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absurd African-American parodies. The concept is quite simple: “The audience suggests the title of a popular film, and a cast of all-black comedy actors improvise the black version of it,” according to the Groundlings website. *Groundlings Theatre, 7307 Melrose Ave., Hollywood; Mon., Feb. 24, 8 p.m.; $20. (323) 934-4747, groundlings.com.* —FALLING JAMES

**TUE 2/25**

**FOOD & DRINK**

**A Peak Behind the Curtain**

Ever wonder how chefs dream up their next best dish? Find out during *Resy Off The Menu Week,* and get access to the inner workings of your favorite restaurants. Instead of the standard prix-fixe meal deal, it’s all about culinary creativity: from a showcase by superstar line chefs at Rustic Canyon to radical new dishes in development at Maude and iconic eateries. Neighborhood mainstays will serve their experimental concepts and off-menu hits — all auditioning for a spot on the main stage. Chefs can interpret the idea of “off menu” however they wish, the only criteria is that they add a minimum of four new items. *Various locations; Feb. 24-March; prices vary. blog.resy.com/2020/01/resy-off-the-menu-week-los-angeles-american-express/* —MICHELE STUEVEN

**WED 2/26**

**DANCE**

**A to B**

When the ballet *Agon* premiered in 1957 with African-American Arthur Mitchell partnering white ballerina Diana Adams in a central pas de deux, the barrier-breaking integrated pairing was highly controversial, yet choreographer George Balanchine resisted pressure to recast Mitchell. Photos of that Mitchell/Adams pairing became iconic and the controversy faded over the decades, leaving the ballet to join other Balanchine masterpieces on its considerable merits. In the second offering of *Los Angeles Ballet’s* 2019-2020 season, *Agon* joins two other Balanchine touchstone ballets *Concerto Barocco,* set to Bach, and *Apollo,* which like *Agon,* has music by composer Igor Stravinsky. *The Broad Stage, 1310 11th St., Santa Monica; Wed.-Thu., Feb. 26-27, 7:30 p.m.; Fri., Feb. 28, 6 p.m.; $68-$114. losangelesballet.org/balanchine-black-and-white.* —ANN HAJKINS

**THU 2/27**

**POETRY**

**Homeward Bound**

If there’s a musicality in Joy Harjo’s poetry, it might be because the Oklahoma poet plays alto saxophone and flute with her band Arrow Dynamics in addition to her extensive career as a writer and teacher. Last year, the member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation was anointed as the U.S. poet laureate — the first Native American writer selected in that role. “May we all find the way home,” Harjo offers in her new collection, *An American Sunrise.* She takes the tragedy of the Trail of Tears, and reclaims that history by mixing in the personal stories of her family. *Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Blvd., Westwood; Thu., Feb. 27, 7:30 p.m.; free. (310) 443-7000, hammer.ucla.edu.* —FALLING JAMES
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A few short hours after our meeting with rapper/reality TV star D Smoke, The Game would bring him out at his sold-out show at the Novo to perform “Cross On Jesus Back” — a standout off Jayceon’s final album, Born 2 Rap. But he’s humble and patient so; despite his breathtakingly full schedule, we sat down at the brand new Soho Warehouse in downtown Los Angeles the Saturday of Grammy week.

D Smoke is cut from a different cloth. When you grow up in Inglewood, you sit somewhere between the hood and boujee. The majority live in middle-class suburbs populated with families — the other side sees gangbanging, robberies and violence. Born Daniel Anthony Farris, D Smoke found his outlet in music.

Farris is not only a rapper, he’s also a recording artist, producer, MC, teacher, mentor, Netflix star and, most importantly, a proud member of his community. Fame didn’t just fall into Smoke’s lap, he had to work for it. He had to fight for his dreams, experiencing and enduring the hardships and obstacles that come with being an African-American male from Inglewood. Smoke didn’t just overcome them, he embraced his reality and takes pride in showing the youth that they can too.

With a strong belief in God, Smoke is able to preach to the choir via hip-hop. Having won the Netflix reality series Rhythm + Flow, with celebrity judges T.I., Chance the Rapper and Cardi B, it wasn’t only his ability to rap or make music that made TV audiences swoon — it was his story, message, dedication, passion, authenticity, love for his family, drive… really his entire image.

While Smoke comes from a musical family, his upbringing was tumultuous, to say the least. As far back as Farris can remember, his father was locked up. He briefly recalls his father returning home a couple of weeks after his fourth birthday party, only to get locked right back up. He did two separate sentences that ultimately totaled more than six years.

“The second time, he’s supposed to be in for a total of 17 years, but his time got cut,” he says. “The sentence was 17 years, so if he served half of that, it would’ve still been more than what he actually ended up serving. He was addicted to crack cocaine. He was doing all kinds of shit to sustain his habit.”

His older brother banged, direct cousins banged — and Farris’ parents never hide their addiction from him and his two brothers, Davion and Darryl (SiR from TDE). It was these experiences that led him to become more spiritually-aligned.

“It’s not your energy, it’s true positive energy that comes from God,” Smoke says. “Inspiration comes from God, creativity comes from God. When you’re aligned with sound spiritual principles, you’re more equipped to protect that energy and give that off more regularly — even in situations all kinds of other energies are thrown at you. When you inspire people and instill in them values and principles that allow you to maintain that, despite what’s going on around them, that’s a major calling. That’s the role of an educator too.”

Meanwhile, Smoke’s mom Jackie Gouché would go away on tour for weeks at a time, singing background for major gospel artists such as Michael Jackson, Gladys Knight and Tina Turner. Mrs. Farris wrote world-renowned gospel songs, including “My Help,” which was recorded all over the world (and re-recorded by CeCe Winans). This dual existence consisted of love and music in the house, mixed with the scrambling, fighting and wailing out outside.

Smoke was signed by DreamWorks at 11 years old alongside his two brothers, as a boy group called N3D (Davion, Daniel and Darryl), but they were soon dropped.

“We hadn’t released a project,” he says. “We were going to Johnny Gill’s house for voice lessons regularly with his brother Randy Gill. We were in the studio, halfway through a project — had some good stuff, but ended up getting dropped.”

Rather, they took matters into their own hands and created their own independent record label at the house with themselves, their cousin Tiffany Gouché, and a couple of homies. Fast-forward to 8th grade, his uncle Andrew Gouché (Prince’s last bass player, who toured or years with Chaka Khan) dropped off an entire studio set up at the crib. While most kids played in middle school, they’d make beats and record and create their own music at the house.

Maintaining straight A’s throughout high school, a 17-year-old Farris graduated and entered one of the city’s top schools, UCLA, that same year. Initially a Business Economics major, Farris fell back on Spanish merely because he was good at it (plus he knew it was useful). Two years later at 19, he got signed to a publishing deal with Warner Chappell. From there, he penned songs for major artists, such as “Never” for Jaheim, “Takin’ Over the World” for The PussyCat Dolls and “Why Just Be Friends” for Lloyd.

“You’re still asking people to select your creative property and put it on their project versus controlling what gets put out, which lead all of us to prioritize being artists versus pitching songs to other people,” Smoke explains.

Although he’d already gotten signed and was writing songs for major artists, he took on the director position at SHAPE. During that two-year term, he somehow managed to keep writing songs. On his way out from a meeting with Debra Tate who was also his principal at Inglewood High, she offered him the job. She said, “When you done with UCLA and want a real job, come holler at me.” He took her up on it, going on to teach Spanish at Inglewood High for two years.

Inglewood Unified School District board president D’Artagnan Scorza says, “D Smoke is an inspiration and an example of excellence to many of our youth here in Inglewood. As an educator and an artist from our community, his story shows that when we return to and invest in our neighborhoods, we can build hope and opportunity for the next generation. As a talented storyteller, he shows how uniquely suited he is to shine light on the struggles we face while making sure we see the potential that exists within ourselves and each other.”

Smoke taught at Inglewood High School, Morningside High School and View Park Preparatory High School on Crenshaw and Slauson (across from where Nipsey Hussle’s store was). “For a year, I was across the street from Nip everyday,” he says. “I used to walk to Hungry Harold’s for lunch just to get out of the classroom. One day, I went over and bought me some Crenshaw shirts. This was before they remodeled, it was just a T-shirt shop. Couple of Inglewood homies came with me because they’re like, ‘We walking with you. We ain’t gon’ let you go over there by yourself.’”

He then taught at Augustus Hawkins High School, and at the High School for Recording Arts. All throughout his journey teaching, Farris remained a hungry artist, saving every penny he could to invest back into his artistry. Releasing visuals over the course of years, he always knew his music was somewhat different.

“It wasn’t edgy because it was vulgar or because it was super racy, it always had content,” he says. “I feel like something that’s different requires a visual so that people can better understand it. All major artists came out at some point with some backing so my goal was to make it look like we had a label behind us, even before we did.”

Then came Rhythm + Flow. The Netflix show reached out to Farris early winter of 2018. At the time, he was doing a series called “Run the Subtitles (RTST),” which saw him rapping over familiar beats. “West Coast beats that people heard before… classics! I was rapping English and Spanish and putting subtitles. We got a couple of notable shares: Jill Scott shared something she liked. Tyrese shared something.”

But when DJ Battlecat shared, DJ Moonbabu (who was familiar with the producers of the show) caught wind of it. She told him, “Hey, this kid might be dope for your show.” They reached out and said, “Fill out the application.” From there, he still wasn’t sure whether or not
he’d do it. At one point, he actually told them he was going to pass.

“Because there was no precedents set for the show,” he says. “I didn’t know if it was going to represent me well [because it’s reality TV]. I believed I was going to do well with or without the show, so the last thing I needed was something cheesy on my record.”

While Smoke had to take the main stage in front of music’s biggest names — Cardi B, T.I. and Chance The Rapper — he kept it 100, stating the only judge to give him the wow factor was Snoop Dogg. “Cardi, Chance and Tip are big artists, but they’re not from where I’m from,” he says. “So if I’m representing them, then they’re audience members to me. Because I’m teaching them something, I’m bringing them something they’re not familiar with. Whereas Snoop’s from where I’m from, so me stepping up and presenting this new energy — the only person there who can critique whether or not what I’m doing feels authentic, is Snoop.”

Regardless of the fame and followers, Smoke remains grounded and humble. His goal, at least once a day, is to forget he’s famous. “The reason is the awareness of how many people know you or a certain level of fame changes your thought process,” he says. “Now you’re outside of yourself. When you forget, you’re more in tune. You’re more relaxed.”

His solution? Simply spending time with the people he’s known long before the show. But even Smoke is cautious when it comes to his day ones, making sure they never see him in any different light.

“One of the challenges of achieving a certain degree of fame is having to tell people you know and love, how to remain the warm, chill, comfortable people they were prior to,” he says. “The last thing you want is your family who you know and love, how to remain the warm, chill, comfortable people they were prior to.”

With younger brother SiR joining the TDE family, Smoke respected his situation and let him shine — although Top Dawg was familiar with him because Smoke went on the road with SiR, playing keys at his sold-out shows. But SiR states he’s always been the leader of the pack.

“He’s a year older than me and our relationship has grown so much over the years,” SiR says. “Dan has always had my best interest at heart, and wouldn’t hesitate to let me know that himself [chuckles]. Being so close in age has always driven us to work hard to keep (everything) competitive, but Dan has always had an extra gear that we all admire. His biggest asset is his work ethic. He’s relentless. If he wants it, it’s only a matter of planning and time.”

SiR adds, “At this point, we’re all extremely proud and happy for everything happening in his life. His success is our success. We’re all excited to see what the future holds for Smoke.”

Older brother Davion is also an artist, featured on Smoke’s recent single “Fly.” Smoke loves to recount the story behind the making of the record, which showcased the euphoric feeling of him winning Rhythm + Flow. Initially, he intended on “Fly” being his song, entertaining doing a third verse on the already three-minute long record.

“That feeling: ‘Are we flying? Are we lifted?’” he says. “Is this really happening? I did both verses, loved them already. Because it’s a slower song, we could of left it at two. Davion was there, he’s been on his notepad. He’s like ‘ay man, let me just sing you what I got’. Reluctantly, I said ‘alright, go ahead’. He sang his idea: ‘Word for word, it’s just hard. The melody’s beautiful, it fit right in. I told him to knock it down’

They did it all that one night, with no additions. “Fly” is located smack dab in the middle of Smoke’s critically-acclaimed new release Black Habits, a 16-track album that over time got darker than what he initially wanted to release.

“I did that intentionally to give my audience some depth prior to doing a lot of the inspirational things that I naturally do,” he says, speaking in advance of the record’s release. “There’s still inspirational moments, beautiful artistic moments, but I wanted to release a project that really dug deep first so we can grow from there. Black Habits isn’t a title that’s conclusive, that you know what it’s going to be about once you hear it. I like art that raises a question more so than answers it. It allows me to touch on different nuances on what it means to be black: the good, the bad, the ugly.”

Most recently, Smoke returned back to Inglewood High for a pep rally, which he described as “beautiful.” And the first thing he did when he started doing interviews after the show was announce a new scholarship in the city. “I didn’t ask them first, we just set it in motion and it happened,” he says. “I believe that’s how things work. The principal and I were close so we kept following up, then the district caught wind of it and got behind it. We’ve since helped them out, built out with their attendance campaign. Did things to change the culture and the district.”

The point of the pep rally was to inspire the kids to reprioritize their academic endeavors, and also to announce the scholarship. Smoke hopes to be a light shining on the students in situations where people would normally turn their backs. With incredible support from council members, the faculty and students — along with SiR — the scholarship will be given out to graduating seniors, with an essay as part of the application.

A favorite among the Netflix community, Smoke is honored to be selected as the face of their Black History Month campaigns, culminating with a performance on the Netflix campus. “That relationship’s always going to be a priority because not only in the filming of the show, but following the show and the editing stages. I started to meet the actual people responsible for not just making the show, but seeing it all the way through.”

At this point of his burgeoning career, Smoke just wanted to tour. A lot of times, artists create their audience by touring, and then tour again — whereas the show created the demand for Smoke. “A lot of places that now we’d be... smart [chuckles], to go interact with people,” he says. “I’d be a beautiful experience to be able to reach those people who feel connected because they saw us on a show. A lot of people’s response when they do interact with us is the energy they receive for me in person is a lot like what they see on the show — or what they think I’d be in person, which is a high compliment because it speaks to my authenticity on the show.”

Smoke plans to do a full run in the States before hitting Europe, South and Central America, Australia, Asia, Antarctica, a lot of places in Africa — the whole world. But selling out shows is nothing new. Before Rhythm + Flow, Smoke served as SiR’s musical director, opening for Miguel on the War & Leisure Tour. The biggest takeaway? How to stayhealthy on the road.

Doing 33 shows in 45 days, “you almost have to be like an athlete, because it’s one game after the next,” he says while snapping his ﬁngers. “Also the importance of seeing people face to face, giving them the chance to see you deliver your art live, in person.”

Putting together the shows was something he’d been doing for a long time. Even tracing back to his smaller shows in Inglewood, he’d play that quarterback, orchestrating role — exactly why SiR asked Smoke to play that role with him.

With his own live performances, Smoke will be on stage with a live band, incorporating musicianship that’s seemingly innate within him. “I like transitions,” he says. “I like when things ﬂow together so you can keep people in one moment, and ﬂow right into another moment. Those are the things I want to make sure we give them when we’re designing the set.”

Smoke wants his legacy to be that he inspired people to be their greatest self. “There’s always a next chapter to whatever it is that’s going on... there’s always a brighter side to it,” he says. “I want my legacy to be that anything is possible, that God is real, and that nothing is ﬁnal.”

Smoke is slated to return to his stomping grounds at UCLA to headline a show for Black History Month on February 25. Fans can also look forward to the “Lights Out” visual featuring fellow Inglewood native Issa Rae and Danny Trejo.
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FOOD

L.A.‘S DAILY BREAD

The five-year journey to open Bub and Grandma’s Bread

BY MEGAN MARTIN

A t a 6,200-square-foot bakery in Frogtown, the floors are coated in flour and a row of bakers stand elbow to elbow, kneading out giant balls of dough into the day’s loaves. The smell of fresh bread fills every corner. Something good is always cooking at Bub and Grandma’s, one of Los Angeles’ most coveted wholesale bakeries. There’s a Glassell Park sandwich shop coming this fall, another bakery location in the distant future and maybe even a cookbook. Then there is Andy Kadin, founder ad man turned bread connoisseur — and the guy who started it all.

Kadin is a lanky 6’3”, wearing a uniform of denim and work boots. Stubble lines his face and he seems both harried and endlessly patient. He tells his story in rapid-fire sentences, vignettes of life before and after Bub and Grandma’s. All this success, all this bread. It’s something he himself still seems a little stunned by. Currently, they deliver orders daily to restaurants like Osteria Mozza, Kismet, Sqirl and Konbi — and have a waitlist of 100 more hopefuls itching to work with them. They’re beloved at the Hollywood Farmers Market, where their glazed donuts have become something of legend.

“We do the work,” Kadin says with a shrug, “I feel like because of my past and because of how much I loathed my former life, I owe it to myself to do this without leaving myself with any regrets. It requires immense amounts of work.”

He walks around the two-story bakery. Every inch pulses with activity: bread going in ovens, onto metal racks, into brown bags. Delivery drivers rush loaves out the door. They are re-configuring the space, Kadin says, mixing in one room, expansive walk-in refrigerators in another. They’re installing an elevator and an additional oven so they can churn out even more loaves to the cultish masses.

“I wouldn’t trade any bread maker for Andy,” says Akira Akuto, co-founder of Konbi, a sandwich shop in Echo Park and one of L.A. ‘s Daily Bread. “He walks around the two-story bakery. Every inch pulses with activity: bread going in ovens, onto metal racks, into brown bags. Delivery drivers rush loaves out the door. They are re-configuring the space, Kadin says, mixing in one room, expansive walk-in refrigerators in another. They’re installing an elevator and an additional oven so they can churn out even more loaves to the cultish masses.

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“I had to know how bread worked.”

He turned to popular cookbooks — Tartine and Ken Forkish’s Flour Water Salt Yeast first, which he found somewhat flawed. Then he went to blogs, like “The Fresh Loaf” which was a more “bread nerd, obsessive weirdo place,” where he eventually homed in on what he wanted and started documenting his own processes.

Around this time, Scott Zweizen, owner of Atwater Village restaurant Dune, asked him to make their daily bread order. Kadin said yes while continuing to bake exclusively out of his home kitchen in Mount Washington. He then graduated from his “Home Depot oven” to a pizza oven down the road from his place (not ideal for bread baking, too dry). After accounts started hopping on the bandwagon, he had to find an industrial bakery space.

“Great bread is an utter necessity for a great sandwich,” says Zweizen, who said he wanted to do a Middle Eastern take on a classic hippie sandwich when he first sampled Kadin’s bread. “The ciabattas just got better and better. Over time we talked about a sour rye. Again, he nailed it. Just beautiful bread.”

It was the beginning of something big, but Kadin was too immersed in figuring out how to run everything as a one-man show to focus on their popularity. In five years, the company grew to a 43-person team, maintaining nearly 150 accounts citywide. They currently make more than 2,000 loaves per day, going through around 7,000 pounds of flour each week.

In 2016, he brought in his friend and pastry chef Christopher Lier (formerly of Mozza) to help run the bakery and expand into pastries. Lier will have his own pastry kitchen in the new sandwich shop. “He can make all the pies and cakes and croissants and everything that he’s ever wanted to do,” says Kadin. “He can showcase his genius.”

When faced with the stress of opening a new restaurant, Kadin finds it almost a relief. He has funding, a full staff, a clear vision about the food. He has a lease on a 2,800-square-foot space in Glassell Park with built-in skylights and a recipe for the perfect BLT. He had none of these when launching his bakery business. Starting it all from scratch was Herculean in effort, but worth it. He finally found his perfect sandwich bread; he just had to make it himself.

Bub and Grandma’s Bread, 2433 Riverside Drive, Elysian Valley; bubandgrandmas.com.

“If I was going to do this I would have to explain to a bread baker what I wanted,” he says. “I had to know how bread worked.”

He turned to popular cookbooks — Tartine and Ken Forkish’s Flour Water Salt Yeast first, which he found somewhat flawed. Then he went to blogs, like “The Fresh Loaf” which was a more “bread nerd, obsessive weirdo place,” where he eventually homed in on what he wanted and started documenting his own processes.

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GOODBYE, HELLO AND WELCOME BACK

The emotional conclusion to an animated journey, Stephen King done right and a triumphant return.

BY ERIN MAXWELL

There’s a battle brewing, and it’s being fought by streaming services, cable TV and primetime television. If you’re too weak to resist, “UnBinged” is here to help, telling you what to hate, what to love and what to love to hate. This week: the end of a cartoon anti-hero, the beginning of suspenseful new series and the return of a sci-fi hero.

BoJack Horseman | Netflix

It might be unexpected that one of the most heartfelt, gut-wrenching dramas on television happens to be a cartoon, but Netflix’s BoJack Horseman is a show that has been defying expectations for the better part of six years. It’s been a long journey for the equestrian nincompoop, and yet over the last seven seasons, BoJack (Will Arnett) has developed a character arc that rivals Breaking Bad’s Walter White or Game of Thrones’ Jamie Lannister. Seriously.

The events of the final season hold the newly reformed BoJack accountable for previous misdeeds, including inadvertently causing the death of his former co-star Sarah Lynn. Though the former sitcom star has gotten his life together, as well as a new teaching gig, the damage he caused to friends and family catches up with him, forcing him to finally face his demons.

BoJack has always been deeply flawed. An addict with anger issues, he’s been a bad influence — and sometimes just a bad person. And while he attempted to make good, the sins of his past remain a constant for viewers. He tries. He fails. He tries again and he fails again. His constant fuck-ups drag us down with him, both to judge and to laugh and to contemplate the fuck-ups of our own life.

And that is the greatness of BoJack Horseman. It’s a dark, winding road of a show filled with critter caricatures and puns to help cushion its brutality. The adorable animal names, funny booze-fueled antics and hundreds of super-famous voice actors never distract viewers from the brilliant pessimism that drives the show, a fatalistic ideology filled with remorse and the brilliant pessimism that drives the show, and a final chapter for a great character.

The Outer | HBO

Terry Maitland (Jason Bateman) is a small-town baseball coach and teacher who was seen by witnesses abducting a local boy and later emerging from the woods covered in blood. He is seen on video in the area, he was witnessed by locals with the lad and he left behind a trail of DNA evidence a mile wide. But he was also 70 miles away attending a teacher’s conference at the same exact time. He is on video in a field, witnessed by locals and left evidence that places him nowhere near the scene of the crime. It is a conundrum for local officials, especially Detective Ralph Anderson (Ben Mendelsohn).

Based on Stephen King’s 2018 novel, The Outsider is a creature feature of the highest order, a monster movie that is anything but boilerplate. The miniseries is a slow burn, taking its time to build on the approaching dread, a luxury sorely lacking in several previous King adaptations. And because it is a series, it has time to construct a specific class of terror: suspense and an unfolding narrative that keeps us guessing.

The show is given its depth thanks to the stellar cast. A particular stand-out is Cynthia Erivo, who plays investigator Holly Gibney, a genius who brandishes Occam’s razor as her weapon of choice. She is brought into the case by Anderson to help hunt the boogeyman.

The Outsider is another win for HBO, and an example of its ability to elevate entertainment.

Star Trek: Picard | CBS All Access

What the Starfleet Enterprise is to Starfleet, Star Trek: Picard is to CBS All Access: A flagship show meant to show off the service’s best assets. But is it worth the subscription? Short answer: Yes. But only if you are already a fan.

The show follows the venerable Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) in his twilight years. Picard’s star treks are far behind him, his association with Starfleet all but severed, with the exception of a loyal hound. Nursing his bruised ego, Picard is hiding, waiting to die, at least until he meets Dahj (Isa Briones). Somehow tied to the late, great Data (Brent Spiner), in a welcome guest appearance, the young woman offers a fun continuation of Star Trek: The Next Generation and a final chapter for a great character.

But it won’t be too exciting for new fans. Picard requires a bit of homework. Movies need to be watched and series needs to be binged to get it all. It’s a massive undertaking for the unindoctrinated. Still, for folks already onboard with the second generation of Trek (versus the Shatner era) and for those who always wanted to be, Picard is a bold and nostalgic treat.
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A VIEW DOWN MEMORY LANE

The photos in “Vanity Fair: Hollywood Calling” have their own red carpet energy

BY KATHY LEONARDO

I n honor of Vanity Fair’s 2020 Hollywood Issue, and the 92nd Academy Awards, the Annenberg Space for Photography opened the new exhibition "Hollywood Calling" attracting red carpet-ready celebrities like Demi Moore, Charlize Theron and Sharon Stone, among others.

Featuring 150 images by 50 photographers, the idea was born out of a conversation between Walls Annenberg and David Friend, Vanity Fair creative development editor. Friend and co-curator Susan White — herself the former Fair co-curator — have organized a riveting and nostalgic exhibit spanning four decades.

Katie Hollander, director of the Annenberg Space for Photography, said it was thrilling to see so many iconic Vanity Fair images gathered in one place, and the exhibition includes a 20-minute film offering an inside look at the making of the 2020 Hollywood Issue.

“It is both a walk down memory lane, as well as a reflection on the impact these photographs and actors have had on our culture,” she tells the Weekly. “Just look at Demi Moore’s portrait, with her pregnant and naked on the cover, which was shocking at the time. Or the image of Jennifer Lopez in lacy bottoms paying homage to 1940s pinup images. These images capture much more than just a portrait, they reflect a moment in history.”

Instead of organizing the exhibition in chronological order, the curators have chosen to divide it into categories. These star-studded vignettes are grouped in sections, crossing timelines by decades. The categories included: Icons of Icons, Oscar Night, Family Affair, Actors as Actors, Filmmakers & Moguls, and so on.

Firooz Zahedi photographed Jennifer Lopez in 1998. “She’s an amazing woman. Love her! She’s 50 and she still rocks!” he glows.

The Elizabeth Taylor cover story was Zahedi’s favorite assignment. “I wanted to get her a cover to promote her work to fight AIDS. She had already been on the cover once before shot by Helmut Newton in that Helmuty style — kind of tough and unapproachable,” he says. “I asked if I could shoot her again. They said only if she’d hold a condom in her hand. I asked her and she said yes.”

You can find Zahedi’s cover shot of Elizabeth Taylor exhibited as part of the Vanity Fair Hollywood cover issue and portfolio wall titled “The Cover Story.” Zahedi adds, “It was a huge success for the magazine, and everyone wanted to use those photos.”

Zahedi gave the rights to three publications in Europe for a donation of $75,000 to the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation. “I raised over $80,000 for her foundation. That was a lot back in 1992. She was delighted and so was I. It feels good to do good. I miss that lady big time.”

A quintessential Barbara Streisand photo was shot by the late Herb Ritts in 1991 at Streisand’s own Beverly Hills garden. This celebrated portraitist captured classic Hollywood elegance with his painterly style.

A photo snapped by Mark Seliger pictured a group of men at the 2016 Vanity Fair Oscar Party clowning around. You can almost hear the laughter echoing from the photo which was dubbed “The Funnymen”. It features Larry David, Judd Apatow, Martin Short, Bill Maher, David Steinberg and Eugene Levy having a great time. You’ll find this photo on the Kings & Queens of Comedy wall, along with a hilarious picture of Amy Schumer with her couch on fire by Annie Leibovitz.

A deeply moving image contributed by Mark Seliger featured Kobe Bryant with his wife Vanessa. The photo was taken in 2018 at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party, after Bryant won an Academy Award as the executive producer of Dear Basketball for Best Animated Short Film.

Justin Bishop, Vanity Fair staff photographer from 2014-18, nabbed the Lady Gaga and Mark Ronson image after their Oscar win in 2019. “I had seen her arrive, seen her go to the bar for a glass of champagne, and I had seen him earlier about halfway across the room. So I headed back in his direction and shot around there, hoping she’d find him and they’d have a moment,” he recalls. “They did!”

The imagery and artistic voice of Leibovitz, who was the principal Vanity Fair photographer for many years, dominates the exhibition — perhaps to the detriment of a wider, more eclectic, balanced range of creative perspectives. Some of her most iconic works on display are: Whoopi Goldberg in a milk bath, Jack Nicholson golfing, and Tony Curtis and Jack Lemon in drag as they recreated their roles in the 1959 hit Some Like it Hot.

Attendees to the exhibition can, if they are so inspired, partake in a special installation created by Mark Seliger. Each year, he furnishes a photo-op room at the Vanity Fair Oscar Party, and Seliger has replicated this year’s room for the exhibition so that the rest of us common folk can take selfies or set up our own shots — just like those who were actually invited.

Vanity Fair: Hollywood Calling runs through July 26 at the Annenberg Space for Photography, 2000 Avenue of the Stars, Century City; annenbergphotospace.org.
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