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## 2020: THE YEAR IN REVIEW

BY ISAI ROCHA





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# 2020 YEAR IN REVIEW

BY ISAI ROCHA

This year has been challenging for the city of Los Angeles and the world alike. The COVID-19 pandemic turned our world upside down, taking the lives of hundreds of thousands in the U.S., exhausting our health care system and forcing aspects of our everyday lives to shut down. In the midst of enduring the hardships of a pandemic, Angelenos fought for societal issues, fought to make their voices heard in the political spectrum and even fought historic wildfires that ran wild throughout California. In a year of many unfortunate firsts, we take a look back at the stories that affected Los Angeles the most in 2020.

## THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

After a month of hearing about a deadly virus that rapidly spread throughout China and parts of Europe, the U.S. reported its first case of COVID-19 on February 26.

After the virus began to spread more quickly throughout the country, President Donald Trump declared a state of emergency on March 13, with the country unaware of the potential dangers the invisible virus could bring.

With the guidance of L.A. County Public Health, Mayor Eric Garcetti enacted strict guidelines, asking Los Angeles residents to not attend large group events of over 50. We were introduced to the term “flattening the curve,” which was the goal for reducing the spread of the disease. Days later, President Trump initiated stricter guidelines, asking Americans to not gather in groups of more than 10 people.

As more accurate COVID-19 testing became available in the U.S., Los Angeles organized testing sites throughout the city and made the tests free for all L.A. County residents.

As the number of positive cases began to increase, so did the restrictions ordered not just on a county level, but a statewide level, as well.

All sectors that attracted crowds were shut down, such as theme parks, stadiums and eventually small businesses.

The term “essential business” became commonplace and applied to sectors such as grocery stores, fast food restaurants, care facilities and utility companies.

For weeks, those were the only places opened to the public and even as businesses were allowed to reopen, L.A. County shut down almost all everyday sectors such as indoor dining, personal care businesses, shopping malls and even beaches.

The use of face coverings became a requirement, as Gov. Newsom signed the order after multiple counties faced confusion over mask regulations in public.

By the fall months, L.A. County began seeing record numbers of daily COVID-19 cases and deaths. For multiple days in early December, more than 100 single-day deaths were reported, and the county reached maximum ICU capacity, as hospitals were being flooded with COVID-19 patients, leading to hours of wait times in emergency rooms.

L.A. Public Health officials correlated the surge in cases to holiday gatherings, just as pharmaceutical companies began to get approval for emergency use of COVID-19 vaccinations.

Both Pfizer and Moderna created vaccines that were 95 percent and 94 percent effective, respectively. The first batches of vaccine doses were distributed to health care workers across the country, including in L.A. County.

“In the new year we will start vaccinating more broadly with a continued focus on equity, using that equity lens,” L.A. County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis said. “Los Angeles County will ensure that vaccines are eventually available in every neighborhood and to all people in Los Angeles, regardless of race, insurance status or ability to pay.”

More than 500,000 vaccine doses were distributed to L.A. County in 2020 and with accelerated production, the county has set a goal to get the vaccines to the general public by Spring 2021.

## A YEAR OF PROTESTS

Cities across the U.S. protested law enforcement's use of force following the Memorial Day death of George Floyd, a Minneapolis man who was recorded lying unresponsive with Minneapolis PD officer Derek Chauvin's knee over Floyd's neck and back, allegedly causing his death.

In a matter of days, Los Angeles experienced a wide spectrum of phases during its protests, from peaceful marches, to looting, to businesses being lit on fire and even countywide curfews.

The Los Angeles-based protests started small on Thursday, May 28, and progressively got larger in size with every passing day. From groups of tens that blocked freeway traffic on the 110 Southbound freeway, to hundreds of thousands who marched the streets of downtown L.A., the death of Floyd sparked a movement against what activists called “police brutality” and attributed it to racism.

“This is about #GeorgeFloyd and about so much more than him. ... It's about the thousands of folks who are killed by police every year, including #KennethRossJr, #WakieshaWilson, #GrecharioMack, #RyanTwyman



and #LeeJefferson, whose families were all at the protest,” Melina Abdullah, a co-founder of Black Lives Matter Los Angeles, told *L.A. Weekly* in a written statement. “This is also about a system of policing that puts targets on the backs of black people, and eats up public funds which could be used for resources and services, like permanent housing, health care, youth programs, parks and libraries.”

While the first two days of L.A. protests saw few altercations between protesters and law enforcement, Saturday, May 30 was the day that conflict escalated between protesters and police.

On that Saturday, protesters gathered at Pan Pacific Park, for what was said by attendees to be a peaceful rally led by the Black Lives Matter organization.

“I left before things seemed to have gotten really intense, but while I was there it was very emotional and overwhelming to see thousands of people stand in solidarity,” protester Britnee Sweat told *L.A. Weekly*. “It was a great feeling to have that reassurance that there are so many people who truly believe that black lives do matter.”

Jennifer Gross, who also attended the Fairfax rally, reiterated the peaceful nature, but then said things took a turn.

“Suddenly, the police seemed to square off on 3rd Street, a few blocks west of Fairfax,” said Gross. “All of a sudden this protest march stopped and turned, and the police started shooting rubber bullets into the crowd. How did a police car suddenly go on fire? I have no idea, but when the police showed up — tensions built.”

As far as police vehicles being set on fire, an attendee by the name of Richard told *L.A. Weekly* he saw a nearby vehicle get vandalized, saying, “Conveniently some decommissioned cop cars were on the side of the road... some instigators lit it on fire.”

Richard continued that the positive feeling he had to start the protest, turned to disappointment, as he watched friends be shot with “less than lethal” bullets, and LAPD yelling out things such as, “Let’s fuck ‘em up.”

As standoffs ensued and angry activists began to damage property around the city, Mayor Eric Garcetti ordered a one-night curfew covering the entire city of Los Angeles from 8 p.m. Saturday to 5:30 a.m. on Sunday, which would be the

first of more curfews to come in L.A. County.

Garcetti expressed support of protests, but also said that he could not let them lead to violent and destructive altercations.

“Even if they block streets, they yell, they scream, that’s what creates change in this country,” Garcetti said of the protesters. “But at one point, you’ve got to take the temperature of the crowd, and eventually it starts getting ugly, we’ve got hundreds in this area ready to go in.”

That same night is when Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency in Los Angeles, as 2,000 members of the National Guard were deployed to assist law enforcement, despite initially announcing there would be no deployment of National Guard members.

L.A. County Sheriff Alex Villanueva added that most protesters had dispersed by the 8 p.m. curfew, and the only people left were “professional anarchists,” who he believed were the ones setting businesses on fire and initiating looting.

Both Mayor Garcetti and Gov. Newsom said they believed out-of-town agitators were sent into the city to disrupt the protests, with Garcetti going as far as calling them “organized criminals” and Newsom refusing to give any specific group public acknowledgment.

By Sunday, May 31, protests took a backseat to the amount of looting that was taking place in the county.

While affected areas of downtown Los Angeles and Fairfax were being patrolled by the National Guard, several L.A. cities, most notably Santa Monica, began to see more store looting. In response, Santa Monica implemented a 4 p.m. curfew and saw the National Guard assisting law enforcement, as they arrested 398 people by night’s end.

At several points during the weekend, stand-offs were created between police officers and protesters, as LAPD often shot tear gas and “less than lethal” bullets into the crowds, and protesters countered with “flash bangs,” molotov cocktails, and at times even bricks.

As the protests saw the vandalization of businesses in the Los Angeles area, Mayor Garcetti responded by saying, “This is no longer a protest, this is destruction. Looting, stealing or vandalizing have nothing to do with the protest.”

President Donald Trump addressed the protests publicly for the first time that following Monday, June 1, stating that he would mobilize

military forces across the country, dispatching thousands to “stop the rioting, looting, vandalism, assaults and destruction of property.”

“We cannot allow the righteous cries of peaceful protesters to be drowned out by an angry mob,” Trump said Monday.

Over 1,200 arrests were made in Los Angeles County during the weekend curfews, and the protests have continued in several cities across the U.S., all in the midst of a global pandemic where Americans have been advised to wear face coverings and stay away from large gatherings for more than two months.

“I could put together a group of advisers. I could put together another task force. I could promise and promote a few pieces of legislation, but program passing is not problem solving,” Gov. Newsom said. “You got to change hearts, you got to change culture, not just laws.”

Chauvin was charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and third-degree manslaughter, but was released from jail on a \$1 million non-cash bond in October.

Almost four months after the Floyd protests began, Angelenos took to the streets again on September 25 after Kentucky Attorney General David Cameron presented the state’s investigation results of Breonna Taylor’s killing to the grand jury. The results led to officer Brett Hankison being charged with three counts of first-degree wanton endangerment for firing shots that went into another home. The charges were the lowest level felonies, which meant Hankison faced one to five years in prison if convicted.

“How ironic and typical that the only charges brought in this case were for shots fired into the apartment of a white neighbor, while no charges were brought for the shots fired into the black neighbor’s apartment, or into Breonna’s residence,” Ben Crump, the Taylor family attorney said in a statement. “A documented and clear cover-up, and the death of an unarmed Black woman who posed no threat and who was living her best life.”

On the same day of the indictment, officer Hankison was terminated from the Louisville Metro Police Department, with Chief Robert Schroeder saying Hankison’s “actions displayed extreme indifference to the value of life when you wantonly and blindly fired 10 shots into the apartment of Breonna Taylor.”

Hundreds in downtown L.A. gathered in support of Breonna Taylor that Wednesday, carrying over into Thursday night.

“Nobody FEELS like protesting ... especially in the midst of a pandemic. ... But ... Police stole #BreonnaTaylor’s life. Prosecutors co-signed,” Black Lives Matter Los Angeles co-founder Melina Abdullah said in a tweet. “Media echoing a narrative that blames Breonna and her partner for her own death. And they want us to be quiet. Nah.”

Taylor was shot six times and killed by Louisville Metro Police after a no-knock warrant was being executed in connection to an ex-boyfriend of hers. Both Taylor and her current boyfriend Kenneth Walker were asleep when Walker heard banging on the apartment door. Believing that someone was trying to break in, Walker said he shot once toward the door, reportedly striking an officer in the leg. As police began to shoot back, Taylor was struck and killed while in the hallway.

In the attorney general’s investigation, the officers involved said that they knocked on Taylor’s door and announced themselves, despite

it being a no-knock warrant.

Both Crump and Kentucky Governor Andy Beshear have asked for the release of evidence from the investigation and while criminal charges have now been filed, there is a federal investigation into whether any of the officers committed human rights violations.

## THE TRAGIC LOSS OF KOBE BRYANT



PHOTO BY TED SOQUI

With 2020 not even a month old, the city of Los Angeles lost one of its most beloved figures in Laker legend Kobe Bryant on January 26.

At 41-years-old, the five-time NBA champion, his daughter Gianna Bryant, 13, and seven other passengers were on their way to the Mamba Sports Academy in Thousand Oaks via helicopter before a fatal crash took place in the Santa Monica Mountains.

The National Transportation Safety Board has been investigating the helicopter’s crash and acknowledged that the foggy weather could have played a part in the accident. Witnesses told the NTSB that they saw the helicopter drifting in and out of the fog, while security video obtained at the 101 Freeway showed a helicopter disappearing into the clouds.

As the news spread, the sports world was in shock, with some of Bryant’s closest confidants, such as Laker legend Shaquille O’Neal, expressing their disbelief.

“There’s no words to express the pain I’m going through with this tragedy of losing my niece Gigi & my brother @kobebryant I love u and u will be missed,” O’Neal said in a tweet. “IM SICK RIGHT NOW?”

For several days after Kobe’s passing, Staples Center and L.A. Live allowed fans to gather in remembrance of Bryant, as flowers, photos, sneakers, basketballs, teddy bears, handwritten notes, and Kobe Bryant memorabilia adorned the area as far as the eye could see.

Huddled in circles, several fans chanted “Kobe” and “Gigi,” while others quietly observed the mementos that surrounded the L.A. Live makeshift memorial.

Los Angeles City Hall was lit purple in Bryant’s honor, while several skyscraper buildings in the city did the same. The L.A. City Council even proposed renaming part of Figueroa St. in downtown L.A. “Kobe Bryant Boulevard.”

Bryant is survived by his wife, Vanessa Bryant and three other daughters — Natalia, Bianca and Capri.

## CITY OF CHAMPIONS

While 2020 brought Los Angeles a lot of struggles and strife in the form of a pandemic, a thread of normalcy was provided by sports, as not only did the Los Angeles Lakers capture their 17th NBA Championship, but the Los Angeles Dodgers won their first World Series title since 1988.

The championships were unique in the sense that they were both won during the pandemic, at a time when professional sports were shut



Bobcat Fire

PHOTO BY NIKOLAY MASLOV/UNSPASH

down around the world, and it was not clear if games could be safely played.

The NBA shut down its season in March, after Utah Jazz player Rudy Gobert infamously joked about the virus, touching all of the reporters microphones and testing positive for COVID-19 days later.

The Gobert incident was a wakeup call for many Americans, as the Coronavirus was widely believed to be an overseas issue. But when an outbreak shut down the entire NBA, it was an early indication of things to come.

The league did not restart until July 30, as the NBA invested \$190 million to isolate the league from the outside world, in what is now known as the “NBA Bubble” inside of Disney World in Florida.

In this bubble, the teams, coaches and personnel were tested frequently and did not record a single case of COVID-19 throughout the season.

With basketball games resuming, in a vastly different environment, the Lakers were able to defeat the Portland Trailblazers, Houston Rockets, Denver Nuggets and ultimately, the Miami Heat in the NBA Finals to secure the franchise’s 17th championship. LeBron James earned his fourth NBA title and Finals MVP award.

The Dodgers and Major League Baseball handled their season differently than the NBA, not only shortening the season to 60 games instead of the usual 162, but allowing for travel between states.

The MLB’s experience did not go as smoothly

as the NBA’s, having several outbreaks lead to game postponements, but they managed to play all the scheduled games and end the season as it usually would at the end of October.

The Dodgers thrived in the pandemic-shortened season, finishing with a 43-17 regular season record before beating the Milwaukee Brewers in a two-game Wild Card series, making quick work of the rival San Diego Padres and edging out a tough series against the Atlanta Braves before making their way to the World Series.

This was the Dodgers’ third World Series appearance in the last four years, and while luck did not fall their way in previous seasons, they finally pulled it off against the Tampa Bay Rays, on the backs of World Series MVP Corey Seager and longtime pitcher Clayton Kershaw.

## HISTORIC WILDFIRE SEASON

Between record-breaking heat that Gov. Gavin Newsom attributed to climate change and lightning strikes sparking fires within forest brush, more than 4 million acres of California land burned in 2020, including the state’s first “Gigafire.”

Los Angeles County battled the Bobcat Fire that burned through 115,796 acres of the Angeles National Forest and destroyed 87 homes. The blaze began on September 6 and reached full containment on December 18, but not before the months-long battle saw as many as 1,600 personnel joining the fight.

The Bobcat Fire started near Azusa and L.A. County Sheriffs said the fire moved quickly,

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burning through more than 1,800 acres on its first day.

As the Bobcat Fire continued to push through terrain in the San Gabriel Valley, it remained at zero percent containment for five consecutive days. In that span, foothill communities in Duarte, Bradbury, Monrovia, Arcadia, Sierra Madre, Pasadena and Altadena were all given evacuation warnings, being asked to have evacuation plans in place with emergency supplies and personal belongings packed. Those evacuation orders were eventually lifted as crews were able to corral the fire before reaching the San Gabriel Valley homes.

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti spoke on the record-breaking fire season, saying, “The climate crisis isn’t some far off threat — it’s here at our doorstep. How we rise to confront it will determine our very survival.”

Fears of the Santa Ana winds pushing the fire closer to communities never materialized, as the winds instead pushed the fire north, helping fire crews along the way.

By September 11, fire crews consisting of more than 500 personnel, using 50 engines, two aircrafts, five dozers and five water tenders brought the fire to 6 percent containment, a number that stood for four days and eventually went down to 3 percent as the fire “outpaced containment,” according to the Angeles National Forest.

Thick smoke from the Bobcat Fire billowed down throughout the county, forcing a smoke advisory that declared the air quality unhealthy and in some cities, hazardous. L.A. County residents were asked to avoid outdoor activities, especially for children, older adults and sensitive groups.

“It is difficult to tell where smoke, ash or soot from a fire will go, or how winds will affect the level of these particles in the air, so we ask everyone to remember that smoke and ash can be harmful to health, even for people who are healthy,” Muntu Davis, Health Officer for Los Angeles County said. “If you can see smoke, soot or ash, or you can smell smoke, pay attention to your immediate environment and take precautions to safeguard your health.”

The Bobcat Fire was part of a record-breaking 4 million acres that burned throughout California this fire season. In comparison, 118,000 acres had burned in California in the same timespan in 2019.

“This is the largest fire season in terms of total acreage impacted we’ve had in some time,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said. “You put it in comparison terms ... to last year, it’s rather extraordinary, the challenge that we’ve faced so far this season.”

The source of the Bobcat Fire is still being investigated by the U.S. Forest Service, and Southern California Edison told L.A. Weekly it is conducting its own investigation to see if nearby utility equipment could have been compromised in the area of the fire’s starting point.

Edison is working with federal investigators and has turned in the equipment in question.

Outside of L.A. County, Northern California experienced the largest fire in California history, as the August Complex Fire burned 1,032,648 acres, becoming the first “Gigafire” in modern history. The fire burned for nearly three months and was ignited by lightning strikes on August 16, according to CAL Fire.

“If that’s not proof point, testament, to climate change, then I don’t know what is,” Newsom said of the million-acre fire.

After California recorded its highest tem-

perature of all time at 137 degrees in Death Valley this August, and Los Angeles County felt a record high temperature of 121 degrees on September 6 in Woodland Hills, Newsom reiterated his ongoing sentiment that climate change is “self-evident.”

President Donald Trump visited California on September 14 in order to assess the fire season himself. In a meeting to discuss the fires, Newsom looked to find “an area of commonality” with the president, as Trump said he believed the culprit was vegetation management, not climate change. California Secretary for Natural Resources, Wade Crowfoot, emphasized that the science of climate change cannot be ignored, to which Trump responded, “It’ll start getting cooler. You just watch.” Crowfoot then responded with, “I wish the science agreed with you,” to which Trump said, “I don’t think science knows, actually.”

Despite the differing opinions, Newsom continued that California needed more federal help, with 57 percent of California being federal forest land, to which President Trump said, “I’m all for it. That’s something I feel strongly about.”

“We really need that support,” Newsom said to Trump. “We need that emphasis of engagement and we are fully committed to working with you to advance that cause.”

In October, the Trump administration denied federal aid toward six of the larger fires that burned through California, but then later granted the help after Gov. Gavin Newsom spoke with President Trump directly.

### JOE BIDEN WINS PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

The 2020 U.S. presidential election saw the most votes cast in history, with president-elect Joe Biden not only receiving 306 electoral votes, but a record high 81,283,098, to President Donald Trump’s 74,222,957.

As of this writing, President Trump continues to contest the election results, going as far as calling out Republican colleagues for acknowledging president-elect Biden’s victory.

“Time for Republican Senators to step up and fight for the Presidency, like the Democrats would do if they had actually won,” Trump said in a December 26 tweet. “The proof is irrefutable! Massive late night mail-in ballot drops in swing states, stuffing the ballot boxes (on video), double voters, dead voters.”

Trump attempted multiple lawsuits against Pennsylvania, Georgia, Wisconsin and Michigan, with Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton attempting to sue those states as well, in support of Trump. The lawsuits did not move forward, with the U.S. Supreme Court rejecting Paxton’s attempt, as well.

The disputes were not resolved by December 14 and the electoral college cast its votes, with Biden becoming the 46th president of the United States, and U.S. Senator Kamala Harris of California being the first Black and South Asian woman to hold the vice presidency.

After the electoral college confirmed Biden, he echoed Trump’s 2016 words of the election being a “landslide victory” for him.

“At the time, President Trump called his electoral college tally a ‘landslide,’” Biden said. “By his own standards, these numbers represented a clear victory, then, and I respectfully suggest they do so now.”

Despite Trump not yet conceding, the transition process has begun for Biden and Harris, who will be sworn in on January 20.

# SCREENS & QUARANTINES

LA Weekly Critics Look Back At 2020 Film & TV

BY CHUCK WILSON, ASHER LUBERTO & ERIN MAXWELL



The Queen's Gambit

## Losing Time in Movies

By Chuck Wilson

Back in March, in the surreal new Covid world, movies intended for release in theaters began arriving in homes via Video on Demand. Devoted movie fans could rent new films from iTunes or Amazon or cable On Demand... but should they? Audiences knew what they'd be getting if they blew \$20 on *Trolls World Tour* but did they want to risk six or eight bucks or more on a low-budget indie or arthouse film?

There weren't many reviews to go by. Left and right, film critics were being furloughed, or worse, their newspapers and websites shuttered forever. It was crushing that so many film voices were being silenced at the exact moment movie audiences needed them most. But the *L.A. Weekly* was still here (somehow). Maybe we could use that space to help people figure out what to watch. And so it was that a smaller but no less passionate team of movie lovers including myself, began reviewing new movies for this publication. The idea was to be upbeat and focus on the good stuff. It was our version of rolling bandages.

These days, with the Oscars on the far horizon, film critic inboxes are brimming with screening links – that's true privilege – but as good as the new stuff is, I find myself dwelling on the movies I reviewed in those first few months of Covid. Why is that?

Life was heightened then, and a movie like *Swallow* had a strangeness that seemed true to our newly weird moment, whereas the comedy *Straight Up*, so brilliantly precise in its point of view, simply made me happy. I live alone (with my dog Janey) and that movie made me smile out loud. I watched it in the middle of the night, I remember, and I was so grateful. *Time* and *Residue*

both showed me worlds I thought I knew but didn't and did so in ways that altered my perception of how memory both tricks and sustains us – a good lesson in this year of lost time. Here are the 10 movies from among those I reviewed in 2020 that mean a lot to me. They carried me along. They're my bubble.

## Chuck Wilson's Top 10

1. *Driveways*
2. *Time*
3. *The Truth*
4. *Swallow*
5. *Residue*
6. *Straight Up*
7. *My Dog Stupid*
8. *Crip Camp*
9. *The 24th*
10. *River City Drumbeat*

## Arthouse at Home

By Asher Luberto

It was a strange year for movies. With cinemas opening and closing due to COVID-19 restrictions and a release schedule that kept shifting to match, it was hard to keep track of which movies actually came out this year. The good news: plenty of films did come out this year, and many of them would have been extraordinary achievements in any movie season.

In fact, 2020 was a lot like an arthouse. It didn't give us the James Bond's and Black Widow's of the world, or any blockbuster that would have played at AMC for three-straight-months. But it did offer smaller movies – films that otherwise might have been lost among glitzier releases – and gave them a spotlight. In terms of accessibility and quality, it was a year of riches, indies, documentaries and

period pieces.

The best of those was *Martin Eden*, director Pietro Marcello's personal, astonishingly vivid WWII epic. It was shot to look like a Bertolucci film, which transcended mimicry and created an intensely pleasurable experience. Another epic that had people talking was Autumn de Wilde's *Emma*, an adaptation of Jane Austen's 1815 novel, starring Anya Taylor Joy, Johnny Flynn and Bill Nighy. It turned out to be one the biggest releases of the year, and was as moving as it was colorful (and it was plenty colorful).

But they say size doesn't matter, and this time, that's actually true. My year began with a pair of heartwarming gems: *Driveways*, starring Brian Dennehy in his final role, and *Crip Camp*, a documentary about a summer camp for the disabled. One of my favorite viewing experiences this year, the latter was the one film I was glad I watched at home instead of at a theater, only because theaters aren't stocked with tissues.

Which is not to say that I didn't see my share of tear-jerkers at home, or that Hulu, Netflix and other streaming services didn't keep the content from pouring in. From HBO to Quibi, Disney+ to Apple TV, it almost seemed like there were more streaming platforms being released than actual movies, which brought up a few questions. Will there be more? Will they make money? Will streaming services take over the theatrical experience?

What's certain is good, bad and indifferent movies will continue to be exhibited, one way or another, and this year wasn't any different. The bad stuff stunk; the good stuff delighted. *Gunda*, *Vitalina Verela* and *Fire Will Come* delivered hypnotic, meditative chills, while feel-good movies delivered light, ebullient thrills. There's almost too many to name here: *Hamilton*, *Wolfwalkers*, *Boys State*, *Lovers Rock*, *American Utopia*, *The Climb*, *The Trial of Chicago 7*, *Dick Johnson is Dead* and *Shaun the Sheep: Farmageddon* were all happy surprises.

And here are a few more surprises: You won't find *Dear Santa* on anyone else's list, but I found the documentary to be as giddy as a child on Christmas morning. Andy Samberg gave a career-best performance as Bill Murray 2.0 in *Palm Springs* and Ninian Doff made a memorable directorial debut with *Get Duked!* And then there's *Borat: Subsequent Moviefilm*, Sacha Baron Cohen's follow up to the 2006 *Borat*. It didn't make my list, but like 2020's release slate as a whole, it's strange, confusing and ultimately rewarding.

## Asher Luberto's Top 10:

- 1) *Martin Eden*
- 2) *Nomadland*
- 3) *Lovers Rock*
- 4) *Wolfwalkers*
- 5) *Minari*
- 6) *Crip Camp*
- 7) *Driveways*
- 8) *Fire Will Come*
- 9) *Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets*
- 10) *Dear Santa/Get Duked!*

## 2020 – The Year of the Binge

By Erin Maxwell

2020 was the year that small screen entertainment became a lifeline to the masses. As folks were forced to stay indoors due to a pandemic, murder hornets, Big Foot sightings, UFOs, raging wild fires, and an election that refused to end, people sought comfort in the warming light of their televisions. As movie theaters remained empty for the

better part of the year, streaming services became the escape everyone turned to, and thus got the bounty of attention in a weird-ass year.

2020 was the year of the streaming service. It became a window into life and an escape route from reality. It offered original movies, amazing series and mind-boggling bizarre documentaries. And while Netflix was the big winner with a Tiger's share of programming, every service got a chance to shine in a year when it seemed every single program was mandatory viewing... except Quibi.

The second season of Disney+'s *The Mandalorian* was not only some of the best television of the year (if not the decade), but it managed to revive an entire franchise. In addition to reinvigorating the Star Wars universe, it also brought beloved fan favorite characters into a new continuity while proving that event television can still exist in a bingeing world. The weekly series gave people something to look forward to each week other than the mounting horrors of the outside world, and the finale offered a reason to stand up and cheer.

The final season of *Schitt's Creek* was another reason to smile as it indoctrinated American audiences with the comedic escape Canadians have been turning to for six seasons. The fish-out-of-water cliché was elevated thanks to great writing, hilarious acting turns, one hell of a cast and plenty of heart. The Daniel and Eugene Levy-created laffer was rightfully celebrated at the Emmys as it gave Netflix audiences a reason to laugh again.

Netflix's limited series *The Queen's Gambit* was able to reinvent the classic sports movie by giving it a *Mad Men* sense of style and charismatic leading lady. The story of chess prodigy Beth Harmon managed to avoid a boiler plate Lifetime-movie template by creating a compelling character-driven story that was truly one of the very best of the year.

2020 was also the year of the dark superhero story. While 2019 offered HBO's critically-acclaimed *Watchmen*, 2020 managed to get its grubby little hands on second seasons of Netflix's *Umbrella Academy*, Amazon Prime's *The Boys*, and HBO Max's *Doom Patrol*, all of which excelled from their freshman outings to become social-conscience programming about fuck-ups with super powers. While it seems each property is tromping on well-worn subversive superhero ground, they all work in their own unique way.

And finally, who the hell expected Netflix's *Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness* to be just the thing we all needed to help us through the early days of the pandemic? The strange story of Joe Exotic and his rivalry with Carole Baskin was just the perfect amount of insanity needed to make a stay-at-home order seem a little less bonkers. The deranged dealings of exotic animal dealers and big cat owners incredibly crafted storytelling mixed with bat-shit insanity to make *Tiger King* the must watch show of the year. And everyone did.

## Erin Maxwell's Top 10

- 1) *The Mandalorian*
- 2) *What We Do In the Shadows*
- 3) *Unorthodox*
- 4) *The Queen's Gambit*
- 5) *Doom Patrol*
- 6) *The Boys*
- 7) *The Flight Attendant*
- 8) *Schitt's Creek*
- 9) *The Crown*
- 10) *Big Mouth/I May Destroy You*

# TYLA YAWEH KEEPS RAGING

Orlando-Born Rapper Finds Success in L.A.

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



**B**ack in Orlando, Tyler Jamal Brown was another kid working at Dunkin' Donuts and getting into enough trouble with the police to get thrown out of his mom's house. He knew that he needed to do something to change his course, so he turned to music and a new name.

"I started when I was 13 or 14," Tyla Yaweh says. "That's when I really started going crazy on music – going to the studio, and releasing music too. When I started releasing music, I was getting good feedback from my high school. It

just made me want to go harder and become an artist. I was living in Florida at the time."

So he has his career path clearly in mind, but he also suspected that Florida probably wasn't the right place for him to hone his already-developed skills.

"I moved here when I was 18, and I just thought it was time to go to the land where everybody makes their dreams come true and that's L.A.," he says. "I packed my bags, stopped everything, and drove to L.A. with my friends. Now I'm here today. It's crazy."

Unsurprisingly, Yaweh points out there are big differences between carving out a rap career in Los Angeles and Orlando.

"Florida is more a retirement state for older people to be honest," he says. "At the same time, there are a lot of crazy things that go down in the streets out there. There's a lot of street activity that you can get yourself caught up in, and you can either be dead or in jail. It's the same thing in L.A. too – it has its pros and cons. But I just felt like I was going to make it out here. This was the spot to be."

His decision to move here was swiftly justified; he was discovered by manager Dre London and, in turn, Post Malone.

"My manager [Dre London] reached out to

ist says that he's grown organically in the two years between.

"Honestly, I always evolved with every song I do," he says. "I always want to make a new sound and something different that the people will relate to. It's just growth – you've always got to have that growth no matter what. You're always going to see growth. You're changing every day and growing up every day. It's great to see – *Heart Full of Rage* wasn't how *Rager Boy* is with all the features I have and all the different sounds. Me pushing myself to do other music that people weren't expecting me to do. It's cool."

The thread between the two albums would appear to be "rage," but even there, nothing is quite what it seems.

"It's an acronym for Release All Good Energy," Yaweh says. "It's not saying go and destroy stuff and be a hooligan. It's about, let out all that emotion and all that energy in the music. Giving positive energy back and motivating people."

The themes on *Rager Boy*, Yaweh says, are of relationships and life observations.

"Things that I've seen around the world," he says. "Other stories that I've been through. The stories that you've never heard before that I've been through in the past. I want to give that to the world."

He's not alone; besides working closely with the aforementioned Post Malone, Yaweh has collaborated with artists as prestigious as DaBaby (on "Stuntin' On You") and Wiz Khalifa (on "All the Smoke").

"Wiz is my idol," he says. "His blogs helped me want to become an artist and do things that you have to do to get to the top. He showed us on those YouTube videos. It's just crazy, to have him as a friend. Me being on his album and everything else, it's just so cool. DaBaby is just dope. You've got a number one artist and he's a kind spirit. His music is amazing so it's so cool to work with other stars and peers."

Those two, plus "Tommy Lee" (with Post Malone), are the most recent singles and Yaweh says that they're fairly representative of the album.

"I just wanted to give people good music to have fun, especially during the pandemic," he says. "Just to have some type of motivation to get up in the morning and even go out here. I wanted to give people fun music, and I felt like it was good music for people's souls and spirits. We have music on the album that anyone can relate to. Like I said, break-ups and stuff."

The album has kept him busy throughout the lockdown, and for that he says that he feels blessed.

"Unfortunately, we're stuck but I'm blessed to be able to still work with the team," he says. "Have these records go crazy. So honestly, it's a blessing and a curse at the same time. We want to be outside with the fans and be able to touch the fans. Give them our music. Right now, we have to do it through the internet. So we're just working, staying motivated, and we're going to keep this thing going."

As for 2021, everything is up in the air but Yaweh has some plans.

"This album is my main focus," he says. "We want to connect to the world, and *Rager Boy* is going to be worldwide. It's a movement, and this is our lifestyle."

Tyla Yaweh's "All the Smoke" single is out now. The *Rager Boy* album is out early winter.

me through Instagram because he saw me doing a show in Oakland," Yaweh says. "I was crowd surfing with barely anybody in the crowd – just a few hundred people. He saw that energy of a star and hit me up. This is right after I did a song with his artist and they loved the song. That's what got me part of the whole team with Posty and stuff. Get cool with Posty and getting to know him, and he accepted me. I made a friend and he's a superstar."

Yaweh's forthcoming album is *Rager Boy*, the follow-up to 2019's *Heart Full of Rage*. The art-



faster. That's unsurprising -- Jack Daniels was lowered to 80 proof but with an ABV of over 57%, this baby is 100 proof. Not to be messed with.

In a tumbler over ice, sipped while writing, Hillrock's Motorhead bourbon is magnificent. The tongue tingles, the throat goes warm with the merest tickle of liquor, then the flavors come. That beautiful woody, corny perfumed punch. This isn't a bourbon for beginners, but one has to imagine that Lemmy would have approved.

Purists will scoff, but the real test is how it tastes with Coke. That's how the big man drank it, and that's surely how he'd want it. The goods news it, it's utterly delicious. It's a strong, hearty bourbon & Coke that is perfect for this holiday period.

No surprises there; Hillrock know what they're doing. "Based in historic Hudson Valley they are the first U.S. distillery since Prohibition to floor malt and hand craft whiskey on site from estate-grown grain," reads a press release. "To date, Hillrock has won over 80 gold medals in major competitions and has established an outstanding reputation for premium quality and innovation."

So treat yourself. And while you're at it, if you have a spare few bucks, treat yourself to the *Ace of Spades* anniversary box set too. (<https://www.laweekly.com/motorheads-ace-of-spades-box-set-is-an-exhaustive-joy-for-fans/>)

Enjoy both simultaneously, and you have one hell of a party.

Available from [mashandgrape.com](https://www.mashandgrape.com)  
<https://www.mashandgrape.com/collections/hillrock-x-motorhead>

# THAT'S THE WAY I LIKE IT, BABY!

Motorhead bourbon unveiled to celebrate Ace of Spades anniversary

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Lemmy, may he rest in peace, loved his bourbon and Coke. So much so, in fact, that fans petitioned to have a Jack Daniels & Coke officially re-named a "Lemmy." So it's somewhat appropriate that, in honor of the fact that the classic *Ace of Spades* album is 40 years old, an official Motorhead bourbon is being released.

Sadly, we'll never know what Lemmy would make of it. He knew what he liked and he stuck by it. But those who have the responsibility and the legal rights to use the Motorhead name have decided that this is fair game, so there we go.

The limited batch of cask strength bourbon is being produced in collaboration with Global Brews and the Hillrock distillery. Only 1100 bottles have been made, and each

one comes in a rather fancy and quite lovely box illustrated with the Motorhead logo. The bottles are individuality numbers -- the packaging is lovely.

Here's the info for the bourbon-heads: "A lush and velvety expression of Hillrock's Solera Aged Bourbon amplified by this undiluted proof. Specially selected for its delicate balance of proof and flavor, as well as its incredibly long finish. A truly decanter worthy bottling. Cask #1 was bottled at 115.6° and limited to 599 bottles, ABV of 57.8%. Cask #2 was bottled at 115.3° and limited to 623 bottles, ABV 57.65%."

But the proof is in the pudding. The aroma is unmistakable; delicate and oaky, yet arguably sharper than other, more mainstream bourbons. It hits the back of the nose way

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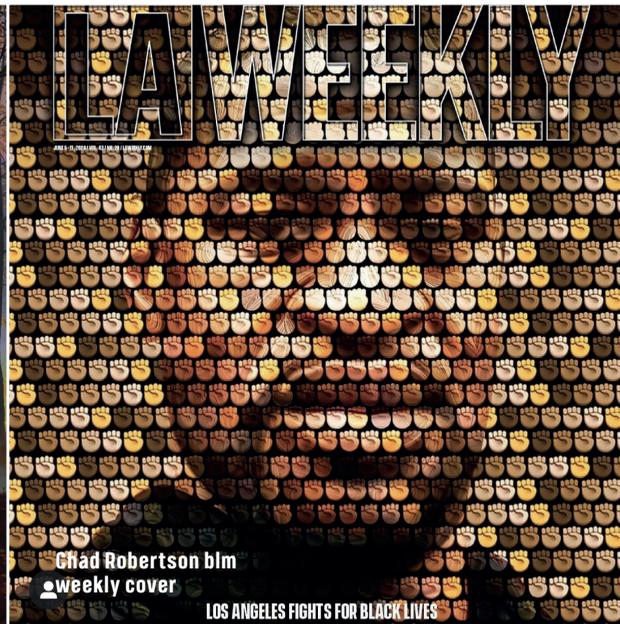
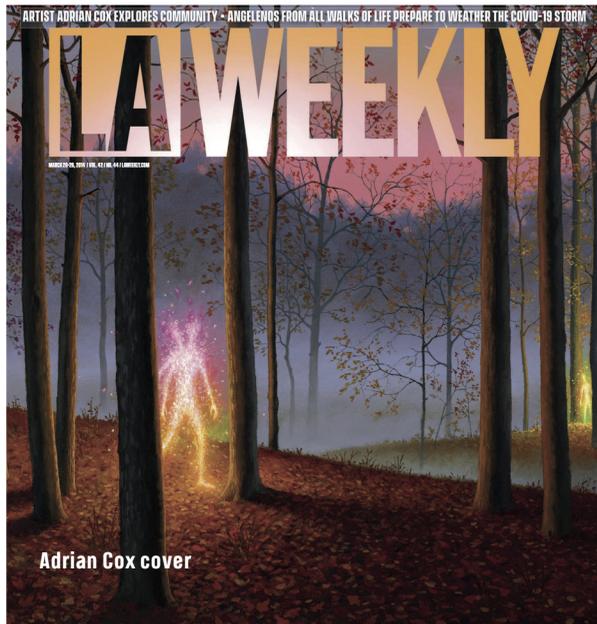
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# PROTEST, POLITICS, AND PANDEMIC: L.A. WEEKLY ARTS YEAR IN REVIEW

How the art world helped save our sanity in 2020

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



Not a day has gone by since the events of mid-March when I haven't felt awe and gratitude for the unstoppable creativity and innovation of the global and local community of artists and impresarios who made these past nine million months more bearable. From nimble pivots to online versions to resource and awareness-raising, manifestations of irrepressible humanity and solidarity with demands for progress, unflinching depictions of cataclysm and soulful oases of harmony, their offerings of entertainment, escapism, and enlightenment held space for humanity in the most essential ways.

Art historians have shown us how the past holds fresh insights for the present. Curators have realized a new focus on representation, inclusivity, and social engagement. Independent artists have reinvented themselves over and over in response to technology and shifting economic terrain. It has been an honor to cover and share their triumphs and perspectives, and we can't wait to see the assuredly powerful and enduring work still to come, that will have been forged in this crucible, as we look ahead to 2021 -- together, even in our separation.

The beloved and influential author Barry Lopez passed away late last week, and these are just a few of his words that have more power than ever: "We have little to guide us but love, and our ability to remember," he wrote. "We need stories that help." Indeed. Following are just some of the stories from the arts pages that form a sort of timeline narrative of where we've been and what we've seen.

Adrian Cox Summons the Spirit Gardener, by Trina Calderon, was our cover story on March 19, the day the first stay at home orders took effect. Although written before that curtain came down, the resonance with these haunting, poetic images of contagion and isolation was truly remarkable. "Cox's new work vibrates around a mythical journey his characters take through power, redemption and, finally, community..."

The Berggruen Institute's Transformations of the Human Project was an April cover story, dealing with a fellowship class of visual artists investigating the interaction of people and microbiomes -- another example of a story begun in the *Before Times* that held new dimensions after. "Among lofty discourses on the definitional qualities of what it means to be human, much of the philosophy has centered on figuring out what



separates us from the rest of the natural world..."

We covered the launch of the dublab x Onassis LA philosophical and intimate phone call interview series, *The Quarantine Tapes*, in April. Host Paul Holdengraber has been going strong ever since. "We have an incredible archive of guests," they say, "that every day grows and documents the times, the feelings, the fears and our hopes."

Lorna Simpson Picks Up the Pieces came out

new lens on older things, to update the things we think we know by casting fresh eyes on things of historical note..."

In August, April Baca reviewed the exhibition *Fallen Monuments* at the outstandingly innovative all-VR gallery platform Epoch. In October, our cover featured photographer Kathleen Clark's *White House China* book project, reimagining presidential commemorative dinnerware as ar-

in early May, in which we spoke to the artist about a new series of collage-based portraits melding historical representations of women of color with present day sensibilities. Made during lockdown, which started just weeks after her arrival in L.A., "the works were all made in the past several months, some in the past several weeks, and are very much steeped in the condition of fracture in which global society is currently immersed."

When the George Floyd and further BLM protests happened in late May and into June, it was apparent that artists and muralists were among the most influential, emotional, accessible, inspirational messengers for the movement for racial justice. It was a blessing to be able to assemble a few of these voices, in the story *Art Helps Us Understand and Take Better Care of Each Other*.

We interviewed the luminous curator and scholar Tyree Boyd-Pates about the dimensions of his new role at the Autry -- curating the archives to flesh out Black history in the American West, while at the same time founding a new archive chronicling community experiences of Covid. And yes, Black cowboys. "I want the general public to see themselves in this history, to focus a

chives of these men's worst transgressions. In November, we took a trip to El Segundo, where *The Free Republic of California* was founded by artist and world-builder Cole Sternberg. No passports required, yet.

By December, it was all about responses to what has by now become a public health crisis on an order of magnitude we previously thought unimaginable. Esther Pearl Watson's *Pandemic Paintings* is "a still ongoing series of nearly 200 works, each no bigger than a laptop, [in which] Watson processes the subtle and cataclysmic changes wrought by a season of public health crises, civil unrest, and political volatility. But she does this through a lens as intimate as the work's scale, with street views of urban and suburban blocks, one frame at a time."

British icon of the organic, ephemeral and mindful, Andy Goldsworthy, offered new works he made in bucolic isolation. "Like everyone else I am trying to work my way through the events of this year," he writes. "The urge to create no matter what is not just a way of getting through but also fighting back. Art has the capacity and indeed the responsibility to be creative no matter what the circumstances or restrictions." Well, amen to that.

# 2020'S BEST & WORST OF CELEBRITY POT

Big names decided to jump in the cannabis industry in 2020

BY JIMI DEVINE



With 2020 coming to a close, it's time to take a look at one of the few things that wasn't locked in the house for most of the year: Celebrity cannabis brands.

For better or worse, there was a lot of new celebrity cannabis in 2020, and there would have been even more if not for the pandemic throwing wrenches in people's plans since March. Other celeb brands with a little more time under their belt also gained traction this year.

There are a lot of different subplots intertwined with the way celebrities dipped their toes into the game in 2020. Some are tales of perseverance, good pot and the reasonable quest of making a buck without blindly robbing their adoring fan base that followed them into the world of cannabis.

Sometimes those fans weren't even remotely in it for the weed – just that piece of the star they adored. One dispensary told me stories of boxing memorabilia collectors calling, trying to get Mike Tyson's lineup shipped out of state. They didn't even want the weed; they wanted the dispensary employee to take the weed out of the jar and mail them the packaging. Other

collectors didn't have a concept of shelf life, and that the nugs would eventually lose their visual prowess.

The first rule of celebrity weed should be to smoke it. Nobody wants to see some brown nugs next to an autographed headshot in five years.

But after that, you get into the different approaches people used to find success, or at the very least, temporary internet torment. With the Tyson Ranch product that's now doing well on shelves, you're looking at the results of a few years of effort to build its current momentum. It's been a phased build to the steady pace of growth and results seen now.

But not everyone looking to attach their identity to a cannabis brand in 2020 was looking for that kind of development cycle, and it's certainly fair to say some proved they didn't need it to find success if their model was right.

While there has been a lot of talk about the price of celebrity weed running a bit expensive in terms of quality in recent weeks, to coincide with some of the year's final launches, one person proved deals and steals are always in. In a world currently defined by \$60 to \$70 pretax top shelf eighths, Carlos Santana and his team decided to sell twice as much weed for the same price.

Now was it the absolute heat you're going to write home about? No. But certainly reputable pot for a \$65 quarter. When I talked to Santana about his methodology on the project, he was a riot. So many times, you'll hear about celebs scouring through pheno after pheno to put their name on in hopes of it being the next Instagram sensation, but Carlos simply wasn't about it. He told me he wouldn't need to see all the wine in Wine Country either, just two glasses. Regardless of his mentality in development, he certainly has one of the more positive debuts in 2020, both with the initial announcement revving up excitement and when the jars finally hit the shelves.

One of the people that took a very different approach, but found equal levels of acclaim in their 2020 debut, was Rick Ross.

When we talked with Ross early in the summer, a few months into lockdown, he sounded like a guy that loved to work and smoke blunts. He smoked two of Pink Rozay during our in-



terview. At the time, Ross noted he only got involved with stuff he loved, like beards and 25 Wingstop Restaurants. When he talked about his Collins Ave. collaboration with Cookies, you could hear the hype levels within his own voice as he literally exhaled what he was speaking on.

The collaboration approach proved successful. The combination of good weed, what Cookies had already built, and his own hype machine proved a success in getting the upper echelons of cannabis enthusiasts excited. And these are the kind of folks that needed the heat to go with a name. They weren't just going to keep purchasing based on his discography.

In the final category of celebrity cannabis entrepreneurs in 2020, you have the people that didn't set the bar too high for themselves. Maybe

they launched the brand with good pot and switched it out to an inferior product after winning a few hearts and minds. Maybe they just sold trash the whole time, completely removed from the brand, process and product they found themselves so willing to endorse.

Yes, there was certainly a charlatan or two, and who knows how many were turned off by the idea of working a little harder given the current shape of the world. But there was a bunch of good pot being sold by people who have found success in other fields of life.

The celebrities who jumped in the game in 2020 found themselves facing the same challenges of a wider industry that became essential. Many met those challenges head on – some will try again next year.

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**FICTITIOUS BUSINESS STATEMENT 2020195416**  
The following person is doing business as Fit Fat & Happy 15740 Sherman Way #218 Van Nuys, CA 91406. REGISTERED OWNER(S): ROSALIND JOYCE BAKER 15740 Sherman Way #218 Van Nuys, CA 91406. This business is conducted by an individual. The date registrant started to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above: 10/2020.

**NOTICE- IN ACCORDANCE WITH SUBDIVISION (A) OF SECTION 17920, A FICTITIOUS NAME STATEMENT EXPIRES FIVE YEARS FROM THE DATE I WAS FILED IN THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK, EXCEPT, AS PROVIDED IN SUBDIVISION (b) OF SECTION 17920, WHERE IT EXPIRES 40 DAYS AFTER ANY CHANGE IN THE FACTS SET FORTH IN THE STATEMENT PURSUANT TO SECTION 17913 OTHER THAN A CHANGE IN RESIDENCE ADDRESS OF A REGISTERED OWNER. A NEW FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE FILED BEFORE THE EXPIRATION. EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2014, THE FICTITIOUS BUSINESS NAME STATEMENT MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY THE AFFIDAVIT OF IDENTITY FORM. THE FILING OF THIS STATEMENT does not of itself authorize the use in this state of a fictitious business name in violation of the rights of another under federal, state, or common law (see Section 14411 et seq., Business and Professions Code.) Publish 12/18, 12/24, 12/31/20, 01/08/21 LA Weekly**

**ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: 20STCP03172**  
PETITION OF Anthony Ryan Vargas FOR CHANGE OF NAME To All Interested Persons:  
1. Petitioner: Anthony Ryan

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Vargas filed a petition with this court for a decree changing names as follows: Present name: Anthony Ryan Vargas to proposed name: Anthony Ryan Luna

2.THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two court days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing. NOTICE OF HEARING Date: 01/26/2021 Time: 11:00am Dept: 72 The address of the court is: SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES. Los Angeles Superior Court 111 North Hill Street Los Angeles, CA 90012 MAILING ADDRESS: SAME. 3.A copy of this Order To Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four consecu-

tive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county: LA Weekly. Date: 09/30/20. Ruth A. Kwan Judge of the superior court.

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The following person(s) are doing business as LAZY LOTION. REGISTERED OWNER(S): 1. CRAIG B. FRALICK 4520 VISTA DE ORO AVE. WOODLAND HILLS, CA 91364. 2. REBECCA LEE ARCHER 4520 VISTA DE ORO AVE. WOODLAND HILLS, CA 91364 3. MAUREEN BURKE 6212 YARMOUTH AVE ENCINO, CA 91316. This business is conducted by a General Partnership. The date registrant started to transact business under the fictitious business name or names listed above: 10/2020.

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