Wiz Khalifa is bringing his long-awaited cannabis line to the biggest legal market in the world.

By Jimi Devine
Suspect Arrested and Charged for Murder of Brianna Kuper

Shawn Laval Smith has been charged for murder after an alleged knife attack left a young woman dead inside an L.A. furniture store.

By Isai Rocha

The Los Angeles District Attorney’s office presented a murder charge against Shawn Laval Smith after Smith allegedly stabbed a furniture store worker to death on Jan. January 13.

Along with the murder charge, Smith is also charged with a related allegation that he used a “deadly and dangerous weapon, a knife,” in the murder of 24-year-old Brianna Kuper.

“Those who show no compassion for human life will face serious consequences,” District Attorney George Gascón said in a statement. “The murder of Brianna Kuper has left Los Angeles County devastated and my office is reaching out to her family to provide any services they may need.”

Smith, 31, was found and detained by Pasadena PD on Jan. January 19, before being taken into custody by LAPD.

“We can confirm, Shawn Laval Smith, the suspect responsible for the murder of Brianna Kuper, is in custody, after being located and detained by Pasadena PD around 11:50 a.m. on Jan. January 19, before being taken into custody by LAPD.”

As of this writing, there is no known motive for the attack.

White House Launches Free COVID Test Resource

The federal government launched a website that allows all U.S. households to order free COVID-19 at-home tests.

The site was originally supposed to go live Wednesday, Jan. January 19, but launched a day early, at covidtests.gov.

“Every home in the U.S. is now eligible to order 4 free at-home, rapid COVID-19 tests,” California Public Health tweeted Tuesday. “Getting tested, along with vaccinations and masking, help us reduce the chances of spreading COVID-19 and its variants.”

There is a limit of four tests per household, which ship household and ship within 7-12 business days.

The free at-home tests are an alternative to already free COVID-19 testing sites around L.A. County and do not affect the ability to be reimbursed by insurance for over-the-counter tests.

As of Jan. January 15, “most health plans” will cover the reimbursement of over-the-counter COVID-19 tests, up to $12 per test.

With a receipt of purchase, a claim may be made to your insurance provider, although some retailers may cover the costs up front. Up to eight tests may be reimbursed per month.

“The Biden-Harris Administration is strongly incentivizing plans to offer at-home over-the-counter COVID-19 tests through preferred pharmacies, retailers and online and mail-order programs without up-front out-of-pocket costs to you,” The U.S. Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website said. “Consumers can find out from your plan if it is providing such direct coverage of over-the-counter COVID-19 tests. You will not need to seek reimbursement later for tests received through such a program.”
**NEW YEAR, NEW YOU**

**BY LA WEEKLY**

It feels like we say this every year, but we are SO ready to leave the past year behind and embrace the new! We are dedicating this one to enjoying and enhancing ourselves. Join us in making 2022 the ultimate year of self-care and self-love. From at-home rituals and routines to new adventures and local happenings, here are a few of the experiences we are excited to give ourselves, making 2022 the best year yet!

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After seven years of percolating, Khalifa Kush is finally hitting California store shelves this week.

For the better part of a decade, its namesake and founder Wiz Khalifa has eyeballed the cannabis space. One might even argue Khalifa Kush is a legacy idea that took a little time to execute right. But the work is done and the weed, which we sampled ourselves before tomorrow’s big launch, was exceptional.

We sat down with Khalifa a week out from his big launch. While everyone knows like puff, puff, he dove into his first experiences with more elite cannabis to give context to the path that’s led to the first Khalifa Kush drop tomorrow.

“I started traveling going on tour, of course needing it on the road, I’d get it a lot of different places. Some kids would have packs sent in, others grew it,” Khalifa told L.A. Weekly. “But I didn’t run into the best I ever smoked until I got out here on the west coast. And that’s when I met Berner.”

Khalifa describes meeting the Cookies co-founder as his personal Renaissance moment when it came to smoking the heat. He’d loved what he thought was great pot already, but the finest wares California had to offer introduced him to another level of excitement.

“And he actually showed me like real plants, and showed me how to cure and things like that stuff,” Khalifa said. “Stuff I’d never seen and never really even knew about. He taught me about phenos and different genetics, and all of that stuff.”

With the help of Berner giving him a wider sense of cannabis quality and the game, Khalifa was able to start transitioning to a deeper kind of connoisseur. Eventually, Berner brought him into the lucky few getting to test the newest heat from Cookies before it hit the streets.

When Khalifa would return home to L.A. from tour, Berner would head south with the full variety pack for them to sample. In those sessions, the idea that would become Khalifa Kush was born.

“He would bring a lot of different weed down, and we would test them out and kind of name them. Just really coming up with a fashion line, but it was weed, higher-end weed. And the Khalifa Kush was one of those brands that made it through,” Khalifa said of the origins of his kush.

He noted when Berner first brought it down that people in the Bay weren’t quite feeling it. I think one of the things about San Francisco’s distaste was how reminiscent it was to the Cherry AK-47 terpene profile that was some of the best terps coming out of Sacramento in the early 2010s. The Khalifa Kush has a bit more fuel on it though.

Berner expected the flavor would be more appealing to Khalifa than some of his friends back in the bay, and he was not mistaken. The flavor that tasted like a pairing of OG Kush, AK-47, and a gas station was exactly the kind of phenotype Khalifa wanted to start building from.

“And he named it after me and we just kind of have just been on the road to make it what it is now ever since,” Khalifa said. “Whether it’s the brand name, making songs about it, actually putting it in people’s hands so they know what it tastes and smells like. But we’re really excited to finally be in stores and it being the actual product that me and Berner started out with. It’s the one, not the two.”

Khalifa would go on to elaborate on some of the hurdles he’s seen in the marketplace over the years working to get to shelves. He argues the biggest surprise was just the volatility of the market.

“There were a lot of times where they were ready to push the button and go, then we had to like go all the way back,” he said about watching the market’s ups and downs.

But there was still value to be had. Many entrepreneurs entering cannabis didn’t want to touch the space until the dust had settled. Some were waiting for banking access that never came, others to see if the ghost of John Ashcroft would wage a federal war on legal pot, while others just wanted to see others learn the hard lessons.

Whatever the reasoning, there are a bunch of good ones when it came to waiting for a second to enter the cannabis space. And regardless of which boat you found yourself on, you learned a lot over the years since California’s first legal weed sale.

“So I was just getting to know the ins and outs of the game, and just waiting for the right time and just literally figuring out that sweet spot,” Khalifa said.

There was plenty to take in. From L.A., Khalifa has had a first-hand view of the perils of the cannabis industry at both the municipal and state level. But he wasn’t sitting on his hands.

“It’s been crazy, and I think not as much waiting as it is just trying different things, trying to enter in different spaces, fuck with different people, different companies and things like that,” Khalifa said. “Luckily, I’ve had a really strong team that has been able to make it through the entire journey.”

One aspect of keeping the team tight was it made it easier to cut the pieces out that didn’t really make the most sense. Khalifa argues now they’re at a point where everything is moving in the right direction whether it’s inside the company or out.

“A lot of it has to do with the laws and just the availability of the space to work,” Khalifa said. “So now that everything is
changing, and we’re getting better with that, it’s all lining up for the work that we put in overtime, to pay off.”

Khalifa’s whole interaction with the cannabis space is a lot different than most of his peers. With the exception of Berner and B-Real’s complete vertical entities that can grow, distribute, and sell through their own retail entities, there aren’t a lot of celebrities getting as hands-on with the genetics process as Khalifa.

Much of the time, we see celebrity pot wasn’t grown specifically for those brands in the first place. California has a large market for purchasing bulk legal flowers. We asked Khalifa what it was like having the reverse ethos of so many that wanted to get in quick with anything, as opposed to his wait to come out the gate with his exact vision that started at his coffee table with Berner.

“It’s been good and it’s been fun to actually be a part of the expansion of recreational marijuana,” Khalifa said. “Of course, I’m happy to have my brand in the stores and different states, and stuff like that. And be able to launch and show up showing love, but it’s just all about the plant.”

Khalifa went on to speak a bit more about how his kush originally won his heart, as he explained the excitement he hopes California consumers will enjoy when they take it home for the first time this weekend. He emphasized it is the exact same one as the original cut. In hopes of bringing out its best attributes, it’s passed through the hands of a few growers over the years. The ultimate goal of that search was to try to make sure people experience it the same way that he did. “I would never want people to get like a watered-down version just because it’s being mass produced,” Khalifa said. “So even with this first batch, you know, coming in, there are some things that are going to change a little bit.”

Khalifa went on to say there wasn’t any real stress in the hunt for that grower. He knew what he was getting into from the start and always envisioned anything that was going to be done well to be a long-term process.

For Khalifa Kush’s CEO DJ Saul, maybe there were a few days where he bore the brunt of the less-fun stuff. “I mean, lots and lots of R&D testing, discussion, hard conversations, easy conversations, fun conversations, I mean, all of it right?” Saul told L.A. Weekly. “But at this point, we are extremely confident with who we ended up working with, what we’re actually bringing to market here.”

Saul noted the brand has plenty in store for 2022. Expect to see Khalifa Kush enter more markets and expand from the flower and preroll lineup it will launch within California. But the quest to grow is where great pot can take a hit sometimes. He said you should not be concerned.

“100% quality first, and everybody says that; we say it and mean it,” Saul said. “Not to knock anybody else, but if we do have to make some sacrifices on the scale to make sure we’re only delivering products that Wiz himself would not only smoke but approve and enjoy, that’s what we got to do.”

Much of the lab work to preserve Khalifa Kush took place at Node Labs in San Francisco. The lab’s cuttings are made from the plant’s meristem. This part of the plant is so fresh that any nasty things it picked up over the years haven’t touched it yet. Those clean cuttings were propagated to supply those first retail waves of Khalifa Kush.

While not in the lineup for release, The Khalifa Mints collaboration with Compound Genetics is also definitely something to keep an eye out for in the future. The version we sampled last spring was fantastic.

One of the most important conversations happening in the cannabis industry at the moment is whether the communities that were hit the hardest by the War on Drugs are getting their shot in the
industry. Khalifa was familiar with the racial disparities he saw in Pittsburgh’s policing, long before he got to California, and it could be said he’s spoken on the criminal justice aspects of cannabis more than most big names entering the space.

We asked Khalifa how excited he was to be able to add being a Black business owner in the space to his voice, as he continues to push for progress?

“Part of what I do is just breaking down those barriers and those walls and those color divisions that people see. And as you said, it hasn’t happened overnight, but we’ve been putting in work for a lot of years, probably 10-plus when it comes to this space.”

Khalifa is also excited to represent for people who love exotic weed. He didn’t build a character to convince people he enjoys cannabis.

“But it definitely makes me happy and you know that I could just be myself and represent for the community and people who are like me, and even though it might be a process,” Khalifa said, “we’re willing to go through it and take the necessary avenues to get to where we’re at now. And nothing is compromised in the process. So I’m super happy about that.”
BOSS LADY
Jersey rapper Lady London drops new project
BY BRETT CALLWOOD

New Jersey via Bronx rapper and renaissance woman Lady London refers to herself online as the “Aristotle of Bravado.” That’s a bold statement, and there’s a lot to unpack there. Aristotle was, of course, a famed Greek philosopher, and a pioneer in a variety of scientific fields. In many respects, he led the way. Lady London claims to take those many and complicated attributes, and direct them toward bravado. Which is, in and of itself, an act of bravado. You’ve got to love that confidence.

That same confidence that oozes throughout her new project Lady Like: The Boss Tape. It’s a body of work that fully encompasses what she’s about, and what she’s been about since getting started in the biz three years ago.

“I started in March of 2018 with my rap career,” London says. “Prior to that, I was a poet from when I was maybe 11 years old.

I started with one viral video which actually, that same music in that video is the first track on my Boss Tape that’s coming out tomorrow.’

The move from poetry into hip-hop (and vice versa) isn’t an uncommon one. There are certainly similarities between the two artforms. Lady London’s move was slightly haphazard though.

“ Weirdly enough, I was in school for medicine and I had no intentions of doing any kind of music but the poem landed on a social media craze and I missed a lot of fans from that so I started to try to rap afterwards,” she says. “To collate the two, hip-hop and poetry.

The artist describes her sound as “all-encompassing.” She’s essentially at the start of a hip-hop career and there’s really no reason to box herself in yet, to get bogged down with sub-genre tags. “I think it takes you through every emotion possible,” she says. “I think the sound is somehow monotone, but there’s a melodic element to it as well. It’s hard to describe. It’s different – it’s unlike anything I’ve ever heard.”

We ask Lady London about her stage name, hoping for a cool story about English family history or a love for British grime artists like Dizzee Rascal and Stormzy. No such luck.

“My grandma and my mom raised me,” she says. “My grandmother used to have a house in Jersey, so I’ve basically always been wherever my grandmother was,” she says. “My grandma and my mom raised me, and I’ve always lived between the same 15-20 mile radius my whole life, in the same area.”

Through the experience of her cross-state border living, she says that the Jersey and NY hip-hop scenes are almost exactly alike.

“The hip-hop scene was born in the East Coast period,” she says. “I think we have, especially in the north-east region, we have a dominance over it as a whole. That’s not only the Tri-State, that’s DC and Maryland and Virginia. It’s all-engulfing for me.”

Her debut release, Lady Like: The Boss Tape, just dropped and it’s a tour de force of incisive hip-hop, with the rapper in full artistic control.

“It was literally all me,” she says. “I recorded and arranged it myself, I recorded in North Hollywood, I tracked and engineered most of it, then I sent it out to a mastering engineer to finish it. It was incredible. It took from July to now to finish. I probably finished up technically at the end of December, so from July to December I worked on it vehemently.

True to her DIY work ethic, London learned to engineer out of necessity.

“I pretty much know how to engineer, from pretty early in my career when I couldn’t afford an engineer to be in a studio with me,” she says. “I learned the trade myself.”

She says that there are no overarching themes or concepts on the record, as she attempts to touch every base.

“It’s very versatile,” she says. “I wanted everyone to be able to take something from the tape. There’s a mix of emotion and a mix of heartbreak and trauma, of storytelling and lyricism. So I think it embodies everything that a hip-hop project should have.

Obviously, she’s been working on the project during a global pandemic and she says that hasn’t been without its challenges.

“I guess it affected it in the sense that COVID measures were being taken in most studios so it was hard to get studio time in that space with everybody wanting to record there with nothing else to do,” she says. “But I think that the pandemic was beneficial in the sense that people’s attention span expanded. So people that usually did eight seconds of listening time expanded up to 17 seconds now. So it gave people with my lean a little bit more wiggle room to really expose my art form and have it ingested the right way by the consumers.”

She’s also delighted that female MCs are receiving overdue recognition right now.

“It’s been a long time coming, because we haven’t seen this wave since the Latifahs, MC Lytes and Monie Loves of the world were out,” she says. “So it’s dope to see it resurfacing again and I hope that we can keep the quality of music going.”

Looking ahead, Lady London is planning on spending 2022 building her brand.

“A mogul in every way,” she says. “So getting more into acting, fashion, branding, movies, soundtracks and things like that.”

We wish her luck. Lady London’s Lady Like: The Boss Tape is out now. [7]
Executive producer Zendaya.

the best shows on television today, thanks that doesn't make it any less than one of ally surrounds event programming, but create the kind of conversation that usu-
tropes along the way. The subject matter about teen dramas and shattering TV makes one of the most talented casts assembled

Barry) and rapper Drake, and featuring

Emily in Paris

Should you get stung by Yellowjackets, fall into the brutal bliss of Euphoria or say bonjour to Emily in Paris? Read on to find out.

BY ERIN MAXWELL

Streaming services, cable TV and Pri-
etime television are fighting for your viewership now more than ever. Our UnBinged column is here to help you weed through it all, with reviews of the latest shows that highlight what we love, what we hate and what we love to hate-watch, too. This week we take a gender at a few series with unusual leading ladies – from thrillers to high-end dramas to dopey comedies.

Euphoria (Season 2) / HBO

After a lengthy wait, Euphoria has finally returned to HBO for its second season, aiming to dismantle everything we know about teen dramas and shattering TV tropes along the way. The subject matter might be harsh and the topics might not create the kind of conversation that usually surrounds event programming, but that doesn't make it any less than one of the best shows on television today, thanks to the efforts of its leading lady and now executive producer Zendaya.

Shepherded by Sam Levinson (son of Barry) and rapper Drake, and featuring one of the most talented casts assembled in front of a camera, Euphoria paints a picture of a modern-day teenage wasteland. The audience follows the ensemble as they attempt to live what might seem like their best lives amidst the folly of youth.

At the center of the chaos is Zendaya’s Rue Bennett. Both a central figure in the series and the omniscient – sometimes unreliable – narrator, Zendaya uses her abundant acting talents to elevate Rue beyond the caricature of an addled addict whose heartbreaking history leads to self-destruction.

Season two starts off with a focus on drug dealer Fezco (Angus Gold) and his childhood, which features a badass dealing grandma who taught him everything he knows. From the minute Billy Swan’s cover of “Don’t Be Cruel” kicks in, audiences are treated to a backstory that pulls more from Scorsese than Degrassi. This sets the tone for a cinematic experience divided into bite-size episodes. It also helps that the show’s striking cinematography makes Euphoria look comparable to any big screen effort.

After two stand alone episodes last year during the height of the pandemic powerfully explored Rue’s substance abuse and her bestie Jules’ (Hunter Schafer) own challenge as a transgender young woman, the second season continues where season one left off. A relapsed Rue reconnects with her heart’s desire, Jules, who fled to New York due to a terrifying setup by toxic teen dream Nate (Jacob Elordi), but has returned. The two are back together, but Rue’s old habit and new friends are becoming problems. Also returning are pseudo-sociopath Mad- die (Alexa Demie) and the broken Cassie (Sydney Sweeney), whose fragile friendship looks to crumble thanks to the aforementioned Nate. Throw in Gold’s well-meaning drug dealer and insecure good girls on the outside looking in (Mauve Apatow and Barbie Ferreira), and you have a dynamic cast that’s hard to turn away from.

Though many shows try to capture the dark essence of Generation Z, nothing does it as raw and shamelessly as Euphoria. Most focus on shallow teen culture consumed by TikTok and endlessly chasing trends, but this show attempts to artfully portray troubled teens for who they are: no different than any prior generation. They’re just as lost and just as confused, but with better makeup and gadgets.

Filled with exceptionally written characters who thrive in the gray area between bad and good (a running theme this season), the show remains fluid in tone, shifting from dark comedy to dangerous tragedy within a single, well-directed moment. The camera stalks each character, often during scenes meant to make younger audiences relate and older ones recoil. Thanks to the immense talent both behind and in front of the camera, Euphoria creates a world that is difficult to forget and impossible to ignore, for both.

Yellowjackets / Showtime

Adrift in a wave of young adult dramas currently flooding streaming and cable TV, Showtime’s Yellowjackets might be easy to miss, but if you’re looking for something completely different, it’s a barbaric breath of fresh air, dark and twisted with delicious performances from both its adult cast and their teen counterparts.

Right off the bat, the audience is given an intriguing premise. Set in both the present day and the mid-1990s, the show follows a girls championship soccer team whose plane crashes in the wilderness. As teens, we learn how they survived, and as adults, we learn how they hid the secret of their survival.

The two versions of the cast play magnificently off each other in this gender-flipped Lord of the Flies. Survivors include the strong Shauna (Sophie Nélisse/Melanie Lynskey), wild Natalie (Sophie Thatcher/Juliette Lewis), determined Taisa (Jasmin Savoy Brown/Tawny Cypress) and stage five clinger Misty (Samantha Hanratty/Christina Ricci). A blackmail scheme and prying reporters who just won’t let sleeping dogs lie – or die – are part of the narrative unraveling.

It deserves to be said that the masterminds behind the casting in this thriller (Libby Goldstein and Junie Lowry-Johnson, according to IMDb) are a fucking geniuses. The adult counterparts are matched perfectly in tone and likeness to their mini-mes. The volley between the two casts, and their complementary performances, adds to the story and character arcs as we witness the that enhances the already compelling and merciless story.

Yellowjackets is a twisted treat for people who seek out the dark side of streaming. It’s completely original and thoroughly de-ranged in all the right ways. For folks who enjoy a little shock and awe with their female-led dramas, suit up. Yellowjackets has a hell of a sting.

Emily in Paris (Season 2) / Netflix

Hit series Emily in Paris returned to Netflix just in time for its Golden Globe controversy of 2021 to die down and for a few new controversies to pick up steam. Though the show is problematic in many ways, it shouldn’t be completely overlooked.

In this second season, we once again follow marketing exec Emily Cooper (Lily Collins) as she falls in love, demolishes friendships, screws up at work, destroys the French language and leaves a path of destruction in her wake about a mile long. The real problem with the show isn’t with Emily, but the writing, which is uneven at best. The occasional sharp and witty one-liners are lost among the try-hard dialogue, which results in uneven characters and scenes marred by clunky storytelling.

There are many, many times in which the viewer may wish to clobber Emily with an empty champagne bottle until she stops doing stupid shit. Still, the show is not without its appeal, mostly thanks to the talents of Collins. She has some great work behind her and she’s clearly above this dreck, but her commitment to the material (she’s a co-producer) sells every hokey line. No matter how chipper and likeable she might be, Emily isn’t a character you can get behind. She’s a train wreck in clothing she can’t possibly afford (the true mark of any Darren Star series), but she is still delightful as hell.

Emily in Paris is pure cotton candy. Simple, sweet fluff that sits somewhere between the TGIF sitcoms of yesteryear and Freeform’s dystopian dramas featuring teenagers. The writing might be silly, but it has a foolish charm that can make it an entertaining escape. Sometimes you can just enjoy a dumb series for what it is: a lovely little distraction from the less glamorous trials of real life. This is one of those.
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THE ADVENTURES OF ROBERT WILLIAMS ACROSS MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS

OCCCA’s current exhibition examines the vision and influence of the Lowbrow icon

BY LIZ GOLDNER

D

o monsters in our imaginations and in the real world generate depictions of monsters in art, ultimately producing work of exceptional creativity? Robert Williams would answer this question affirmatively. As he told an interviewer, “Monsters are the fantasy anthropomorphic creatures that you make up in your head, that you’re attracted to … I love monsters.” And so do his legions of admirers throughout SoCal and beyond.

In his several decades producing darkly narrative paintings — shaped by his early involvement in California car culture working for Ed “Big Daddy” Roth — his contributions to the underground comics scene during the late 1960s and early ’70s, as well as cinematic settings, graffiti art and psychedelic imagery — the now 78-year-old Williams has played a central role in the Lowbrow art genre. His painting stands out for its meticulous old-master style of figurative oil painting, while portraying scenes antithetical to those of high art.

This Lowbrow exhibition, curated by local artists Brennan Roach, Liz Zuniga Roach and Dustin Myers, contains nearly five dozen in-your-face pieces, including prints, an original oil painting, several skateboards and a custom-painted hot rod.

The thrust of this visual feast is the juxtaposition of conventional scenes with apocalyptic, surreal imagery mined from Williams’ dreams and unconscious self, and even from his exploration of our collective unconscious. The visceral Patrick Has A Glue Dream, for example, illustrates a normal-looking boy building model airplanes while sniffing glue and dreaming of a demonic Hitler head, encased in a yellow bell jar affixed to a red flying octopus that grapples with a bomber flying over the European landscape.

While the pieces in this show span about half a century, from the 1960s nearly to the present, none of the work feels dated, perhaps indicating Williams’ proclivity to see the world as a perennially rebellious child. As he has said, “Every one [of his paintings] is a child that needs discipline.”

The consistency of this assertion is borne out here in work after work. Death by Exasperation is a parody of a Lewis Carroll poem, featuring a purple Jabberwock in a state of collapse, as an enormous red dragon-like monster looms over the scene. A defiant doctor stands in the midst of this dramatic scene, as a team of EMTs strive to rescue the Jabberwock. The pop surrealism In the Land of Retinal Delights features a large eye dominating a man’s profile. He — or it — stares out at a field of colorful detritus. While stretching the boundaries of realism, the painting cajoles us into opening our own eyes to the world that humankind is creating.

In the Pavilion of the Red Clown, referred to as a tableau vivant (living picture) by Williams, a menacing one-legged clown holding a bird cage containing a snake, torments a beautiful female acrobat. Disassembled masks and prosthetics menacingly inhabit the background. This unseemly look at behind-the-scenes circus performers draws brashly on film noir tropes. The female figures, prominent in this work but scattered throughout his paintings, relate to a long pre-feminist tradition of pulp fantasy illustration, most memorably by Frank Frazetta. The fierce blonde woman in Persuasion of Right Angles is clad in a scant red dress and leotard print tights. She wards off a contingent of robotic men with heads composed of square rods. The symbolism and threatening tone of this artwork is open to interpretation, while its bucolic landscape with trees, houses, streams and skies is askew and disorienting.

There is a lighter side to Williams’ oeuvre. As an admirer of old automobiles since his time with Roth, he illustrates vintage cars, albeit with his sardonic perspective. Three Years of Automotive Infamy features four souped up, gleaming 1955-57 Chevys blazing through a ring of fire and defying a muscular devil. With his off-center humor, the artist adds a bikini-clad pin-up to the piece, her back to us as she applies make-up — seated just above her signature.

A group of emerging and mid-career artists, featured in a rear gallery, pay homage to Williams’ example: Jennybird Alcantara, Anthony Ausgang, Adrian Cox, Matt Dangler, Craig Gleason, Naoto Hattori, Parker S. Jackson, Chris Lieb, Laurie Lipton, Amber McCall, Shane Mesquit, Dustin Myers, Peca, Brennan Roach, Johnny Ryan, Isabel Samaras, Scott Scheidly, Greg “CRAOLA” Simkins, Keith Weesner, Casey Weldon, Eric White, Jaime ‘Germs’ Zacarias and Austen Zaleski. His influence on new generations of painters, illustrators and sculptors is an established fact.

With its high volume of provocative paintings, along with skateboards and a gleaming, classic hot rod, The Visual Adventures of Robert Williams reflects the bewildering era we live in. While the artist has striven to have his work seen and considered for much of his adult life, he has come to be regarded as the old master that he dreamed about and rebelled against all those years ago. He always had an audience; by now it has caught up with him.

On view at Orange County Center for Contemporary Art (OCCCA), 117 S. Sycamore St., Santa Ana through Jan. 29; occca.org.

This story first appeared at Visual Art Source, an online platform for listings, features and reviews covering Southern California and the Midwest art scenes.
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