TWINKLE TWINKLE!

STARCRAWLER keeps rocketing

BY BRETT CALLWOOD
FOOD

WEST HOLLYWOOD’S LIBERATION IS BRINGING BACK CAFE SOCIETY

Refuge at the Los Angeles LGBT Center.

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

A t a time when many of the funky independent cafes are dwindling in West Hollywood and haven’t reopened since the pandemic, and big coffee chains are rethinking and redesigning their layouts geared more toward grab-and-go than stop and chat, Liberation Coffee House at the L.A. LGBT Center is determined to bring back cafe society.

The coffeehouse is bright and airy, framed in rose and golden hues, designed to mimic a soothing sunset. The design comes equipped with a photogenic space for TikTok or IG Reels, free Wi-Fi, electrical outlets everywhere, communal tables and seating areas for group study, and a cafe menu with approachable price points that don’t reflect today’s inflation economy.

“We want to bring back the traditional coffeehouse feel, where you come in, sit down, work on your project and meet your friends here,” barista Willow Fields tells L.A. Weekly while pouring a tall iced mint tea.

“The parts I love the most about being a barista here is the community aspect and connecting with folks,” she says. “Especially in a place like this, where people are looking for somewhere safe and to meet with members of the LGBT community. So many of the spaces in the queer community are centered around alcohol and dancing in nightclubs. It’s nice to have an inclusive environment during the day and office hours. People come here to work and socialize, and not have to worry about going out and partying. Not just for people under 21, but also older folks. Post covid, everyone felt so isolated; having something like this to interact with the community and relate to one another is so important.”

The Los Angeles LGBT Center’s social enterprise cafe and its Intergenerational Culinary Arts Program are the base of the multigenerational center’s Anita May Rosenstein Campus on Santa Monica Boulevard that services those in need.

According to Border Grill and Socalo chef and owner Susan Feniger, who helped launch the culinary program, about 100 people have gone through the intergenerational program up to 12 at a time, for a 12-week program, which includes four weeks of teaching and four weeks of production. The 300-hour culinary curriculum is based on classic French techniques.

Many finish with an internship at Border Grill and either move on to restaurant jobs or are hired to work in the cafe or the large kitchen on site that provides about 200 meals a day to everyone living on the campus, as well as homeless coming in hungry off the street. Social workers are there for anyone who needs help with getting back on their feet.

The culinary operation is run by Nick Panepinto, director of Culinary Training and Operations and Erin Muscatelli, manager of Café and Catering.

“You can be who you are with whatever name and who you choose to be,” Feniger told us at a recent Make Noise Today fundraiser for marginalized youth groups. “It feels safe because everybody works there is from the community and all the proceeds go right back into the center, and because you’re surrounded by the LGBT community. You can be who you are and not worry about being threatened or feel weird. There’s security all around, to help create a safe environment. It’s very peaceful.”

Barista and chef Gio Bertuccelli stumbled into the center at traumatic crossroads in her life, which became a turning point for the Colombian-born musical artist who grew up in Italy.

“I was in the closet for many years, so I have the perspective of two lives,” she tells the Weekly, “I remember when I was fairly deep in the closet, I buried it way under. I went to school like everybody else and had social interactions with the primary cultural group of society. Once I transitioned much later in life and started to come out, coming here into the kitchen, with everyone else and the staff in this safe environment, I remember one of my first thoughts was this is an amazing place. Many that come here have been abandoned by their families and are living on the street. They can be free and be themselves here, and if they think somebody’s cute, they’re not going to get their ass kicked. They don’t have to worry about getting kicked out of the group or being judged and shut out. I thought, wow, this is the safest place to be yourself. For me, coming out so late, I didn’t know how to maneuver in a world that thought I was queer right off the bat. I just remember the great feeling of being in the kitchen here, just able to be myself and safely say whatever comes to my mind.”
A love letter to the pioneer of text-based art, by his peers and the generations he influenced.

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

REGEN PROJECTS’ very first exhibition was a solo show with Lawrence Weiner. It opened in December 1989, and was followed by another ten before his death in 2021; the gallery exterior on Santa Monica Boulevard is laced with Weiner’s text and font murals. Weiner not only was a game-changing champion of conceptual art since the late ’60s, and a practitioner of text-as-image work that fused precepts of concrete poetry with avant-garde ideas about materiality, objecthood, authorship, and the primacy of ideas — he was gallery family.

Weiner played his ideas out by using language as a kind of raw material for his work, similar to how other artists might use paint, ink or clay, except with the deliberate intention of divorcing the creative impulse from the physical process of transforming thought into an object or image, and instead aiming straight at the idea of it. This existed partly in opposition to the art market’s acquisitive instinct for precious objects. Weiner’s vision was one in which the words and the specific but ambivalent vignettes they represent, activated by their installation affixed in architectural settings, stood in place of a physical object, while also vaguely yet evocatively describing what that object might have been or looked like, had it been made.

One particularly striking example included in the show is the large-scale mural reading “BLOCKS OF PINE LAID BUTT TO BUTT A STONE’S THROW FROM THE WATER,” a 1986 work whose medium is listed as “Language + the materials referred to.” Whether the work is therefore completed in whatever image comes to the viewer/reader’s mind, or whether it is ever completed at all, is of little interest to Weiner, whose labor mostly occurred during the having of the idea. Whether it was even ever noticed by the intended viewer is of little interest to Weiner, whose labor mostly occurred during the having of the idea. Whether it was ever noticed by the intended viewer is of little interest to Weiner, whose labor mostly occurred during the having of the idea. Whether it was even ever noticed by the intended viewer is of little interest to Weiner, whose labor mostly occurred during the having of the idea.

Weiner’s influence on the generation of conceptual artists of the late 1960s and early ’70s cannot be overstated, but the lineage of his ideas expanded, as subsequent generations took equal notice. The gallery’s extraordinary tribute show, Stars Don’t Stand Still in the Sky, surveys those inter-generational communiqués, across modes of abstraction and compositions based on language, with some perennial favorites and more than a few surprises.

Weiner’s own BITS & PIECES PUT TOGETHER TO PRESENT A SEMBLANCE OF A WHOLE (1991, Language + the materials referred to, Dimensions variable, appearing in this temporary iteration Courtesy of Walker Art Center) is at the whole of the entrance wall, forming the perfect moment of landing and introductory description for the show inside. And indeed, the elements of the assembly are far more varied than its premise might suggest; for while there is a predominance of other “text-based art” mixed in with meditations on abstract positive and negative shapes for wall and floor, it’s actually the fullness of all the word-based content that demonstrates the most diversity of style, medium, point of view, relationship to message, graphic sensibility, and mood.

Works by other major artists singularly identified with the use of text also make their presence felt. Where Ruscha’s paintings do use text in a deracinated, sometimes pun-filled way, his work also retains its obvious status as a painting or drawing. This is true of many, even most, others in the exhibition, especially those like Joseph Kosuth, John Baldessari, Glenn Ligon, Jack Pierson, Mel Bochner, Sue Williams, Doug Aitken, Jenny Holzer, Raymond Pettibon, and even Virgil Abloh in his collaboration with Weiner for Louis Vuitton — all of whom manage to honor and demonstrate the influence of Weiner, but without relinquishing nearly as much of their agency and authorship when it comes to making a physical work of art.

Of particular note for its meta modern stance, the sheer perfection of its inspiration, and the refreshingly pure humor of its spirit, is the 2012 short video by Ed Ruscha, titled “Ed Ruscha Toasts Lawrence Weiner,” a proper love letter to Weiner, in the famous video idiom of Bob Dylan, in which the voiceover reads off cards that each contain a work of Weiner’s. Strung together set to music, and with a possible rabbinical argument happening in the background, the work highlights the broad potential for taking delight in language, and is a suitably intimate, late-career demonstration of love between friends and colleagues in a heartfelt touchstone for the entire undertaking.

Stars Don’t Stand Still in the Sky: A Tribute to Lawrence Weiner is on view at Regen Projects, 6750 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood, through Oct. 22; free; regenprojects.com.
EX-USC DEAN TO PLEAD GUILTY IN RIDLEY-THOMAS BRIBERY CASE

Marilyn Louise Flynn, a former USC dean of social work, will plead guilty in a bribery case that allegedly involved longtime Los Angeles official Mark Ridley-Thomas.

BY ISAI ROCHA

Former USC dean of social work Marilyn Louise Flynn has agreed to plead guilty in a bribery case connected to suspended Los Angeles City councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas.

Flynn, 83, faces up to 10 years in federal prison, with prosecutors agreeing that she serves the sentence under home confinement and pays a fine of no more than $150,000.

“We have a very strong case. What we have is evidence that would convince a jury of 12 of her guilt,” said federal prosecutors.

Flynn, who was appointed to the position in 2001, is accused of offering to a 2018 scheme to funnel a $100,000 payment to the United Way of Southern California organization led by Ridley-Thomas. The United Ways of Southern California is a nonprofit operated by his son to obtain a donation to his campaign account through the University of Southern California.

After the payment was processed on May 11, 2018, Flynn allegedly met with Ridley-Thomas to discuss his vote in favor of the amended Telehealth contract, or the “master contract stuff,” as she said she referred to it.

While the FBI is still investigating the matter, Ridley-Thomas stepped away and was later suspended from his council duties in October of 2021, leaving district 10 without representation for months.

The city council made multiple attempts to temporarily appoint former district 10 councilman Herb Wesson, but the decision was continually challenged by lawsuits from supporters of Ridley-Thomas. Wesson officially resigned from his interim role in August.

After Wesson’s resignation, Heather Hutt was voted as the interim council representative for district 10.

Ridley-Thomas never officially resigned from his position, and if cleared of charges, may return to the council.

The councilman’s trial will begin Nov. 15.

METRO BOARD EXPRESSES CONCERN WITH GONDOLA LIFT TO DODGER STADIUM

The Los Angeles County Metro board expressed concerns over the proposed gondola lift to Dodger Stadium, ranging from lack of transparency to effects on the community.

The Los Angeles Aerial Rapid Transit (LA ART) project has created a buzz since its unveiling and display in the Dodger Stadium parking lot, but more questions than answers have been raised since then and the Metro board discussed the gondola during the Metro Executive Management Committee meeting Thursday.

Rockwell presented the plans for the zero-emission gondola project, highlighting its canvassing efforts to 21,000 local homes, relaying information in Cantonese, Mandarin, English and Spanish, as well as 17,000 flyers mailed out about the project.

Metro board director and L.A. County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis brought up worries about public transparency, saying “Self-Cleaning Technology” that requires minimal maintenance.

The color used will be a palette labeled Extra White SW 7006, or by its new name, Hollywood Centennial White.

The 45-foot high Hollywood Sign was first erected in 1923, towering over Griffith Park, becoming a staple of Los Angeles pop culture and tourism.
SOME LIKE IT HEAVY
Ana de Armas Brings Humanity to Blonde, a Dark, Dizzying NC-17 Nightmare
BY CHAD BYRNES

There’s a good chance that you’ll be gasping for air by the end of Andrew Dominik’s merciless fever dream, Blonde, starring a miraculous Ana de Armas as screen icon Marilyn Monroe. With a running time of nearly three hours and a rating of NC-17 (Netflix’s first), Dominik’s take on celebrity, toxicity and the loss of identity isn’t interested in the facts surrounding the famed actress’ truncated career or her tragic passing at 36, as much as psychologically inhabiting her skin. In doing so, he flings us down a rabbit hole where childhood trauma, the trappings of fame, and a male-dominated industry conspire like Satanic priests to devour her cowering soul. The result is a visual nightmare that’s both enthralling and frustrating; sometimes in equal measures.

Writer/Director Andrew Dominik’s adaptation of the 700-page novel by Joyce Carol Oates opens on 7-year-old Norma Jeane (Lily Fisher) as she’s tormented by her alcoholic mother (Julianne Nicholson). One day, her mother shows her a photograph of a man in a fedora and says that her father’s a Hollywood bigwig who abandoned them. The image of an absentee father who works in “the industry” unleashes a torrent of emotion, which courses through the film.

From there, Dominik hurries us through Monroe’s adolescence and early 20s, where she endures the rigmarole of auditions, acting classes, and pinup shoots. She gets her big break with a small role in All About Eve, but only after submitting to a studio head who rapes her in his office. It’s a jarring moment, which tears down our preconceived idolatry. She’s human and a victim. Not a symbol. Throughout her journey, Dominik and cinematographer Chayse Irvin switch between black and white, and technicolor, creating a dizzying effect; we don’t know where fantasy begins and reality ends. Soon, Norma Jeane creates the screen persona Marilyn Monroe, which plays as a splinter in her psyche. Suddenly, she lives in a jigsaw puzzle with disembodied voices, grotesque reflections, bright lights, and cameras that snap like gunshots.

As Monroe becomes famous in films like Niagara and Gentlemen Prefer Blondes, she dreamily floats from one romance to another. The most ill-conceived of these is a steady threesome with Cass (Xavier Samuels) and Eddie (Evan Williams), the sons of Charlie Chaplin and Edward G. Robinson, respectively. This groan-inducing sequence plays like a tacky Calvin Klein ad and lands with a pretentious thud. Suddenly, she’s pregnant with one of their babies and becomes tabloid fodder. Buckling under pressure from the studio, she gets an abortion, which haunts her for the rest of her life. Although it’s genuinely heartbreaking, CGI shots from inside her cervix, in which her aborted baby scolds her, are ill-suited. Scenes like these might’ve held resonance in Oates’ novel, but onscreen they feel maladroit and outlandish. Thankfully, they are few and far between.

From there, we tiptoe through her marriage with baseball legend Joe DiMaggio (Bobby Canavale), whose ego is so fragile you wonder why he married a movie star in the first place. Their relationship disintegrates into a battleground of physical and mental abuse. Her subsequent marriage to playwright Arthur Miller (Adrien Brody) is more tender and intellectually stimulating, although he creepily idealizes her as a girl from his childhood named “Magda.” These relationships feel like Faustian bargains in which she sells a piece of her soul in return for paternal love. After a miscarriage, she descends into an inferno of pills, booze, and a sordid affair with John F. Kennedy, which is exposed in the movie’s most disturbing scene.

This isn’t the first time the Australian filmmaker has tackled the subject of celebrity. From Chopper to The Assassination of Jesse James by the Coward Robert Ford, Dominik seems fascinated with fame’s ability to camouflage and even exacerbate mental illness. Is it any wonder that Dominik’s version of Jesse James is the only one in cinema history who suffers from schizophrenia?

Her swooning score by Nick Cave
and Warren Ellis, *Blonde* shares the same unsettling, dreamlike mood as his other films, although this one’s bleaker. While movies like *Jesse James* and even *Killing Them Softly* balance grim material with absurdist humor and unique characters, *Blonde* is unceasingly brutal and sullen. There isn’t a trace of Marilyn Monroe’s incandescent wit or the exuberance she brought to the screen, which keeps us at a certain distance. But this is completely intentional. The film doesn’t want us to empathize with Marilyn, as much as share a confined space with her. A sensory experience filled with dread and paranoia, at times, you feel locked inside a hall of mirrors without an escape. Simply put, Dominik wants to know what it’s like to be the victim of a toxic culture, *physically*. Sometimes his stylistic flourish works, at other times it feels awkward or exploitative.

Thankfully, Ana de Armas provides the compassion and humanity the movie so desperately needs. She doesn’t play Monroe as much as disappears inside her. With her breathy voice and childlike gaze, she creates a portrait of a woman slowly drowning in the malaise of an unforgiving world. Yes, her Cuban accent surfaces from time to time, but her tour-de-force performance makes those complaints irrelevant. It’s a performance of such grit and daring, it’ll be remembered for years.

If you’re expecting a conventional biopic, you’ll be sorely disappointed. This is a complex portrait of victimhood that takes chances and asks tough questions. It’s also probably too long, inconsistent, abrasive, and could’ve lost a few sequences that decelerate an otherwise immersive experience. Dominik trusts his audience to fill in the blanks though, and that alone is exciting.

*Blonde* is in theaters now and debuts on Netflix on Wed., Sep. 28.
TWINKLE TWINKLE!

LOCAL ROCKERS STARCRAWLER KEEP ROCKETING

BY BRETT CALLWOOD
It's been almost exactly five years since Starcrawler was on the cover of this publication, heralded at the time as disciples of the Runaways and Ozzy Osbourne, thanks to its striking aesthetic, often theatrical performances, and uncompromising rock ‘n’ roll sound. The earliest version of the band had the ability to shock and confuse audiences, as listeners in a decidedly “unrock” era tried to come to terms with what Starcrawler’s deal was. They’re likely still trying to figure that out.

It’s not that hard. Starcrawler is a typical band story in that it’s about a group of friends finding their sound and then evolving over time. Their oddities, what makes the band atypical, is the subtleties. Frontwoman Arrow de Wilde might remind some people of the likes of Iggy Pop, Wendy O’Williams, Cherie Currie, Stiv Bators, etc., but she’s very much her own person, her own artist. Like those vocalists, de Wilde is a captivating performer – unpredictable and charismatic, and occasionally shocking. With her naturally lean frame and sneer, she literally looks like she was born into this shit. The archetypal rock star. The rest of the band members are, of course, key to the sound, integral components of what Starcrawler is and has become.

So yeah, it’s been five years and Starcrawler is back on the cover of LA Weekly. It’s been a fruitful half-decade, too, with the band enjoying a steady rise.

“I can’t speak for everyone, but I’m definitely very happy,” de Wilde says via a Zoom interview. “I think we’ve always had goals for ourselves, but I think from the last time we were on that cover, we definitely have made some progress. I remember when we did that, it felt crazy. I mean, it still is, but it was very unexpected for that time.”

The band were promoting the debut album at that time. Since then, they released the Devour You sophomore effort, and now are set to drop their third - She Said. Guitarist Henri Cash says that there’s been a natural progression between records.

“It’s been so many years since we record-
was cool to spend time focusing on that. But he's also a dad, and so when we looked hungry, he would cook us grilled cheese sandwiches, so that was really cool."

The album’s themes, they say unexpectedly, is pink.

“I’m actually in between painting a bunch of stuff pink right now, which is a headache,” says Cash. “But our stage set is pink. Even before we wrote most of the songs, we were pretty set on the color tone. When you visualize something like that, it helps put stuff together.”

“We’ve always had a color scheme, but it was loose,” adds de Wilde. “Like now, we’re putting our all into it and making it this world. Before, our color scheme was red and white, but it was kinda loose. Now, each record has its own visual world.”

It’s an interesting approach and one that doesn’t always take the conventional approach. What is pink? That can be subjective.

“For some reason, the name She Said is pink to me,” says de Wilde. “I don’t know if that’s weird. None of the other songs when I was thinking of them sounded that pink. I have a weird thing where certain words and numbers I associate with colors. Four is also pink. I don’t know how to explain it, but to me She Said felt very pink. It was also just the one that we could all agree on.”

However you want to look at it, it’s working out for them. Starcrawler has a sound that is clearly rock ’n’ roll, but it’s also flexible enough that they can open for artists as diverse as Nick Cave, My Chemical Romance, Jack White, and Porno for Pyros.

“You can’t really pigeonhole our music,” de Wilde says. “We can play with My Chem, Jack White, we just played with Nick Cave, and then I think we could play with Insane Clown Posse. Who knows? We’re all over the board. I think any type of music, not even just rock. I think it would be cool to play with rap artists and stuff. There’s something about our music. There are people who come to our shows who have told me they don’t usually listen to rock, but they like us. Which is cool, and very interesting to me.”

That said, Starcrawler is still a rock ’n’ roll band, and the members have seen the scene develop since they formed.

“It seems like it’s getting to a better place,” says de Wilde. “When we first started, there weren’t a lot of other bands that I feel like we could play with. Like, I didn’t really know a lot of other rock bands at the time. People viewed rock as this cheesy, ironic thing, which I understand, but I feel like it’s coming back in this new way where kids, younger people, can relate to it, too.”

“Now that there’s a bunch of younger bands playing rock music, it feels like a new thing for a lot of people, especially younger people that before didn’t listen to that genre – it feels like their own, instead of their dad’s music or something,” adds Cash.

That’s what’s so great about Starcrawler – they feel like a fresh, young rock ’n’ roll band and not a stale, lumpen vehicle for nostalgia. The latest single is an example of that – the excellent “Broken Angels.”

“That one started with Tim [Franco, bass],” says Cash. “It was his brainchild, and it was a lot slower. It was a ’60s jam. Then I found it, and we made a chorus for it. We didn’t know if it was going to work for Starcrawler, and there was a long time of sitting on it. This could be cool, but it would be a leap. I think once we did it together, it really showed our dynamics as a band. I think that’s something that we’ve grown the most. When a lot of people start playing music, they go really hard or really soft, and it’s hard to find a place in-between. I think we’ve started to develop that. I also think about how Led Zeppelin’s hard songs wouldn’t be as good without the soft ones. We needed to have some of that in there.”

By the time this feature goes to press, Starcrawler will have played their album launch show at the Troubadour. After that, there are plenty more plans.

“We have another single that comes out with the release of the album, and then we’re doing a two-month long tour across America,” says de Wilde. “Then we go to South Korea, and then the Dominican Republic early next year, which will be a first.”

There’s simply no stopping a band that is rocketing, rather than crawling, to the stars.

Starcrawler’s new album She Said is out now. They play the Observatory on Tuesday, October 18.
EEO/AA equal opportunity employer. Apply online at careers.accenture.com

**International Distribution Specialist (Los Angeles, CA)**

A mix of internal and external stakeholders is engaged to develop and implement strategies to increase sales and revenue for company. Requires experience in business, marketing, communication, and data analysis. Requires 3 years' experience as a sales and revenue manager. Send resume to: Mark Grady or Ethiopia. For more information, visit www.accenture.com/us-en-careers. Equal opportunity employer.

**Clinical Manager, F/T, BA**

Responsible for healthcare, medicine, or related. Mail resume: Rosencrans Villa, Ph. 51410 Cordary Ave. Hawthorne, CA. 90250.

**Search Marketing Strategist**

Sought by Eyetheticca in Los Angeles, CA. Dev. and implement online marketing programs. Requires 3+ years exp in increase sales and revenue for company. Requires Master’s in Bus. Market, Communication, Data Analysis, Healthcare, or related. Send resume to: Mark Grady or Ethiopia. For more information, visit www.accenture.com/us-en-careers. Equal opportunity employer.

**Senior Manager of Strategic Finance**

Sought by Crosscut Ventures Management, LLC in Santa Monica, CA. Requires experience in bus. Admin with specialization in entrepreneurship + 2 yrs exp in invest banking. Send resume to: Masha Gilson. Crosscut Ventures Management, LLC, 3110 Main Street, Ph, Santa Monica, CA. 90405.

**Marketing**


**Senior Exterior Engineer - Los Angeles**

A.E. Electrical Engineer - Risk Mitigation. Must have willingness and ability to travel domestically approximately 80% of the time to meet client needs. Multiple Positions Available. For complete job description, list of requirements, and to apply, go to: www.accenture.com/us-en-careers. Equal opportunity employer. Minorities/Women/Vets/Disability. Clinical Manager, F/T, BA in healthcare, medicine, or related. Mail resume: Rosencrans Villa, Ph. 51410 Cordary Ave. Hawthorne, CA. 90250. Social Media Manager - Los Angeles, CA. Requires 2+ years’ experience in digital media, social media, and marketing. Send resume to: Alvaro Cerda. Canoo Technologies Inc. has openings in Torrance, CA. **Mechanical Engineer - Wk in Crocs’ interior Team**. candidate must reside in CA. Jobsite: LA. CA. Email resume: ChArecruite d@crocs.com. Canoo Technologies Inc. has openings in Torrance, CA. (Senior Exterior Engineer - Risk Mitigation. Must have willin...
**SECURITY GUARDS NEEDED**

Rio Gentlemen’s Club - 13124 S Figueroa St, Los Angeles, CA 90061

$18 to $20 an hour. Outside security needed for patdowns, ID checks and monitoring parking lot of the club. Please contact Dave Carlson at Rmckinney@jjmfirm.com

**Goldendoodles Standard, Red Standard Poodles. Excellent therapeutic family dogs. please text or call Lisa 424-227-2646. Instagram @redpoodlesdoodles**