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LA WEEKLY



GO»LA

Week of
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P. 7 **FRI**

ENJOY HAPPY HOUR AMONG
COLD WAR ARTIFACTS

P. 7 **SAT**

THE SPOOKY DAYS OF SUMMER
ARE AT SCARELA

P. 8 **SUN**

PREVIEW DAVE GROHL'S CAL JAM
AT A PALLADIUM POP-UP



P. 9 **WED**

DISCUSS DOCUMENTARY
AFRO-PUNK WITH THE DIRECTOR

fri

8/24

DANCE

Dancing in the Moonlight

A dance double-header this weekend brings two all-female shows to the al fresco Ford Amphitheatre. Friday and Saturday belong to **Marjani Forté-Saunders**, an alumna of Urban Bush Women who brings her Bessie Award-nominated *Memoirs of a ... Unicorn*. The highly personal evening-length solo performance has the audience seated onstage amid structures built by Tony Award-winning set designer Mimi Lien and the choreographer's Arkansas-born father, Rick Forté, who worked as a contractor and whose stories are the inspiration for the evening. On Sunday, and timed to coincide with a full moon's illumination, **szalt** performs *Moon &*. This is the fifth full-evening work by choreographer Stephanie Zaletel for her six-member, all-female contemporary troupe. The dancers will be backed by electro-acoustic composers Louis Lopez and Jonathan Snipes performing live. Zaletel and her troupe were selected by a panel of L.A. artists for this presentation as part of the Ford's Ignite @ the Ford! series. *Ford Theatres, 2850 Cahuenga Blvd. East, Hollywood Hills. Marjani Forté-Saunders, Fri.-Sat., Aug. 24-25, 8:30 p.m.; \$25. szalt, Sun., Aug. 26, 8:30 p.m.; \$25-\$45. (323) 461-3673, fordtheatres.org. —Ann Haskins*

ART/CULTURE

Foodies From Behind the Iron Curtain

The Wende Museum of the Cold War is a unique institution, founded to collect and preserve objects and images of Soviet society. It does this through not only fine art but also graphics and printed matter that outline the contours of the era's aesthetic, and the ways in which political and social messages were crafted, disseminated and subverted. But the Wende is more omnivorous in its collecting habits, with a trove of design objects from the industrial to the domestic, commercial to commemorative: artifacts of daily life that augment the high culture wars with insightful texture. One of its most popular exhibitions — **Happy Hour at the Wende** — is centered around mid-century Soviet foodie culture. In this spirit, the Wende offers a free-ranging lecture

Marjani Forté-Saunders: See Friday.

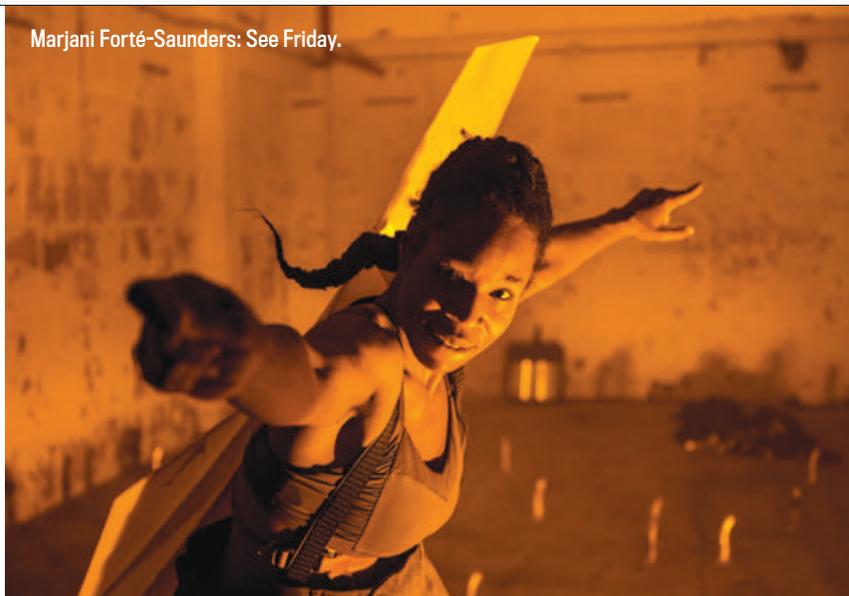


PHOTO BY MARIA BARANOV

on alcohol consumption as depicted in its holdings and in art history, generally with suitably thematic adult beverages. And while you're there, be sure to check out the exhibits closing on Aug. 26. *Wende Museum, 10808 Culver Blvd., Culver City; Fri., Aug. 24, 6-8 p.m.; free, RSVP required. (310) 216-1600, wendemuseum.org/programs/happy-hour-wende. —Shana Nys Dambrot*

FOOD & DRINK

Taste Excellence

Gastronomic trailblazers, both national and local, and all-around excellent cookery touch down in the City of Angels during the **Los Angeles Food & Wine Festival**. Highlights of the event include a four-course lunch, a tag-team effort pairing Antonia Lofaso (Dama) and Aarón Sánchez of Food Channel fame and a massive wine tasting featuring more than 200 wines at the Barker Hangar, with plenty of bites and photo and signing opportunities for star-struck attendees. The prices may be a little steep, but if the roster is any indicator, it will be well worth it. Check schedule for locations and times. *Downtown and Barker Hangar; Wed.-Sun., Aug. 22-26; prices vary. lafw.com. —Avery Bissett*

MUSIC

Ending Summer With a Bang

Next month, L.A. Philharmonic celebrates its centennial with a range of

fantastic and unusual events, including a special CicLAvia street festival that will connect the orchestra's two home bases, the Hollywood Bowl and Disney Hall. But before the new season officially begins, conductor Gustavo Dudamel leads the band through one more big summertime bash — L.A. Phil's annual **Tchaikovsky Spectacular** with fireworks. Although the pyrotechnics display and a visit from the USC Trojan Marching Band will provide dramatic counterpoint to the Russian composer's brassy *1812 Overture*, the real fireworks are in the way Dudamel artfully finesse Tchaikovsky's music, including adaptations of *Hamlet* and *Romeo and Juliet* that feature such actors as Asia Kate Dillon, Ioan Gruffudd and Anika Noni Rose. *Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood Hills; Fri.-Sat., Aug. 24-25, 8 p.m.; \$14-\$195. (323) 850-2000, hollywoodbowl.com. —Falling James*

sat

8/25

CONVENTIONS

Summertime Frights

Los Angeles has a problem. We are sick individuals who eat up all things eerie, bloody and horrific. Well, a lot of us do, anyway. For hardcore horror fans, celebrating macabre culture once a year on Halloween just isn't enough, which is why

there are so many conventions throughout the year geared toward scary imagery and entertainment. **ScareLA** is one of the biggest and best. Back in 2013 it was the first fan convention dedicated to Halloween, and even though it's faced some fiendish competition from other cons, the promoters strive to outdo themselves via weird workshops, creepy classes, impressive industry panels, haunted tours, screenings and more. This year the event will take place in a dark zone: Vendors and attractions will appear within the setting of a haunted experience, complete with mood lighting and pop-up scares. There will also be freaky VR fun, live dark bands and big names including renowned makeup artist Ve Neill, George Cameron Romero (son of the cinematic icon), John Murdy (creative director at Universal Studios' Horror Nights) and the queen of possession herself, Linda Blair. *Los Angeles Convention Center, 1201 S. Figueroa St., downtown; Sat., Aug. 25, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., Aug. 26, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; \$35 and up. scarela.com. —Lina Lecaro*

FOOD/ART

Head to Chinatown ... and Eat!

Don't miss this year's final **Chinatown Summer Nights**. The trifecta of events has featured a crowd-pleasing array of attractions and food, and this evening's lineup does not disappoint. Starting with food, because we all know what's best in life: Fluff Ice (which may be superior to even plain ol' ice cream in dealing with summer weather) and eye-popping and exquisite hot dogs from Tokyo Doggie Style will be among the food trucks present. Additionally, there will be a tribute to Jonathan Gold featuring Asian street food such as Hip Hot's big toothpick lamb and Good Gravy Baker's churros with Oolong custard. And when you're full, take in the live music or any number of wonderfully esoteric artistic displays, such as fruit carving, candy sculpting or calligraphy. *Central Plaza, 943 N. Broadway, Chinatown; Sat., Aug. 25, 5 p.m.-mid.; free. chinatownsummernights.com. —Avery Bissett*

ART/MUSIC

Chinese Punks

The Broad sometimes seems more like a randomly assembled hodgepodge of its namesake Eli Broad's personal art collec-

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tion than a thoughtfully curated museum, but the institution has mounted some interesting temporary exhibitions and ongoing programs. The Summer Happenings series often presents unusual combinations of personalities from the art and music worlds, and this evening's edition, "The Greater Body: Shi Dat," gathers together a fascinating assortment of creative types who evoke China in both traditional and modern ways. Performances by Beijing punk bands such as FAZI, Hell City and Shave 'n' Shut are juxtaposed with more experimental works by Yan Jun and Ji Dongyang, and the arty California ensemble Xiu Xiu were just added to a lineup that includes Re-TROS, Asian Dope Boys, Aisha Devi and Daniel Collás. *The Broad*, 221 S. Grand Ave., downtown; Sat., Aug. 25, 8 p.m.; \$30. (213) 232-6200, thebroad.org. —Falling James

sun 8/26

ARTS

Street History

Steve Grody has forgotten more about the history of graffiti and street art in L.A. than most people will ever know. Luckily for us, he's all about sharing his encyclopedic knowledge and enthusiastic insight with anyone who can keep up. His wildly popular **Arts District walking tours** guide people through the streets, alleys and indie venues that nurture and celebrate graffiti practitioners of all generations and styles. As part of the Cartwheel Art brain trust, offering context and analysis that help folks understand the deep significance and meaning of individual works and the whole movement, he literally conjures modern art history as he walks. Also, there's BBQ and a drawing session with UTI crew artist Nuke for those who find themselves inspired. *Pearl's BBQ*, 2143 Violet St., downtown; Sun., Aug. 26, 2-5 p.m., \$58 (includes lunch). (213) 537-0687, eventbrite.com/e/graffiti-with-steve-grody-and-nuke-pearls-bbq-dtla-arts-district-tickets-48458844709?aff=ebdssbdestsearch. —Shana Nys Dambrot

POP-UP/MUSIC

Everlong Fun

Dave Grohl never does anything half-assed. Whether it be secret shows at tiny L.A. clubs to hype a new record, renting out the Forum to throw himself a rock star-packed birthday bash or re-creating a Woodstock-like rock concert from the '70s (Cal Jam, complete with a water park and camping), Grohl and his Foo Fighters are full-on, F-shit-up entertainers. Even those not sure yet about driving out to San Bernardino for the fest will want to hit the **Cal Jam '18 Pop-Up** at the Palladium on Saturday. The event is free, for all ages and packed with foo-bulous fun including FF merch and props (Dave's throne and white limo), plus food and drinks, and live performances by Taylor Hawkins' Chevy Metal and a mysterious act called The Holy Shits (Google it). Special discount (\$49, no service fee) lawn tickets to Cal

Jam will be available at the event. *The Palladium*, 6215 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; Sun., Aug. 26, 3-7 p.m.; free. facebook.com/events/2070054236360915. —Lina Lecaro

mon 8/27

MUSIC

It's a Thriller!

Michael Jackson's 60th birthday is Aug. 29, and *Moonwalker*, his cinematic musical anthology, marked its 30th anniversary this year. Motown on Monday, the long-running soul-dance shindig at the Short Stop, "wanna be startin' somethin'" to celebrate both, and they're even changing the event's name for this evening to **Michael on Monday**. It starts with a screening of the movie, followed by dancing to Monalisa, Jedi and Expo's off-the-wall hits sets, mixing in funky jams from MJ's friends and artists he influenced. Expect videos, a King of Pop photo booth (featuring album-cover backdrops), drink specials and a thriller night's worth of fun. *The Short Stop*, 1455 Sunset Blvd., Echo Park; Mon., Aug. 27, 8 p.m.-2 a.m.; free, 21+. eventbrite.com/e/michael-on-monday-mj-b-day-tribute-827-motown-on-mondays-la-tickets-48679531790. —Lina Lecaro

tue 8/28

COMEDY

Check Your Voicemail

Modern communication revolves around emails, texts and social media — you probably only get calls from your doctor and your tech-challenged parents. But voicemails haven't completely gone the way of beepers and fax machines. Directed by Christine Bullen, *The Truce: The Voicemail Show!* reminds us that people still leave spoken words on our phones, and that they're often very funny. Karen Baughn, Geri Carrillo, Sara Clarke-Chan, David Danipour, Andrew Goldmeier, Madeleine Kang, Amber Kenny, Josh Krilov, Alex McCale, Charlie Mihelich and Michael Murphy, who perform monthly as sketch comedy team the Truce at ACME, crowdsourced actual voicemails — wrong numbers, sales calls, automated messages, drunk dials — from friends and family. Tonight, they perform the best of the worst, each followed by a sketch routine. *Comedy Central Stage*, 6539 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, Tue., Aug. 28, 8-9 p.m.; free, RSVP required. (323) 960-5519, comedycentralstage.com. —Siran Babayan

MUSIC

Medieval Classic

Considering that Carl Orff's 1936 cantata *Carmina Burana* was based on medieval poems written almost 800 years earlier, the choral piece has nonetheless remained compelling in the modern era. The work has been adapted in numerous formats, including a version by former Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek, but guest conduc-

tor Bramwell Tovey gathers together the L.A. Phil, a group of star vocalists and the combined forces of L.A. Master Chorale and L.A. Children's Chorus to revive the opus with full power. Pianist Emanuel Ax sets the mood first with a rendition of Beethoven's always-delightful *Choral Fantasy*. *Hollywood Bowl, 2301 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood Hills; Tue., Aug. 28 & Thu., Aug. 30, 8 p.m.; \$1-\$158. (323) 850-2000, hollywoodbowl.com. —Falling James*

wed 8/29

MUSIC/FILM

Forgotten History

People sometimes forget that the very early punk-rock shows were much more diverse — both musically and racially — than the mostly male, white hardcore scene that followed in the early 1980s. Director James Spooner's 2004 documentary, *Afro-Punk*, points out that African-Americans were a major force in punk rock, even if they were often left out of the mostly white-centric histories of the era. While Spooner's documentary is by no means definitive and leaves out the crucial contributions of influential black punk rockers in L.A., for instance, it nonetheless highlights the startling impact of bands such as Bad Brains, who were faster, harder and more musically dexterous than their white rivals. Spooner, writer Tisa Bryant and the incisive critic Ernest Hardy discuss the film

after a free screening. *Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Wed., Aug. 29, 7:30 p.m.; free, RSVP required. (310) 443-7000, hammer.ucla.edu/programs-events/2018/08/afro-punk/. —Falling James*

thu 8/30

BOOKS

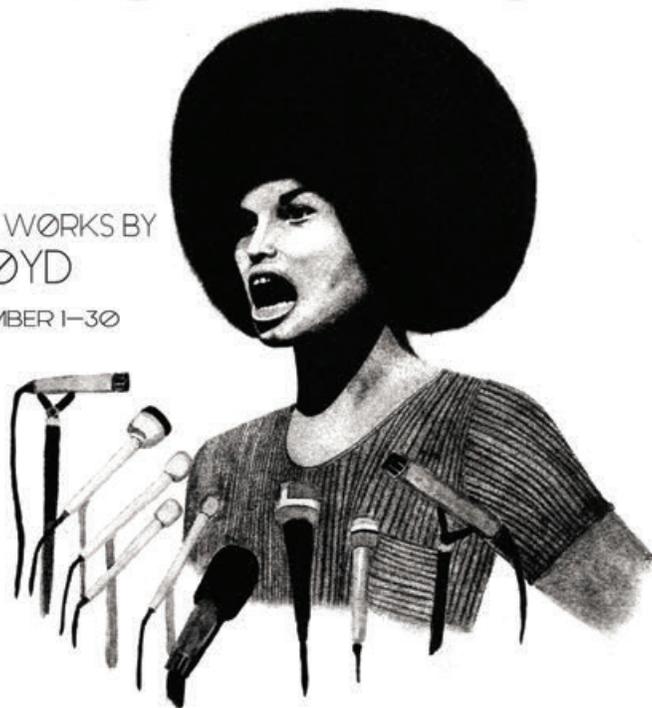
Those Who Can, Write Books

Fans of comedian-writer **Adam Cayton-Holland** know him best as Spanish teacher Loren Payton on truTV's *Those Who Can't*, which returns for a third season this fall. In the sitcom, Cayton-Holland, Andrew Orvedahl and Ben Roy play self-absorbed and woefully dysfunctional teachers — they're the rotten apples, not the students — who wreak havoc at fictional Smoot High in Denver. (The series has featured nearly every big-name comedian as a guest star, including Patton Oswalt, Eddie Pepitone, Baron Vaughn, Mary Lynn Rajskub and the perpetually drunk Kyle Kinane.) This year, Cayton-Holland published a new book, *Tragedy Plus Time: A Tragi-Comic Memoir*, which he discusses tonight. In it, he recounts his career and forming the Denver-based comedy trio The Grawlix but, more important, his relationship with his parents and two sisters, one of whom committed suicide in 2012. *Skylight Books, 1818 N. Vermont Ave., Los Feliz; Thu., Aug. 30, 7:30 p.m.; free. (323) 660-1175, skylightbooks.com. —Siran Babayan*

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L.A. WEEKLY JOINS THE CITY IN MOURNING JONATHAN GOLD

TRIBUTE TO



Jonathan Gold found his imitable voice at *L.A. Weekly*. The much-admired food critic and cultural icon, who died of pancreatic cancer on July 21, proclaimed this in a piece celebrating the paper's 30th anniversary in 2008 (this December marks our 40th anniversary). He also said he found his politics at this publication, "the result of concussions sustained while butting heads with the editor, Jay Levin."

In the piece, titled "Between the Lines," Gold shared that he learned about "love and loss and betrayal and loyalty" at the *Weekly*, which was obviously as formative as what he came to know about constructing paragraphs, comma placement, and the power of words to convey mood, atmosphere and flavor.

Though he eventually took his masterful food coverage to the *Los Angeles Times*, the *L.A. Weekly* was his home and that of his beloved wife, editor-in-chief Laurie Ochoa, during a prolific and game-changing period, for the writer and for this publication itself. At the *Weekly*, he became the first Pulitzer Prize-winning food critic

ever in 2007, and he pushed his already deep and beautiful writing to extraordinary heights, injecting history and culture into his reportage, giving his vibrant words context, and making us look at eating as an art form.

Gold's piece chronicling a year devouring the many flavors available on one Los Angeles street, Pico Boulevard, is probably his most cited work, so much so that those not familiar with it might expect it to be an epic think piece of great length. It's relatively short for such a robust report, and it represents the writer's soulful gift for saying a lot with a little. (Gold's N.W.A cover feature, also included here, is a lengthier example of his



PHOTOS BY ANNE FISHBEIN

THE MASTER

brilliance.)

“The Year I Ate Pico Blvd.” still reads like poetry, very personal poetry from someone who loved his surroundings so much that he actually became absorbed by them. Gold was great at conveying the unique details and creativity that goes into making the finest cuisine. But it was his gift for helping us to appreciate the full cultural breadth of cooking and consuming in the city — from ingredients and preparations to innovations and traditions — that set him apart from everyone else attempting to write about food, and about L.A. in general.

With his public memorial taking place in downtown this weekend, *L.A. Weekly* joins all of Los Angeles in honoring the one and only Jonathan Gold, by sharing some of his words (reprinted here with his family’s blessing) as well as sharing reflections by, and conversations with, writers he greatly influenced.

The Community Tribute to Jonathan Gold will take place on the steps of Los Angeles City Hall, 200 N. Spring St., downtown, on Sunday, Aug. 26, from 5:30 to 8 p.m. It will be hosted by *L.A. Times* staff writer Carolina Miranda, and will include tributes from Mark Gold, Jonathan’s brother and UCLA associate

vice chancellor for environment and sustainability; Evan Kleiman of KCRW’s *Good Food*; Laura Gabbert, producer-director of the documentary *City of Gold*; L.A. City Councilmember José Huizar; Providence’s Michael Cimarusti; Bricia Lopez of Guelaguetza; Sang Yoon of Lukshon and Father’s Office; and composer Carl Stone. KCRW’s Anthony Valadez will DJ, and there will be a picnic with food trucks, followed by speakers and then a screening of favorite and never-before-seen moments from *City of Gold*. Members of the community are encouraged to share their own tributes using #LAGold.



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Jonathan Gold, back in the day

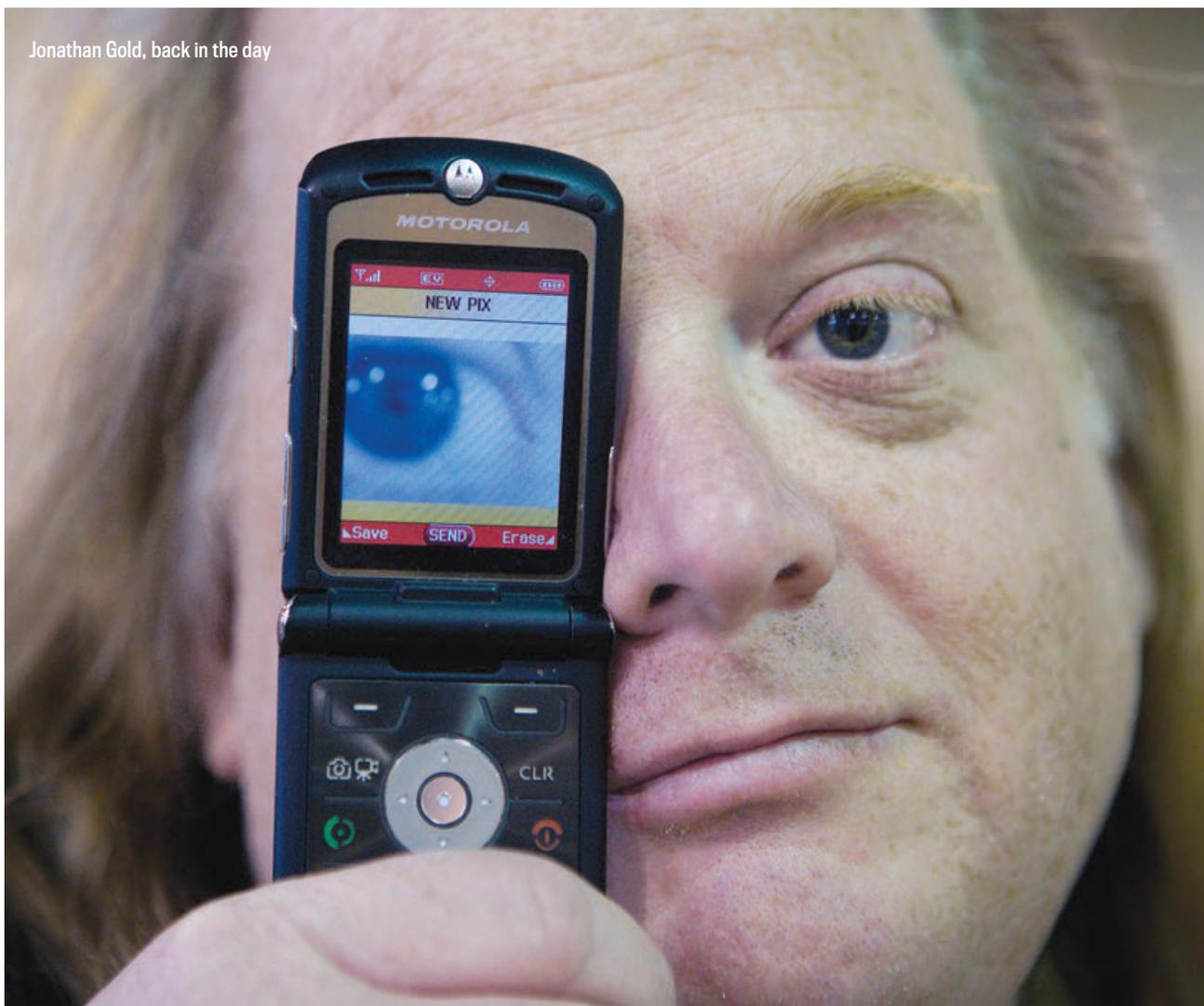


PHOTO BY ANNE FISHEIN

AS GOOD AS GOLD

A colleague recalls what Jonathan Gold did for her, and for L.A.

BY SEVEN MCDONALD

Like any L.A. native worth their weight in sea salt — or any who have driven across the city to experience the most reliable lamb *barbacoa* tacos, blackened at the edges and caramelized to a sweet subtle gaminess; or bowls of ramen filled with resilient noodles and fatty, long-simmered meltingly soft pork; or the swelling *xiao long bao* dumpling in all its splendor — I was heartbroken to hear of Jonathan Gold's passing.



I've known Jonathan since the '90s, when we both worked at a start-up teen magazine, where he was still, magically and wonderfully, writing about music, and I most likely was clumsily writing about Hollywood and "trend forecasting."

Years later, I learned it was Jonathan who'd encouraged his deep, beautiful wife, then-*L.A. Weekly* editor-in-chief Laurie Ochoa, to hire me at the paper after I cold-pitched a story about a Kali temple. I had recently returned from living in an ashram in the Bahamas, where I had spent a year and a half subsumed in practice, seriously considering renouncing the world as a Brahmachari (a Vedic or Hindu monk).

Having been away from writing for years, at the time I had only worked as a celebrity journalist with contracts at numerous glossy magazines, a career I was extremely grateful to have stumbled into, because I hadn't gone to college. I wanted to write about the temple and assumed nobody at any of the publications I knew would let me, but maybe the *Weekly* would? The way I heard it, he told Laurie the paper would be "lucky to have me."

So Seven, then known as Shamala at the ashram, was able to write for the first time about something other than Hollywood, celebrities and trends. This changed my life in a meaningful way. It allowed me to

change my voice and develop my writing. Soon I was writing cover stories for the *Weekly* about young political activists trying to save the planet, child actors who had moved here for pilot season and the underage music scene.

Eventually Laurie gave me my own column. I was historically slow getting covers in and sometimes wouldn't even turn them over to her — like the year I spent with a Krishna family or another writing about all the elephants living in captivity in America. Laurie said if my pieces were shorter, maybe she "could have me in the paper more."

She even let me do it bimonthly, instead of every week. "24/Seven" (cleverly named by then-deputy editor Joe Donnelly) ran here for some five years, with Laurie serving as my editor most of that time. It allowed me to have an incredible relationship to my city, the people who live here and Laurie, who was a perfect editor for me. It was an experience I cherish.

I wanted to bring my spiritual practice into my writing, and I was inspired by

something I heard Ram Dass say: that the only way to create change is "from heart to heart to heart." I was allowed to explore the idea of capturing the hearts of my subjects, in hopes that readers would experience their own heart opening as they read, in turn creating connections across a city that people often said lacked community and depth. Like Jonathan, if I may presume, I didn't see my city that way. Maybe I was trying to grant permission to my fellows to stop and smell the roses or, perhaps more apt, the sugary scent of Mexican sweet bread wafting through my neighborhood's streets.

For the years I wrote "24/Seven," my life had a wonderful, almost prayerful purpose. I started most mornings exploring the city looking for subjects doing interesting things, hoping to share with readers the beauty and, yes, God within the everyday, the non-famous. I wrote about guys posting flyers for their bands with push pins and Scotch tape, free spirits at the Venice drum circle, stoners dressed in pink pushing pink bikes with flat tires down the street on Valentine's Day, money-obsessed 13-year-olds hanging out at the Koreatown Plaza, talking punk-rock stuffed animals, young Republicans, perfectly average hipsters, young soldiers at the Greyhound station heading off to Camp Pendleton.

Strangers would often stop me to tell me how much they loved the column; humbling and wonderful, this allowed me to feel that authentic connection I was hoping to provide. I share this with you to give a taste, pun acknowledged, of what Jonathan did for me personally.

Jonathan's loss is vast for L.A., the writing and food communities at large, readers, eaters, longtime foodies and those who recently, over the last decade, got on board, and also for everyone who has ever lived, worked or visited in our city. He changed the landscape. He showed us how to explore, live, enjoy life; respect ingredients, kitchens, the people who make our food and the cultures they come from.

He democratized fine dining and gave people permission to seek dining experiences that were exceptional, saving a whole class of people who basically have lunch for a living from a hell of a lot of soulless, unnecessarily expensive meals. He was a teacher, explorer and topographer; an exceptionally generous, unique human, talent and voice. There was nothing common or pretentious about him at all; he was as rare, beautiful and authentic as his surname indicated. He loved his city, people, strangers, food, music and his family. His own writing lifted the free press to the highest of heights and his casual generosity allowed me the opportunity to have one of the most meaningful experiences of my life.

"It can be noted that I waited until the last hour to turn this piece in and, in that time, found it important to cook a passable corn soup with fresh fennel and kitchen staples, and an exceptional dinner of grocery store steak, frozen peas and organic Finley Farm carrots for my spoiled springer spaniel.

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Jonathan Gold in his natural habitat: a restaurant

PHOTO BY ANNE FISHER

| Eats // Fork Lift //

THE YEAR I ATE PICO BLVD.

L.A. Weekly looks back at one of Jonathan Gold's seminal pieces

BY JONATHAN GOLD

For a while in my early 20s, I had only one clearly articulated ambition: to eat at least once at every restaurant on Pico Boulevard, starting with the fried yucca dish served at a *pupuseria* near the downtown end and working methodically westward toward the chili fries at Tom's No. 5 near the beach. It seemed a reasonable enough alternative to graduate school.

After I'd finished work each day at a legal newspaper near City Hall, I would walk to the next restaurant on Pico. After dinner I would buy an orange from a street vendor and catch a bus the rest of the way home. (I should mention here that I actually lived on Pico, over a kosher butcher shop near Robertson.)

When the enormity of the adventure seemed overwhelming, I might buy a taco at one restaurant, a hamburger at the next and a bowl of *chilate y nuegados* at a third. I never made it to the beach, but I did

eat my way almost to Century City that year, from the El Salvador Cafe all the way to the old Roxbury Pharmacy grill. I grooved on the Persian-Jewish neighborhood around Beverly, the remarkable strip of soul food between Fairfax and Crenshaw, the pan-ethnic zone around Westwood. I especially liked the neighborhood — mostly Central American — that had sprung up between Vermont and the Harbor Freeway, the thousands upon thousands of Guatemalans and Salvadorans who crowded Pico until dark, choosing toys from big displays set up in grocery-store parking lots, buying mayonnaise-smeared ears of corn from street-corner pushcarts. The restaurants in that neighborhood were good, too. I learned about everything from marinated octopus at El Pulpo Loco, El Parian's Jalisco-style goat stew, and Salvadoran *pupusas* to El Nica's giant Nicaraguan tamales, Cuban fried rice, Guatemalan *pepian* and Ecuadorian *llapingachos*.

This was not my mother's cooking. Pico, in a certain sense, was where I learned to eat. I also saw my first punk-rock show on Pico, was shot at, fell in love, bowled a 164, witnessed a knife fight, took cello lessons, raised chickens, ate Oki Dogs and heard X, Ice Cube, Hole and Willie Dixon perform (though not together) on Pico. These experiences are, I suspect, not

atypical. Sunset may have more famous restaurants, La Brea better restaurants and Melrose more restaurants whose chairs have nestled Mira Sorvino's gently rounded flanks. No glossy magazine has ever suggested Pico as an emerging hot street; no real estate ad has ever described a house as Pico-adjacent. The street plays host to the unglamorous bits of Los Angeles, the row of one-stops



THIS WAS NOT MY MOTHER'S COOKING. PICO, IN A CERTAIN SENSE, WAS WHERE I LEARNED TO EAT.

that supply records to local jukeboxes, the kosher-pizza district, the auto-body shops that speckle its length the way giant churches speckle Wilshire. And while Pico may divide neighborhoods more than it creates them — Koreatown from Harvard Heights, Wilshire Center from Midtown, Beverly Hills-adjacent from not-all-that-Beverly-Hills-adjacent, neighborhoods your cousin Martha lives in from neighborhoods she wouldn't step into after dark — there isn't even a Pico-

identified gang. But precisely because Pico is so unremarked, because it is left alone like old lawn furniture moldering away in the side yard of a suburban house, it is at the center of entry-level capitalism in central Los Angeles, and one of the most vital food streets in the world. Pico is home to Valentino, which specializes in preparing customized Italian food for millionaires, and to Oaxacan restaurants so redolent of the developing world that you half expect to see starved chickens scratching around on the floor; to Billingsley's, a steak house, which could have been transplanted whole from Crawfordsville, Indiana, and to the Arsenal, a steak house decorated with medieval weaponry; to chain Mexican restaurants, artist-hang-out Mexican restaurants and Mexican restaurants of such stunning authenticity that you're surprised not to stumble outside into a bright Guadalajara sun. Greek and Scandinavian delis still flourish on stretches of Pico that haven't been Greek or Scandinavian since the Eisenhower administration.

I went back to Pico last week, to a faded Mexican joint once famous for the best carne asada in Los Angeles, beer so cold that a thin sheet of ice formed on top of it on hot summer days, and waitresses beautiful as Velázquez princesses. The restaurant had not aged well. It was populated with guys sitting around in stained undershirts, half-looking at the Galaxy game that droned from a TV overhead, dosing shrimp cocktails with generic-brand ketchup, listlessly draining one can of Modelo after another. The food was rank — sour grilled meat, cardboard-thin, a week older than it should have been; watery beans; commercial tortillas. I probably would have pushed it aside uneaten if the cook hadn't been sitting three feet from the table.

I couldn't help wondering whether I would have grooved on the scene 15 years ago, followed the game, plowed through the food. (It was approximately 15 years ago, after all, that I had sung with an excruciatingly bad white blues band that used to cap its sets of Peetie Wheatstraw and Blind Lemon Jefferson covers with a song I'd written called "Breakfast on Pico." The last time we did this, at a disco deep in the north Valley, a bouncer unplugged the PA and then pounded me bloody when we refused to stop playing. Perhaps it was the couplet rhyming "mountain-size" with "chili fries" that set him off.) I thought about Pico restaurants — Mr. Coleslaw Burger, Hody's, Nu-Way, Chicken Georgia, Ben's Place, Kong Joo (for goat soup), Carl's BBQ, the carnitas place on the corner of Vermont with old boxing snapshots on the walls — that had vanished except for a shiny patch of sidewalk or the ghost of a painted sign. I wondered whether my infatuation with Pico was purely nostalgic, standard-issue post-adolescent infatuation with poverty. I finished the bottle of Bohemia, paid the check and walked sadly away from a barely touched plate of food.

This article originally appeared in the Sept. 25-Oct. 1, 1998, issue of L.A. Weekly.

Jonathan Gold with wife Laurie Ochoa, whom he followed from *L.A. Weekly* to the *L.A. Times*



PHOTO BY ANNE FISHER

Culture //

GUSTAVO ON GOLD

Food writer and former *OC Weekly* editor Gustavo Arellano on Jonathan's impact on him and his career

BY LINA LECARO

It's hard to say who Jonathan Gold influenced more, people who love L.A. (both "hot new trend"-seeking types and historians), food enthusiasts (fine-dining fans and seekers of bites on a budget), Caucasians seeking knowledge of ethnic flavors, or people of color who came to realize that our food heritage is an essential part of what makes this city the most diverse and delicious melting pot in the world. More than any food

journalist anywhere, Gold made us reverent about what we ate, and that will be his legacy for the public at large.

There's another important group Gold influenced: writers. His writing was so good, there

was no way he couldn't have had an effect on those of us who use words for a living.

Since Gold's death on July 21, the heartfelt sentiment from fellow scribes has been one of the most telling signs of his cultural impact. You can see it in Seven McDonald's piece and here, in our exclusive chat with Gustavo Arellano, former editor-in-chief at *OC Weekly*, nationally syndicated columnist ("Ask a Mexican"), author of books and busy freelance writer for countless publications including the *Columbia Journalism Review*.

Arellano knew Gold since his days with this publication back in the early 2000s (as did I) and, as he shares with me here, the iconic food critic remained inspirational throughout his life and will surely

continue to do so even in death.

L.A. WEEKLY: You wrote some of the most heartfelt remembrances and tributes to Jonathan in the *L.A. Times*, on *L.A. Taco* and on your own website and newsletter, covering his influence. Can you tell me about your personal relationship with him and how you guys first met?

GUSTAVO ARELLANO: Ya know, I'm not sure. I think it was the *Weekly's* old offices on Sunset Boulevard. I would always end up hanging out with the fact checkers there, who were friends. We'd hang out, then go down the street to Cat & Fiddle to look for Morrissey. One time I was there and this big tall guy walks by. And then somebody says, "Oh, that's Jonathan Gold." I was like, "Really?" So I go to say hi to him — and this was like around 2003, so I was still starting as a writer. I said I was a big fan and I hoped to try to do what he was doing, down in Orange County.

He said Orange County had some good food. He wished he could get down there more and to reach out if I wanted any help with anything. And I was like, "Wow, that's really cool." This was before Jonathan became "Mr. Gold," by the way. It was just "Jonathan." He seemed shy, and he picked his words carefully. But he was funny always. Always smart and always really gracious, too.

Did you ever write for *L.A. Weekly*?

Yeah, I wrote for John Payne [former music editor]. I was doing *rock en español* stuff and some concert reviews.

Wow, John Payne (who still writes for the *Weekly*) was my first editor at the paper also — when I started interning at the Hyperion Avenue location in Silver Lake.

So you're known for writing about political and social issues as well as food, mostly as it pertains to the Latin experience, but in a broader sense as well. I bet a lot of people probably didn't know you started with music, just like they didn't know that about Jonathan. Was he a direct influence in inspiring you making the leap into food coverage and critique? Oh yeah, as a food writer, for sure. Back then I didn't know Jonathan's music writing career. This was before the internet, so you didn't know all this stuff. I just knew him as a food writer, and I first started reading him even before getting into journalism. I'd pick up *L.A. Weekly* at Tower Records in Buena Park. I remember getting the paper and reading the food section and thinking, "Wow, this guy really knows his shit."

In 2003, I started a column called "This Hole-in-the-Wall Life." I did it for 14 years at *OC Weekly*. That's what people outside of Orange County don't realize: I was a full-time food critic.

So how did you develop a friendship with Mr. Gold over the years?

We would send little notes to each other via email. Then social media came around and we would leave comments on each other's Facebook or Twitter. Once I started becoming more known for my food column, we started to be on the same food panels. So that's really when I would see him most — at events. He lived in Pasadena and I lived down in Orange County, so it was impossible for me to go up there and hang out with him more, or go on the food adventures I would have liked to, or anything like that.

What was your perspective on his Pulitzer win? It was amazing. Of course it was de-

served. All food writers try to mimic Jonathan Gold in one way or another. What I love about his stuff was just stories of immigrant communities and telling like whole prior histories of a neighborhood just through one dish. That's what really struck me. That's what made me decide to be a food writer in Orange County.

It's funny, because whenever we'd run into each other we wouldn't talk about food. We would gossip about the old owners of the *L.A. Weekly* and *OC Weekly*. Like, what weird email did we get from the bosses this time ... what crazy new demands? Reporters always talk about their bosses. Always.

You dealt with lots of, shall we say, challenges with the former owners at *OC Weekly*. What was your impression of Jonathan's relationship with the former owners at *L.A. Weekly*? Well, he left the *Weekly* because of the way [owners Village Voice Media] treated his wife.

Right. That's been well documented. They let editor-in-chief Laurie Ochoa go and she went to the *L.A. Times*, where he followed.

Yes, and it's a little-known fact that Jonathan tried to recruit me for the *Times* from *OC Weekly*. I said, "It would be an honor to work alongside you, Mr. Gold" (at that point I always called him Mr. Gold) but "the *OC Weekly* is my home forever."

Well, that didn't end up being true. Obviously.

I feel like journalists are all in this sort of club, especially in L.A. Sadly it's more like high school, with cliques and bullies, these days; people who'd rather judge each other for their work or professional choices than support each other. Jonathan was never like that. It's part of why he was so inspirational to all of us. Losing him was a real blow to the journalism community. But what would you say Jonathan's impact on Los Angeles as a whole has been?

I think he might go down in history as the greatest Southern Californian of them all. He was from here. And he really made an effort to try to learn about all the different parts of what makes Southern California special. We were all shocked about his passing because it was so sudden. He was at a pie contest just a few months ago, like beginning of May. Now this amazing man is gone. It's been beautiful to see so many people of all walks of life understand how important he was. We've seen simultaneous sadness and happiness — sadness because he's gone but happiness that we had him to begin with and that we all had the privilege of reading his work. We haven't lost someone on this level since Huell Howser. The next time we might see such goodwill in L.A. for someone is whenever Vin Scully passes away.

What else would you like to say about Mr. Gold's passing?

Just that he was a kind man. He was a kind man to people who didn't know him, and even kinder to those who did. It's sad what happened, and I just hope before he passed away that he knew how many people loved him.



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Crime + Punishment



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| Film //

FIGHT THE POWER, BE THE POWER

Crime + Punishment exposes the heroic struggle to change policing from within

BY ALAN SCHERSTUHL

Several weeks ago, as *BlacKkKlansman* debuted in theaters, Boots Riley, the writer-director-radical behind that satiric marvel *Sorry to Bother You*, tweeted a brash callout. “After 40 years of cop shows and cop movies,” he wrote, “did we really need one more movie where it’s supposed to be about racism but the cops are the actual heroes of the film and the most effective force against racism?”

Riley later deleted this rhetorical question, and he has expressed admiration, elsewhere, for Lee’s film. His concern, it must be noted, is written right into the script of *BlacKkKlansman*, which is hardly a brief for the Blue Lives Matter crowd. Patrice, the college radical played by Laura Harrier, insists that a minority cop could never force significant change upon a racist police department. Lasting change, she insists, must come from outside. The undercover cop hero never mounts much of an argument against her, and despite the heroics of his Klan-busting unit, *BlacKkKlansman* is at best ambivalent about the prospect of him transforming the department itself.

Stephen Maing’s searing documentary *Crime + Punishment* offers a fuller look at the question of what can be accomplished

from inside, revealing the personal toll that fighting the system can exact but also the urgent necessity of such battles. Through sensitive portraiture and vigorous investigative reporting, it tracks the struggle of minority police officers within the NYPD to reshape the culture of law enforcement itself. “The reality of it is law enforcement uses black bodies to generate revenue,” bluntly states one officer, Edwin Raymond. He’s a member of what came to be known as the NYPD 12, a band of minority cops who in 2015 sued New York City and its police department over the pressure put on officers by supervisors to meet monthly quotas of arrests and summonses.

Such quotas are illegal, and the NYPD has long insisted its cops are held to none, but *Crime + Punishment*, shot between 2014 and 2017, again and again demonstrates otherwise. Listen to the surreptitiously recorded sergeant beseeching an officer to score his “collar, collar, collar, collar for the month.” Fume at the printout itemizing the brass’ expectations for office productivity, filched from an office. And witness the cruel tragedy of men and women arrested, ripped from their lives and sent to Rikers Island for months on end, only to see their cases dismissed due to a lack of evidence.

Between 2007 and 2015, a staggering 900,000 summonses issued by NYPD officers were dismissed. *Crime + Punish-*

ment makes it clear that, whether or not it’s official policy, quota systems have long ruled at the NYPD. The reasons for this prove complex. Raymond insists that it has much to do with the raising of money through fees and fines; he argues that the economic abuses that the police in Ferguson, Missouri, long visited upon their city’s most vulnerable citizens

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OF SELLING LOOSE
CIGARETTES.

were inspired by the NYPD’s example. Also bound up in this, of course, are the long-gone stop-and-frisk policy and the more durable mandate toward “broken windows” or “quality of life” policing, the aggressive punishment of petty crimes as a preventative measure against serious ones. The calculus is bald: More arrests equals more “productivity” equals more

revenue equals more opportunities to insist that the streets have been made more safe.

But safe for who? The officers, citizens and lawyers profiled in *Crime + Punishment* — like so many nonwhite New Yorkers — all attest to the dehumanizing horrors of years spent under constant threat of arrests and summonses, of detentions and strip searches, of the possibility of confrontations that go wrong. The film’s wrenching centerpiece is the 2014 death of Eric Garner, killed due to “compression of neck, compression of chest and prone positioning during physical restraint by police” who suspected him of selling loose cigarettes.

The case brought by the NYPD 12 has brought some change. As we see in Maing’s film, NYPD commissioner James O’Neill in 2017 sent an email to all officers declaring that the NYPD “does not and will not” use quotas; this past February, all officers were required to undergo a training session that stipulated that quota systems were verboten and called for any cop facing pressure to meet a required number of tickets or arrests to report it to internal affairs. Whether that results in actual change remains to be seen.

What is clear, though, is the cost paid by these whistle-blowing cops. Maing captures them receiving blowback: denied promotions, busted down to miserable street patrols on dead blocks, subjected to disingenuously negative performance reviews, cited for nonsensical violations. One officer, a mother, reveals her fear that her life will be upended by being put on midnight shifts. A retired cop, supportive of the 12, drops by a gathering to lay out for them all the ways in which the top brass can use “performance monitoring” programs against them. When one officer tells the others always to wear a “vest” on duty — as in, bulletproof — it’s impossible to judge whether this precaution is over the top.

For all its investigative rigor and sympathetic character studies, Maing’s film also proves arresting in its composition, its moody, city-spanning drone photography, its occasional playful looseness. But its power rises from the courage of its subjects, men and women who don’t necessarily want to be fighting the system — they’re eager to be out there in their city, policing in a way they consider just. One heartening sequence finds an NYPD 12 cop attempting to talk down a furious man outside a bodega. The customer spits the foulest of invective about the shop’s owner but the cop — rather than restraining him or citing him with a drunk-and-disorderly — tells him, again and again, with unflagging warmth, that it’s over and spend your money somewhere else. It’s the answer that *BlacKkKlansman*’s hero cop never musters to that college radical’s talk of pigs: Doing the job right is all the justification anyone would ever need for doing the job at all.

CRIME + PUNISHMENT | Directed by Stephen Maing | Hulu/IFC Films | Premieres Aug. 24 on Hulu

John Cho in *Searching*

COURTESY SONY PICTURES

| Film //

CTRL-ALT-DEL

COMPUTER-SCREEN THRILLER *SEARCHING* IS A STRONG ARGUMENT FOR LOGGING OFF

BY APRIL WOLFE

Director Timur Bekmambetov has said that he developed the screen-capture technology responsible for the transtextual horror film *Unfriended: Dark Web* and the thriller *Profile* when he realized Americans spend up to half their waking hours online or connected to devices. Now he has produced a feature directed by Aneesh Chaganty called *Searching*, starring John Cho as a checked-out father combing through his missing daughter's online footprint, hunting for any clues that might help reveal what has happened to her. The story has some of the hallmarks of the best twisty, turny whodunits, and that at least kept my interest, but as the action played out via FaceTime and YouTube videos, I couldn't help but wonder: What's actually gained by this novel technique of watching a story on a screen on a screen? And every time I wondered this, I imagined how whatever scene I was watching might have been staged and shot and acted out in a more traditional film — and I was inevitably disappointed by what has been lost, especially in terms of cinematic decision-making and flesh-and-blood performances.

We meet husband David Kim (Cho) and wife Pam (Sara Sohn) through a long, 10- or 15-minute montage of videos, emails and texts presented in a manner reminiscent of those Apple ads that try desperately to convince

you it's a joyful thing to commit your entire life to its tech. Chaganty is essentially trying to sell his audience something similar — please buy his tech-based story! He's savoring rather than critiquing. Even the music seems ripped off from twee commercials. We see David and Pam go on vacations and cheer on the accomplishments of their daughter, Margot (played by a succession of actors as Margot grows older, including Alex Jayne Go, Megan Liu, Kya Dawn Lau and finally Michelle La). An email with the subject line "Test Results" pops up, and then Pam's struggle with cancer is portrayed through a Google search for "How to fight cancer as a family?" I admit that I'll cry at most tearjerker commercials, and this montage is a potent example of the form, so it's not surprising that my eyes wetted when we learn that Pam has taken a turn for the worse — a revelation followed by an image of Margot's first day at school with just her father.

The next time we see David, he's FaceTiming with his teen daughter, telling her to come home right after her study session — and to take out the trash. He's stilted, tense. In the middle of the night, David misses three calls from Margot, and then everything goes awry. Now no one knows where Margot has gone, and after digging into her computer, David finds out he may not know his daughter at all. It's an apt story for today. Think of how many news articles have popped up about parents who didn't realize their kids had been

indoctrinated into Nazism via YouTube.

The film has promise, but the tech keeps getting in the way of the performances. Debra Messing, who plays Detective Vick, is a formidable actress, yet I didn't believe a word she said, especially when she was just a detached voice on the phone — too clean and too crisp. Why wouldn't you want to see John Cho and Debra Messing actually vibing off each other in a scene? Chemistry between actors has only fueled Hollywood filmmaking for a century! But the bigger question is why a filmmaker would be so committed to putting what we watch on the small screen on the big screen. What's the point, when even YouTube is creating content (such as *Cobra Kai*) that is designed to make you forget you're watching YouTube?

See, there's a thing called "co-presence" — that feeling of being there with the people you see on the screen — that most filmmakers strive to achieve for their audience, even if they don't know that's what they're doing. Tech has been trying to make big strides toward co-presence with 3-D and motion capture, though scientists have found that attempting to ape reality's dimensions onscreen doesn't actually trick the human brain. It might look cool, for sure. But we don't buy it as real. The only thing that does create a feeling of co-presence? Big-screen technology like IMAX or your local Cinerama theater, with traditional filmic cinematography. It's one of the reasons film lovers are so averse to watching movies with the smooth motion setting on their TV.

In the least effective parts of *Searching*, David must leave his FaceTime camera on his laptop open, even after calls have ended, so that we can see Cho's performance. I was yanked out of *Searching*'s reality every time this happened. Bekmambetov's purpose for telling stories onscreen is to mirror our reality, but the choices the characters make to keep the drama unfolding before our eyes are at cross-purposes with the producer's intent. Though the script by Chaganty and Sev Ohanian is taut and surprising, I've felt more absorbed in an episode of *Murder, She Wrote* than I did in this film, because there, it's story and performance that we're invited to savor, not just tech and technique.

SEARCHING | Directed by Aneesh Chaganty | Written by Chaganty and Sev Ohanian | Sony Pictures | Citywide

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OPENING THIS WEEK

ARIZONA If traditional comedy says “Nothing is sacred,” too often black comedy says “Everything is meaningless” and also “Fuck you, Jack.” Every character is just the setup to a ghastly punchline, and the joke is on the audience. We attach to characters as a function of storytelling, and when their brains are splattered in the service of hilarity, the result is a mingled sense of horror and the feeling you’ve been punked. Director Jonathan Watson’s super-violent *Arizona* is a well-done but chilly and essentially unlovable black comedy with one tiny spark of warmth — Rosemarie DeWitt’s performance as Cassie, a real estate broker who finds herself underwater financially after the 2006 housing market collapse. She’s a witness when Sonny (Danny McBride), another bankrupted homeowner, murders her horrible boss, Gary (Seth Rogen). In his haste to flee the scene, Sonny, a psychopathic knucklehead, knocks out Cassie and takes her to his house, a McMansion lost in a suburban Arizona wasteland of empty foreclosures. Watson cultivates a sense of isolation and dread as dimwit Sonny vacillates between murdering Cassie and forcing a promise that she won’t report him. Screenwriter Luke Del Tredici’s best move is using the housing crash as a setting, and he populates it with broad comedic stereotypes. The flatter the character, the more it’s like a paper target at a shooting range. As the kidnapping escalates to a series of brutal killings, Sonny murders his shrewish ex-wife (Kaitlin Olson), a hard-nosed cop (David Alan Grier), Cassie’s hapless ex (Luke Wilson), a redneck subdivision guard, and he even blows out the brains of a cute, heroic Rottweiler as a visual gag. Life is meaningless. Fuck you, Jack. (Chris Packham)

BLUE IGUANA Back in 1988, a little movie came out called *The Blue Iguana*, where a cool, smart-ass American dude goes overseas, gets into some lucrative criminal activity and faces violent, buffoonish antagonists and a flirty, manipulative femme fatale. Now, here we are 30 years later, and here comes another little movie called *Blue Iguana*, where a cool, smart-ass American dude goes overseas, gets into some lucrative criminal activity and faces violent, buffoonish antagonists and a flirty, manipulative femme fatale. The American this time is recent Oscar winner Sam Rockwell. He plays a military-trained ex-con who travels to England, along with his equally snarky partner-in-crime (Ben Schwartz), to take on a heist job for a bossy, mousy Brit (Phoebe Fox). When that caper predictably doesn’t go as well as planned, they hatch another scheme where they steal a diamond from a cigar-chomping gangster (Peter Polycarpou) and his mulleted, double-crossing underling (Peter Ferdinando). While writer-director Hadi Hajaig says he was inspired by acclaimed, quirky-but-scary movies like Jonathan Demme’s *Something Wild* and George Armitage’s *Miami Blues*, this new

Iguana appears more like the work of someone who has watched Guy Ritchie’s early, Tarantino-knockoff films too damn much. *Iguana* suffers from being incessantly wacky one minute and excessively gory the next, plus a soundtrack of late-’70s/early-’80s pop hits, mostly used for ironic effect. From the characters to the purposely perplexing plot, it’s all hollow and artificial to the point of being downright grating. *Blue Iguana* is another exercise in sarcastic, self-referential, postmodern pulp whose time has come and gone. (Craig D. Lindsey)

THE BOOKSHOP Writer-director Isabel Coixet’s period drama *The Bookshop* is so bloody British that the story’s central concern is that an aristocratic heiress is quietly making it difficult for a young widow to run a bookshop in a small fishing town. This is a story of stifling manners and oppressive codes of conduct, where the wealthy “villains” wear a strained smile and an icky sheen of privilege. Social mores dictate that all others must simply fall in line. Though nearly nothing happens in this movie besides a woman opening a shop and beginning a standoffish friendship with a reclusive man, I still found myself drawn in; sometimes the quiet is enticing. Emily Mortimer plays Florence Green, whose dream is to honor her dead husband with a bookshop that would memorialize the importance of reading in their relationship. But most people in her rural town aren’t readers. The local heiress, Violet Gamart (Patricia Clarkson), would rather the location Florence has selected become a small arts center. She orchestrates little inconveniences designed to push Florence elsewhere — as politely as possible. So politely, in fact, that I often forgot that was the actual plot line, until it snuck up on occasion. This is the kind of film where a character (Florence) worries endlessly over the color of her dress and what that color conveys to the people who see it. In American films, if a protagonist is racked with grief and financial pressures, they’re often depicted thrashing in a violent rage, desperate to feel something. It’s sometimes nice to be reminded of violence of the paper-cut variety, that some troubles can be worked through without an ass-kicking. (April Wolfe)

CIELO Somewhere between a Discovery Channel special and a *Koyaanisqatsi*-esque head trip, you’ll find Alison McAlpine’s exquisite portrait film *Cielo*. “Cielo” is Spanish for sky, but it also translates to heaven, and that’s exactly the sort of ambiguity McAlpine uses to her advantage. She opens with a sort of invocation to the *cielo* of Chile’s Atacama Desert, and then we meet the people living underneath it. There are travelers, cowboys, miners and an older couple just going about their lives. Then there are the planet hunters at different observatories, some from Switzerland, others from Spain and Chile. They analyze data, they tinker with their telescopes, they sing songs about the celestial unknown. There’s also a wandering photographer looking for UFOs and a teacher retelling ancestral stories. “We are invited to a party in the

YOUR WEEKLY MOVIE TO-DO LIST

Charlie Chaplin, With Live Music

Friday, Aug. 24

Andrei Rublev, Andrei Tarkovsky’s sublime biopic of the famous icon and fresco painter, has been newly restored by Janus Films. The Aero Theatre will premiere this digital presentation on Thursday — a few weeks ahead of its arrival on Blu-ray. Perhaps the greatest movie ever made about the role of the artist in religious life, it was cut significantly by the Soviet government in 1966 and denied a wide release for years, only to be reclaimed as a key work by one of Eastern Europe’s most important filmmakers. *Aero Theatre, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Fri., Aug. 24, 7:30 p.m.; \$12. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.*

Saturday, Aug. 25

The Egyptian Theatre screens *Two for the Road* — one of the truest portraits of a marriage that Hollywood produced during the sexual revolution — as part of its **Fashion & Film** series. Kimberly Truhler, founder of GlamAmor, will introduce the movie with a 90-minute illustrated presentation focusing on style icons of the 1960s, including Audrey Hepburn, who stars here with Albert Finney. *Egyptian Theatre, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., Aug. 25, 2 p.m.; \$15. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com.*

The **Retroformat** series — a semi-regular event dedicated to screening silent films on 8mm or 16mm with live musical accompaniment — presents *A Night at the Show With Charlie Chaplin*. The program, sponsored by the George Lucas Family Foundation, will feature several of the legendary silent clown’s best early works, including *A Night at the Show*, *His Regeneration*, *Police* and *One A.M.* The last is a mimetic masterpiece in which Chaplin plays a drunk trying to access his bed. The indispensable Cliff Retallick will be at the keyboard for your listening pleasure. *Spielberg Theatre at the Egyptian, 6712 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood; Sat., Aug. 25, 7:30 p.m.; \$12. (323) 466-3456, lafilmforum.org.*



A Night at the Show

Sunday, Aug. 26

Shane, one of the most iconic of classical American Westerns, will screen at Laemmle’s Ahrya Fine Arts Theatre for its 65th anniversary. A Christian allegory wrapped in buckskin, the film features a handful of unforgettable characters and set pieces, including the salvific gunslinger’s (Alan Ladd) showdown with the devil incarnate (Jack Palance). A Q&A will follow with the producer-star’s son, David Ladd, himself an accomplished actor and producer. *Laemmle Ahrya Fine Arts Theatre, 8556 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; Sun., Aug. 26, 3 p.m.; \$15. (310) 478-3836, laemmle.com.*

Thursday, Aug. 30

Phantasmagoric, erotic and frankly indescribable, **Belladonna of Sadness** has been swiftly gaining a sizable cult reputation ever since Cinelicious Pics restored it in 2016. Eiichi Yamamoto directed this Japanese anime from 1973. The plot concerns a young medieval woman’s journey from rape victim to sorceress, but that doesn’t scratch the surface of this bold, disturbing vision. Masahiko Satoh provided the psych-rock soundtrack, which perfectly complements the hallucinatory watercolor stylistics. *Aero Theatre, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; Thu., Aug. 30, 7:30 p.m.; \$12. (323) 466-3456, americancinemathequecalendar.com. —Nathaniel Bell*

sky,” he explains. Anyone who comes to Atacama is profoundly moved by the clearness and closeness and wonder of the place. The images in the film are unmatched by any Hollywood blockbuster, but it isn’t just the awesome views of what looms above; it’s also the faces of those looking from below. This all makes for some heavy viewing, but *Cielo* works in defiance of Arthur C. Clarke’s famous statement that we are either alone in the universe or we are not, and both possibilities are equally terrifying. Revealing a generosity, zeal and delight here, *Cielo* suggests the cosmos may not be as cold as some think. (Jordan Hoffman)

AN L.A. MINUTE The thought of having to watch a satire of celebrity culture in 2018 already sounds grating. At this point it’s so been there, done that, and even a satire on this topic demands you sit through characters’ insufferable behavior. Daniel Adams’ *An L.A. Minute* makes you suffer through it all and never redeems itself, despite the potentially interesting duo of Gabriel Byrne and Kiersey Clemons as leads. The stars seem out of place with each other and in this movie, with creators who have no idea what they want to say. Byrne plays Pulitzer-winning novelist Ted Gould, now a sellout in a bougie Malibu mansion. His latest book is about a homeless serial killer, and my educated guess is that it’s not just out of

touch but offensive. He passes out money to the homeless on the street but calls them out for not being more thankful, though he has not shown gratitude for the people working under him. Gould’s life takes a sharp turn, though, when he gets mugged by two homeless men and runs into a performance artist who goes by the name Velocity (Clemons). Velocity is an edgy, boundary-pushing artist but exists as nothing more than your manic pixie type, the girl who makes Gould realize he’s just a “hack author” and teaches him to say “urban outdoorsmen” instead of “bums.” But for a movie that sets itself up as one that will teach the 1 percent some kind of valuable lesson, *An L.A. Minute* offers no takeaways, especially as Velocity gets sucked into the limelight and is promised fame in, verbatim, “an L.A. minute.” (Kristen Yoonsoo Kim)

MEMOIR OF WAR (LA DOULEUR) In adapting the wartime diaries of Marguerite Duras, Emmanuel Finkiel captures the author’s oblique style, which filters events through a thick layer of ennui, and centers on women who deal with inflicted trauma by torturing themselves. When Duras’ episodic memoir was released in 1985, her U.S. publisher changed the French title, *La Douleur (Pain)*, to the more generic *The War: A Memoir*. Writer-director Finkiel (*Voyages*) deals with both aspects, using voice-over narration and subjective visuals

to express Duras’ anguished emotional state, and also presents a clear-eyed vision of history as nerve-wracked Parisians anticipate the end of Nazi occupation. *Memoir of War* works best when there’s tension between the inner thoughts of Marguerite (Mélanie Thierry) and outside forces that require her to take action. After she meets Rabier (Benoît Magimel), the eager collaborator who arrested her husband (like Duras, writer Robert Antelme was in the French Resistance), they commence an intellectual seduction that explores the iron grip and tenuous grasp of power. But the bulk of the 127 minutes involves Marguerite exquisitely suffering in a haze of cigarette smoke, fretting over the fate of Antelme (Emmanuel Bourdieu), whom she worships yet may no longer love. Cinematographer Alexis Kavryrchine uses long lenses to present Marguerite’s slippery state of mind, rendering solid buildings as expressive blurs and transforming robust men into Giacometti stick figures. It’s one of the effects Finkiel employs to convey the duality of her prose (Duras is simultaneously participant and observer), but his balance is off. He emphasizes Marguerite’s passivity — she waits, she worries — over her resolve. While clearly adoring Duras’ work, Finkiel doesn’t credit the strength it took for her to ruthlessly detail the experience. (Serena Donadoni)

SONGWRITER *Don't Look Back* it isn't, but *Songwriter* — a documentary about Ed Sheeran, co-produced by Apple Music and featuring a boatload of Apple products — is an interesting window into the creation of a modern pop behemoth all the same. Directed by Sheeran's cousin and best pal Murray Cummings, who has been shooting footage of the red-headed singer since he first picked up a guitar, *Songwriter* is a closely guarded affair. There's zip in here about the young Briton's private life, apart from the fact that he wrote a song about his mum. We're witness to the recording of his latest album, + (aka *Divide*), which Team Sheeran does at a luxurious California ranch, an English countryside studio and aboard the *Queen Mary 2*. That last location is thanks to his diamond-touch producer Benny Blanco (né Levin) and his unwillingness to fly. Blanco's sanguine demeanor livens up the workmanlike proceedings considerably. His claims that Sheeran's mild vocal tracks are "fire" may seem dubious at first, but with enough poking at computers, they evolve into the agreeable songs you hear at the drugstore. A sequence with orchestral musicians at Abbey Road is a highlight, especially with Sheeran in a ratty sweatshirt and cargo shorts. *Songwriter* sells the "nice boy" bit well, but if you aren't already a fan, it eventually becomes tiresome. There are occasional glimmers of a real person (wishing to topple Adele, laying down a "no Snapchat" rule at his house, etc.) but rarely is a feature film so bluntly just marketing. (Jordan Hoffman)

A WHALE OF A TALE (OKUJIRASAMA):

FUTATSU NO SEIGI NO MONOGATARI At one point in Megumi Sasaki's *A Whale of a Tale*, an American activist protesting the whale-hunting traditions of the people of Taiji, Japan, fumes, "They tell us they have respect and reverence for the animals. But we see none here." Sasaki immediately cuts to a montage of the whale-themed public art that pervades Taiji, including the many festivals and rituals through which its people constantly honor their source of sustenance. It's a telling juxtaposition, indicative of the ethnocentrism that often makes such conflicts intractable — and that made *The Cove*, the Oscar-winning doc that birthed the global outrage against Taiji, somewhat ethically suspect. *A Whale of a Tale* is a corrective, countering *The Cove*'s agitprop sensationalism with a measured and nuanced curiosity. Sasaki assembles a well-rounded cast of characters: local fishermen who insist that whaling is their ancestral way of life; historians who highlight America's role in over-hunting whales in the 20th century and remind us that no endangered species are hunted in Taiji; foreign activists who decry the cruelty of drive-in hunting; even Japanese environmentalists, who argue that the foreign pressure has fueled a nationalistic response in the country, making it harder for them to speak up. This is all easy to understand when you see Americans shoving their cameras into the faces of the fishermen, calling them "barbaric" and "dumb little shits."

Together, these voices paint a complex picture of the clash between globalism and a fast-disappearing localism. As Jay Alabaster, a Japan-based AP reporter, says toward the end of the film, it's not just the plight of whales and dolphins that's at stake in Taiji: "I think little communities like these are far more endangered." (Devika Girish)

WHAT KEEPS YOU ALIVE Like its not-quite-done and dusted hero, the horror grinder *What Keeps You Alive* tries — boy, does it try. Jules (Brittany Allen) has just been dumped by her wife, Jackie (Hannah Emily Anderson), and by "dumped" I mean "pushed off a cliff in the middle of the woods during a cabin getaway." Like the baddie of a dumb action movie, Jules improbably survives, rising from the ground a gnarly wreck. Once her broken bones are snapped back into place, she's ready to survive the night, the next day, the following night — however long it takes to elude her surprise attacker or, once properly dehumanized and raw, enact some jilted lover's revenge. *What Keeps You Alive*'s ability to keep going and going is impressive, but seasoned low-budget-genre director Colin Minihan (*Extraterrestrial*) grounds the twisty shenanigans in something deeper — or at least gives it the old college try. The busted-up Jules has to pull double duty: staying alive while wrestling with feelings of betrayal, of trust shattered, of a relationship that, as Phil Collins would put it, has all been a pack of lies. Quickie B&W flashbacks to the salad days pop into Jules' head during brief spurts of downtime, each one a splash of hydrogen peroxide on a fresh wound. Minihan's ambitions are towering, so it's only right to note that he doesn't quite get there. The ideas, even the emotions, don't develop and grow; they just repeat until one or both of our leads have croaked. (That one of them is a one-note psycho doesn't help, though the role is played with deadpan elan.) We're left with "Spy vs. Spy" by way of *The Revenant*, only better directed. (Matt Prigge)

ONGOING

CRAZY RICH ASIANS Lately, Asians in America have gravitated toward the romantic comedy genre, partly to bask in its flights of fancy and desire — and, quietly, to challenge stereotypes of a submissive, homogenous group of robotic workers. Nowhere has that been more apparent than the anticipation of Jon M. Chu's *Crazy Rich Asians*. Scandal ensues when the charming Nick (Henry Golding), secretly heir to a Chinese-Singaporean real estate fortune, brings his accomplished, lower-class Chinese-American girlfriend, Rachel (*Fresh Off the Boat*'s Constance Wu), home for his best friend's wedding. While the film attempts to situate identity as its emotional heart, Rachel's sense of self isn't easily shaken. "I'm so Chinese, I'm an economics professor with lactose intolerance," Rachel says when her free-spirited mother (Tan Kheng Hua) worries she's too American for the old

money. If Rachel does struggle with her identity, Chu's pacing leaves little room to investigate these nuances. Instead, Wu is tasked with delivering sentimental monologues about her background in a believable way. When Nick's mother Eleanor (Michelle Yeoh) and her mother-in-law (Lisa Lu) try to cast doubt on Rachel, by way of a long-buried family secret, the drama and subsequent fallout feel manufactured. Rachel's cat-and-mouse game to win Eleanor's respect is the most enjoyable thread of the film. The opulence of the clothes and jewelry begins to take on the quality of an advertisement; of what and for whom is up for debate. But these images are too aware of the ones that have come before it; they're diametrically opposed to stereotypes of Asians laboring or laundering clothes. For all its carnival-like antics, *Crazy Rich Asians* is all too aware of its own spectacle. (Alana Mohamed)

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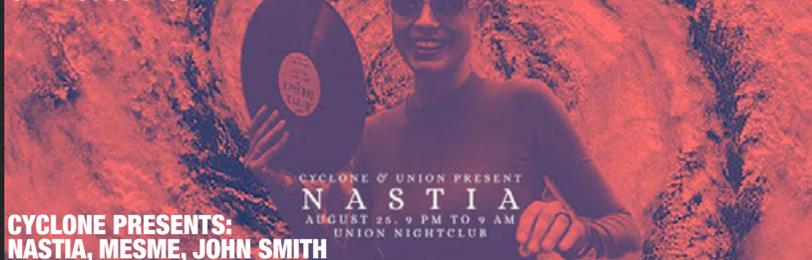
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For a long time, the very recognizable Jonathan Gold tried to disguise himself while reviewing.



PHOTO BY ANNE FISHEIN

Music //

N.W.A: A HARD ACT TO FOLLOW

Like many other people in and around Los Angeles, I've been reading a hell of a lot of Jonathan Gold articles this past month. As somebody who wasn't living here when Gold was writing for L.A. Weekly, I've been playing catch-up. And what an intensely pleasurable experience that has been, akin to when a teenager first discovers Bob Dylan or David Bowie, and then realizes just how much magnificent back catalog there is to dive into. Your mind gets blown by Low, and then you immediately get to sit with "Heroes." It's a lot like that.

Later, of course, Gold would be best known for his food writing — the sort of incredible work that won him a Pulitzer Prize while at the Weekly. But his music journalism will never be forgotten.

For me, much of the beauty in Gold's music writing stems from the fact that he took the same approach as he did with food. Nothing was below him, nothing was above him. All of it was happening in L.A. so all of it was a vital ingredient in Los Angeles' vibrant, eclectic scene.

Gold celebrated local punk bands such as The Germs and X, but he was also a vigorous defender of the Sunset Strip hair-metal bands. The Warrants and Poisons might not have been as "cool" as the punks, but Gold didn't care. Just as he didn't care if a strip-mall restaurant in the Valley wasn't typical food-critic fare. Anti-snobbery at its finest.

In May 1989, Gold wrote the first major feature on N.W.A, for L.A. Weekly. Given the context of time, it's a groundbreaking piece of work; Gold recognized early on the impact that hip-hop was having in L.A. and the important role the genre played in telling a side of the Los Angeles story that was otherwise going untold. He

spotted the wider cultural significance of N.W.A, and he dived in, telling the story with typical flare. It's a stunning piece of work, and it holds up beautifully today.

—Brett Callwood

BY JONATHAN GOLD

August '88: Eazy E props his Air Jordans up on a desk, stares at the ceiling, and leaves the room whenever the beeper on his belt goes off, which is often. He answers most of the reporter's questions with a non-committal *mmmm*; he could as well be talking to a parole officer as a writer from the slicks. Eazy's group N.W.A — Niggas With Attitude — has just finished mixing down "Gangsta Gangsta," a breathtakingly violent, vulgar gangster-rap jam that is their first single in more than a year. In the office of the record company president, Dre, the producer, slaps in a tape; it's the first time anybody has heard the song outside the studio. Ice Cube's angry voice cuts through the room over a funky Steve Arrington guitar riff: "... Out the door, but we don't quit./Ren said, 'Let's start some shit./I got a shotgun, and here's the plot:/Takin' niggas out with a flurry of buckshot ..."

Fifteen sets of jaws go slack, including their manager's, their publicist's, and the president's. Fifteen sets of eyes stare at the carpet, the ceiling, the California Raisins gold records on the walls, anywhere but the cassette deck. The white people look shocked, the black people embarrassed. A drive-time jock rubs his temple hard. One promotion guy cackles in the corner, muttering, "I love to work dirty records. I love to work dirty records." Eazy smirks. The hooks are tight, the rhymes are tough, the rapping right on key — it's a perfect hardcore rap track ... and unthinkable.

February '89: On the morning his solo record was certified gold, Eazy E stood blinking in the well-kept backyard of his mother's house in Compton, 15 minutes south of downtown. He is tiny, his neat Jheri curls just so beneath a black Raiders cap, the gold chain around his neck thick as his frail wrists. He slouched, eyes puffy, as if his body couldn't believe it wasn't still in bed. He and his friends in N.W.A had hung out at a Bobby Brown gig, holding court, until late. Two days earlier they had hosted a segment of *Yo! MTV Raps* (though MTV would refuse to play their video); later that afternoon they will be interviewed by *Word Up!*, a black-teen pinup magazine; the next day they will fly to New York for something called the Urban Teen Awards.

Eazy, who signs checks as Eric Wright, is sole owner of Ruthless Records, an independent hip-hop production company that releases music through Atlantic, Elektra/Asylum and Priority, a compilation label run by a former K-tel executive who had never before dealt with an act, unless you count the California Raisins. The Ruthless touch, the raw, danceable Compton street sound, is hot, and each

of the label's three Dre-produced rap albums — by Eazy, N.W.A and J.J. Fad — is certified gold, well on its way to platinum. This spring there'll be three more, plus an unexpurgated N.W.A video album and, for squeamish retailers (and the armed services), a self-censored version of *Straight Outta Compton* minus "Fuck tha Police," half the violence and all the cuss words. (The censored version of *Eazy-Duz-It* reportedly accounts for close to 200,000 of the roughly 900,000 copies sold.) The final figure hasn't been released yet, but Ruthless is rumored to have shopped around the Dr. Dre-produced album by rapper D.O.C. for a cool million, and Sylvia Rhone of Atlantic A&R snapped it up. When this summer's projected tour with Ice-T fell through last week, Eazy arranged a 60-city Compton Posse tour himself, with N.W.A headlining over MC Hammer and Too Short.

Each of the five members of N.W.A writes songs for each of the Ruthless albums, whether dance, rap or squishy soul. Each member of N.W.A — young Compton men who all grew up in the same couple of blocks — will probably earn in the six figures this year. Eazy's manager, Jerry Heller, who was instru-

"Eazy is the most Machiavellian guy I've ever met. He instinctively knows about power and how to control people."

—JERRY HELLER,
Eazy's manager

mental in breaking Elton John and Pink Floyd, supposes \$75 million in retail sales for Ruthless next year might be about right, and thinks Eazy might be the most important black-music entrepreneur since Motown's Berry Gordy.

"I've been in the music business 30 years," Heller says. "Eazy is the most Machiavellian guy I've ever met. He instinctively knows about power and how to control people. The couple of times I've gone against him, I've been wrong. And his musical instincts are infallible. In a few years, Ruthless could be as big as A&M."

Today, N.W.A is being photographed. "If this is going to be on the cover, we should find us an alley or something," Eazy says. "Man, if we get us in an alley for this picture, niggas gonna know we drove to an alley in a Benz," Ice Cube says. "Let's do it right here in the backyard."

They pose, first by the stagnant green water of a fountain, then near some steps, assuming a formation familiar from every published photo of the band.

"What, no AK?" somebody asks. Eazy looks disappointed. "Shit, man, this is my mother's house. All that stuff (24 »

» **23**) is at my place.” He straightens from his crouch and goes inside. A minute later he reappears with a heavy-canvas duffel bag and empties weaponry onto the grass like a Little League coach pouring out bats and balls — 9mm repeating pistols and 12-gauge shotguns and a couple of small-bore rifles and a .38 and a mean-looking sawed-off, clips, sights, scopes and boxes of ammunition, an arsenal bigger than Sergeant Samuel K. Doe needed to overthrow Liberia. But no AKs. Not at Mom’s house.

N.W.A swarms over the guns: “Give me the revolver, man. ... Put in the gunpowder, boom. Give me the scope, man. ... No, man, that’s a BB gun, ain’t nothing in that one. ... That one is an ugly motherfucker right here, man, you got to hide that, yeah. ... John F. Kennedy, John Fuckin’ Kennedy — that scope is def.”

Click.
“You look like an orange, like something up at the range. ... Those scopes with the little red dot is hard. ... What’s that got ... one of those Public Enemy things in there, the crosshairs ... Give me the nine, off with this motherfucker. ... What you mean, man, that’s a magnum, that shit look kind of crazy. ... I be like comin’ from the hidden, still be comin’, pop you off right in the ditch. ... Pow! This shit is kickin’. Roll over and die, motherfucker.”

Click. Click-click. Click. Click.
“Hey, Eazy, your momma give you this Daisy-ass shit ... I can really shoot you, right? ... Crispus Attucks ... No, man, never hold it where you can only see the scope — that’s a long-ass shotgun. Get it right, soldier. I want your ass. ... I need that ass. ... I want your radio. Ten guns, sheriff guns, chrome guns, shotguns, old black movies. ... You see the smoke and the bullet.”

Click. Click-click. Click. (The photographer shoots back.)

“Public Enemy uses plastic guns, you know,” Ice Cube says.

A black person in leather with a gun is considered bad, crazy hard. But I’m not saying so much “Fuck the police” as “Let’s grow up more.”—KRS-One, June ’88

Fuck tha Police!—N.W.A, October ’88

Public Enemy is hard. Too Short is hard. Eric B. and Rakim are hard: raw, noisy, uncommercial. Hard beats are what you hear pounding from Oldsmobiles, boomboxes, skateparks and hardly ever from the radio; spare, percussive backing tracks composed with cheap-sounding drum machines and short snatches bitten from old soul singles.

LL Cool J used to be hard until he recorded a love song, which no self-respecting rapper will ever let him forget. Run-DMC were hard until they jammed with Aerosmith. KRS-One of Boogie Down Productions, whose first album included an ode to his 9mm repeater pistol, wanted to stay hard so bad that he posed with an Uzi on the cover of his last album — an album whose hit single was “Stop the Violence.” The brutal calculus of hardness forgives lapses in taste, but never in form. “There’s a principle involved,” Ice Cube

says. “The *Weekly* wouldn’t run a picture of a baby getting its head cut off; N.W.A wouldn’t do a pop song.”

Hardness arose as a rap aesthetic at about the same time much of the music became essentially suburban. While artists from Harlem and the Bronx were still producing good-time party jams, middle-class kids from Queens and Long Island began to form the contemporary image of the rapper as an articulate gangster with a chip on his shoulder, a young black man hard by choice. (Every rapper suburban middle-class Def Jam mogul Rick Rubin ever had a hand in producing is hard:

ported *New Yorker* in the mid-’80s, was the first to realize that if pretend gangsters went over so well, a niche existed for the sort of *real* gangster he’d been in his early teens. He performed with one fist wrapped around an Uzi, released a 12-inch (“Killers”) he knew was too hard for the radio, and spent a lot of time getting his picture taken near picturesque, graffiti-spattered walls in South-Central L.A.

If Ice-T’s pose was a little calculated, his approach to rhyme closer to pastiche than innovation, he still developed a national reputation as the hardest rapper

Pooh; and especially Eazy E and N.W.A, who came across as *active* gangsters, not world-weary alumni.

In ’86 Ice Cube, then a 16-year-old neighbor and follower of the Wrecking Kru, wrote a cussword-packed song for HBO, a long-forgotten New York rap posse, who rejected it as too West Coast. Dre, the Kru’s DJ, along with his aide-de-camp Yella, convinced his neighbor Eazy to try the rhyme. E put on a pair of dark shades, ejected his friends from the studio, and rapped for the first time. Later, he sunk a few thousand dollars into getting the 12-inch record pressed and released.

Depending on who you talk to and when, the seed money may or may not have come from illicit drug profits. Last August, Eazy asked me where I *thought* he got it. Last week, Dre refused to comment. Ren said, “Eazy had a cousin that was runnin’ everything around here, man, and when his cousin got killed, he was left with all these responsibilities of the street. So many people was getting killed, I guess he realized he had to get out. He invested his money, you know, in the record business. Like he says, that’s no myth.” Eazy silenced him with a glance.

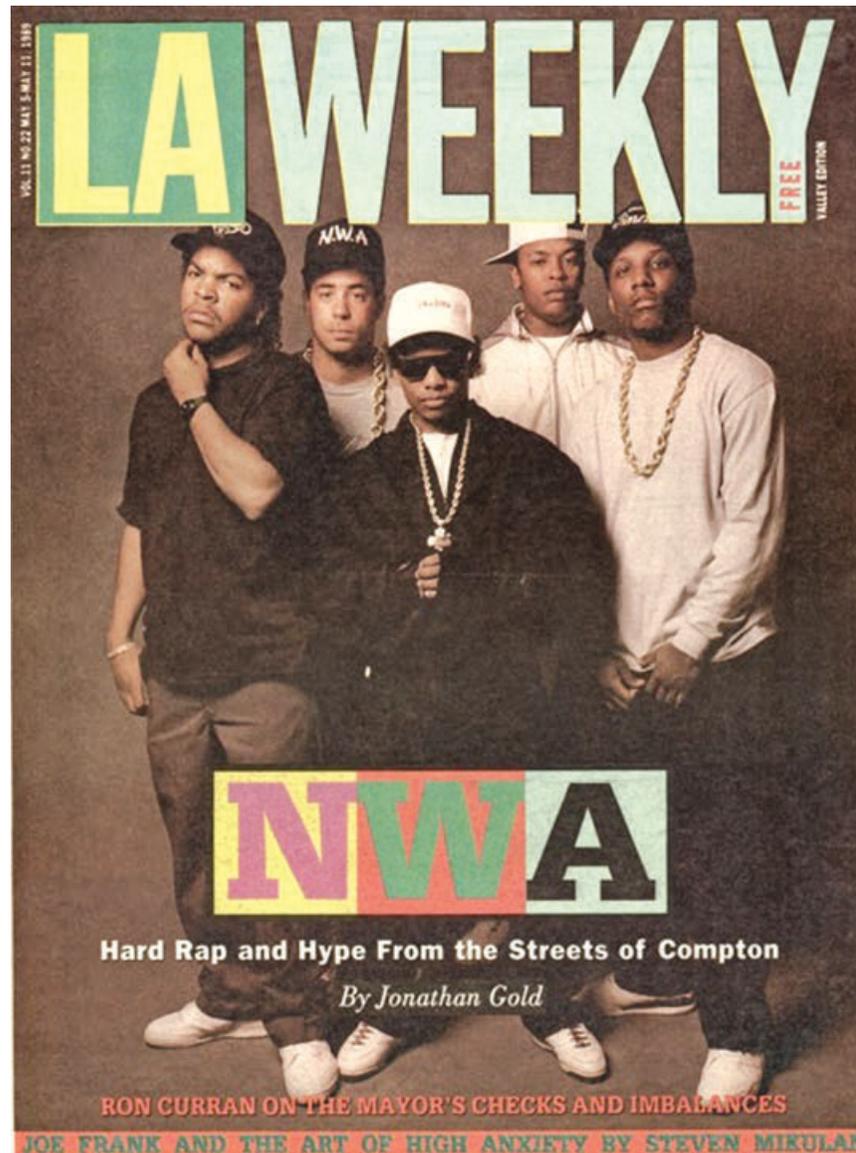
“I know the drug thing sounds glamorous, but I wish they wouldn’t keep saying that,” Jerry Heller says later. “It wasn’t all that much money. And IRS guys will read this thing, too.”

“Boyz-N-the-Hood,” five and a half minutes of cheerful vignettes from the short, happy life of a ghetto hoodlum, became the cornerstone of the California street sound, one of the first West Coast rap records rooted as much in the hardcore New York break style as in Kraftwerk. Eazy’s rapping is a drawling blend of Woody Woodpecker and the vicious, whiskey-smooth tenor of Rakim: a super character voice. The song was considerably slower than the party jams put out by local groups like the Kru and the Dream Team, and the production was knowingly raw — you can pick out Dre’s tinkly two-note keyboard riff and exuberantly tinny beatbox coming from a car radio two blocks away. A lot of people hated the record, because while the urban-gangster life had been romanticized since Capone, nobody had ever made it sound quite so much fun before.

“It is fun,” Eazy says.

N.W.A got an opening slot on the West Coast dates of the Salt-N-Pepa tour in the fall of ’87. KDAY, the local hip-hop station, put “Boyz-N-the-Hood” into rotation before the L.A. date, and the record was requested often enough to jump to No. 1 on their playlist for almost a month. Ice Cube wrote two more: “8 Ball,” a paean to his beloved Olde English 800 malt liquor, and a sneering cautionary tale called “Dopeman,” both of which were released as the first double-sided N.W.A single. (Basically, an Eazy E song ambles, while an N.W.A song cranks; the performers, producers, writers and sidemen are identical.) That 12-inch also sold well.

Macola Records, the distributor, collected 10 or so random Dre-produced sides and packaged them as an unauthorized bootleg N.W.A LP, *N.W.A and the Posse*, that stayed on the



Run, LL, PE, Slick Rick, even the Beastie Boys.) Hard rap, like punk, brought together a self-selected community of kids by becoming an image of what their parents feared most.

L.A. hip-hop had been the Next Big Thing for years, but the proto-hi-energy sound — bass-heavy, fast tempo, ticky-ticky-ticky synthesizer clicks, heavy breathing and moans straight out of the Barry White songbook — was the opposite of hard. It meant more for the flygirl in the disco than the homeboy on the street corner. Ice-T, a Crenshaw High grad who still billed himself as a trans-

in the business. He moved hundreds of thousands of records while such overhyped local electro-hoppers as the Dream Team and the World Class Wrecking Kru floundered. The members of Uncle Jam’s Army, who had regularly thrown hip-hop parties at venues as large as the Sports Arena, had long since dispersed. Gangster style quickly replaced slick surface as the hallmark of the L.A. sound. And as Ice-T grew avuncular with age, up came younger, harder and more street-wise rappers to nudge him to the side of the stage: Tone-Loc (whose hardness didn’t last all that long); King T and DJ

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» **24**) *Billboard* black album charts for the better part of a year. (N.W.A refuses to discuss this album; more than the money, the dated hi-energy cuts, many of which Eazy originally declined to release, embarrass them.) Macola settled with Ruthless out of court for legal fees and damages but, according to band members, still pays the installments with rubber checks. (“They ganked us, man, straight fucked us with no grease,” Eazy says.) After this, Ice Cube left the group for a year to study mechanical drafting.

Early last year, adjunct N.W.A member Arabian Prince produced a novelty single for some hangers-on, J.J. Fad, as a side project: “Supersonic.” The single sold half a million copies on Dream Team Records. Every record company in the world was after the album. Eazy leveraged J.J. Fad away, licensed them to Atco, and had Dre produce the album, which also went gold, for the aptly named Ruthless Records. “It’s what we call a ghetto LBO,” N.W.A publicist Pat Charbonnet says. “Eazy’s the Gordon Gekko of Compton.”

Arabian left the group. The Priority pickup deal was signed, and Eazy recruited an old friend, Ren, to write three songs — “Radio,” “Eazy-Duz-It,” and a brilliantly funny bank-heist fantasy called “Ruthless Villain” — for a single. Covering his bets, Eazy hired KDAY DJ Greg Mack to do an intro to “Radio” à la Parliament-Funkadelic, and signed KDAY morning-jock Russ Parr’s comedy-rap act Bobby Jimmy & the Critters to Ruthless/Priority. (No ulterior motive is implied here, but the move probably didn’t hurt the record’s chances for a decent rotation.) The “Radio” 12-inch sold 140-odd thousand copies. Ren joined N.W.A, wrote much of Eazy’s album and, when Ice Cube returned last September, helped to write *Straight Outta Compton*.

Eazy-Duz-It went platinum but was largely unremarked upon. N.W.A coined the phrase “reality rap,” which guilty white liberals find a convenient term when explaining why they like the album so much. Word of the N.W.A album was picked up by CNN and the city desk of the *Herald* — more as a news story (“L.A. Gangs Speak”) than as an entertainment story — and suddenly Eazy and the gang were promoted from amusing hoodlums to spokesmen for a generation. The *L.A. Times* found them progressive and put them on the cover of Sunday Calendar.

There were two triumphant sold-out shows at the Celebrity Theater in March; although they were sloppy, N.W.A outperformed Ice-T for the first time. The audience knew the words to the songs well enough to rap along. During “Dopeman,” Ice Cube brought a cute white girl onstage from the front row. A few seconds into the song, while band members humped against her, 2,000 people merrily pointed and chanted, “She might be your wife and it might make you sick/To come home and see her mouth on the dopeman’s dick.” Later, the mob shouted “F-Fuck the Police!” in unison. Ten minutes later, a melee broke out on center stage and the cops were called in even as Eazy strutted among the turmoil, grinning, finishing out the set. There were

stabblings that night.

Most rapping used to promote the rapper’s indomitability, his invincibility: “I create; I am.” When Public Enemy has Chuck D in a prison cell, it is only so that he can break out; when an LL Cool J rhyme includes a policeman, he is only there for LL to outwit. A rapper, whose implicit statement is always “You want to be like me,” is a role model whether he sets out to be one or not. If nobody wanted to be like him, nobody would buy the record.

Many whites and blacks find N.W.A frightening; mainstream black leaders hate them because of their distorted image of the black community. They celebrate the gangster life and reinforce racist iconography. Yet if you get past the language and violence — a line like “Fuck you, bitch” serves the same purpose here it does in an Eddie Murphy routine — you’re struck by the powerlessness the first-person lyrics project: “I can fuck you up; I am.”



PHOTO BY ANNE FISHBEIN

When a policeman appears in an N.W.A song, he’s got Ren face-down on the pavement in front of his friends. In the course of an N.W.A song, crimes are punished, women are faithless, and somebody else’s stupidity inevitably leads to retribution, which leads straight to jail for keeps. N.W.A choose not to live out the omnipotence that rap is all about — their most controversial song, “Fuck tha Police,” is the ultimate expression of hip-hop weakness in the face of police power, the sort of snarling anti-cop rant left unsaid until the black-and-white is around the corner and safely out of earshot. “Fuck tha Police” isn’t a metaphor for anything.

N.W.A call themselves “street reporters,” another phrase parroted by journalists. “We don’t tell no fiction,” Ice Cube says, “so N.W.A can’t get any harder unless the streets get harder, know what I’m saying? If somebody blows up a house and we see it, we’ll tell you about it.

“If we were all for gangs, we’d be going,

‘Yo, go out and Crip.’ We’re just telling them what the gangbanger shit is like. And what would happen. At the end of the song, you might end up in jail or dead. If you get away every time, you’d be a superhero.”

“We’d look stupid trying to be political,” Ren adds. “The street’s political enough. We’d lose all our fans. I don’t really know about Mandela and Malcolm X and people like that. It would be like Public Enemy rapping about 8 Ball. You’ve got to stay what you are from the jump.”

“Straight Outta Compton,” the title track from N.W.A’s first album, is violent even before anyone says a word, a strong backbeat overlaid by a nervous repeating snare fill that palpates like coffee jitters, like a sick feeling in the pit of your stomach, like an itchy trigger finger. The beat is scary all by itself in this song — too intimidating to dance to, really — not an in-your-face sort of deal like Public Enemy or Big Daddy Kane but somehow

Ren is the deep-voiced enforcer, loyal, violent and thorough; Eazy is laid-back and vicious, in control, funny as hell; Dre is clever, forceful yet tentative.

The vibe, when it’s not hardcore pissed-off, is easy, merry, casual, fun, as if the guys were just cutting loose in the studio in front of a live mike, the sort of carefully scripted heavy-bottom street-corner jive Parliament-Funkadelic did so well in the ’70s. (Songs are punctuated with staccato comments from the engineer’s booth, the *thwee* of rewinding tape, expressions of pleasure at the unexpected in-studio appearance of Eazy-E — on Eazy’s own record. It sounds like a bunch of guys sitting around *listening* to a record, not making one.) A song might take its form from a call-in radio show or an interview with a probation officer.

There are precedents for this sort of thing — *Starsky and Hutch*, Iceberg Slim’s novels *Pimp* and *Trick Baby*, Leroy and Skillet, over-the-top blaxploitation pictures like *The Mack* and *Dolomite* — although nobody ever assumed that Redd Foxx or Rudy Ray Moore had any moral authority over the nation’s youth. Take out the cussing and it turns out the gangster crime-spree narrative of “Gangsta Gangsta” is nothing the network censors would blue-pencil from an average episode of *Wiseguy*. The lyrics of Satan-metal bands like Slayer are unquestionably more violent.

N.W.A’s canny self-identification as a ruthless Compton street gang, though, is close enough to blur the knife’s edge between streetwise fantasy and funky cold experience. Excruciatingly detailed accounts of a burglary, a liquor store holdup, a bank robbery or a drive-by shooting make equally uncomfortable both the people who think N.W.A might not be fronting and the people who’re sure that they are.

A prominent Crip hung up on a journalist friend when she asked him about N.W.A; he thought they were just talkers (giving gangbanging a bad name, perhaps). A local rap promoter who’s been active in L.A. hip-hop as long as it’s existed swears N.W.A are currently active gangsters, gun-crazy, slinging ‘caine. (He’s almost certainly wrong, by the way.) To celebrate the Eazy E and N.W.A albums last fall, Priority threw a pre-release bash at the World, a not-very-swankey disco in the Beverly Center. The doorman, thinking N.W.A were a bunch of thugs, refused to let them into the club for their own party. Eazy, at least a foot shorter than the doorman, threw a punch. N.W.A never made it inside.

N.W.A themselves, although they insist they know gangbangers but are not themselves gangbangers, are remarkably cagy about all sorts of basic facts: age, school, girlfriends, where they live, what they did before N.W.A.

It says something about who they are that what they’re trying to hide could either be criminal records or solid B averages and high school diplomas. “You’re not bringing up our skeletons,” Eazy says, cocking a finger. “That’s dead.”

March ’89: The day MTV banned their

Jonathan Gold



PHOTO BY ANNE FISHBEIN

“Straight Outta Compton” video, N.W.A is hanging out at the Torrance recording studio that’s the seat of the Ruthless empire. They are all surly — they were counting on the video, a brutal *vérité* gang-sweep scenario directed by Australian Rupert Wainwright, to put them over the way that Tone-Loc’s did — and upset about a Compton flare-up between the Piru Bloods and the Atlantic Drive Crips: They’ve lost friends over the weekend. Concert-volume beatbox riffs whump from specially built 18-inch playback woofers in the engineers’ booth where Dre is recording the B-side for the next single, a stripped-down jam called “Give It to Dre.” He hunches over a record on a turntable like a studio guitarist over his ax and grimly scratches in the break time

“WE DON’T TELL NO FICTION, SO N.W.A CAN’T GET ANY HARDER UNLESS THE STREETS GET HARDER, KNOW WHAT I’M SAYING?”

—ICE CUBE

and again over the beat. “Give it to Dre ... G-G-Give it to Dre. G-Give it to Dre and the boy is done.” He makes a mistake and Yella rewinds the tape. “Fuck the image!” somebody yells from the next room.

A slight blonde from PBS takes notes for a possible five-minute segment on the band; Ice Cube, Eazy and Ren sprawl over easy chairs in the lobby, zombie-like, doing phone interview after phone interview. “Kids want to hear about reality,” Ice Cube says again and again. “White kids don’t live in the ghetto, but they want to know what’s going on.” Ren cuts in on cue: “If you’re watching the news and Tricia Toyota says three people got killed in McDonald’s, it’s not like she’s telling you to kill them — she’s just telling you what happened.” Ice Cube stands up, stretches: “But y’all have *mwa-ral* authawrity,” he says, imitating the last interviewer.

“If they don’t buy our records, fuck that shit.”

He pulls a scrawled-on sheet of three-ring paper out of his pocket and walks into the studio. Yella rolls the tape, and Ice Cube starts to rap. His staccato drawl is devastating, playful, spontaneous yet on; he knows exactly which syllables to punch and which to roll; he’s comfortable and in control, although he seems to have written the rhyme only minutes before. It’s like hearing Clifford Jordan try out a new standard on tenor. It’s clear that Ice Cube would be a star rapper with any producer in the country.

In the waiting room, Ren finishes up another interview and starts talking to his buddy Laylaw about Compton. Laylaw has heard this story many times:

“I lost a lot of friends to gangbanging, man. When you been kickin’ it with somebody, and you hear they dead, you think like, ‘That was my homeboy, that was *stupid!*’ The night I got shot, I was in front of a friend’s house just kickin’ it. You know, we wasn’t doin’ nothing. It was one of my buddies, though, who was into gangbanging; he was *into* it. The Crips were over here, right? And the Pirus were over from across the boulevard; I guess they came and spotted his car, which was parked where all of us were at, like, 2 in the morning. My friend says, ‘Come on, man, let’s go watch some movies.’ All of us walking in the house, they just start blat-blat-blat-blat — shooting and shit — and I got hit. And you know, after I get shot I was like, ‘Man, damn what they shoot me for? I didn’t do nothing.’ It’s all because my friend go around shooting people. I got his bullet, man, because a bullet don’t have a name on the motherfucker. Since then I haven’t wanted to be around my friend too much anymore.

“But when we put this shit out on video and on records, ain’t nobody want to see this shit. The video ain’t half of a half of what go on for real. It’s just a little sweep, no guns. MTV’s into all that crazy devil-worshipping shit. ... To me there’s more violence on a motherfucking cartoon than in our music. Little kid see a cartoon character with a gun, he going to want to carry a gun, right? GI Joe, all that shit. But they aren’t even playing our video on the MTV rap show.”

This article was originally published in the May 5-11, 1989, issue of L.A. Weekly.

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Celebrating their new album, *Hypochondriac* (Epitaph Records), with a live set and signing! Buy your copy of *Hypochondriac* at Amoeba to get it signed by the band.

FRIDAY • AUGUST 24 • 12PM

NEIL & LIAM FINN

Celebrating release day of their new album, *Lightsleeper*, with a live performance and signing at Amoeba. Details on amoeba.com.

SATURDAY • AUGUST 25

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SUNDAY • AUGUST 26 • 2PM

DUBLAB: SUNDAYS ON SUNSET DJ GABRIELLE COSTA

WEDNESDAY • AUGUST 29 • 6PM

ALICE IN CHAINS SIGNING

To attend signing, buy their new album, *Rainier Fog*, BEGINNING AUGUST 24th in-store only at Amoeba Hollywood. Details on amoeba.com.

WEDNESDAY • AUGUST 29

MICHAEL JACKSON'S BIRTHDAY 20% OFF ALL MJ MUSIC & MERCH!

THURSDAY • AUGUST 30 • 6PM

TAKEN BY TREES

The solo project of Victoria Bergsman - from the Swedish band, The Concretes. She plays live at Amoeba to celebrate the vinyl release of her latest album, *Yellow To Blue*. Details on amoeba.com.

FRIDAY • AUGUST 31 • 6:30PM

EGYPTIAN LOVER

THE legendary Egyptian Lover celebrates his latest vinyl release, *808 Beats*, with a live set at Amoeba Hollywood.

WEDNESDAY • SEPTEMBER 5 • 6PM

DAPHNE GUINNESS

Daphne Guinness celebrates her latest album, *Daphne & The Golden Chord*, with a live set and album signing at Amoeba Hollywood.

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Music //
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fri

8/24

The Rap Show

@ SHRINE AUDITORIUM

Sometimes you just have to look at a bill, stand back and applaud. There's also the wonderful simplicity of naming this event The Rap Show — really nothing to argue with there. But the array of talent involved is stunning, the curators booking some of the top names from the early 2000s scene. Atlanta's T.I., who hit big in 2003 with his sophomore album, *Trap Musik*, is a worthy headliner, although Bay Area great E-40 could just as easily top the bill. Fabolous saw five albums break into the Top 10 between 2001 and 2009, with *Loso's Way* peaking in the No. 1 spot, so his set will be a crowd-pleaser too. And we didn't even talk about Scarface and Twista yet, never mind openers Suga Free and Spice 1. Unbelievable. —Brett Callwood

Bambu

@ BOOTLEG THEATER

"We been conditioned though we are not the criminals," Bambu declares on "Info Trip," from his 2016 album, *Prey for the Devil*. Throughout the record, the Watts native uses references to prey to flip stereotypes about people living in the inner city. In Bambu's worldview, rappers, gang members and other defiant people of color usually are treated as prey by the police and political establishment. "But the predator is sticking all my homies in the cage," he observes before insisting, "This is not the last breath of a martyr." The Filipino-American performer grew up amid violence but, unlike less authentic rappers, he seldom glorifies it. Tonight, Bambu previews new material from *Exorcising a Demon*, *Article 1: A Few Left*, an upcoming project with his longtime producer and collaborator, DJ Phatrick. —Falling James

Swingin' Utters, Kevin Seconds

@ ALEX'S BAR

NorCal punks the Swingin' Utters have been around since 1987, although, to be fair, they took a good long break between 2003 and 2010. That hiatus clearly did them good; the 2011 full-lengther *Here, Under Protest*, their seventh in total, was a clear statement of intent. Everything since then has followed suit, and the end of August sees the release of the band's 10th album, kinda ironically titled *Peace and Love*. The lead-off single, "Human Potential," is a banger. "The fashion police is a fascist regime," sings Johnny "Peebucks" Bonnel with typical fire and fury, spit and savagery. At Alex's Bar, the pit will be insane, as it will for erstwhile 7 Seconds frontman Kevin Seconds. That's quite a double bill, and The Fiends also play. —Brett Callwood



Sam Smith: See Wednesday.

PHOTO BY RUVEN AAFANADOR

sat

8/25

Mac DeMarco

@ HOLLYWOOD PALLADIUM

A charismatic showman, noted prankster and prolific purveyor of relaxed, aqueous dream pop, Mac DeMarco is one of the premier acts in indie rock today. After an auspicious six-year relationship that produced two near-classic albums (2012's *2* and 2014's *Salad Days*), DeMarco announced this month that he is leaving Captured Tracks — he has been the Brooklyn imprint's marquee name — to found his own label, which he has ingeniously dubbed Mac's Record Label. The musician also has plans for his first solo tour after this current run of shows, which feature his full band. DeMarco will be coming off a three-night stand at the Teragram to play tonight at the Palladium. —Matt Miner

David Byrne

@ SHRINE AUDITORIUM

At Coachella in April, elder statesman David Byrne performed two triumphant sets in front of a largely youthful crowd, reveling in a potent combo of Talking Heads nostalgia and his still entirely relevant solo career. *American Utopia*, Byrne's 11th solo studio album, dropped in March and new tunes such as "I Dance Like This" and "Everybody's Coming to My House" went down nearly as well as "Once in a Lifetime." Since then, Byrne has continued to tour, using the same stage setup and performance art routines, which many fans believe is Byrne's best all-round show since the acclaimed Talking Heads concert film *Stop Making Sense*. One of music's true one-offs and genuinely unique voices, any chance to see Byrne live should be grabbed with two hands. Ibeji also plays. —Brett Callwood

Combo Chimbita

@ THE GETTY CENTER

Combo Chimbita are based in New York, but their music draws from an entire universe of styles. While there are elements of cumbia, Caribbean rhythms and reggae on their 2017 album, *Abya Yala*, the group don't strictly adhere to the formal limitations of world music. Such tracks as "No Regreso" infuse traditional impulses with wildly psychedelic and electronic flourishes. Much of the band's music

centers on charismatic vocalist Carolina Oliveros, whose fiery exhortations are pumped up by bassist Prince of Queens, inventive drummer Dilemastronauta and guitarist Niño Lento. "Pachanga" is a whirlwind of Prince of Queen's febrile synth patterns, while "Cachimba" is an artier fusion of circular grooves and Lento's spidery streaks of guitar. "Congo" is buttressed by Dilemastronauta's percussive interplay against a spacy dub backdrop. —Falling James

sun

8/26

Punk Rock BBQ

@ HARVELLE'S

The Punk Rock BBQ was based for many years at the West L.A. bar Liquid Kitty, but it has more recently been held at Santa Monica blues club Harvelle's. As always, though, the afternoon shows are free and generally feature veterans from the early punk-rock scene. Today's lineup includes such South Bay luminaries as Lawndale, who take their surf-music instrumentals into unpredictable sonic spaces, and Mike Watt & the Secondmen, a hard-hitting bass-drums-organ trio with Pete Mazich and Jerry Trebotic. The show is highlighted by a relatively rare set from The Last, the Hermosa Beach band whose late-'70s collisions of power pop and punk influenced such seemingly unrelated acolytes as The Descendents, The Bangles and The Gun Club. The Last's poignantly bewitching early single "She Don't Know Why I'm Here" is often covered onstage by Watt. Plus, Pedal Strike and Herbert. —Falling James

Yes

@ WHISKY A GO-GO

This Yes set at the Whisky offers a rare chance to see the British prog-rock titans in an extremely intimate setting. There might be a bit of chaos on the Strip that night; tickets are available only on the day of the performance, so a few proggy fans may be imitating Walmart shoppers on Black Friday. For those who do manage to get in, it will surely be a special night. This current lineup features frontman Jon Anderson, guitarist Trevor Rabin and one-of-a-kind keyboardist Rick Wakeman. No Steve White, Alan White or Geoff Downes, who are off in another version of Yes. That's

always a bit awkward, but what can you do? Anderson says that whatever he does is Yes, and when he has Rabin and Wakeman in tow, few fans will argue. —Brett Callwood

mon 8/27

Zane Carney
@ TROUBADOUR

Zane Carney has just picked up this new monthly residency at the Troubadour, and he's earned it. While working with John Mayer, his band Carney, and on the Broadway production *Spiderman: Turn Off the Dark*, he has developed into an accomplished and exciting guitarist and performer. The list of people he's worked with is as long as it is impressive: Stevie Wonder, Bono and The Edge, Keith Urban and Don Was, to name just a few. He's also opened for U2, Fergie and The Black Crowes. The guy has already crammed so much into his career, and one has to believe that there's much more to come. His debut EP, *Confluence*, and instrumental album *Amalgam* are available now, and expect to hear tracks from both of those at this iconic venue as the months roll on. R Finn and Sophia Pfister also play. —Brett Callwood

Zane Carney:
See Monday.



PHOTO BY MELISSA ALDERTON PHOTOGRAPHY

tue 8/28 **thu** 8/30

Fiona Grey
@ MOROCCAN LOUNGE

Los Angeles can always use a new dance-pop goddess, and Fiona Grey was born to inherit the role. The Chicago native looks like a star, adding a visual flair to her live performances with her elegant ballgowns, elaborately lavish makeup and dramatically assured stage presence. In many ways, Grey is like a glittery silver disco ball come to life, radiating and spinning reflected light like diamonds all around the dance floor. On "Dirty Dream," a new single from her upcoming EP, *Cult Classic*, Grey confides, "I had a dirty dream ... about our fucked-up love affair," but she doesn't wallow in self-pity for long before she's swept away by the track's infectious disco groove and euphoric chorus. Grey previously revealed glimpses of her pop potential as a teenage diva on *Striped Heart* and *Belladonna*, as well as a more recent and languorously intoxicating

interpretation of Blondie's "Heart of Glass." —Falling James

wed 8/29

Sam Smith, Beth Ditto
@ STAPLES CENTER

Almost a year after the release of his commercially and critically acclaimed second album, *The Thrill of it All*, Sam Smith brings his arena show to Los Angeles' Staples Center. A chart-topping, multiple award winner (Grammys, Billboards, Brits and Academy), Smith has found his niche in heartbreak, his androgynous, soulful voice handily lending itself to the left-lover playlist. Not unlike Smith's debut album, *In the Lonely Hour*, *The Thrill of it All* is a succession of ballads, which sometimes feel as if they are just one long, drawn-out lament pushed along by many sweeping orchestral flourishes. Smith's support artist, one-time Gossip frontperson *Beth Ditto*, is more than his vocal match. Ditto's brash and ballsy belt-outs, which sparkle with pop reflections off a disco ball, are a great foil for Smith's sad-sack croons. Also Wednesday, Aug. 29. —Lily Moayeri

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CLUBS

ROCK & POP

ALEX'S BAR: 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. Swingin' Utters, Kevin Seconds, The Fiends, Fri., Aug. 24, 8 p.m., \$18 (see Music Pick). Farbarf, The Fabulous Downey Brothers, Yaawn, Assquatch, Sat., Aug. 25, 8 p.m., \$10. Happy Sundays festival with The Shrine, Death Valley Girls, Draemings, Holy Wars, Yip Yops, Falkow, Ramonda Hammer, No Tides, Spare Parts for Broken Hearts, Sun., Aug. 26, 1-11 p.m., free. Fang, Billy Club, Thu., Aug. 30, 8 p.m., \$10.

AMOeba MUSIC: 6400 Sunset Blvd., L.A. DJ Diallo Riddle, Fri., Aug. 24, 8 p.m., free. DJ Gabrielle Costa, Sun., Aug. 26, 2 p.m., free. Alice in Chains, record signing, Wed., Aug. 29, 6 p.m., free.

BOARDNER'S: 1652 N. Cherokee Ave., L.A. Night Club, Nyxx, Sat., Aug. 25, 10 p.m.

BOOTLEG THEATER: 2200 Beverly Blvd., L.A. Bambu, DJ Phatrick, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., \$20 (see Music Pick). Andrew Combs, Harrison Whitford, Sat., Aug. 25, 8:30 p.m., \$12. Catastrophie, Danke, Lisel, Jupiter Black, Sun., Aug. 26, 8 p.m., \$10.

CAFE NELA: 1906 Cypress Ave. The Hickoids, Pat Todd & the Rankoutsiders, The Golden Rulers, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., \$10. Black Heartthrobs, Doctors & Engineers, Bikos, The World Record, Sun., Aug. 26, 5 p.m.

DIPIAZZA'S RESTAURANT & LOUNGE: 5205 E. Pacific Coast Highway, Long Beach. Happy Sundays, with Caught a Ghost, Los Hurricanes, Devil Season, Emmitt James, Bundy, Sun., Aug. 26, 4 p.m.

THE ECHO: 1822 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A. Omar Apollo, Fri., Aug. 24, 8:30 p.m., \$15. Stu Larsen & Natsuki Kurai II, Tim Hart, Sat., Aug. 25, 5:30 p.m., \$12. Combo Chimbita, Rudy de Anda, Billy Changer, Sun., Aug. 26, 8:30 p.m., \$15 (see Music Pick); DJ Xian Vox, Sun., Aug. 26, 10 p.m., \$8. Slugs, Egg Drop Soup, Nicky Blitz, Rumblepak, Turtles on Speed, Mon., Aug. 27, 8:30 p.m., free. A Celebration of Fred Cole, with Toody Cole, Vashti Windish, Gabriel Hart, Cheap Tissue, Secret Stare, Warren Thomas, S.O.S., Pat Kearns, Patsy's Rats, Tue., Aug. 28, 7 p.m., \$16. Mahalia, Kiah Victoria, Wed., Aug. 29, 8:30 p.m., \$18.

THE ECHOPEX: 1154 Glendale Blvd., L.A. Monophonic, Jungle Fire, Los Yesterdays, The White Blinds, Fri., Aug. 24, 6:30 p.m., \$20. Cholo Goth Night, Sat., Aug. 25, 4 p.m., \$5. Lyfe Is Dope, with The Brandon Brown Collective, LA Theo, D. Parks, DJ Dnyce, Mon., Aug. 27, 8 p.m., \$20. Dimber, Yaawn, Peasant, Tue., Aug. 28, 8:30 p.m.

4TH STREET VINE: 2142 E. Fourth St., Long Beach. The Thingz, The Two Tens, Sat., Aug. 25, 7 p.m.

IGUANA KELLEY'S: 4306 E. Anaheim St. Happy Sundays, with Audacity, The Paranoyds, The No. 44, The Ghost Dance, China Rose, Sun., Aug. 26, 3 p.m.

LARGO AT THE CORONET: 366 N. La Cienega Blvd., L.A. Robyn Hitchcock, Thu., Aug. 30, 8:30 p.m., \$30.

LOS GLOBOS: 3040 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A. Nicole Kiki Jaffe, Strange Brew, Fri., Aug. 24, 7:30 p.m.; Juwan Rates, SoulRebel, Willie Guilty, Fri., Aug. 24, 10 p.m. Pat Kelly, The Steady 45s, The Scratch Outs, The Capsouls, Sat., Aug. 25, 8:30 p.m.

THE LOVE SONG: 450 S. Main St., L.A. Tommy Alexander, Taylor Kingman, Balto, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., free. Chelsea Brown, Anthony Cozzi, Sam Burton, Sat., Aug. 25, 9 p.m., free. Greg Felden, Mon., Aug. 27, 8 p.m. The Contraptionists, Tue., Aug. 28, 8:30 p.m. Spain, Thu., Aug. 30, 8:30 p.m., free.

MCCABE'S GUITAR SHOP: 3101 Pico Blvd., Santa Monica. Tyler Ramsey, Fri., Aug. 24, 8 p.m., \$20. The Suitcase Junket, Sat., Aug. 25, 8 p.m., \$20. Peter Holsapple, Sun., Aug. 26, 8 p.m., \$18.

MEOWMEOWZ: 2423 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. The Walker Brigade, Wormstew, Amanda Green, Sat., Aug. 25, 7 p.m., \$4.

THE MINT: 6010 W. Pico Blvd., L.A. Talking Dreads, Jesse Batiuk & the Blue Morning Band, The Carothers Brothers, Fri., Aug. 24, 8:30 p.m., \$10 & \$15. Diego's Umbrella, Hoist the Colors, Underground City, The Inside Break, Berries & Toast, Sat., Aug. 25, 7:30 p.m., \$12. The Mint Jam, every other Monday, 8 p.m., \$5. Che'Nelle, Ghoos, Thu., Aug. 30, 9 p.m., \$15.

THE MOROCCAN LOUNGE: 901 E. First St., L.A. Cavetown, Johnny Goth, Fri., Aug. 24, 7:30 p.m., \$15. Cavetown, Loyal Lobos, Sat., Aug. 25, 7:30 p.m., \$15. Cavetown, NoSo, Sun., Aug. 26, 7:30 p.m., \$15. Ruby Haunt, Water Slice, Runnner, Mon., Aug. 27, 7:30 p.m., \$5. Fiona Grey, The Orchard Quartet, Timothy Heller, Tue., Aug. 28, 7:30 p.m., \$10 (see Music Pick). Brenda Carsey & the Awe, Livingmore, Liv Slingerland, Kismet, Wed., Aug. 29, 7:30 p.m., \$10.

Los Colognes, Talk Time, Thu., Aug. 30.

OHM NIGHTCLUB: 6801 Hollywood Blvd., L.A. Madeintyo, Young Thug, Jaquenes, Fri., Aug. 24, 10 p.m.

THE PIKE RESTAURANT & BAR: 1836 E. Fourth St., Long Beach. Travis Daggett, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m. Silver Kings, Tue., Aug. 28, 9 p.m. Cara Borracho, Wed., Aug. 29, 9 p.m. Jack & Peg, Thu., Aug. 30, 9 p.m.

THE RED LEPRECHAUN: 4000 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. Happy Sundays, with Jake Snider, White Woods, Rudy de Anda, Lucy & La Mer, Easy Friend, Sun., Aug. 26, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

THE ROXY: 9009 W. Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood. Bleeding Through, Fire From the Gods, Fri., Aug. 24, 7 p.m. Modern Anchor, Jordyn, Sat., Aug. 25, 9 p.m. Sabrina Claudio, Mon., Aug. 27, 9 p.m. The Strike, Thu., Aug. 30, 9 p.m.

THE SATELLITE: 1717 Silver Lake Blvd., L.A. No Small Children, The Two Tens, The Drained, Fri., Aug. 24.

1720: 1720 E. 16th St., L.A. No Parents, Junkie, The Paranoyds, Fri., Aug. 24, 8 p.m.

THE TERAGRAM BALLROOM: 1234 W. Seventh St., L.A. Mac DeMarco, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., \$42. Napalm Death, Cattle Decapitation, Thrown Into Exile, Tue., Aug. 28, 6:30 p.m., \$25.

THE TROUBADOUR: 9081 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood. Joey Dosik, Woody Gossa, Fri., Aug. 24, 8 p.m., \$20. Lydia, Jared & the Mill, Cherry Pools, Sat., Aug. 25, 7 p.m., \$20. Zane Carney, R. Finn, Sophia Pfister, Mon., Aug. 27, 7 p.m., \$15 (see Music Pick). Freddy & Francine, Jamie Drake, Jason Hawk Harris, Wed., Aug. 29, 8 p.m., \$17.

URBAN AMERICANA: 1345 Coronado Ave., Long Beach. Happy Sundays, with Spentime Palace, Levitation Room, Mind Monogram, Earl Grey, Chav, Sun., Aug. 26, noon.

WHISKY A GO-GO: 8901 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood. Puddle of Mudd, Slant, Motorbone, Amargo, Hipnotic, Project 88, Undecided Youth, Orange Mayfield, Fri., Aug. 24, 6 p.m. Wild Child, Sat., Aug. 25, 7 p.m. Yes, Sun., Aug. 26, 7 p.m. (see Music Pick). Headbangers Ball, Tue., Aug. 27, 7 p.m. Persefone, Manticora, Aeonic Impulse, Fail to Fear, Wed., Aug. 29, 7 p.m. Heaven & Earth, Thu., Aug. 30, 8 p.m.

ZEBULON: 2478 Fletcher Dr., L.A. Asher Shasho Levy, Aram Soba, Sat., Aug. 25, 8 p.m., free. Superstar & Star, Charles, Maraschino, The Bennett Show, Sun., Aug. 26, 9 p.m., \$10. The Renderers, Mon., Aug. 27.

-Falling James

JAZZ & BLUES

THE BAKED POTATO: 3787 Cahuenga Blvd. W., Studio City. Jeff Lorber, Fri., Aug. 24, 9:30 p.m., \$25. Travis Larson, Sat., Aug. 25, 9:30 p.m., \$25. Scott Wilkie, Sun., Aug. 26, 9:30 p.m., \$15. Doug Webb, Wed., Aug. 29, 9:30 p.m., \$25. Allen Hinds, Thu., Aug. 30.

THE BATTERY BOOKS & MUSIC: 26 S. Los Robles Ave., Pasadena. Dan Rosenboom, Miller Wrenn & Jesse Quebbeman-Turley, Wed., Aug. 29, 8 p.m.

BLUEWHALE: 123 Astronaut E.S. Onizuka St., L.A. Larry Goldings, Rich Hinman, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m. Arianna Neikrug, Sat., Aug. 25, 9 p.m., \$20. Darek Oles, Sun., Aug. 26, 9 p.m., \$15. Adam Bravo, Mon., Aug. 27, 9 p.m. Guinga, Tue., Aug. 28, 9 p.m., \$20. David Binney, Wed., Aug. 29, 9 p.m. Jeremy Siskind, Thu., Aug. 30, 9 p.m., \$15.

CATALINA BAR & GRILL: 6725 Sunset Blvd. John Pizzarelli, Aug. 24-25, 8:30 p.m.; Sun., Aug. 26.

CICADA CLUB: 617 S. Olive St., L.A. The Fresh Rhythm, Fri., Aug. 24, 8:30 p.m., \$30.

DESERT ROSE: 1700 Hillhurst Ave., L.A. The Mark Z. Stevens Trio, Saturdays, 7-11 p.m., free.

HARVELL'S SANTA MONICA: 1432 Fourth St., Santa Monica. Shiva the Destroyer, Ujah, Fatlip, Little Homies, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., \$10. Imperial Crowns, Sat., Aug. 25, 9 p.m. Punk Rock BBQ with Mike Watt & the Secondmen, The Last, Lawndale, Pedal Strike, Herbert, Sun., Aug. 26, 1 p.m., free (see Music Pick); The Toledo Show, Sundays, 9 p.m., \$10. Jeff Dale, Hunter & the Dirty Jacks, Tue., Aug. 28, 9 p.m. The House of Vibe All-Stars, Wednesdays, 9 p.m., \$5.

THE LIGHTHOUSE CAFE: 30 Pier Ave., Hermosa Beach. The Sam Hirsh Trio, Sat., Aug. 25, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m., free. The Riner Scivally Quartet, Sun., Aug. 26, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., free. The Dave Tull Quartet, Wed., Aug. 29, 6-9 p.m., free.

VIBRATO GRILL & JAZZ: 2930 Beverly Glen Circle, Bel-Air. Anne Walsh, Fri., Aug. 24, 6:30 & 9 p.m. Mike Miller, Sat., Aug. 25, 6:30 & 9 p.m. Hefti Plays Hefti, Sun., Aug. 26, 7:30 p.m., \$25. Roberta Donnay, Wed., Aug. 29, 7:30 p.m. Christopher Dean Sullivan, Thu., Aug. 30, 7:30 p.m., \$20.

THE WORLD STAGE: 4321 Degnan Blvd., L.A. Eric Revis, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., \$20.

—Falling James

COUNTRY & FOLK

THE COFFEE GALLERY BACKSTAGE: 2029 N. Lake Ave., Altadena. The Miskey Mountain Boys, Fri., Aug. 24, 8 p.m., \$20; Burgan & Chan, Sat., Aug. 25, 2 p.m., \$20. Janet Klein, Sun., Aug. 26, 7 p.m., \$20.

E.B.'S BEER & WINE BAR, FARMERS MARKET: 6333 W. Third St., L.A. Dime Box, Sat., Aug. 25, 7 p.m., free.

JOE'S GREAT AMERICAN BAR & GRILL: 4311 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank. Mary White & Magnolia Drawl, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m. Rachel Ritzner & the Resonators, Sun., Aug. 26, 9 p.m. The John Reynolds Quartet, Mon., Aug. 27, 9 p.m.

—Falling James

DANCE CLUBS

AVALON HOLLYWOOD: 1735 Vine St., L.A. TigerHeat, Thursdays, 10 p.m., \$5.

UNION NIGHTCLUB: 4067 W. Pico Blvd., L.A. We Love Kandy, Fri., Aug. 24, 9 p.m., \$10-\$25; Peaches & Cream, Fri., Aug. 24, 10 p.m., free-\$20. Nastia, Mesme, John Smith, Sat., Aug. 25, 10 p.m., \$15 & \$25; Kevin Saunderson, Doc Martin, Kool-Aid, Sat., Aug. 25, 10 p.m., free-\$30; Killahurtz, Sat., Aug. 25, 10 p.m., \$15. Abstract, Ryan Oakes, Dylan Reese, Aryia, J. Vita, Mitch the Hero, Thu., Aug. 30, 7 p.m.

—Falling James

CONCERTS

FRIDAY, AUG. 24

ATTILA, SUICIDE SILENCE: The Fonda Theatre.

ERASURE: With Reed & Caroline, 7 p.m. The Wiltern.

J. COLE: 7:30 p.m. Staples Center.

GO MARK DE CLIVE-Lowe: With Dwight Triple, Ras G, Linafornia, 7 p.m., free. Levitt Pavilion at MacArthur Park, 2230 W. Sixth St., L.A.

GO THE PUNCH BROTHERS: With Madison Cunningham, 9 p.m. The Theatre at Ace Hotel.

GO THE RAP SHOW: With T.I., E-40, Fabulous, Juvenile, Scarface, Twista, 8 p.m., \$29.50-\$89.50. Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall. See Music Pick.

SHAILA DÚRCAL: 8 p.m. The Novo by Microsoft.

SATURDAY, AUG. 25

ARIANA GRANDE: 9 p.m. The Theatre at Ace Hotel.

BILLY VALENTINE: 8 p.m. S. Mark Taper Foundation Amphitheatre, 12601 Mulholland Dr., Beverly Hills.

GO CHINATOWN SUMMER NIGHTS: With Tampa, Caught a Ghost, Clara-Nova, Jasper Bones, Mini Bear, Jane Holiday, Emma Cole, 5 p.m. Chinatown Central Plaza, 727 N. Broadway, L.A.

GO COMBO CHIMBITA: 6 p.m., free. The Getty Center, 1200 Getty Center Dr., L.A. See Music Pick.

GO DAVID BYRNE: With Ibeyi, 8 p.m., \$39.50-\$149.50. Shrine Auditorium, L.A. See Music Pick.

GO ERASURE: With Reed & Caroline. The Wiltern.

FLOR DE TOLOACHE: With Chulita Vinyl Club, 7 p.m., free. Levitt Pavilion at MacArthur Park.

J. COLE: Staples Center, 1111 S. Figueroa St., L.A.

KARL DENSON'S TINY UNIVERSE: 6:30 p.m., \$30. The Viaduct, 1799 Baker St., L.A.

GO MAC DEMARCO: 8 p.m., \$39.50. Hollywood Palladium, 6215 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A. See Music Pick.

MURA MASA: With Empress Of, 9 p.m. The Novo.

GO RODRIGUEZ: 8 p.m. Luckman Fine Arts.

GO SAM SMITH, BETH DITTO: 8 p.m. Honda Center, 2695 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim. See Music Pick.

GO SUMMER HAPPENINGS: THE GREATER BODY: With Re-Tros, MIIIA, Daniel Collás, Juliet Swango, Jie Ma. The Broad, 221 S. Grand Ave., L.A. See GoLA.

SUNDAY, AUG. 26

GO THE ANNUAL JOHNNY RAMONE TRIBUTE: With a screening of *Barbarella*, 6:45 p.m. Hollywood Forever Cemetery, 6000 Santa Monica Blvd., L.A.

CHEVY METAL, THE HOLY SHITS: 3 p.m., free. Hollywood Palladium, 6215 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A.

GO ERASURE: With Reed & Caroline. The Wiltern.

TUESDAY, AUG. 28

GO SAM SMITH, BETH DITTO: 8 p.m., \$35.50-\$125.

Staples Center. See Music Pick.

SHAKIRA: 7:30 p.m., \$50.50-\$180.50. The Forum.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 29

ALICE IN CHAINS: 8 p.m. Hollywood Palladium.

GEORGE BENSON: With Ledisi, 8 p.m. Hollywood Bowl.

ROB ZOMBIE, MARILYN MANSON: 7 p.m. FivePoint Amphitheatre, 14800 Chino, Irvine.

GO SAM SMITH, BETH DITTO: 8 p.m., \$35.50-\$125. Staples Center. See Music Pick.

SHAKIRA: 7:30 p.m., \$50.50-\$180.50. The Forum.

GO YES: The Greek Theatre. See Music Pick.

THURSDAY, AUG. 30

GO ALICE BAG: With Generacion Suicida, 7 p.m. Levitt Pavilion at MacArthur Park. See Music Pick.

GO GEORGE CLINTON & PARLIAMENT FUNKADELIC: With Fishbone, 8 p.m., \$25. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.

ROONEY: With Mating Ritual, 8 p.m. Regent Theater.

THE SMASHING PUMPKINS, METRIC: The Forum.

—Falling James

CLASSICAL & NEW MUSIC

GO L.A. PHILHARMONIC: Gustavo Dudamel conducts a fiery night of Tchaikovsky, Aug. 24-25, 8 p.m., \$14-\$195. Bramwell Tovey conducts Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana*, Tue., Aug. 28, 8 p.m.; Thu., Aug. 30, 8 p.m., \$1-\$158. Hollywood Bowl. See GoLA.

PHAZE ENSEMBLE: The winds-piano quartet sets forth works by Robert Muczynski, George N. Gianopoulos and Gregory Wannamaker, Wed., Aug. 29, 8 p.m., free. Mimoda Studio Theatre, 5774 W. Pico Blvd., L.A.

GO TRIO CÉLESTE: The strings-piano ensemble roams across Tchaikovsky's epic and lyrical Trio in A minor, Op. 50, Sun., Aug. 26, 6 p.m., free. LACMA, Bing Theater, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., L.A.

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