COVID-19: Local Musicians Speak Out
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Life has changed beyond all recognition for most of us since COVID-19 forced us into lockdown. Fears over our health and our livelihood have left us with a tangible sense of dread as we attempt to continue with our days, generally from home, in as “normal” a fashion as possible. This virus is the great leveler — most of us are in the same boat. We spoke to a handful of L.A.-area musicians about their own experiences over the past few weeks...

Aimie Lovett Sommer, Loretti

I am a musician with a day job. Most of us are, but I actually have the good fortune of being able to work during the current quarantine and it is something I deeply appreciate. Prior to the pandemic I had plans to release new music this spring, a common story for L.A. indie artists. I have four songs recorded at MooseCat Recording, a studio owned by Carly Rosenthal and Mike Post. Post recorded, co-produced and mixed the EP, and Will Borza mastered it. I’m very excited and proud of these songs, which are the first Loretti offerings since 2014.

With PR and release shows on hold, my focus is on content I can continue to produce and release, i.e. three new music videos. My situation is stable, and I am not taking that for granted. Every day I hear about my fellow musicians and promoters losing their livelihood and it’s absolutely heartbreaking and frustrating. Both their income from the music business along with their freelancing and side gigs have evaporated... I may have buried the lead, but my day job, for which I am blessed to have, is that I am an RN working at a local hospital during the pandemic. I am equally grateful to have music and my community as an outlet during this stressful time. To be of service to both the medical and music populations is an honor that I do not take lightly. I know that connection and support is how we will all get through this terrible time in our history.

Mike Berault, Bite Me Bambi

Today I made chili. Yesterday, I tried to remember all the songs I knew by heart on guitar. I blew through the ska stuff pretty easy but it was somewhere in the Bob Mould/Sugar/Husker Du section that lost it and got stuck. In many ways a small band like Bite Me Bambi is better suited for a pandemic quarantine situation, I mean... surviving to make music is our everyday struggle living in the L.A./O.C. area. The good news is: We are small and nimble, we can change strategies for touring or pro-
productions on a dime. Try to do that if you’re Radiohead, or Imagine Dragons, or whatever. Bad news is: It takes a while to get on the radar of booking agents and promoters, and hard to regain lost momentum that has been earned pre-pandemic.

Kakophonix, Hvile I Kaos

The outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent quarantine affected me in much the same way as they did other musicians, and indeed those of all disciplines. My teaching job closed its doors, my live gigs were canceled, and my band had a grand total of one rehearsal before such gatherings became obsolete. In short, I lost work and income, just like everyone else.

As such, I’ve fallen back on my ability to record and compose from home. I have worked as a session cellist, primarily in the black metal scene, for several years now, and writing for my own band has always been something I can do in isolation. The quarantine, however long it ends up lasting, has afforded me a unique opportunity not only to expand upon this essential aspect of my work, but also to reflect upon what makes my chosen artistic trajectory truly unique, from both a practical and spiritual standpoint.

Zambricki Li, Magic Giant

Magic Giant got home to Los Angeles from a two month tour on March 7 and it was like being dropped back into a different city. The first couple of days we were all laying low anyway, with life-hangovers from playing 60+ shows. We started listening to Sam Harris’ podcast Making Sense where he went into the concept of social distancing early on so we just rolled our tour recovery into harboring in place. On March 17, I did a stealth mission to our recording studio in Silver Lake and pulled microphones, recording equipment, instruments, all the wires: the basic stuff so we could write and make records from home. Even looking back Shakespeare wrote King Lear during the Spanish Flu. Some people are really struggling out there, so if we can do our job and create art in this time it’s probably the best use of it.

We were supposed to go back out on tour in April, supporting our new single “Disaster Party” which we originally wrote about how the wildfires in Los Angeles brought neighborhoods together in unexpected ways. Now we’re seeing what we can do from here to help out in small ways from home.

Magic Giant threw an Instagram festival called “Live from Quarantine” on our Instagram page last Sunday supporting MusiCares, which helps out the road crews and different people in all aspects of the music industry get insurance and help get their bills paid.

For more stories from local musicians, check out laweekly.com.

FOOD

Deep Dive

Upcoming documentary The Delicacy showcases sea urchin’s culinary journey

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

The Delicacy is the story of the rare and exotic sea urchin — how it’s harvested, how it’s eaten, and the role it plays in nature and the lives of those who bring it to the table. With commentary from some of the most influential and prolific voices in the culinary world including Andrew Zimmern and Ray Isle, the film follows the fascinating historic journey of this food from the ruins of Pompeii to the present day coasts of California, where sea urchin is a prized delicacy not only for humans, but also for sea otters.

“Harvested by hand, risking life and limb collecting food off the ocean floor, because they can make a living out of it,” chef and host of Bizarre Foods Andrew Zimmern says in the film. “It’s done the old fashioned way by real people who are carrying on the legacy of taking food from the ocean that is as old as human history.”

At the heart of the film is a small group of Santa Barbara divers who gather the delicacy from the depths of the ocean including Stephanie Mutz, the only female sea urchin diver who shifted the distribution directly into the hands of consumers, and her partner Harry Liquornik. Also featured is Jim Marshall, a diver who has nearly 50 years of experience and has witnessed the ebb and flows of the industry as it changed overnight from harvesting the dwindling abalone to the plentiful sea urchin. The film follows their journey through the trials of their profession and how they deal with losing one of their own in a shark incident.

“I am thrilled that food enthusiasts all over the world will now have the opportunity to gain an in-depth look into the extreme environments and physical nature divers must go through in order to bring the delicious sea urchin to our plates,” Wise, who shot the underwater photography, said in a statement. “This film was a labor of love and I can’t wait to share the beautiful documentary with food lovers worldwide.”

SOMM TV is the first full SVOD (subscription video on demand) streaming platform in the wine, food and travel space with exclusive new shows, films and educational content created from the ground up by the team that made the award-winning SOMM documentary series. First-time users to SOMM TV can enjoy all available content with a seven-day free trial.
Important Facts About DOVATO
This is only a brief summary of important information about DOVATO and does not replace talking to your healthcare provider about your condition and treatment.

What is the Most Important Information I Should Know about DOVATO?
If you have both human immunodeficiency virus-1 (HIV-1) and hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection, DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- Resistant HBV infection. Your healthcare provider will test you for HBV infection before you start treatment with DOVATO. If you have HIV-1 and hepatitis B, the hepatitis B virus can change (mutate) during your treatment with DOVATO and become harder to treat (resistant). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in people who have HIV-1 and HBV infection.

- Worsening of HBV infection. If you have HIV-1 and HBV infection, your HBV may get worse (flare-up) if you stop taking DOVATO. A “flare-up” is when your HBV infection suddenly returns in a worse way than before. Worsening liver disease can be serious and may lead to death.
  - Do not run out of DOVATO. Refill your prescription or talk to your healthcare provider before your DOVATO is all gone.
  - Do not stop DOVATO without first talking to your healthcare provider. If you stop taking DOVATO, your healthcare provider will need to check your health often and do blood tests regularly for several months to check your liver.

What is DOVATO?
DOVATO is a prescription medicine that is used without other antiretroviral medicines to treat HIV-1 infection in adults who have not received antiretroviral medicines in the past, and without known resistance to the medicines dolutegravir or lamivudine. HIV-1 is the virus that causes Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). It is not known if DOVATO is safe and effective in children.

Who should not take DOVATO?
Do Not Take DOVATO If You:

- have ever had an allergic reaction to a medicine that contains dolutegravir or lamivudine.
- take dofetilide.

What should I tell my healthcare provider before using DOVATO?
Tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you:

- have or have had liver problems, including hepatitis B or C infection.
- have kidney problems.
- are pregnant or plan to become pregnant. One of the medicines in DOVATO (dolutegravir) may harm your unborn baby.
  - Your healthcare provider may prescribe a different medicine than DOVATO if you are planning to become pregnant or if pregnancy is confirmed in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.
  - If you can become pregnant, your healthcare provider will perform a pregnancy test before you start treatment with DOVATO.
  - If you can become pregnant, you should consistently use effective birth control (contraception) during treatment with DOVATO.
  - Tell your healthcare provider right away if you are planning to become pregnant, you become pregnant, or think you may be pregnant during treatment with DOVATO.

Tell your healthcare provider about all of your medical conditions, including if you: (cont’d)

- are breastfeeding or plan to breastfeed. Do not breastfeed if you take DOVATO.
  - You should not breastfeed if you have HIV-1 because of the risk of passing HIV-1 to your baby.
  - One of the medicines in DOVATO (lamivudine) passes into your breastmilk.
  - Talk with your healthcare provider about the best way to feed your baby.

Tell your healthcare provider about all the medicines you take, including prescription and over-the-counter medicines, vitamins, and herbal supplements.
Some medicines interact with DOVATO. Keep a list of your medicines and show it to your healthcare provider and pharmacist when you get a new medicine.

- You can ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a list of medicines that interact with DOVATO.
- Do not start taking a new medicine without telling your healthcare provider. Your healthcare provider can tell you if it is safe to take DOVATO with other medicines.

What are Possible Side Effects of DOVATO?
DOVATO can cause serious side effects, including:

- Those in the “What is the Most Important Information I Should Know about DOVATO?” section.

- Allergic reactions. Call your healthcare provider right away if you develop a rash with DOVATO. Stop taking DOVATO and get medical help right away if you develop a rash with any of the following signs or symptoms: fever; generally ill feeling; tiredness; muscle or joint aches; blisters or sores in mouth; blisters or peeling of the skin; redness or swelling of the eyes; swelling of the mouth, face, lips, or tongue; problems breathing.

- Liver problems. People with a history of hepatitis B or C virus may have an increased risk of developing new or worsening changes in certain liver tests during treatment with DOVATO. Liver problems, including liver failure, have also happened in people without a history of liver disease or other risk factors. Your healthcare provider may do blood tests to check your liver.

Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following signs or symptoms of liver problems: your skin or the white part of your eyes turns yellow (jaundice); dark or “tea-colored” urine; light-colored stools (bowel movements); nausea or vomiting; loss of appetite; and/or pain, aching, or tenderness on the right side of your stomach area.

- Too much lactic acid in your blood (lactic acidosis). Lactic acidosis is a serious medical emergency that can lead to death. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the following symptoms that could be signs of lactic acidosis: feel very weak or tired; unusual (not normal) muscle pain; trouble breathing; stomach pain with nausea and vomiting; feel cold, especially in your arms and legs; feel dizzy or lightheaded; and/or a fast or irregular heartbeat.

- Lactic acidosis can also lead to severe liver problems, which can lead to death. Your liver may become large (hepatomegaly) and you may develop fat in your liver (steatosis). Tell your healthcare provider right away if you get any of the signs or symptoms of liver problems which are listed above under “Liver problems.” You may be more likely to get lactic acidosis or severe liver problems if you are female or very overweight (obese).
SO MUCH GOES INTO WHO I AM

HIV MEDICINE IS ONE PART OF IT.

Reasons to ask your doctor about DOVATO:

DOVATO can help you reach and then stay undetectable* with just 2 medicines in 1 pill. That means fewer medicines† in your body while taking DOVATO

You can take it any time of day with or without food (around the same time each day)—giving you flexibility

DOVATO is a once-a-day complete treatment for adults who are new to HIV-1 medicine.

Results may vary.

*Undetectable means reducing the HIV in your blood to very low levels (less than 50 copies per mL).
†As compared with 3-drug regimens.

Dovato
dolutegravir 50 mg/lamivudine 300 mg tablets

What are Possible Side Effects of DOVATO (cont'd)?

• Changes in your immune system (Immune Reconstitution Syndrome) can happen when you start taking HIV-1 medicines. Your immune system may get stronger and begin to fight infections that have been hidden in your body for a long time. Tell your healthcare provider right away if you start having new symptoms after you start taking DOVATO.

• The most common side effects of DOVATO include: headache; diarrhea; nausea; trouble sleeping; and tiredness. These are not all the possible side effects of DOVATO. Call your doctor for medical advice about side effects. You are encouraged to report negative side effects of prescription drugs to the FDA. Visit www.fda.gov/medwatch, or call 1-800-FDA-1088.

Where Can I Find More Information?

• Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist.
• Go to DOVATO.com or call 1-877-844-8872, where you can also get FDA-approved labeling.

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Trademark is owned by or licensed to the ViiV Healthcare group of companies.

Could DOVATO be right for you? Ask your doctor today.

‡ Compensated by ViiV Healthcare
ART IN A TIME OF PANDEMIC

How artists and institutions stay connected

BY ANNE WALLENTINE

On March 20, California’s lockdown went into effect to combat the spread of COVID-19. Since then, artists and institutions alike have been swiftly adapting to new ways of making and sharing art while studios, schools, galleries and museums are closed.

Digital platforms like Instagram were already woven into the fabric of the art world, but in the absence of physical spaces they have turned into lifelines for community and communication. Many artists have begun to offer livestreamed art classes and prompts, including Bay Area illustrator Wendy MacNaughton, who started leading her 30-minute drawing classes for kids almost as soon as quarantine began. “This is uncharted territory, and we’re all stepping up in new and exciting ways,” MacNaughton said.

MacNaughton, who trained as a social worker, aims to provide “fun, silly, and interactive” sessions to help stressed-out parents whose children are now at home. Her joyful, high-energy presence on screen is balanced by her ability to create an emotional grounding that helps children process their feelings.

“Drawing is a creative activity, but it’s also focusing and calming...it’s very meditative,” MacNaughton said. In the first week, her class drew an audience of around 2,200 live viewers, with roughly 15,000 views over 24 hours. She hopes to use the platform to build a sense of shared community, noting that, “the classroom just got a lot smaller, but at the same time it got huge.”

Other artists are fostering community and communal coping by sharing creative prompts. Dane Nakama, a third-year CalArts student, has been posting a multidisciplinary prompt on Instagram daily since quarantine began. With classes moved online, it was important to him to stay connected to other artists. “Regardless of the specific responses, you feel like you’re with others — that’s what’s exciting,” he said. Nakama keeps the prompts open-ended in order to create opportunities for interaction across mediums. “I’ve always understood the real art to be the interaction,” he said, “whether it be between the artists and the medium or between the viewers and the artwork.”

That interaction is vital for artists to continue their practice in a distanced world, not only to engage with community, but also to have opportunities to display and sell work. Art Share L.A., a stalwart organization for artist resources, has created a virtual gallery on Instagram while hosting daily home performances via Zoom.

Benjamin Cook, an artist and adjunct professor at the Art Academy of Cincinnati, started the Social Distance Gallery after his students’ BFA show was canceled along with those of many other schools. The Instagram account showcases BFA and MFA students’ thesis projects, creating “opportunities for visibility [and] network building.” Cook said that he wanted to use the digital project “to not only help students, but to recontextualize how people look at the experience of viewing art.” This moment, he said, will force a reassessment of digital images as “an important part of how art is now consumed, rather than...a lesser version of a physical gallery show.”

Cook noted that, like physical venues, digital platforms are subject to inherent bias — in this case, through algorithms that can reinforce societal privilege. “If visibility and success are partially linked, Instagram takes the flawed system of inequality that exists in a physical world and heightens it,” he said. The allure of immediate, global connection comes with the danger of reinforcing systemic barriers. Artist and educator Micol Hebron also pointed out the issues of equitable access that arise, from access and understanding of technology to physical ability.

Artists Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III, the co-collaborators of FriendsWithYou, see this as a transformative period for artists to question societal structures. “There’s no choice but to take in this moment and have it be a part of your art,” Borkson said. As they and their studio assistants work remotely on ongoing works, they are brainstorming projects that will support and entertain people during the crisis, including coloring books and online tools for people to build their own FriendsWithYou-inspired art.

“No choice but to take in this moment and have it be a part of your art,” Borkson said. “This moment is bringing to light that we have to act as an organism that is connected; that situations like this we cannot face alone.”

Artists are indeed part of an ecosystem, which includes museums struggling to stay connected to audiences who can no longer visit. Many shuttered institutions are providing alternatives by shifting to virtual exhibitions. The Annenberg Space for Photography released an online audio tour of their latest exhibit, Vanity Fair: Hollywood Calling. That and their Photo Ark guides garnered around 5,000 listeners in their first week of release — a remarkable demand, given that they average around 2,000 visitors weekly. As Director Katie Hollander explained it, art is “providing a human touch and connection — something that we need more than ever right now.”

Like many institutions and individuals, the Annenberg also plans to increase their social media engagement. The Getty has already had a strong response to its call for people to recreate their favorite paintings at home via Twitter using #MuseumFromHome, while independent Instagram accounts like @hemapatel, @tussenkunstenquarantaine and @covidclassics have popped up with amusingly inventive recreations of famous works. “Even if we can’t be together physically, [art] can provide solace and reflection and humor,” Hollander said.

The glut of artistic responses shows how strong the desire to connect and create remains, even — or especially — in times of crisis. But, as several artists pointed out, this is only the beginning. The impact of the coronavirus, and the varied artistic responses to it, will continue to evolve.

Hebron found herself “bemused” by artists’ rush to act, saying, “I think they’re blowing their creative wads,” she said. “This is gonna be the reality for a while. We can take our time and work through it...and lots of amazing things will come out of it.”

While it is a powerful form of communication, art is not, in itself, a solution. For now, as Hollander said, and many echoed, “it’s a moment of humanity.”
MOVIE NIGHT AT HOME
The best of streaming services and VOD during quarantine

BY CHUCK WILSON AND LINA LECARO

L.A. Weekly’s (Streaming) Movie Guide is your look at the hottest films available on your TV sets and electronic devices — from indie art house gems to new movies garnering buzz that moved from theaters to digital video on demand and streaming subscription services. Check this guide regularly as you shelter at home during the pandemic.

Extraction | Netflix

Stop the presses … Netflix has finally produced an action movie worth watching. Extraction stars Chris Hemsworth as a sad-eyed mercenary hired to rescue the kidnapped teenage son (Rudhraksh Jaiswal) of a Bangladesh drug lord. Things don’t go according to plan, prompting a spectacular 12-minute, one-shot action sequence reportedly filmed with a handheld camera strapped to the chest of stunt coordinator-turned-director Sam Hargrave. Written by Avengers director Joe Russo, Extraction proves itself memorable not for its crazy action but for the poignant chemistry between Hemsworth and Jaiswal. On set, Hemsworth is said to have referred to Jaiswal as “the little legend.” It’s easy to see why. —CHUCK WILSON

Circus of Books | Netflix

For decades, the Circus of Books stores in West Hollywood and Silverlake weren’t just a place to buy porn and poppers, they were a safe harbor for gay men still nervous about being themselves. Filmmaker Rachel Mason’s parents, Karen and Barry, owned the shops, and in a Netflix documentary of particular interest to Angelinos, tracks her folks’ battles against censorship and homophobia, even as they struggled to reconcile their son’s emerging sexuality. Narratively, Circus of Books moves in fits and starts, but the story of how the Masons stumbled into the porn biz is fascinating — it’s easy to imagine executive producer Ryan Murphy making the Masons the heroes of a future miniseries. —C.W.

Selah and the Spades | Amazon Prime Video

Five social factions rule the illicit goings-on at the Haldwell Prep School, including the Spades, the school’s drug and booze running posse, led by Selah (Lovie Simone), a brilliant, beautiful senior looking for her successor. Enter Paloma (Celeste O’Connor), a socially ambitious photographer flattered by Selah’s attentions but soon overwhelmed by the labyrinthine turns of prep school villainy. For her virtuoso but feature, writer-director Tayarisha Poe has made a film that’s funny and sexy, angry and complicated and most wonderfully, proudly ferocious. —C.W.

Stray Dolls | VOD

In upstate New York, Riz (Geetanjali Thapa), an undocumented Indian immigrant, is ensnared by Una (Cynthia Nixon), a motel owner who promises her papers in exchange for work. A beat later, Riz is in deep with fellow maid, Dallas (Olivia DeJonge), who becomes both her best friend and biggest danger point, in ways that feel true to the complexities of a friendship built in duress. First-time writer-director Sonejui Sinha is frustratingly skimpy on plot specifics but her resourceful young leads, buoyed by the ever-amazing Nixon, are captivating. It’s been a week since I saw Stray Dolls, and I’m still worried about Riz. —C.W.

And Then We Danced | Outfrest On Demand

Backdropped by Tbilisi, Georgia, and taking place in the dance world, this evocative film explores the nature of dedication and desire, and how one can influence the other. Merab, a competitive dancer who has been training for years with his partner for a spot in the National Georgian Ensemble, finds himself grappling with conflicted emotions when Irakli, a new male dancer enters his world. Delving into the hyper-conservative confines of Georgian society, the film aims to explore LGBTQ+ struggles in an personal way while providing insight into the history and modern culture in a part of the world that is not well known beyond its surrounding regions. —LINA LECARO

We Summon The Darkness | VOD

After rocking out at a heavy metal concert, three stud-n-leather-clad gal pals invite some dudes to party at the estate where one of them lives— owned by her preacher dad (Johnny Knoxville). When the soiree turns deadly, all signs point to Satan, but the true villains are not who you’d expect. This fun little horror film will satisfy fans of menacing movie fare and metal music alike. Director Marc Meyers’ (My Friend Dahmer) takes on old school slasher movies shamelessly referencing the creakster clichés we’d expect from a film of this kind, but it manages to feel somewhat fresh thanks to the performances and in-on-the-joke dialog. —L.L.

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