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**Culinary Reunion**

*Love & Salt* in Manhattan Beach is launching a guest chef dinner series, kicking off their inaugural dinner with *Nancy Silverton*. The special dinner reunites the team of chef Chris Feldmeier and chef de cuisine Tracey Harada, who both cooked for *Silverton* for years at Osteria Mozza. As an ode to their time with Silverton, the dinner will be four courses of the chefs’ favorite Mozza dishes, with multiple selections available for each course. Dinner will be $85 per person, with wine pairings available for purchase. *Love & Salt*, 317 Manhattan Beach Blvd., Manhattan Beach; Mon.-Tue.; for reservations, loveandsaltla.com. —MICHELE JUEVEN

**GOOD VIBES**

Cynicism is so last decade. It’s all earnestness and positivity going forward. *Cages*, an ambitious, genre-defying multimedia musical exemplifies this new wave while covering timeless topics like isolation, forbidden love and self-acceptance. The tech is the true star of the show. Behind the trippy strobes and pounding bass, stylized animated videos play, not unlike those looming tech is the true star of the show. Behind the trippy strobes and pounding bass, stylized animated videos play, not unlike those looming.

**Step By Step**

On the theory that the arts — and perhaps dance and movement especially — are not only engaging, uplifting and inspirational, but also therapeutically, Heidi Duckler Dance often stages work at activating locations and communities outside the conventional fine arts space. One powerful example has been their three-month residency workshop at the California Institution for Women. Now the new pop-up exhibition and performance event *One Leg at A Time*, which culminates the CIW project, traces the paths toward mental and physical healing which the dancers and inmates shared during the workshops. *Track 16 Gallery, Bendix Building, 1206 Maple #1005, downtown; Sun., Feb. 2, 5:30-8:30 p.m.; free. heididuckler.org/event/one-leg-at-a-time-exhibition. —SHANA NYS DAMBROT

**Drag Heaven**

Celebrating the wonderful world of local drag at its fabulous downtown locale for nearly two years, *Queen of Angels L.A.* is the city’s only brick-and-mortar retail queendom of its kind. Now it’s growing and re-launching at a new location. The reopening bash is open to all, with a special drag show starring store owner and local club performer Rudeness, along with local “LA-dies” James Majesty, Lady Forbidden, Eddie D Lite, Nubia VonBoom, De La Rosa and DoorKnob. *Queen of Angels, 204 E. 11th St., downtown; Thu.-Sat., Feb. 6-8, 7-10 p.m.; free. queensofangelsla.com. —JUSTIN CAFFIER

**Ride the Lightning**

Sad but true — most of us who love classic vintage cars don’t have the financial portfolio to actually own any. But rap and rock stars sure do, and *Metallica* frontman James Hetfield’s gorgeous collection puts him in good company. The Petersen Auto Museum’s newest exhibit, *Reclaimed Rust: The James Hetfield Collection*, offers fans of the singer — and old cars in general — a chance to get up close to these glorious automobiles; it’s the first time ever that all 10 of his custom cars will be on display including. Complemented by some equally gorgeous guitars, the show also features memorabilia and photos. *Petersen Automotive Museum, 6060 Wilshire Blvd., Mid-Wilshire; Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; Sat.-Sun., 10 a.m.-6 p.m.; $16. petersen.org/hetfield. —LINA LECARO

**The Super Bowl of Art**

Amid the vast expanses of the L.A. Convention Center, the 25th annual L.A. Art Show, curated by Marisa Caichiolo, is touted as “the largest lineup of art programming in the city’s history.” And while it only seems as if every major contemporary art gallery in the world is represented, this year’s edition promises some interesting variations, including an expansion of the L.A.-centric showcase DIVERSeArtLA, which features artists and nonprofits from Southern California and the Pacific Rim. *LA Art Show, South Hall, 1201 S. Figueroa St., downtown; Wed., Feb. 5, 6-11 p.m.; Thu.-Sat., Feb. 6-8, 11 a.m.-7 p.m.; Sun., Feb. 9, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; $40 & $300. (310) 822-9145, laartshow.com. —FALLING JAMES

**Go LA**

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PHO LEGEND

www.LAWEEKLY.COM | JANUARY 31 - FEBRUARY 6, 2020 | LA WEEKLY
Here are the things no one will say in public but have likely thought at some point in their lives:


Over the duration of his 20-year basketball career and his life off the court, Kobe Bryant, a black man, refuted the above stereotypes through his athleticism, his mentorship, his parenting, his image and courage, and his intellect, work and words. With the exception of one fallible, high-profile instance, he was the ultimate hero. He wasn’t a king or saint, but he was ours; every black person is thinking this right now.

When I heard the news of 41-year-old Bryant's death from my daughter in Brooklyn, my heart rocked a little in my chest. A good brother gone. A black man who didn’t fit the intrinsic bias that haunts and lingers in the American cultural imagination was dead.

Feeling the communal loss, I opened Instagram and actress Tia Mowry-Hardrict’s post popped up first: “OMG! I can’t[sic] I’m crying hysterically! We just saw you in your car!” I scrolled through more, reading the sincere outpouring of sorrow, incredulity and disbelief at the tragic death in a helicopter crash of the former NBA All-Star and MVP turned businessman, producer and author. Political pundit and activist Shaun King tweeted, “At whatever cost, the Staples Center should be renamed after Kobe Bryant.”

But when I saw the picture and caption that 13-year-old Gianna “Gigi” Bryant had died in the crash alongside her father, my heart fell out of my body. In all their photos, Gigi’s smile was unfettered and carefree, and with her father’s arm around her in most shots, she looked strong and poised. There was magic in her eyes. That smile, like her father’s smile, said, “I’m taken care of; I am loved. I am cherished. I am a mixed-blood girl who is loved by her father and mother. I am loved.”

Of course she was. A budding basketball star herself who attended Sierra Canyon School in Los Angeles, Gigi thankfully didn’t grow up with the pervasive negative depiction of black men. Gigi’s father was the stuff of legends. Drafted out of high school in 1996, the Philadelphia native was the youngest player ever at age 18 in the NBA; an upstart who seemingly antagonized teammate Shaquille O’Neal with every dribble; at the helm of five NBA titles for the Los Angeles Lakers in 2000, 2001, 2002, 2009 and 2010; an Olympic gold medalist; and upon retirement in 2016, he entered a second act of entrepreneurship as a venture capitalist, producer and children’s book author. Kobe,
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melting rainbows
named after the Japanese steak, showed up to Gigi’s basketball games and avidly coached her, yet he also encouraged and mentored thousands of youth over the years.

But for the black community in Los Angeles, nationally and worldwide, Bryant was a symbol of everything American society said black men were not and could not be: educated, fluent in other languages, successful, kind, good, happy.

While Kobe Bryant was not perfect (he was acquitted of a sexual assault charge in 2004 and settled with his accuser out of civil court), his personal life and actions as an athlete, a husband, a father, a businessman and an author removed him as far from most of these stereotypes as a black man could get. His legacy will remain conflicting for some; and just as those feelings are valid, so is the sorrow felt by those he inspired — and he inspired so, so many.

As an Angeleno, like Nipsey Hussle, Bryant not only represented the spirit of Los Angeles’ community pride and grassroots engagement. He raised our emotional currency with his consistent work with youth. We saw him on basketball courts; we saw him at parks and at the store. Unlike some high-profile celebrities, athletes or rappers who stay in their lanes, Bryant embraced his role model status. Despite his youthful arrogance and his human errors, Bryant grew up, sought redemption and brought us with him on that journey.

The succession of tributes that occurred Sunday attempted to convey what Kobe meant to his fans. The Dallas Mavericks retired the number 24 in honor of Bryant; in Reggio Emilia, the Italian town where Kobe attended school for several years publicly mourned; Alicia Keys and Boyz II Men opened the Grammys with a tribute at the Staples Center (which Keys called “the house that Kobe built”); fans gathered at the crash site and outside of Staples; and The Forum was lit up purple.

Former President Barack Obama tweeted, “Kobe was a legend on the court and was just getting started in what would have been just as meaningful a second act. To lose Gianna is even more heartbreaking to us as parents. Michelle and I send love and prayers to Vanessa and the entire Bryant family on an unthinkable day.”

In South Central — not South L.A. — and particularly in Leimert Park, droves of mostly black people walked slowly down sidewalks, stunned, nodding to each other in the coffee shops, stopping to mince the tragedy of a father and daughter’s deaths, and send up prayers for Bryant’s widow and their daughters, 17-year old Natalia, 3-year old Bianka and the newest baby, 7-month old Capri.

As parents, we are grieving with her; as black parents and, for myself, a mother and new grandmother, I — we — cannot imagine what Vanessa and the Bryant family are going through right now. There are no words for this kind of grief. Now, later or ever.

After witnessing the life and capacity of love for his wife and daughters, for all that he was giving to his respective communities, for the legacy Kobe Bryant left us, a young black man who hustled on the court and off the court, here are the things we should be thinking and saying in public now:


In a 2017 Goalcast interview, Bryant shared that what he (Bryant referring to himself) realized is that, “the most important thing in life is how your career moves and touches those around you and how it carries forward to the next generation….. He realizes that’s what makes true greatness.”

Thank you, Kobe. Thank you, black man in America. Thank you, Gigi, for your all-to-brief magical smile. Rest in power.

Shonda Buchanan is the author of five books, including the memoir Black Indian, the tale of a mixed-race Midwest family caught in an intergenerational bi-ethnic and tri-ethnic identity crises. An award-winning poet and educator, Shonda is editing her first novel about black/American Indian intersections, a second memoir and a collection of poetry about Nina Simone. Shonda teaches at Loyola Marymount University.

Research Description & Purpose
The goal of this study is to learn about areas of functioning in cannabis users. Information will be collected using individual assessments over the course of 12 months. This research is being conducted by UCLA researchers Dr. Yih-Ing Hser and Dr. Larissa Mooney, and is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Would the study be a good fit for me?
This study may be a good fit for you if:
- You are 14 years or older
- You use cannabis regularly

What would happen if I took part in the study?
You would be asked to:
- Attend 4 assessment sessions where you will be asked questions about your cannabis use and daily life.
- Provide urine samples that will be tested for drug use
For attending all the assessment sessions, you will be paid $230 (plus up to an additional $100 if traveling to the UCLA research office).

Contact Information:
To take part in this research study or for more information, please call 1(800)581-9847 or visit https://uclahs.fyi/uclacannabis or scan the QR code to access the link.

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CANNABIS
STATE LEGISLATORS TAKE AIM AT POT TAXES
AB 1948 is lawmakers’ third attempt at leveling playing field
BY JIMI DEVINE

As the state’s legal cannabis industry continues to float on top of an underground market three times its size, the debate has again kicked off around lowering California’s pot taxes to make legal marijuana more competitive with its tax-free alternative. And with a number of communities that don’t even have proper access to marijuana in California two years after legal sales began, it’s easy to see why people aren’t making the drive to the store for their pot, never mind how much more expensive it is once you add in taxes.

In an attempt to put a little wind back in the cannabis industry’s sails, lawmakers in Sacramento began an effort to lower the state’s cannabis taxes for the third year in a row. Assembly Bill 1948 would eliminate cultivation taxes and lower the state excise tax from 15 percent to 11 percent for three years.

California NORML said last year’s tax-reduction bill, AB 286, stalled pending a newly released Legislative Analyst’s Office report that recommends major changes to the state’s cannabis tax structure. What may help this year’s effort is that the report used 11 percent as a possible tax rate — just like AB 1948. The goals of the LAO report were to undercut illicit market prices, making sure California is creating a situation to drive revenue, and preventing kids from getting their hands on marijuana.

First and foremost the report’s authors noted that the most important thing to actually do with the money was reduce harmful use. And if everyone is buying black-market weed, there is less revenue for mandated programs meant to mitigate the impact legal marijuana.

“Accordingly, we recommend that the Legislature replace the existing retail excise tax and cultivation tax with a potency-based or tiered ad valorem tax, as these taxes could reduce harmful use more effectively,” the report noted.

“If policymakers value ease of administration and compliance more highly than reducing harmful use, however, the Legislature might prefer to keep the existing retail excise tax. In contrast, we see little reason for the Legislature to retain the weight-based cultivation tax.”

The wildest recommendation from the LAO report was certainly the move to a potency tax; the LAO said currently available information suggests that a potency-based tax in the range of $0.006 to $0.009 per milligram of THC could be appropriate. But it would be curious to speculate how the state would adapt for other cannabinoids. For example, it’s hard to imagine someone stripping all the THC out of a cartridge but leaving everything else in is going to be able to sell a tax-free product.

Assembly members that included sponsor Rob Bonta (D-Alameda) and co-sponsors Ken Cooley (D-Rancho Cordova) and Tom Lackey (R-Palmdale) held a press conference recently announcing AB 1948. “The illicit market continues to undercut businesses that are complying with state regulations and doing things the right way,” said Bonta. “AB 1948 will temporarily reduce the tax burden on those licensed operators to attract customers to licensed businesses and help ensure the regulated market survives and thrives. Other states have shown that this approach actually increases overall tax revenue.”

Lackey also reiterated just how wide the gap is becoming between legal marijuana and underground cannabis providers. “The illicit market continues to annihilate the regulated market,” Lackey said. “We continue to witness the destruction of untested products in our communities.”

AB 1948 is also backed by State Treasurer Fiona Ma, who authored the bill alongside Assembly members Jones-Sawyer and Cooley. Ma also supported cannabis banking reforms for years before being elected to take charge of the state’s coffers.

The state’s leading marijuana reform organizations are in strong support of AB 1948 as the next step in providing the industry some relief. Josh Drayton of the California Cannabis Industry Association told L.A. Weekly the introduction of AB 1948 by Assembly member Bon- ta and its bipartisan coalition was absolutely critical to the survival of California’s regulated cannabis industry.

“AB 1948 will provide the tax relief necessary for regulated operators to compete against a thriving illicit market that evades the financial obligations which drive up the cost of tested and regulated cannabis products,” Drayton said.

California NORML also said AB 1948 will also make the state’s industry more competitive against the underground pot economy thanks to lower prices for consumers. Ellen Komp, CANORML’s deputy director, noted “with the illnesses and deaths caused by illicit vape products in California and elsewhere, there is an urgency to pass this bill this year.”
Reflecting on Social Justice
Glendale Library’s gallery highlights community experience

BY SIRAN BABAYAN

In 2017, ReflectSpace opened inside Glendale’s newly remodeled Central Library. The gallery’s first group show, Landscape of Memory: Witnesses and Remnants of Genocide, featured both historical images of the Armenian Genocide and an outdoor installation of contemporary photographs of survivors, among other works.

The gallery is one of only three in L.A. housed inside a library, along with the Brand Library & Art Center and Los Angeles Central Library. It’s a small, quiet space in the middle of the city’s busy downtown where visitors can look at art and history and reflect, just as its name suggests. It’s also part of the area’s expanding concentration of cultural venues, including Tufenkian Fine Arts, Ace 121 Gallery, Abril Bookstore, Antaeus Theatre Company and the future 30,000 square-foot Armenian American Museum.

But ReflectSpace isn’t an Armenian gallery. Since launching, photographer Ara Oshagan and his wife, Anahid, have co-curated more than a dozen exhibits using art, archives, technology and eyewitness accounts that represent other experiences of human rights violations and marginalized communities. It’s one of the few galleries in the country dedicated to social justice issues, bridging different cultures and histories that many might think have little in common.

“We want to talk about the genocide as it’s connected to other chapters in history,” says Oshagan. “We’re inclusive and we’re authentic to the voice of the community we’re representing. There has to be a witness narrative.”

“Diasporic identity” has been the main thrust of Oshagan’s career. Born of Armenian descent in Beirut, he moved to L.A. in 1982. A self-taught photographer, he started his first series, “Traces of Identity,” in 2000, capturing Armenian immigrants at weddings, schools, protest marches and in their backyards from Hollywood to Palmdale. He’s photographed the Armenian village that bears his family’s name, and Nagorno-Karabakh — the disputed border region claimed by both Armenia and Azerbaijan — which he traveled to with his father and included in one of his two photography books, 2010’s Father Land.

“I look at my own history and try to articulate that,” says Oshagan. “What’s my relationship to the land there and to the land here? You can really only create art that you’re really connected to, whether it’s historic, emotional or physical.” He’s also documented Californians in the Central Valley, Ethiopians in L.A., incarcerated youth and Asian “comfort women,” the latter a recurring theme at the gallery.

ReflectSpace’s origins date back to 2001, when Glendale’s Citizens’ Memorial Advisory Committee proposed a room at a library or public facility that would address not only the Armenian Genocide, but all “crimes against humanity.”

“They wanted a space for discourse,” says Anahid.

Two years later, the Central Library inaugurated the Genocide Memorial Collection, which focuses on genocides “as defined by the U.N.,” and carries books, videos and DVDs. Ara had exhibited at the branch in previous years, so when it shut down for renovation in 2015, the library director approached him about curating a new gallery inside the library.

Though ReflectSpace focuses on Glendale, past collections have explored — in both historical and “post-trauma” contexts — the Holocaust, American slavery, Japanese-American internment camps, the treatment of Native Americans, the war in Afghanistan, LGBTQ rights, and the U.S. prison system. “Invisible: Negotiating the U.S.-Mexico Border,” for example, contained an interpretation of the San Diego-Tijuana border wall that split the gallery in half, as well as photographs of Mexican immigrant workers dressed as superheroes.

And the exhibits on comfort women have honored the many Asian women, especially Koreans, who were used as sex slaves by the Japanese military during WWII. Glendale commemorates “Comfort Woman Day” every year. In 2013, it also erected the Peace Monument statue, a replica of the one in Seoul, South Korea, located in Central Park, near the library.

Among the gallery’s upcoming shows is “Access: A Century After Women’s Right to Vote,” opening January 31 and marking the centennial of the passage of the 19th Amendment.

“Glendale has changed a lot over the decades,” says Anahid. “It’s always transforming. Part of the gallery is to document that, but also draw in art that speaks to everything. There’s so much polarization in the community, but this is an attempt to connect people. Our communities are parallel, but they never intersect. There’s an effort here to understand and appreciate who we are and where we come from, all of us. There isn’t just one color, one story, one narrative. It’s about us, but it’s also beyond us.”

ReflectSpace at the Glendale Library, 222 E. Harvard St., Glendale. glendaleca.gov/government/departments/library-arts-culture.
LA WEEKLY

FILM

INTO THE WOODS

Gretel & Hansel, The Rhythm Section and more

BY LINA LECARO

L. A. Weekly’s Movie Guide is your look at the hottest films in Los Angeles theaters this week — from indie art house gems and classics to popcorn-perfect blockbusters and new movies garnering buzz.

Opening wide
Friday, January 31

Infamous siblings get a new horror take in Gretel & Hansel, which puts the sister up front as it reimagines the classic Grimm fairy tale. Director Oz Perkins, who also wrote the screenplay along with writer Rob Hayes, takes the inherent creepiness of the classic story from Germany and meshes it for all its worth. Sophia Lillis (Gretel) and Samuel Leakey (Hansel) portray the main characters who journey into the woods to seek work and food to help their poor parents, only to stumble upon the dwelling of a sinister witch. Charles Babalola, Jessica De Gouw and Alice Krige co-star. Out to prove she’s more than Ryan Reynolds’ fashionable arm candy, Blake Lively carries The Rhythm Section. The former Gossip Girl star plays Stephanie Patrick, an “ordinary woman,” as the film press states, “on a path of self-destruction after her family is tragically killed in a plane crash.” The dark journey begins after our heroine learns that the crash was in fact, not an accident, setting her on a path to revenge that includes lots of wigs and sexy disguises — if the movie trailer is any indication.

Limited/Art-House
Friday, January 31

The feature directorial debut of writer turned filmmaker Claude Lalonde, Coda stars Picard himself, Patrick Stewart, as a famous pianist struggling with performance anxiety, stage fright and depression until a free-spirited music critic (Katie Holmes) comes into this producer — scores a job as an assistant to a big-time entertainment mogul, her job consists of the expected duties: making coffee, loading the copy machine, scheduling appointments, taking phone messages, etc. But as her duties start to expand to wife-lying, couch clean-up and more, she soon comes to realize that her boss isn’t just a cheating big wig, he’s a monster. How she deals with that is explored in The Assistant, a study of degradation, crisis of conscience and how power can obstruct justice in male-dominated. If it’s not obvious, this is all based on the Harvey Weinstein scandal. Arclight Hollywood, 6360 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood; arclightcinemas.com; The Landmark, 10850 W. Pico Blvd., Rancho Park; landmarktheatres.com/los-angeles. check websites for showtimes.

Despite its referential name, the Ford vs…. screening series isn’t some car movie marathon. It’s a survey of John Ford, who directed countless classic films, from the Western genre and beyond, influencing filmmakers for decades to come. The series, which started last week concludes this weekend with more pairings of Ford’s films with those by filmmakers who found obvious inspiration and built upon the movie legend’s cinematic style, including Capra’s Mr. Smith Goes To Washington and Ford’s Young Mr. Lincoln; Ford’s The Searchers and Spielberg’s Saving Private Ryan; and Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath with Ford’s The Ox-Bow Incident. Aero Theater, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; full schedule at americancinemathequecalendar.com/content/ford-vs—. Thursday, February 6

Filmmaker brothers Josh and Benny Safdie will make an in-person appearance at the New Beverly, during a Q&A following a screening of their acclaimed film starring Adam Sandler, Uncut Gems. Should be a fascinating discussion because, as noted in L.A. Weekly’s review of the film, the Safdie bros, “take us on a thrill ride… Young and full of ideas, these 30-somethings enjoy pushing the boundaries, and their camera goes places no other director would dare explore.” New Beverly Cinema, 7165 Beverly Blvd., Fairfax; Thu., Feb. 6., $7.30 p.m.; $12. thenewbev.com.
INTO THE WOODS

Gretel & Hansel
/T_he Rhythm Section
and more

BY LINA LECARO

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Opening wide Friday, January 31

Infamous siblings get a new horror take in Gretel & Hansel, which puts the sister up front as it reimagines the classic Grimm fairy tale. Director Oz Perkins, who also wrote the screenplay along with writer Rob Hayes, takes the inherent creepiness of the classic story from Germany and milks it for all its worth. Sophia Lillis (Gretel) and Samuel Leakey (Hansel) portray the main characters who journey into the woods to seek work and food to help their poor parents, only to stumble upon the dwelling of a sinister witch. Charles Babalola, Jessica De Gouw and Alice Krige co-star.

Out to prove she's more than Ryan Reynolds' fashionable arm candy, Blake Lively carries /T_he Rhythm Section. The former Gossip Girl star plays Stephanie Patrick, an "ordinary woman," as the film press states, "on a path of self-destruction a/f_ter her family is tragically killed in a plane crash." The dark journey begins a/f_ter our heroine learns that the crash was in fact, not an accident, setting her on a path to revenge that includes lots of wigs and sexy disguises — if the movie trailer is any indication.

Limited/Art-House Friday, January 31

/T_he feature directorial debut of writer turned/f ilmmaker Claude Lalonde, Coda stars Picard himself, Patrick Stewart, as a famous pianist struggling with performance anxiety, stage fright and depression until a free-spirited music critic (Katie Holmes) comes into this life. Giancarlo Esposito, Letitia Brookes and Drew Davis co-star.


When Jane (Julia Garner) — a recent college graduate with dreams of becoming a/f ilm producer — scores a job as an assistant to a big-time entertainment mogul, her job consists of the expected duties: making coffee, loading the copy machine, scheduling appointments, taking phone messages, etc. But as her duties start to expand to wife-lying, couch clean-up and more, she soon comes to realize that her boss isn't just a cheating big wig, he's a monster. How she deals with that is explored in /T_he Assistant, a study of degradation, crisis of conscience and how power can obstruct justice in male-dominated. If it's not obvious, this is all based on the Harvey Weinstein scandal.


Despite its referential name, the Ford vs…./f ilm screening series isn't some car movie marathon. It's a survey of John Ford, who directed countless classic films, from the Western genre and beyond, influencing/f ilmmakers for decades to come. /T_he series, which started last week concludes this weekend with more pairings of Ford's films with those by/f ilmmakers who found obvious inspiration and built upon the movie legend's cinematic style, including Capra's Mr. Smith Goes To Washington and Ford's /T_he Searchers and Spielberg's Saving Private Ryan; and Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath with Ford's /T_he Ox-Bow Incident.

Aero /f ilm, 1328 Montana Ave., Santa Monica; full schedule at americancinemathequecalendar.com/content/ford-vs-…

/T_hursday, February 6
Filmmaker brothers Josh and Benny Safdie will make an in-person appearance at the New Beverly, during a Q&A following a screening of their acclaimed/f ilm starring Adam Sandler, Uncut Gems. Should be a fascinating discussion because, as noted in LA Weekly's review of the/f ilm, the Safdie bros, "take us on a thrill ride… Young and full of ideas, these 30-somethings enjoy pushing the boundaries, and their camera goes places no other director would dare explore."

**MUSIC**

**GETTING UP AND GETTING OFF FOR 10 YEARS**

Generacion Suicida subvert perceptions of the barrio

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Tony Abarco, frontman of L.A. punks Generacion Suicida, is nothing if not modest. When asked to describe his band’s sound, he chuckles and says, “I often tell people that we’re the B-side of every good record you’ve ever heard.”

That’s funny, but inaccurate. The Latino band from South Central Los Angeles have spent the last decade releasing a string of urgent, melodious and infectious punk tunes in Spanish that are far from studio throwaways. In doing so, they’ve built up an adoring and loyal fan base.

“We started playing in 2010, about 10 years ago,” says Abarco. “We were just kids who we got together, we started jamming out to have fun. To be honest, I don’t think any of us really thought that anyone would ever even listen to our music so we just ran with it and had a whole bunch of fun. Here we are today and we’re still playing, we’re still recording music and stuff. Initially, when we first started, the idea was we wanted to record a vinyl. We were young, so we thought it would be really cool to record an actual vinyl. That ended up happening, and then we just kept going from there.”

Initially, the band’s sound was easy to spell out. The fast-paced punk of the Ramones combined with bands such as Eskorbuto and Paralisis Permanente. As time has passed, they’ve evolved and there’s a dark and emotional post-punk vibe. But of course, the strongest source of influence is their culture and surroundings.

“There’s always been a really strong Latino punk scene in L.A.,” Abarco says. “It was a little bit stronger a few years ago when we started. Like in 2008 or so, there was a reemergence of Spanish punk bands, like a bunch of kids from the hood started playing music. I’m just talking about my era. There were all these bands coming up and all of them were singing in Spanish. All of them were first-generation immigrant kids from Mexico, Central America and things like that. So I think in L.A., that gives it its personality. A lot of bands come through here and they get blown away. It’s not what they think of when they’re going to tour through the West Coast. These kids are speaking different languages, and we have our own culture, our own identity, our own style. It’s even from if you were actually born in Mexico or if you were to go to Central America. It’s a different thing.”

In 2016, a documentary called *Los Punks: We Are All We Have* explored L.A.’s Latino punk scene. Or, as Abarco is keen to stress, one segment of it. “A lot of people my age that I know criticized it saying it’s not what real punk is,” he says. “But in my eyes, there’s no such thing as what really punk is — it just depends on what people want to run with. Another thing is, that documentary really shows the backyard scene, which is completely different. It’s wild. The backyard scene is nothing like other punk scenes. It’s almost like a different scene altogether, and I think it really emphasizes the younger kids who are still too young to be able to go to bars and venues. They have all these other issues. They have to deal with gangs. It’s crazy. That’s how our band started — we played shows like that. I feel like it shows that pretty well. It shows all the negatives too. When people are like, ‘Are you gonna pay the bands?’ and they’re like, ‘Nah, I’m gonna pay my rent with the door money or whatever. That’s what it really is like.’”

Generacion Suicida’s most recent album *Reflejos* came out in 2019, though it was initially rush-released in a shorter form to coincide with a European tour, confusing everyone. Abarco says that, in retrospect, this was a mistake. “The good news is there’s another one on the way.

“We have this thing where we’re releasing a new record every year,” Abarco says. “With this one, we just took our time a little bit. It’s a little different. We’re all getting older and taking influences from a bunch of different things now. It’s not just listening to the same Ramones records every weekend or whatever. Now, it’s like we’re listening to a whole bunch of other stuff and implementing that into our music. The last record actually had some of those elements, so people already have an idea of what the sound is coming out like. I don’t know about a lot of the people who are die-hard fans, if they’re going to accept that. But we can’t just be playing sped-up punk forever.”

That’s true, and that desire to grow while risking the wrath of their devoted fans is to be admired. That growth is also reflected in the lyrical content.

“We write about whatever we see in the neighborhood,” Abarco says. “I think there’s a misconception where people look at the hood and they’re scared — they think it’s nothing but thugs on every corner and people are gonna mug you and they’re gonna rob you. Those kinda things happen but it’s a systemic thing where like it has a lot to do with the fact that there’s obviously a sense of inequality in this area. And so I think people lash out at that, especially at people not from here. But at the same time, there’s a community and we’re all really in it together. That’s one of the things that I write about.”

Abarco is also keen to touch on loneliness and mental health with his lyrics — subjects that men traditionally don’t talk about for fear of losing their “tough guy” reputation. “The perception is, because you’re from the hood you’re not allowed to feel those feelings,” Abarco says. “We’re just supposed to be hard about it. We’re just supposed to be hard about it, like it doesn’t really matter. We don’t talk enough about that so I write a lot about that kind of stuff as well.”

Just don’t expect them to hang around. Says Abarco: “You go up on stage, you do it as quick as you can, you get off, and you’re done before anybody even really notices that you’ve been fucking up the whole set.”

Generacion Suicida plays with Manic Hispanic, Blindhouse and Loose Trucks at 8 p.m. on Saturday, February 1 at Alex’s Bar.
is steeped in bluesy shadows before vaulting into “Sleep.” Even a funereal ballad like “BB’s Momma” lends to such lonely garage-rock interludes as girl-lost vocals add an element of pop enchantment to such lonely garage-rock interludes as “Sleep.” Even a funereal ballad like “BB’s Momma” lends to such lonely garage-rock interludes as girl-lost vocals add an element of pop enchantment to such lonely garage-rock interludes as “Sleep.” Even a funereal ballad like “BB’s Momma” lends to such lonely garage-rock interludes as girl-lost vocals add an element of pop enchantment.

SUN 2/2

Tashaki Miyaki
@ BOOTLEG THEATER
“All I want is your praise/Oh, and I want fame,” Paige Stark confides on “Girls on T.V.,” from Tashaki Miyaki’s 2017 album, The Dream. She coos the lines with a dreamy delivery that disguises the lyric’s inherent sarcasm. As with many of the local group’s songs, Stark’s melodic entreaties are buried in a fuzzy storm of Luke Paquin’s guitar. The combination of Stark’s yearning vocals with Paquin’s cloudy guitar often evokes Neil Young’s duality of folk-pop mixed with harder rock. Influences aside, such pretty pop confections “Anytime” have a mainstream-rock appeal that overrides the sometimes self-conscious mannerisms.

MON 2/3

The New Pornographers
@ THE FONDA THEATRE
The New Pornographers are an alt-rock supergroup from Vancouver, Canada. On the band’s latest album, In the Morse Code of Brake Lights, Newman’s voice and songs are predominant, which is a shame for Case fans hoping for more of her songwriting input. That said, Morse Code is another gently engaging collection of power-pop songs such as “The Surprise Knock” and “You’ll Need a New Backseat Driver” (highlighted by Case’s radiant vocals). Other tracks are more memorable for their titles than melodies, while lesser numbers like “Opening Ceremony” veer too close to anonymous yacht rock. —FALLING JAMES
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