30 p.m.; $25. (323) 857-6010, lacma.org. —Siran Babayan
Volunteers in clinical research are the heroes in the discovery of new medical treatments.

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**POT AND PTSD**

Korey Rowe’s documentary Mile Marker spotlights cannabis’ benefit for vets

**BY MADISON MARGOLIN**

Living with PTSD, or post-traumatic stress disorder, looks something like this: Veteran Korey Rowe gets stuck in traffic on the 405. He’ll get angry and work up and start beating the steering wheel of his Jeep Wrangler. As a trained soldier, having been deployed to both Afghanistan and Iraq, he has memories of being ambushed during war when stuck in traffic — so now, even 15 years later in sunny L.A., traffic sends his mind into fight-or-flight mode.

“I turn into an asshole,” says Rowe, whose personality is more that of a sweet, artistic filmmaker than any kind of actual jerk. Diagnosed as 70 percent disabled from PTSD and 10 percent from tinnitus, Rowe has identified traffic as a trigger.

“I have to ask myself, is someone going to pop out with an AK-47 and shoot at me? No, they’re not, I’m in a safe environment,” he says. “So there are two things I can carry in my car to deal with traffic. One of them is a .45 — if I get angry and in a fight, I need a weapon to protect myself. And the other option is a cannabis pen. I can hit that pen when I get aggravated and the cannabis helps me relax, calm down and deal with the traffic.”

Of course, Rowe opts to carry ganja over guns. That’s why he moved to California. He calls himself a “medical refugee,” seeking free access to cannabis to treat his PTSD. His story began in 1999 at the age of 16, when he got busted for two dimebags of shwag. Labeled a “stoner,” Rowe became unwelcome at home. He moved out and, by the time he got busted for two dimebags of shwag. Labeled a “stoner,” Rowe became unwelcome at home. He moved out and over the next two years got evicted from more than a dozen apartments. By the time he was 18, his only option was to join the military. It was August 2001. Then 9/11 happened.

“I had no idea what I had signed up for. Before I was even 19 years old, I was tiptoeing around landmines, holding a grenade launcher, and shitting my pants every day for what I had done,” Rowe says. After four years, he returned home from the army to upstate New York, eventually getting himself into trouble for drugs, using whatever he could to self-medicate. His life spiraled downward so quickly that his only hope was legal weed where he could medicate without getting into trouble. “My goal now is to make cannabis an acceptable and beneficial part of healing humanity because that’s what it’s done for me,” Rowe says.

The now 55-year-old vet recently finished a cross-country road trip to make a documentary called Mile Marker, shedding light on his battle buddies’ stories and showing those who struggle with PTSD that they’re not alone. On Tuesday, May 22, there will be an 8 p.m. screening of Mile Marker at the Pacific Theaters at the Grove, with free entry for vets. (To RSVP, they can email MileMarkerVeteran@gmail.com.)

For Rowe, the number 22 carries a lot of significance. According to the most commonly cited statistic, 22 veterans commit suicide every day. So in Mile Marker, Rowe interviewed 22 veterans. The film, he says, is for No. 23, “for the one who’s thinking about suicide and to stop him from doing it.”

PTSD is diagnosed when, after a traumatic, often life-threatening stressor, a person’s recovery process is interrupted, explains Dr. Paula Schnurr, executive director at the National Center for PTSD. After a car accident, for example, it’s typical to experience PTSD symptoms such as sudden, unwanted memories, nightmares, self-blame, and feeling alert, numb or cut off from other people. Within days or weeks, those symptoms should subside, but if they persist for at least a month, that may qualify as PTSD. “What that means for individuals is that they themselves are also changed, and they may find that it affects all aspects of their well-being and functioning,” Schnurr says.

Today, 11 percent of the adult homeless population are veterans, while 51 percent of those homeless veterans have disabilities and 50 percent have mental illness. A whopping 70 percent have substance abuse problems. Not surprisingly, PTSD increases a veteran’s risk of death by suicide, whether they’re homeless or not.

“It’s not clear that any particular medication helps with symptoms, but that doesn’t stop people from trying to self-medicate,” Schnurr says. With effective, holistic treatment, however, substantial symptoms can be mitigated, she adds.

Chris Taylor, a veteran from Phoenix who is featured in Mile Marker, tried to get treatment; he made an appointment with the VA, but the soonest he could get was in six months. So when he returned six months later for his appointment, they told him he had to wait another three months, and put him on a “secret waiting list.” In the interim, Taylor’s life took a turn for the worse: He developed a tolerance to the opioid painkillers he’d been prescribed for a back injury he sustained in Afghanistan, and eventually switched to heroin. He floundered around for nearly two years until the VA finally helped get him into a PTSD program — but unfortunately, Taylor’s story isn’t unique.

Currently, there are no clinical studies in America examining cannabis for PTSD, with the exception of Dr. Sue Sisley’s FDA-approved double-blind research program in Arizona. Sisley, who also is interviewed in the documentary, and her cohort just enrolled their 61st vet in the program, with the goal of getting to 76. The veterans in the program are given up to 1.8 grams of flower a day so they can self-titrate, or smoke as much or as little as they feel they need.

The cannabis flower itself, which Sisley bemoans is of poor quality, is grown by a government facility at the University of Mississippi. “I don’t have any hope that this administration will take initiative to license other growers for research, even though the DEA announced over two years ago they would do that,” Sisley says. “So in the meantime, we’re stuck with this really suboptimal plant material. Our beef is that it doesn’t represent real-world cannabis.”

Sisley fears the medical community will never embrace whole-plant cannabis as a medicine until it’s been put through an FDA drug development process. But even so, Sisley has already observed decent efficacy with minimal side effects. “The main side effect is anxiety,” she says. “But I assure you the side effects are still considerably less than the prescriptions that I write for patients every day.”

So far, research from the Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies (MAPS) has shown that patients with PTSD have lower levels of anandamide, also known as the body’s “bliss molecule,” an endogenous cannabinoid, or chemical compound normally found in cannabis. Anandamide triggers the same receptors that are activated by THC, CBD and other cannabis compounds, according to researcher Marlene Taylor. Because PTSD is characterized by a deficiency of anandamide, cannabis can be especially helpful.

In short, cannabis might be able to replenish the body’s receptor sites for cannabinoids, where PTSD causes deficiencies. At the same time, pot suppresses the REM phase of the sleep cycle, when dreams and traumatic nightmares happen. By this token, cannabis could also help PTSD patients sleep better.

Many states around the country, even those with conservative medical marijuana programs, have sanctioned cannabis for PTSD. “One of the things we had to overcome were irrational stigmas that had been around for decades, when some people in the administration and elsewhere thought of cannabis, they think of hippies and the ‘60s,” says Pennsylvania state senator Daylin Leach, who passed his state’s medical marijuana bill. “Vets were hugely helpful [in passing the bill]. One guy who had never smoked pot in his life said that when he tried it, after suffering with PTSD and meds that made him a zombie and suicidal, he felt like he had his life back. The endorsement from a demographic you wouldn’t think of as being pro-cannabis was hugely helpful in changing minds.”

While Rowe’s family once judged him for being a “stoner,” they says he’ve come a long way in recognizing that cannabis is truly his medicine. “My mother kicked me out for smoking cannabis, but when I made this movie, for the first time she understood what I was going through and why I smoke it,” he says. “For the first time in my life, I rolled a joint in front of my mom and didn’t feel bad about it, and she didn’t feel bad about it. And all of this started over a dimebag of shwag.”
Enter The Cabinet of Dr. Deekay

Through literature, painting and stop-motion animation, Camille Rose Garcia has realized a fantastic and zany universe

By Shana Nys Dambrot
Art books tend to focus on final, fully realized works and self-contained exhibitions, and hardly any get turned into movies. But in the case of Camille Rose Garcia, the order of things gets a bit cattywampus. For Garcia, this time it’s the book, *The Cabinet of Dr. Deekay*, that came first, in an original narrative project begun more than six years ago, influenced by years of work in the visual arenas of the publishing industry and one particularly alarming experience with dentistry.

The paintings in her current solo show at the Corey Helford Gallery actually came last, informed by the animated filming that’s been going on for the last two years.

The animation itself is being produced in collaboration with Martin Meunier of Meunier Films, best known for his company’s Oscar-winning work in *James and the Giant Peach* and *Coraline* and its revolutionary technology in the service of an indie sensibility.

It’s been a long journey for Garcia, 47, from youthful Disney dreaming to a top-tier L.A. gallery and the bustling El Segundo studio where her vision becomes a reality.

For her exhibition, “The Wonderful World of Dr. Deekay,” which opened May 12, Garcia executed an impressive suite of large-scale, richly textured, sparkling, goofy, shadowy, neon-inflected, expressive, folkloric paintings. Fever-dream portraits and narrative vignettes, these paintings and drawings depict key scenarios, plot points and protagonists whose more nuanced personas and accoutrements came to life as part of the parallel process of designing the stop-motion animation realm.

The paintings utilize and deftly parlay her schematic literary storylines into the evocative, visceral and disco-lit folklores that fans of her work adore. Take the majestic and seductive figure of La Sirena Fantasma — her whole look and story. We never actually meet her in the book. Instead, she is invoked by a brave and brilliant lobster named Sandoval, once her lover and determined to reunite with her. This is only one of several unresolved plot points in the book that telegraph Garcia’s vision for the stop-motion feature to become more than a film. Its snaking, nesting-doll array of places and persons is perhaps better suited to a series format than a feature. Either way, it’s going to be epic.

“I had no idea what I was doing,” Garcia says. “So I was free to have a lot of crazy ideas. But one thing was that, since it’s stop-motion, of course that design and production process is not computer-generated. It needed to include actual, built ...
objects, plus costumes, props, architectural and environmental settings. I had to figure out the logistics and details of scenes, locations and all the things that took place there. Every single element, every atom of every frame. And the palette, too! I did the book in ink drawings, so we needed a color story as much as everything else.”

And that’s exactly how Garcia came to fully develop the look and feel and expanded spaces of what came to be the new paintings. In turn, The Cabinet of Dr. Deekay—the story is complete but the design is coming to fruition now—doubtless will be flavored by the details worked out in the movie and painting studios. As it says early on in the storybook, “If you started over backwards you could sometimes get to a place before you left.”

Viewers of “The Wonderful World of Dr. Deekay” will get up close on dozens of illustrations, puppets, the first clips from the stop-motion film and an interior mural based on the old Wonderful World of Disney aesthetic.

“It’ll basically be a map of the whole known universe,” Garcia says, as it is both mapped and hinted at in the book. This includes a vast warehouse of shrink-rayed parts of the earth and sky; all the planet’s natural inhabitants; a sprawling Escher-esque hulk of a hospital on a seaside cliff; the hospital’s monstrous patient/prisoners; and its surreal labyrinth of hallways, cellars, false doors and wormholes, populated by hybrid creatures of air and ocean, both thralls and rebels, giant crickets and a feral albatross. “It doesn’t have to make sense,” Garcia says, “not in the same way our world does.”

Fairy tales, especially the super-dark Brothers Grimm versions, are intended to prepare children and adolescents for the archetypal, inevitable traumas of adult life—crime, injustice, heartbreak, death, lies—and also to encourage rewardable behaviors such as forgiveness, patience, honesty and empathy. “But no one,” Garcia laughs, “prepares you for the horror of, say, a violently bungled dental surgery and the prolonged quasi-psychosis of an atypical drug reaction.”

That’s the real-life and incredibly personal scenario at the root, so to speak, of the entire book/canvas/animation continuum. “I’d call it obfuscated autobiography,” Garcia says. “It is a story of terrible dentistry. I feared my whole life and finally what happened was the worst thing that could happen, worse than my worst nightmare.”

She’d been afraid of the dentist her whole life, and suffered from hard-to-fix periodontal issues. So right after her illustrated edition of Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland became a New York Times best-seller in 2010, she took her money and called a specialist, determined to get her issues sorted out for good.

One week and 11 root canals later, when it was time for gum surgery, things went off the rails. She remembers saying “I’m not OK,” as her eyes split between two focal planes and things in general split into multiple dimensions. She was having a bad drug reaction, a temporary and rather psychedelic cognitive break. “I’ve always had this fear. Fear of being tampered with, fear of the modern world…”

It’s a medical phobia, and a wariness of the rampant over-reliance on pills and prescription dysfunction in our medical system. When this happened to her, Garcia says, “I saw through the veil.” This book is the story of what she saw. The drawings are what it looked like, and in a way, the paintings are how it felt to be there.

Since Garcia started with the book, we will, too, with a brief spoiler-
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Handmaid’s Tale —artist Camille Rose Garcia on her creation that. Its introduction is the scene in which we learn that Alex’s face, which had been removed and replaced with, well, something less desirable, has its own sentient, separate storyline. The vault where this cabinet is hidden is just one wing of the innumerable sprawls of the hospital, and its own rewarding challenge to design and build for the animation.

Likewise the Sea Prison, the underwater location in which we learn that the claw that is now Alex’s right hand used to have an owner, Sandoval, who misses it almost as much as Alex misses his face. The lobster character has kind of an Inigo Montoya thing going on, involving both a love story and a sort of political activist subplot. He wants his mermaid girlfriend back, but first he has to raise awareness of the sea’s plight among us surface dwellers. Well, first he has to get his claw back. Though we don’t (yet) meet her in the story, other than in Sandoval’s memory, Garcia’s op-

It doesn’t have to make sense, not in the same way our world does.
—artist Camille Rose Garcia on her creation

Huxley and Franz Kafka — all of whom worked in the allegorical, symbol-rich world of dystopian fiction, often presented as though for children. “Did you know,” Garcia says, “that Animal Farm was first offered as a fairy tale? It was rejected a few times before Orwell found a publisher.”

Like the antagonists of those novels, the character of the Doctor is, according to Garcia, “a middleman between evil and good.” He’s actually pretty terrible, but readers are also introduced to the Collection, which is the Doctor’s secret stash of illegal old-world relics, evoking Winston Smith’s perilous wistfulness in 1984.

“Flanking the walls of the long hall were an endless collection of glass-doored cabinets,” reads the scene, “and in between there were doorways leading to other rooms filled with even more cabinets, which contained boxes inside of the cabinets and within the boxes there were entire worlds, and they all contained fragile and extinct
rems saved from a disappearing world, saved from futile and senseless destruction ordered by the Party. He loved the place."

These worlds were stored in their boxes by virtue of molecular shrink-rays, in a very Doctor Who- pocket universe kind of way.

One imagines this corridor of tiny worlds as an endless source of imagery and of plots, another reason this book should really be a television series, on the order of Fantastic Voyage, with a little of the edge of The Prisoner. The Cavern of Cabinets is a model of the universe, or else perhaps of the human mind, with the look and feel of a false diorama replicating the known world to trick its inhabitants, on the order of retro-futurist sci-fi masterpiece Dark City, in which aliens experiment on humans by transplanting memories and rearranging the city streets each night. "There are a great many doors," Alex’s would-be rescuers admit at one point, "but we can’t seem to find an exit."

These rescuers are the Cats of the Midnight Moon, a band of felines with steely nerves, military-grade strategic thinking, exceptional knitting skills, a knack for burglary and a dedication to leading the resistance to Party rule. This crew is lead by Alex’s missing and presumed dead cat Pier St. Claire, who had scammed when word of the cat-banning laws came down; he’s been plotting revenge and the restoration of natural order ever since. “Well, I’m not dead,” he tells Alex at their first reunion, “and I’m here to put you back together again ... I know where your face is.”

Garcia was born in 1970 in Los Angeles, where her parents were an activist filmmaker father and a muralist/painter mother. She grew up near Disneyland, but you didn’t need that kind of proximity to be influenced by the world of Disney as a child. What was interesting to Garcia was the juxtaposition of the Enchanted Kingdom with the punk scene to which she was equally attracted. All of these cats and hospital denizens portrayed in the drawings, which formed the basis for the stop-motion animations, definitely evince a sensibility born from that Disney/punk rock hybrid.

Animation pioneer Meunier was instantly attracted to the potential for Garcia’s project. This stop-motion video is Garcia’s first foray into the medium, though she had dreamed of being an animator (specifically a Disney artist) long before attending art school.

“When we first started plotting this out,” Garcia says, “there were questions. Like, ‘How big is this world?’ ‘How big are its rooms, compared to the characters?’ In my drawings, there were sketches but there were no straight lines, and they said, ‘Well, do you need straight lines?’ Of course not!

It’s not the real world, it doesn’t need to make sense!”

Influenced by the phantasmagorical architectural visions of Gaudi and Geiger, Garcia designed organic buildings, feeling that not only the metastasizing hospital but the entire world of the story is alive. Structured as a kind of nesting doll, the hospital is made of an untold number of nesting “cabinets,” rooms within rooms, shrunken-down continents in boxes on shelves. It’s like a multiverse half based on string theory, emblematic of the way mixed reality increasingly blurs the boundaries between real and fake. Garcia’s challenge was to make it tangible. “Don’t worry,” Meunier’s team said, “we can build anything you can draw.” Challenge accepted.

The paintings and drawings in the exhibition are accompanied by sculptural objects, which in many cases also functioned as the props, puppets and sets for the animation. There is actually a huge amount of locational description in the book; for example, “a cavernous green emerald hallway draped with moss and twinkling with an almost imperceptible sheen.” Garcia’s palette was inspired by the psychedelic qualities of her post-dental hallucinations. She looked for inspiration to iconic colorists such as Peter Max, Yellow Submarine, and all that 1960s psychedelic, fluorescent, candy-store, glitter-bomb goodness.

Meunier explains that not only shape and palette but, as with painting itself, lighting makes a huge difference in the emotional and cognitive impact of imagery. “In computer-generated worlds,” he says, “to re-create the architecture of light is impossible — it’s better to light the real thing.” That’s one of the main reasons he so enjoys the production process of stop-motion, what he calls the “toy factor,” an economy of scale not unlike a dollhouse coming to life.

“The appeal of miniatures is obvious,” Garcia says. “Tiny real objects evoke a sense of nostalgia, play and the texture of a made-up world.”

The book, like the show, has an open-ended conclusion that telegraphs the infinitude of its nature. But the fact of it being published at all is also a kind of happy ending for Garcia: Long Gone John, the famous/infamous lowbrow art champion, is putting out books now as Sympathetic Press, and will publish hers this fall. “He said, ‘Do whatever you want,’” Garcia laughs. “It’s my world. It’s the one I want to make.”

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A WINNING ATTITUDE

Beard Awards honoree Caroline Styne will never be above bussing tables

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Last May, the stage of the Hollywood Bowl was set with tables of food and flowers. Chandeliers were suspended from the top of the Bowl over bartenders mixing drinks and pouring wine as the sun set over the hills. Guests milled about, but the audience seats were all empty.

Caroline Styne, the star of the show and co-owner of the Lucques group of restaurants, was busy bussing dirty dishes at the party, celebrating the Los Angeles Philharmonic’s season. Styne will be onstage at the Bowl again Tuesday to preview the diverse menu for the Bowl’s new concert season, which begins May 22 with Paul Simon’s farewell tour.

Styne, the just-announced James Beard Award winner as Outstanding Restaurant, and her partner, chef Suzanne Goin, have taken over and expanded the Hollywood Bowl food and wine program to include a variety of dining options: two full-service restaurants, food kiosks, custom picnic boxes for pre-order and supper in your seats, and the newly built Plaza Marketplace for grab-and-go prepared foods and wine.

They have brought in teams of the best chefs from the Lucques group to prepare and develop every dish, relying on local produce and freshly baked bread.

Authentic street food can be found throughout the Bowl grounds, including a diverse selection of the multicultural foods of Los Angeles, from street tacos and specialty hot dogs and sausages to confections and signature desserts at the Sweet Shop.

Styne oversees every detail of her empire, which aside from Lucques includes A.O.C. and Tavern restaurants as well as the Larder Baking Company. The iconic Lucques will celebrate its 20th anniversary in September.

“l’m always bussing tables,” the diminutive Styne tells L.A. Weekly. “I can’t walk by a table with dirty dishes on it and pretend that I’m too good to clean them up. That’s my joke when I’m plunging a toilet, how glamorous the restaurant business is. I’ll be there cleaning up a spill. It’s all about the guest experience and what they see, and I take an active part in that. ... Everybody works with me, not for me.”

That work ethic started early. Her single mother, Mimi Styne, a pioneering female Realtor in Los Angeles, raised Styne and her three siblings. She died of cancer when Caroline was 17.

“I watched my mother have her own business and just assumed that’s...”
what I was going to do. I never wanted to be in a cubicle somewhere,” Styne says.

A trip to Mexico inspired her to develop her own line of flavored tortillas and quinoa tortillas (unheard of at the time).

“My partner then and I did this all in my tiny rent-controlled apartment in Santa Monica. If any normal-sized person would have gone into this apartment, they would have thought it was a dollhouse, but to us it was perfect. We connected with a health food company called Barbara’s Bakery and sold the idea,” Styne says. She later met and connected with Goin, winner of a James Beard Award for Best Chef in 2016, and the rest is L.A. restaurant history. Last week Styne took home the James Beard Award for Outstanding Restaurateur at a ceremony in Chicago.

“I am just completely over the moon about this win,” she says. “I really hadn’t expected this and am just so thrilled to bring the award home to my home and restaurant families. This is really a testament to the hard work and sacrifice that everyone in our group puts in, from the front of the house to the back of the house, busters, dishwashers, prep cooks, line cooks, servers, runners, managers and beyond. I feel so lucky to have all of these incredible people on my team. This award is really all about them.”

That team effort is grounded in the unique relationship she has with partner Goin and their united vision and philosophy about what the Lucques group should be. Styne says she can count the disagreements they’ve had on one hand.

“What makes us different from other people is we don’t have that ‘20 restaurants in 20 years’ plan. We go one at a time. We just thought we’d have Lucques — we never thought beyond that, our dream restaurant,” says Styne. “We’re restaurant soulmates. She is very level-headed but she is a chef. It’s like a marriage. We’ve had our ups and our downs, but we are in a really good place right now. We’ve been together over 20 years and have had our growing pains. I spend more time with her than my husband.”

Styne feels a strong connection to her community, children and efforts to battle cancer, which took her mother at an early age. Each year she and Goin produce the L.A. Loves Alex’s Lemonade food festival to raise funds to fight childhood cancers; they’ve raised millions for cancer research. The massive event brings together the best chefs and vintners across the country on the UCLA campus in the name of Alexandra Scott, who died of cancer at age 8 and started her own fight raising funds by selling lemonade.

The young woman in her Santa Monica dollhouse kitchen formulating quinoa tortillas never imagined she’d be the head of one of L.A.’s biggest culinary institutions.

“What makes us different from other people is we don’t have that ‘20 restaurants in 20 years’ plan. We go one at a time.”

—RESTAURATEUR CAROLINE STYNE

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**Stage**

**LADIES SING THE BLUES**

*Blues in the Night* is back in all its glory at the Wallis.

By Jordan Riefe

When director Sheldon Epps was a young man trying to make it on Broadway in the 1970s, he came across a quote from Billie Holiday that read, “Blues is to jazz what yeast is to bread.” He took that phrase to heart and, along with dancer-choreographer Gregory Hines, assembled his directorial debut, *Blues in the Night*, a musical revue exploring the romantic tribulations of three women and one wayward man through classic American songs.

In 1980, the show enjoyed its world premiere off-Broadway at Playhouse 46 before moving to the Rialto Theater two years later starring Leslie Uggams. It ran only 53 performances but still managed to garner a Tony nomination for best musical. A West End revival in 1987 earned two Olivier nominations, including best musical, and subsequent tours attracted names like Della Reese and Eartha Kitt to the marquee.

Another revival is scheduled for London next year, but until then *Blues in the Night* is back in the ever-loving hands of creator Epps at the intimate Lovelace Theater at the Wallis in Beverly Hills.

The conceit is simple: Three women occupy separate rooms in a 1938 Chicago hotel, conjured by scenic designer John Iacovelli. A moody parlor stage right is occupied by “The Woman of the World” (Paulette Ivory), a bedroom center stage belongs to “The Lady From the Road” (Yvette Cason), and a practical table and chair stage left are the home of “The Girl With a Date” (Bryce Charles). Each has a similar story to tell through song about “The Man in the Saloon,” a no-good played by Chester Gregory, who employs his biggest Broadway voice on songs like Duke Ellington’s “I’m Just a Lucky So-and-So” and “Wild Women Don’t Have the Blues” by Ida Cox.

As expected, the set list is loaded with unforgettable standards like “Willow Weep for Me,” in which newbie Bryce Charles seamlessly blends her delicate soprano voice with an evocative arrangement featuring flute, muted horn and piano. Charles was in the touring company of *The Book of Mormon* and holds only a few TV credits, which makes her remarkable debut at the Wallis all the more auspicious.

In “Take Me for a Buggy Ride,” a rambunctious Yvette Cason implores her driver to “giddy-up, Daddy, curve it and swerve it,” stretching the innuendo with “Kitchen Man,” a song with allusions to meat, heat, sausages and clams. Her rendition of Bessie Smith’s “Wasted Life Blues” in the second act nearly brings down the house. A veteran of the Los Angeles stage, Cason demonstrated substantial musical range playing Mahalia Jackson in the Pasadena Playhouse production of *Shout Sister Shout* last year, and brings a similar force and talent to her work here.

Paulette Ivory renders Benny Goodman’s “Stompin’ at the Savoy” in a silky mezzo, slowing down the pace and imbuing it with emotion. She joins the others in ensemble numbers like the titular “Blues in the Night” by Harold Arlen, as well as Bessie Smith’s raunchy “It Makes My Love Come Down,” living the songs rather than singing them.

It’s what makes *Blues in the Night* more than a concert. Epps is savvy enough to recognize these songs are stories and must be inhabited to be properly interpreted, transforming them to living narratives with hearts and souls laid bare.

No doubt it’s the result of instincts honed over 40 years in the theater. For half that time Epps served as artistic director of the budget-challenged Pasadena Playhouse, from 1997 to 2017, spawning the original productions of eventual Tony nominees like *Sister Act: The Musical, Baby It’s You, and Looped*. Returning to *Blues in the Night*, adding dialogue and more fully articulating his characters based on the comments of critics, Epps just might have found some truth in Holiday’s quote, “Blues is to jazz what yeast is to bread,” because he’s been rising ever since the day he first read it.

**BLUES IN THE NIGHT** | Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts, 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills | Through May 27 | (310) 716-4000 | thewallis.org/blues

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TIME’S UP IN TERMINAL

Actress-producer Margot Robbie is a femme fatale with a plan in her new thriller

BY DAVID WEINER

Make no mistake: Margot Robbie runs the show and the scenes of the new thriller Terminal, in which she plays a vengeful femme fatale with an agenda taking on hired assassins and shadowy characters in a neon-lit, anarchonomic film noir setting.

“She’s a quirky waitress with a morbid fascination with death,” actress-producer Robbie tells L.A. Weekly about her duplicitous character, Annie, who holds several aces up her crimson sleeve.

“As she says in the film, she has an unquenchable bloodlust of darkness and depravity. She gets immense enjoyment out of carrying out sadistic pleasures.”

Writer-director Vaughn Stein's darkly playful debut feature, released May 11, gleefully riffs on Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland, with a touch of hard-boiled edge reminiscent of Sin City. Co-stars Simon Pegg, Mike Myers, Dexter Fletcher and Max Irons are players caught in Annie’s sinister web of intrigue.

As the film’s producer, Robbie, who received a Best Actress Oscar nomination for her lead role in I, Tonya, was a key architect in bringing Stein's story to life. With her LuckyChap Entertainment production company, she worked to develop the script, secure financing, line up the ideal crew, hunt down locations and proactively cast the story to achieve a fine-tuned hum. “And then we were off to the races,” she says, beaming. Indeed, the Australian-born star has a right to be proud of pulling off her latest project, given the challenges of indie-budget filmmaking.

“Vaughn had so many great ideas,” she recalls of her first read-through of Terminal. “I started asking questions, but I wasn’t expecting him to have an answer [regarding] backstory and motivation, and he had these incredible answers. And I was like, ‘Well, put that in the script, it’s so good!’”

As Stein says of the film’s version of the fable, “I really wanted to be able to convey the urban fairy tale, and I think Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland was a really elegant way of doing it; we really stitched it into the DNA of the film,” he tells L.A. Weekly. “The iconography within Alice is so universal — everyone knows and everyone recognizes the Mad Hatter, the smoking Caterpillar — these are sort of totemic things in the collective conscious.”

Packed with “Easter eggs” — from the signage and costume design to pointed dialogue and five original Alice in Wonderland–themed songs written for the film by Newton Faulkner — the trick to watching Terminal is trying to determine who reflects whom from the classic Carroll tale, as most characters are not what they seem — including Annie. “It fits the world well,” Stein says. “It has that sense of surrealist hypnosis and kaleidoscopic elements to it, so weaving it into Terminal made sense.”

The casting of Pegg as the sickly schoolteacher, Bill, also lends itself to the narrative misdirection, as no character is a saint in Terminal. “You fall into the trap of loving Bill and thinking he’s this nice guy,” Robbie says, “and then there’s this certain comfort level, it trails with audiences when Simon’s onscreen. And then to have the rug torn out from under your feet like that, you feel even more deceived.”

“The script was very artful and it felt like theater,” Pegg tells L.A. Weekly. As his projects of late — the Star Trek and Mission: Impossible franchises — have required heavy emoting and lots of physicality, he applauds Terminal’s subtlety and plot twists. “It wasn’t just exposition. I wasn’t just running around, not detonating bombs or saving the universe. I really loved the idea of playing something which was very much in contrast to other things that I’ve done. Maybe he starts out to be the kind of character you’d see me play, but he turns out to be someone you wouldn’t.”

Robbie’s eye for casting also impressively lured Mike Myers out of the woodwork to play a mysterious, limping janitor who may just hold the key to the heart of Terminal’s labyrinthine plot. What was the trick to luring Myers to the film? “‘Bananas,’ Pegg jokes. “We left them outside his place in New York.”

“And then a trail all the way to Budapest, Robbie chimes in with a laugh. Despite his recent in-disguise experiment as Tommy Maitland, the quirky host of TV’s updated The Gong Show, Myers had not appeared in a major feature since 2009’s Inglourious Basterds. The prospect of getting the former Austin Powers comedian to do the film felt like a long shot.

“We were trying to find someone really unique, someone totally off the wall,” Stein recalls. Robbie adds, “We kept saying we want a character actor, someone who really incorporates physicality into the role. … And with most things on this film, we thought, ‘Why not just try? Give it a go.’”

Robbie fully credits Stein with sealing the deal with Myers because the writer-director has “such a way with words, a way of explaining his vision and building a world in front of your eyes, that you just want to dive inside.”

Stein says that once Myers was on board, his devotion to the role was intense, developing an entire backstory for his character. “He is impeccably prepared when he comes to set, and he pushes and pushes everyone around him as hard as he can, all in pursuit of the best it could be. It’s amazing to be around.”

The mission statement of LuckyChap, which Robbie founded in 2014 with partners Tom Ackerley and Josey McNamara, is a dedication to championing strong female talent and stories, while providing a platform for a new generation of filmmakers to explore their craft.

In that vein, Pegg, for his part, perceives Terminal to be a contributing voice to the empowering MeToo and #TimesUp movements. “It’s a very timely film in that it’s essentially kind of like a ‘Time’s Up’ film,” Pegg says. “It’s about a woman taking revenge on all the toxic masculinity that’s affected her all through her life. And if Alice in Wonderland is about a woman being terrorized by a perverse society, this film is about a woman terrorizing a perverse society and taking revenge. It just feels like, ‘Wow, this is really on point.’”

Though Terminal was written in 2015 and filmed in Budapest in the summer of 2016, Pegg opines, “This feels like it could have been written last year as a reaction to everything that’s happened rightly in society recently.”

On a high-speed career climb thanks to her head-spinning bad-girl performance as Harley Quinn in Suicide Squad and her acclaimed turn as disgraced figure skater Tonya Harding in I, Tonya, Robbie has demonstrated that she will not be satisfied simply to wait for great projects to fall in her lap — even if her phone is blowing up these days. Going down the rabbit hole with LuckyChap, she’s aggressively moving forward with a diverse slate of projects in film and television. Guiding Quinn’s return for DC’s Birds of Prey with Kathy Yan attached to direct along with her attachment to multiple other in-the-works Quinn projects — Robbie is also taking on juicy roles that include Queen Elizabeth in Josie Rourke’s Mary Queen of Scots, trapeze artist Lillian Leitzel in Queen of the Air, a revisionist take on Maid Marian that twists the Robin Hood legend in Marian, a fugitive bank robber in the Dust Bowl thriller Dreamland and others.

Explaining her nothing-ventured-nothing-gained, can-do mindset, Robbie says matter-of-factly, “I guess the idea is that you wait until someone says they’ll do your project. And then [at LuckyChap] we’re like, ‘If that’s not going to happen, why don’t we just do it?’”

After seeing the results of Terminal, the star’s trajectory is clear: It’s her time on and off screen.
DEADPOOL BLINKS

Deadpool 2 will laugh at anything, except the sanctity of superhero movies

BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL

More than half a century ago, in the scorchingly bleak Friz Freleng short “Show Biz Bugs,” that frustrated show-fowl Daffy Duck finally finds a way to win over an indifferent audience. Standing center stage, he gulps down gasoline, nitroglycerin, Uranium 238, and then — after a vigorous bout of shaking — a lit match. He explodes, and the crowd does, too — but they do so in the good way. They roar their approval.

Problem is, the duck’s ghost-angel notes, “You can only do it once.”

The endlessly yammering superhero Deadpool (Ryan Reynolds) stages for himself a similar suicide in the opening moments of the second movie to bear his name. The setup is elaborate, involving explosive barrels, a slo-mo match toss and an ironic Air Supply music ballad. Explosive barrels, a slo-mo match toss. The setup is elaborate, involving explosive barrels, a slo-mo match toss and an ironic Air Supply music ballad.

But Deadpool’s mutant power makes him essentially unkillable: In the first film, he shatters his hands punching the X-Man Colossus (Stefan Kapicic) and grows new ones by the next fight. That means that Deadpool killing himself has none of the rawness or terror of Daffy Duck doing the same. Unlike Daffy, he can pull the trick again, as often as he wants, and audiences know this. Or they should: For Deadpool 2 to approach coherence, you must have seen Deadpool, Logan and a couple of X-Men, and maintain a working knowledge of the corporate and contractual absurdities that make Deadpool’s Marvel Universe distinct from the X-Men’s and both distinct from the Avengers’. If you’ve ever feared, watching the superhero movies, that there might be a test later, I have to warn you: This is it.

Several minutes later, we see Deadpool jaunt across the world, slaughtering interchangeable villains in many countries, each shot of this montage an elaborate, frenetic long take that finds the hero stabbing and shooting, slicing off heads and arms and eventually just cold chainsawing some mooks. He notes, in narration, that everyone watching must be thinking we’re glad that we didn’t bring the kids to this movie. The line lands with a thud — it’s a preening joke, an “ain’t I a stinker?” joke, and its premise is based on a misapprehension. Deadpool, or at least the filmmakers, actually think someone might find all the carnage and balls jokes shocking. It’s not even as harrowing as Looney Tunes. When the kids do see it, they’ll roar undisturbed.

Look, you probably know already whether you’re going to see Deadpool 2. If you are, the question is simply how much you should invest in it. Full-price opening night? Weeknight Moviefass? Streaming in three months? At a cousin’s house this Thanksgiving, as the kiddos re-enact the kills? Here’s what you need to know: This is less Deadpool 2 than Deadpool Squared, a studio and its star (Reynolds is credited as co-writer) committing to hyper-violent, self-referential, comic-book buffoonery. They’ve crafted both an extravagant franchise blockbuster and its own Mad Magazine parody. Almost everything you either loved or gritted at in the original is here expanded, refined, sometimes even invigorated. It’s giddier in its mayhem, more gratuitous in its splatter, more confident in its mixing comedy and superhero pathos. The fights are more elaborate but somehow less engaging, with much of the chump-killing too fast to follow, despite David Leitch, the co-director of John Wick, serving as director. The jokes, though, are better, the relationships more interesting, the surprises more surprising.

It’s meta that Lego Deadpool would be redundant. Reviewing the first Deadpool, I carped that the star, an exuberant Reynolds puttiing over with fake burn scars, is his series’ own RiffTrax, patterning right over the plot’s contrivances. This time Deadpool is even Deadpool-er, cracking on his own box-office receipts, the deaths in Logan, the dopiest twist in Batman v Superman, the fact that Josh Brolin, who here plays the derivative time-traveling killer Cable, also played Thanos in Avengers: Infinity War.

The conversation about Deadpool 2 is baked right into the movie, with Reynolds cracking every joke that Marvelphiles might normally tweet themselves. Again, Deadpool even acknowledges his own film’s deficiencies. “That’s just lazy writing!” Deadpool exclaims after learning of one arbitrary complication. That’s true, but it’s also a cheap way of asking us to let the production off the hook. I can understand why fans might laugh, but I’m obliged to ask: Wouldn’t less lazy writing without a self-exonerating joke prove more satisfying?

The difference between Deadpool’s parody of itself and what Mel Brooks or Zucker-Abrahms-Zucker might have done is that, for all its (often funny!) irreverence, Deadpool never dares assail the one thing its creators and fans truly hold sacred: the high seriousness of superhero movies. That opening suicide attempt is inspired, in a flashback we see just a few minutes later, by the corniest dude-hero motivator this side of seeing his partner gunned down by a drug kingpin. (I’m not going to spell it out, exactly, because you people take this spoiler stuff way too seriously.) That’s followed by a James Bond–parodying title sequence with jokes that are based on the assumption that we can’t believe what we’ve just seen — but we’ve seen it dozens of times before, in dozens of movies. The jolt is not that it happens but that a movie that carries itself like the smartest, most cutting critic of pop-culture clichés asks us to invest in the oldest and cheapest.

Leitch’s film is entirely earnest in its emotions, even saddling the hero with a troubled teen to mentor. Sometimes the most hilarious thing in the movie is its baffling morality. Packing superweapons and rock-hard abs, Cable has journeyed to our present from his future to murder the young mutant (Julian Dennison) who will one day kill Cable’s family. (Deadpool shrugs at this premise’s staleness by offering a Terminator joke.) Our hero, of course, can’t abide the death of a teenager, so he strikes a deal with Cable: If ‘Pool can prevent the kid from taking his first life, Cable will back off.

After some inspired nonsense (surprise cameos; a strong team-building sequence; an ace comic set piece involving a Fast & Furious–style heist plan; a dada bit of healing-factor body horror/humor), Cable and Deadpool find the kid and, to prevent his own first kill, slaughter dude after dude themselves. They’re joined in this by winning newbie Domino (Atlanta’s Zazie Beetz, who deserves much more screen time). Here’s death to prevent death, death as punchline and dance sequence, death without consequence even as the script insists nothing could matter more.

It’s telling that the hero who never shuts up doesn’t dare joke about the contradiction; rather than face its own moral incoherence, Deadpool 2 blinks.

THIS IS LESS DEADPOOL 2 THAN DEADPOOL SQUARED, A STUDIO AND ITS STAR COMMITTING TO HYPER-VIOLENT, SELF-REFERENTIAL, COMIC-BOOK BUFOONERY.
THE EDIES REDUX

THAT SUMMER INVITES US BACK INTO THE MYSTERIOUS SQUALOR OF GREY GARDENS

BY ALAN SCHERTHUL

D don’t let the title fool you. Despite 20 or so bookend- ing minutes in which photog rapher and artist Peter Beard reveals cov er old photos and some alluring footage about the innocent days when Montauk, New York, drew celeb rities like Andy Warhol and Mick Jagger rather than mere ka- bilionaires, That Summer could more helpfully have been called More Edie and Edie or Before Grey Gardens or A Very Edie Prequel or Hey, Look What We Found! The heart of the film, about an hour of its running time, consists of new-to-us footage of those perennial documentary favorites, the reclu-otive Big and Little Edie Beale of the Mayesles’ Grey Gardens. In 1972, Lee Radziwill (as in former Princess Caroline Lee Radziwill née Bouvier) shlepped from Southampton, New York, to East Hampton with the idea of making a documentary about the Long Island life of her and her family, including her sister, Jackie O; why not invite their “eccentric” — that’s Radziwill’s term — Aunt Edie to participate, filming the scandalous Havisham squalor of her life, and maybe get her to sing a few songs? So, Radziwill, Beard and a film crew that included the Mayesles brothers (Albert and David) entered the crumbling, overgrown, raccoon-infested mansion that would eventually become legend. The Bouvier-family documentary sputtered, and the Mayesles never got access to the footage they shot in ’72; recog- nizing a great story when they saw one, they made Grey Gardens a year later.

Now, That Summer reveals four lost reels of Grey Gardens’ habit- uits, “Big” Edie Beale — aunt to Radziwill and Jackie O — and “Little” Edie Beale, “Big” Edie’s adult daughter. They are, here, es- sentially as we remember them, just a touch more self-conscious. The crucial difference: Here the Beales are often in receiving-vis- itors mode, on their best behav- ior in the company of Radziwill and Beard. In fact, That Summer finds the dank, dark confines of Grey Gardens getting sunnier and more welcoming. Radziwill and Co. arranged for plumbers and electricians to come out and restore hot water to the property, all while making plans to dispose of rotting furniture and bags of garbage. This footage is more incen- dential, less mysterious and revelatory than in Grey Gardens. But, still, it’s more of the Edies, which makes it priceless. (Goran Hugo Ols- son, director of The Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975, put the film together.) Highlights include Edie the younger, again wearing black turtlenecks and marvelous headscarves, improvising a caba- net number she calls “My Adobe Hacienda.” There is, again, much ado about critters, including far too many cats: “Mother was en- gaged to Horace Bigelow Allen, so I named that Maltese male cat Bigelow,” Little Edie tells us. Pointing to a golden tabby, she says, “That’s Teddy Kennedy. He has eye trouble.” Meanwhile, the raccoons eat at the roof and the cats and raccoons toss them and inspire this for-the-ages observa- tion: “I think it was the icing on the cake that made them vomit.” Occasionally, present-day Radziwill and Beard speak in warm terms over this footage about the intensely private lives the Edies lived in Grey Gardens. “They were in a dream world, and it was OK,” Beard says, investing OK with curious significance, as if it’s the most profound insight. But in stray moments, Little Edie seems desperate to escape: “I’ll never feel right in this place, ever,” she sighs. She often covers her face when the camera moves from her mother to her — she’s much more comfortable performing the role of Edie when alone with the crew. “If I were a drinker, I could be consuming my eight bottles of booze every day,” she confides in a stairwell. Late in the film, the Radziwill cohort departs Grey Gardens, leaving the film crew be- hind. Soon the Edies are picking at each other while the Mayesles pan around Big Edie’s sitting room, studying the clutter. After much time spent on Big Edie’s fondness for her own portrait, Little Edie turns the conversation to the general untrustworthiness of men.

“You shouldn’t have had incest with your uncle,” Big Edie snaps. “I didn’t have incest — I just found out about men,” Little Edie replies.

As often happens in Grey Gardens, this moment pierces through the voyeuristic skeiv- ness of the project. Rather than just gaping at the spectacle of Hamptons royalty gone proudly to seed, here we’re invited to ache with them, to consider whether the other options their lives of- fered would truly be better than their filthy yet comforting co- dependence. Not that watching this feels clean. Offhandedly, in a movie that itself is offhanded to a fault, Little Edie cuts to the core of the whole Grey Gardens phenomenon during one of her most famous scenes: “To [dig up the past, I think, is about the most cruel thing any- body can do.”

THAT SUMMER | Directed by Goran Hugo Olsson | Sundance Selects
YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DO LIST

Silents Shine at Old Town Music Hall, Art Theatre
Friday, May 18
The slow-burn forces of Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy are timeless in their exuberant silliness. That’s why they seem to play better to kids today than some of the other geniuses from the Golden Age of Comedy. The Old Town Music Hall in El Segundo comprehends their appeal, as evidenced by its annual Laurel & Hardy Festival, a weekend romp featuring some of the comic duo’s funniest short subjects. The show likely will begin with an audience sing-along featuring the Mighty Wurlitzer pipe organ. The theater has been in business since 1968 and still has plenty of charm. Be sure to bring cash, though, because this place is so old-fashioned it doesn’t take credit cards. Old Town Music Hall, 140 Richmond St., El Segundo; Fri., May 18, 8:15 p.m.; $10. (310) 322-2992, oldtownmusichall.org.

Saturday, May 19
Cinespia heads into the hotter days of summer with another screening among the headstones of Hollywood Forever Cemetery. This week’s, it’s Nicholas Winding Refn’s uber-cool Drive, starring the stoic Ryan Gosling as a getaway driver who gets more than he bargained for when he intervenes for the girl next door (Carey Mulligan). Shot in hot pop colors and featuring some of the fanciest stuntwork outside of The Fast and the Furious franchise, this violent action flick came ready-made for cult status. Cinespia, Hollywood Forever Cemetery, 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., May 19, 8:30 p.m.; $16 (plus $2 for on-site parking). cinespia.org.

Sunday, May 20
Bernardo Bertolucci’s The Conformist was an aesthetic breakthrough in 1970, when it thrust its young Italian director into the international spotlight. Today, it remains an irrepressibly stylish precursor to some of the decade’s most intellectually stimulating thrillers. The Art Directors Guild Film Society has partnered with the American Cinemathque for a special screening sponsored by The Hollywood Reporter. The crisp digital screening will be followed by a discussion with production designer Hannah Beachler, moderated by Michael Allen Glover. Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., May 20, 5:30 p.m. $12. (323) 406-3436, americancinemathquecalendard.com.

Tuesday, May 22
The Art Theatre in Long Beach will screen the 1920 version of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde with a live musical score performed by the Jack Curtis Dubowski Ensemble. Seeing a classic silent without a canned soundtrack can be revelatory, especially if the film is as good as this one — John Barrymore’s intensely physical performance is the best take on the character until Fredric March won an Oscar for playing the ill-fated scientist a decade later. Unlike most versions, the transformation is achieved in a single take without makeup, allowing Barrymore to show off his epic facial contortions. Art Theatre, 2025 E. Fourth St., Long Beach; Tue., May 22, 7:30 p.m. $11.50. (562) 438-5435, arttheatrelongbeach.org.

Thursday, May 24
George A. Romero’s Night of the Living Dead — one of the first and greatest modern horror films — is 50 years old. To mark the anniversary, LACMA has teamed with the Hollywood Foreign Press Association to host a special screening with a new score by The Paranoyds, L.A.’s own four-piece psych-punk rock ensemble. Come for the movie, stay for the reception. LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Thu., May 24, 7:30 p.m.; $25. (323) 857-6000, lacma.org. —Nathaniel Bell
NEIGHBORHOOD MOVIE GUIDE

Schedules are subject to change; please call ahead to confirm showtimes. See Film & Video Events for additional shows.

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The Escape Fri., 5:15 p.m.; Sat., 4:30 p.m.; Sun., 7, 9 p.m.
Godspeed: The Race Across America Tue., 7 p.m.
Deadpool Fri., 9:45 p.m.
Godspeed: The IMAX 2D Experience Fri., 7 p.m.
Harry & Meghan - The Royal Wedding Thu., 6, 9:30 p.m.

AMC SUNSET 5 8000 West Sunset Boulevard (323)396-2217

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Thu., 7, 9 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Opening Experience Thu., 6 p.m.

LAEMMLE'S AYRZA FINE ARTS THEATRE 8550 Wilshire Boulevard

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story 3D Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
PACIFIC CULTURAL STADIUM 12 9500 Culver Blvd. (310) 304-9465

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Experience Thu., 6 p.m.

AMC LA BREA THEATRE 3 15080 W. Century Blvd. (310) 479-5811

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 11:30, 1:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Thu., 7, 9, 11:30, 1:30 p.m.
PACIFIC CULTURAL STADIUM 12 9500 Culver Blvd. (310) 304-9465

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Experience Thu., 6 p.m.

PACIFIC CULTURAL STADIUM 12 5900 Deep Valley Dr., Rolling Hills Estates (310) 530-3800

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 10 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story 3D Thu., 7, 9 p.m.

AMC THEATRE 20 3050 LA MIRADA BLVD (310) 307-0703

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7:30, 10:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Thu., 7:30, 10:30 p.m.
PACIFIC CULTURAL STADIUM 12 5900 Deep Valley Dr., Rolling Hills Estates (310) 530-3800

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 10 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story 3D Thu., 7, 9 p.m.

AMC THEATRE 8 4250 Fashion Island (310) 307-0703

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story The IMAX 2D Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
PACIFIC CULTURAL STADIUM 12 5900 Deep Valley Dr., Rolling Hills Estates (310) 530-3800

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 10 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story 3D Thu., 7, 9 p.m.

REGAL THE AVENUE 13 5900 Deep Valley Dr., Rolling Hills Estates (310) 530-3800

Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 10 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story 3D Thu., 7, 9 p.m.

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Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 11:30 p.m.
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Solo: A Star Wars Story Thu., 7, 9, 10 p.m.
Solo: A Star Wars Story 3D Thu., 7, 9 p.m.
vons have failed to tell their stories. These women’s voices reverberate through the years, vividly recalling the past after long lives they scarcely could have imagined. (Serena Donadoni)

FLESHLER with the downtown folk. Driver’s film premises inner-city people were beginning to mingle to get his foot into a scene where the Basquiat was a wandering vagabond, main focus, is not really as interesting. (Craig D. Lindsay)

GRACE JONES: BLOODLIGHT AND BAMI Too few female role models get memorialized in the culture as “rock stars.” Enter Grace Jones: Bloodlight and Bami, a document that resists reification even when the subject exploits in the club scenes of the 1970s and ‘80s, legends that director Sophie Fiennes says you can easily track down in books and magazines. Instead, this is an intimate portrait of the artist in recent years as she returns to Jamaica, the country of her birth and childhood, for a family reunion. She and her boisterous family — brothers, sister, mother, father — travel the island, meeting with friends, telling stories. Through these conversations, a heart-breaking story emerges, as the talk turns to a man named Max P, who was Jones’ and her brothers’ caretaker as a child, when her parents left to live in the States. Though Max P is long dead, his presence is like an echo. His story can find work told on Jones and her brothers, but they attest to having somehow transformed that pain into fuel for their new lives. Jones tells us that the raging masculine persona she adopted for her stage shows comes from allowing her memory of Max P to, in a way, possess her body. Fiennes then shows what that possession looks like when the segments of Jones performing a concert in 2016 of material from her most recent album, 2008’s ‘Tomorrow’s Hurricane. Watching her on stage, you could not guess at her age. In platform heels, she struts and conquers her domain like a 20-year-old glitzy-clad warrior. Her voice is robust and deep and still shines you. The footage is so elective that it prompted applause after every song in my community. (April Wolfe)

LU OVER THE WALL [YOAKE TSUGERU LU NO UTA] Mermaids are the new vampires, so Masaaki Yuasa’s bouncy anime Lu Over the Wall incorporates vampiric elements into its mermaid mythos, because why not? Indeed, “because why not?” seems to be the guiding impulse behind this colorful tripe about a teenager named Kai (the voice of Michael Sinterniklas), a talented musician who’s been sulking ever since his family moved from Tokyo to a small fishing village. He reluctantly agrees to help classmate Yuh (Stephanie Sheik) and Kunio (Brandon Engman) with their band, creating music that attracts a little girl and native fish person (Chiharu Naito as Cabanos). Calling the mermaid little isn’t just an easy Disney allusion; she’s a wee thing, which combined with her limited vocabulary, wide smile, and desire to spread love and friendship makes her come across like a precocious 5-year-old, or perhaps the Marie Piecem Dream Girl. Karl breaks her onward with this little girl. Her relationship with Kai remains largely platonic, though Lu’s own music makes humans dance uncontrollably, causing all hell to break loose in Kai’s historically mermaid-phobic village. Oh, and direct sunlight is fatal to Lu and her bite can turn humans and dogs into mer-creatures, so again, she’s a skosh vampiric. Even by anime standards, Lu Over the Wall is best enjoyed by disconnecting your logic circuits and just enjoying the pretty colors and sounds. (Shelley Connelly)

THE GUARDIANS (LES GARDEIENS) The gutting French WWI romantic drama The Guardians convincingly examines homebound women sublimating lovescissiveness (sexual, parental and sororal) into farmyard chores after their sons and husbands were sent to the eastern front. Director Bertrand Tavernier and director of photography Caroline Champetier’s picturesque landscape shots of women plowing fields and raking coals suggest why resourceful farmhand Francine (Iris Bry) prefers to chop firewood than to pursue a relationship with recently conscripted soldier Georges (Cyril Descours), Francine, a nominative outsider who wherever she goes permits the immediate satisfaction she gets from physical labor. That’s because she knows that everybody — including stubborn farm owner Hortense (Nathalie Baye), Francine’s boss and Georges’ mom — expects Georges to marry jealous farmhand Marguerite (Mathilde Vaeuve-Ely) instead, just because Marguerite’s a local girl. Beauvois (Of Gods and Men) and fellow co-writers Frederique Moreau and Marie-Julie Malle’s focus on the subtle beauty of everyday chores pays off handsomely when Hortense’s feisty neighbor Monette (Malle) catches her breath seconds after a local messenger tells her — while she kneels breakdancing in the sun — that her husband has been killed in action. Months of unexamined emotions (regret, heartache and overwhelming uncertainty) cross Malle’s face as she looking everywhere but at the bearer of bad news — stubbornly flicks gobs of bitter her fingers, as if trying to rid herself of her unruly feelings. These unassumingly powerful details make The Guardians one of the most affecting love stories. (Simon Abrams)

TRAINE TO ZAKOPANE Writer-director Henry Jaglom’s blocky dialogue makes his already hard-to-swallow WWII romantic-drama Train to Zakopane even more unpalatable. The film is a desperate plea for tolerance that follows self-righteous Russian-Jewish refugee Semyon (Mike Falkow) as he struggles with his romantic feelings for anti-Semitic Polish nurse Katia (Tanna Frederick). Many of the film’s conversation-centric scenes — adapted by Jaglom (Ovation, Tracks) from a stage play he wrote about real events from his late father’s life — circle around but never meaningfully develop two crucial plot points. Katia is unaware that Semyon is Jewish, and he doesn’t know how to reconcile what he sees as her dual nature. She’s ostensibly both “a fierce, hating bigot” and “a sweet, lovely, almost innocent creature,” too. But Semyon and Katia’s relationship is consistently unbelievable since she’s always raving about the economic anxieties that compel her to hate Jews. Her father was wounded by, in her words, “one of those crazy older religious Jews with the beard and the cape and the big black hat,” while Semyon weakly explains to her, “There are all kinds of Jews, just like there are all kinds of other people.” Jaglom’s dialogue also frequently trips up Falkow and Frederik, making it even harder to appreciate his leads’ chemistry. (It is best expressed through their warm smiles and curious glances.) If you spend enough time watching Train to Zakopane, you might want to join Semyon when he answers Katia — after she tells him that she doesn’t hate Jews, she “just doesn’t like certain attitudes, certain behaviors” — in her filmmaking: “Stop! Stop! Stop!” (Simon Abrams)

BOOM FOR REAL: THE LATE YOUTH OF JEAN-MICHEL BASQUIAT There are two stories being told in the documentary Boom for Real: The First: How 1970s New York, that city of urban decay, run-down apartment buildings, rampant crime and overwhelming squalor, spawned a hopeful, vibrant art scene. At the same time, graffiti virtuoso Lee Quiñones and savvy hustler Fab 5 Freddy (both interviewed here) were spearheading or whatever they called fields over there that soon brought Quiñones’ subway-car graffiti into the linelined, along with the rapping, Dijing, b-boy dancing and what would soon be celebrated as the main components of hip-hop. The other story, the one that’s supposed to be this doc’s main focus, is not really as interesting. This one tells Jean-Michel Basquiat’s ascent from spray-painting street vanguard to one of the icons of renegade New York art. The way Sara Driver’s doc tells it, Basquiat was a wandering vagabond, always looking for a place to crash for the night, hopefully next to a warm, female body. Boom makes Basquiat out to be an on-the-fringe, Zeitgeist-like character, attempting to get his foot into a scene where the inner-city people were beginning to mingle with the downtown folk. Driver’s film pres-
Lighting It Up

SAINt JHN heard you got too litt last night

BY SHIRLEY JU

From penning records for Usher to landing his own single, “I Heard You Got Too Litt Last Night,” on the radio, SAINt JHN (who apparently loves to play with type formatting) is here to prove he’s what the rap game has been missing. With undeniable trap melodies, hard-knocking beats and stories for days, the Brooklyn-based multifaceted artist takes years of knowledge and experience in the industry to streamline his own career as a solo artist.

With his 2016 breakout single, “Roses,” it was clear real-name Carlos St. John won his heart on his sleeve. While he’s reluctant to explain the full story behind the moniker SAINt JHN, he gives us a little snippet.

“I make music,” he says. “I wear silk. I watch a lot of ... unscripted TV. [laughs] Like things you can only find on the internet that don’t usually have clothes on.”

With no distinct words to describe his sound, it’s his quirky personality and undeniable charm that fans gravitate toward. In regards to the lowercase “t,” he cockily says he intends to save that story for when he lands the cover.

“I don’t try to describe it,” he says. “I would use the words ‘good, great, better, best, silk.’ I like sexy things and that was sexy. I come from a hyper-religious background. We can delve into that later, though. Give me the cover, and we’re good to go.”

Born in Brooklyn but splitting his childhood years between Guyana and the States, JHN might have been destined for a life of crime along with his peers. Instead, he holds on to the power of music for a greater purpose. Being a fan of hip-hop moguls DMX, Jay-Z and Nas, he finds a way to incorporate the nitty-gritty East Coast rhymes with his South American roots.

“You can hear the influence in my music,” he says. “A lot of my melodic references are dancehall because I grew up listening to dancehall. Dancehall is transformative, exciting music. It does for people in the Caribbean and around the world what hip-hop does for America. It’s expressive. I don’t know, but I know what it makes me do. It makes me want to take my shirt off.”

Success certainly did not happen overnight. SAINt JHN’s journey in music comes with a lot of hard work and dedication, and a strong will to never give up. Having written for artists such as Joey Bada$$, Usher and Jidenna, JHN remembers the challenges that came with writing for others. It was during these early days that he discovered his own talents.

“It was a lot of work,” he says. “I wished it to be. I willed it to be and it sort of happened. Through a lot of trial and error and a lot of failures. I made music for a while and then I started writing for artists, and that was where I got a breakthrough. I started giving up and I found myself writing for people who already had promising careers and I found my footing right there.”

That footing has now placed his standout single, “I Heard You Got Too Litt Last Night,” on the airwaves of Power 106. This is something the majority of society can relate to: having a little too much fun at the function the night before. The only thing better than the record is the story behind it.

“I made the record the day after my birthday,” he says. “My homegirl came to my birthday and we had a weed cake. So my ex-girlfriend made me this cake and it had one of my clothing designs on it. And my homegirl ate the cake. She didn’t know that it had weed in it. But she had a good time. And my ex-girlfriend made me this cake and it had THC in it. The water around me might have THC that I like edibles, so you should know. The water around me might have THC in it. The bread might have THC. So she got lit. And then I texted her the next day and I was like, ‘Yo, I heard you got too lit last night.’ That was the text. Actually, that should have been the artwork. She said, ‘Yes I did.’ I said, ‘I’ll call you right back.’ Because I was texting her. I was in a session when I wrote that to her and I was like, ‘All right, cool. That’s what this song is about to be.’”

While the record closes out his debut project, Collection One, this is only the beginning.

“Collection One is an introduction,” he says. “It’s ‘Hey, nice to meet you, I’m wearing a fur. Here’s a drink. I’ll see you when I see you.’ That’s what I want them to know. I want them to know that it’s going to be a long, wonderful, winding relationship. But for now, I just want to say hello. I’ll see you when I double back.”

On top of his music endeavors, SAINt JHN also has a strong presence on social media, which he admits plays a huge role in his career.

“It’s 2018,” he says. “It’s not even a real question. You can’t survive without that. Plus I get my own TV show on Instagram, so it’s pretty good. I like it.”

This TV show comes in the form of his Rapper Behavior series on Instagram. If anyone ever wonders what a day in his life is like, JHN lays it out pretty loud and clear.

“I think I lived like that my whole life, but I didn’t call it anything,” he says. “It’s champagne ignorance, that’s what I call it. You get to see the things that I would typically do, but I gave you the context for it. Like I’m going to throw some money in the tub and I know this is irresponsible, but it’s OK. Let me be a rapper for a second. This is rapper behavior. Or oftentimes when I’m in some wonderful, marbled-out penthouse, I want you to see it from my perspective, but I want you to get the idea that you can have it, too. It’s informative information, or it’s ignorant. It’s all the things I like.”

As he continues to grow and flaunt his wealth and successes, JHN has no plans of slowing down.

“In 10 years, I see myself very rich,” he says. “Damn, I didn’t even hesitate. You can have three very’s: very, very, very rich. I’m always going to participate and create art and music. I want to impact the culture in different ways. Even if that means owning the best strip club with great food, with the greatest food... [laughs] We’ll see how it goes. I’m here today. I’m alive and I’m thriving.”

Now he brings his Rapper Behavior to real life, embarking on his first headlining tour. Attracting old fans and new fans alike, JHN explains his favorite encounters with fans.

“There was this guy from Arkansas at my New York show,” he says. “I met him. I don’t remember his name but I remember the experience. He came a really long way to decide to be there. That’s a fantastic experience. The next time you see me and we have another conversation, hopefully those experiences keep growing and I’ll tell you something different.”

In addition, he loves it “when they throw bras on the stage.” JHN reveals some pointers on how to survive one of his shows: “Fans can expect a lot of energy,” he says. “Don’t come to go to sleep. You probably shouldn’t take a Xanax and come to my show. That’s not good advice. A lot of Red Bull, hydrate, and bring spare panties and bras.”

This would be a good time to hit play on another standout on the project titled “God Bless the Ratchets.” As he gets ready to headline the Roxy on Sunset, SAINt JHN details his favorite part of the City of Angels.

“It’s important,” he says. “I get to drive drop-tops when I’m in Los Angeles. That’s very essential to my state of being, my psyche, my emotional beliefs. That’s everything.”

SAINt JHN performs at the Roxy on Friday, May 18, at 9 p.m.
MGMT
@ HOLLYWOOD PALLADIUM
MGMT’s debut album, Oracular Spectacular, with its astronomical worldwide hits “Kids,” “Time to Pretend” and “Electric Feel,” created a fresh pop-music paradigm for the late 2000s. They lost this immediately with their next two albums, but MGMT’s recent release, Little Dark Age, aims at gaining back some of its original indie-electronica cool pop flavor. A cross between space-rock and ‘80s new wave, Little Dark Age doesn’t overtly attempt to gain attention but manages to retain it anyway. Standouts are the grand-without-being-grandiose title track, the easy grooves of “Me and Michael” and the fun twinkles of “TSLAMP.” MGMT live are a colorful and psychedelic experience representative of the duo’s core. The entire evening will be in anticipation of their early hits, understandably so, but Little Dark Age’s MGMT-lite vibes could prove to be a refreshing return to form.
—Lily Moayeri

Peter Hook & the Light
@ THE WILTERN
Following up the big success and wild critical huzzahs of their U.S. shows in 2016, Hooky ‘n’ mates do a second round of North American dates performing Joy Division and New Order’s revered Factory Records Substance compilation album series, sequentially and in their entireties. These shows are, of course, ecstatic love feasts for the faithful fans who shall flock tonight, but even the casually curious might be stunned and amazed at just how many massive hits bassist-singer Hook’s two biggest bands racked up on the charts from the ’70s to the 2000s. The best news is that musically the performances are very strong, as Hook and his hard-edged and hungry band play their ever-loving arses off and keep it all sounding fresh and contemporary. Now for some fightin’ words: Hugely energetic, the performances are very strong, and the fun twinkles of “TSLAMP.” MGMT live are a colorful and psychedelic experience representative of the duo’s core. The entire evening will be in anticipation of their early hits, understandably so, but Little Dark Age’s MGMT-lite vibes could prove to be a refreshing return to form.
—Falling James

Suzanne Santo
@ THE BOOTLEG THEATER
Suzanne Santo is the primary singer in HoneyHoney, but as she and songwriting partner Benjamin Jaffe embark on solo careers during the duo’s extended hiatus, Santo continues to reveal new sides of herself. Her 2017 debut solo record, Ruby Red, builds on the country and folk style of HoneyHoney but is layered with a richer variety of musical textures. “I’ve got blood on my hands,” Santo wails with a bluesy gospel fervor on “The Wrong Man,” which marries a funereal percussive stomp with an eerie atmosphere.

Midget Handjob, Unhushables, Hurry Up
@ GRAND STAR JAZZ CLUB
This wily wild affair, part of the fabu-lous Save Music in Chinatown concert series (proceeds go to music programs at nearby Castellar Elementary), is sure to jam a hard jolt of high slam into your sunny Sabbath afternoon. Participants include legendary Black Flag/Circle Jerks howler Keith Morris convening his always mind-melting beatnik-bizarro combo Midget Handjob; the world debut of Unhushables, with M.I.A./Big Drill Car vocalist Frank Daly and Supernova rhythm section Art Mitchell and Dave Collins; plus Hurry Up featuring Bangs’ Maggie Vail; Cringer/J Church tribute Cringeworthy; and DJ Lisa Fancher.

PHOTO BY B RAD ELTERMAN
PARQUET COURTS
Wide Awake!
Chaotic, visionary and righteously pissed off, Wide Awake! feels like the perfect rock record for the times. - Q Magazine

MATT COSTA
Santa Rosa Fangs
An ambitious project, this is a conceptual work about three siblings in California as they deal with life, love and death.

JAMES BAY
Electric Light
Bay has embraced electronic beats and woozy atmospherics, citing Prince and Frank Ocean as his musical touchstones. - The Guardian

CHVRCHES
Love is Dead
An album about the fact that there are great things in the world and awful things too and that you cannot have one without the other. Out MAY 25TH!

MATTHEW SWEET
Tomorrow’s Daughter
Sweet likens the project to 1994’s Son Of Altered Beast but notes that “this is 12 songs that seemed to hold together and be their own fresh thing.”

SNOW PATROL
Wildness
Searches for clarity, connection, and meaning, while staying true to the melodic songwriting that brought them to prominence. Out MAY 25TH!

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Paul Simon
@ HOLLYWOOD BOWL

With apologies to 2017, 2016 was a memorable year for music. Among many great releases, the year saw fine returns-to-form from David Bowie and Leonard Cohen, who left us Blackstar and If You Want It Darker, respectively, as parting gifts before each shuffled off this mortal coil, along with Prince. Another luminary, Paul Simon, released Stranger to Stranger that year. Displaying experimental arrangements and Simon’s nearly unequaled genius for writing melodies, it contains some of his best work since the perennial "Graceland." Thankfully, Simon is still among us — and he’s touring. At 76, Simon states this will be his final run; with the title Homeward Bound — The Farewell Tour, it seems like he means it. Tuesday evening will be the first of three nights at the Bowl. Also Wednesday, May 23, and Monday, May 28. — Matt Miner

Depeche Mode
@ HONDA CENTER

Depeche Mode are one of the finest singles bands of the 20th century. Not just with new wave, not just with synth-pop — from “New Life” to “Never Let Me Down Again” to “Personal Jesus." — their sterling songcraft has given the world both unassailable dance-floor bangers and stark tunes about teen suicide and bondage. They have a newish album, Spirit — but for their fans their songs are more like tree rings, or marks scrawled in pencil on a doorway to mark how tall you got. Time capsules of emotion, these songs — when manifested in the transformed sorcery of live performance — instantly transporting you back to where you were (and who you were) at times in your life for which Depeche Mode lit the way until you could finally climb your way out of the darkness yourself. —David Cotner

Janiva Magness
@ GRAMMY MUSEUM

Singing the blues isn’t really about a look or a sound. It’s about having soul and empathy and the ability to express and invoke deep emotions. Janiva Magness understands this better than most modern blues singers. The Detroit native lived in numerous foster homes after each of her parents killed themselves. She has never forgotten what it’s like to be left alone and forgotten, and she has spent much of her adult life publicly championing foster-care organizations. That sense of community infuses Magness’ latest album, Love Is an Army, in which she’s accompanied by a small platoon of simpatico musical allies including Cedric Burnside, Delbert McClinton, Charlie Musselwhite, Courtney Hartman, Rusty Young and Bryan Stephens. Magness’ uplifting spirit should imbue this intimate if antiseptic venue with a feeling of genuine warmth. —Falling James

Lael Neale
@ ZEBULON

Lael Neale lives in Silver Lake, but she was raised in the mountains of Virginia, and a connection to the natural world courses through her homespun, pastoral songs like a gentle brook. On her debut album, I’ll Be Your Man, Neale’s voice soars over a rural landscape on such idyllic tracks as “Paley Light of the Sun” and the quietly reverential “Cinnamon & Dust.” She contrasts the elegant romanticism of “White Daisy, Lace Gloves” and the ethereal “Sleep to Remember” with the harder-rocking, shimmering brilliance of “Born in the Summer.” “I live like a king now, and I’m perfect like a scar,” Neale confides softly on the somber “To Be Sad.” At tonight’s Cosmic Pageant, she’s billed with Rocco DeLuca, Brodie Johnson, Molly Lewis and DJ Guy Blakeslee on a show to “honor the Earth, sun, moon and stars.” — Falling James

Nellie McKay
@ CATALINA BAR & GRILL

Wordsmith and brilliant song-crafter Nellie McKay has never fit any particular era. In recent years, she’s written a handful of inventive musical biographies of notorious and fascinating women (convicted murderer Barbara Graham, transgender bandleader Billy Tipton, Joan Rivers). Her latest album, Sister Orchid, finds her in a black-and-white mood covering songs of the ’30s and early ’40s, including “Where or When,” “Georgia on My Mind” and “In a Sentimental Mood.” The new record takes the concept of a “dark, foggy drive along Highway 1” and evokes a sultry, wee-hourly landscape, thanks to McKay’s tinkly, jazzy piano and dreamy vocals. Even her accompanying liner notes are pulpy and menacing and may drive you to pour another bourbon. McKay also plays an in-store performance at Fingerprints in Long Beach on Wednesday, May 23, at 7 p.m. —Libby Molyneaux

Sango
@ THE NOVO

If you like Soulection, this is for you. Introducing one of music’s hottest producers of our time, Sango. Hailing from Seattle, real name Kai Asa Savon Wright, he has the ability to break down all barriers of EDM, hip-hop and R&B. When it comes to deejaying, the 26-year-old strives to play upbeat music that will get the crowd moving and shaking. His beats are influenced by timeless hip-hop, the South, black gospel, ’70s soul, straight xEDM, funk and funk carioca, and so much more. From working with some of music’s greats such as Tinashe, Bryson Tiller and Smino, to his 2018 release In the Comfort of, Sango makes a name for himself as someone who embraces change and authenticity with open arms. —Shirley Ju
CLUBS

ROCK & POP

ALEX’S BAR: 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, Farbarb, Bobby Blanders, Band Apart, Asi Fui, Sat., May 19, 8 p.m., $10. Hurry Up, The Alley Cats, Rats in the Louvre, Club Fantasy, Sun., May 20, 8 p.m., $7. The Briefs, The Gears, Shattered Faint Green Pollen, Mon., May 21, 8 p.m., $16 (see Music Pick), Big Business, INTRICITIP, Crate Digger, Thu., May 24, 8 p.m., $12.


THE GRAMMY MUSEUM: 1000 W. Sixth St., San Pedro. Randy Stodola, Cema Twins, Jason Paul, Michael Espinoza, Michael Blume, Brassroots District, Thu., May 24, 8 p.m., $30.


THE LIV: 142 Pacific Coast Highway, Hermosa Beach, John Popper, Fri., May 18, 9 p.m., $20. The English Beat, Sat., May 19, 8:30 p.m., $35.


THE REDWOOD BAR & GRILL: 316 W. Second St., L.A. Bicycle Proof of GFs, Kurt Stiffe, Mecardo Cavos, Fri., May 18, 9 p.m.


SOUTHERN GROUNDS: 1511 Sunset Blvd., L.A. Free. Randy Stodola, Cema Twins, Jason Paul, Michael Espinoza, Michael Blume, Brassroots District, Thu., May 24, 8 p.m., $30.


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16 E. Huntington Dr., Arcadia.
HARVELLE'S SANTA MONICA:
COAXIAL ARTS:
CUBAN AMERICAN MUSIC FESTIVAL: With Pedro "Pedrito" Colon, the Afro Big Band, La Charanga Cubana, Calixto & Timba L.A., Las Chikas, 12-8 p.m., $25 & $50. LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes, 501 N. Main St., L.A. See Go LA.
MAY 20
FLORENCE & THE MACHINE: 8 p.m. Walt Disney Concert Hall, 111 S. Grand Ave., L.A.
TUESDAY, MAY 22
GO DEPECHE MODE: With Black Rebel Motorcycle Club, 7:30 p.m, $63.50-$349. Honda Center, 2695 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim. See Music Pick.
WEDNESDAY, MAY 23
GODSPEED YOU BLACK EMPEROR: 7 p.m., $30-$45. The Wiltern, 3790 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.
With Kaelin Ellis, 9 p.m., $19.50 & $35.25. The Fonda Theatre.
With Sudan Archives, 8 p.m., $25-$40. The Fonda Theatre.
With Half the Animal, 6:30 p.m., $20. The Belasco Theatre.
JIM CARUSO'S CAST PARTY: 7:30 p.m., $20 & up. The Wiltern. See Music Pick.
THE AVE'S QUARTET: The strings-clarinet-piano en-
semble unwraps Béla Bartók's *Contrasts* and Paul Moravec's *Tempest Fantasy*, Sat., May 19, 3 p.m., free.

First Lutheran Church & School, 2900 W. Carson St., Torrance.

**BLAZING GUITARS:** With Scott Tennant, Andrew York, Fri., May 18, 7:30 p.m., $40. Barrett Hall, Pasadena Conservatory of Music, 100 N. Hill Ave., Pasadena.

**GO**

**RIGOLETTO:** Matthew Aucoin conducts Giuseppe Verdi's tragically twisted opera, and Mark Lamos directs L.A. Opera's presentation, Sat., May 19, 7:30 p.m.; Sun., May 27, 2 p.m.; Thu., May 31, 7:30 p.m.; Sun., June 3, 2 p.m., $25-$130. Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 135 N. Grand Ave., L.A.

**THE LOVE POTION:** Tenor Bernard Holcomb (Tristan) and dramatic, chameleonic soprano Jamie Chamberlin (Isolde) portray star-crossed lovers in Long Beach Opera's intriguing presentation of composer Frank Martin's version of the mythical romantic fable, Sat., May 19, 7:30 p.m., $49-$150. Warner Grand Theatre, 478 W. Sixth St., San Pedro.

**GO**

**MONDAY EVENING CONCERTS:** Pianists Ursula Oppens and Gloria Cheng open up Meredith Monk's “Ellis Island,” “Totentanz” and other works for solo and duo pianos, and the MEC Chamber Players cycle through Julius Eastman's *Femenine*, Mon., May 21, 8 p.m., $10 & $27. The Colburn School of Music, Zipper Concert Hall, 200 S. Grand Ave., L.A. See GoLA.
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