People 2019
Bespoke boutiques, Michelin-starred eateries and curated events for style icons, food connoisseurs and entrepreneurial visionaries.

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People2019

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photography by Danny Liao
Los Angeles is defined by those who call it home, and L.A. Weekly’s People 2019 issue focuses on the best our city has to offer. Some of these Angelenos are natives with deep roots, born and bred here, while others are transplants who were drawn to the City of Angels; all of them, however, contribute to L.A.’s richness and diversity through their unique passions and professions.

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Reza Aslan is a multi-hyphenated figure — progressive scholar of world religions, author, podcaster, burgeoning media mogul — who said “Fuck the gatekeepers” and is blazing his own path in the entertainment business and de-exotifying Muslims in film and television.

Kat Corbett rides shotgun with commuters as host of KROQ’s Locals Only show, helping give local musicians their first big break.

To paraphrase performance artist Ibuki Kuramochi — who is featured on one of this issue’s covers — L.A. is a city of contrasts. In this issue, our editors and writers highlight that.

All photography by Danny Liao

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A DUB BROTHERS PRODUCTION
There's a lot of canna-cookery going on in Los Angeles right now, and nobody is leading the charge more tastefully than executive chef and partner at the Original Cannabis Cafe (formerly Lowell Cafe) in West Hollywood, Andrea Drummer.

Drummer, who's worked with cannabis/food-pairing pioneer Neal Fraser since before 4/20, says it's about ensuring the flavor supports and doesn't overpower the food, while also discovering which flavor profiles of herbs pair well with specific cuisines. While Fraser laid much of the groundwork for this burgeoning sector, L.A. chefs are taking advantage of legalization to explore the concept and enter a space where they're comfortable experimenting at cannabis supper clubs around Southern California.

The Cordon Bleu–trained chef is probably best known from her multiple Netflix appearances on shows like Chelsea Does and Cooking On High. She's also spent years crafting private meals for celebrities like Wiz Khalifa and Chelsea Handler, and is now feeding Angelenos at the city's first cannabis cafe.

In addition to meat-based dishes, there are plenty of vegan options on the menu, like the signature vegan nachos made with cauliflower, black beans, Follow Your Heart cheese sauce, guacamole and pico de gallo with house chips. Suggested pairing: a mild Jack Herer sativa.

Drummer recently introduced weekend brunch at the cafe, with a menu that includes a nontraditional corned beef hash, French toast, veggie options and sweet Belgian waffles.

Drummer considers the unique job her life's work, to help change the misconception of cannabis consumption.

“It’s been three and a half years in the making,” says Drummer, who was originally approached by Lowell Farms to be the executive chef. “And I think what makes it so successful is the sense of community—between consumers and non-consumers. Some people come in here just to eat, but we really wanted to pump up the food and not have it be secondary and a reason on its own just to come in,”

—Michele Stueven
For someone bearing quite literally the weight of potentially altering the nation's history, Congressman Adam Schiff is surprisingly calm. The House Intelligence Committee chair representing Burbank and charged with helming an impeachment inquiry of President Trump has a packed Veterans Day — photoshoot, interview, two veterans’ events, all before wheels up at 1:30 p.m. for a flight to Washington, D.C. Nevertheless, he appears to be in good spirits, joking about his artistic stint as a photographer while at Stanford. This affability stands in contrast to his blunt diagnosis of — borrowing a phrase from President Gerald Ford — the “long nightmare” the country faces.

“Many of us had concerns for [Trump’s] fitness for the office, but we had no idea how truly awful he would be as president,” recalls Schiff. “This is the first president in history who gets up in the morning determined to find new and inventive ways to divide the country,” he adds.

The mantle of impeachment was one the congressman took up reluctantly, citing his original fear that it would be “a wrenching experience” for the country. But the president’s conduct the day after Bob Mueller testified “compelled” him to act. Now, days before the start of public hearings, Schiff is solemn and, in some ways, resigned. “It’s impossible for me to see [the president] changing,” the 10-term congressman admits.

Despite his rapid ascent to the national stage (Schiff wryly comments that it’s a “popular myth” that he was unknown before Trump), the Burbank representative has not neglected the issues facing his constituents. Schiff recently introduced H.R. 4239, the Affordable Housing Incentives Act, which would incentivize growing stocks of public housing. He’s careful to point out, however, that the ultimate cause of the “national catastrophe” of homelessness is an “economy that just isn’t working for too many families.” There’s no panacea, in his mind, and the crisis demands “a really comprehensive approach” from all levels of government.

While recognizing the severity of the homeless crisis, Schiff is measured and hopeful, crediting Angelenos for stepping up. “I think the public to its credit has been willing to tax itself to try to provide homes for people and to try and deal with the problem,” he explains. “Los Angelenos have been very generous in trying to do that.”

Schiff’s way of communicating is a perhaps a welcome contrast to the bombastic style of his foil in the White House. Substance over rhetoric. The congressman also cited the recent passage of a resolution asking for the U.S. government to recognize the Armenian Genocide as “one of my proudest days on the House floor,” the fruition of 19 years of struggle alongside his many Armenian-American constituents.

When asked what’s next for him — the senate or even higher offices don’t seem out of the question — Schiff demurs, telling us he isn’t ruling anything out but is currently focused solely on the Herculean task at hand, impeachment proceedings, which he’s taking day by day. Nevertheless, he sees the future of the Democratic Party as a fusion of moderate and progressive voices, citing Californians’ desire for principled leadership and maintaining their position on the nation’s vanguard.

As the interview winds down, the subject of film arises. The amateur screenwriter recently received a poster from his constituents that reads, “This Aggression Will Not Stand, Man” (The Big Lebowski is Schiff’s favorite comedy); he mentions that the big-screen adaptation of To Kill a Mockingbird helped inspire him to be a lawyer and recalls the pride he felt when one of the children of Gregory Peck (who played Atticus Finch) mentioned that their dad would have been proud of what Schiff’s doing. It’s a sentiment that dovetails nicely with the public servant and what he wants his legacy to be: “someone who understood his duty and defended our democracy when it was in its greatest danger.”

—Avery Bissett
THE MAN FOR THE MOMENT

Adam Schiff

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— Avery Bissett
intelligent and gentle, artist Alexandra Grant sees with exceptional clarity. She sees you, she sees me and she sees herself. Holding that inclusive space, her work in paintings, photography, sculpture, installations, and publishing serves as a great connector, joining ideas of equality, the feminine and a bigger thread of consciousness that unites us all.

Grant’s mother is from Northern California and grew up in Mexico and Colombia, while her father is from Edinburgh. Most of Grant’s childhood was spent in Mexico City, but she also lived in Paris, Washington D.C., and Ohio, where her parents were both teachers. Her nomadic lifestyle made her into a true global citizen. Working from this expansive external knowledge, her love for reading nurtured her interior life, giving way to a multifaceted art practice that decodes, informs and inspires.

“I know that my aesthetic was deeply influenced by the Scottish anthroposophist side,” Grant tells the Weekly. “And the Mexican childhood in a way, the color and fearlessness about it. When I returned to live in the U.S. as a teenager, I understood inherently that my world inside was much more colorful than the world outside, and this is my place.”

Considering questions like “What do I care about when no one is there?” Grant accessed a persistent view of making work in relationship to writing practices. Her 2008 Love House project facing the Watts Towers invited this relationship of exchange into the community, through image, design and social practice. Further investigating reading as a form of seeing, she began painting words backwards, collaborating with author Michael Joyce.

“The goal for me was not to make the audience uncomfortable nor was it to make them labor. But it was to put people in a position that they were encountering something that was both similar and foreign at the same time and let them to their own curiosity,” she explains. In the series “Bodies,” made with Joyce, she incorporated mirrored lines of text and this has continued in her work.

“What I wanted my paintings to do is create that feeling like you’re not going to be able to read the language. You’re going to understand that there’s a system of language, that there’s a narrative in a certain emotional or intellectual tone, but you’re going to make sense of it using other parts of the mind.”

Engaging radical French philosopher Hélène Cixous over her book Philippines, Grant created a site-specific installation with 18th Street Arts Center in 2013. Forêt Intérieure/Interior Forest was an open collaboration with public drawing sessions. Experimenting with artist-writer transference a step further, Grant publishes collaborative books on her X Artists’ Books imprint, co-owned with partner Keanu Reeves and designer Jessica Fleischmann. One of their first titles, The Artist’s Prison, features images by artist Eve Wood, while Grant tells a story set in a future world where creativity is a crime.

Large-scale mixed media paintings and new neon sculptural works (the latter on view at Lowell Ryan Projects in West Adams through December 21) interchange the myth of Antigone with abstraction. Declaring the powerful stance in mirrored text, “I was born to love not to hate,” Grant inspires the audience to query “Who am I?” while deliberately opening up a larger conversation about how to be in the world, as an artist and as a woman. —Trina Calderón
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Feliz Navidad

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Is there anything Margaret Cho can't do? In addition to taking the comedy stage she's known for, just this year alone the comedian/actress started a podcast on the woman–owned podcast network Earios called *The Margaret Cho* (continuing her penchant for puns on her last name); she also stumped all of America when she disguised herself in a furry poodle costume and showed off her singing chops on the first season of the surprise hit singing competition *The Masked Singer*.

Her ability to carry a tune might have come as a surprise to some, but to her fans it was old news. *The Glendale resident by way of her native San Francisco has always loved singing,* and on her 2010 debut studio album *Cho-Dependent* she made a bold musical move, trading standup bits for actual songs with collaborators ranging from Fiona Apple to Ani DiFranco. She followed it up with another ditty-driven effort called *American Myth*. Both records mesh the cultural humor that made her a star with sweet, sassy vocals. Highlight tracks include "Come With Me" (honoring her past as a sex worker) and "My Puss" (a perfect answer track to Dirt Nasty's penis brag, "My Dick").

Live music took her subsequent comedy tours to an entirely new place over the years and her stage show evolved even further when she presented *The Sensuous Woman*, a variety spectacle featuring diverse acts heavy on burlesque. Cho has in fact, performed with many local troupes over the years, showing off her gorgeously inked bod and tassel-twirling skills. "It's a beautiful art form," she tells us during a taping of her podcast. "It's so fun and so body positive. I think nakedness is really important. Nudity in society is still this shameful thing, but to me it's the ultimate power."

Banishing shame has always been a central theme in Cho's signature comedy style, which explores her pansexual point of view and concepts via uncensored commentary and audacious anecdotes, a combination that makes people laugh, think and often blush. *Though she's a regular on local comedy and underground performance spaces, Cho has always kept her national profile on point via TV — her role in *Drop Dead Diva*, a stint on *Dancing With The Stars*, co-hosting *The Golden Globes* — and there's more to come. She's the producer of a new show in development called *Almost Asian* and she'll play a sex-trafficking, massage parlor owner in an upcoming episode of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit*. "It's always fun to work with other Asian actors," she shares, adding that she plans to do a lot more acting in the near future, "both comedic and serious stuff… I love being able to transform into different people."

She's come a long way since her television debut in 1994's *All-American Girl* (the first sitcom to explore the lives of Asian-Americans on network TV) and her last *The Cho Show* (a short-lived quasi-reality foray for VH1), and she's not slowing down anytime soon, even if her hormones try to get in the way.

The 50-year-old's latest stage show, *Fresh Off The Bloat*, tackles the wonderful world of aging. "Menopause is a gateway drug," she proclaims. "It puts you into another world where you don't give a shit. You're more confident and you really hone into what's important. It opens up your mind."

True or no, if anyone can make getting older seem funny and fabulous, it's this lady — for Cho. — Lina Lecaro
THE FEARLESS FUNNY LADY

Margaret Cho

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True or not, if anyone can make getting older seem funny and fabulous, it’s this lady — for cho. —Lina Lecaro
THE ROCKIN’ RETAIL PIONEER

Nancy Hunt

Nancy Hunt rarely slows down. With bright red hair, a toothy grin and an imaginative style—pushing wardrobe, Hunt can be spotted all over town attending the snappiest art shows, the coolest concerts and most regularly, overseeing Brat, her eclectic Santa Monica clothing and gift boutique.

But Brat isn’t her first ride at the retail rodeo. Hunt’s history as a fashion innovator in the early days of Los Angeles punk rock began with the 1976 opening of her store Na Na in Santa Monica. Before MTV and Hot Topic, her vision and experimentation in both designing and selling creative punk wardrobe and shoes was crucial to the evolution of 1980s (and beyond) style — and set many trends which ultimately spread like a wildfire across America, defining style for a generation.

The store’s name, Na Na, came from Nancy’s own nickname, borrowed from a flamboyantly dressed character in a novel by Émile Zola, who rises from the gutter to the height of Parisian society. From the beginning Na Na carved out its own identity, making clothing items that had not yet been dreamed up.

“Punk rock clothes weren’t manufactured, so we took it upon ourselves to start creating stuff,” Hunt, originally from St. Louis, explains. She’d started by making skirts out of shirts, and sewing patches and upside down pockets on miniskirts, and moved to experimenting with whatever struck her fancy. “At the time military surplus was quite inexpensive,” she says. “In the back of the store, on a loft we’d built, I’d systematically cut sleeves off of jackets, sew on patches and put zippers on everything, embellishing them so they became like vests. They became a very prominent uniform for some of the punks. The store’s rent was incredibly cheap, so it was easy to stay open.”

During a trip to London around that time Hunt was introduced to Doc Marten, a British utility shoe made in black, red and brown, mostly worn by postmen and blue collar workers. She also discovered Monkey Boots, a standard issue Czechoslovakian army boot, and creepers, a shoe with thick crepe soles and suede uppers. Though these types of footwear were already being worn by British punks, none were easily available or even heard of in the United States. Hunt approached English factories about importing the shoes for Na Na. “We brought them in to try them, and soon after they sold so well we approached Doc Marten with doing different colors of leather,” Hunt remembers. “We branded all of our shoes with the Na Na label and our own sock. All made in the factory in England.”

Doc Martens took off, becoming so popular that Na Na began ordering massive numbers and wholesaling them to other stores throughout the city, the state and eventually the whole country. The Na Na store expanded in size to take up a whole Santa Monica block, creating a specific shoe store and then opening other locations in Los Angeles, San Francisco and New York. They imported motorcycle jackets, Merc suits and multi-colored suede jackets from the U.K., as well as T-shirts, jewelry and punk accessories.

“Kids would travel for hours to Na Na because they could get everything,” says Hunt. “We carried all the bells and whistles. Black skinny jeans had not been made yet, so in the beginning we were getting plain skinny jeans and dying them black. We were helping to define the uniform for that age.”

Hunt’s stores were frequented by the trendsetters of the day, who in turn wore their looks and helped the styles spread, everyone from Madonna, Lou Reed and David Lynch to the Bangles, the Cramps, Kurt Cobain, Tupac and TLC.

Though groundbreaking from the late ’70s to the late ’90s, as times changed Na Na eventually closed its stores, with Hunt’s offshoot Brat store opening in 2001 and continuing to sell unique fashion and gifts. Cool clothes are a lot easier to get these days thanks to the internet, but the legacy Hunt created was revolutionary and its still being seen today. Her creativity continues to radiate too. “I’m always looking for what’s around the next corner,” the style maven states proudly. “I have complete faith in creative young people. They are not going to go away and they will always make themselves heard. I hope even now that I can continue to inspire people. It is more important now than it ever has been.”

— Nikki Kreuzer
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Dwight Trible has a big, warm house of a voice that can fill any particular sonic universe that needs filling, but it’s also supple and flexible enough to soar upward into airy flights of dreaminess and push past the barriers of space and time. “Every day has a vibration that’s different than any other day,” the singer-lyricist says in a phone interview from his Mid-City home. Trible is talking about the improvisational nature of many of his concerts, and how each performance is intrinsically unique based on the sound and size of the room, the song choices, and the mood of the audience, among other factors.

The longtime L.A. resident moved here in 1976 after being born in Cincinnati and raised in that city’s West End. He declines to reveal his age and says instead, “I am in the eternal stream of consciousness where there is no young and there is no old.” His majestic voice is so prized that Trible is often asked to perform in a wide variety of settings, from the wildly improvisational sessions he prefers to more rigidly formal renditions of other musicians’ material. “When I start feeling restricted, the music shuts itself down,” he says. “People wanting things to be note for note, that’s not as enjoyable to me.”

When asked how to label his deep, resonant vocals, Trible demurs. “I don’t really classify it. Any note that I can hear, I should be able to do it,” he says, adding that labels are another kind of restriction that he’d rather avoid. “That’s becoming a common theme in this conversation,” Trible says about his disdain for restrictions. “It’s all about doing what the spirit gives me to sing. There are many notes standing out there like stars. There’s one that’s the brightest star, and you go for that one.”

Discussing his collaborations with the brilliant jazz saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, Trible says, “Of course, I’m honored that [people like Sanders] would want to work with me. I just feel that if I’m a musician, I should be able to take the music inside of me to create another flavor in the soup. The combination between Dwight and Pharoah … when we start doing it, we don’t have any reservations or restrictions.”

Throughout his extensive career, Trible has worked with such stellar figures as Kenny Garrett, Charles Lloyd, Harry Belafonte, Kamas Washington, Della Reese, Oscar Brown Jr., Billy Higgins and Kamau Daáood. His Cosmic Vibrations ensemble includes such heavy friends as percussionists Derk Reklaw, Breeze Smith and Christopher Garcia, bassist John B. Williams, and flutist Pablo Calogero.

But Trible’s style was considered so unusual at first that it took awhile before his music found traction. “Early on, people hated what I did,” Trible recalls. “I didn’t really sound like anybody. [Pan Afrikan Peoples Arkestra pianist-composer] Horace Tapscott gave me credibility. It took someone like Horace to legitimize me.”

Unlike many veteran jazz musicians, Trible embraces rap and hip-hop, citing his admiration for L.A. rap wordsmith Busdriver, Freestyle Fellowship’s Myka 9 and influential drummer-producer Darryl Moore. “If you listen to rappers … it’s almost like being an improviser with an instrument because it’s all about rhythm. I’ve learned so much from them about cadence and rhythm. It’s so much more advanced than singers.”

Trible’s ambitious 2019 release, Mothership, is a quintessential, forward-looking album that invokes themes of maternal love, family and transcendent spirituality. The record includes a propulsive and tripped-out interpretation of The Beatles’ “Tomorrow Never Knows.” “I hadn’t heard it before,” he says about the original version. “One day, I was watching a TV program [and heard it], and I said, ‘What is that?’ … It sounded like a Dwight song to me. I love the lyric of it. I love the music — it’s funky, it’s expansive, it leaves room for the song to go anywhere.”

Trible has long used the World Stage — the Leimert Park performance space founded by poet Kamau Daáood and the late drummer Billy Higgins — as a launching pad for his more free-flowing explorations. “I have been intimately involved since the beginning … I’m the executive director and janitor and the art director and MC, the on-call performer. I do the booking. You might see me sweeping the alley or cleaning the toilet. Or onstage.” — Falling James
What Ibuki Kuramochi does isn't just dance, and it isn't just art. Instead, she combines butoh dance with live painting for unusual performances that are strangely beautiful, always changing and thoroughly mesmerizing.

Back in May, in an outdoor solo performance called Spirit at the Terasaki Nibei Foundation in West L.A., Kuramochi emerged from under a large, saucer-like straw hat draped in sheer red veils, through which she slowly and ritualistically twisted herself. She unwound her limbs languidly on a long, red carpet–like sheet that stretched behind her on the ground and was pinned vertically against a white wall, framed by green hedges layered with long red ribbons.

Suddenly, the tranquil spell shattered when the dancer turned toward the red sheet and began slashing at it with aggressive brushstrokes of black and white paint. The bold rhythms of Kuramochi's dramatic movements were reflected in the kinetic patterns of her strikingly evolving, almost punk-rock live painting. The artist tore a hole in the painting and emerged from it as if in a daze, her hands rising above her head like waking flowers turning toward the sun.

“I’m always searching for pieces of myself that I’ve lost all over the world,” Kuramochi explains from her home in Sherman Oaks.

In June, at the memorial for LA Artcore founder Lydia Takeshita in Little Tokyo, Kuramochi bent and undulated her body as she solemnly wended her way through the mourners. Her already pale face and limbs were painted even whiter, and little cloud-like puffs floated within the translucent folds of her billowing white sleeves and gown as she moved her arms in dramatic, sweeping motions. Once again, it was hard to say which was more visually arresting — the abstract figures Kuramochi was painting black on a white dress suspended between pillars or the expressive movements she needed to manifest them.

“Lydia was one of my first supporters,” Kuramochi reminisces. “She passed away in her beloved rose garden. In her tribute, I painted a big rose for her and projected her journey to heaven. When I started the performance, some birds came and watched the performance. I could feel Lydia’s spirit while performing.”

Kuramochi's other performances this year include Midori, in which she invoked the spirit of a marebito, a wise supernatural force, as she weaved her arms and painted within a virtual greenhouse of clear plastic panels in August at Radiant Space in Hollywood. The following month, she entered The Uterus — portraying a fetus attached to a long black rope — in an erotically tinged, darker and more unsettling performance at the opening reception of Echo Lew and Chenhung Chen’s “Time.Timeless” exhibit at Orange County Center for Contemporary Art in Santa Ana.

“At first, I made paintings before I started performing. My turning point was doing a live performance at an art-college festival,” Kuramochi recalls about her evolution as a painter. “That was the first art performance in my life. At that time, I just painted and moved my body to music freely. I and the audience were excited.”

Born in Gunma, Japan, she moved to Tokyo when she was 18 and lived there for a decade before relocating to Sherman Oaks.

“At one point I wanted to use my own movements as part of my performance. The worlds of painting and butoh combined together like a marriage” when she had a creative epiphany while taking a class from Yoshito Ohno, the son of legendary butoh iconoclast Kazuo Ohno.

When asked how living in Los Angeles has influenced her creativity, Kuramochi replied, “When I first came here, I was surprised of the abundance of nature. I think L.A. is a ‘contrast’ city. Nowadays, I often see wild coyotes in my neighborhood. When I saw the coyote’s eyes, I felt a butoh feeling. Sadness, quiet madness and loneliness. I’ve never seen those kind of eyes in my life. I’m thinking to include a coyote theme in my next art project.”

— Falling James

THE SHAPE SHIFTER

Ibuki Kuramochi
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Born in Gunma, Japan, she moved to Tokyo when she was 18 and lived there for a decade before relocating to Sherman Oaks. “After I graduated art college, I started a career as an artist, and I did many live-painting performances with different types of musicians, dancers and actors,” Kuramochi continues. “However, at some point I wanted to use my own movements as part of my performance.”

The worlds of painting and butoh “combined together like a marriage” when she had a creative epiphany while taking a class from Yoshito Ohno, the son of legendary butoh iconoclast Kazuo Ohno.

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Founded in 1992, Cleopatra Records is an independent record label perhaps best known for putting out goth and industrial releases by bands such as Christian Death, The Electric Hellfire Club and Gary Numan. But the secret to the label’s success has been expansion, thanks to the vision of main man Brian Perera.

There are a number of subsidiary labels under the Cleopatra umbrella, catering to a variety of different tastes: the self-explanatory Cleopatra Blues, plus X-Ray (hip-hop), Deadline (hair metal), Purple Pyramid (prog/psych rock) and more. Perera has kept moving forward ever since his humble beginnings in band merch.

“I was the guy making local bands’ T-shirts and stickers,” he says. “One of the biggest that broke out was Gun N’ Roses. That must have been around ’85–’86. I remember going into a venue and one of the bands said, ‘Unfortunately we’ve moved onto a bigger merchandise company,’ and then it dawned on me I should probably try to get into another profession, where I felt like there could be more longevity. That’s when I started Cleopatra Records.”

Cleopatra’s first ever release was Motörhead’s On Parole, the band’s first recordings which were previously unavailable in the U.S. “I knew I had to get a distributor to start, and then they weren’t gonna touch you if they had something that nobody had heard about,” Perera says. “I knew I had to get something that a distributor was familiar with so I went to Capitol Records and did a licensing deal for Motörhead’s first album.”

From the first Christian Death release though, Cleopatra had a “goth” stamp on it. Perera says that he has never ignored or veered away from that scene — rather, he simply expanded.

“I wanted to turn the company into, like if somebody was to walk into a record store and there’s something there for everyone — the brother, the sister, the grandparents — everyone would have something there that they would like,” he says. “That’s how Cleopatra is right now. I’m still signing a lot of goth bands at this moment that are new.”

Not only is Cleopatra surviving challenging industry conditions, it’s thriving. Perera says this is because he had his eye on downloading and streaming early doors. “I looked at that as an opportunity earlier on where I would just do licensing deals with people just for a lot of digital rights,” he says. “There was no inventory to invest in, so I just went to people that didn’t really look at digital as meaning anything, a lot of European companies and even American companies, and just bought out their digital rights. Digital has actually helped us thrive and we’re using money from that to go back into physical products because I still believe in physical. We’re big pro–vinyl-makers here.”

There’s also a lot to look forward to. Cleopatra recently signed Danzig to a record deal and the Cleopatra Entertainment arm will be releasing his Verotika movie — a move Perera describes as a dream. The guy knows what he wants and he goes out and gets it. That’s why Cleopatra will be sticking around.  

By Brett Callwood
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SPECIAL ADVERTISING SECTION

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26
Regular listeners to KROQ will be familiar with the enthusiastic yet dulcet tones of Kat Corbett. As well as hosting middays, she is responsible for choosing the bands for and hosting the popular and important Locals Only show. The likes of Billie Eilish, Silversun Pickups, Young the Giant, and Fitz & the Tantrums all received early airplay there, cementing Corbett's voice as vital for L.A. music.

She got her start in radio at sadly-defunct Boston station WFNX after interning at, surprisingly, a gospel station. "It was really interesting because it was run by ministers and I'm an atheist," Corbett says. "But they were lovely and I learned how to edit. I got sick of the snow in Boston and drove out to L.A. to try my luck."

Escaping the cold for this warmer climate and to try one's luck in the entertainment industry isn't an uncommon tale. Of course, not everybody makes it. After arriving in SoCal, she co-hosted a morning show on Y107 with Chris Hardwick and Courtland Cox before everyone was fired and that station went under.

"I like to believe I'm not the reason these stations have gone under," Corbett says. "We all got fired, and I was happy because I was so done. I kept bugging Kevin Weatherly at KROQ. Radio is a really hard nut to crack. There's a finite number of positions and they're always full. You literally have to wait for someone to die. It goes along with the local thing — you build a rapport with the audience. You should feel like I'm riding shotgun in your car. So I hounded him until he gave me an audition."

Eventually, Weatherly did open the door a crack and, with her foot in there, Corbett gradually squeaked through, first with the occasional weekend set and then, finally, her own shows, including Locals Only. KROQ has a rich history of breaking local talent, from Rodney Bingenheimer to Zeke Piestrup's Music From Your Own Backyard.

"I wanted to take it on but there has to be a slot that opens up," Corbett says. "The secret of L.A., I think, is who can hang on the longest. I didn't want it to be after midnight, so we waited and then finally a slot opened up before Loveline."

For Corbett, seeing bands that she championed on Locals Only break big and pass into regular KROQ rotation, appearing at events such as Almost Acoustic Christmas, is what it's all about.

"I'm looking for stuff that will get into rotation that a lot of people will love," she says. "When Billie Eilish is on Almost Acoustic Christmas, I'm like, yay. In 2016, when I was telling everyone about Billie Eilish, there was crickets. The Interrupters, Silversun Pickups, Young the Giant — the list goes on and on and I have a good track record."

She absolutely does. Corbett also highlights local bands and businesses on KROQ's Local Commute, as well as the wonderful work done by animal shelters on KROQ to the Rescue. What would L.A. do without her?

By Brett Callwood
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

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Most people closely associated with the Los Angeles punk rock scene already know who Geza X is. Those that don’t are certainly familiar with his work. The man born Geza Gedeon was in the producer’s chair for some of the greatest recordings in California punk rock history, including the Dead Kennedys’ “Holiday in Cambodia,” Germs’ “Lexicon Devil” and Black Flag’s “Six Pack,” as well as work by Redd Kross, the Weirdos, the Avengers… the list goes on.

X was introduced to the scene when, after hitchhiking up and down the coast with his dog and guitar and then returning to L.A., he started looking around for work as in a studio doing just about anything, including cleaning the trash cans. “There was a studio in Hollywood right across the street from the future Masque — it was called Artists Recording Studio,” Geza X says. “I talked to the owner, said I had some gear and maybe I could set it up in the rehearsal room and help out. He gave me the opportunity to sleep on the floor so I was living there, basically. I’d repair equipment in the evenings, and do routine stuff in the daytime.”

When Brendan Mullen opened the world famous Masque club in ’77, Mullen gave him some office space and a place to stay. X started spreading the word that he was a record producer despite not really knowing what that meant. Before long, a Germ came a-knocking.

“Darby Crash said that he was making a record for Slash [the punk label], so could I produce them,” X says. “That was right before Don Bolles joined the Germs so Nicky Beat from the Weirdos was going to play drums on the record. They auditioned him in the men’s room. Darby was a cheerful kid with a death wish.”

When considering the many genre-defining records that X worked on, he picks the DK’s “Holiday in Cambodia” as his absolute favorite.

“I worked with them a lot more than some of the other bands,” he says. “[Jello] Biafra and I were excellent friends. The Screamers, for whom I was the soundman, went to San Francisco to play with them a lot. When I first heard the opening bit of ‘Holiday in Cambodia’ I was stunned. I would have done anything to record that song.”

Geza X would go on to record one album of his own, the criminally underrated and underheard You Goddamn Kids. But his greatest commercial success came with something of a surprise smash — Meredith Brooks’ “Bitch.”

“I knew it was a smash hit, so I recorded the whole thing on spec,” he says. “The studio that Josie Cotton and I built in our garage when we were dating, City Lab, I recorded it all there. At the end of the recording, Meredith brought in another woman who became her permanent manager. That woman brought Perry Watts-Russell from Capitol. He signed her on the spot, on that one song. That went double platinum, and is probably the biggest song I’ve ever done.”

Nowadays, Geza X spend most of his time working out of the Vortex, a multipurpose community center downtown in the Arts District. He still masters music for indie bands too.

“I’ve mastered hundreds of titles, and I did Posh Boys’ entire catalog, which is Social Distortion, Agent Orange, Redd Kross, Circle Jerks — I can’t even think of them all,” he says. “I still get a regular influx of songs from all sorts of European and Japanese bands. It’s a lot of fun. It keeps me current with the indie scene.”

—Brett Callwood
For the past 13 years, at the charmingly bohemian Petit Ermitage Hotel in West Hollywood on Friday nights, an L.A. legend has provided an intimate, sexy and artfully rhythmic experience that's unlike anything else in town—and we don't say that with nonchalance or hyperbole. The show is that unique.

Inside a candle-lit room on the roof of the hotel, filled with people sitting on vintage chairs, velvet pillows and ornate rugs, the self-proclaimed “film noir soul” musician Toledo Diamond walks in and begins using an old table as a drum. Backed by a small full band, including a key-crushing, head-swaying young female pianist behind him, he begins a throaty oration that's part singing, part spoken word—not quite rap, weaving cinematic sounding tales about life, love and mystery. Driven by his Tom Waits-meets-Cab Calloway–ish vocals, the music builds, as one number blends into the next, and suddenly a beautiful girl (or two) in lingerie emerges to dance beside him — sometimes with him — enacting his poetic musical expression.

He tells us afterward that everything in his hotel show is thought up and delivered “on the spot with no rehearsal, no notes and no prep,” at all. The show is 100 percent improvised and spontaneous, and it all comes together to create pure magic on a weekly basis, providing a speakeasy-style escape for hotel guests and those lucky enough to get on his guest list.

If you're a L.A. nightlife lover, you've heard of Toledo. The audacious L.A. native, who's proudly lived “everywhere from South Central to the Valley to Hollywood” (he says the latter were his stomping grounds), has been bringing his stage shows — the long-running Toledo Show and Toledo's Circus of Sin — to L.A. club stages consistently for the past couple decades now, everywhere from The Central (now The Viper Room) to Union in Hollywood. His current residency, open to the public, is at Harvelle's in Santa Monica on Sundays.

When we ask him how he describes what he does, he says it's essentially “film noir fairy tales,” but adds that the dancers are an important element that inspire him. “I've always considered them as femme fatales ever since the beginning,” he says. “I love women that own everything they do, good, bad or indifferent… so the show is really a femme-fatale cabaret.”

Though The Toledo Show was lumped into the burlesque scene early on, that label was always too limiting for what he did and does, which is driven by live music and storytelling talent. Toledo commands attention at all times. The Harvelle's shows, he says, are more structured than what he does at Petit, but even after all these years, the musical poet possesses pizazz. His performances have aged like fine wine, or even more accurately, like the classic old movies that inspire his vibe. “It has these elements of like, you're in an old gangster movie,” he says of his sound and feel, anchored in soul, but ever-changing, which keeps it fresh. “It's just cool. You can't really describe it, because it's its own thing. No two people will feel it the same way. But it's about the past and the present and the people you meet along the way.”

—Lina Lecaro
THE FILM NOIR SOUL MAN

Toledo Diamond

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Inside a candle-lit room on the roof of the hotel, filled with people sitting on vintage chairs, velvet pillows and ornate rugs, the self-proclaimed “film noir soul” musician Toledo Diamond walks in and begins using an old table as a drum. Backed by a small full band, including a key-crushing, head-swaying young female pianist behind him, he begins a throaty oration that's part singing, part spoken word/not quite rap, weaving cinematic sounding tales about life, love and mystery. Driven by his Tom-Waits-meets-Cab-Calloway-ish vocals, the music builds, as one number blends into the next, and suddenly a beautiful girl (or two) in lingerie emerges to dance beside him — sometimes with him — enacting his poetic musical expression.

He tells us afterward that everything in his hotel show is thought up and delivered “on the spot with no rehearsal, no notes and no prep,” at all. The show is 100 percent improvised and spontaneous, and it all comes together to create pure magic on a weekly basis, providing a speakeasy-style escape for hotel guests and those lucky enough to get on his guest list.

If you’re a L.A. nightlife lover, you’ve heard of Toledo. The audacious L.A. native, who’s proudly lived “everywhere from South Central to the Valley to Hollywood” (he says the latter were his stomping grounds), has been bringing his stage shows — the long-running Toledo Show and Toledo's Circus of Sin — to L.A. club stages consistently for the past couple decades now, everywhere from The Central (now The Viper Room) to Union in Hollywood. His current residency, open to the public, is at Harvelle’s in Santa Monica on Sundays.

When we ask him how he describes what he does, he says it’s essentially “film noir fairy tales,” but adds that the dancers are an important element that inspire him. “I’ve always considered them as femme fatales ever since the beginning,” he says. “I love women that own everything they do, good, bad or indifferent… so the show is really a femme-fatale cabaret.”

Though The Toledo Show was lumped into the burlesque scene early on, that label was always too limiting for what he did and does, which is driven by live music and storytelling talent. Toledo commands attention at all times. The Harvelle’s shows, he says, are more structured than what he does at Petit, but even after all these years, the musical poet possesses pizzazz. His performances have aged like fine wine, or even more accurately, like the classic old movies that inspire his vibe.

“It has these elements of like, you’re in an old gangster movie,” he says of his sound and feel, anchored in soul, but ever-changing, which keeps it fresh. “It’s just cool. You can’t really describe it, because it’s its own thing. No two people will feel it the same way. But it’s about the past and the present and the people you meet along the way.”

—Lina Lecaro
Jolene is an all-inclusive strip night that takes place at Cheetah's in Hollywood. "All-inclusive" means trans women, female-identifying and non-binary dancers are not only welcomed, but encouraged. One of those dancers is Daphne Von Rey, who helped start Jolene.

A SoCal native, Von Rey was born in Orange County and relocated to Los Angeles about eight years ago. Naturally, those early years in the relatively conservative surroundings of the O.C. had an impact.

"It was interesting," Von Rey says. "It helped shape a lot of what I do today — the duality from a lot of the injustices and the oppressive thinking that I had to navigate when I was living there. It was a huge drive and I'm grateful for it, even though at the time I hated it — it pushed me into a space where I could thrive."

Von Rey moved to L.A. before she started transitioning; she identified as a gay male when she arrived, and it was the queer community that took her in and helped her deal with some deep-rooted issues.

"From my conservative background, there was a lot of shame I had to deal with, growing up as a queer Christian," she says. "Internalized misogyny and homophobia. It was only through my journey here and meeting people that I was able to fully realize the source of my identity issues. It's been a tough journey to the woman that I am today but I'm grateful for it because it showed me who I am."

Comfortable within her own skin, Von Rey started dancing last year, partly as a means of survival. She had been pursuing a career in the food industry, but soon realized that there's a lot of work to be done about how people address trans people in the community.

"It was really hard to go from being celebrated for being a trans woman to having to correct people on my gender, correct people on my pronouns," she explains. "Fighting to defend my identity. I got so tired of it that I left and had to seek some other outlet. I went through a breakup, and I found a community of women at a studio that were so supportive of me in my journey as a dancer. When I saw Jordan Kensley dance at Jumbo's Clown Room, seeing these women own and channel the feminine and live in their body was so crucial to me as a trans woman. That was a goal. It came full circle when I was able to find a place and start dancing."

While there's a similarly open-minded club in Brooklyn called Pumps, Von Rey says that that there's really nowhere like Jolene. Trans women can openly dance there without fear of getting beaten up and outed by insecure men.

"For Jolene, I have this lineup of half cis women, half trans women, and Jordan helped shape this idea of helping my goal of normalizing attraction to trans women," she says. "A lot of the murders that have happened of trans women have been from their lovers who couldn't deal with the shame of being outed for loving a trans woman. That's a huge danger that a lot of trans women have to deal with. So it's important to normalize it. There's a hot person on stage if you want to spend time with them. Of course you'll have to pay for the private dance, but at least it's a step in the direction of normalizing and celebrating that attraction, as opposed to shaming it. I guess that's the thing I'm doing differently."

—Brett Callwood
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Eric Nakamura is the man behind the Robot — in particular, the fantastic pop-culture empire known as Giant Robot. In 1994, the West L.A. writer-publisher debuted Giant Robot, a bimonthly fanzine that was ostensibly about Asian pop culture but also covered punk rock, art, film, videogames, toys and food from numerous scenes and cultures. “We’re interested in all these things, from Hello Kitty to Bad Brains,” Nakamura says in a phone interview.

Along with longtime co-editor Martin Wong, Nakamura shepherded Giant Robot from its simple beginning as a photocopied zine through its evolution into a vibrant and influential publication that was among the first national magazines to embrace both nerd-geek culture and the punk-rock underground. Giant Robot captured the era’s zeitgeist so perfectly that it eventually expanded into a series of related retail stores and galleries in New York, San Francisco and Silver Lake, as well as a restaurant, gr/eats, that had a six-year run in the Sawtelle neighborhood of West L.A. “That was a tough project,” Nakamura admits about gr/eats, which he feels might have been too ahead of its time. “I wouldn’t suggest that to anyone.”

By 2010, a changing economy led to the closure of most of the stores and galleries, and the magazine stopped publication in 2011. But the flagship Giant Robot store remains a fixture in West Los Angeles, as does the GR2 Gallery just down the street on Sawtelle Boulevard. “I understand what my space is, its size and location, and what it can do. I’m in a neighborhood filled with restaurants and ramen,” Nakamura says about GR2 Gallery, which occupies a space with about 750 total square feet. “I’m not in a huge, empty warehouse in the middle of nowhere. I have a space that has more traffic than those places. Most of it is really fun. It’s a lot less stress than running a magazine.”

In addition to curating GR2 Gallery’s art exhibitions, Nakamura presents spoken-word readings and a comedy night on the first Thursday of every month. “My space is a community space,” he says. “I do photos for fun — I just shoot family and friends.” He also designs pins, boba cups and other objects for the Giant Robot store. “I don’t consider myself a designer. I do it for myself. I always say I’m just a hobbyist with a little bit of an outlet … I just do it; I don’t contextualize it.”

One of Nakamura’s greatest projects occurred when Toyota commissioned him to design the Giant Robot Scion Famicar, a drivable (if not entirely street legal) car that was like a mobile videogame console, which was functional and celebrated retro game style with outlandish sound effects and videogame whimsy. More recently, he’s been taking part in the Robot and the Bear podcast, in which he chats about art with painter Luke Chueh. — Falling James
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Though true vintage finds in thrift shops these days are rare, there was a time when cool authentic looks from the past could be had if you knew how to dig and maybe do a little mending or repurposing. In a small Georgia town south of Atlanta, Micheline Pitt would do just that growing up, putting together stylish looks that also complimented her punky dyed hair and untrendy aesthetic. “I have been making clothing for myself since I was in middle school, if not younger,” she says. “I grew up fairly poor in comparison to other kids. Getting new store-bought clothes was a rarity, toys were on sale or thrifted as well.”

Pitt’s love of horror (inspired by the grandfather she watched scary movies with as a kid) led to collecting nostalgic toys and eventually a career as a professional makeup artist. She worked for MAC Cosmetics, and moved to L.A. as a young adult hoping to break into film makeup work. She collaborated with a few well-known local fashion brands in L.A., guest designing under her namesake, until she decided to create Vixen, her own sexy and powerful, retro-style clothing line.

“When I met my now husband, and changed my friend circle, I had people behind me championing me to go off on my own,” she remembers. “I started Vixen, and its sister company [La Femme en Noir], with one of my closest friends, Lynh Haaga. Lynh and my husband are truly the ones to credit for my path.”

Vixen — which now has a showroom/store in Burbank — started pretty bare bones. She couldn’t afford a real photographer or models, so she became the face of the line. As the company grew she added more faces, body types and sizes. “One really great thing I love about our website is our customer reviews,” she says. “They can upload photos of themselves candidly in the clothing giving everyone inspiration for style, as well as someone to relate to. My goal is to empower anyone who puts on our clothing, no matter their identity or dress size.”

Empowerment is a big part of what she’s about. When she turned 30, repressed memories of sexual abuse plagued her, so she decided to free herself, telling her story on YouTube and raising money for RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network). She now sits on the board of the organization.

Though focused on fashion, Pitt’s love of horror, makeup and effects still permeates her life. Vixen has several monster-minded prints and inspirations, including an adorable Creature from the Black Lagoon purse, referencing her most prized collectible — a Creature head made from the original mold from the film. (It’s currently on display at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles for their Natural History of Horror exhibition).

She’s been collecting since her days hunting in thrift stores, but her obsession has transcended fashion and decor. She just produced her first horror film with her husband RH Norman, Grummy, an autobiographical yarn about a little girl who uses her imagination to escape the trauma of real life. It’s a very personal project that represents the badass beauty in more ways than one, and as she states with sincerity, “It’s a story about how monsters saved my life.”

— Lina Lecaro
A slan is first and foremost a progressive scholar of world religions and author of helpful considerations of religious history such as How to Win A Cosmic War, Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth and No God but God. But increasingly, his writing has turned toward screenplays. Plus, the world has been encountering him as an on-air personality, partner in a busy media studio and the face of a major new production initiative.

His film adaptation of Zealot — working with James Schamus and Lionsgate — is a biopic of Jesus as told through the eyes of his brother. He’s an E.D. on a new Chuck Lorre CBS comedy called The United States of Al, which aims to “de-exotify” a Muslim character for a mainstream audience. And the massive “One Thousand and One Nights” initiative will see Aslan and Mahyad Tousi, his partner at BoomGen Studios, creating filmed content exploring this famous trove of Middle Eastern folklore.

When the Weekly caught up with Aslan, he had just wrapped taping on the 30th and final episode of his delightful and often hilarious podcast Metaphysical Milkshake (Soul Pancake/Luminary), in which he and co-host, real-life friend and shockingly spiritual and philosophical actor Rainn Wilson, ask their guests and each other big questions about the nature of existence, faith, and consciousness.

His short-lived but memorable series Believer — in which he traveled the world and immersed himself, sometimes literally, in fascinating religious practices — was cut short by CNN when he tweeted prescient displeasure with the racism and generally dismal lack of moral character in the 45th president. Perhaps, however, it was for the best. He is after all a father of four young children, and making that show was intense. “I definitely do less risky stuff now, less putting my life in danger,” he says. “When Believer collapsed, for all the reasons, I had a choice. Go out and do more life-and-limb stuff, or… I could host a talk show where I tuck my kids in at night and go drink booze and talk to writers. Rough Draft came at the perfect time.” The writer’s room–style interview show debuts this month as streaming service Topic VOD’s first original content.

So how did Aslan go from religious scholar to media mogul? His education includes a Master of Theology from Harvard Divinity School, a PhD in sociology from UC Santa Barbara and a fellowship at the Iowa Writers’ Workshop — but that’s not the whole story. “I am a tenured professor, I host reality and talk shows, I produce and write books and screenplays, and I do political commentary because politics are stories, just like religion is stories,” Aslan says. “But it’s all the same thing — no matter what the platform is — and that is the storytelling.”

Now BoomGen Studios is the go-to for media projects by and about the people and cultures of the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and North Africa, with a global audience in mind. “That region is the cradle of myth, religion and literature,” Aslan says. “The best stories in the world have been born there, so why not mine that resource?” His favorite stories are about protagonists who follow their own truth who say, as he does, “Fuck the gatekeepers,” and fight for their ideas. “I don’t want to follow someone else’s path,” says Aslan. “I want to be the path.” — Shana Nys Dambrot
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Straight outta Compton takes on an entirely new meaning with the emergence of Danny “KP” Kilpatrick and his crazy hot tattoo collective from Black Ink Crew: Compton, currently featured on VH1. Kilpatrick’s career under the persona of iAmCompton is highlighted by a three-part identity as a tattoo artist, musician and TV personality; to his family and friends, his creative pursuits come as no surprise — even as a child, art was always calling him.

KP was in the first grade when his teacher called his mother, not because he was in trouble, but because she saw his drawings. “I guess she wanted to tell my mom I was good,” he recalls. But I didn’t realize until I was older I had a real talent.”

He kept drawing, adding music to his repertoire, but football dreams eclipsed his artistic endeavors for a while. Dominguez High School and a competitive environment introduced KP to the value of community praise. “People saw my name in the newspaper and once your name is in the paper and people are impressed, it’s a good feeling,” he shares.

But fate is fickle. As an art major at Lincoln College, he continued following his passion for writing rhymes and drawing, but in 2005 on a trip to Florida he and some friends got stopped by the police. He was in possession of purple kush, which he’d been selling on the side to make extra money. While saved from doing serious time because it was his first offense, he lost his football scholarship, had to move back to Compton to live with his mom, and suddenly he had a probation officer to answer to. He knew he’d let his community, and himself, down. With football taken away he wasn’t sure what to do next, and he had just 30 days to figure it out, get a job and show a paycheck or he was going back into the system — “to a halfway house, aka, a center for troubled youth,” he says.

One of KP’s friends happened upon him one day as he was planning his next moves and kicked over an old mental rock: “Man, you still draw?” the friend asked. “You can sell your artwork.” The floodlight snapped on. He started selling his drawings, but then realized if he could reproduce his art, he’d sell more drawings. He ordered a tattooing kit and started tattooing his own legs. Then he sequestered a buddy and tattooed his whole body, walking him around the neighborhood as advertisement.

“He was my walking canvas,” the artist remembers. People started ordering personalized tattoos almost immediately and at the end of his 30 days, KP showed his probation officer his receipts, receipts which thereafter started adding up.

His reputation as the number one tattoo artist in Compton sparked and his business took off, scoring him clients from the hip-hop community, including Diddy and Nas. So when the popular VH1 reality show Black Ink Crew reached out to him and asked him if he wanted to start a franchise on the West Coast, it was a no-brainer. In May of 2019, after a year of searching for the right building in a traditionally underserved neighborhood, he opened his Ink Art Music Shop (named after his Ink Art Music record label), the reality that he was a business owner, with four employees, hit him: “It was like, ‘wow, I’m official.”

With a mission to “create a movement in Compton through their creative collective by celebrating the talent, passion and rich culture of the community,” the Ink Art Music shop became the first black-owned tattoo business and art collective in Compton.

The family man, business mogul and multifaceted artist has built a following on social media too, with Instagram pics and music videos featuring songs riddled with a sense of exuberance, creative synergy and especially deep gratitude for his loyal friends and family — particularly his girlfriend, actress Kyla Pratt — all of which he says helped him succeed. The community raised him up again as a leader and a role model for Compton youth, and he serves as an example of finding, honing, promoting and monetizing one’s skill.

“When I was a kid, I didn’t look at drawing as a gift or something I could make a living at, but it was my own god-given talent.” Talent yes, but don’t forget the hustle. — Shonda Buchanan

THE ARTFUL PERSONIFICATION OF COMPTON

Danny “KP” Kilpatrick
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—Shonda Buchanan

THE ARTFUL PERSONIFICATION OF COMPTON

Danny “KP” Kilpatrick
The music swells to a crescendo as the black-and-white image of Bette Davis’ visage fades from the screen. Alicia Malone swings her feet off her diminutive mid-century sofa and leans forward as Davis’ piercing eyes glare back at her. And with a slow burn, the 1964 horror obscurity Dead Ringer comes to an end. Alicia leans back, mesmerized, even a little fatigued, as she pets her cat, Miss Hayworth, and with a devilish grin, says, “Davis still had it. The studios said she was past her prime, but even after Whatever Happened to Baby Jane? she continued making interesting films.”

A thought suddenly occurs to her as she grabs a notebook, jots something down, then gestures towards the television, and muses: “Besides, look at those eyes! You can’t deny the power of Bette Davis’ eyes. There was even an ‘80s song about her eyes… wasn’t there?”

Turner Classic Movies host Alicia Malone is the embodiment of the romantic adage that you can literally live your dreams. With her striking red hair, green eyes and penchant for vintage clothing and home decor, Malone wears a modest smile which betrays an insatiable curiosity. Having grown up in Australia’s capital of Canberra, the stylish movie buff moved to Los Angeles in 2010 with a suitcase and a journal filled with goals.

“When I arrived in L.A. I remember I wrote down my biggest dreams,” she recalls. “At the top was ‘Work with TCM (host?).’ I broke it down to small steps. I was content knowing it could take years, or not at all. But eight years later, here I am! And it’s even more wonderful than I imagined.”

Watching Malone introduce a movie on the famed network, it’s clear she fits right in with such TCM luminaries as Ben Mankiewicz, Eddie Muller, the late, great Robert Osborne and fellow newcomer Dave Karger. Her grasp of classic cinema is impressive, not only in the detailed scripts she writes, in which she describes the film’s historical context, but also with her unique presentation and candor. “I try to focus on the story that I find the most interesting — whether it’s about the making of the movie or the bio of the filmmaker,” she reveals of her process. “Ultimately, I hope my enthusiasm transfers through the screen and to the audience.”

The TV host admits she latched on to the classics at an early age. “I started with films like Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, because of my fascination with Marilyn Monroe, and Rear Window, because that was the first time I started to understand directing,” she explains.

In addition to hosting innumerable screenings, panels and events for TCM, Malone has also written two books about the history of women filmmakers, The Female Gaze and Backward and in Heels. For this cinema fan, women in film — or the lack thereof — is not only a fascinating subject, but a wake-up call. “I started speaking to gender inequality in film when I realized how many people simply weren’t aware there was an issue,” she says. Luckily, the subject of women filmmakers easily fits in with her ongoing obsessions. “Classic films are time capsules. Through movies, you can learn about history, society, culture, politics…” she trails off, looking down at her ‘50s swing dress, before concluding, “And fashion!” — Chad Byrnes
Most popular art galleries originate in entrepreneurs' cunning minds. Terrell Tilford's gallery, Band of Vices, originated in his living room.

After he and his wife, actress Victoria Platt, successfully hosted an art show in their Los Angeles home in February of 2003, the pair decided to do it again. "I reached out to five different artists," Tilford recounts to the Weekly. "And when we opened up that [second] show two months later, you would have thought we were a drug house!"

Nearly a hundred people showed up in his living room, and Tilford remembers, "literally people were walking around going, 'I want that, I want that, I'll take that, I'll take this one.' It was crazy."

The kind of crazy that an art fiend who started collecting art at the age of 16 eagerly embraced. Located in the heart of the West Adams district, Band of Vices is the people's art gallery. "It's about the artists, it's about the people, it's about people bringing their individuality into the venue," Tilford says.

Although the space opened in May of 2018, it has already produced acclaimed shows, including "You Is Pretty!" — Chelle Barbours' afro-surrealist show that was co-curated by Oscar-nominated actress Angela Bassett. Tilford says he'd like to collaborate with director Ava DuVernay and producer Swizz Beatz in the future.

But the real stars of Band of Vices are its diverse roster of artists and the neighborhood where it resides. Tilford, a Los Angeles native, envisioned a space that would dismantle the separation and exclusivity prevalent in the art world. "I think when people walk by and see themselves on the wall, they know they're included right away," he shares.

Band of Vices’ commitment to inclusion and showcasing the work of emerging and established artists distinguishes it from other galleries. "We've done more solo shows of women of color than probably any gallery here in L.A. in the past five years," Tilford states. A 21 year-old Nigerian-American artist Monica Ikeywu from Baltimore, and 17 year-old Remi Patton, a local artist, completed sold-out shows at the gallery; and the beginning of 2020 will showcase WAVES, a solo show by Shantell Martin that will create a "complete experiential process."

But even such inclusive, sold-out art shows of top-notch artists aren't enough for Tilford, who maintains an ever-expanding vision. The gallery's ART2You program delivers curated art shows into homes, offices and public venues. "It's almost like a Tupperware party for art," Tilford explains. "We recognize that there are so many people that have never set foot in the gallery before, so our goal is to get out into the streets more, to push the art that way."

Art is clearly Tilford's vice of choice, and he's pushing for it to become the neighborhood's favorite vice, too. "This is here for all of us. There's no, you know, airs about anything. We want to engage people with it — because how many of us grew up with an art gallery right in our own neighborhood?"

— Chanté Griffin
Ellen Reid is unafraid of breaking through barriers, whether she's helping other women composers smash through the glass ceiling that still exists in much of the classical and new-music worlds or by ignoring genre rules in the methodically mad way she creates powerful music that is melodically memorable yet also has the capacity to shock.

The native of Oak Ridge, Tennessee, is the first composer to have had work commissioned by all four of Los Angeles' leading classical-music companies (L.A. Philharmonic, L.A. Opera, L.A. Master Chorale, and L.A. Chamber Orchestra). Reid, who divides her time between Highland Park and New York City, is also the first composer to have had world premieres performed by all four groups, as well as the first female composer to have her work interpreted by all four.

She's a composer and sound designer who has written film scores and chamber, choral, theater and pop music. Reid's work is often site-specific. She turned a swing set into a musical instrument (the interactive sound sculpture Playground), and members of L.A. Phil had to be arrayed on several floors of Disney Hall to enact a feverish and bracing string-laden instrumental (Thought Experiments in F# Minor). Reid collaborated on a jazz score with wind instrumentalist Vinny Golia for the Getty Villa (Prometheus Unbound), and she was one of several composers to contribute musical vignettes for Yuval Sharon and The Industry's Hopscotch, an L.A.-centric opera that took place inside 24 cars and across multiple locations.

For Reid's first full opera, Prism, she and librettist Roxie Perkins ventured into even bolder territory. The opera centers on the enigmatic relationship between a mother (mezzo soprano Rebecca Jo Loeb) and daughter (soprano Anna Schubert) who are isolated from the outside world in a large glass cube, as the daughter recovers from a sexual assault and begins to question the warped version of reality that surrounds and confines her. Produced by Beth Morrison Projects with Trinity Church Wall Street and presented by L.A. Opera's Off Grand series in an inventively cramped staging by director James Darrah, Prism received its world premiere at REDCAT in November 2018.

Reid's score alternated between lush melodic grandeur and darker, eerier new-music experimentation, and its dreamlike passages were infused at times with pop-music hooks and electronic effects. The music was so distinctive that Reid was awarded the 2019 Pulitzer Prize for Music. "It was a huge shock, a major life event," she recalls by phone from New York. "I found out because I got text messages from friends. My phone started blowing up. I started yelling … I think Prism is an important piece on so many levels, and I'm so glad it will be seen by many more people."

Reid, 36, hopes that the award will inspire the young composers she works with as part of Luna Composition Lab, a program that she runs with fellow composer Missy Mazzoli. "It's possible to have your voice heard," she says. "There's a massive gap that we're trying to fill and raise awareness about. People who identity as women, non-binary and gender nonconforming are majorly under-represented in classical music. Less than 3 percent of the music performed in concert halls is by female composers."

In fall this year, Reid took up a new role as creative advisor and composer in residence for L.A. Chamber Orchestra, and in May 2020 she'll pair Luna Lab Fellows with mentors in a program of new music for LACO.

Prism, which has been staged in New York and São Paulo and will be performed in Washington, D.C., will briefly return to L.A., albeit as a highly mutated video flashback. As part of L.A. Opera's festival early next year surrounding the world premiere of composer Matthew Aucoin and librettist Sarah Ruhl's new opera, Eurydice, a sound installation will be located in the lobby of Dorothy Chandler Pavilion running "an epic 30-minute loop" with two arias from Prism in "an immersive soundscape," Reid promises. — Falling James
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THE TORTILLA EXPERT

Jennifer Feltham

Three years ago, Jennifer Feltham and partner Teodoro Diaz-Rodriguez Jr. opened a tiny taco shop in downtown L.A.'s Fashion District paying homage to the region where Teo grew up. The idea for Sonoratown was simple, to serve tacos in the style of San Luis Río Colorado, an area in Northern Mexico famous for its carne asada cooked over mesquite wood fires and tortillas made from the flour unique to Sonora.

"Tio and I started off with $7,500 each, which we scrimped and saved while working at Bluewater Grill in Redondo Beach," Feltham tells L.A. Weekly on the packed patio of Sonoratown. "We took $15,000 of our own money and went in with a $30,000 small business association loan to open the shop in our neighborhood in the menswear district downtown. That was the biggest financial liability I'd ever had in my life and I was petrified about being able to pay it back if things didn't work out. We figured if it floundered we'd spend the next 10 years paying it back and start all over again. But it was worth a try."

Little did the couple fresh out of high school ever dream that their small business would shoot off like a meteor over the Sonoran desert and explode into one of L.A.'s most recognized restaurants.

"In the beginning, I was going once a month to get flour from Sonora and would just put as much as I could fit into the back of my truck and drive it back here, five hours both ways plus another five hour wait at the border," says Feltham as customers line up to wait 30 minutes for a taco. "Doing it once a month wasn't so bad, but then it changed to twice a month. Every two weeks I'd go and bring back 1,000 pounds, which is the maximum capacity for my truck. We tried using American flour, but the tortillas didn't come out the same. We also bring back tapi chiles every time we get the flour, the most popular chile in Sonora and foraged by hand. If we didn't have them here in our salsa, Sonoran people would riot, they expect it to be on the menu."

After Netflix featured Sonoratown in the Taco Chronicles documentary, the Torrance native had to increase the trips to every weekend and expand the tiny space. Having lived downtown for nine years, Feltham and Diaz-Rodriguez Jr. were highly sensitive to gentrification and their neighboring residents.

"We took over the space next door, which used to be a tailor's shop. He'd been here for about 10 years, and then his lease came up," says Feltham. "We talked to him, because we didn't want to displace him or anybody in the neighborhood. We want to be part of the neighborhood, not change it. We made a deal to lobby our landlord and give him a space around the corner in the same building for a cheaper price, because Los Angeles Street frontage is more expensive than 8th Street frontage. It was part of the renegotiation of our lease — which our landlord was eager to get — to take care of our neighbor Gilbert. We helped him and put down some money to help him with the build-out of his new space. So he's still in the same building as before and doesn't have to lose any customers."

While she may not admit it, a large part of Sonoratown's success is due to the love, genuine caring and infectious energy Feltham radiates, enough to light up the Sonoran desert.

"Here in downtown everybody has a place," she says. "That might also be why we have a little friction with the different cultures and movements and politics running up against each other all of the time. But that's what makes us special and strong. The more we can learn how to negotiate publicly and privately and be represented, the stronger our neighborhood will become. We can only get better for it." — Michele Stueven
FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS TAKE THE 405

Beat the traffic and fly through Hollywood Burbank Airport.
Twenty years ago, David Thomas smoked about $1,000 worth of cocaine and was standing at a bus stop on Vernon and Vermont tweaking hard while his heart was beating a mile a minute. A bus stopped and the driver frantically waved Thomas into the vehicle, insisting he get in. Wide-eyed and nervous, Thomas refused, but the driver wouldn’t move on until he boarded. He finally stepped in and the driver took him to Broadway and stopped the bus.

“Just walk straight down this street,” the driver told Thomas. He continued down 5th Street toward Skid Row until he found himself at the massive green gates of the Los Angeles Mission. He has been sober ever since. It was a bus ride he will remember for the rest of his life.

“A guy came out of those doors and said, ‘Hey man, you hungry?’” Thomas, who is now the head chef of the mission’s kitchen program tells L.A. Weekly. “He said ‘just stay right there, I’m going to get you a plate of food.’ I asked him what kind of a place this was, and he said a rehabilitation place. I knew I needed to change my life. If I hadn’t come in here that day I’d be out there living in a tent right now. The L.A. Mission showed me a lot of love and hope that my life could be fixed if you follow certain guidelines. They told me to pick God first and when I did, everything started to fall into place.”

Thomas graduated from the mission’s Work Start rehab program in 1999 and went on to graduate from L.A. Trade Tech and became a certified chef. He met his wife in the program, and they have been married and sober for the last 20 years. He feeds about 1,600 people a day, preparing breakfast, lunch and dinner and creating a menu for each meal. There will be handmade meatloaf patties with vegetables, mashed potatoes and gravy for dinner, chorizo scrambled eggs with home-fried potatoes or overnight oats for breakfast, and a salad bar at lunchtime that would put Sizzler or Whole Foods to shame. No iceberg lettuce here, just mixed greens, and plenty of fresh vegetables like cauliflower and broccoli. For dinner, the King Taco and In-N-Out Burger trucks often pull up to help feed the needy in Thomas’ food hall.

“My motto is if I wouldn’t serve it to my kids, I wouldn’t serve it to them,” says the soft-spoken gentle giant who does all of his own shopping. “If my kids won’t eat it I won’t give it to a homeless person.”

The rainy holiday season is tough and keeps getting more demanding, according to Thomas. He made his cornbread from scratch, which went into the Thanksgiving stuffing. When it’s cold out, he puts comfort food on the table like hearty beef and potato stew with vegetables over rice.

“I’m seeing so many younger people now than 20 years ago,” says Thomas who grew up at 69th and Vermont downtown. “The drugs are much more destructive now. Even when I was an addict in Kansas City, Missouri, I still got up every morning and went to work. The drugs now won’t allow you to drag yourself into work. It’s the stuff inside these drugs that’s killing us. That’s where the mental illness comes from, it’s blowing their brains out.”

Thomas has carried on the student program that saved his life, training young chefs in his kitchen who go on to working in restaurants like the Cheesecake Factory. He himself could have moved on to his choice of kitchens for much better pay than his Skid Row kitchen, but realized it was his calling to help the disadvantaged change their lives. There’s hope and a meal on the other side of the heavy green gates.

“There’s no reason for me to go anywhere, God brought me here,” says Thomas. “That was the best ride I ever took. If I had to do it all over — I wouldn’t change a thing.”

—Michele Stueven
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Artists have long addressed our country’s immigration policies in their art, especially the debate over the U.S.-Mexico border. Tanya Aguiñiga has not only created art along that border, but crossed it countless times herself.

Aguiñiga, 41, was born in San Diego and raised in Tijuana. Her parents couldn’t afford a babysitter when she was young, so every day for 14 years Aguiñiga left home at 3:30 a.m. to commute to school in San Diego, where her grandmother lived. “I couldn’t be friends with anybody because they’d know I lived in Mexico and I’d be kicked out of public school because I didn’t live in the district,” recalls Aguiñiga, speaking to the Weekly from her Elysian Park studio. “I couldn’t get close to anybody. It was an unstable childhood.”

Though she was a U.S. citizen, seeing the perilous journey migrants took crossing the San Ysidro Port of Entry — the busiest border in the country — left a profound impression on Aguiñiga. “In the ‘80s and ‘90s, there were thousands of people jumping the fence,” she says. “Men were risking their lives daily to live in America. We’d see people get run over. It was such a deadly process to get to the other side.”

Aguiñiga became interested in art while at community college, later earning her MFA at the Rhode Island School of Design. She began her career designing furniture and other functional art, which she felt was, “something people can relate to.” She recently exhibited at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, has just been announced as a COLA Artist Fellow for 2020, and in February will be the subject of a solo show at the Armory Center for the Arts in Pasadena.

During her formative years, she became a community volunteer for artist collective Border Art Workshop. After studying with Mayan weavers and doing some “soul searching” throughout Mexico, Aguiñiga focused on working with textiles, using cotton, canvas, rope, felt and human hair to make sculpture and other large-scale work with her studio team.

“I learned to reconnect with my hands and decolonize my process of working,” says Aguiñiga. “We don’t work with actual looms. We do everything by hand. You can never make a mistake. There’s no right or wrong.”

The duality of having lived in one country while going to school in another, and Trump’s campaign rhetoric about the border, motivated Aguiñiga in 2016 to launch her biggest project, AMBOS (Art Made Between Opposite Sides). Aguiñiga and her team have traveled to 17 border towns from California to Texas, asking commuters in cars and on foot, taxi drivers, vendors, and anyone who congregates at the border to tie two strings — representing the U.S. and Mexico — into a knot attached to a postcard, and then answer the question: “What are your thoughts when you cross this border?”

The knots are inspired by quipu, an ancient organizational system used by the Incas. To date, AMBOS has collected nearly 10,000, which they’ve incorporated into floor-to-ceiling columns. “We want respect (because we are humans just like them),” is just one of the responses.

“It’s an emotional survey of what the entirety of the U.S.-Mexico border is like,” says Aguiñiga. “I want to increase people’s understanding and empathy. We have a symbiotic relationship with these border communities. We depend on each other. It isn’t a black-and-white situation, and you can’t close the door.”

— Siran Babayan
It would be fine to describe Glenn Kaino as a conceptual, installation or multimedia artist; that would get close to an aesthetic appreciation of his practice. But it leaves out dynamics of material experimentation and place-making — not to mention books, web platforms, gallery curation and nonprofit activism — that are every bit as salient to his vision. A native of East L.A. and a graduate of UC San Diego and UC Irvine, Kaino approaches each of his projects, whether from an institutional scale to more intimate, performative encounters, with the same problem-solving perspective on personal experience that drives his presence as a citizen of the city and the world.

Along the way, he’s collaborated with figures from Mark Bradford to athlete Tommie Smith (of 1968 Mexico City Olympics fame), actor/producer Jesse Williams (their collaboration VISIBILITY’s apps are BLEBRITY and EBROJI), and musician John Legend (who with Williams co-produced the film With Drawn Arms based on the work inspired by Smith’s raised-fist, gold medal podium protest). A related exhibition is on view until spring 2020 at the San Jose Museum of Art.

Across literature, history, magic, philosophy, technology and the environment, Kaino’s projects are as eclectic as the downtown gallery Deep River (which he founded in 1997 and where he was the first to show Mark Bradford) and the co-founding of modern kunsthalle LAXART in 2005 and The Mistake Room in 2014. He is on the boards of the Hammer Museum and the Music Center and works with nonprofit culinary/visual arts hybrid Active Cultures. He had his fingers in Napster, launched a progressive social media and news platform called Uber in 2007, exhibited at the Whitney Biennial in 2004, and built the illusion of a mirrored slide to the Earth’s core for Desert X in 2017.

Besides San Jose, a new exhibition from Kaino is currently on view at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. “When A Pot Finds Its Purpose” is a poignant and multivalent meditation on the physical musicality and nationalized symbolism of the bell in our politics and culture, intertwined with a cascade of fertile soil, itself both a literal and metaphorical representation of hope, stewardship and interconnectedness.

We see this same accretive symbolism and material symbiosis in a number of large-scale public art projects closer to home. He’s creating sculpture for the landings on either side of the L.A. River as part of the 6th Street Viaduct PARC project — set to open in 2028 around the completion of the new bridge. His representation of the iconic “L.A. hands” will be both a cultural and architectural signifier.

His commission for the Airport Metro Connector at the LAX/Metro Transit Center is based on years of research into ideas about how humans might travel to space, from the Aztecs to H.G. Wells, NASA to Space X. Keeping on the theme of lofty ideas, this May Kaino inaugurates the new Compound Long Beach, a community art center supporting the arts and holistic wellness, with a 6-month immersive installation which he describes as “visualized hope.” Playing with technology to create a kind of cloud chamber, harnessing cosmic rays to let you see (and hear) the invisible energy of thousands of hopes and dreams is right up Kaino’s alley. After all, his favorite way to describe his eclectic practice is simply to say, “I hope for a living.”

—Shana Nys Dambrot
There are two LAPDs overseeing the downtown area. One whose motto claims to “protect and serve,” and another which actually does so. Founded by acclaimed performance artist John Malpede in 1985, the Los Angeles Poverty Department is the nation’s first performance group comprised of homeless and formerly homeless practitioners.

As advocates for Skid Row through the lens of art and culture, their mission is to sustain the community and its members’ “artistic and personal development,” which they pursue through performance and theatrical projects speaking directly to the challenges faced by this unique neighborhood.

“The notion is to create community on Skid Row and to get the real deal out, to have an unmediated voice of the community,” Malpede tells the Weekly. “If anyone cares about solving something perceived as a social ill, then they might as well be grounded in reality. There hasn’t always been the will. And even when there is the will, there’s not a huge amount of work being done.”

LAPD associate director, author and artist Henriëtte Brouwers agrees, adding, “It can be done. It’s where you put your priorities.” Since 2000, Brouwers has produced, directed and performed in theatrical works, and is an integral part of the entire operation. “LAPD would not be what it is,” says Malpede, “without our work together.”

In recent years, Malpede and Brouwers have curated the Skid Row History Museum and Archive, a downtown space that explores gentrification issues. On view through mid-January are sculptures and paintings by Nick Paul and Diane Prozeller. At the age of 38, Paul is a two-time cancer survivor and has been sober for 18 years. Prozeller, who cites Salvador Dali and Frida Kahlo among her inspirations, received an associate’s degree from Pasadena City College in art.

In October, the Festival For All Skid Row Artists offered a platform for over 125 community practitioners to perform or show their work. A biennial parade acknowledges those responsible for transformative efforts like the Downtown Women’s Center, co-founded by a homeless woman whose first name was Rosa and activist Jill Halverson, which has been servicing the medical needs of homeless women since 1978.

A 2013 recipient of the Doris Duke Performing Artist Fellowship, Malpede has taught at UCLA, NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts, and The Amsterdam School for Advanced Research in Theater and Dance, and has produced projects with communities in the U.S., U.K., France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Bolivia. The list of awards Malpede has received are legion — New York’s Dance Theater Workshop Bessie Creation Award, San Francisco Art Institute’s Adaline Kent Award, L.A. Theater Alliance Ovation Award, and grants from the NEA, California Arts Council, City of Los Angeles’ COLA fellowship and many more.

“Everyone needs a reason to get out of bed in the morning, beyond coffee,” Malpede responds when asked why he has fought this uphill battle for the past 35 years. “Engaging people in all their dimensionality — their street smarts, their sense of humor, all they’ve lived through — that is what motivates me.”

— Jordan Riefe
There may no bigger fan of music from the ’80s in L.A. or O.C. than Danny Sanchez. After frequenting teen-club environments such as Studio K and Cloud 9 at Knott’s Berry Farm and Videopolis at Disneyland as a kid, the Anaheim DJ (who began his career at 13 years old) felt an immediate connection to the new wave genre — its synth-y, dance-y nuances and themes that ranged from dark and seductive to campy and care-free. For Sanchez — and really his peers in Gen X — the sounds of the ’80s provided an outlet, a connection and an escape from the drudgery of daily life, with the fashion and imagery of the era creating a perfect complement, especially in an after-dark environment.

Though he started in the early ’80s spinning at parties, clubs and school dances, it wasn’t until 17 years later that Sanchez decided to promote his own night. But unlike his peers, he didn’t move on musically. “All my other DJ friends started playing ’90s [music] and doing rave stuff,” he remembers. “But my love for the ’80s — I never let it go.” He opened his first gathering, called ’80s Club Addiction, at an old strip club in 2000; it quickly outgrew the space, so he moved it to Hully Gully in Downey, where it’s still going strong today. But his life-long dream was to open his own ’80s-themed venue, and after getting investments from family members, he was able to take his shot. “My mom and dad were the reason why I was able to start the clubs because they took out a mortgage on their house,” he says gratefully. “This was my dream and I knew I wouldn’t let them down. I promised to pay them back and I was able to a lot quicker than we expected.”

Today, Sanchez is the proud owner of no less than four all-’80s-themed dance clubs: the New Wave Restaurant & Bar in Bellflower, Totally ’80s Bar & Grille in Fullerton, Club ’80s Bar & Grille in Fullerton and That ’80s Bar in Montclair. His venues might be off the beaten path for people living in central Los Angeles, but for nostalgic dance fans they’re worth the trek, especially since he often books the actual acts who had hits back in the day. Everyone from Flock of Seagulls to Missing Persons to Dramarama has played his bright, retro-decorated clubs, and “they always want to come back and they tell other bands my clubs are their favorite places to play,” he says. “The fans here appreciate them the most.”

It’s not just Sanchez’s bookings that his customers appreciate, though. They’re happy his venues exist at all. The areas he opens up in often don’t have a lot going on in terms of nightlife, as they’re mostly quiet L.A. and O.C. suburbs. He and his wife Cynthia (whom he credits for helping in every area of the business) promote every venue heavily each week, with flyers and social media. They offer rotating DJs, live music, food and vibrant visuals that take older fans back in time and attract new ones too. “We can’t stop and we won’t stop,” he says adamantly. “There are a lot of people out there who still love the ’80s and always will no matter what year it is.”

—Lina Lecaro
Named by both *Bon Appetit* and *Food & Wine* as one of 2019's best restaurants of the year, Konbi owners Akira Akuto and Nick Montgomery don't know what all the fuss is about. They're just two guys who like sandwiches that don't make a mess.

The tiny daytime sandwich shop in Echo Park that serves Japanese–style egg and pork sandwiches as well as French pastries and seasonal vegetable dishes has developed a cult following, unintentionally fueled by their wonderfully Instagrammable sandos.

"We want our food to be simple but technically perfect," Montgomery tells *L.A. Weekly*, sincerely surprised at the wild response their little cafe has garnered. "You obviously want that to happen, but we really didn't know if people were going to understand it or like it at all. I was worried people might think 'Oh, this is just a dumb sandwich on crappy white bread.' Overhearing people sitting at the counter discussing a fishy omelet on bread with a little sauce is kind of bizarre."

The pair worked together in New York and wanted to move west to open a sandwich shop, inspired by Japanese convenience store sandos wrapped in plastic to eat on the go.

"I love eating sandwiches," Akuto tells the *Weekly* under the persimmon tree of his Highland Park home. "They're portable and you have to define what you want to have in a sandwich for yourself. We have specific things for a sandwich we want our shop to be. The amount of work that goes into the sandwich is the same amount that goes into a fine dining dish. The thought process is the same, it just goes between two pieces of bread. For us, it's to be able to take all the ingredients we're used to working with but making it in a way that's not pretentious, so that more people are able to eat it at a price point we're able to feed our friends, who are regular people."

The partners spent five years developing the concept, which included wandering in and out of many a Japanese convenience store, where the sandos are a more pared-down version. The popularity of the distinct sandwiches has resulted in Konbi knock-offs around Los Angeles.

"We didn't just go and see these convenience store sandwiches and say let's open a sandwich shop because it's trendy," says Montgomery, who grew up in the South, where egg salad is a vehicle for mayonnaise and French's mustard, he claims. "We wanted to do something that was unique at the time and execute it at a very high level, which is why we chose those sandwiches, pastries, coffee and tea. Four years ago nobody was making these kind of sandwiches, but we don't get sidetracked by what's popping up around us."

Despite the fun visuals, delightful textures and the fact that they just taste good, convenience and simplicity is at the core of Konbi.

"We don't want a messy sandwich that gets all over your hands if you're driving," says Akuto, who moved to the U.S. from Korea as a child. "It should be clean and everything about it should be portable and easy to eat. More is not better for a sandwich, that's why we cut it into three — not for visual purposes. It just easier to eat three pieces. Maybe you like crusts, maybe you don't, this gives you an option. We're not going to get into the crust game, and bottom line it's got to fit into the box. We cut it this way because it's easy and it works. It should look simple." — *Michele Stueven*
THE CHINATOWN PUNK SAVIOR

Martin Wong

Martin Wong is a singular force in Los Angeles. As curator of the ongoing Save Music in Chinatown concert series and co-founder of high-gloss, sorely missed Asian-centric pop mag Giant Robot, Wong has shown he has a gift for deftly weaving a constructive and offbeat thatch of disparate cultural elements.

A cool cat, Chinatown resident and former textbook editor at McGraw-Hill (and one time Disneyland Jungle Cruise tour guide), Wong celebrates his hood’s vibrant composition. “Chinatown has a rich history of underground music — mostly punk,” he says. “It’s a wild overlapping of my favorite bands and the neighborhood where my immigrant grandparents and in-laws found community.”

1970s punk rock had thrived, as Keith Morris sang, “in the shadows of Gin Ling Way” and Wong is continuing the tradition. “It was pretty cool to discover that the Germs, Go-Go’s, X, Black Flag, Plugz, Zeros all played the Hong Kong Café and Madame Wong’s,” says the devoted father. “When my daughter started going to Castelar Elementary in Chinatown, we found out that the music program was underfunded, so we started a series of all-ages DIY punk rock matinee fundraisers — now we’re planning our 20th show in our seventh year.”

“I especially love when L.A. punk lifers and legends come back to Chinatown to play our shows,” Wong adds. “We’ve had Alice Bag, Mike Watt, Chuck Dukowski, Hector Penalosa, Alley Cats, and two secret shows by the Adolescents [that] meant a lot to me, including one of Steve Soto’s last hometown performances. When The Dils played their first show in 40 years for us, it was so packed that it was scary.”

Wong was first drawn into the punk rock vortex after witnessing a Clash show in 1983. “The Clash changed the way I perceived culture in general, because not only did they play rad songs and look cool, they had purpose,” he explains. It’s a quality which Wong has now brought full circle. “I love how the shows impart the DIY ethic to kids and we have grown a multi-generational community of regulars who support punk rock, public education and Chinatown,” he enthuses. “I almost started crying when the kids in front knew exactly what to do when the Gears sang ‘Don’t Be Afraid To Pogo.’ I get emotional when I think about Phranc singing ‘It’s Cool To Grow Old in L.A.’ at my 50th birthday show, too. And I never expected my daughter and nieces to start a band called The Linda Lindas and really thrive in the space.”

All the money from ticket sales and their raffles go to Castelar’s music program, and for Wong, the Save Music series is profoundly gratifying. His punk passion and soul-deep dedication to community has become a critical aspect for many grizzled musicians and fresh faced youths alike.

“I thought my coolest days were behind me when Giant Robot ran its course in 2010,” says this dad making a difference. “But now Save Music in Chinatown is carrying on the neighborhood’s punk rock tradition, only it’s with cookies and coffee and little kids dancing in front like the Peanuts gang.”

— Jonny Whiteside
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The big guys know what sells, but when it comes to alternative talents, unique subject matter and titles that reflect our world in ways we might not always expect, indie publishers deserve a lot of credit. Gathering some of their favorites all in one place, the Sunset Strip's coolest book hub — Book Soup — is providing a one-stop shop for the holidays at L.A. Indie Small Press Day. The seasonal reception will offer refreshments and a chance to meet some of the companies and authors from the vibrant local literary community, including Angel City Press and Unnamed Press, to name a pair of highlight pubs. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd. West Hollywood; Sat., Dec. 14, 4 p.m.; free. booksoup.com/event/la-indie-small-press-day. —LINA LECARO

The Woickest Wordsmith

According to Michael Eric Dyson's JAY-Z: Made in America, which includes a foreword by Pharrell, Jay-Z is “one of the greatest poets the country behind Oprah and Michael Jordan,” but made him the woikest wordsmith of his generation. California African American Museum, 600 State Drive, Exposition Park; Fri., Dec. 13, 7-9 p.m.; free, RSVP required. (213) 744-7432, caamuseum.org. —SIRAN BABAYAN

Conscious Consumption

How do you know if someone is pescan? Don't worry, they'll tell you. They'll just sound like they're underwater when they say so. Two notable pescans — Abbie Cornish and Jacqueline King — today present Pescan: A Feel Good Cookbook ($30, Harry N. Abrams). You'll get scads of recipes in this latest development in conscious consumption, something which involves lots of nutritious plants, no dairy, and plenty of high-protein eggs and seafood. Along the way, you'll also find out how they get to be such great friends, bonding over everything from miso-ginger glazed black cod to artichoke hummus with za'atar. Book Soup, 8818 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood; Fri., Dec. 13, 6 p.m.; free. (310) 659-3110, booksoup.com/event/jacqueline-king-abbie-cornish-present-and-sign-feel-good-cookbook. —DAVID COTNER

Crawl for Charity

Most pubs have someone crawling out of them after one drink too many — but today's 11th Annual Santa Monica Pub Crawl benefits the Westside Food Bank, so for once you've actually got an excuse to walk, run and crawl from the Enterprise Fish Co. to Gramercy, from Birdcage to O'Brien's, from Jameson to Ye Olde King's Head. Keep an eye on the crawl's website to find out where you get your wristbands, and be sure not to jaywalk today — the cops will be on the street, too — because it costs $350 to jam across the block in Santa Monica now! Main Street, Santa Monica; Sat., Dec. 14, 5 p.m.; $10-$25. eventbrite.com/e/11th-annual-santa-monica-pub-crawl-tickets-69508268101. —DAVID COTNER

Vintage on the Cheap

Department stores are hectic this time of year, and buying secondhand is not only a growing trend but more environmentally friendly. ThriftCon, launched last year in Denver, is part flea market, part walking fashion show. Hundreds of shop owners and online dealers will be selling thousands of retro clothes, shoes, accessories, home goods and other collectibles from every decade. So you just might find those vintage Air Jordans you've been coveting for a bargain price. The event also features raffles, giveaways, podcast recordings, a DIY customization area and art installation by local artist Berk Visual. The organizers are holding a donation drive benefiting the Union Mission Rescue and Shelter Partnership, so bring five articles of clothing and get a free shopping bag. Los Angeles Convention Center, 1201 S. Figueroa St., downtown; Sun., Dec. 15, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; $5-$20. (213) 741-1151, thriftcon.co. —SIRAN BABAYAN

CULTURE

Helping Hands

You want to go out to dance but you're worried about getting hassled or judged. Just like life! Ever-understanding of these dilemmas, LACMDS presents A Slightly Guided Dance Party: Winter Wonderland Edition. The L.A. City Municipal Dance Squad (LACMDS) is the dance company of your dreams — or, at the very least, your un-self-conscious — and they'll give you the encouragement to take the steps that lead to the heedless joy of body movement. Whether you want to do the African Anteater Ritual or just kind of sway the steps that lead to the heedless joy of body movement. Whether you want to do the African Anteater Ritual or just kind of sway there unmolested, tonight is your night, this is your place and these are your people. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, 152 N. Central Ave., downtown; Sun., Dec. 15, 6 p.m.; free (currently sold out, so just dance outside!) (213) 621-1732, moca.org/program/la-city-municipal-dance-squad-holiday-edition. —DAVID COTNER

FOOD&DRINK/HOLIDAYS

SUN 12/15

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LITERATURE

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LITERATURE/MUSIC

The Woickest Wordsmith

According to Michael Eric Dyson's JAY-Z: Made in America, which includes a foreword by Pharrell, Jay-Z is “one of the greatest poets this nation has produced.” He's “America at its scrappy, brash, irreverent, soulful, ingenius best.” Dyson knows a lot about the rapper; the author, New York Times contributor and professor teaches a course on Jay-Z at Georgetown University. In his new book, which he discusses tonight, Dyson doesn't just breakdown the hip-hop icon's lyrics. Dyson examines the three main themes — poetry, politics and “hustling” — that helped Jay-Z not only sell records and become the genre's first billionaire (only the fifth African-American billionaire in the country behind Oprah and Michael Jordan), but made him the woikest wordsmith of his generation. California African American Museum, 600 State Drive, Exposition Park; Fri., Dec. 13, 7-9 p.m.; free, RSVP required. (213) 744-7432, caamuseum.org. —SIRAN BABAYAN

FOOD&DRINK

SAT 12/14

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Food & Drink

Sun 12/13

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**ART**

**Pint-sized Art Works**

If you want to do your part in stemming the tide of faceless consumerism and artist exploitation, be sure to hop on down to the **Bueno, Bonito y Barato pop-up exhibition**. Art is always a gift under any circumstances — but this time you can actually buy a masterpiece no larger than 10” by 10” that you’ll see in the exhibition which you can either give away, squirm away so it appreciates, or just hang in your own home to admire. It’s all available for a very limited period of time — like most good things in this world! Through December 19. **Self Help Graphics & Art, 1300 E. 1st St., Boyle Heights; Mon., Dec. 16, 10 a.m.; free.** ([facebook.com/events/sel-help-graphics-art/bueno-bonito-y-barato-exhibition/214234651866404](http://facebook.com/events/sel-help-graphics-art/bueno-bonito-y-barato-exhibition/214234651866404). —DAVID COTNER

**TUE 12/17**

**DANCE**

**When Swans Go Bad**

The original show opened in Britain in 1997 where it was seen by then Center Theater Group artistic director Gordon Davidson who booked it into the Music Center’s Ahmanson Theatre. Thus L.A. became the American launch of **Matthew Bourne’s Swan Lake** before it went on to become a Broadway and international phenomenon. Along the way, Matthew Bourne showed how danced theater could be a game changer for both arts. Bourne kept the Tschaikovsky score but turned the classical ballet from a tale of some once upon a time kingdom into a recognizable contemporary British monarchy, replaced the female corps with male dancers in feathered knickers, and transformed the lead swan into a male who comforts and seduces the neglected prince then goes on to entice and seduce the queen herself. And now Bourne is back, its show’s 20-year old audacity still ringing curiously true. As the British crown reels once more from revelations about a current prince’s involvement with a notorious sexual predator, the return of the ballet continues to resonate.

**Ahmanson Theater, Music Center, 135 N. Grand Ave., downtown; Tue.-Fri., 8 p.m., Sat., 2:30 p.m. & 8 p.m., Sun., 1:30 p.m. & 7 p.m., through Jan. 5; $35-$145. centertheatregroup.org.** —ANN HASKINS

**ART**

**Art From the Islands**

LACMA’s “**Fiji: Art & Life in the Pacific**” is the first and most comprehensive exhibit in America on the art of Fiji, an archipelago of more than 300 islands. Mostly on loan from other museums and private collections, namely the Fiji Museum, British Museum and Smithsonian, the nearly 300 items explore the art and culture of the South Pacific country — especially its relationship with the ocean — from the 18th century to the present. Divided into eight thematic sections, the objects include sculpture, weapons, textiles, bowls, personal adornments, model temples, pearl shells and whale ivory, in addition to European watercolors, paintings and 19th-century portraits drawn from LACMA’s own collection. A highlight is a newly commissioned, 26-foot-long canoe made without metal, but entirely out of wood and coconutchusk fiber. LACMA, 5905 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles; Dec. 15-Jan. 19; Mon.-Tues. & Thurs., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Fri., 11 a.m.-8 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.-7 p.m.; $20, $16 seniors & students, free children. ([323) 857-6010, lacma.org.](http://lacma.org) —IRAN RABAYAN

**THU 12/19**

**CULTURE**

**Strings Attached**

On this, the final night of their three Thursday run, the Bob Baker Marionette Theater Puppet Show graces audiences with a kind of innocent, playful reverie that harks back to a simpler time, before kids as young as 7 learned how to roll their eyes. You’ll get two unique performances packed with sing-a-longs, ballet, wonder and showmanship the likes of which, against overwhelming odds, have continued to abide since Baker’s passing at 90 five years ago. You should go check out the new Marionette Theater over in the old York Theatre space in Highland Park. You won’t regret it. *Santa Monica Pier, 200 Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica; Thu., Dec. 19, 6 p.m. & 7 p.m.; free. ([213) 250-9995, eventbrite.com/e/bob-baker-marionette-theater-puppet-shows-tickets-80145917597.](http://eventbrite.com/e/bob-baker-marionette-theater-puppet-shows-tickets-80145917597).** —DAVID COTNER

**ART**

**Jingle Jangle Jingle**

Castelli Art Space wraps up the holiday “give the gift of art” shopping season with a hard-core group exhibition of art for floor, wall and table, as well as body and head, featuring the fine art of metalwork. Featuring the rough-edge, glossy chromatics of primitive pop sculptures by **Rick Robinson,** the quirky, poetic metal “drawings” of **Mark Walsh,** amoebic shaped photographs by **Rob Grad,** and artisanal body armor by **Greg Orloff,** with more artists being announced as the shiny show approaches. Look for the opening reception to sparkle with the holiday party vibes among the steel. *Castelli Art Space, 5428 W. Washington Blvd., Culver City; opening reception: Thu., Dec. 19, 6-9 p.m.; on view through Jan. 18; free.** ([castelliartspace.com/upcoming-exhibitions](http://castelliartspace.com/upcoming-exhibitions). —JHANA NYS DAMBROT
Marriage Story is an empathetic love letter to divorce

By Chad Byrnes

There’s an uncomfortable and strangely acerbic moment in writer/director Noah Baumbach’s Marriage Story, where Adam Driver’s character demonstrates an ongoing joke he has with his son, in which he mimics cutting himself with a small box cutter knife on his key chain. It’s a gag he’s been doing for years, except this time, he tries it after recently going through a separation. As a result, he unintentionally slices himself in the arm. Suddenly, he’s bleeding profusely, wandering around his apartment in a daze, dressing his wound with napkins, before passing out on the floor. The scene not only demonstrates the movie’s darkly comic underpinnings, it’s also a parable of its inherent tragedy — even with the best of intentions, when overwhelmed by circumstance (like divorce), we can all lose control and end up face down on the floor.

Unlike Kramer vs. Kramer, which clearly favors Dustin Hoffman’s predicament, there aren’t any villains in Marriage Story (unless you count the lawyers). In Noah Baumbach’s universe, both parties lose something precious. Most likely based on his divorce from actress Jennifer Jason Leigh, Baumbach’s film is amusing, but also insightful and vitriolically charged; it’s difficult not to feel the gut-wrenching pain of a family separating. Cinematographer Robbie Ryan (The Favourite) enhances the emptiness of the rooms, surgically opening us to the characters’ lives. This is virtuosic and humanistic filmmaking. It’s also one of Baumbach’s best films to date. He’s always specialized in human frailty, usually focusing on East Coast intellectuals who are so busy tending their carefully crafted egos they forget about their souls. From his coming of age confessional about being raised by two narcissistic parents in The Squid and the Whale, to a lacerating profile of an affected writer visiting her sister in Margot at the Wedding, Baumbach has a knack for exposing our penchant for self-absorption, and in doing so, revealing our struggle to find empathy. It’s perfect fodder for a divorce story.

Charlie Barber (Adam Driver) is an avant-garde director on Broadway. His wife, Nicole Barber (Scarlett Johansson), is an actress. For years they worked at the same theater company. They also have an 8-year-old son, Henry (Azhy Robertson). Marriage Story opens with Charlie and Nicole in couple’s therapy, obviously getting nowhere. The end is near. Nicole moves to Los Angeles to star in a TV pilot, where she stays in her childhood home with her mother (Julie Hagerty) and sister (Merritt Wever). When Charlie visits them in Los Angeles and is swiftly served divorce papers, he’s plunged into a world of confusion and betrayal. They were going to do this on their own, without lawyers. No such luck. Nicole enlists a no-holds-barred attorney (Laura Dern, in a lacerating performance), and in desperation, Charlie follows suit, first with a mild-mannered Bert (a hilarious Alan Alda), then with an expensive, calculating shark, Jay (Ray Liotta, in full mafia mode).

Once the lawyers enter the picture, Charlie and Nicole’s divorce takes on a toxic life of its own. Harmless situations and statements become lethal ammunition in the courtroom. Meanwhile, their son twists in the middle, gravitating toward his mother to seek emotional shelter. Up to this point, both Charlie and Nicole appear drawn, almost in shock, as they try to navigate these new, treacherous waters. But later, in a stripped down, uncompromisingly potent scene, they unleash all their scalding damnations to each other.

These are the right actors for a movie with so much emotional vicissitude. Johansson does a great job of maintaining composure while suppressing years of resentment for paying attention to her husband’s needs, but not her own. But the real surprise is Adam Driver. With a hangdog expression and existential uncertainty etched on his face, he’s a walking, talking open wound. His performance is revelatory here. This may be the film that sees the great Noah Baumbach finally get the attention and recognition he deserves. The filmmaker’s stories might be a little provincial for the masses, but his themes are universal, and during a time where empathy is in short supply, he reminds us of its importance.

Marriage Story is currently streaming on Netflix.

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SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Why America’s community colleges are more relevant than ever

BY PAUL ROGERS

For decades, community colleges have been stigmatized as last resorts for young people who can’t get into “real” college, older students, or teens simply “treading water” after high school. There was even a TV sitcom, NBC’s Community, which lampooned these publicly-funded institutions.

However, since the Great Recession of 2007-2009, when a doubling of the US unemployment rate spurred a 33% increase in enrollment in two-year colleges, things have changed. Community colleges have diversified and updated their degree and certificate programs, while remaining affordable, career-focused and flexible options for learners of all ages and backgrounds.

The skyrocketing cost of a university education (the average cost of attending university for four years has nearly doubled since 1989, to $104,480, according to the National Center for Education Statistics) has encouraged students and educators alike to reconsider the place of community colleges in America’s higher education ecosystem. After all, with nearly 1,000 such institutions serving some 5.8 million students, community colleges provide the largest portion of higher education in this country (and the 115-college California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the country).

We spoke to four education experts for insight into contemporary community colleges.

What is the reality of community colleges today? How have they changed over recent years?

Eulynn Gargano, Orange County, Calif.-based education strategist: They are a high quality option for students who are looking for a lower-cost alternative route to a four-year college degree. Community colleges have changed much more quickly than their four-year college peers in terms of the diversity and quality of their programming. Because they have more direct communication with industry professionals and more of a pulse on what is necessary in the modern workplace, they are able to make quick adjustments to their offerings and respond to those needs.

Dr. F. J. Talley, Director of the DeSousa-Brent Scholars Program at St. Mary’s College of Maryland: Somewhere along the way … community colleges threw off the yoke of being the “also ran” institutions to acknowledging that they could compete with four-year colleges … As a result, community colleges are developing innovative programs, usually with four-year college partners so that the adage of “you can get there from here” rings true.

What are the great strengths of community colleges?

Heather Hiles, President and CEO of Calbright College, California’s first fully online community college: Community colleges are ubiquitous, with deep ties to their neighborhoods and cities, providing an access point to higher education that doesn’t require room and board or a trip across the state.

Gargano: They are definitely unique in being able to respond to new and emerging career trends that are experiencing explosive growth. The leaders at community colleges work with the state and employers within the communities they serve to define current industry needs and employment trends. Additionally, most of the courses are taught by professionals within the industries who are focused on building skills in the cohorts of students they are graduating. They are able to be much more student- and skill-focused than at traditional research universities.

Talley: Community colleges also have small classes and a wealth of resources to help students succeed, including tutoring and academic support centers, writing centers, etc. On the whole, they tend to be more nimble than their four-year counterparts … often able to start new programs more quickly than four-year schools, so they are able to meet market demands, whether that’s in their transfer programs or in their workforce programming.

But cost-effectiveness remains their major selling point, right?

Adrian Ricner, CEO of Mountain View, Calif.-based online learning platform Study.com: Cost is a huge part of it. America has more than $1.5 trillion in student loan debt. But what’s even more ridiculous is that there are 31 million students stranded with some college credit and no degree. Flexibility and support become the other two critical components to truly removing the barriers of earning a college degree.

Gargano: On average, the yearly cost of a community college is less than half (and in some cases, a third) of a traditional four-year public institution.

Hiles: Cost effectiveness is the name of the game. What good is a degree if it hobbles you for the rest of your life? Education should work to people’s advantage, but instead what we’re seeing is a generation of people, especially younger people, being saddled with crushing debt they’ll never be able to pay back.

So what sort of person might benefit most from a community college education?

Hiles: Anyone who doesn’t want to go into a lifetime of servitude to student loan servicers would benefit from community college. We at Calbright are charged with providing tangible economic benefits to our learners, and being debt-free is a key component of our model. We’re firmly in the careers business, not the credentials business.

Talley: Anyone who wants to improve their lives and opportunities. This applies to students right out of high school and those who graduated thirty years ago looking to make a career change … [Also] those looking for workforce-related training, for example, someone seeking to become a first responder. Community colleges are the best at workforce training in areas like allied health, law enforcement, commercial truck driving, etc.

Why do community colleges serve older, maybe mid-career learners so well?
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Quality instruction - all classes are taught by members of CSUN's distinguished faculty.

This program contains quality content on business, communications, humanities, global perspective, digital content management, linguistics, multicultural relations, philosophy, problem solving, leadership, and more.

A liberal studies degree opens up many professional opportunities, including those in media and entertainment, communications, marketing and sales, organizational leadership, global business, health care, education and more. This degree can also significantly increase your earning potential and help you develop the advanced skills to move into senior roles and positions in your chosen field.

Now is the time to finish college and earn your degree! The priority application deadline for Fall 2020 is March 24 and classes start in August. Learn more at go.csun.edu/aboutLS.

SPONSORED CONTENT

ArtCenter Extension offers inspiring courses in art and design for all ages

Since 1930, ArtCenter College of Design has prepared artists and designers whose work has impacted our world. If you've ever watched Star Wars, poured soy sauce out of a Kikkoman bottle, or used Twitter, then you've encountered work created by an ArtCenter alumn.

And during that entire 90-year history, ArtCenter has offered non-degree art and design courses for professionals seeking to add new skills to their repertoire. What began as a series of night classes in the '30s has evolved into ArtCenter Extension (ACE), a multipronged extension program that offers courses for everybody from fourth graders to seasoned professionals.

The College's continuing studies program designed for busy adults, ACE, offers more than 150 college-level courses and weekend workshops in the visual arts. ArtCenter also offers AXK Kids and AXK Teens, courses for students in grades 4–8 and 9–12, respectively.

One of the hallmarks of the College's extension program is that its course instructors are not only practicing artists and designers, but many of them also teach in ArtCenter's degree program. Students interested in applying to one of ArtCenter's bachelor's or master's programs benefit from instructors who consider the College's portfolio requirements when structuring their assignments. And many ArtCenter degree students do just that—in any given term, between 30 to 50 percent of the students accepted into the College developed their portfolio through ArtCenter Extension.

This Spring, ACE is offering several new courses for adults, across a variety of interests, most of which are held at ArtCenter's South Campus in downtown Pasadena. These include:

- EV Design Basics—taught by transportation designer Mark Clarke, who's held positions at Porsche, BMW and Fisker Automotive—which will introduce students to the world vehicle electrification, the single largest disrupter in the auto industry;
- Collections and Trends for Textile/Surface Design—taught by designer Brett Burer, who creates surface and textile designs for fashion, stationery and home décor markets—in which students will learn how to differentiate their work from the competition; and
- Game Dev Bootcamp—taught by Albert Carranza, who has worked with Indien, PixelWest and Hidden Variables—which will explore the role of art and design in game development and ask students to create a gameplay mock-up and playable prototype.

ACE also works with several partners to offer off-site courses that deepen students' learning experiences. These partners include Honda R+D Americas in Torrance, Mazda Design North America in Irvine, and the Petersen Automotive Museum in Los Angeles.

Individuals interested in seeing ACE up-close and personal can attend Experience AXE, an informal open house event held at the end of each term. Spring Experience AXE will take place April 20th through 22nd, from 7 to 9 p.m. For more information, visit artcenter.edu/acx.
ArtCenter Extension offers 150+ college-level courses and workshops in design and the visual arts.

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Sponsored Content

Cal State LA Offers Popular Project Management Program in the San Gabriel Valley

Since launching at Cal State LA Downtown in 2017, the Certificate in Project Management program offered by the College of Professional and Global Education (CPGE) has seen great success. Expanding Cal State LA’s commitment to serve anywhere where they live and work while addressing regional skill gaps, the University expanded its program to the San Gabriel Valley, launching in Monrovia in 2018. The Monrovia program’s curriculum mirrors that of its sister offering in Downtown Los Angeles; its features engaging lectures by industry professionals, case studies, and hands-on exercises, providing students with the skills required to manage projects from inception to execution. Those who successfully complete the program are able to call for industry courses including the Certified Associate in Project Management (CAPM) and Project Management Professional (PMP) exams offered through the Project Management Institute (PMI). The program arrives at a time when project management skills are in high demand.

A 2017 report released by PMI shared that the need for skilled project managers across the globe over the next 10 years is growing faster than demand for workers in other occupations, a talent gap that is placing diverse demand for workers in other occupations, a talent gap that is placing diverse industries that historically have been less project-oriented such as healthcare and professional services, have changed trajectory in recent years with healthcare now representing the largest growth sector for project management-related jobs at 12%.

As a career path, project management is a financially rewarding one. In the U.S. in 2017, wages of project management-oriented workers were significantly higher than wages of non-project-oriented employees. In certain sectors, the median project manager salary was over $100,000 per year. For Cal State LA alumna Lea Fukutaki, who obtained her project management certificate in Monrovia last spring, tangible career benefits were available to her upon finishing the program. “When I started the course, I was a program consultant for CareMore Health, an Anthem, Inc. subsidiary. After utilizing the skills our instructor taught me, I received a promotion to senior project manager for the parent company, Anthem,” said Fukutaki.

Cal State LA’s Project Management certificate program in Monrovia mirrors the University’s position as an economic driver for Los Angeles and Southern California. By providing quality programs and relevant training, the University is expanding upward mobility. In fact, Cal State LA has been rated #1 in the U.S. for the upward mobility of its students by the New York Times.

Registration for Spring 2020 Project Management programs in Monrovia and Downtown Los Angeles is now open with classes starting in January. To learn more about the program, view course schedules, or sign-up for an upcoming webinar, visit us online at calstatela.edu/page/certificate-management.

Artists with the necessary skills they need to succeed in the industry. Whether it’s in the studio, on location or in the editing room, we train the next generation of creative professionals. Students thrive in our experiential environments under the instruction of seasoned faculty members, many of whom are still actively involved in Hollywood.

The Los Angeles Film School provides a collaborative, yet challenging environment for students so they can live, breathe, and sleep entertainment— and a network of like-minded classmats who might someday land a dream job in the industry.

E entertainment is the Los Angeles Film School’s past, present and future. We are proud to be one of Hollywood’s leading film and entertainment arts colleges for the past two decades. Our goal is to equip aspiring artists with the necessary skills they need to succeed in the industry.

Bachelor of Science in Audio Production is a 36-month program offering the experience needed to learn on diverse media applications using today’s latest digital music technology. Bachelor of Science in Music Production is a 18-month program that provides students with technical knowledge of recording and foundational music and production skills. Bachelor of Science in Animation Online is a 36-month animation program that begins with the fundamentals of computer-generated art and teaches students the art, techniques, processes and technology that animators use in professional environments. Students may also choose between a concentration in Visual Effects or Game Art.

Bachelor of Science in Animation Online is a 36-month animation program that begins with the fundamentals of computer-generated art and teaches students the art, techniques, processes and technology that animators use in professional environments. Students may also choose between a concentration in Visual Effects or Game Art.

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Gargano: Primarily because of their cost effectiveness and flexibility. Students are able to maintain their existing careers and/ or balance families, while pursuing their higher education goals.

Talley: Because community college faculty are accustomed to teaching students of all ages and abilities, they tend to be very effective with adult learners. The faculty also know how to help adult learners integrate their existing knowledge into their current instruction.

Hiles: Older learners are focused on where the rubber meets the road, on how education directly relates to better pay for themselves and their families. That’s our focus as well, and we’re committed to meeting learners where they are, wherever they are.

A recent growth area for community colleges has been enrollment by students under 18 years old. What lies behind this phenomenon?

Ridner: Part of this is both parents and high school students understanding how ridiculous the tuition is getting and it’s growing at an unsustainable rate. High school students could save thousands of dollars just by taking advantage of alternative credit options. Nothing says students have to earn all of your credits on campus. Alternatives like the College-Level Examination Program (CLEP) let them test out of general education requirements, which can significantly reduce the amount of tuition they have to pay.

What about community college professors? Have they traditionally been underpaid?

Gargano: The “publish or perish” pressure that professors at traditional four-year colleges face is absolutely distracting and disheartening for most professors. The focus and unadulterated passion that community college professors maintain is a definite advantage for community colleges in general. Additionally, the average class size of a community college classroom is 25 or fewer. Compared to a traditional four-year public university, where you may be seated in a freshman or sophomore class with close to 300 students, a community college professor can make a much greater impact.

There’s been a perception that community colleges don’t offer many majors. How has this changed over recent years?

Talley: Community colleges do offer a variety of majors, in arts and sciences areas, health care, business, education and other areas. Where we’re seeing the most growth in community college degrees is in mechanical and electrical engineering, information technology, artificial intelligence, scientific glass technology and other fields as they meet the increasingly technological world we’re facing.

Has the transfer process from community college to university been made easier over recent years?

Ridner: The transfer process is getting easier thanks to community colleges and their partnerships with their respective state ... While this has happened in a few states in the country, there’s still room for growth here across the U.S.

Gargano: Community colleges are working more closely with traditional four-year institutions to make sure the course offerings align with what is necessary for transfer students.

Finally, what do you see as the near future for America’s community colleges? How will they continue to change, and why?

Ridner: Right now, community college is a great, if not ideal option, for students. The flexibility aspect of community college will take off and become mainstream in the next 5-10 years. This includes adaptive learning, night classes and online classes to help students work and go through school much easier. People still value the semi-college experience and in-person teaching, so community college will always remain a good choice for those looking that experience.

Gargano: Traditionally, community college enrollment goes down when the economy is up - more specifically, when jobs are plentiful. However, I predict that until the bubble bursts on the cost and admissions processes of the traditional four-year universities, you’ll see more and more enrollment at community colleges. The return on investment of time and money of a traditional 4-year university is simply not what it used to be for many graduating high school students.

Talley: I also envision more community college and four-year dual enrollment systems, in which community college students are already “admitted” to four-year schools and identify with both institutions. Essentially, they are “transferring” as soon as they enter their community college so that when official transfer is completed, they don’t miss a beat.

Hiles: For community colleges, the only constant must be change; the economy isn’t going to slow down or stay the same, and neither should instruction, or definitions of success.

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TRIAL BY MEDIA

Richard Jewell addresses media hysteria

BY NATHANIEL BELL

Welcome to L.A. Weekly’s Movie Guide, your look at the hottest films in Los Angeles theaters this week. Check here before you make your big screen plans.

Opening wide
Friday, December 13

Clint Eastwood continues his examination of American heroism with Richard Jewell, a tightly constructed drama about the security guard who drew national media attention following the 1996 Atlanta bomb scare. Initially exulted as a hero, Jewell became a suspect in the bombing, and although never officially charged with a crime, underwent a vicious “trial by media” that nearly ruined him. At 89, Eastwood demonstrates his usual command of story and character, daring audiences to draw connections to contemporary media practices.

Austin Powers scribe Jay Roach takes a crack at the Oscar with Bombshell, a ripped-from-the-headlines drama about the women who banded together to expose Fox News CEO Roger Ailes (John Lithgow in a fat suit) for sexual harassment in the workplace. Charlize Theron plays former Fox anchor Megyn Kelly, Nicole Kidman is journalist Gretchen Carlson, and Margot Robbie creates the role of producer Kayla Pspisil, a character invented for this movie. Annapurna Pictures dropped out as principal production company due to budget concerns. Lionsgate took over as distributor.

Jumanji: The Next Level is the third installment in the rebooted franchise, bringing together Dwayne Johnson, Kevin Hart, Jack Black and Karen Gillan for another comedic adventure about the titular magic video game. This time, Awkwafina, Danny Glover and Danny DeVito join the cast, increasing the silliness quotient threefold. Jake Kasdan directed.

Black Christmas is the second remake of Bob Clark’s 1975 Canadian horror classic and the first attempt by Blumhouse Productions to reboot the franchise. Directed by Sophia Takal from a screenplay by Takal and April Wolfe, the film concerns a sorority house whose members become the target of an unseen, deranged murderer. The world probably didn’t need another slasher movie, but this one attempts to create fuller female characterizations amid the requisite blood and gore. Cary Elwes co-stars.

Limited
Friday, December 13

Franz Jägerstätter, a peaceful Austrian farmer from the village of Radegund, was 36 years old when he was executed by the Nazis for refusing to swear allegiance to Hitler. A Hidden Life tells his story. On paper, it sounds very much like the stuff of traditional Hollywood biopics, but because the film is directed by Terrence Malick, the story takes on a spiritual dimension that catapults it to a higher emotional plane. The film marks a return — successful, if not wholly triumphant — to scripted drama for the famously intuitive and improvisational writer-director, yet the breathtaking beauty of the landscapes and the intense physicality of the performances — particularly Valerie Pachner as Jägerstätter’s wife Fani — make you feel as though you’re watching a documentary. Michael Nyqvist and Bruno Ganz give their final performances. The Landmark, 10850 Pico Blvd., Rancho Park; Fri., Dec. 13, various showtimes; $12-$15; (310) 470-0492, landmarktheatres.com.

Rosine Mbakam was born in Cameroon and lives and works in Belgium. After gaining acclaim for her short films, she turned to feature-length documentaries. Her first two features are being packaged as a diptych and released on screens in select cities across the country. In The Two Faces of a Bamileke Woman, Mbakam returns to the country of her birth and reconnects with her mother, who still remembers life under French colonial rule. In Chez Jolie Coiffure, Mbakam gives a rounded portrait of a hair salon in Brussels that functions as a social hub for West African women. Gradually, their stories are told. These enchanting, emotional non-fiction works shed light on the experience of migrants and offer hope in the form of resilient, independent women. Lumière Music Hall, 9036 Wilshire Blvd., Beverly Hills; Fri., Dec. 13, various showtimes; $9-$12; (310) 274-6860, lumierecinemala.com.

Maurice Tourneur was one of silent cinema’s greatest artists, but like huge swaths of history from that period, his filmography remains largely inaccessible. That’s why the West Coast premiere of the new 4k restoration of Tourneur’s The Broken Butterfly is so exciting. The film, which runs just under an hour, concerns a composer (Lew Cody) who falls in love with a young woman (Pauline Stark) in a forest. The French-born Tourneur (father of film noir master Jacques Tourneur) was revered in his time and his work — particularly Valerie Pachner as Jägerstätter’s wife Fani — make you feel as though you’re watching a documentary. Michael Nyqvist and Bruno Ganz give their final performances. The Landmark, 10850 Pico Blvd., Rancho Park; Fri., Dec. 13, various showtimes; $12-$15; (310) 470-0492, landmarktheatres.com.
PACE. Since then, band members have come through now-dead social media platform Myspace. After their early days having alcohol-fueled alter egos and gone, but the consistency of the albums has remained of a high standard. Most recently, 2018’s Pressure and Time, released through Wild Records, saw the group explore rootsy Americana. The crowd tends to some from the rockabilly punk side of things, but those lines are blurring. Main support are Greg Antista & the Lonely Streets — another act coming from an alt-country/cowpunk place with a strong Johnny Cash influence. BAT! (featuring members of L7, Stellar Corpses and Resurrex) and The Legendary Swagger also play.

**FRI 12/13**

**Goldie**

@ 720

It’s absolutely accurate to refer to English DJ and producer Goldie as the godfather of electronic bass music. The West Midlands man put out music under the name Rufige Kru but took a full five years to produce. In between, he released his 10th studio album, Chris is Good Music, was released last year, and pioneered what was called jungle and later became drum & bass. His Metalheadz club, which would also tour, went a long way to raising the profile of fellow bass artists such as L activates Bukem. Meanwhile, his 1995 album Timeless is a bonafide classic. The follow up, 1998’s Satans Return, is a bit more of a mixed bag, though it still has its moments. Nineteen years as Inglewood’s Three Weavers and San Diego’s Societe sharing plenty of pours to ensure a properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. Socials sharing plenty of pours to ensure a properly fueled mosh pit. /The /floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. /The /floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. /The /floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. /The /floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. /The /floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. /The /floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit.

**Decibel Metal & Beer Fest**

@ THE OBSERVATORY

Heavy metal and beer is a marriage that has blended together hand-in-hand throughout the life of the genre, from Metallica in their early days having alcohol-fueled alter egos dubbed “Alcoholica” through the hundreds of bands that have shared their love for wicked brews in song. This weekend, over a dozen bands — including headlining veterans Possessed and Carcass and new-school greats such as rising melodic metal stars Spirit Adrift and power-violence masters Nails — descend upon The Observatory, with breweries such as Inglewood’s Three Weavers and San Diego’s Societe sharing plenty of pours to ensure a properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit. The floor may get messy and sticky, but the beer will taste good properly fueled mosh pit.

**SAT 12/14**

**The Delta Bombers**

@ ALEX’S BAR

Las Vegas rock and blues act The Delta Bombers formed in 2008 when the members met through now-dead social media platform Myspace. Since then, band members have come and gone, but the consistency of the albums has remained of a high standard. Most recently, 2018’s Pressure and Time, released through Wild Records, saw the group explore rootsy Americana. The crowd tends to some from the rockabilly punk side of things, but those lines are blurring. Main support are Greg Antista & the Lonely Streets — another act coming from an alt-country/cowpunk place with a strong Johnny Cash influence. BAT! (featuring members of L7, Stellar Corpses and Resurrex) and The Legendary Swagger also play.

**MON 12/16**

**Elizaveta**

@ HOTEL CAFE

Born in New York and raised in Moscow, Elizaveta Khripounova has been crossing cultures before she knew what that meant. Her music is an entrancing blend of pop, jazz and opera, resulting in a gentle, easy listening experience. Recent song “Black Cat Emergency” is more on the pop side of things, proving that Elizaveta can do pretty much whatever she sets her mind to. The song is the most important thing, and this rising star has songs by the bucketload. Emotional and stirring, she’s currently based in Japan and working on an album in Mandarin. It’ll be fascinating to see what her set includes at the Hotel Cafe.}

**TUE 12/17**

**Sir**

@ NOVO

While being signed to TDE (home to Kendrick Lamar, Jay Rock, Schoolboy Q) has its perks, R&B singer Sir’s music speaks for itself. It was his 2016 single “Cadillac Dreams” from Big K.R.I.T. that put him on the map, combining the likes of old school soul with modern-day R&B. Fast forward to 2019, Sir release of his second studio album titled Chasing Summers, spearheaded by standout single “Hair Down” featuring labelmate K Dot. The project also...
features appearances from Lil Wayne, Jill Scott, Smino, Kadhja Bonet, Sabrina Claudio and Zacari. At the end of the day, real name Sir Darryl Farris loves music and that's all that matters. Plus, hometown shows are always the most lit! ~SHIRLEY JU

Rooney
@ THE TROUBADOUR
L.A. indie power-pop band Rooney have now been around for two full decades, having formed in 1999. That said, when the band took a break in 2011 following the tour for the Eureka! album, then returned in 2016 with Washed Away, frontman and singer/songwriter Robert Schwartzman assembled a whole new lineup. This is, after all, his baby. As far as we can make out, Rooney currently consists of Schwartzman plus guitarist Boaz Roberts, bassist Sean Sobash, drummer Maxwell Flanders and keyboardist Matthew Jordan, though that lineup has been rotating. More importantly, the new stuff sounds great and whoever is in the band plays the old material fantastically well. This 20th anniversary show will be special. ~BRETT CALLWOOD

Plaid & John Tejada
@ 1720
Plaid is a celebrated British electronic music duo comprised of Ed Handley and Andy Turner, both formerly of IDM (intelligent dance music; not to be confused with EDM) pioneer the Black Dog. The pair is touring in support of its latest album, Polymer, which came out on the venerable, London-based Warp Records in June. Opening for Plaid is Los Angeles techno mainstay John Tejada — who recently remixed the Polymer album, cut “Maru” and records for the German label Kompakt, as well as his own Palette Recordings — and Nordic Soul, also known as Sean Horton, who founded Seattle’s former, highly regarded Decibel Festival and now resides in L.A. ~MATT MINER

Kiefer Sutherland
@ THE TROUBADOUR
A comprehensive overview of the cultural landscape of the greater metropolitan Los Angeles area wouldn’t be complete without Kiefer Sutherland. His music, it must be argued, is just as worthwhile as the most mangled of the avant-garde and the most dulcet of the philharmonic. In fact, the music of a personage such as Mr. Sutherland — whose BMG-released diary of corroded country crooning Reckless & Me incarnated this past April — makes music that demands the kind of attentive listening that occurs only when eyes are shut so that it may more thoroughly be heard. You have to look past the celebrity. Well, we mean, don’t actually look — your eyes are supposed to be closed, dummy. But that’s how Elvis used to listen to music. And everyone deserves to be heard. Sutherland gives you a golden opportunity to listen deeply. ~DAVID COTNER

Death Angel
@ WHISKY A GO GO
Bay Area thrash band Death Angel rose up in the same scene that produced Exodus, Testament and of course Metallica. They formed in ‘82 but took a break for a decade between ‘91 and 2001. Since then, the band has been firing on all cylinders and the lineup has remained remarkable stable. “It’s amazing even by normal standards, not just us,” Rob Cavestany said recently. “Not many people get that situation going. It’s been great for us. We’ve had amazing experiences with that team and that’s why we did it, we went back for four servings. It’s been working out really well.” Those four servings are the four most recent albums, with the excellent Humanicide coming out this year. We’ll get a career-spanning set at the Whisky. Exmortus, Hellfire, GraveDanger, Bury Them Deep and XMethod also play. ~BRETT CALLWOOD
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