L.A. Phil Is 100 Years Old

Cannabis
L.A. Phil Is 100 Years Old

The orchestra looks back at its past century by embracing a brave, new future

By Falling James
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Upper Plaza, 735 S. Figueroa St., downtown;
Fri.-Sun., Sept. 14-16 & Sept. 21-23, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; free; RSVP recommended. bit.ly/2uCS2Db. —FALLING JAMES

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palooza, these festivals also provide the best
monster costume contests that one is ever
likely to experience and top-notch monster
museum installations. Burbank Convention
Center, 2500 N. Hollywood Way, Burbank;
Fri., Sept. 14, 6-11 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., Sept. 15-
16, 11 a.m.-6 p.m.; $25-$70. (818) 843-6000,
montepalooza.com. —SCOTT FEINBLATT

Nature in a Suitcase
Kim Abeles’ work doesn’t just comment on
the world around her. Instead, the L.A. artist
pulls raw matter from that world and places
it at the center of her mixed-media work.
In her celebrated early series The Smog
Collector (1987), Abeles stenciled images of
U.S. presidents on porcelain plates, left them
on the roof of her studio for varying lengths
of time, and let nature do the rest — which
nature gleefully did, filling in the outlines
with smoggy particulate dust. In her new
exhibition, “Valises for Camp Ground:
Arts, Corrections and Fire Management
in the Santa Monica Mountains,” Abeles
has created — with the help of firefighting
women inmates from L.A. County’s Camp
13 — adorable small suitcases that open up
to tableaux of miniature, bonsai-like forests.
But the juxtapositions of fire-ravaged
landscapes with lush woods raise questions
about the environment and emphasize
that cute is not what Abeles is aiming for.
Armory for the Arts, 145 N. Raymond Ave.,
Pasadena; reception Sat., Sept. 15, 4-5 p.m.;
rates thru Sun., Sept. 30; free. (626) 792-
5101, armoryarts.org. —FALLING JAMES

Taco Time
There’s a taco-themed event nearly every
week in Los Angeles, it seems, and that’s
probably still not enough considering
the importance of the humble food staple
in Los Angeles’ food geography. The L.A.
Taco Takeover is sparing no expense this
weekend in bringing out the heavy hitters.
The food lineup will include tacos and
Latin-inspired dishes from the likes of Te-
tee House, Aqui Es Tescoco, Pez Cantina,
Dia de los Puercos, High Lounge at Hotel
Erwin, Pink Taco and Frida Mexican
Cuisine. A bevy of traditional cocktails and
Mexican beers will accompany the food,
and there will be live music and entertain-
ment. LA Plaza de Cultura y Artes, 501
N. Main St., downtown; Sat., Sept. 15, 1-4
p.m. & 5-8 p.m.; $39-$69. thetacotakeover.
com. —EVERY BISSETT

Be Blessed ... by the Unholy
Back when the band Christian Death first
aired their tortured souls onstage in L.A.,
and Patrik Mata of Kommunity FK creepily
crooned about inner despair, death rock (it
wasn’t called “goth” then) was fresh, fierce
and new. At Spiritual Cramp, Sado Maso
Disco’s fundraiser for a new documentary
of the same name about departed Christian
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Pasadena Playhouse

Death singer Rozz Williams, you'll get to see some of the O.G.s who are still around, still making gorgeous gloom and bringing fans of dark and decadent rock, dance and fashion together. Amid the splendor of one of L.A.'s oldest churches, Kommunity FK will celebrate its 40th anniversary with some rare gems, while two former Christian Death members — Eva O and Gitane Demone (with a quartet featuring Rikk Agnew and Paul Roessler) — conjure more wicked soundscapes. Don Bolles on the decks, "service" pamphlets, Blood of Christ drinks and a pop-up photo exhibit round out the unholy hullabaloo. Black attire and formal wear is encouraged. Welsh Presbyterian Church of Los Angeles, 1153 Valencia St., Pico-Union; Sat., Sept. 15, 9 p.m.-2 a.m.; $20. eventbrite.com/e/kommunity-f-k-eva-o-gitane-demone-spiritual-cram-fundraiser-tickets-49755956405.

—LINA LECARO

SUN 9/16
ART/FILM

A Fount of Creativity

Water, and its endless implications and reverberations across geography, ecology, politics, economics, industry and culture, is a perennially relevant and inspiring topic for artists and curators — especially in L.A., and especially now. In fact, art is in many ways better suited for an exploration of the nuances and paradoxes of our society’s relationship to this life-giving resource. What better place for an interdisciplinary, topical exhibition than Descanso Gardens, a local botanical treasure with its own hydro-complexities. Featuring sculpture and installation from the intimate tactility of ceramics to the large-scale of scaffold — and excitingly occupying not only the gallery spaces but spread across the architecture and the entire grounds of the gardens — “La Reina de Los Ángeles” opens Sunday with a DJ party and an after-hours outdoor screening of Chinatown. Sturt Haaga Gallery, Descanso Gardens, 1418 Descanso Drive, La Cañada Flintridge; (818) 949-4200, descansogardens.org; Sun., Sept. 16, 5-7 p.m.; free after 4:30 p.m. —SHANA NYS DAMBRO T

Fearing Fear No More

You see them everywhere. Maybe you are one yourself. Fearful people whose stomachs hurt, who second-guess every opportunity, and for whom stain-resistant Dockers are the norm. Tonight, Courtney Hameister — formerly one of those pathetic cowering wretches herself — discusses Okay Fine Whatever: The Year I Went From Being Afraid of Everything to Only Being Afraid of Most Things ($26, Little, Brown & Company). When she hit her 40s, she actively decided to take a year to triumph over all the things that constantly scared, frightened and terrified her — not the least of them being public speaking like this. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Mon., Sept. 17, 7 p.m.; free. (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com/event/courtenay-hameister-discusses-and-signs-okay-fine-whatever-year-i-went-being-afraid-everything. —DAVID COTNER

MON 9/17

FALL 2018

LIVE TALKS

LOS ANGELES

TICKETS & INFO:
www.livetalksla.org

Daniel Siegel
AWARE: The Science and Practice of Presence
SEP 24
Moss Theatre, Santa Monica

Soraya Chemaly
Rage Becomes Her
SEP 26
Moss Theatre, Santa Monica

Kate Atkinson
TRANSCRIPTION
OCT 2
Moss Theatre, Santa Monica

America Ferrera
AMERICAN LIKE ME: Reflections on Life Between Cultures
OCT 3
Moss Theatre, Santa Monica

LIVE TALKS

LOS ANGELES

TICKETS & INFO:
www.livetalksla.org

A series of on-stage conversations featuring writers, actors, musicians, humorists, artists, chefs, scientists and thought leaders in business.
SCI E N C E

Learning From Bugs

Although they may not have the same luster as the butterfly or the same publicist as the honeybee, termites nonetheless possess a heretofore unrealized potential to transform how we humans deal with the world we’ve made for ourselves. Asking the question What Can Termites Teach Us About the Future of Technology?, Lisa Margonelli — author of Underbug: An Obsessive Tale of Termites and Technology ($27, Farrar, Straus & Giroux) — brings her keen and insightful grasp of terminology to Zócalo to demonstrate how these occasionally satanic bugs can teach humanity about everything from communication to climate change to indigestion. The RedZone at Gensler, 500 S. Figueroa St., Carson; Wed., Sept. 19, 7:30 p.m.; free. /T_hedavidchappelle.com/events/performances/505/2018-09-18/.

—DAVID COTNER

DANCE

Matrimony of Mind and Body

In the one-night-only event Dearly Beloved: A Union, Out of Wedlock, choreographer Andrew Pearson offers what he describes as a “CerePhony.” Preceded by a cocktail hour and followed by a reception, the evening’s interactive art installations by Mary Margaret Groves and backed by live music. Known as a provocative choreographer and an imaginative presenter, Pearson’s chosen venue is a commercial wedding chapel, an inherently theatrical space where brides and grooms revel in their moment as star performers. Where the wedding party often provides dramatic tension, Pearson gets help from recorded and live performances from a half dozen notables including Tiffany Sweat. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. and top ticket price promises bridal-suite access. Ruby Street Wedding Chapel, 6408 Ruby St., Highland Park; Thu., Sept. 6, 7:30 p.m.; $20-$60. bodiesinplay.com/dearlybeloved. —ANN HASKINS

THU 9/20

ART

History in Miniature

At first glance, Hotel Modern’s Kamp looks like a children’s game, a fantastic replication of a toy village with miniature structures and train tracks, populated by thousands of tiny figurines, taking up the entire REDCAT stage. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that Dutch artists Pauline Kalker, Arlène Hoornweg and Herman Helle are depicting the Auschwitz concentration camp — where Kalker’s grandfather Joseph Emanuel died in 1943 during WWII. The artists use music, video and sculpture to create a chilling, live animated film onstage as they move figures of prisoners and Nazi guards around to simulate role calls and even deaths in the notorious camp’s gas chambers. The intricately detailed work is both strangely moving and disturbing. REDCAT, 631 W. Second St., downtown; Thu.-Sat., Sept. 20-22, 8:30 p.m.; Sun., Sept. 23, 7:30 p.m.; $27 & $37. (213) 237-2800, redcat.org. —FALLING JAMES

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FALL 2018

GET SCHOoled

Green Flower offers online education to those who want to work in cannabis

BY MADISON MARGOLIN

For those of us who grew up in the 1980s and '90s, the extent of our education about cannabis was through programs like DARE or high school health (“don’t do drugs, kids”). But with the cannabis industry expanding faster than our DARE officers would have predicted, an entire sector of the workforce needs an updated education on pot — after all, among other things, the Green Rush means job creation.

California already leads the nation in weed hires: In 2017, the state had 38,233 people directly employed in the cannabis space, with another 18,165 in auxiliary fields, according to BDS Analytics market research. By 2021, BDS predicts that nearly 100,000 Californians will work in the cannabis industry, while nationally almost 300,000 will.

So whether you’re looking to break into the cannabis space or you already work in cannabis and want to touch up your knowledge base, Green Flower is taking you to weed school. Virtually, that is.

Green Flower’s Cannabis Education Certification program offers professional development and in-depth curricula on everything related to cannabis: science, botany, compliance and so forth.

“Companies have been hiring people like crazy, and the biggest problem that companies in cannabis have is that either you’re hiring people from outside the space who don’t know a lot about cannabis or you have a lot of turnover, for which part of the reason is that they’re not doing anything to engage their employees and supply that level of support and training to become more skilled or move up in an unexpected way,” says Max Simon, CEO of Green Flower.

The program launched a few months ago, and companies have been using the beta program to educate their employees. September saw registration open to anyone, whether they work in cannabis or not. There are already 3,000 people on the waiting list, Simon notes, for online courses leading to a résumé-building certification from Green Flower.

Each course covers a different area of cannabis, while the curricula are replete with quizzes, reading materials and lectures given by experts in the field.

Green Flower’s “fundamentals” certification course includes information on the different cannabis products, cannabinoids, myths and fears about pot, plant biology, safe dosing protocols, quality control, and careers in the cannabis space. Students can get more specific certifications in cannabis cultivation, science, patient care, medicine and law.

“There’s nothing like this that exists in the world,” says Simon. “We’re not only developing the relationship with these world-renowned experts but we’re also developing something that has global reach and authority.”

What’s more, Green Flower will offer a scholarship program for veterans, students from low-income families and people who have been affected by the Drug War. Take that, DARE.
The orchestra looks back at its past century by embracing a brave, new future

BY FALLING JAMES

The folks at L.A. Philharmonic could have taken the easy way out in marking the orchestra’s 100th anniversary. Nobody would have blamed them if they had decided to spend the next year jogging through a well-deserved victory lap, with the band playing crowd-pleasing greatest-hits sets of timelessly epic classical works by Mozart, Tchaikovsky, Brahms, Mahler and Bruckner and underscoring its past by bringing back such former conductors as Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas and Zubin Mehta. All those nostalgic visitations will occur in the new season, which begins at Disney Hall on Thursday, Sept. 27, with music director Gustavo Dudamel conducting the “California Soul” gala of works by such disparate Golden State composers as John Adams, Frank Zappa and Jerry Goldsmith, accompanied by guest vocalists Corinne Bailey Rae and Coldplay’s Chris Martin.

Three days later, on Sunday, Sept. 30, the centennial celebration encompasses much of the city as the orchestra takes part in its first CicLAvia event. Major streets will be shut down for cyclists and pedestrians as dozens of dance groups and musicians — including jazz-pop stylists Pink Martini, provocative funk/hip-hop singer Georgia Anne Muldrow, Latin jazz conguero Poncho Sanchez, psychedelic Cambodian-American explorers Dengue Fever and Chicano world-music collective Ozomatli — perform at a series of six stages that link Disney Hall with the orchestra’s summer home, Hollywood Bowl. L.A. Phil will close the day with a free concert at the Bowl that features Katy Perry, Herbie Hancock and Kali Uchis.

“It’s going to be a party, as Gustavo describes it,” says Chad Smith, the orchestra’s chief operating officer. "This diversity, like our community, will drive audiences and music fans to understand that the L.A. Phil can be pretty hip for a 100-year-old," Dudamel says in an email interview.

Over the course of the next few months, the orchestra also will interact and collaborate with Moby, Andrew Bird and choreographer Benjamin Millepied (who will stage Sergei Prokofiev’s ballet Romeo and Juliet). In November, L.A. Phil takes an odyssey into music from the films of Stanley Kubrick, and conductor Christopher Rountree invokes the anarchic spirit of the Fluxus art movement of the 1960s with the first in a set of unpredictable events presented in coordination with the Getty Center — some of which will be improvised and spontaneously occur in and around Disney Hall with little notice. The Fluxus concerts will include...
Opening reception September 27, 2018 at 6:00pm
Exhibit open to the public September 29, 2018
Purchase tickets at petersen.org/juxtapoz
rarely performed works by La Monte Young, Yoko Ono, Luciano Berio, Nam June Paik and Pauline Oliveros, and the orchestra also will emphasize John Cage’s importance as a native son with performances of his 1987 *Europeras*. “John Cage was born here, he walked these streets, and he sucked in some of the essence of California” in his work, Smith says of the composer, who was better known for his subsequent career in New York.

And yet, despite all that activity, the major focus of the centennial season will be new works, as L.A. Phil issues the world premiere of an estimated 54 pieces that the orchestra commissioned, including 23 compositions that will constitute the entire season of its boldly adventurous and radically experimental Green Umbrella series.

“By far, it’s the most premieres we’ve ever done before,” Smith says during an interview in his office at Disney Hall. He adds that L.A. Phil’s previous record for most world premieres in a single season was 25 works. “The creative community of Los Angeles is so remarkable. We feel we’re part of the ecosystem of L.A. … There isn’t this monolithic audience for classical music. There are dozens of audiences for classical now.”

“I don’t know of any other orchestra in the world that will be celebrating its centennial by making such a bold statement by commissioning and premiering so many new works,” says Bay Area composer and L.A. Phil creative chair John Adams by phone while driving from Berkeley to Oakland. As both a conductor and a composer, Adams will figure prominently in the upcoming season. Two of his past works — *Harmonium: “Wild Nights”* and the evocative, electric violin–sparked *Dharma at Big Sur: Part 2, Sri Moonshine* — anchor the “California Soul” program on Sept. 27, and Adams returns to Disney Hall in January to conduct the L.A. Phil in the world premiere of Philip Glass’ Symphony No. 12, *Lodger*, which is inspired by the collaborations of David Bowie and Brian Eno.

Even more intriguing, in March, Dudamel conducts the world premiere of Adams’ *Must the Devil Have All the Good Tunes?*, a piano concerto the composer recently wrote specifically for soloist Yuja Wang, the Chinese pianist whose dazzling speed, astonishing technique and daring makeovers of traditional classical warhorses make her the classical-music equivalent to Jimi Hendrix.

Adams says he wanted to write “a piece that had a diabolical energy, especially if played by Yuja Wang.” Given the pianist’s pyrotechnical abilities, was Adams ever tempted to turn the concerto into an ornately detailed showcase for Wang’s florid style? “I was concerned that my piece didn’t take advantage enough of her technical talent, but I didn’t want to write something that was just flashy and showy. … I’m not a pianist but I’ve written a lot of piano music. That’s my biggest ongoing challenge, to write something that pianists want to play.”

As a composer who has previously had several significant works premiered by L.A. Philharmonic — including 1999’s Naive and Sentimental Music, 2003’s The Dharma at Big Sur, 2009’s City Noir and 2011’s The Gospel According to the Other Mary — Adams has long appreciated the orchestra’s flexibility. “They’ve been dealing with a lot of new repertoire,” he says. “They have a very fast learning curve. … That’s what makes it exciting.”

“Something I admire about a lot of the L.A. Phil players is how they can shape a line,” says composer Andrew Norman, 38, whose new orchestral opus, Sustain, is the centerpiece of the orchestra’s official season-opening concert at Disney Hall on Thursday, Oct. 4. That evening also launches L.A. Fest, an intermittent series of performances that draws from the plethora of unusual new works by composers from this city’s burgeoning underground contemporary-music scene.

The Oct. 4 program begins with Esa-Pekka Salonen’s L.A. Variations coupled with Ludwig van Beethoven’s momentous Triple Concerto, which spotlights three of the orchestra’s most adept and nuanced soloists: violinist-concertmaster Martin Chalifour, intense cellist Robert deMaine and versatile pianist Joanne Pearce Martin.

But the whole program hinges on, and culminates with, Norman’s orchestral work. Has he finished the piece yet? “No, it’s not done!” Norman admits. “I think everyone is anxiously awaiting its completion.” Referring to Dudamel, who will conduct the world premiere, Norman thinks the conductor will only be happy “once I find that double bar and give him the music.”

In the past, Norman’s bracing,
unusual work has ranged from angular, architecturally structured and inspired pieces such as The Companion Guide to Rome (2010) and Frank’s House (2015), a musical homage to Frank Gehry, to more melodically entrancing works like Trip to the Moon, a fanciful science-fiction opera that L.A. Phil debuted earlier this year.

“As if composing for an orchestra isn’t hard enough, there’s this other layer of meaning and significance,” he says, about taking on the pressure of writing a piece that will set the tone for L.A. Philharmonic’s centennial season. “This is a piece we’ve been talking about for four or five years, the idea of a big orchestral piece for L.A. Phil,” Norman says in a phone interview. “I thought about making this a portrait piece of this city, but in the end what got me going was thinking about the future. What would the audience be like 100 years from now in this hall? Maybe the hall won’t even exist in 100 years. How would the ears of the audience be different than ours, and how would they be the same?”

“The piece is largely about time,” he continues. “Maybe people in the future will experience time in a different way.”

Norman says that Sustain, a roughly 40-minute work, will have standard symphony orchestration along with “a healthy dose of percussion. I wasn’t interested in pulling out all the bells and whistles and sticking in instruments that don’t belong. I’m taking the core orchestra instruments and getting them to behave in a way that feels fresh and exciting.”

“He’s a very extraordinary talent,” Adams says about Norman. “He’s especially gifted in writing for instruments in a unique and exciting way.”

“With Andrew, complexity is a color,” to explore this personally and also in this very public way how we, in this particular moment, think about the future. … As my pieces go, it’s pretty abstract, with long geologic lines unfolding, a process so slow you can’t even perceive it. It’s also about how our perception of time is affected by memory and sound,” he says, adding that he intends to evoke “the lifespan of a continent” with his ambitious work.

“I like for my music to do it all in dialogue with a wide variety of music and ways of listening,” Norman says. “Some of the most interesting work now is happening in the in-between spaces between categories. … A lot of my music pushes to the limit of what people can do.”

“It’s absolutely frightening,” says longtime L.A. Phil violist Meredith Snow, speaking generally about the flood of world premieres in the upcoming season. “There’s absolutely no sitting back and saying, ‘I know this piece.’ Some of the scores are still being written and won’t be available to the musicians to rehearse until just days before the scheduled concerts.”

“A lot of the composers are unknown. You never know what you’re going to get,” principal timpanist Joseph Pereira, 44, says. “A lot of the challenge is figuring out the notation of the composers. The way it’s notated, it’s like you’re learning how to read music again.”

Not only do the musicians have to learn an unprecedented amount of physically intense new pieces, they are also responsible for performing music from the wide variety of genres — Broadway, pop, jazz, Latin and avant-garde — that L.A. Phil tends to perform over the course of a year. The orchestra is able to include so many new works in part because its traditional season is busier and longer than it used to be.

“At this point, we’re doing close to 300 concerts per year,” Smith says. “It’s a lot of work, but it’s not a job,” Moore says. “It’s always fun even when it’s emotionally demanding. There’s a weight of responsibility and expectations and standards you’re trying to uphold, but it’s always a good time.”

At what point did L.A. Philharmonic turn the corner from being a respected if overlooked orchestra into its current status as one of the world’s preeminent groups and champions of vital new music? It all depends on whom you ask.

Many people, both within and outside the orchestra, credit Gustavo Dudamel and L.A. Phil chief operating officer Chad Smith for the increased focus on new music since Dudamel took over as music director in 2009. Smith, 46, started with the organization in 2002, when he was hired as associate artistic administrator. After a stint with New York Philharmonic, Smith returned and was promoted to chief operating officer in 2015.

“If music rests on its laurels, its future will be bleak indeed,” Dudamel writes. “If music rests on its laurels, its future will be bleak indeed,” Dudamel writes. “We must provide outlets for today’s musicians, composers and songwriters to express themselves and expose them to the widest audience possible. The L.A. Phil you see today is uniquely different from the L.A. Phil 100 years ago. And the 200th L.A. Phil will be even more different than that. The world is changing, and music must reflect that. … We’ve thought this through across the entire organization, from how we open up Disney Hall to new audiences by providing thousands of free tickets to the community, to our one-of-a-kind education programs, in which we are investing and expanding at
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This study has been reviewed by an Independent Research Committee.
All enquiries will be confidential.

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STAGE

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A multicultural mix hits L.A. stages this fall

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all is just about here, bringing L.A. theater audiences plenty to choose from when it comes to dynamic and dramatic entertainment onstage. There are shows aplenty, from touring to homegrown productions, brand-new or kicking off their West Coast premieres. We couldn’t list all of them, but here are a few of the highlights worth marking on your calendars, both currently running and upcoming in the next few months.

Sweat: Lynn Nottage’s Sweat premiered at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in 2015 and went on to win the 2017 Obie Award for Playwriting and the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The play is set in Reading, Pennsylvania (officially one of the poorest cities in the United States), and revolves around a group of blue-collar workers and the impact of job loss and de-industrialization on their lives — including the fracturing of a long-time friendship along racial lines. More than one critic has noted a parallel between Nottage’s narrative and current political events, with key characters matching the profile of Trump supporters. Directed by Lisa Peterson. 

Thrue Oct. 7 at Mark Taper Forum, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; (213) 628-2772, centertheatregroup.org/theatres/mtf/.

School Girls or, The African Mean Girls Play: In Jocelyn Bioh’s play, the “mean” girls that serve as a staple in American teenage films and stories are transplanted to a girls’ school in Ghana. Two girls — the reigning queen bee and a newcomer — compete in a beauty contest for Miss Ghana 1986. The newcomer’s skin becomes an overriding factor in the contest, and the play deals with prejudices that people of color may inflict on one another, spurred by those of the world at large. 


The Untranslatable Secrets of Nikki Corona: Prolific Obie Award–winning playwright José Rivera ventures to the afterlife in this play about a woman seeking to communicate with her dead twin. An agency that specializes in hooking people up with the dead puts her in touch with a dead person who becomes her lover. Together they venture through the unknown. Jo Bonney directs. 

Thrue Oct. 7 at the Geffen Playhouse, 10886 Le Conte Ave., Westwood; (310) 208-5454, geffenplayhouse.com.

Native Gardens: Jason Alexander directs Mexican-American playwright Karen Zacarías’ new comedy about hitherto friendly neighbors whose dispute about a fence between their property balloons into a major confrontation with racial overtones. The feuding parties are an up-and-coming pair of young Latino professionals who just arrived in the neighborhood and an older white couple with roots there. The setup is intended as a microcosm for the larger upheavals that threaten the stability of the planet, with shenanigans that get pretty farcical. The ensemble includes Christian Barillas (Modern Family), Bruce Davison (Longtime Companion), Frances Fisher (Titanic) and Jessica Meraz (Major Crimes). 


Swansong: Irish playwright Conor McDevitt’s one-person show features noted Australian performer André de Vanny as a troubled and mildly brain-damaged young man whose ostracism early in life helps forge his volatile and violent nature. An Australian import co-produced by the Australian Theatre Company and SkyLight Theatre, the play has been staged to accolades in London, Dublin, New York, Australia and the Edinburgh Fringe. 


Black!?: British writer-performer Michael Washington Brown examines the permutations of race and identity in this thoughtful solo show. Brown portrays four black men from different parts of the world (an American, a Caribbean, an African and a Brit), illustrating the contrast in the experiences of a person of color within a variety of cultures. Brown underscores the viciousness of the American slave tradition when, speaking as himself, he educates us to the existence of an 18th-century document titled “The Makings of a Slave,” which instructs plantation owners on the methodology of human subjugation. 


All Night Long: Open Fist Theatre Company has a long history of undertaking challenging material. Its upcoming venture is a 1980 surreal play by California playwright John O’Keefe, directed by Jan Munroe. Straddling the unconscious, it shreds the notion of the traditional American family with a bizarre plot and stream-of-consciousness dialogue. One family member lives inside a wall closet (where she’s plugged in to recharge) while a mother and son engage in an incestuous liaison. 


Gloria: Echo Theatre Company artistic director Chris Fiedrich directs this West Coast premiere of Obie Award winner Branden Jacobs-Jenkins’ play about ambitious editors whose admiration and acceptance his deceit has garnered. Michael Greif directs this touring production. 


Cost of Living: Polish-American playwright Martyna Majok won the 2018 Pulitzer Prize for this four-character play about two difficult disabled individuals and the people who care for them. John Vreeke directs. 


See more theater picks at laweekly.com.
Singer John Legend surprised an unsuspecting room full of lucky wine lovers at Heritage Fine Wines on Thursday, Aug. 30, with an impromptu performance in the intimate back room in Beverly Hills.

At the piano, the award-winning singer (he just became the youngest ever EGOT, or Emmy-Grammy-Oscar-Tony winner), humanitarian and father of two treated guests to five Legend-ary hits, including “All of Me” and “Ordinary People,” and previewed his new Christmas song, which comes out in December.

Legend dropped in to celebrate the new Côtes de Provence Rosé from his LVE Vineyards.

The food menu offers a variety of French- and Spanish-influenced bites, such as sand-wiches with Spanish tuna or chORIZO with roasted peppers and fresh anchovies or sardines. Entrees include salmon papillote, boeuf Bourguignon and croque-monsieur polaine. There’s also an assortment of prix fixe lunch and dinner specials and plenty of French polaine bread.

“Just never know when he’s going to pop in and sing a song or two,” Andrieu says of Legend.

Heritage Fine Wines, 467 N. Cañon Drive, Beverly Hills; (310) 888-8042.
Here’s some good news. *White Boy Rick* isn’t the movie its advertising has promised. Its trailer, an orgy of images of guns and cocaine and black Detroit hustlers marveling at some white teenager’s awesomeness, played like a Kidz Bop Grand Theft Auto, like *Breaking Bad Jr.*, the latest iteration of the pop-culture fantasy of some cracker waltzing in and taking over everyone else’s racket. But the film itself proves skeletal and humane, committed to the opposite of what that trailer promises. Turns out, the filmmakers are cautious about not romanticizing crime or crack, possibly to a fault — they don’t even seem comfortable depicting it.

Save for a couple of squad walks and the chance to buy groceries for his baby’s mother, crime here doesn’t work out well for Richard “Rick” Wershe Jr., a figure of real-life notoriety. At age 14, the real Rick Wershe became the youngest informant in the history of the FBI after getting caught up in his dad’s selling of illegal guns.

The agents prodded the tough-talking street kid into selling crack on Detroit’s East Side, the better to get him close to the real kingpin. The feds’ case was sprawling, touching the gun-show AK-47s that Wershe’s dad (played by Matthew McConaughey) sells from his trunk but reaching all the way to the office of Detroit’s mayor.

As *White Boy Rick* tells it, the feds got up in Rick’s business before he even really had a business. Rather than some mastermind, the kid is compromised from the start, and the filmmakers pointedly never suggest that his year or two of balling is worth the hell that will follow. Don’t expect *Wolf of Wall Street*-style debauchery. Here, even that balling looks strained, too much effort for too little pleasure. In *White Boy Rick*, swanning about VIP style has nothing on just being broke-ass with a date at the drive-in.

The real Wershe (played here by teen newcomer Richie Merritt) stirred up more crazy before being arrested at the age of 17 with a kilo of cocaine than a two-hour movie can do justice. Tracking the uncertain rise of the too-young-to-shave hustler, Yann Demange’s film is overstuffed with incident, with proper nouns introduced without much context, with twists and betrayals that don’t hit that hard. But it’s also alive with excellent actors, many compelling scenes, and above all else vivid evocations of its milieu, the bombed-out but still kicking Detroit of the early to mid-’80s, a city of champions (Tigers ’84!) but not opportunity.

Electric sequences take us to the roller rink, where the camera glides with adult skaters to “Get Off Your Ass and Jam,” or that drive-in, where nobody is actually bothering to watch *Footloose*, or a tux rental shop the day before a wedding, where the groomsmen are discovering the pleasure and power of dressing sharp.

The filmmakers also conjure the city’s cold emptiness, the misery of its drizzles and the treacherous beauty of snow on black highways.

*White Boy Rick* has reams of story to tear through, but at heart it’s a family drama, one more concerned with the Wershes than with crack, the feds or Detroit itself. Fortunately, this material proves engaging, especially as the filmmakers track the ways the worldview of the father gets twisted in the son — who in turn manages to twist up the father’s.

As Rick’s dad, a tender but wild-eyed McConaughey spouts prime McConaughey-isms, mostly on the subject of seizing your piece of the world and making something of it. “Lions don’t leave the Serengeti,” he opines, as the Wershe Chevy rattles down wide, empty boulevards. The question that haunts Rick: How can one become a lion in a wasteland without game?

Merritt shows us Rick’s learning curve, how he hardens from wannabe to actually-is, but in the rushed last half-hour he’s not given the screen time to reveal how Rick slips, how he makes the mistake of believing his own hype.

The strongest sequences are the most detailed: Rick’s prickly meetings with FBI agents, played by Jennifer Jason Leigh and Rory Cochrane, and the father and son’s rescuing of Rick’s sister, Dawn (Bel Powley), from the crack-house in which she’s holed up. That’s followed by her slow withdrawal in a bedroom of the Wershes’ lower-middle-class home, a piercing set piece.

Merritt and McConaughey create between them the sense of a closed loop of understanding, of men of limited imagination sharing patterns of thought. The dad deplores drugs but defends the selling of guns as “constitutional”; the son understands better the costs that both businesses exact upon their neighborhood.

But Rick is both savvier than his old man — he sees how to make an illegal enterprise thrive — and also more dumb: He doesn’t know when to lay low, to not grab so much that he draws attention to himself.

At least I think that’s what happens. The machinations of the cops, the feds, the other hustlers and the political establishment of Detroit transpire offscreen, along with most of Rick’s actual crimes. The crime world scenes often play as thin and dashed through. The details of how a kid turns a block of cocaine into bagged rock to be sold on the streets get left to a quick montage, as does how that rock becomes a small fortune.

We barely get to know Rick’s crew, or even if he has one, and it’s not easy, based on the film alone, to understand how far he goes in claiming and protecting his turf.

*White Boy Rick*’s great mystery is whether this is a mistake or by design. Has it been sliced up, a too-short cut carved out from some more expansive version of this story? Or is it too polite, refusing to be tempted by the allurements of vice — the very thing audiences are paying to see?

*White Boy Rick* | Directed by Yann Demange | Written by Andy Weiss, Logan Miller and Noah Miller | Sony Pictures | Citywide
**THE BASEMENT** A feast for its two main actors, the uneven but diverting horror movie *The Basement* is short on excessive gore and long on talk. While running a late-night errand, Craig (Cayleb Long), a successful L.A. musician, is kidnapped, beaten and tied to a chair in a small basement. His captor, Bill (Jackson Davis), first appears wearing a clown suit, but Craig soon realizes he’s being held by an infamous serial killer. The clown exits; a beat cop and then a detective appear, both accusing Craig of being that killer. In an inventive riff on Split, the writing-directing team of Brian M. Conley and Nathan Ives have created an actor’s dream for the gifted Davis, who portrays all of Craig’s visitors, including a skimpily dressed woman claiming to be his mother. By then, Craig, still tied to the chair, is working furiously to convince each visitor and, by extension, his captor, to let him go free. In the home stretch, Long and Davis act up a storm, and that can be fun. The energy zap here is a clever but poorly staged final twist, as well as the many cutaways to Craig’s wife (Mischa Barton) fretting at home. Barton, who’s becoming the queen of low-budget, barely released horror films, doesn’t have much to do, even though her name is above the title. If she has seen the final film, she might well have wished she’d had a scene or three with her go-for-broke co-stars. (Chuck Wilson)

**BEL CANTO** Age-old definitions of enemy and ally, victor and victim, get thrown into question in Paul Weitz’s deft film adaptation of Ann Patchett’s award-winning novel *Bel Canto*. Though not an opera, the film, its title translating to “beautiful singing,” delivers the high drama of one. Julianne Moore radiates elegance as defiant opera singer Roxane Coss, who has been invited to sing at the home of an unnamed South American country’s vice president for an audience of wealthy internationals. As the evening concludes, a band of mostly teenage guerrillas bursts in and takes everyone hostage. El Presidente refuses their demands, and the ensuing standoff lasts for weeks. Meanwhile, the physics of love and hate operate differently inside the mansion. Hostages sympathize with their captors, and love blooms between some of them despite language barriers and the threat of violence. The film only loosely tracks the passage of time, and the relationships develop quicker than makes emotional sense. But pacing problems are easy to overlook thanks to some outstanding performances. Beyond the luminous Moore and Davis, who is well on her way to becoming the queen of low-budget, barely released horror films, doesn’t have much to do, even though her name is above the title. If she has seen the final film, she might well have wished she’d had a scene or three with her go-for-broke co-stars. (Chuck Wilson)

**GO BLAZE** The chief achievement of Blaze, Ethan Hawke’s impassioned, uncompromising study of musicians on the margins, is that the film’s subjects, were they alive, wouldn’t scoff at it. Like Blaze Foley and Townes Van Zandt, the late Texas singer-songwriters it honors, Blaze is high-proof liquor in a near-beer world, a drink that’ll burn some going down — and knock the unsympathetic right out. It proudly, defiantly ain’t for everybody, and Hawke, in the spirit of a Van Zandt live album, ain’t afraid to follow a dirge with a dirge. It is to Hawke’s credit that he has invested what clout he has gathered into this study of an artist who never gathered much clout at all — and that the resulting film has the warm, weary rhythms of Foley’s own songs. Hawke has framed the film as a eulogy, a romance and a command performance. At a radio station interview after Foley’s death, Van Zandt (Charlie Sexton) tells Foley stories and plays the searing tribute “Blaze’s Blues.” This is interrupted with scenes from Foley’s life, most notably lively, lovely glimpses of the months he lived in an off-the-grid cabin with actress-writer Sybil Rosen (Alia Shawkat); she and Ben Dickey’s Foley seem fully, breathlessly lost in each other. Finally, thread all through this is Foley’s final performance, to an indifferent crowd at an Austin club on the final night of his life. Foley’s art was delicate and demanding, avowedly not for everyone, given its power by its own cussed integrity. The same goes for Hawke’s film. (Alan Scherstuhl)

**A BOY, A GIRL, A DREAM** A Boy, A Girl, A Dream, sets out to show that white people don’t have a lock on movies about two strangers meeting on some glorious night and seeing the sparks fly every which way. This film revolves around two L.A.-based African-Americans: club promoter (and aspiring filmmaker) Cass (Omari Hardwick) and Frida (Meagan Good), a lawyer (and aspiring DJ). Cass gets Frida into a club and, after a heated moment in which they make out in the bathroom, they spend the evening sparring when they’re not letting personal issues hold them back from getting to know each other. Did I mention all this is going on during the sad, sad, very sad night when Donald Trump won the presidency? A lot gets thrown into this compact hour and a half, from a brief, symbolic tussle with the cops to a party scene where the leads take it upon themselves to keep the irate attendees calm and collected. Co-writer/director Qasim Basir does this in a series of long takes that are digitally spliced together to make it look like it’s one unbelievably long shot. (There are also J.J. Abrams–style lens flares all over the damn place.) And while Basir has a cool eye for composition, this love story feels awkward and clunky. Hardwick and Good have minimal chemistry. As much as this movie wants to prove that love and hope can be found even when everything is going batshit, A Boy, A Girl, A Dream, goes about it in a cringey, saditty manner. (Craig D. Lindsey)

**THE CHILDREN ACT** Following this year’s *On Chesil Beach*, directed by Dominic Cooke, a novel from the frequently adapted Ian McEwan is again the source for a film, *The Children Act*, a courtroom drama from director Richard Eyre. Emma Thompson stars as Honorable Justice Mrs. Fiona Maye, the judge tasked with a difficult case, 17-year-old Jehovah’s Witness Adam Henry (Dunkirk’s Fionn Whitehead) is battling cancer and facing high risk of death or deformity unless he accepts a blood transfusion, which is strictly prohibited by his religion. If he chooses life, he would be shunned by the only community he has. Though Maye specializes in family matters, her own life is that of a clichéd working woman — one who struggles to balance the personal and professional. Her overweight husband, Jack (Stanley Tucci), announces that their 17-month sex drought is pushing him toward an affair. That declaration inspires a cheesy flashback to better times and then a complicated plot twist when...

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Adam, convinced to accept the blood transfusion, recovers and becomes obsessed with the woman who saved his life. Maye initially scolds Adam’s stalker ways but eventually becomes captivated with the boy, albeit in a manner that seems forced, utterly lacking chemistry, as if Thompson had discovered this plot development in the script just as she was shooting the scene. Thompson goes along with it as best she can, but it’s hard to watch this shift when we haven’t been given any believable reason why Maye would fall for Adam’s adolescent courtship and love poems. (Kristen Yoonsoo Kim)

FIVE FINGERS FOR MARSEILLES

Thanksgiving, I loaded my plate with so much stuffing, potatoes and cranberry sauce that I had no room left for any turkey. I thought of this an hour into Five Fingers for Marseilles when I realized this was a movie brimming with sides but without any meat. The location cinematography – a Western shot in the north of South Africa’s Eastern Cape – is extraordinary, and first-time director Michael Matthews takes full advantage of cliffs, big skies and frequent electrical storms. He fits his cast in a series of badass dusty costumes, shoots them with short lenses in color-saturated vistas and has them speak slowly without any meat. The location cinematography – a Western shot in the north of South Africa’s Eastern Cape – is extraordinary, and first-time director Michael Matthews takes full advantage of cliffs, big skies and frequent electrical storms. He fits his cast in a series of badass dusty costumes, shoots them with short lenses in color-saturated vistas and has them speak slowly enough to make Nicolas Winding Refn winces. Each moment oozes cool. It’s just that there’s hardly
HOT TO TROT

Hot to Trot is the wrong title for this engaging movie, not least because it was used 30 years ago for a Bobcat Goldthwait vehicle about a talking horse. Focusing on two pairs of same-sex ballroom dancers, Gail Freedman’s new doc is essentially a pivot for a reality show, unfolding between 2012 and 2016, primarily in New York and San Francisco. But only a sliver of the screen time is devoted to the smashing dancing, shown mostly in frustratingly quick cuts. Costa Rican hottie Ernesto Palma, who anchors the male couple, reveals his former meth addiction (“I saw that the drugs were destroying my beauty”), barbecues a “ghetto” breakfast on his stovetop in Chelsea, competes in a Gay Games competition with Russian partner Nikolai Shpakov and finds true love. All but one of the featured competitive dancers are immigrants. We meet parents visiting from New Zealand and Russia, and visit Palma’s first partner, Hungarian Robbie Tristan, who was felled by a brain tumor. Each of the same-sex pairs changes dance partners during the long journey director Freedman takes with her final decision to prioritize her tech career.

There isn’t a single shot in this movie that fails to look stylish, but the rote scenario and glacial pace make it difficult to connect to the picture in an emotional way. Nice trimmings don’t make a meal. (Jordan Hoffman)

LIZZIE

Craig William Macneill’s terse, at times tense Lizzie re-airs that most familiar of dirty laundry; the case of the 1892 hatchet murders that will forever be attributed to Lizzie Borden, despite her acquittal. Still, for a while, after a somewhat compelling hour suggesting all the reasons that Borden might be willing to kill, Macneill and screenwriter Bryce Kass tantalize with the possibility of their subject’s innocence. When the killing comes, the film skips right over it. We glimpse a shadowy figure grab the hatchet from a cellar, and soon after hear Borden (Chloë Sevigny) scream at the discovery of her father’s corpse. Then Lizzie cuts to the aftermath. We’re cued to wonder: Is she being railroaded? Might she not recall having done it? Earlier in the film, Lizzie has collapsed in public, suffering fits. Might she have murdered in a fugue state? But the filmmakers keep up the pretense of possibility for only a couple of scenes, just until we’ve seen the Bordens’ servant Bridget (Kristen Stewart) attest to Lizzie’s innocence at trial. Then Lizzie vaults back in time to present its theory of the case, becoming a blunt true-crime procedural, tracking Borden and Bridget minute by minute through the slaughter, hacking into its simple ideas about women and the past with all the nuance of Sevigny’s Borden swinging her ax into her father’s and stepmother’s skulls. While dutifully feminist in its outlook, the film strips Lizzie while never laying her bare. (Alan Scherstuhl)

I THINK WE’RE ALONE NOW

In the first minutes of I Think We’re Alone Now, director Reed Morano’s camera stalks the streets of a quaint American town, like a New York Times Trump-voter profile come to life. But something’s off: The town, near the Hudson River, is empty. Del (Peter Dinklage) breaks into a deserted house, collecting the batteries from all the electronics he can find. When he finds corpses, he wraps them in blankets and drags them by the feet into a makeshift graveyard. This macabre routine is soon interrupted by Grace (Elle Fanning), who drives into town and worms her way into Del’s life. Eventually, Mike Makowsky’s script reveals that Del’s stick is in response to an epidemic in which people have just started dropping dead. “They could reanimate one of a sudden,” Del says, cryptically; the situation is hazy, and Makowsky favors intimation over explanation. It’s an approach that suits Morano’s exploratory style (she also serves as the film’s cinematographer); her camera roves over the vacant town, savoring the glowing, otherworldly light of empty spaces. From there, the story treads a well-worn path. Grace wins Del over with her easy charm, a montage unfolds of their new regimen, a slideshow of life after apocalypse in which each day is the same as the last. Groundhog Day without all the people. Despite the efforts of Dinklage and Fanning, both always pleasant enough to watch, and Morano’s keen eye — witness how she rarely puts Del and Grace together in one frame — neither character really comes to life, and the script proves too conventional. (Lara Zarum)

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THE PUBLIC IMAGE IS ROTTEN
The Public Image Is Rotten. Tabbert Fillier’s documentary about Public Image Ltd. (PiL), the band John Lydon (aka Johnny Rotten) formed after the Sex Pistols, makes one wonder: Does anyone still care? Its interviews are either with aging, fanboy musicians (including Red Hot Chili Peppers’ Flea, who nearly joined PiL in the ‘80s) or with the revolving door of instrumentalists who were in PiL through the decades. Except for some vintage clips and an interview with music journalist Vivien Goldman, the film goes out of its way to ignore women who were part of the punk and post-punk scene.

MDMA MDMA opens with a young, scantily clad woman sniffing cocaine in a nightclub. How did she get there? The film soon takes us back to a year earlier, when Angie (Annie Q.), a bright but increasingly troubled college freshman, experienced culture shock as a working-class Asian girl from a broken home going to a school filled with preppy white kids. Angie quickly discovers the joys of ecstasy, and almost immediately starts synthesizing and dealing the drug. That might sound far-fetched, and the dramatic beats are closely aligned with a Lifetime movie’s, but the story is inspired by writer-director Angie Wang’s life. While that story is worth sharing, as a director she relies too heavily on choppy exposition via abrupt flashbacks, and the screenplay is weighed down by cliché lines like, “I’m whoever you want me to be.” The proceedings take place in the 1980s, and there are some suitably fun oversized earrings and lace gloves on display. The soundtrack—featuring two non-“Relax” Frankie Goes to Hollywood songs, among other earworms of the era—also deserves a shoutout. Angie’s relationship with her wealthy, blonde roommate (Francesca Eastwood) adds moments of intimacy and sweetness (save for the inevitable druggy threesome to a tale drenched in darkness. While MDMA might feel frustratingly familiar, at the same time it’s difficult to dismiss. It couldn’t have been easy for Wang to film a depiction of such a dark time in her life, and she does find fragments of garish visual interest. It’s a shame, then, that so much of the action essentially plays as a new-wave take on Go Ask Alice. (Abbey Bender)

RODENTS OF UNUSUAL SIZE
As suggested by its title (which audiences likely will associate with The Princess Bride), Rodents of Unusual Size possesses a lightness of touch. The documentary, directed by Chris Metzler, Jeff Springer and Quinn Costello, and narrated by Wendell Pierce, uses cartoon diagrams and a cheerful score by the Lost Bayou Ramblers to make its tale of inherited destruction and trauma as charming as possible. The way that initial ease peels back is the film’s greatest asset. The focus is on southern Louisiana’s struggle with an invasive species of rodent, the nutria. The local population’s efforts to use the nutria as a resource of food and fur comes from equal parts resourcefulness and necessity; grimmer parts of the doc showcase the hunters who are paid $5 per tail as an incentive for helping clear them out, and cameras don’t shy away from the piles of animal carcasses they leave in their wake. The film demonstrates a surprising—and commendable—frankness, especially as its creators interview those working to stay afloat amid hurricanes and nutria-accelerated coastal erosion. One fisherman-turned-hunter (who points out his old refrigerator, lodged in a tree by a hurricane) holds up a dead nutria, and isn’t the least bit begrudging when he says, despite the damage the animal has wrought, “It wants to survive, just like me.” (Karen Han)

Less Heat in Arizona

Sept. 14-20, 2018  Daily at 1:00 pm
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NEW GROUND

Moe Espinosa and Luis Flores bring their long-distance collab Belief Defect's techno to L.A.

BY MATT MINER

Belief Defect

A stygian, discordant style of electronic dance music, techno has since its origin in the 1980s drawn inspiration from the relentless grind and dystopian aesthetic of industrial music. Moe Espinosa, who grew up in the San Gabriel Valley on a steady diet of industrial and punk, is a DJ/producer and co-founder of Droid Recordings, arguably the most important techno label in the United States today. Luis Flores, also a DJ/producer, is a Mexican-born, Berlin-based veteran and a key player in the establishment of his native Guadalajara as a main hub for techno in Latin America.

In 2015, Espinosa and Flores formed Belief Defect, an experimental electronic music project deeply rooted in both techno and industrial. They released their debut full-length album, Decadent Yet Depraved, last September on the noted German electronic music label Raster.

L.A. Weekly caught up with Espinosa and Flores by Skype for this interview in advance of Belief Defect’s appearance at the Regent Theater on Saturday, Sept. 15, with headliners Black Line.

“I started playing guitar mostly and started playing in rock bands — I use the word ‘rock’ loosely,” Espinosa says. “I was trying to play everything from punk to harder-edged metal and what I perceived to be industrial at that young age. I ended up finally going to raves around ’95 or ’96 and discovered electronic music, which was completely alien to me at the time, and just went down the path of wanting to be a DJ and working in recording studios to where I am today.”

Espinosa began working in Hollywood recording studios while he was still in high school, initially performing menial tasks like making coffee. “I finished high school and I went to Musicians Institute to study recording engineering and audio acoustics and electronics,” he says. “Right after I finished school, I went straight back to working in studios, until I started to put out records and travel and play as a DJ.”

“I have a slightly different story,” Flores says. “Among other things, because I grew up in Mexico, and I’m a little older than Moe. I got into music because my father is an audiophile and I grew up with him playing a lot of classical music. And he had very early electronic music records, in this case, Tomita’s Pictures at an Exhibition and Oxygen by Jean-Michel Jarre. This is ’70-something. I must have been 5, 6 years old. And Radio-Activity from Kraftwerk. And he played them sporadically but it always caught my attention — the movie-like soundscapes that all of them had. And specifically, those three records, they have concrete references and other sound effects incorporated in the music.”

Those watershed LPs instilled in Flores a lifelong love of synthesizers and the richly detailed electronic music they are capable of creating.

“I wanted to study music and [play synthesizers] but at first I didn’t know what they were,” he says. “So I ended up studying organ because I kept telling my mother that it wasn’t a piano that I wanted to play. Around 15, I got a sampler and pretty much taught myself how to use it. I got into industrial music as my first thing I wanted to make, thus a sampler. Industrial music kind of offered the best combination of my parents’ education, which was the music side — my dad — and my mother’s side, which has always been politics, so, nothing more appealing than all the anger in industrial music for a teenage nightmare that I was, so that’s how I got started. Eventually I flipped to techno and so on.”

Asked about the formation of Belief Defect, Espinosa recalls, “We actually met in Guadalajara when I was starting to travel more as a DJ because of the records I was doing — techno, Droid Behavior and all that. I went to go play at a festival in Mexico with Developer [respected L.A. DJ/producer Adrián Sandoval]. Right after we Luis went on, and I remember seeing this guy play for the first time and it absolutely blew me away. We exchanged information and it started a pretty long collaboration of musical work together, before Belief Defect formed, producing techno records together, releasing techno records, doing remixes for each other. And I believe even the first time that I went to Europe to DJ internationally was with Luis as well. We played a gig in Brussels. That was my first time being able to play internationally overseas.”

Flores adds, “I think in that period, too, it was really kind of a lucky time because we were both a little bit jaded, possibly, and kind of lost with music and listening to the same kind of albums. It was a pretty good couple of years of music all around, as in not techno specifically, but there were a lot of albums floating around that were very inspiring.” Flores and Espinosa mention albums by Andy Stott, Fuck Buttons, Haus Arafna and Alessandro Cortini.

“We were trying to look for new grounds and break out of this perpetual loop we seemed to be stuck in musically and artistically,” Espinosa says. “And we wanted to do something different purely out of frustration and creative desire to explore new territories — create music freely, for lack of better words.”

Describing the process of writing and producing Decadent Yet Depraved, Flores explains, “Moe came to Berlin with a lot of recordings he had on his modular system in L.A. and left them here; then I added something, rhythmically or whatever, and then we kind of bounced it back and forth. It was weird. Every track kind of came together differently on the record, but it was pretty much like pushing back and forth until we felt it was done.”

Espinosa adds, “It’s weird looking back on it, it’s difficult to pinpoint exactly in memory how the whole entire album came together. For me at least, it was a very cathartic experience working on the entire project. And even though we brought elements from separate studios, and maybe Luis worked on some loops when I wasn’t there that I came back and listened to and then added on top of it, there were large portions of development of the record that were both of us locked in the same room with very little sleep for three or four days nonstop, never seeing sunlight.

“For me, one of the closest experiences I’ve had to one of those romantic notions of what you would expect to hear from your favorite musicians growing up, being locked in a recording studio and going through this maddening process of creating music. In a lot of ways it kind of was. It was a brutal experience at the end of it.”

Espinosa sees the completion of Decadent Yet Depraved and its release on Raster as coming full circle. “Like I mentioned earlier,” he reflects, “the first time that we went to Europe, we played the Brussels Electronic Music Festival. There was a Raster label showcase going on and I remember specifically, we all sat down and watched it. It’s like a weird loop. After all these years of playing gigs and traveling all over Europe, we came right back to Raster, which was one of the labels that was there at the very beginning. Luckily, they were the first label we sent it to, and they came back and said yes.”

Belief Defect play with Black Line at 9 p.m. on Saturday, Sept. 15, at the Regent Theater.
THE STORY SO FAR

**FRI 9/14**

**Zhu**  
@ SHRINE AUDITORIUM

Zhu is one of modern dance music’s most beloved acts. Hailing from the Bay Area but now residing in Los Angeles, real name Steven Zhu gained his loyal fan base through the mystery of anonymity and letting his music speak for itself. By 2014, he released his breakout single, “Faded,” which went on to receive a Grammy nomination. Currently signed to Mind of a Genius, Zhu continues to bless his fans with explosive releases and even bigger shows. From festivals across the world to headlining two nights at Los Angeles’ Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall, the DJ/producer prepares to unleash his new EP, *Rings Desert* (which dropped Sept. 7) to the rest of the world in real time.  
—HIRLEY JU

**SAT 9/15**

**Joan Jett, Cheap Trick**  
@ POMONA FAIRPLEX

Back in the late 1970s, Joan Jett and Cheap Trick were simpatico allies who hung out and toured together. Jett was still trying to find herself as a solo performer after the messy breakup of The Runaways, and Cheap Trick were just starting to get belated national attention after the gatekeepers of classic-rock radio mostly ignored the numerous hard-rock and power-pop gems on the Illinois quartet’s first two studio albums. By the early ’80s, though, both Cheap Trick and Joan Jett & the Blackhearts had become so popular through touring that the corporate rock establishment was forced to acknowledge their impact, and both groups continue to release credible albums four decades later. While the sound system and sightlines at Pomona Fairplex are mediocre, there’s something eternally thrilling about hearing these musicians at the county fair with the sounds and lights of the carnival in the distance behind them.  
—FALLING JAMES

**SUN 9/16**

**Mirah**  
@ THE ECHO

“If anything tries to hold you back, we won’t let it,” Mirah insists on “Hot Hot,” from her latest album, *Understanding.* “Try to keep your tires on the road even when the wind picks up.” The Brooklyn songwriter discloses her messages of encouragement over soothing keyboards, which occasionally give way to more momentous clouds of noise that soon subside again beneath her whispery vocals. In the past, Mirah Yom Tov Zeitlin has collaborated with such indie-pop allies as Thao Nguyen, Tune-Yards, Tara Jane O’Neill and Phil Elverum, and she even wrote an album with Spectrasonics International, *Share This Place: Stories and Observations,* that examined the secret lives of insects. Mirah’s quiet observations are framed artfully with lulling chamber-pop and folk settings on such records as 2017’s *Sundial.*  
—FALLING JAMES

**Pathway to Paris**

@ THE THEATRE AT ACE HOTEL

Some things are inarguably more important than music. The Pathway to Paris concert will see some spectacular names gather for a benefit to raise money and simultaneously raise awareness for climate-change causes. While it seems ludicrous that people in 2018 still need to be made aware of this very real danger, unscrupulous politicians and pseudo-scientists have convinced the naive and desperate that global warming (and evolution, and the Earth being a globe) are liberal conspiracies. So any help getting the facts out there is vitally important. Here, the help comes courtesy of the great Patti Smith, Eric Burdon, Flea, Karen O and many more. There’s already been a successful New York event, and we’re sure L.A. can do the world proud, too.  
—BRETT CALLWOOD

**Saint Etienne**

@ THE FONDA THEATRE

For a good while in the 1990s, London band Saint Etienne were one of the coolest groups on the electro-indie scene. Sarah Cracknell was (and is) a dazzling frontwoman: part contemporary alt singer, part Berlin chanteuse with a Nico vibe. Similarly, the sound has always been a seamless blend of British rave/club sounds and ‘60s pop (unsurprisingly, particularly British Invasion). Saint Etienne never went on a hiatus, though they did slow down in the mid-’2000s (2012’s *Words and Music by Saint Etienne* was their first album since 2005’s *Tales From Turnpike House*). Still, the material the band produced over their nearly-three decades has been remarkable consistent, right up to last year’s *Home Counties.* That said, the Foxbase Alpha

**Astronautica**


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9/15 TOM GUN LIVE
9/16 24TH ANNUAL BRAZILIAN SUMMER FEST
9/21 FAMILY FUNCTION
9/25 MUSTASCH
9/26 BLANK CASSETTE
9/27 BENJAMIN DAMAGE
9/28 DAN TERMINUS
9/28 CREEK BOYZ W/ LIL BOI KANTU
9/29 REVOCATION, EXHUMED, RIVERS OF NIHIL, YAUTJA
9/29 THE NEW DIVISION
10/5 PIG W/ KEVORKIAN DEATH CYCLE & HAEX
10/13 NEROZ & INSIDIOUS

10/18 JOSH A & JAKE HILL
10/22 THE SHOWCASE TOUR
10/24 NETNOBODY
10/27 CARNALLOWEEN
10/27 W/ NEGINMINO DA BELA FLOR
10/27 RHYANNON'S REVENGE
10/28 NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD
10/28 W NERCO + MORE
11/1 HOCICO
11/2 ALCEST (PERFORMING THE ALBUM ‘KODAMA’ IN ITS ENTRETY)
11/3 THE LOS ANGELES PANCAKES & BOOZE ART SHOW
11/7 G HERBO W/ SPECIAL GUESTS SOUTHSIDE & QUEEN KEY
11/8 CLAUDIO SIMONETT'S GOBLIN PERFORMING SUSPIRIA

GRIMS
9/22 TECHNO CUMBIA
9/22 PEPASEED: LA'S THROWBACK JAMAICAN REGGAE PARTY - DJ CROOKS
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9/23 FENDI P AKA CORNERBOY P LIVE IN CONCERT
9/25 THE MOTH
9/25 COMEDY POP UP
9/26 LOUD & CLEAR
9/27 FLOWERS RDM PRESENTS BICOASTAL BOMBAZO
9/28 A CLUB CALLED RHONDA
9/29 REDHOUSE PRESENTS EARTHQUAKE WEATHER, SHABBAAAAAA DJ SEAN G,
9/29 THE FLOOR IMPROV NIGHT
**MON 9/17**

**Konk Pack**

@ ZEBULON

As they enter their 21st year of existence as a group that is the apex of freedom and the zenith of improvisation, Konk Pack (titanic Tim Hodgkinson on lapsteel guitar, electronics and clarinet; luscious Thomas Lehn playing the analog synth; and reliable Roger Turner on drums and percussion) descend from on-high to blow your minds sky-high tonight. But don’t let that rapturous sticky praise throw you. Their performances are surprisingly intimate affairs, three stars locked in orbit during their brief time onstage as what they summon up as an individual adult human being to become a band himself with revolutionary, evolutionary help from drummer Matt Chamberlain, Grdina on oud, Moog-er and bassist Shahzad Ismaily, violist Eyvind Chamberlain, Grdina on oud, Moog-er and bassist Shahzad Ismaily, violist Eyvind Kang, saxophonist Patrick Shiroishi, and Chris Speed on tenor sax and clarinet.

—David Cotner

**THU 9/20**

**Margaret Glaspy**

@ Hollywood Forever

“I’m not your mother, I’m sticking around,” Margaret Glaspy declares on “One Heart and Two Arms,” from her recent EP, Born Yesterday. “I’m not your father, trying to screw the whole town.” The New York singer confides these sentiments over a low, ominous electric guitar that snarls like a wildcat between verses before pulling back its claws as she begins crooning again. The song stirs up a more intriguing sense of menace and danger than Glaspy’s typically laid-back folk-pop songs, such as “Before We Were Together,” which is centered around a more typically lyrical “I’m damned if I do and damned if I don’t” cliché. Although the EP’s introspective ballads such as “I Love You, Goodnight” possess a certain intimate charm, Glaspy is far more interesting when she turns things up, as on the occasionally harder-rocking “I’m not your mother, I’m sticking around, ” after the whole thing leaked online. They had both the image and the sound to cross the sleaze rock/emo punk divide. But then things stalled. Even the release of this year’s Waking Up Dead album was problematic after the whole thing leaked online. They seem to be back on track now; that new album is a killer, and the live shows have been hard-hitting, too. —Brett Callwood

**Arcade Fire/The Zombies**

@ The Greek Theatre

There are few words left to be written about Arcade Fire. At this point, you either like Win Butler, his super-serious Canadian crew and their overblown, sub-Springsteen, though admittedly emotionally infectious, brand of indie rock, or you despise the pomposity of it all. Hey, music is entirely subjective, so that’s your call. But this show is arguably more interesting than most from the Fire, because of the inclusion of The Zombies on the bill. The British ‘60s rockers normally can be found playing at venues such as the Rose in Pasadena or the Canyon Clubs, to oldie crowds. But putting classics like “Time of the Season,” the intensity and fire of her early solo albums and work with The Wailers, Mowatt’s voice remains pure and is a direct link to reggae’s classic golden era in the 1970s.

—Falling James

**Judy Mowatt**

@ Santa Monica Pier

Along with Rita Marley and Marcia Griffiths, Judy Mowatt was one of The I Threes, the trio of women backup vocalists who imbued the later lineup of Bob Marley & The Wailers with a heavenly Greek chorus of lilting harmonies. Before that, Mowatt wrote songs for The Wailers’ Bunny Livingston, but she eventually stepped out on her own as a solo performer, releasing the classic album Black Woman in 1979. Her own music ranges from reggae and soul to uplifting gospel exhortations. While many of her later, glossier pop productions lack the intensity and fire of her early solo albums and work with The Wailers, Mowatt’s voice remains pure and is a direct link to reggae’s classic golden era in the 1970s.

—Brett Callwood
GO OUT

MUSIC


Exchange LA: 618 S. Spring St., L.A. Benny Benassi, Fri., Sept. 14, 10 p.m. Boombox Cartel, Sat., Sept. 15, 10 p.m.


Dance Clubs


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CONCERTS

Friday, Sept. 14

Anita Baker: 8 p.m. The Greek Theatre.

The Eagles: 8 p.m., $59.50-$399.50. The Forum.

Zhu: With Tokimonsta, 9 p.m., $54.50-$50. Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall. See Music Pick.

Saturday, Sept. 15


Joan Jett & the Blackhearts, Cheap Trick: 7:30 p.m., $44-$185. Pomona Fairplex, 1101 W. McKinley Ave., Pomona. See Music Pick.

Community FK, The Eva O Experience: With The Gitane Demone Quartet, 9 p.m. The Pico Union Project, 1153 Valencia St., L.A. See GoLA.


Jazz & Blues


Catalina Bar & Grill: 6725 W. Sunset Blvd., L.A. Cecil McLorin Salvant, Sept. 14-15, 8:30 & 10:30 p.m.; Sun., Sept. 16, 7:30 p.m.

The Lighthouse Cafe: 30 Pier Ave., Hermosa Beach. The Mitch Forman Quartet, Sat., Sept. 15, 11 a.m.-2:30 p.m. The Paul Young Quintet, Sun., Sept. 16, 11 a.m.-3 p.m., free. The Bruce Lett Trio, Wed., Sept. 19, 6-9 p.m., free.


Country & Folk


Joe’s Great American Bar & Grill: 4311 W. Magnolia Blvd., Burbank. The Messaround, with

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