System of a Down/Scars on Broadway’s Daron Malakian is ready to put a decade of frustration behind him

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Black Gold
The bituminous goo filling La Brea Tar Pits has been bubbling out of the ground for tens of thousands of years, and it’s likely not going anywhere anytime soon, so what better place to wallow in deep thoughts about the eternal mysteries that surround us (and well up under us) than at Late Night Fridays at the La Brea Tar Pits? The museum has a curious idea of what the phrase “late night” means, as the summer-long, weekly soirees run from 5 to 8 p.m. But after the museum closes, stick around for behind-the-scenes tours and witness morbidly fascinating excavations of bits of bones and matter from extinct mammals and the occasional human, along with screenings of 3-D films such as Werner Herzog’s solemnly reverential documentary Cave of Forgotten Dreams. La Brea Tar Pits & Museum, 5801 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Fri., July 28, 5-8 p.m.; free-$10. (213) 763-3499, tarpits.org. —Falling James

New Original Works Festival at REDCAT centers on performance art and modern dance works that alternately trace how movement interacts with militant music, invokes issues of queer and feminine identity, and adapts to technology to reimagine the human body. Choreographer Milka Djordjevich symmetrically aligns the limbs of a group of women dancers within composer Chris Peck’s martial, persuasive score in Corps. Three performance artists engage in “an experimental collage of actions and movements” in Sebastian Hernandez’s Hypanthium. Media artist KyungHwa Lee constructs an “architecture of the body” by using virtual reality and 3-D printing to envision an ideal physical form in Malleable Bodies: Flusser, Plasticity and the Corset. REDCAT, 631 W. Second St., downtown; Thu.-Sat., July 26-28, 8:30 p.m.; $20. (213) 237-2800, redcat.org. —Falling James

Grab a Slice — or an Entire Pie
Pizza comes from Italy, or originally Greece, if you want to make that argument, but it’s the most popular comfort food in America. Happy, sad, stressed, hungover — we never say no to a slice. The first California Pizza Festival will feature pizzaiolos from 20 local, national and Italian restaurants, each serving their version of the savory pie, whether it’s authentic Italian, New York or healthy. Among them are Naples’ L’Antica Pizzeria da Michele and Antica Pizzeria PortAlba, the world’s oldest pizzeria (founded in 1783), in addition to Tony’s Pizza Napoletana in San Francisco, whose owner Tony Gemignani is a 12-time World Pizza Champion. The festival also includes beer and wine, live music, cookbook signings and pizza-making demonstrations by both the United States Pizza Team and Italian “pizza acrobat” Danilo Pagano showing you his tossing and spinning tricks. It’s all-you-can-eat, so rest assured you’ll leave well-fed and sleepy-eyed. Los Angeles Center Studios, 450 S. Bixel St., Westlake; Sat., July 28, noon-8 p.m.; $45, $89 VIP, $20 children, under 3 free. (213) 534-3000, calipizzafestival.com. —Siran Babayan

INTERSECTIONALITY BY MOONLIGHT
As our conventional public arenas for social discourse descend further into hyperreal horror, consider the green things sprouting from the cracks. A full moon “genders promenade” engaging artists, activists and the public in an exploratory dialogue, Ain’t I a Womxn features local performance art illuminati leading a midsummer bacchanal that promises both revolution and entertainment: audio tunnels, vogueing, group scream, feminist PSAs, free ephemera, food trucks and a moonlit, engaged celebration of intersectionality. It’s all backed by Freewaves, the L.A. nonprofit that has been fucking up media in the best way since 1989. Bring a flashlight, learn to see. The whole thing will be folded into an online book for the group’s ongoing public art series, “Dis...Miss.” More than 20 independent artists, 10 art groups and community orgs, with funding and support from local government (sometimes they get it right), will participate. L.A. State Historic Park, 1245 N. Spring St., Elysian Park; Sat., July 28, 8-11 p.m.; free. freewaves.org. —Beige Luciano-Adams

PHOTOGRAPHY
Reality or Fiction?
In the practice of photography, the lines between documentary and tableau, the candid and the staged, have always been a bit blurry. A sense of truth pervades photographic images, part of the persistent idea that what is depicted is “real” despite the ubiquitousness of the contrary. A certain kind of photographer is inspired by the
**DANCE**

**Bring Your Walking Shoes**

While visiting Brazil and Chile, choreographer Heidi Duckler discovered Brazilian Clarice Lispector, whose short stories inspired the choreographer’s latest site-specific event, A Bela e a Fera Salon: An Evening of 3 Clarice Lispector Short Stories in Dance. As with many Heidi Duckler Dance performances, each story unfolds in a different space, with the audience moving about. Set in an arched hallway, Such Gentleness finds dancer Raymond Ejiofor on an illuminated Plexiglas and steel light table. The title work, A Bela e a Fera (Beauty and the Beast), takes the audience to the rooftop with dancer Tess Hewlett. Back indoors, a short film captures the collaboration with Duckler and fabric artist Mimi Haddon, inspired by Lispector’s The Sound of Footsteps before it all concludes with drinks, supper and a preview of Duckler’s next Lisperator-inspired endeavor, The Chandelier. Original music is by M8’s Joe Berry, with narration by Paula Rebele. Bendix Building, 1206 Maple Ave., Ste. 1100B, downtown; Sun., July 29, 7 p.m.; $60. abelaefera.eventbrite.com. —Shana Nys Dambrot

**FOOD & DRINK**

**Intergalactic Party**

What do tiki culture and Star Wars nerd-dom have in common? Escape, that’s what. Whether you dream of zooming through the galaxy in a spaceship or lounging on a breezy tropical island, it’s about doing something different and forgetting the drudgery of the 9-to-5 grind. Plus loving both of these cultures means dressing up! Fans of tiki tend to lean toward ’60s stylings such as the Barbarella look, while Star Wars is very ’70s, but the regulars at Star Wars Tiki Brunch surely will make the meld work, and after a few cocktails, who really cares anyway? On-theme specials such as the Bantha Milk Punch and Dark Side Piña Colada will be served as this intergalactic, rum-guzzler gathering strikes back for summer. Stormtroopers from the Southern California Garrison will be present, DJs including Justin Garrison, Personify, Vickki Acuna and Robot Heart perform, and food is provided by East Los Musubi and Presley’s Pantry. Hosted by Ray Bowen, who will slay you with his lightsaber if you’re not in tiki attire. Resident, 428 S. Hewitt St., downtown; Sun., July 29, noon; free (21+). residentdtla.com. —Lina Lecaro
**BOOKS**

**Setting an Example**

“As California goes, so goes the nation,” an old adage says. The essence of this homily is change—and to crystallize that thought eloquently, author Manuel Pastor discusses his timely screed *State of Resistance: What California’s Dizzying Descent and Remarkable Resurgence Mean for America’s Future* ($27, the New Press).

Where once the state seemed poised for a future more like the one in the film *Escape From L.A.*, now it’s forging ahead with brave new developments in tackling everything from climate change (remember smog alerts?) to low-wage work (remember $5.25 an hour?) to prison overcrowding (remember the escape from Alcatraz?). At Vroman’s Bookstore, 695 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena; Mon., July 30, 7 p.m., free. (626) 449-5320, vromanbookstore.com/event/manuel-pastor-discusses-and-signs-state-resistance. —David Cotner

**ART**

**One Person’s Trash...**

If she weren’t such a gifted visual artist, you might mistake Shinique Smith for a hoarder. That’s because her painting and sculptural installation practice involves collecting and saving the clothing, personal effects, self-cannibalized studio art, photographs and other non-garbage debris of human existence. She then re-formulates these masses of raw materials into richly detailed, colorful, poetically abstract and surreal works of art. Poignant on a personal level, garnering empathy for the fleeting nature of life in a what-we-leave-behind sort of way, the works also speak to societal inequities of wealth, consumption and disposability. In conjunction with her current solo exhibition at CAAM, “Refuge” (through Sept. 9), Smith is interviewed by LAXART director Hamza Walker. Because there’s a lot to unpack here, California African American Museum, 600 State Drive, Exposition Park; Thu., Aug. 2, 7-9 p.m., free with RSVP. (213) 744-2084, caamuseum.org/programs/current/in-conversation-shinique-smith-and-hamza-walker. —Shana Nys Dambrot

**MUSIC**

**Bold and Beautiful in the Bowl**

Summer’s here, and the time is right for some darkly engrossing, bold and inevitably beautiful music by Igor Stravinsky and Edward Elgar. After guest conductor Matthias Pintscher guides the L.A. Philharmonic through the sweetly lyrical and relatively formal passages of Stravinsky’s *Pulcinella Suite* (1922), violinist Nathan Cole stretches out and carves his way along the more adventurous and moody grand contours of the Russian composer’s only Violin Concerto (1931). The concert culminates with the more traditionally stirring melodies of British composer Edward Elgar’s *Enigma Variations*. Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood Hills; Tue., July 31, 8 p.m.; $1-$158. (323) 850-2000, hollywoodbowl.com.

—Avery Bissett

**MUSIC**

**Reveling in Excess**

Motoko Honda uses every inch of the piano, whether she’s rumbling up and down the keys with jazzy aplomb or dissecting its prepared strings and other innards with a surgical, experimental curiosity. *Motoko Honda’s Simple Excesses* might initially seem like a traditional jazz combo, as the Oakland pianist interacts with drummer Jordan Glenn, woodwinds player Cory Wright and bassist Miles Wick. But the ensemble are just as likely to burrow into knotty, noisy and unpredictable new-music spaces as they are to take flight with unfettered jazzy improvisation. Poet William Blake could have been thinking of them when he wrote, “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.” Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Thu., Aug. 2, 8 p.m., free. (310) 443-7000, hammer.ucla.edu. —Falling James

**FILM/FOOD**

**Think, McFly! Think!**

Beat the heat as you watch as Marty McFly and Doc Brown rend the very fabric of space and time itself while avoiding Oedipal awkwardness with *Back to the Future at Sweet Rose Creamery*. Before the screening on the back patio, guests can play games and conquer the challenge of picking a flavor or flavors of ice cream to try. If you’re feeling adventurous, try the summer corn ice cream. Sweet Rose Creamery, 4377 Tujunga Ave., Studio City; Wed., Aug. 1, 8:30-10:30 p.m.; free. sweetrosecreamery.com. —Avery Bissett
MEET THE HASH QUEEN

Dutch legend Mila talks about her book and her innovative inventions

BY MADISON MARGOLIN

Mila, better known as the “Hash Queen,” is a Dutch legend. A single mother, traveler, spiritual practitioner and inventor, Mila has led a life full of adventure, a whirlpool of love, heartbreaks and hash. She has trekked throughout India, Afghanistan, Europe, and California, pioneering the cannabis industry. Today, the 73-year-old canna-seur is finishing a trip to Los Angeles, a stop along the tour for her new book, Mila: How I Became the Hash Queen.

Mila invented the first machine to separate the crystal from the rest of the plant material in order to make hash. For thousands of years, the making of hashish had always been a manual job, she explains. “I started off manually fluffing up the material, and eventually some crystal went through the screen,” Mila recounts. One day she found herself in front of a clothes dryer tumbler and thought to herself, “What those clothes are doing in the tumbler is exactly what I’m trying to do by hand.” Inspired by her realization, Mila got a secondhand dryer, ripped out the heating parts, and put cannabis material through it. “Lo and behold, the crystals were lying at the bottom,” she recalls. “That was the beginning of the whole thing that’s now a super expensive extraction machine.”

Nowadays, that machine is called the Pollinator. “It holds the drum that tumbles, and the drum is surrounded by a screen, and if you put the dried material in there, everything that’s worthwhile will fall through the screen,” Mila says of her invention. “Eventually the little stems that the crystals sit on will start passing through, and some of the leaves will crumble up. You just want to have the pure crystals, and if you look under the microscope it looks like caviar.”

Mila has been smoking pot for 54 years now. The first time she smoked pot was in 1964. “In those days you would buy a whole matchbox full,” she says. “I remember I was rolling on the ground laughing, it was immediately love at first experience, and basically I never stopped smoking since that time.” In those days, you couldn’t get cannabis flower in Amsterdam — just hash. It came from the East, places like Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, even China or Thailand.

From Amsterdam, Mila moved on to live in India for 14 years, where she watched and engaged with the local people there who were making hash. When she returned to the Netherlands, she began growing her own weed and experimenting with hash methodology. Despite Amsterdam’s reputation for cozy, cannabis coffee shops, Mila bemoans how far behind she thinks the Netherlands has fallen in terms of the global cannabis industry. “It’s a beautiful city, Amsterdam, but one thing that’s not good is that nothing gets tested there,” she says. “If it does get tested, it’s for THC and cannabinoids, but never for pesticides or nutrients or anything like that. It’s very strange, and I really like that over here [in California], things are tested and you know what you’re taking.”

Overall, the quality of the weed you get in California is now so much better than in Amsterdam, she says. “I really like over here that all the time people are developing new stuff, new strains, while over there it’s stifled,” Mila says. “I really love how things are just moving along over here — it’s really amazing, and it’s a very positive, striving community. I hope it keeps on growing.”
It’s a quiet midweek evening in Glendale, and we’re at a coffee shop, about an hour before closing time. The place is empty but for a couple of day-weary punters, tapping out the final drops of coffee. The radio is on but nothing of interest is blaring out of it — just standard background noise. It’s a nice, regular, main street coffee joint.

Daron Malakian initially does nothing to disturb the normality. Later, the coffee shop owner will figure out who he is and excitedly ask for photographs, but that’s because he can see the interview taking place rather than any overt “rock star” vibe. As he strolls in alone, Malakian’s demeanor is as unspectacular as the surroundings. His clothing is equally ordinary — jeans, tee, hoodie — and, while there’s something resembling a shy awkwardness about him from the outset, the Glendale resident is extremely likable. His eyes are instantly recognizable. They pop with an intensity almost at odds with the slouch in his gait. He can’t hide it, though — there’s a curiosity in those big eyes, soaking in everything they scan, that helps make him the artist that he is. It’s a look that System of a Down fans know well. From that Glendale band’s 1994 beginnings, Malakian’s intense expressions (not to mention singer Serj Tankian’s Zappa-esque hair) were focal points for a group that could have afforded, had they so desired, to rely entirely on the music.

SOAD sounded like nothing the metal genre had birthed before. With Malakian the main songwriter, the music blended the ferocity of metal with the traditional Armenian music so richly ingrained in his DNA, incorporating strong and smart political messages. System of a Down broke down just about every barrier that metal fans could construct. And in doing so, that unpredictability became a part of their identity. Their fans grew to crave something different with each record. There was nothing the group couldn’t do.

Over the course of two decades and five excellent albums, System of a Down rose to be one of the biggest metal bands in the world. 2001’s Toxicity and 2005’s Mezmerize and Hypnotize (both released that same year) all reached No. 1 on the mainstream album charts in the United States and Canada while doing well in a multitude of other countries. The band played to hundreds of thousands of people around the globe, headlining festivals and selling out arenas. People love System of a Down.

But those 2005 albums are, to date, still the band’s most recent. They haven’t been able to find common ground when it comes to writing a new one, so they simply haven’t. They have continued to perform live together, but no new material. For an artist, a songwriter, like Malakian, that simply won’t do. In 2006, he founded his own project, Scars on Broadway, and, in 2008, he put out that group’s debut self-titled album. Here we are, 10 years later, and he’s just about to release Dictator, the second Scars album. The first thing we have to ask is, what the hell took so long?

“It was about not knowing what was going to happen with System,”
Malakian says, bluntly, “So I just held the songs, and waited to see. I have plenty of songs that haven’t been recorded, that I’ve also held on. There was always talk of making a new album with System, so that was one of the main reasons I kind of had this album recorded but didn’t release it, just because of uncertainty with the System album.”

“Yeah, as he reiterated to Consequence of Sound recently, Malakian believes that Tankian pretty much checked out on System of a Down prior to the Mezmerize and Hypnotize albums. Tankian confirmed as much with an open letter, republished on the same website.

Over the course of our conversation, Malakian answers every question that’s thrown at him without flinching. Occasionally, we get the impression that he’s holding a little something back, particularly about the behind-the-scenes SOAD goings-on, but that’s understandable. Simultaneously, it’s hard to shake the feeling that he’s scanning us, trying to figure out what makes his interviewer tick. That’s not unusual; we’ve only met briefly before, so there’s no reason there’d be instant trust. So he holds our gaze, considers his answers carefully and speaks at a moderate pace. With that comes an attention to detail that we appreciate immensely.

When talking about the state of System of a Down today, Malakian makes it clear that the four men are not fighting. “They’re still friends, and they still enjoy playing those old songs live. They just can’t get into the same creative headspace when it comes to writing and recording a new album. So the fact that he has 100 percent creative control when it comes to Scars on Broadway must be refreshing.

“Yeah, it’s not too far away, aside from playing the drums, to my approach with System,” he says. “I do a big part of the writing in System, I produced those albums as well, so my approach isn’t very different with Scars or with System. The difference with this one is that I sing everything and played the drums. With System, usually when I bring in a song, people give their opinions, but the song doesn’t change all that much from the time that I had it writing it in my room to when I present it to the band. It has little changes here and there, and someone will say, ‘Maybe do that twice,’ or something.”

That, plus the fact that Malakian says the songs he writes would work for either band, is fascinating. He was the main songwriter in System, he does something with Scars, and when writing, he takes the same approach. So, for him, the only differences come from the other personnel involved. That said, as an artist he organically evolves with time. There have been 10 years between Scars albums, so naturally there are differences.

“This album is a little heavier, a little more of a Down because I don’t write with a guitar, I have all the drums and vocals going on in my head while I’m playing guitar, but this album has a little bit more of an aggressive, heavier, more metal... I think the first Scars album had more of a rock vibe to it.”

Prior to the release of Dictator, Malakian dropped “Lives,” the first single from the new Scars record. The accompanying video is spectacular — the chugging metal riffs somehow both at odds and comfortable bedfellows with the traditional Armenian dancing. “We are the people who were kicked out of history,” Malakian sings with an effective blend of venom and croon. It’s a superb song, and the visuals complement it beautifully.

“I always wanted to make a video like that for that song, and it came out perfectly,” Malakian says. “My dad was a dance choreographer in his early years, so he was a big inspiration on including the folk dancing. It really matched up well with the lyrics, and I wanted to do something that wasn’t focused on just the deaths but also the survival. The people that survived, and I guess for us as Armenians to be proud of that, even though it’s a dark thing in our history. There’s something to be said about the people who survived and had kids, Armenians who built communities in Glendale or other places in the world, [like] Argentina — just different places where Armenians had to flee and build new communities and thrive. I wanted to shine a light on that, and have people thrive on that.”

From the moment System of a Down started to receive national and international attention in the mid-’90s, the band members were educating the public about the Armenian genocide, the Ottoman Empire’s extermination of 1.5 million Armenian people starting in 1915. It’s something barely covered in American school history books so, for many people, System of a Down interviews in metal magazines such as Kerrang! were the first time they heard about the devastating events.

“That’s why I like to shine a light on it,” he says. “There could very well be another genocide, and nobody will do anything about it because nobody knows about it. If I can help people not die through getting them something as easy as a first aid kit, because I heard a lot of people died through just bleeding out, I’ll do what I can.”

While politics and world events have continued to provide a rich vein of subject matter for Malakian to mine, the music industry around him has changed almost beyond recognition over the past two decades. The guitarist says the creative process hasn’t changed at all, but the way music is put out — the way musicians make, or don’t make, money — that has changed completely.

“We’ve done everything on our own right now,” he says. “We don’t have a label. We’ve had offers, but I’d prefer not to have one. I don’t really see what they’re going to do. You put it out yourself on your own social media and stuff. That’s what’s changed — social media, I guess since 2006, 2008. Then you’ve got streaming outlets — you put your songs out through there. Nobody’s really buying CDs, or music. So you’re judged on how many people listen to you. The label world had

history books and educate people about something that happened in our culture. It’s something I continue to do as a writer, and I think Serj does in his own way as well, even away from System of a Down.”

He’s putting his money where his mouth is, too, donating the first week of sales on iTunes of “Lives” to the Armenia Fund, while drawing attention to the fact that the Armenian Fund website is asking for people to donate first aid kits. Meanwhile, tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan continue to escalate, with ceasefires broken. Malakian believes that another genocide is very possible.

“That’s why I like to shine a light on it,” he says. “There could very well be another genocide, and nobody will do anything about it because nobody knows about it. If I can help people not die through getting them something as easy as a first aid kit, because I heard a lot of people died through just bleeding out, I’ll do what I can.”
“A lot of people think of Hollywood, and think of glamour and red carpets. That’s not the part of Hollywood I grew up in. It was a lot of gangs and prostitution in the ’80s.”
passed away, I wasn’t sad because I didn’t know him. It was more about the guy who influenced [a couple of] songs is gone. It was more about that. I think a lot of people would listen to him and think, ‘This is a crazy guy talking.’ You’ve got to read between the lines of what he’s saying — he was a lot of times making a lot of sense about society for the most part.”

On a brighter note, Malakian’s father, Vartan, has contributed the artwork to Dictator, as he did for the first Scars on Broadway album as well as System of a Down’s Mezmerize and Hypnotize. The guitarist is happy and proud to be able to show the world how talented his dad is.

“He’s a really talented guy, but he’s not much of a self-promoter,” Malakian says.

‘Lost in Hollywood’ — I’ve sang about the city. Sometimes more about the darker sides of the city. A lot of people think of Hollywood, and think of glamour and red carpets. That’s not the part of Hollywood I grew up in. It was a lot of gangs and prostitution in the ’80s when I was a kid riding my bike in the streets.”

When we spoke, Scars on Broadway were preparing for an intimate acoustic show at the Grammy Museum, and then a full-on electric gig at the Fonda. Malakian is excited about both, as well as the five System shows this summer. He’s convinced both bands can coexist in their current form. For now, SOAD is about the past and Scars is the future. But, he admits, that could change.

“With System, we’ll see what happens,” he says. “We may get on the same page one day, we may not. I’ve come to terms with that. I still enjoy going out there and playing live. It’s a good time for me right now to have this outlet with Scars and finally know where everything stands with both bands. It makes it a little bit more comfortable this time around with Scars, that I didn’t have last time. There was more uncertainty in the air. When is System going to come back? Should I save these songs? Should I wait? That’s not happening right now, so I feel more confident moving forward with Scars now than I did 10 years ago with the first album.”

As for the fans, we can just sit back and enjoy the fact that both bands are out there performing, and that Malakian is releasing new music. It won’t, he says, be another 10 years before he puts out another album.

Scars on Broadway perform at 9 p.m. on Saturday, Aug. 4, at the Fonda Theatre.
System of a Down perform with Incubus at 3:30 p.m. on Saturday, Oct. 13, at Glen Helen Amphitheater, San Bernardino.

PHOTO BY KREMER|JOHNSON

A local research study is now enrolling people aged 50 to 85 People with memory loss or early Alzheimer’s disease and a regular support partner may be eligible.

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UCLA IRB#16-001857. This UCLA research study is being conducted by the UCLA Dept of Family Medicine (PI: Keith Heinzerling MD). Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

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Jonathan Gold celebrates his Pulitzer Prize in the L.A. Weekly newsroom.

Eats // Fork Lift //

MOURNING JONATHAN GOLD
Longtime L.A. Weekly food critic turned food writing into an exploration and explanation of the city he loved

BY LINA LECARO

Jonathan Gold died Saturday, July 21, of pancreatic cancer at 57 years old. The news has stunned fans, friends and food lovers alike. It is an immeasurable loss for Los Angeles. Gold was world-renowned for his beautiful and nuanced writing, which, more than any other food critic before or after him, celebrated all the flavors, histories and cultures of Los Angeles, most notably under the tutelage of Bob Levin. I learned about love and loss and betrayal and loyalty and the inadvisability of changing so much as a comma in the copy of Michael Ventura. I edited a humor column whose conceit was that nothing in it was actually funny, and I edited so many ‘Best of L.A.’ issues that I still have to be constrained from over-editing it for much longer; because it was on a local level, it might have been more impactful, too. Gold brought attention to the international fare and experiences available here in L.A., gearing his reports to the average Angeleno who did not know about all the tasty and usually affordable offerings right in his own backyard. The attention Gold gave local businesses big and small helped the restaurant industry, local chefs and mom & pop joints alike not only survive but flourish.

From hidden mini-mall eateries to the off-the-beaten-path holes-in-the-wall to food-truck faves, Gold’s coverage not only informed us about the myriad of multicultural flavors out there but also educated us — about the inspirations, the abundant fusions, the people and the places, in a style that was singularly his own. He wrote about food the way he wrote about music, vividly and vibrantly, making us feel as if we were there with him, experiencing what he was experiencing.

Jonathan Gold’s writing not only expanded our city’s knowledge and appreciation of food, it enlightened us and made us hungry for more. Though he’s gone, his memory will linger like a satisfying meal, and thankfully he left behind so many delicious bites for us all to enjoy.

You can read some of his best at laweekly.com/authors/jonathan-gold-2126528.

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Making Huge Strides

Why Pose is the most groundbreaking LGBTQ TV show ever

BY MICHAEL COOPER

“Yo know what my life is like… every movie, TV show, ad in a magazine shows what my life is like,” says one of the few cisgender characters to his trans lover on the FX original series Pose, about the late-’80s New York City ball scene. “But the only chance I’m gonna get of understanding your world is if you show me.”

Pose is doing exactly this for the mainstream — giving cis (people whose gender identity matches their physical sex), straight, white America a piece of LGBTQ history and representation that was absent from the televised zeitgeist. That’s why it’s so important to the LGBTQ community.

The show follows the lives of fictional characters within the ball scene, an LGBTQ subculture where different “houses” — mostly black and Latin gay, bi, lesian and trans people walk (or compete), on club stages or runways, for trophies in categories such as Face, Body, Butch Queen Realness, Femme Queen Realness, Miscellaneous Drag and Vogueing (this is where the dance style originated).

Steven Canals wrote a Pose spec script for his UCLA screenwriting graduate program a few years back, and later joined forces with writer-producer-director Ryan Murphy (Nip/Tuck, Feud, Glee, American Horror Story), who had optioned the rights for Paris Is Burning, the 1991 documentary about the ball scene. Aside from the talented cast, vibrant visuals and, of course, drama, Pose — which aired its season finale on Sunday, July 22, and was just renewed for a second season — broke down boundaries in bold, new ways.

Here’s how:

It featured the largest number of openly trans actors in lead roles ever in a TV series.

Blanca (Mj Rodriguez), Angel (Indya Moore), Elektra (Dominique Jackson), Candy (Angelica Ross) and Lulu (Haifaa Sahar) are played by trans women of color. Accepting his VH1 Trailblazer Honors award last month, Murphy said, “I believe strongly in the power of television, because if you see yourself and some part of your human experiences reflected back at you, you will not feel alone. And people with hatred and bias in their hearts can often be converted if a character or situation they are invested in feels like a friend. I decided [I wanted to] create representation, showcase gay people and minorities and outsiders and underdogs of all kinds.” The representation doesn’t end in front of the camera, either: Many of the writers are trans women as well, including Janet Mock, Our Lady J (Transparent) and co-executive producers Silas Howard.

It didn’t shy away from sexually complex stories.

Having a writers room with diverse voices really lends itself to stories about marginalized groups that aren’t often seen on TV. In one storyline, trans character Elektra struggles between fulfilling her dream of having her surgical transition from male to female and keeping her cisgender straight lover satisfied. “I know what I like but I can’t explain why my dick gets hard knowing that yours is there. All I know is that I want it in the room,” says Elektra’s lover (played by Christopher Meloni). After she decides to go through with the surgery, he ends their 10-year relationship. This struggle of finding a partner who doesn’t fetishize trans women is a common one, but bearing it out loud in plain language was an innovative TV moment.

It was educational.

LGBTQ kids (and allies) may know terms such as “shade” and “reading” from RuPaul’s Drag Race, but both RuPaul and Michelle Visage were part of the New York ball scene first. Many of their references came directly from this world. Pose does a great job showing younger people where the culture came from. Similarly, with the advent of effective AIDS drugs, many in today’s younger LGBTQ generation are not as careful as they probably should be. They may know about the AIDS epidemic but it’s seen as ancient history. Set in the late ’80s, Pose reminds the LGBTQ community just how devastating AIDS was. The series begins with Blanca finding out she’s HIV-positive, and Pray Tell (Billy Porter)’s loss of his boyfriend to the virus (as well as finding out he has it himself).

One scene went farther in terms of educating. Damon (Ryan Jamaal Swain), kicked out by his parents for being gay, is given a sex talk by his house mother, Blanca. Damon, whose father gave him “the talk” as if he were straight, gets the info he needs from Blanca, including his options. “Gay life is hard,” she says. “Now as a gay man, you have options when it comes to sex. You can be a top or a bottom.”

I can’t remember the last time I saw kind of honest exchange about gay sex depicted on TV, let alone by a parental figure teaching a child. Destigmatizing these conversations on TV is sure to help anyone with such questions feel less alone.

It tackled race issues, even within the LGBTQ community.

While it would be great if the entire LGBTQ community had one another’s backs, this is simply not the case. Despite being marginalized and ostracized by society, we often discriminate against one another. Pose brilliantly depicts this when Blanca and Lulu are kicked out of a gay bar for being trans. While the prejudice within the LGBTQ community may not be as bad as it was in the ’80s, one doesn’t have to look far on hookup apps like Grindr to see profiles that blatantly say things like “No fats, no femmes, no blacks, no Asians.” Some may call it a “type,” but most see it for what it is: racism and discrimination. Many in the LGBTQ community still segregate themselves from others to feel superior, and Pose boldly puts the issue out in the open, addressing this ugly history.

It explored cultural and class disparities in a new way, and producers are trying to close the gap.

It’s probably no coincidence that the only two cisgender, straight, white principal men in the story work for Donald Trump, who gained notoriety in the ’80s and who helped usher in the era of conspicuous consumption. These men, played by James Van Der Beek and Evan Peters, often display their white privilege. Van Der Beek’s character is shown sexually harassing the women in his office, while Peters’ repression sees him cheating on his wife with a trans woman of color (Angel), for whom he rents an apartment.

The flaunting of wealth by white cis men is juxtaposed with the poverty of the people of color who go to balls. Trans women risk their lives to buy cheap hormones injections because they can’t afford the good ones; gay young men kicked out of their homes are living on the streets; and the houses resort to stealing money or outfits just so they can feel fierce, pretty and accepted at the balls.

The show brilliantly highlights the wage inequality, especially between the white majority and minorities, that still exists today. Murphy is putting his money where his pen is: He has pledged to donate 100 percent of his profits from Pose to trans and LGBTQ charitable organizations.

It was authentic.

There have definitely been boundary-breaking shows about the LGBTQ community before — from those that started the conversation and laid the groundwork, such as Ellen and Will & Grace, to those that normalized gay characters but showed them to be complex, too, like Modern Family and Six Feet Under, to shows with all gay characters, like Queer as Folk and Looking. What Pose does differently is depict an accurate and real history of the LGBTQ community, without any white-or straight-washing, spotlighting stories of trans (and gay) people of color, played and written by trans (and gay) people of color. This is why the content is so innovative and refreshing and different from anything on television.
I’ve usually a foregone conclusion that when a Hollywood blockbuster movie franchise gets to a sixth entry in the series, it probably won’t be that good. It’s the sequel law of diminishing returns: At the very least you can expect new thrills amidst predictable formulaic beats and the comforting familiarity that lured you out of your living room to the big screen. But a popcorn-munching optimist can still hope for a sequel that can surprise in unexpected ways. *Mission: Impossible — Fallout* is that sequel in spades. It elevates the franchise to next-level status — and then some.

Written and directed by Christopher McQuarrie (who first teamed up with Cruise for 2012’s *Jack Reacher*), *Fallout* is a superb action movie of the highest caliber. It’s like someone gave them a jolt of Red Bull inspiration. I think it’s the best film of the series, and I don’t say that lightly.

A direct sequel to 2015’s above-average *Rogue Nation* (also directed by McQuarrie), *Fallout* finds Cruise’s IMF agent Ethan Hunt haunted by visions of nuclear armageddon and unable to shake the guilt of abandoning his former love, Julia (Michelle Monaghan), to protect her from the crossfire. His new mission, which we all know he will accept: Track down black-market plutonium before it gets into the hands of a splinter group of spies from the Syndicate that emerged after the capture of Rogue villain Solomon Lane (the returning Sean Harris). If they obtain the plutonium, they will detonate three nuclear devices around the globe in an effort to tear down the world order. “The end you always feared is coming,” a wide-eyed, manacled Lane breathes to Hunt. “And the blood will be on your hands.”

What follows is a crackerjack exercise in taut storytelling and filmmaking craftsmanship. Using many of the pieces set up in *Rogue Nation*, McQuarrie’s new, faster-paced chess game plays out in a less complicated manner than previous *Impossible* installments (which often get caught up in their own technobabble), resulting in a more coherent and emotionally charged storyline that reunites Hunt with/pits him against deadly MI6 agent Ilsa Faust (the brilliantly capable Rebecca Ferguson) and puts Julia back on the board. Also in play is CIA operative August Walker (an imposing Henry Cavill), an unreadable assassin assigned to shadow Hunt in babysitter mode by CIA director Erika Sloane (Angela Bassett); the “White Widow,” an ambiguous arms dealer (Vanessa Kirby); and, of course, loyal IMF teammates Benji (Simon Pegg) and Luther (Ving Rhames) under the direction of new IMF chief Alan Hunley ( Alec Baldwin). As a variety of factions jockey for the plutonium and the scalp of Solomon Lane, the action travels to such locales as Berlin, London, Paris and Kashmir.

Ironically, while high-altitude free-fall stunts and helicopter chases make for incredibly exciting elements of the film, it’s the visceral nature of McQuarrie’s expert handling of the running, jumping, driving and close-quarters fighting that really clinch *Fallout* as a top-notch action film. There’s a bravura, bone-crunching battle in a bathroom stall between Cruise, Cavill and a formidable foe that itself is almost worth the price of admission. The choreography of a desperate car-and-motorcycle chase up and down the streets of Paris, muscular engines loudly growling and revving, clearly draws inspiration from some of the best car-chase films ever made, including *The French Connection*, *Ronin* and *Bullitt*.

And when Hunt finally goes into full sprint mode (something he does in pretty much every *Mission: Impossible* film), the basic fact that Cruise himself is actually booking at top speed along the rooftops of London is exciting in an absolutely primal way. Now 56 years old, the laser-focused star remains as dedicated as ever to entertain. Performing most of his own stunts, he broke his ankle during a bravura, bone-crunching battle in a bathroom stall between Cruise, Cavill and a formidable foe that itself is almost worth the price of admission. The choreography of a desperate car-and-motorcycle chase up and down the streets of Paris, muscular engines loudly growling and revving, clearly draws inspiration from some of the best car-chase films ever made, including *The French Connection*, *Ronin* and *Bullitt*.

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Continuing their legacy of equally infuriating and enlightening documentaries, the producer-director team of Amy Ziering and Kirby Dick poke into the archaic and futile FDA approval systems for medical devices with their film *The Bleeding Edge*. Prepare to be scared shitless of vaginal mesh or high-tech surgery robots. Through a series of personal stories from both qualified medical professionals and laypeople, the film explores just what exactly the word “complications” means on a device’s warnings. In the cases Dick investigates, those complications become a ripple effect of lives ruined by untested but FDA-approved devices.

The film, which premieres Friday, July 27, on Netflix, traverses the spectrum of medical devices but opens and closes on one particular item, Essure, a metal coil that’s inserted into the Fallopian tubes for sterilization purposes. We meet a mail carrier from upstate New York whose doctor sold her on Essure years ago. As the documentary jumps around to different people, devices and experts, we return again and again to the horrifying story of this mail carrier, who came to find that her body was rejecting the coil, which led her to nearly bleed to death. Another woman, a Latina account executive with four children, relays a frighteningly similar story, only with the added layer of racism; her doctor told her he assumed Latinas just bled more than white women did. Neither woman’s story takes a turn for the better, but it’s the Latina woman whose entire life — and the lives of her daughters — gets smashed all because of one doctor not taking her concerns seriously.

Dick seems to anticipate that viewers — just like doctors — may be conditioned to think women exaggerate their pain, so at the 15-minute mark of the film he jumps into the story of a respected older white male doctor who got a cobalt hip joint and began suffering from neurological issues. These were so severe that he had a complete mental breakdown in a hotel room, smashing things and scrawling cryptic messages on the walls. He begins questioning established medicine’s embrace of cobalt implants; upon the removal of his, every neurological issue he had developed disappeared. If a completely healthy man with medical training can go so quickly from zero to delusional, what of the millions of other Americans with cobalt in their bodies? What of the injured vets already fighting PTSD who live with an implant that could be poisoning them? What are the metal plates and screws in my own ankle made of, and why didn’t I know to ask?

The director backs up all these anecdotes with some hard facts about the FDA approval process, which — even according to a former head of the department — is a broken system. The medical device industry is the least understood and regulated in the FDA umbrella.

Dick exposes so much that I yelled “Oh my God!” multiple times while watching. There is nothing more upsetting than listening to a charming Southern woman say the words, “My colon’s falling out!” Worse yet are the profit-hungry companies that have been able to slide by unnoticed for so long. Here’s hoping *The Bleeding Edge* gets the right attention on a decidedly unsexy topic.
14 CAMERAS It's hard to tell if the makers of the bewilderingly awful home-invasion thriller 14 Cameras — which follows cartoonishly gross internet voyeur Gerald (Neville Archambault) as he uses nancy-cams to spy on a nuclear family at a secluded California summer house — believe that web users are inherently monstrous or that the internet only underscores mankind’s innate cruelty. On the one hand, disaffected teenager Molly (Brytnee Ratledge), one of Gerald’s four victims, evokes the nihilism of The Texas Chain Saw Massacre and seemingly speaks for screenwriter Victor Zarcoff when she diagnoses Gerald’s monstrous behavior: “Some guys are just fucked up.” On the other hand, Zarcoff and neophyte co-directors Seth Fuller and Scott Hussein mystifyingly juxtapose Gerald’s sleeky real-world behavior — he likes to sniff women’s panties and drink milk straight out of the carton! — with the childish shit-posting that defines the members of his private “dark web” chat room. It’s especially hard to understand why one anonymous user seems to quote John Belushi’s Jake Blues when he asks Gerald to auction off his unwitting camera subjects: “How much for the girl?!” Unfortunately, Archambault’s churlishly over-the-top performance makes it impossible to take 14 Cameras seriously, no matter how you interpret Gerald’s actions. He breathes (heavily) through his mouth and waddles around like a cartoon yenta with his shoulders hunched, his eyes wide open and his jaw sticking out. Archambault’s perplexingly broad mannerisms suggest that the internet, like bad horror movies, is only as bad as you make it. (Simon Abrams)

DETECTIVE DEE: THE FOUR HEAVENLY KINGS The equally thrilling and exhausting detective martial arts fantasy Detective Dee: The Four Heavenly Kings boasts more inventive weapons, monsters and plot twists than most Western audiences will know what to do with. Like the popular Chinese Gong’an courtroom mystery series by which it is very loosely inspired, Detective Dee has a convoluted, episodic narrative that primarily serves as a showcase for the various tools in 7th-century sleuth Renjie Dee’s (Mark Chao) crime-solving kit, which this time include a Buddhist sutra and a dragon-taming mace. Thankfully, the shambolic kitchen-sink convolutions of Dee’s story — in which he investigates catty Empress Wu’s (Carina Lau) Byzantine plot to overthrow her husband (Chien Sheng) with the help of ninjas, warlocks and political dissidents — often seems irrelevant given the galvanizing campiness of set pieces that pit wire-fu fight choreography against, among other things, computer-generated dragon-scorpion hybrid creatures. You may sometimes wonder why director Han Yu and co-writers Kuo-Fu Chen and Chu-Iu-Chang abruptly transition from one subplot to the next. That may happen especially when the villainous weather-controlling Mystic Clan — the Empress’ spellcasting henchmen — are revealed as a minor threat compared with the negligibly developed Indian shapeshifting clan the Wind Warriors, whose Dee mystically describes as “dangerous people with weird skills.” But you will never have to wait long before ninjas strike, a gigantic eyeball demon attacks or a monster’s blood rains from the sky and transforms into flower petals in midair. Like that one Chemical Brothers song, Detective Dee: The Four Heavenly Kings doesn’t have to make sense to get you high. (Simon Abrams)

Far From the Tree A movie here is never just “normal” but either someone who’s somehow exceptional or at least an everyday Joe in exceptional circumstances. Yet in real life, an “exceptional” child is often bad news. There’s illness, biology, behavior and inclinations not covered in most parenting books, supported in most classrooms or tolerated in most playgrounds or social circles. So that’s why children can live their best selves, we tend to try to bend them to the norm, which can be exhausting, heartbreaking and sometimes futile. In his 2012 book Far From the Tree, upon which director Rachel Dretzin’s thorough documentary is based, writer and psychologist Andrew Solomon moved from the help of ninjas, warlocks and political dissidents — often seems irrelevant given the galvanizing campiness of set pieces that pit wire-fu fight choreography against, among other things, computer-generated dragon-scorpion hybrid creatures. You may sometimes wonder why director Han Yu and co-writers Kuo-Fu Chen and Chu-Iu-Chang abruptly transition from one subplot to the next. That may happen especially when the villainous weather-controlling Mystic Clan — the Empress’ spellcasting henchmen — are revealed as a minor threat compared with the negligibly developed Indian shapeshifting clan the Wind Warriors, whose Dee mystically describes as “dangerous people with weird skills.” But you will never have to wait long before ninjas strike, a gigantic eyeball demon attacks or a monster’s blood rains from the sky and transforms into flower petals in midair. Like that one Chemical Brothers song, Detective Dee: The Four Heavenly Kings doesn’t have to make sense to get you high. (Simon Abrams)

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MILFORD GRAVES FULL MANTIS

Form and content collide in inspiring ways in this documentary about MILFORD GRAVES: avant-garde percussionist, educator, gardener, martial artist and cardiovascular researcher. MILFORD GRAVES Full Mantis is a jazz movie in every sense of the word. Nearly every spoken line ends in “man.” Mixing older performance footage, lengthy fly-on-the-wall takes and a few epic instances in which Graves sits down to tell a story, the result is total immersion in the mindset of this remarkable and unusual man. There are no talking heads and no career bullet points; if you want context outside of what’s given, you’re on your own. We’re witness to ecstatic drum circles and solo workouts, including a mesmerizing segment in Japan for an audience of autistic children. Graves is an autodidact and tinkerer and Renaissance man, and a job as a veterinary assistant leads to a fascination with recording heartbeats. His DOS-era home system looks straight-up sci-fi, especially as he begins explaining how certain sounds can affect musculature, which then affects emotion. (He demonstrates this, bringing himself to tears. Directors John Scofield and Neel Young (not that one) occasionally use abstract expressionist imagery while Graves raps to us about his philosophies, and if ever there were a film appropriate for such a technique, it’s this one. “I went straight to the boss,” Graves explains about learning the pranitims fighting style. He quipped human teachers to just observe the insects themselves. It sounds easy until you see his moves. More documentarians should consider just going straight to the boss. (Jordan Hoffman)

PUZZLE A reminder that quiet and subtle are not the same things, Marc Turtletaub’s earnest, compassionate character study Puzzle — adapted from Argentine director Natalia Smirnoff’s short film — generates a profound sense of unease. The character study of a likely to charm and move audiences even as its particulars often fail to suggest the real world. That’s a testament to the strength of the original story, sort of A Doll’s House but with jigsaw puzzles, and to the performances of Turtletaub’s cast, especially Kelly Macdonald. That unemployable Scottish marvel plays Agnes, a Connecticut housewife whose days revolve around her boys: nudging her mechanic husband from his snoozing slumber, whipping up breakfast for him and their two sons, cleaning up and running errands, then prepping a dinner that includes niceties nobody wants to hear about. But it’s one thing to make fun about a Connecticut woman disengaged from the internet, with fast food diets, that utterly alien iPhone that she dismisses as a “little robot.” She’ll only use in emergencies. It’s another to ask us to accept that she doesn’t even know these things exist. Her life and the movie perk up when she discovers a talent for quickly completing jigsaw puzzles. She partners up with a puzzle pro, played with an air of exquisite boredom by a very funny Ira Khan, for competitions. He’s a listless millionaire inventor who comes to prize her quirks and beauty. To its credit, neither Puzzle nor Agnes mistake a chance at urbane adultery for a simple catch-22 cure for her problems. The speeches about puzzle-solving being like life itself could be much worse, but the filmmakers can’t find a way to make sorting and placing pieces any more dramatic than it sounds. (Alan Scherstuhl)

SCOTTY AND THE SECRET HISTORY OF HOLLYWOOD

Matt Tyrnauer’s documentary Scotty and the Secret History of Hollywood follows Scotty Bowers, a World War II veteran (now 90) who, after he was discharged, became a sex worker and pimp. Gary Grant, Walter Pidgeon, Randolph Scott and Tom Ewell were among the famous clients Scotty calls “tricks” in the same charmingly anachronistic way he calls everyone “baby.” Describing how he made money both from pimping out young, unemployed men and from the voyeurs he watched them, he explains, “That’s what you call business, baby!” After his clients died, Scotty wrote a tell-all book but, unlike some shifty works about long-gone Hollywood sex lives, this film boasts photos and accounts from well-known queer men, like Gore Vidal, to back up its stories. It’s a fascinating film about being a gay man, can’t you use anything else? Don’t do that. Or don’t do anything, in fact.” (April Wolfe)

THE CURSE OF TIKI

Link Wray. It should be a good time.”

THE MALMBA MIA!

Moma Mia! Here We Go Again

Watching Ol Parker’s Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again, I found myself grinning so hard and for so long that by the end, the muscles in my face were sore. The film’s half-baked story about a girl trying to live out her slutty, wonderful, deceased mother’s dream of operating a hotel on a Greek island (all set to the music of ABBA) is so thoroughly entertaining and ridiculous that the cast can’t help but crack into dumb grins at what they’re doing. That especially goes for the guys — Pierce Brosnan, Stella Skarsgard and Colin Firth. Even the title of this sequel, Here We Go Again, suggests a giddy expectation and disbelief that these A-list actors have gathered in the Mediterranean, essentially to perform ABBA karaoke. It’s been 10 years since the first installment of the Mamma Mia! franchise — it’s a franchise, right? In the time that’s passed in the story, Donna (Meryl Streep) has died, and her daughter Sophie (Amanda Seyfried) is about to host a grand opening party for the newly renovated hotel. Donna once ran. This gives an excuse for everyone from the last film to return to the island, including the three men who could each be Sophie’s father, and Donna’s comic-relief best buds Tanya (Christine Baranski) and Rosie (Julie Walters). As Sophie faces a series of tribulations — an absent boyfriend, a grieving heart, a disasterly storm — we see the backstory of how a young Donna (Lily James) ended up on this island, pregnant with Sophie, in the first place. James is a delightful addition. She’s peculiar, with a soft touch; she exudes a distinct Julia Roberts vibe. (April Wolfe)
**SURF’S UP!**

**Tiki, Hawaii and rockabilly from The Hula Girls**

**BY BRETT CALLWOOD**

Despite the distance between Southern California and Hawaii, the influence of Hawaiian and Polynesian culture has been quite profound in this region, at least in receptive circles. Of course, an American interpretation of Polynesian culture led to what we now call “tiki,” which has become intrinsically linked with the lowbrow and rockabilly scenes. It’s funny the way these things work out.

Out of all this, The Hula Girls were born. Formed nearly a decade ago by Matt “Spike” Marble, The Hula Girls sprang from the ashes of Huntington Beach band The Smokin’ Menehunes, a hapa haole (literally, half white; here meaning Hawaiian music with English lyrics) group.

“That was going for maybe four years, and when that thing fell apart, I decided that I wanted to pursue more of a rockabilly/surf thing that also does some of those same sort of things,” Marble says. “Borrows from Hawaiian music but also moves it into a midcentury rockabilly/surf thing.”

So that’s what he did. The Hula Girls have been described as “hulabilly,” a term that Marble doesn’t particularly like but admits is pretty much appropriate. The guitarist-singer has a deep fascination with tiki culture that led him installing an expensive tiki bar, complete with volcano and pond, in his backyard. You have to admire that commitment to a culture from which he has no genetic roots.

“I grew up surfing, with a lot of admiration for the Hawaiian people and culture,” he says. “I guess where it all came from is, I was in college in the late ’90s, early 2000s, in Stockton, up north. There was a tiki bar there called the Islander, but it was well out of business by the time I got around there. I had a graphic design professor who was telling me about the different thrift stores around Stockton, and I found these mugs that said ‘The Islander’ on the back. Different kinds of Polynesian-looking things. I started buying them up just for the aesthetic because I thought they looked so interesting.”

Sven Kirsten’s *The Book of Tiki* was released in the early 2000s, and it blew the whole thing open for Marble. The book detailed the tiki culture that was popular from the 1940s to the mid-’70s; it was America’s interpretation of Polynesia. Marble lives in Costa Mesa; the band also has members in Long Beach, Seal Beach and Newport Beach. However, the frontman stops short of saying that they’re part of a Costa Mesa music scene.

“We don’t perform much in Costa Mesa,” he says. “Our long-running gig was always at Don the Beachcomber in Sunset Beach. I guess I can’t really speak to that. We really don’t fit in at most venues. We do really well in tiki bars.”

That makes a lot of sense. Still, the band’s rockabilly edge offers them plenty of opportunities in cities such as Long Beach and, of course, Los Angeles, where that style of music is still popular with old rockers and punks. This weekend, The Hula Girls play at Alex’s Bar in Long Beach, a perfect fit for these guys.

“In L.A., there’s Clifton’s/The Pacific Seas—that’s probably my favorite,” Marble says. “Don the Beachcomber was a tiki wonderland and made a lot of sense for us. Sadly, Don the Beachcomber is closed. Alex’s is great, too. We haven’t played there in seven years or something. Last time we played there, we played with Wayne ‘The Train’ Hancock and Russell Scott.”

Despite that band name, there were no females in The Hula Girls when they originally formed. Later, they added go-go dancers and the name backfired a little, but it was originally intended to be a Skuce along the lines of the Lazy Cowgirls or New York Dolls. “The name was much more clever before we got girls in the band,” Marble admits.

The Hula Girls have released two albums on vinyl in their decade of existence: *The Curse of Tiki* and last year’s *Jungle Beach Party*. Both have the glorious garage-surf sound blended with that trad Hawaiian edge, the sleeve art decorated with pinup girls and tiki statues. It’s all deliciously lowbrow.

“They’re self-released things,” Marble says. “The first record features DJ Bone-brake from X playing vibraphone. We were honored to have him be a part of it.”

As fun as the tiki imagery is, one does have to wonder if it was tainted when white supremacists took to marching with tiki torches in the wake of Trump’s election. For a while, the image of the clueless fuckwits holding tiki torches aloft while screaming hateful bullshit was all over everywhere. It would be a damn shame if tiki culture was tarnished forever because of these creatures.

“Okay, I hope not,” agrees Marble. “I have tiki torches in my backyard and I completely disavow any of that racist bullshit. When I saw that, I was like, ‘Oh man, can’t you use anything else? Don’t do that.’ Or don’t do anything, in fact.”

The show this week should be typically raucous, energetic and pretty fucking sexy, the way rock & roll should be.

“Our instrumentation is upright bass, Hawaiian steel guitar, I play lead guitar and sing, and we have a guy on a Gretsch cocktail drum kit. A small Gretsch kit. It’ll be a lot of stuff from our record. Rockabilly with a Hawaiian theme. Probably some surf instrumentals. Surf, and late-’50s garage instrumental stuff like Link Wray. It should be a good time.”

When that show is done, The Hula Girls have gigs lined up around this region through the next couple of months, so there’s really no excuse not to see this killer live band. After all, the opportunity to experience a little slice of Hawaii in SoCal range is irresistible.

The Hula Girls play the Rock-a-Hula night with Surfer Joe & Band and Black Flamingos at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 2, at Alex’s Bar.
Wu-Tang Clan
@ SHRINE EXPO HALL
Wu-Tang Clan ain’t nothin’ to fuck with!
This show is to celebrate 25 years of Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers), one of the most iconic hip-hop albums of all time. All living, original members will be in attendance, including RZA, GZA, Method Man, Raekwon and Ghostface Killah. Wu-Tang’s 1993 debut album features timeless hits such as “C.R.E.A.M.” and “Protect Ya Neck.” Hailing from Staten Island, Wu-Tang showcased their East Coast swagger, innovative beats and clever lyrics, which would go on to change the rap game forever. They have released seven gold and platinum studio albums, with sales of more than 40 million albums on a global scale. This will be a rap show for the books. — Shirley Ju

Earth, Wind & Fire
@ PACIFIC AMPHITHEATER
Since 1970, the Chicago-born band commonly known as EWF have been spanning genres and blurring divides while simultaneously scoring hit after hit. Maurice White formed the band back then, and he’s been sadly missed since his death in 2016. Still, three of the current lineup — Verdine White, Philip Bailey and Ralph Johnson — have been there since the early-’70s beginnings. 2013’s Now, Then & Forever album was their first since 2005’s Illumination, and that was followed by an album of holiday music, imaginatively titled Holiday, in 2014. In fairness, though, EWF 2018 are a legacy act and people who attend these gigs really want to hear “After the Love Has Gone” and, of course, “Boogie Wonderland.” That’s fine because, at the end of the day, this band’s purpose is to make people dance, and they still do. — Brett Callwood

Happenings
@ THE BROAD
Even though “happenings” were an art concept popularized by Fluxus artist Allan Kaprow, it’s hard to be churlish when faced with the sheer wealth of Joseph Beuys’ and Fluxus-inspired work at tonight’s Happenings. Chief among the strange and wonderful welter of sound bestowed unto you by the spirits of Fluxus is a live action by constitutionally brilliant German dream merchants faust. Will you see pinball players jamming onstage while their mesmeric and psychodelic music unfolds? Someone knitting while they perform? You just never know with faust. Also: the politically charged grooves of DJ Eye; Lonnie Holley and Nelson Patton reminding dead souls that live alternates romantic folk songs with electronic resonance tests; noise-in-opposition with Sigrid Lauren and Monica Mirabile as Fluct; electronica pioneers and washing machine enthusiasts Matmos; Margaret Chardiet’s sonic autopsies and burials performed as Pharmakon; and the aural auras of Total Freedom. — David Cotner

Annabella Lwin
@ THE WILTERN
Tonight’s concert is billed as “Retro Futura,” an oldies revue of fair-to-middling British ’80s pop performers including ABC, Modern English, Kajagoogoo’s Limahl and The Outfield’s Tony Lewis. But the real star of the show is Annabella Lwin, the Anglo-Burmese singer who first came to attention as the precocious 13-year-old who fronted Bow Wow Wow. Lwin overcame the creepy machinations of Svengali manager Malcolm McLaren to put her own stamp on the band with her vivacious, ebullient vocals on such memorable tunes as “Sexey Eiffel Tower” and a hit remake of The Strangloves’ “I Want Candy.” Lwin still sounds fiery today, but in recent years she’s had to reclaim her own legacy after a former Bow Wow Wow bassist somehow finagled the rights to the band name and continues to tour (and confuse fans) with a dodgy imposter vocalist. Ain’t nothing like the real thing, though. — Falling James

The Mr. T Experience, Nerf Herder, Kepi Ghoulie
@ THE TROUBADOUR
Author-singer Dr. Frank Portman has been fronting various lineups of The Mr. T Experience since 1985. As hardcore-punk and hair-metal trends have come and gone, Portman continued to crank out a supremely silly brand of punk and garage rock long before such styles became fashionable again. While latter-day punk moralizers were blustering with secondhand rage, Dr. Frank chose instead to celebrate pop-culture icons in such fannish tributes as “Danny Partridge” and “I’m in Love With Paula Pierce,” a torrid ode to the Pandoras singer. The Mr. T Experience’s most recent album, 2016’s King Dork Approximately, is based on Portman’s young-adult novel of the same name. The Groovy Ghoulies’ Kepi Ghoulie alternates romantic folk songs with catchy, Ramones-y pop-punk anthems. Plus, Santa Barbara punks Nerf Herder. — Falling James

Church of Freaks
@ ALEX’S BAR
The punk rock–abilly, freak-filled dark
THUR. JULY 26
BAILANDO

SAT. JULY 28
HOLGRAM CITY ANNIVERSARY PARTY FT. MALUCA

FRI. JULY 27
A CLUB CALLED RHONDA

SAT. JULY 28
GUIDANCE: FUR COAT, THUGFUCKER, MD & MORE

TUE. JULY 31
THE MOTH

WED. AUGUST 1
TIM NED

COMING SOON:

8/19 THE SHOWCASE TOUR
8/24 WE LOVE KANDY
8/25 KEVIN SAUNDERSON, DOC MARTIN, MR. KOOLAI
8/25 NASTIA
8/30 VIRTUAL REALITY TOUR
9/1 MONDO HOLLYWOOD
9/3 GUIDANCE: FUR COAT, THUGF*CKER, MD & MORE
9/14 ZOMBIE NATION
9/15 GUIDE: FUR COAT, THUGFUCKER, MD & MORE
9/21 FAMILY FUNCTION
9/25 MUSTASCH
10/13 NEROZ & INSIDIOUS
10/13 REVOCATION, EXHUMED, RIVERS OF NIHIL, Yautja

8/19 BAILANDO
8/26 THROWBACK THURSDAYS
8/26 BAILANDO
8/27 A CLUB CALLED RHONDA
8/28 HOLOGRAM 10TH ANNIVERSARY PARTY
8/28 BAILALO BASSMENT
8/31 THE MOTH
8/1 TIM NED
8/2 ISSA VIBE LA: DJ HURRICANE
8/3 BORN FOR BURNING PRESENTS
8/3 SKELETAL REMAINS, MORTUOUS
8/4 CLUB 90'S PRESENTS
8/4 JAMAIAN INDEPENDENCE PARTY
8/4 KARAOKE IS FOR LOVERS
8/9 MANNUP

8/9 THE MOTH
8/10 THE DREAM LAB PRESENTS
8/10 COME AS YOU ARE: GABY G, DJ DESS
8/10 AFRO GO GO
8/12 COAST TO COAST
8/11 A CLUB CALLED RHONDA
8/15 SCRIPTS GONE WILD:
8/15 ROADHOUSE
8/16 BAILANDO!
8/16 COLLIDE
8/17 TRYBVIL - AFRO HOUSE
8/17 CLUB 90'S PRESENTS
8/18 BAILANDO!
8/18 R&B NIGHT
8/18 RETRO BLOOM SINGLE RELEASE PARTY
8/18 MANNUP

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Taleen Kali
@ THE HI HAT
“Language is a skin for disappearing in,” Taleen Kali confides poetically, her voice soaring like a seagull through the fuzzy clouds of electronics and glittery atmosphere wrapped around “Evil Eye II,” from her new EP, Soul Songs (Lollipop Records). The local singer, bassist and yoga teacher used to lead the band Tulips, but last year she unveiled her new solo band at Echo Park Rising. Kali’s EP was produced by Kristin Kontrol (Dee), and there are traces of Kontrol’s shadowy pop allure in Kali’s blend of riot-grrl punk and electronic dance-pop. In the video for “Bluets,” Kali paints herself and muses moodyly over ringing chords before ascending into the ether while riding atop her propulsive bass, her yearning voice unfurling grandly. —Brett Callwood
THE GUITAR EVENT OF THE YEAR

JOE BONAMASSA

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AUGUST 1ST

THE GREEK THEATRE

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TICKETMASTER
**JAZZ & BLUES**


**CATALINA BAR & GRILL**: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A. Pete Escovedo, Fri., July 27, 8:30 p.m.

**THE LIGHTHOUSE**: 3967 Sepulveda Blvd., L.A. The Sam Hirsh Trio, Sat., July 28, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., free. The Daryl Strodes Quartet, Wed., Aug. 1, 6-9 p.m., free.


——Falling James——

**COUNTRY & FOLK**

**THE CINEMA BAR**: 3967 Sepulveda Blvd., M.R. Snakes, Fri., July 27, 9 p.m., free. Kristi Callan, Carnival of Soul. Jeff West & the Witwoods, Sun., July 29, 9 p.m.

**3967 SEPULVEDA BLVD.** M.R. Snakes, Fri., July 27, 9 p.m., free. Kristi Callan, Carnival of Soul.

——Falling James——

**DANCE CLUBS**


**AVALON HOLLYWOOD**: 1735 Vine St., L.A. Figure, Arius, Com3in, Devin Callen, Dilia, Phire, Fri., July 27, 9:30 p.m. TigerHeat, Thursdays, 10 p.m., $5.

**DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION**: 139 N. Grand Ave., L.A. Sleepless: The Music Center After Hours, with Kid606, Nicolas Bougaïeff, Fri., July 27, 11:30 p.m.

**EXCHANGE LA**: 618 S. Spring St., L.A. Matoma, Justin Caruso, Kaylee, Damon Steele, Fri., July 27, 10 p.m. Bear Grillz, Sat., July 28, 10 p.m.

**SUNDAY, JULY 29**

**ANGEL COLLECTIVE**: 9 p.m. The Theatre at Ace Hotel.

**DARYL HALL & JOHN OATES**: 8 p.m. The Greek Theatre.

——Falling James——

**CONCERTS**

**FRIDAY, JULY 27**

**GRO** **BLONDIE**, **ADAM ANT**, **MARC ALMOND**: With Thomas Dolby, Berlin, 8 p.m., $44-$50. Microsoft Theater, 777 Chick Hearn Court, L.A. See Music Pick.

**GRO** **EARLTO, WIND & FIRE**: 8:15 p.m. Pacific AmphiTheatre, 100 Fair Dr., Costa Mesa.

**IMMORTAL TECHNIQUE**: 7:30 p.m. The Forum.

**JAZZ Band, Tue., July 31, 9 p.m. Bob Parins, Mon., July 30, 9 p.m. The Big Butter.

**ASSASSINS**, **KÁTIA MORAES & BRAZILIAN HEARTS**: With Faust, Matmos, Eye, Total Freedom, Pharmakon, Fluct, Lonnie Holley, 8 p.m., $30. The Broad, 221 S. Grand Ave., L.A. See Music Pick.

**ANIMAL COLLECTIVE**: 7:30 p.m., $54-$80. The Forum.

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Software Development Engineer I
Job Code: A20227. Design, develop, implement, test, document and deliver large-scale, multi-tiered, distributed or embedded software applications, tools, systems and services.

Software Development Engineer II
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