Two high-powered offenses will take the field Sunday in what could be a shootout between the Rams and Bengals.

By Isai Rocha
How does the largest, most complex state-of-the-art stadium prepare and feed more than 70,000 hungry fans for the Super Bowl? With state-of-the-art robots, of course.

Taka Hirano, who oversees the entire sushi operation for SoFi Stadium games and events, has partnered with AUTEC, the nation’s leading commercial sushi robot provider, in order to bring high-quality sushi quickly to fans, in an effort to reduce long lines during the game.

Sushi Robots ASM410A (Nigiri Maker) and ASM865A’s (Maki Maker) primary function is to form rice balls and rice sheets as a base for making Nigiri Sushi and Maki Sushi. Both sushis are finished by human hands, where the cut fish is placed on the rice ball, and the Maki is filled and rolled by hand. The robots can create up to 1,300 rice sheets and 2,400 rice balls per hour.

“Learning to form rice for sushi takes years to master,” Hirano tells L.A. Weekly. “Having an assistant like our sushi robot can be an excellent tool for sushi operations of this magnitude, as producing large amounts of perfect and consistently formed sushi in a short time can sometimes be impossible without robot assistance. Multiple factors contribute to this challenge, but the leading cause is usually a drop in concentration and physical fatigue. Even with an expertly trained group of sushi chefs, it is physically impossible to produce the same amount and quality of sushi for the entire duration of the game.”

Hirano explains that the advantage of the sushi robots is that a chef at any level can use the robot with just a 20-minute training process, and can produce perfectly consistent sushi rice balls or rice sheets, and eliminate stress on the chefs and help the food move faster. He believes that it’s a great trend that a lot of people are looking into these food service robots.

“With the nature of sushi, chefs have to go through an extended training period before they are allowed to serve customers, which is a great thing since this is the reason sushi is thought of as an art to some extent, but it does have some cons,” says Hirano.

“With the labor shortage that has been apparent since the break out of COVID-19, it is not just hard to find a qualified sushi chef, but it is also hard to train new chefs to become a sushi chef as well. There are lots of concerns that robots will take human jobs, but I believe that won’t be the case. From my experience, I would say that the robots are there to complement a chef’s work, making it easier for them to focus on the more important aspect of the dish, rather than stripping away the capability for chefs to intervene. Even with the Sushi Robots, there are lots of other things that have to be done by hand, i.e., cutting the fish and cooking rice.

“As for the stadium operation, the speed of preparing each plate has to be kept to a minimum while keeping the quality at high standards. Since we have to serve huge amounts of people in such a short time, it would be virtually impossible for us to prepare everything prior to the game by hand. By utilizing these robots, we are able to focus more toward customer satisfaction, without sacrificing the quality of the sushi itself.”

El Sushi Loco owner Frank Mendoza has been using the 20-year-old AUTEC’s robotic assistance since the pandemic and credits the technology as a main reason he was able to keep all three locations open and believes that integrating automation can actually benefit human staffing.

So how does Hirano anticipate that the visitors from Ohio with traditional appetites for chili and spaghetti will embrace the state-of-the-art food selections of SoFi Stadium’s assorted vendors?

“L.A. is a town known not just for its fanciness, but for its diversity,” says the sushi master. “We have a sushi restaurant next to a Mexican cantina and might have a Pho place next to that. Some might say it’s chaotic, but I think this diversity is what makes this city so interesting to people, and this is normal for us who live in L.A. I have a feeling fans from Cincinnati will be flying over to L.A., not just to support their favorite team, but to experience that diversity.”
BENGALS VS. RAMS: SUPER BOWL LVI PREVIEW

Two high-powered offenses will take the field Sunday in what could be a shootout between the Rams and Bengals.

BY ISAI ROCHA

Los Angeles will host its first Super Bowl since 1993, as SoFi Stadium in Inglewood will welcome a capacity crowd to watch the Cincinnati Bengals face-off against the Los Angeles Rams.

It has been rare for Super Bowl participants to play in their hometown, but the Rams will be the second team in NFL history to do so, with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers doing it first in 2021 at Raymond James Stadium in Florida.

Both the Rams and Bengals had rollercoaster seasons, with neither team knowing if it would win its corresponding division until the last two weeks of the season.

A Week 17 loss to the San Francisco 49ers almost put the Rams in the Wild Card, but an Arizona Cardinals loss to the Seattle Seahawks secured the Rams place atop the NFC West standings.

Similarly, the Bengals fought off the Pittsburgh Steelers and Cleveland Browns in the standings to take the AFC North Championship with a stunning Week 16 victory over the Conference Champion Kansas City Chiefs. The two teams would meet again in the playoffs with similar outcomes, but higher stakes.

Rams Path To The Super Bowl

The Rams entered the 2021 season with not only a shiny new stadium, but also a shiny new quarterback, giving up a king's ransom of future draft picks in order to acquire Matthew Stafford from the Detroit Lions.

The 33-year-old quarterback always had a big arm, becoming the fastest to throw for 40,000 yards in 2019, but his years with the Lions typically ended in losing seasons. Stafford requested a trade at the end last season, which brought him to a Rams team littered with stars on both sides of the field. The Rams were seemingly waiting for an offensive piece to put them over the top after taking a Super Bowl loss in 2020 and an early playoff exit the following year.

Stafford inherited an offense that had solid receiving options in Cooper Kupp and Robert Woods, along with a budding young running back in Cam Akers.

While Kupp had impressive seasons in the past, the addition of Stafford led him to put up MVP-type numbers, catching...
16 touchdowns and receiving 1,947 total yards, both league highs for the 2021-2022 season.

With the team looking almost unbeatable through the first eight weeks of the season, the Rams hit a snag in a loss to the Tennessee Titans. The team responded by making another big splash, landing Pro Bowl wide receiver Odell Beckham Jr., who had just been released by the Cleveland Browns.

The athletic wide receiver gave the Rams a new option for Stafford in the pass game, even if it took a series of weeks for Beckham to find a fit in the offense.

The Rams ended up winning three of their final four games of the season, but had to go into the playoffs with a regular season-ending loss to the rival 49ers.

**Rams Playoff Run**

The Rams barely broke a sweat in the Wild Card round of the playoffs, feasting on an Arizona Cardinals team that limped into the playoffs. Using a balanced offensive attack, the Rams were able to run the ball effectively and control the clock on their way to a 34-11 win.

The divisional round would not be as easy, as the Rams had to get past Tom Brady and the defending champion, Tampa Bay Bucs. The Rams got hot early, taking a 20-3 lead into halftime, and extending it to 27-3 soon after. The defending Super Bowl champs did not go down easily, climbing all the way back to tie the game at 27-27 behind Brady’s arm and four fumbles from the Rams offense.

A late fumble from Stafford in the final minute of the game nearly gave the Bucs another shot to score in Rams territory, but Stafford recovered and marched the team down the field, with a deep pass to Kupp that got them to the Tampa Bay 12-yard line. From there, the game rested on Matt Gay’s leg, as he successfully connected on a 30-yard field goal as time expired, giving the Rams the victory.

The Conference Championship game was a chance for the Rams to exorcise some demons against the San Francisco 49ers. Not only had San Francisco beat the Rams in its two regular season meetings, but had won the past six games in a row against Los Angeles. The 49ers took a 17-7 lead into the fourth quarter and it was looking like they had the Rams’ number, yet again. A raucous SoFi Stadium was treated to a comeback win, as the Rams scored 13 unanswered points and the defensive line pushed right through the 49ers on the last drive, forcing a last-minute interception by 49ers quarterback Jimmy Garoppolo and sealing the victory.

“YoU can’t write this story any better,” Stafford said in a postgame interview with Fox Sports. “Shoot, we’ve got one more at the home stadium, let’s get it done.”

The Rams watched the confetti fall and the fans go crazy, with a chance to do it all again, for the Vince Lombardi trophy on Feb. 13.

**Bengals Path To The Super Bowl**

In theory, the Cincinnati Bengals were a rebuilding team who had the worst re-
cord in the league, just two seasons ago, and mustered up only four wins last season. In 2020, the Bengals drafted quarterback Joe Burrow out of LSU (Louisiana State University), hoping they found their next franchise player.

Burrow suffered a season-ending knee injury midway through his rookie season and came into this season showing a little rust. As Burrow worked to find his groove with rookie wide receiver and former college teammate Ja’Marr Chase, the Bengals continued to grind out wins in close games, with both players showing why they were first-round draft picks.

The season was not without adversity, as Halloween was the start of a nightmare stretch losing to the last place New York Jets that Oct. 31 and finishing off 5-5 to close the season and crawl into the playoffs. They did manage wins against the Las Vegas Raiders and Kansas City Chiefs in that span, which would serve as foreshadowing for the playoffs.

Fighting for first place in the NFC North, the Bengals closed the season with a key 34-31 win against the Kansas City Chiefs in Week 16, securing the top spot in the division, followed by another victory against the rival Cleveland Browns.

**Bengals Playoff Run**

Despite winning their division, the odds were against the Bengals making it this far, but they powered through to the AFC championship game against the Kansas City Chiefs.
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far and challenging for a Super Bowl title. All three of their playoff wins were within one score, getting close wins against the Raiders, Titans and then-Super Bowl favorites, the Kansas City Chiefs.

The Bengals led through most of the Wild Card Round against the Raiders, but had to fight off David Carr and Darren Waller, who chipped away at the lead, trying to force a comeback. The Raiders fell short, despite making a final push in the last minutes of the game. Carr got them down to the 9-yard line, but the offense could not punch it in the end zone, as Bengals linebacker Jermaine Pratt picked off Carr to end the game.

In a defensive battle against the Titans, the Bengals showed that they could pull off a gritty win against a smash-mouth team. A close game throughout came down to a game-winning, 52-yard field goal by rookie kicker Evan McPherson, who before even stepping on the field for the kick, famously and confidently told teammate Brandon Allen, “It looks like we’re going to the AFC Championship.” McPherson was right, as his kick led to an AFC Championship battle against the Kansas City Chiefs, who had represented the AFC in the Super Bowl the last two seasons, winning it all in 2020. Surprisingly, this game was a bit of a defensive
battle that had to be decided in overtime. Tied at 24-24, the Chiefs won the coin toss and could have sealed a victory with a touchdown. That never happened, as the Bengals made a defensive stop behind a huge interception from Vonn Bell. The Bengals offense was able to promptly get into scoring position, leaving the game up to McPherson, yet again. The confident rookie, who had not missed a field goal in the playoffs, came through again, sealing the win with a 31-yard field goal that got the Bengals to their first Super Bowl since 1982.

Watch The Receivers

One of the most unexpected outcomes to this year's Super Bowl would be a low-scoring game, as both teams have explosive offenses with some of the top playmakers of the year.

The connections between the two quarterbacks and their star receivers will dictate the pace of the game.

The Rams will have Matthew Stafford slinging the ball to not only a former Pro-Bowler in Odell Beckham Jr., but the most productive receiver of the season in Cooper Kupp. Stafford finished the season just shy of his career high in passing yards with 4,886 and a career high 41 touchdowns. Cooper Kupp accounted for 40% of those yards, ending the season with a league-high 1,947 receiving yards.

In his first full NFL season, Bengals quarterback Joe Burrow tossed for 4,611 yards and 34 touchdowns, with the bulk of those passes going to star rookie JaMarr Chase and second-year receiver Tee Higgins, both of whom crossed 1,000 yards receiving this season.

Super Bowl LVI will air on NBC this Sunday, Feb. 13, at 3:30 p.m. PST.
With Super Bowl LVI days away, we take a look at the innovative design behind SoFi Stadium, the NFL’s newest and biggest stadium.

**SoFi Stadium: A Closer Look at the Super Bowl’s Lavish Host Stadium**

BY ISAI ROCHA

SoFi’s location kept lead designer Lance Evans on his toes, having to think outside the box for multiple obstacles. One of the most prominent challenges came from its proximity to LAX.

While SoFi’s location makes it a welcome sign for travelers flying in, the fact that it was built so close to LAX meant the design team was working with height limits due to zoning laws.

Their answer to not being able to build a towering structure was to build the bulk of the stadium underground.

“With that proximity to LAX, it actually required us to embed the field 100-feet below grade,” Evans said in a press conference centered around SoFi Stadium’s design.

“We wanted to do that in a way that the design was able to embrace and embody the natural environment and landforms and climate around Southern California. So, the building is almost entirely, passively ventilated.”

Geographically, the stadium sits between LAX’s north and south runways, which means travelers can often experience one of SoFi’s most lavish features, the video projection atop the shell.

Those who have seen the promotional video for the Super Bowl halftime show may have noticed an image projection coming from the SoFi rooftop. That was not the product of commercial editing, but instead a highlight of the shell’s 15,000 LED fixtures, which can project not only images, but live video of the game as it is being shown on the big screen within.

“SoFi’s location kept lead designer Lance Evans on his toes, having to think outside the box for multiple obstacles. One of the most prominent challenges came from its proximity to LAX.”

With Inglewood’s SoFi Stadium playing host to Super Bowl LVI, more than 70,000 fans will descend upon the newly-minted stadium for the first time, and experience what Rams and Chargers fans have all season.

The awe-inspiring 3.1-million-square-foot stadium architectural marvel is now the largest stadium in the NFL, so much so that it is actually three venues in one, considering it also houses the 3-acre American Airlines Plaza and the 6,000-seat YouTube Theater.

One of the first things visitors will notice when arriving at SoFi Stadium is the canopy-like shell that blankets the stadium, giving it a rooftop element, while still being open-air. The unique roof concept is a first of its kind, as entertainment venues have always been either roofed or open, but never both at the same time.

The perforated aluminum shell is a monster of its own, never actually touching other parts of the stadium, and serving multiple purposes that may not be immediately apparent to the naked eye.

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“If you think about creating a global stage and having the ability for millions of people who fly into LAX every year, their first really true impression is the roof on this building,” Mark A. Williams, global direc-
tor of venues at HKS Inc., said. “It’s very ‘touchdown’ into Los Angeles and southern California, really their first true experience is looking down on this stadium. That just shows the power of the site.”

The panels on the rooftop are not exclusively for show, however, as they are constantly opening and closing, adjusting to the daily climate.

If a given day emits harsh UV rays, the panels not only will block 65% of the light, but adjust its panels in a way to create an evenly lit environment and do away with shadows that are typically consistent with open-air stadiums. Similarly, if an event is going on during a rainy day, the panels will adjust and close so that neither the rain nor wind become an issue.

The seats themselves also were designed in a way that somewhat controls the natural air coming from the beaches. The positioning of the seats works together with the roof panels to create the most optimal conditions for fans and performers alike.

“There’s a series of operable panels on the roof that can open and close…to really turn the roof into a machine, to promote the best version of an outdoor stadium that could exist,” Evans said. “The goal for us was to amplify the fan experience at SoFi. That drove almost every decision we had from a design perspective, with the seating bowl design at SoFi.”

Another utility for the shell’s construction centers around its ability to act as a shock absorber in the event of an earthquake.

SoFi stadium is built on a fault line, so the design team had to take into account the possibility of seismic activity. This ultimately was another key reason for the shell being independently built from the seats.

“The other unique feature and challenge as it related to the design of SoFi was there’s actually an active fault line that runs throughout our site,” Evans said. “It became an engineering challenge and our solution was to separate the roof structure from the stadium. We did that with what we call a ‘seismic moat.’ It goes around the entire perimeter of the stadium and allows for the structures to move independently in a seismic event.”

The “seismic isolators” that act as the base of the stadium’s shell can be seen through-out the stadium, although to the unsuspecting fan, they appear as tall pillars that blend with the rest of the stadium’s architecture.

Once you move past the grandiosity of the roof and start making your way inside the stadium, you’re immediately greeted by the 70,000-square-foot Samsung Infinity Screen hovering 122-feet above the entirety of the 100-yard football field.

The Infinity Screen is the largest video board in the league, projecting 4K images not only on the out surface, but inner surface, as well.

“Ultimately it goes to improve and enhance and make the very best fan experience possible at SoFi Stadium,” Jason Gannon, managing director at SoFi stadium, said about the board. “Really, for the 4K technology to be deployed in that 70,000-square-foot video board is unique and is one-of-a-kind in live sports.”

While so much detail went into the construction of SoFi Stadium, it still is only one of the early phases of planning for the 300-acre property owned by Hollywood Park. Construction is underway for an 800,000-square-foot retail and residential project slated for the area. The final piece of the project will consist of 25 acres worth of public parks.

“When designing Hollywood Park, it was critical for us to have open spaces that the community could utilize year-round,” Gannon said. “We want the project to be a true gathering space for sports entertainment, but also for the public community’s use.”
Origins NFL Collection Celebrates L.A. Style

BY LINA LECARO

L.A. is in the spotlight in more ways than one this week. National Football Conference (NFC) champions the Los Angeles Rams have given us another reason to be proud, adding to our city’s successful sports history, while the SoFi Stadium provides an exciting backdrop for the upcoming Super Bowl (as it did for the NFC game). Sunday’s scheduled halftime show featuring natives Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg and more, will only add to the local love.

The National Football League (NFL) is recognizing and celebrating Los Angeles, too, with a just-launched fashion line in honor of this year’s Super Bowl host city. Called Origins: An NFL Collection, the line features some deserving L.A. brands that reflect our culturally diverse style and energy. The “grassroots merchandise collaboration,” as the NFL calls it, includes four beloved Angeleno brands, each interpreting fan gear in their own way. The participants include: Bella Doña, the Latina brand fueled by Chicana sisterhood and street style; Bricks & Wood, a South Central-based, Black-owned collab-oriented apparel company; Circulate, a Black-owned skate brand; and Rip N Repair, a creative collective inspired by Asian-American heritage.

Origins launched via a free pop-up shop event this past Sunday, where each designer unveiled their capsule collections. The looks—which come in a range of colors that go way beyond Rams and Chargers’ blue and gold—also can be purchased through Sun., Feb. 13, at the NFL Shop at Super Bowl presented by Visa, located at the Los Angeles Convention Center (West and South Halls) and online at NFLShop.com/Origins. Here, we take a closer look at each L.A. brand.

**Circulate circulateworldwide.com**

Corey Populus’ skate brand has been living up to its name since 2018, growing by word of mouth in the street sports community with statement-making graphic designs. Populus is an L.A. resident by way of Sacramento, who worked at Diamond Supply Co., before moving on to freelance production and graphics for popular companies like Hawkers Co and Alpina Division, and finally his own brand, Circulate.

“The way we brought our signature style and vision to our designs for the NFL Origins collections was through graphics, storytelling, and typography,” Populus says. “These are all key elements that make up our brand. We like to think of Circulate as a ‘thinking made visual’ brand. One of our most important pieces of the origins collection is a design telling the story of Kenny Washington. He was the first African-American football player to sign an NFL contract and also broke the color barrier. This design incorporates all the elements of graphic design, typography and storytelling.”

**Bella Doña (bella-dona.com)**

Best friends LaLa Romero and Natalia Durazo created Bella Doña to celebrate Chicana pride and culture, as well as the sisterhood that inspires Angelenas in Los Angeles. The brand also touts deep roots in nostalgia, referencing lingo and looks that any Latina female growing up in L.A. (such as yours truly) will know and love. From nail swag to name plates, homegirls to sad girls, the company captures cool vibes and old school street chic.

“Every aspect of Bella Doña draws its inspiration from Los Angeles,” Romero shares with LA Weekly. “From the sunshine, to the candy paint, our neighbor-
hoods are the heartbeat of our brand. Our streets signs and lawns are the backdrop to everything we create and shoot. Our main goal is to always show the world the beauty of our neighborhoods from our point of view, and remind the women in our community that come from a long line of generational fly.”

“Bringing our signature style and vision to our NFL Origins collection designs was a seamless experience,” Romero adds. “Sports motifs are recurring themes that are organic to our brand’s DNA. This collection allowed us to express that even further by embossing the NFL shield and adding airbrushed art, bringing our signature touches to the Super Bowl. It’s a special collection we wanted our community to feel a part of and wear with pride.”

Creative director Kacey Lynch started his career as a photographer in Hollywood, building a resume and network around the globe. His current mission is to spread the energy of South Central Los Angeles abroad, while authentically highlighting its lifestyle and pride so that, as Lynch says, “inner-city kids can see that accessibility” and be inspired by it.

“I believe Bricks & Wood reflects Los Angeles in a very detailed fashion. The goal is to dig deep into the depths of all things beautiful & inspiring within Los Angeles (South Central to be exact) and revamp those perspectives from an updated lens,” says Lynch. “For this collection we decided to take a very direct vintage sports ad approach. We took moments & previous L.A. Super Bowl ads & recreated some of our favorites with our own touch.”

The pair even made “Koreatown” the highlight of each design for their Origins line, from their Koreatown gateway sign in traditional Korean architecture to their Football Logo tee highlighting Koreatown and Inglewood, representing, they say, “the deep history both communities share.”

“Rip N Repair (ripnpr.com) Exploring the layers and eras of Asian-American heritage and identity, Jason Yi and Albert Lim’s graphics-driven brand is inspired by everything from Korean riot culture to manga. “We express the stories from our Korean heritage through the visual language of our neighborhood to create pieces that speak to our roots and experiences,” the duo, founded in Koreatown, says. “The way we brought our signature style and vision to our designs for the NFL Origins collection was through our graphics-led approach inspired by our heritage, community and culture.”

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“Our Origins video also takes place at Catalina Liquor, a staple Korean family owned business for over 30 years,” explains Lim who sought to represent the multi-dimensional talent of his neighborhood. “The RNR x NFL origins collaboration is a love letter to the community that raised all of us.”
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THE ESSENTIAL LA SUPER BOWL WEED HYPE LIST

It's time to take a timeout and buy the best pot available, before Super Bowl LVI hits Los Angeles this weekend.

BY JIMI DEVINE

Many people would try and convince you that Joe Burrow is the hypest thing in Los Angeles going into the big game this weekend, but we've got a lineup of products and dispensaries that begs to differ.

There will be a lot of offerings over the weekend and into Valentine's Day, but we believe the lineup we've put together for you ahead of the Rams' quest to win at home is one for the ages. It features everything from the newest heat to supporting local entrepreneurs.

Here is our Essential L.A. Super Bowl Weed Hype List 2022.

The Black Box Project

As we noted last week, The Black Box Project is an effort to support Black-owned L.A. cannabis. The project features a box filled with local brands like Ball Family Farms and Viola, at a killer deal. There are only 200 available, but they hit shelves on Friday.

Cookies New Website

Cookies rebuilt its website and shopping portal in house from scratch over the last year and launched it earlier this week. You can get some Gary Payton delivered to your hotel room straight from the mother- ship within 90 minutes. But expect things to get even faster as it all continues to get dialed in following the launch.

Jokerz #31

We first told you about Jokerz on the six-month recap of the best weed of the pandemic up to that point. A year and a half later, it still holds up, and we're excited to see it finally coming to shelves. With all the heat Compound Genetics has produced over the last few years, it's truly a testament to the quality of the Jokerz #31 that it's what they chose to launch their flower line with. Keep an eye out for it at Cookies and Greenwolf.

Gorilla RX x Flowershop*

FlowerShop* and Gorilla Rx are teaming up for a full weekend of events and festivities. Gorilla RX will transform the space to a fully functioning Flower Shop for the weekend - culminating on Valentine's Day to get all your fresh-cut and cannabis flowers. This will include local food vendors, brands, and artists that will have products for sale in the gift shop. The event will run Saturday through Valentine's Day. The dispensary will be open from 10 a.m. to 10 p.m., with the Flower and Gift Shop open 2 p.m. to 8 p.m., at 4233 S. Crenshaw Blvd.

3C Farms Downtown Open

The 3C Farms team is taking its lineup of reputable OGs and a bunch of other flavors downtown, to spice things up at their new dispensary. There are a whole bunch of deals in honor of their soft launch for the big game. This includes all the flower they grow in house, for the killer deal of just $33 an eighth. But wait, there's more! Use the promo code "Jimi" and you'll get another eighth for a penny with the purchase of one at regular price!
ARRéL FRIIDOM DUNN, who goes simply by Fridom, is an inventive and ambitious voice in contemporary performance. A cross-platform “movement conductor” who takes his responsibilities as a community storyteller and cultural communicator to heart in collaborative, interdisciplinary, site-specific happenings with an eye on empathy, education and solidarity.

“We all have a finite time here on this earth,” he says. “So I spend every day thinking about what I can do, today, that will reverberate and have influence 1,000 years from now. I want to look back at my life — to have the future look back — and know exactly what I was trying to do.” And what Fridom, as his moniker implies, is trying to do, is pretty much to save the world.

“If we can bring Los Angeles together, we can bring the world together,” Fridom tells L.A. Weekly. “Everyone comes here to seek something out and to communicate it. The entertainment industry is the ground zero of the world in terms of communicating ideas, and it’s so important that we see each other here — really see each other for real, beyond the words.”

With that in mind, Fridom and his all-city network of collaborators, including dancers, musicians, writers, visual artists, community leaders, theater artists, historians, creators and activists, stage regular events, large and small, impromptu and at scale, for live and streaming audiences all across the city. From Leimert Park to Little Armenia, Little Tokyo, Chinatown, Hollywood, East LA and Little Ethiopia, Inglewood and so many places in between, the cohort is focused on communicating a true intersectionality based in Black culture. By activating locations with bodies and attention in unique experiences, the work itself creates unconventional shared experience as a portal to addressing what might be unknown histories — stories that could shed light on the past and address the present-day need for mutual understanding and solidarity.

For example, the piece Komitas presented in Little Armenia and the related work Selassii: How Africa Unites use cultural exchange within the aesthetic and narrative of the works to speak to connections between communities across race and countries, from Jamaica to Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Fridom’s proprietary dance style, Epiic, is a formation of raw expressive movements and extreme precision flow, in which he uses his hands like a conductor of orchestral scores. They further use not only music but also movie trailers, historical speeches, and poetics in Fridom’s own words and in others’ to create a beguiling history-based storytelling that imparts education through narrative theater rather than either abstract concepts or pure didactic. The goal is to learn about each other in order to find actionable, healing commonalities to work from.

Meet the historically minded movement artist working to change Los Angeles, and the world

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT
“We’re all going through something, right? Something personal as individuals, families and societies,” says Friidom. “But we tend to look inward to heal ourselves, yes, but too often we let trauma separate us when it should bind us in solidarity. Those kinds of divisions give the oppressors space to operate, so stop it!”

Emerging from the worst of the pandemic with a new piece called Elegy, dedicated as it needed to be to all and everything we’ve lost in the pandemic, Friidom felt strongly that, “We have to devote some cultural real estate to the grieving process, to engage with death; we’ve been skating reality and it’s not healthy for individuals or for societies.” At this time, his vision for the next 12 months is all about optimism and creative ambition. Right now, he’s busy building a movement to get it done.

As we go, we have pieces coming up in Leimert Park with Ben Caldwell, in L.A., and with Your Ketuphema, another in Little Armenia again, and pieces with dedicated engagement in Latino communities and the South Asian community in Hollywood. In between these signpost pieces throughout the year, there will be more intimate installations within larger community events in Koreatown and Chinatown. The grand finale will be in January 2023, activating New Year’s Day as an entire citywide dance piece, with scores of dancers all over L.A., moving through the day and converging on Skid Row — to reveal the truth of the city to itself. Both live and streaming, with works to follow along with, to stream or to stumble across, featuring dancers and movement artists, some with spoken word and some with music, Friidom sees it as “a mobile symphony exploring causality.”

“What can I really give to Skid Row?” Friidom says. “Art, food, money I guess, but only a broad, deep, sustained attention will really change anything because these are the direct results of policy choices — so someone has to make a stand. On 4th and Los Angeles, we’ll be making a door from our bodies, a grand gesture we hope will reach decision-makers and solidify a grand gesture we really wanted to make. ”

For more information visit thefriidom.com, or follow along on IG at @thefriidom.
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