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What the Live Music Landscape Will Look Like Moving Forward
By Brett Callwood
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What the Live Music Landscape Will Look Like Moving Forward

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Back in December, when we published the story “No Access: Why Rising Concert Prices Increasingly Put Big Shows Out of Our Reach,” we had no idea of the horrors that 2020 was about to present us with. That story explored the fact that, with recorded music no longer a viable means to generate income for most artists, the gap was being partially bridged through more expensive tickets.

But the last seven months, and the COVID-related nightmare, have changed everything. Of course, while people are dying, live music and its survival is not a priority. That said, at some point in the future people are going to attempt to host some sort of live entertainment, and it’s worth having a close look at what that might look like.

At the moment, the first concert on the calendar for Inglewood arena the Forum is Five Finger Death Punch on October 22, and the ticket prices (around $50-$100) look fairly standard. But how much that is going to change between now and then remains to be seen, because surely venues that hold that many people are going to have to implement social distancing rules -- not just in October but most likely for the foreseeable future.

Big changes are necessary and concert venues, promoters, bookers, etc… are having to get inventive in order to survive. As we covered in last week’s cover story, one route being actively explored is drive-in concerts. Jordan Harding of Drive-In OC has been hosting concerts for several weeks at the City National Grove of Anaheim featuring the likes of Andrew McMahon and Common Kings.

There were, he says, a lot of logistics to consider. “We effectively created a new venue outside of our traditional venue,” Harding says. “There were a lot of things we had to think through, including restrooms, food and beverage, merchandise, staging, sound and lights, parking - all of those things we had to really think through from the very beginning, creating a new venue if you will. People are craving live entertainment right now and artists are craving performance opportunities. So, we put our heads together to figure out a way to make it happen.”

Similar events had taken place in Europe, as well as nearby Ventura, so there was a precedent that Drive-In OC could refer to. Still, there are questions. Even if people stay in their car, how do the restrooms work?

“We have an app, and the fan can enter the virtual queue from their own car,” Harding says. “We send them a text notification when it’s time to head to the venue. We utilize our restrooms inside the facility, regulating capacity. We take the temperature of the guest prior to entry, and we continually sanitize and clean them throughout the night.”

Each car has a designated area of 150 square feet, so they can get out of the driver’s side and set up lawn chairs if they wish, while still sticking to the social distancing rules. However, a recent Chainsmokers drive-in concert in the Hamptons saw attendees get out and ignore the rules. How does Harding intend to prevent that sort of chaos -- especially if people (not the drivers, we hope) are drinking?

“We have Anaheim Police onsite, we have a significant security presence, to make sure people are following the rules,” he says. “Fans are respectful of the rules because they know that, if they want live entertainment, they have to. We have to protect, keep each other healthy, and be good citizens. I think people are excited to get out of the house and enjoy some live music. So far they’ve been respectful of the guidelines.”

We can hope. The people that do attend are having to pay increased prices for the pleasure, due to the massively reduced capacity.

“It’s an expensive endeavor, there’s no question about that,” Harding says. “There’s high cost for the staging, lights, and then there’s limited capacity. A normal concert, we can do up to about 1700 people. In this scenario, we can do about 275 cars. So, we price everything on a per car basis for the concert, and we limit the number of people in the car as there are...
Congress goes on recess in August. So, we’ve months in now. That’s why we’re fighting so National Independent Venue Association (NIVAA) was formed. At the end, the National Independent Venue Association (NIVAA) was formed.

“There is no way to over dramatize how serious a crisis we’re in right now,” says Audrey Fix Schaefer, NIVAA’s director of communications. “We did a survey of members of the National Independent Venue Association and found that if the shutdown lasts six months or longer and there is no federal assistance, then 90 percent said that they would go under which is absolutely devastating. It’s a big red blinking alarm because we’re four months in now. That’s why we’re fighting so hard to get funding that will assist our survival until we’re able to open safely. The legislation has to get passed and turned into law before Congress goes on recess in August. So, we’ve got two or three weeks now between now and the potential saving of an industry or the collapse of an industry.”

Independent venues, in general, have zero income and 100 percent of their overheads. Plus, they have negative revenue because they’re having to refund canceled concert tickets. Some, including the Whisky A Go Go, have been hosting crowd-less livestreamed shows, but again that isn’t a sustainable long-term plan. Federal aid is going to be necessary, and Schaefer says that they do at least have bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

“That is something that is helping us get up every day and keep developing more support for that,” she says. “That’s an adaptation to the PPP program. Other PPP programs helped a lot of other businesses, but we’re completely shut down and can’t qualify so we’re asking for a modification so that money can be used for our overheads that are fixed, that we cannot get out of paying — rent, mortgage or utilities. This is an industry that has never come together like this. This organization didn’t exist before the pandemic. We’ve also never individually or collectively gone to lobby Capitol Hill because we’ve always figured out how to survive. But they’re just leaving us in the lurch with no assistance.”

The good news is that we can all help by going to saveourstages.com, and making our voices heard. It takes about 30 seconds, and autopopulates in order to send an email to your senator. Hopefully, we can message this across that this does matter. Because, while drive-in concerts provide welcome relief for now, it’s a temporary relief.

“We’ll keep doing this until the city and county say we can open our doors safely and responsibly,” says Harding. “We’re not sure this is a sustainable business model per say, but at least it’s an opportunity for our staff to get back to work and for us to continue serving the community with live entertainment. It’s a stopgap solution but one that gives people hope and uplifts the community.”

Drive-In OC hosts Fitz & the Tantrums on Saturday, September 5 and Sunday, September 6 at the City National Grove of Anaheim.
TELEVISION

HAVING A BALL
L.A.’s Voguing Scene Slays on HBO Max’s Legendary

BY LINA LECARO

Voguing and ballroom culture was nothing more than a Madonna dance ditty to the mainstream before FX’s POSE — a vibrant, game-changing dramatic series that sought to explore the early days of the scene in New York (both seasons are currently available to binge on Netflix). Even before “Vogue,” this exciting form of underground nightlife meshing movement, fashion and thematic spectacle was depicted in the documentary Paris is Burning, which showed how it emerged via gay and transgender people of color as a mode of expression and acceptance, providing a celebratory contrast with what they were experiencing in the outside world.

But what about the culture now? And what about the colorful real-life characters currently keeping the scene alive? With the success of RuPaul’s Drag Race (which borrows from ballroom in more ways than one) and TV competitions like So You Think You Can Dance, a reality format, “in which contestant’s lives and personal histories are explored before the performances, works especially well here. Sharing how many black and brown LGBTQ people are often ostracized by their families and or their communities, these packages also show how houses offer hope and a new kind of “chosen family” focused on bringing joy to the participants and to the public.

Some still feel like the queen of pop appropriated the scene, even though she’s been a huge LGBTQ supporter throughout her career. As a straight white woman, Jones is very aware of that contention, and she’s always striven to educate and celebrate the origins of the culture. Purple Crush (whose music is heard on Legendary) pays tribute to it and their videos have featured several of BIPOC talents seen on the show, too. A new P.C. album is on the way and Isla can be seen teaching vogue classes via Silver Lake’s The Sweat Spot dance studio online in the meantime.

If Pose took things to a new level, it’s now up to shows like Legendary to make a much bigger leap forward for the queer community and for club culture (which during pandemic, really doesn’t exist otherwise). After all, giving credit where credit is due and bringing a true inclusiveness to entertainment and the world, is something that is needed now more than ever.
HELMUT NEWTON: THE BAD AND THE BEAUTIFUL
A new documentary delves into what the photographer and his models were thinking
BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

About halfway through Gero von Boehm's new Helmut Newton documentary The Bad and the Beautiful you realize there have been no interviews with men. Other than the extensive (and quite rare) footage with Newton himself, the voices heard throughout this film are entirely those of the women in his life and work — from his wife and partner June Newton, to his publisher Anna Wintour, and his most high-profile models/subjects such as Grace Jones, Isabella Rossellini, Claudia Schiffer, Charlotte Rampling, and Marianne Faithfull.

Newton became famous in the '70s for his racy and hyper-sexualized fashion campaigns and magazine spreads obsessing over the female form — a very specific, very naked, fantasy-driven version of the female body as an object, that still inspires both cultish fandom and charges of exploitative misogyny. Throughout the film, footage of Newton at work is woven with modern-day interviews that function as surprisingly warm, witty, and insightful interviews from his models and subjects, testifying to the narrative of their personal empowerment and the work's useful artistic and social transgression. A 1979 interview with the late Susan Sontag, who calls him out on the "I love women" trope oft repeated by misogynists is the only moment of discord in an otherwise keenly empathetic documentary.

The dynamic of the models' and subjects' defenses of Newton is fascinating and obviously sincere if rather one-sided, and the huge amount of works and archival materials offers a richly textured and definitely NSFW visual pageant, but perhaps the most intriguing part of the film is the unpacking of Newton's history as a young Jewish Berliner. In a comparison that seems obvious in retrospect, Newton was both repulsed and influenced by the Leni Riefenstahl aesthetic, and had apprenticed with a pioneering female fashion designer before he fled the Nazis as a teenager. He headed to China then to Australia, where he met his wife June (aka the photographer Alice Springs) whom he clearly loved and respected immensely, and who essentially ran his career and studio from that point on — until he died in 2004 at the age of 83, after his car crashed into a wall on Sunset Blvd. outside the couple's local home base at the Chateau Marmont.

Now playing at Laemmle Theaters VOD; $12; kinomarquee.com.
Natalie Flores is Nourishing L.A. Through Coronavirus

By Michele Stueven

Nourish L.A. was born in a back alley in Mar Vista 15 years ago. Nourish L.A. had outgrown the alley and Flores asked if she could use The Wood Café parking lot as her giveaway hub.

“Because of COVID shutdowns and rather than trying to piecemeal our businesses together to try to make sense, this came along and made all the sense in the world,” Mavromichalis says in between unloading boxes of produce in the parking lot on Sunday.

“We had leftover food in our restaurants that we had to get rid of. We were giving it to our employees and fellow co-workers and at the same time Natalie approached me and said boss, can we get together and do something at The Wood while you’re closed? So I thought let’s take our empty restaurants while we’re closed and give out donated food weekly at food drives.”

And the more food the grassroots operation gains away, the more donations they receive. In addition to the other surplus food that has been donated by Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, Sprouts, Sorrento Italian Foods and Sunrise Produce Co., Flores is also handing out thousands of baby seedlings from Shemesh Farms Lettuce Grow to help encourage more local urban farming.

Ceor Bakery (also known as Cast Your Bread) donated a truckload of bread baked just for the giveaway.

“The only question asked of those driving through the parking lot or walking up to the pickup table at the shuttered Wood Café is “how many in your family?”

“There’s no shame in your game coming here to grab some food,” says Mavromichalis. “Everybody is beat down with COVID and the civil unrest and everything else that is going on in this town. We want to put our neighbors’ minds at ease. It’s uplifting watching our volunteers of all ages. It doesn’t really pay the bills, but it does feed the soul.”

Nourish L.A. has taken off so fast that they haven’t had the chance to even put a website together, but donations can be made on their Facebook or Instagram page.
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**SUMMONS**

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There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further hearing from the court.

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**LEGAL NOTICES**

**ORDER TO SHOW CAUSE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: 20SMCV00614**

**PETITION OF Ophelia Paulette Castro FOR CHANGE OF NAME TO: Paulette Ophelia Paulette Castro**

**TO DEFENDANT: RE Ophelia Paulette Castro**

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**TO DEFENDANT: RE Ophelia Paulette Castro**

**TO DEFENDANT: RE Castro FOR CHANGE OF NAME**

**TO DEFENDANT: RE FOR CHANGE OF NAME CASE NUMBER: 20PSCP0009**

**PETITION OF Ophelia Paulette Castro FOR CHANGE OF NAME TO: Paulette Ophelia Paulette Castro**

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