Genevieve Artadi's Forever Forever is a love album for the ages.

You Can't Enforce Away Legal Cannabis Problems.

Exhibition at Subliminal Projects examines art, activism, and dissent.

Wrestlemania Goes Hollywood—Again

For the first time in 18 years, WWE Wrestlemania, the Super Bowl of professional wrestling, will be hosted in Los Angeles.

By Isai Rocha
**THURSDAY, MARCH 23**

**Ellen von Unwerth: Bombshell at Fahey/Klein Gallery.** Photographs from the queen of female sensuality revel in von Unwerth’s experimentation with archetypes and stereotypes that result in images that are spontaneous, playful, and alive. Ellen von Unwerth’s thirty-year career defined the aesthetic of the 90’s and 2000’s and has made her a staple of fashion photography. Creation of cinematic scenarios for her shoots, Von Unwerth’s airy, kingly, and humorous photographs invite viewers to come along on a boisterous escapade. 148 N. La Brea, Hollywood; Opening reception: “Sunday, March 23; On view through April 29; free; faheykleingallery.com.

A Source Family Scrapbook Party and Screening at Philosophical Research Society. A special 10th anniversary screening of the “Source Family documentary and a reception in honor of the release of the new 100-page table book Family: A Source Family Scrapbook (Sacred Bones and Otherworld) — an immersive view into the public and private world of the Southern California occult commune. The evening includes surprise Source Family guests, rituals, a Q&A and book-signing with Source Family archivist and author Isis Aquarian, co-author Charlie Kitchings, and film directors Jodi Wille and Maria Demopoulos; and a pre-event drinks and music reception. 3910 Los Feliz Blvd., Los Feliz; “Sunday, March 23, 6pm; $20; prs.org/events.html.

**FRIDAY, MARCH 24**

**M.A. Harms: Carnation, Lily at CoAxial.** An interactive installation that transforms Coaxial into a dingy seaside motel; pre-recorded music and videos ranging from found footage, to white-out illustrations, and stop-motion animation will bring Coaxial to life as audience members walk through the space and embody the story’s main character. Harms is a composer, performer, and instrument builder who explores the intersections between grief, gender, and sex through performance art and interdisciplinarity, imagining and creating sound using sculptural installations, found objects, electronics, mannequins, and placing equal significance on the visual experience of their work. 1815 S. Main St. downtown; Friday, March 24, 9am-6pm; Saturday-Sunday, March 25-26, 9am-9pm; free; coaxialarts.org.

**Derrick C. Brown Book Release Party at Lyric Hyperion Theater.** Poet Derrick C. Brown’s new release, Love Ends in a Tandem Kayak, is “the death of Urban Outfitters poetry. It is the embrace of saying the hard thing. It is the death of stunted, academic, ‘u’ ng. It is a deep dive into the battle for self-love, nude grief, and the revealed embarrassments and humor of being human.” is a weird book that purposefully jumps from humor to heartache. If you’ve got a deep wound, this book will try to hold your hand and guide you to needle and thread. It won’t be easy.” Join the author on his home turf for a signing and live show full of surprises, random friends. 2106 Hyperion Ave., Silver Lake; Friday, March 24, 7:30pm; $10/$23 with book; thelyrichyperion.com/tickets.

**SATURDAY, MARCH 25**

**Sam Green: 32 Sounds at the Ace Hotel Theater.** Sam Green’s 32 Sounds is an immersive documentary and a profound sensory experience that explores the elemental phenomenon of sound. “is a meditation on the power of sound to bend time, cross borders, and profoundly shape our perception of the world around us. Presented in its “live cinema” form, 32 Sounds features live narration by Sam Green, accompanied by live music performed by JD Samson of Le Tigre. 32 Sounds redeﬁnes the experience of a sound bath, creating a mesmerizing and engulﬁng evening. 929 S. Broadway downtown; Saturday, March 25, 8pm; $50; acehotel.com.

**Justin Aversano: Smoke & Mirrors at Gabba Gallery.** Smoke and Mirrors presents a timely exploration of memory, history, spiritualism and psychogeography of Aversano’s sitters with a nod to the global growing interest in technopaganism and spirituality expressed through photography. Marrying the worlds of occult and crypto, the exhibition features 78 limited edition silkscreen prints attached to NFTs that reimagine a tarot deck through the medium of photography. “is 22 major arcana (gold) and 56 minor arcana (silver) portraits printed on papyrus capture Aversano’s local healers, spiritualists, creatives and family in handmade analog prints which the artist deems, “hybrid photographic neo-hieroglyphs.” 3126 Beverly Blvd., E. Hollywood; Saturday, March 25, 7-10pm; On view through April 8; free; gabbagallery.com.
**Michael Hilsman: Man in Water at Various Small Fires.** Hilsman works within the boundaries of classical painting to construct images populated by figures and objects that have, according to the artist, a “frayed connection to their own materiality.” Using still life, landscape and portraiture, Hilsman presents fractured narratives that incorporate dream logic and exist in an environment that is equally comical, contemplative, spiritually-charged and absurd. The recurring images in the paintings comprise a lexicon which the artist considers to be “letters in an alphabet that I myself am still trying to learn.” 812 N. Highland Ave., Hollywood; Opening reception: Saturday, March 25, 6-8pm; On view through April 29; free; vsf.la.

**SUNDAY, MARCH 26**
Luna Anais Gallery presents Kiara Alleen Machado: Refugio en las Flores at Launch LA. Machado’s latest body of work establishes a dialogue between autobiography and a shared struggle for justice. She uses abstraction and camouflage, age, embedding figures within thickets of vibrantly-colored, orga, with references to traditional Central American handcrafts throughout the compositions. The muñecas quitapenas — illuminating her connection to a lineage of artists, making, and visual culture. 170 S. La Brea, Mid-Wilshire; Opening reception: Wednesday, March 29, 6-8pm; On view through May 4; free; lalouver.com.

**MARCH 29**
Gajin Fujita: True Colors at L.A. Louver. A transformational new body of work by Gajin Fujita, created between 2020 and 2023, demonstrating radical technical and thematic developments in the artist’s oeuvre as he explores experimenting with shadow and line, the realm of social critique, and the incorporation of portraiture into his practice. Fujita’s distinctive combinations — Eastern and Western imagery and iconography; textual markings and graphic narrative; spray paint and gold leaf — persist and evolve, inspired by photography, memory, and the visual diaries his mother prompted him and his brothers to create while growing up. 45 N. Venice Blvd., Venice; Opening reception: Wednesday, March 29, 6-8pm; On view through May 6; free; lalouver.com.

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29**
Robyn Hitchcock Fonda Theatre
English singer/songwriter and former So’s Boys man Robyn Hitchcock plays Zebulon this weekend — the perfect, intimate venue to catch a Hitchcock show. “Aer 20 years or so in this business, everything you release is seen as a return to form, though nothing, of course, can quite compete with your glory days,” he told this writer back in 2020. Keep trying, sir. 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 25 at Zebulon, $32.98, zebulon.la.

**The Roxy Theatre**
Vanessa Carlton
Singer, songwriter and pianist Vanessa Carlton’s Future Pain Tour arrives in Hollywood, hot on the heels of new album Love is an Art. “Love Is An Art explores the eternal seesaw that is human connection: the push, the pull, the balance, the bottoming out,” reads a statement. “It’s that constantly evolving nature of love, expectations and compassion that Carlton analyzes from all angles on Love Is An Art, from romantic, to parental, to the friends that hold us up and the leaders that repeatedly let us down.” 8:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 30 at the Roxy Theatre, $25, theroxy.com.

**The Wee Beasties**
Alex’s Bar
Denton, TX band the Wee Beasties play at Alex’s Bar in Long Beach on Thursday, March 30, and then at the Redwood in Downtown L.A. on Saturday, April 1. Keep Flying, College Radio and Fresh Veggies also play at Alex’s, while the Poppy Seeds, Free Paintings and Sour Tongue open at the Redwood. “The Wee-Beasties’ shows have included BDSM demonstrations, Chipendales costumes, punk rock burlesque performances and a heroic consumption of whiskey and countless cans of Lone Star beer (or whatever beer is cheapest in your town),” they say. How intriguing! 8 p.m. on Thursday, March 30 at Alex’s Bar, $12.88, alexsbar.com.

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SHAKE OFF THE COLD WITH SOME OF L.A.'S BEST SHAKSHUKA

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

SHakshuka, the warm Maghrebi dish of eggs poached in a sauce of tomatoes, peppers, onion and garlic, is popping up in different versions on menus all across L.A., a welcome sight during these cold winter mornings.

In Jewish culture, a large batch of tomato stew is made for the Sabbath dinner and the leftovers used the following morning to make a breakfast shakshuka with eggs. In Andalusian cuisine, it's known as huevos a la flamenca and includes chorizo and serrano ham. The Italian version is called eggs in purgatory and often includes anchovies or parmesan cheese.

Here are our top picks for this North African comfort food to be lapped up with rustic slices of bread to warm the heart and soul.

Topping our list is Vicky's All Day in West Adams. Located in what was previously an Armenian bakery that specialized in lahmajoun, next to the fortress that is the Rockenwagner bakery, the menu reflects Chef Danny Elmaleh's dietary upbringing from a Japanese mother and Moroccan father. The slightly spicy chunky tomato stew made with peppers roasted by Elmaleh himself with traditional Moroccan spices is topped with oozy eggs and served alongside a dramatic laffa bread the size of a baby's head.

For those who see shakshuka as a vehicle for crusty whole grain sourdough, Amsalam and Alexander Phaneuf's Lodge Bread locations in Woodland Hills, Culver City and Pico Robertson offer a bubbling cauldron topped with fresh herbs. Use the large rustic bread slices as utensils to swirl the oozy fried egg yolks into the tomato mixture.

Also in the Pico Robertson, The Milky Way's brunch version comes with poached eggs, stewed tomatoes, roasted peppers, caramelized onions, spinach and harissa topped with mellow chunks of feta cheese. The perfect match for a mimosa.

And on the subject of green, The Blvd Restaurant and Lounge at the Beverly Wilshire has the most unique version of this Tunisian dish, using power green mix cooked with garlic and onions, North African spices and two poached eggs. It's a filling dish that when combined with one of the lounge's smoothies, like the Anti-O made with oat milk, kale, blueberries and flaxseed, will provide you with energy for the day and definitely make you march.

Interstellar's shakshuka is a cultural combination served hot and bubbly in individual cast iron skillets. Available for breakfast and lunch in its cozy Santa Monica location near the beach, husband-and-wife team Chef Angie and Daniel Kim's slightly spicy version combines harissa marinara, three fried eggs, a trace of nuoc mam fish sauce and is topped with mozzarella cheese and cilantro. This one definitely wins the cheese pull. Pair it with a hot pot of Pu Erh Tea from Lao Ban Zhang.

There are plenty of versions of the recipe to suit any taste. If it's just plain too cold to venture out and you'd like to take the easy route, Zonzon Organic has ready made jars of shakshuka sauce that can be poured over sauteed onions and peppers of your choice in a skillet, topped with eggs and finished for a few minutes in the oven. Tara and Mohamed Belouafa have brought their Tunisian heritage to L.A. at their artisanal certified cannery based in Downtown Los Angeles. You can find their cooking sauces, preserved lemons, harissa paste and pickled peppers online or at the Hollywood, Mar Vista and Marina del Rey farmers markets.

Beck's Cafe in Encino has individual and shakshukas for two, with homemade spicy tomato sauce, onion, cilantro, garlic, and four eggs baked in round challah. It's served with two Israeli salads and pickles.
WRESTLEMANIA GOES HOLLYWOOD—AGAIN
For The First Time In 18 Years, Wwe Wrestlemania, The Super Bowl Of Professional Wrestling, Will Be Hosted In Los Angeles

BY ISAI ROCHA

SoFi Stadium will soon be filled with nearly 100,000 screaming fans, a couple of decades worth of nostalgia and larger-than-life personalities looking to put on the spectacle of a lifetime, as WrestleMania returns to Los Angeles for a two-day live extravaganza on April 1-2. While the calendar year might end in December, the year comes to a close in early April for WWE (World Wrestling Entertainment), as WrestleMania wraps up many months-worth — and in some cases years-worth — of storylines.

This year will mark the 39th WrestleMania, which has a rich history of legendary names behind it, such as Hulk Hogan, who famously fought in the very first event with Mr. T as his partner; The Rock and John Cena, who took their talents to Hollywood and never looked back; The Bella Twins, who leveraged their success into reality television; “Stone Cold” Steve Austin, who returned in 2022 for a retirement match at WrestleMania 38; and a plethora of names that have made an impact through the decades.

Wrestling is looked at by some as a sport, but it’s a story-driven form of entertainment. Narrative programs you see on TV don’t have a cast performing their craft in front of live crowds, in one take, and an expectation to hit every leap, kick and slam to perfection. A lot more transparency exists now about what’s real and what isn’t, but even as wrestlers form bonds with fans through videogame live streaming and podcasts that let every cat out of every bag about backstage happenings, it is not likely that late-night guest appearances will end with a wrestler pulling down their pants in front of Bill Maher to show the massive bruising and injuries that occur, as “Rowdy” Roddy Piper once did in 1999.

While the vibes are different, wrestling is still at its best when the stories being told are so good that you are sucked in for two to four hours with disbelief suspended and an urge to know how it all ends. From top to bottom, this year’s WrestleMania at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood will represent the closing of stories
involving father and son tensions, historic wrestling family heritages, payback for disrespectful actions, and a whole lot of redemption.

If you happen to notice the WrestleMania billboards on the 10 freeway, or become curious why wrestlers are suddenly showing up on your favorite morning show, it's because slowly and surely, the wrestling world is set to take over the city at the end of March. Should your curiosity pique and you want to make it out to the events, or just watch as it's streamed on the Peacock app, here are the most compelling matches to look out for at this year's WrestleMania.

**Rhea Ripley Looks To Make History:** We now know that the first night of WrestleMania on Saturday, April 1, will be headlined by the queen of wrestling, Charlotte Flair, and the self-proclaimed "disruptor," Rhea Ripley, fighting for the Smackdown Women's Championship.

Daughter of WWE Hall-of-Famer Ric Flair, Charlotte always seems to have a championship belt around her waist. Ripley, however, has had a similar trajectory in her young career. She's been able to claim almost every championship except the Smackdown Women's title. The two met at WrestleMania 36 in 2020 under much different circumstances, as a 23-year-old Ripley was still finding her way in the company, compared to the veteran Flair who won the first encounter. The match also occurred in a silent, fan-less, pandemic-affected show that controversially took place in a time when most industries were forced to shut down.

"She has been my kryptonite for too many years now, and I'm sick and tired of it," Ripley tells *L.A. Weekly*. "I'm at a different level in my career and my life right now and I can't wait to step in the ring with her and show her exactly who Rhea 'Bloody' Ripley is and become a grand slam champion, the first person to hold the NXT Women's Championship, the UK Women's Championship, the Raw Women's Championship, the Women's Tag Team Championships and the Smackdown Women's championship. I'd be the first woman to hold those five." Three years have passed since their first match and the company has entrusted Ripley with the highest honor for a wrestler, which is to work a main event championship match at WrestleMania.

"Lucky for me I'm always ready for whatever's next and it's something that you really have to do in this profession," Ripley says. "... just stay ready for absolutely anything."

**Reigns and The American Nightmare:** When "The Tribal Chief" Roman Reigns returned to the WWE in 2020, sporting a new arrogant demeanor and permanent scowl, it would have been impossible to guess that it would lead to a nearly three-year story where he put the company on his back. His ability to move the crowd all these years and keep viewers interested in every word he says has carried one of the greatest wrestling storylines of all time, which involves himself and his cousins in the "Bloodline" faction.

Evoking emotion in every step he has taken as champion, manipulating family members, embarrassing fan-favorites and drawing the ire of the crowd night after night without skipping a beat, Reigns made it clear that he was the next mega superstar in the same vein of Hogan, The Rock and Cena. Watching a Reigns match is like watching a veteran guitarist get in the zone during a solo. He hits the right beats, he knows the exact right time to stare into the camera, he knows exactly when to look out into the crowd, single out a fan to bark at them, and he knows exactly when to grab a helpless opponent and whisper insults at them for the fans at home to scream at their TVs in a rage.

On the other side is Cody Rhodes, son of WWE Hall-of-Famer Dusty Rhodes. At 26, Rhodes was not in a position he wanted to be in with the company. In rebellion, he left WWE, not only trying his hand at indie wrestling promotions, but helping build a brand new wrestling company to rival that of WWE's. All Elite Wrestling (AEW) poached former WWE wrestlers, got a TV deal through Warner Bros. Discovery and sent subtle shots at his former employer, WWE, the whole time.

When Rhodes' AEW contract expired in 2022, he made his surprising return to WWE, shocking both the fans and the WWE roster. The man who attempted to take down WWE, was welcomed back "home" and will attempt to dethrone Reigns, and "finish the story," as he's said multiple times on his road to WrestleMania 2023.

**The Bloodline:** Reigns has managed to piss off the entire WWE roster, winning nearly every championship match with the aid of his cousins, Jimmy Uso, Jey Uso and Solo Sikoa — all of whom have made up the Samoan "Bloodline" faction.

The Bloodline is starting to show vulnerability for the first time in three years, and along with Rhodes taking his shot at Reigns, Sami Zayn and Kevin Owens will finally get their hands on "The Usos" for the WWE Undisputed Tag Team Championships. Since 2020, fighting in empty arenas due to the pandemic, Owens has been repeatedly bested by the Bloodline's power in numbers. Of late, even Zayn was a thorn in Owens' side, as Zayn spent most of 2022 befriending The Bloodline. After a series of back-and-forth betrayals, the dust has settled and the frenemies will do their best to rid Jimmy and Jey Uso of the tag titles.

**The Logan Paul Effect:** From the mo-
ment WWE had its first WrestleMania event, the intention was to create a buzz and get the general public talking. That was the role Mr. T played from the start and it’s a role that is still taken by celebrities today. WWE has enlisted the likes of Logan Paul, the popular vlogger-turned-entrepreneur, who has played a detestable heel to perfection, as he seems to have a special talent for making people hate him. Paul will be fighting former WWE Universal Champion Seth Rollins, who has made it clear that he does not want Paul making a mockery of the sport.

If you have not watched one of Logan’s previous matches in the WWE, it is truly a sight to behold. Who can forget the visual of him livestreaming himself flying off the top rope and onto the announcer’s table? Paul is clearly a natural, despite reservations from Rollins.

Hell In A Cell: “The one thing that I’m really looking forward to is anything that ‘The Judgment Day’ do,” Ripley says about her running mates Finn Balor, Dominik Mysterio and Damian Priest. “I’m looking forward to Finn Balor and Edge.”

The Rivalry between Balor and “Edge” (Adam Copeland) stems from Balor undercutting him and convincing his old group, including Ripley, to turn on him. Now the two will settle their differences inside a 20-foot, fully enclosed steel cage, also known as “Hell in a Cell.” The door will be shut and locked with nowhere to go, as the cell is the ultimate way to settle a rivalry in WWE.

An Old School Slugfest: The fight for the Intercontinental Championship will feature three of the largest, hardest hitting lads on the WWE roster, as Gunther, the “Ring General” from Austria, will defend his title against the “Scottish Warrior” Drew McIntyre and the Sheamus, the “Celtic Warrior.” Fans of 1970s wrestling that consisted of violent chops to the chest and elbows delivered with malice, will love this match-up, destined to be an instant classic.

The Mysterios: Since 1992, Rey Mysterio has put on his luchador mask and entertained thousands around the world. The legend from Chula Vista, California, will be inducted into the WWE Hall of Fame on Friday, March 31, before facing off with his rebellious son, Dominik Mysterio. Leading up to WrestleMania, Dominik has had harsh words for his father, often berating him for being away from home for months at a time as he built the Mysterio legacy. Many believe the 25-year-old Mysterio has been negatively influenced by fellow Judgement Day mate, Rhea Ripley, and she did not mince words when speaking to L.A. Weekly.

“I’m hoping that Dom gets to put his hands on his father again,” Ripley says. “I think everyone’s hoping for it because we all know Rey’s not going to hit back. He’s too much of a coward. I want to see Dom shine. I want to see him win on the grandest stage of them all at WrestleMania and take down his father who has held him back for years and just show him what a man he is.”

For more WWE WrestleMania 39 coverage, visit LAweekly.com.
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Crash Landing on Earth (A Long, Long Time Ago) in 65

Something of an afterthought resume item for everyone involved, the new matinee programmer 65 actually stirs a weathered moviegoer's heart: It's short (93 minutes), it's not a franchise or a reboot, it's modest (if they spent a ton, you don't see it), and it seems unabashedly targeted to fourth-graders, many of whom are still potentially fascinated with dinosaurs. This last point accounts for the scarcity of script — in fact, the movie opens with a title scroll that tells us flat out, "65 million years ago, a visitor crash-landed … on Earth." Way to do that it.

The visitor is Adam Driver, to whom we're introduced on the "Planet Somaris," a visitor crash-landed to dot that i. The whole desperate dad thing gets weaslesome, of course, as if the movie was conscientiously telling lonely 9-year-olds how much their absent work-junkie fathers actually love them. Which it is. Driver's big salary-earning business trip isn't happening to you, he tells his daughter (Chloe Coleman) at the outset, but "for you." That's what they all say. But wait, you're thinking from the beginning: Is Driver the vestige ancestor of all humanity, implanted Erich von Däniken–style on Earth by mistake? Are we all Driveroids? Well, that'd require more time spent on the screenplay than Beck and Woods seemed to want to invest, and anyway, what about that asteroid? The idea nags though — within the minutes of waking up, Driver's addled spaceman completely kills the first minidinosaur he sees, and you think, 'Just like a human.' (Michael Atkinson)

Blood is the Drug in Cocaine Bear

Once upon a time, circa 1985, there was a beautiful black bear that lived in a national park in the state of Georgia. One day, strange brick-like objects fell from the sky and burst open, exposing a white powder the bear could not resist eating. In the real life version of this tale, ingesting the white powder (35 pounds of it) caused the 175-pound beauty to die of a drug overdose, but in Cocaine Bear, actor-turned-director Elizabeth Banks' gleefully gory, naughty but tame horror comedy, the bear turns into a marauding beast with one goal: finding more coke.

This is not a film Nancy Reagan would have screened for Ronnie at the White House, especially since, seen the part, early on, when two 12-year-olds (Brooklyn Prince and Christian Convery) dare one another to sample (by taste) the cocaine they find in the forest while ditching school. Dee Dee and Henry will quickly spit out the foul tasting powder, but Banks (Pitch Perfect 2, Charlie's Angels) and screenwriter Jimmy Warden have made their point: this is a movie that isn't afraid to offend in its quest for a belly laugh. Those two kids, in fact, will turn out to be much smarter than the hapless adults who follow in their wake, a fair number of whom will end up missing an arm or a leg after making the mistake of coming between the bear and the various bricks of cocaine strewn throughout the forest.

One part Jaws and many parts Snakes on a Plane, Cocaine Bear is talkier than it should be and peaks with a virtuoso mid-film scene of carnage, but an able cast do their best to keep us amused in between kills. The great Margo Martindale, with her gift for suppressed grievance, has a grand time as an embittered Park Ranger who plans to spend the day woeing a moronic animal rights activist (Jesse Tyler Ferguson), only to see that dream waylaid by the arrival of Sari (Keri Russell), who's looking for her daughter, Dee Dee, and her friend, Henry. Meanwhile, a St. Louis drug lord (Ray Liotta, in his final role) sends his sad sack son, Eddie (Alden Ehrenreich), and trustworthy fixer, Daveed (O'Shea Jackson Jr.), to Georgia to retrieve as much coke as they can find. A Missouri detective (a marvelous Isaiah Whitlock, Jr.) follows, although he's distracted with worry for the newly acquired shelter dog he had to leave behind. (He didn't expect to care so much.) Ehrenreich, whose career has taken some harscrabble dips (Solo: A Star Wars Story) since his dazzling performance as a trick-rope twirling cowboy in the Coen Brothers' Hail, Caesar!, has a sly first scene here, but he can't do much with the rest of Eddie's story, which mostly finds him walking through the woods with Daveed in search of coke. Mostly, the two men walk and walk and walk, and play straight men to "Stache" (Aaron Holliday), a punk kid who knows where a duffle of cocaine is hidden. Stache is a fool and a philosopher, and Holiday, a relative newcomer, proves adept at jarring up the dullest storyline in the film.

It's the newcomers, in fact, who steal Cocaine Bear from the pros, particularly comedian Scott Seiss, who has the good fortune to play a paramedic who must search a blood-drenched park ranger's cabin for more victims. This scene leads to an ambulance truck chase between bear and humans that is a directorial triumph for Banks, and the sequence most likely to be cheered by blood-thirsty audiences — but it's Seiss who makes it sing. His reactions, which go from deadpan to full-fledged freakout, are priceless, and very funny.

The lingering high, as it were, of the ambulance sequence, may be sufficient for moviegoers to forgive a third act that gets bogged down in more walking and more talking and not enough bear. In the end, there is a half-assed setup for a sequel, but since they never made Snakes on a Plane 2 (which I could have gotten behind), Cocaine Bear may not prove as lasting as the real bear that inspired it. The next time you're in Lexington, Kentucky, take Exit 113 off I-75 and look for the Kentucky Fun Mall. The real Cocaine Bear, long stuffed, and once owned, reportedly, by Waylon Jennings, is there, and ready to greet all. (Chuck Wilson)

Champions Misses at the Free Throw Line

From There's Something About Mary to The Ringer, The Farrelly Brothers have always been fascinated by people with physical or cognitive challenges. And even if those who suffer are the butt of the joke, there's an underlying sweetness which be- lies any flagrant cruelty. In Champions, Bobby Farrelly's solo directorial debut, he celebrates the verve and tenacity of kids with mental disabilities — with frustratingly mixed results. His heart is in the right place, but he's so busy slathering on the schmaltz and making everyone feel fuzzy, he forgot to craft an engaging plot with memorable characters.

Based on the 2018 Spanish comedy hit Campeones, the always likable Woody Harrelson plays Marcus Markovich, a hapless assistant coach for a Des Moines minor league team. After getting fired for sho- ving his head coach (Ernie Hudson) during a game, Marcus goes on a bender before driving and smashing into a police car. For his penance, the judge sentences him to 90 days of community service which involves...
coaching the “Friends,” a group of mentally challenged basketball players who are practicing for the Special Olympics. With a template reminiscent of The Bad News Bears, Marcus initially bristles at the prospect of coaching this ragtag group of misfits. That is, before he learns to embrace them, and in doing so discovers the gentler, gooier part of himself. It’s a formula that’s worked in the past, but not this time.

At the gym, he’s met by Julio (Cheech Marin) who introduces him to the players, wonderfully portrayed by ten disabled actors (Kevin Iannucci, Ashton Stone, Matthew Von Der Ahé, Casey Metcalfe, Joshua Felder, Madison Tevlin and Bradley Edens). All the kids play their parts to the hilt, injecting some verve into a screenplay that seems to be suffering from narcolepsy. These opening scenes should burst with awkward hilarity, or at least provide some insight into Marcus’ problematic character.

Instead, Champions plays it safe by making Marcus so benign and obtuse, you wonder what happened to the egomaniac we met in the opening. He’s so sweet and accepting of his new situation, the movie eradicates any possibility of self-discovery. If our protagonist isn’t going to learn anything about himself or the disabled community, how will we? Storywise, it’s a tactical error the movie never recovers from. Other than the kids, the movie’s saving grace comes in the form of Alex, played by Kaitlin Olson (It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia, Hacks), as the older sister to one of the players. After she and Marcus have a one-night stand, she unexpectedly reappears, throwing his orbit into question (something has to).

Farrelly and screenwriter Mark Rizzo made some very odd choices in their approach to this material. Most scenes feature singing along, vomiting and jokes about body-odor, none of which are particularly funny or move the story forward. It’s just a raucous party, which has its chuckle and showing no signs of letting up. Concerts were on hold, along with the rest of our lives. The whole thing feels like a fever dream.

Artadi had just released the Dizzy Strange Summer album which, while written prior to the pandemic, offered an ideal soundtrack to the trauma. It felt both relevant and soothing. The new album Forever Forever is different but similar in that regard.

“I recorded the album in Mexico,” Artadi says, via a phone interview. “We went to this beautiful studio called El Desierto, and it’s just the most gorgeous place ever. But we had to cut the first session short because we got COVID. We went home, and recorded the rest of the album. Because we were on such a time crunch and I wanted it to have a live feeling, and a unified sound which is really different from Dizzy Strange Summer, we were recording things three people at a time and doing things in fewer takes. So I think generally it has a nice, cohesive vibe which matched the whole vibe of the place.”

Artadi worked on the album with, among others, guitarist Pedro Martins. The pair have an on-and-off relationship which slightly awkwardly informed the record.

“I started doing Muay Thai and archery,” she says. “Pedro and I were together and then we broke up. There’s a Muay Thai studio by my house and I was like, ‘I’m gonna start doing that.’ Just to take care of myself and be healthier. Now, we’ve been back together, and off, and all this stuff, but it’s been really helpful. I just feel so helpful and energetic these days.”

Artadi found El Desierto in Mexico through old friend Dennis Hamm, who now plays with Thundercat but used to play with Artadi in Knower.

“He recorded there and posted something on Instagram saying, ‘this place is amazing, and affordable,’ she says. ‘I was like, ‘Uhh, I wanna do something like that. I’ve never done anything like this before. Recorded my own solo music in a beautiful studio.’ It was just amazing.”

Artadi self-produced the album. She took her demos into the studio with most of the parts written, and then got feedback from her band.

“The band just came in and added solos, added their own types of voicings,” she says. “Made the drum parts come to life and everything. So it was Louis Cole, Pedro Martins, Chiquita Magic, Chris Fishman, Daniel Sunshine (he was engineering with the guys from the studio), and Henry Halliwell did some electronic stuff on there.”

The theme of the album, Artadi says, is love.

“I wrote the whole thing while I was falling in and out of love, and just trying to be a healthier person and I think it came across,” she says. “I wanted to make sure that the musicians weren’t bored. So I wanted to write parts that would hopefully stay interesting, and I wanted to write harmonies that went somewhere. I was more aware. I went a little bit deeper into structure, harmony and melodies. And lyrically, too, because I was like, I want to convey my love in a deep way if I can. I just tried harder, I guess. Pedro being the person that I was writing a lot of these songs for, he’s Brazilian and so knowledgeable on Brazilian music, so he was showing me all kinds of beautiful stuff. That really influenced me a lot, too.”

It was during that whole process that the entire band caught COVID, which Artadi describes as horrible but funny. Thankfully, everyone is all right. Meanwhile, fingers crossed, the industry appears to be getting back on its feet.

“I can tell that everybody is feeling excited,” Artadi says. “It’s like, business as usual or something, in the sense that people are back at it again. It’s vibrant. That’s how it seems, although I don’t know how things are actually going.”

The new album drops on Friday, March 17, and on the same day, Artadi performs a live show at the Echoplex. That’s near when this article is going to press, but there are more shows to come.

“It’s going to be almost everybody from the original band, and then like my friend Adam Ratner who’s also going to play guitar, and I have my friend Maya Mitter who’s going to be singing with me,” she says. “That’s cool because when I do my other dates opening for Lewis on tour; it’s going to be a smaller set with a trio. Me, Chiquita Magic and a drummer. That’s with projections and a mixture of old and new songs. Whereas my album release show, we’re going to play the whole album.”

In advance of that, Artadi has released lead-off single “Visionary,” one of the first songs she wrote and recorded from this new album.

“It sounded big, the solos were just shredded, and I feel like it’s not too out there like some of the songs on the album,” she says. “Maybe some people would think that. This song is pretty clear about what it is. It’s energetic; I wanted to come out and energetic.”

Artadi has more videos coming out this year, and more touring to do in Europe, as well as the U.S. Impressively, with the new album in the bag, she has already started planning the next one.

“‘Im working on my next album, which I think is going to be anime rock inspired,” she says. “I watch a lot of anime. Naruto is the one that indoctrinated me, so that holds a special place in my heart. I love JoJo’s Bizarre Adventures, I love Attack on Titan – there’s going to be some new Attack on Titan coming out.”

“What that album looks like remains to be seen. For now, we have Forever Forever to enjoy, and marinate in. That’s plenty.

Genevieve Artadi’s Forever Forever album is out now.
THE CHALLENGE FOR POLITICAL ART IS HOW TO BE BOTH URGENTLY CURRENT AND THOUGHTFULLY TIMELESS, HOW TO COMMUNICATE COMPELLING IDEAS WITH CLARITY AND FORCE BUT TO CREATE OBJECTS AND IMAGES OF NUANCE AND MYSTERY. THE RISK IS THAT NEITHER THE ART NOR THE CAUSE WILL SHINE. BUT IN MINE. THE RISK IS THAT THE ART NOR THE CAUSE WOULD SHINE. BUT IN MINE. THE RISK IS THAT THE ART.
YOU CAN’T ENFORCE AWAY LEGAL CANNABIS PROBLEMS

As legal cannabis rolls out from state to state, entrepreneurs are claiming the decades-old underground economy is the root of their problems.

BY JIMI DEVINE

Cannabis operators have faced the short end of the stick time and time again in the legal marketplace, but leaning back on the Drug War tactics of prohibition is never the answer.

The plague of operators who have never smoked heat in their lives bashing people who never got the shot they wanted in the marketplace continues to grow. Most of the time, the people taking these shots at the traditional underground market are well-funded operators. They use "enforcement of the law" as a catch-all phrase to narc on the streets from state to state. The lack of enforcement, as they see it, is the root of their headaches. This is regardless of their product quality.

It’s a lot easier to blame someone else to your investors. Those who have been participating in cannabis markets the longest have become the target of that ire. In the worst circumstances, they’d try and convince you all the cannabis grown outside of the legal marketplace is loaded with pesticides that will kill you and sold to you by an international drug trafficking entity. Sure, there’s some nasty weed and sketchy folks in the mix, but painting the entire marketplace with that brush? Sad. Disingenuous. So many things come to mind.

But here in California, those painters may have pushed us into a new era of enforcement that’s going to bring us back to something a lot closer to the dark ages of cannabis. California’s legalization rollout has gone less than ideal. The original plan to transition the underground market to a new regulated market went off the rails quickly following legalization.

In the merger of Prop 64 and the state’s forthcoming medical cannabis regulations that would have gone into effect had Prop 64 failed, certain protections for small farmers were lost. The biggest was the prevention of the permit stacking that led to the mega farms that priced mom and pops out of the game on both sides of the market.

There is a sublayer of people in all this that pretends to hate the underground market while backdooring products from mega grows through sketchy distribution companies. These distributors are the plausible deniability between you and your weed in New York, should shit hit the fan. The mom and pops getting hit the hardest by enforcement this summer rarely will have access to such wider distribution networks technically tapped into the legal market.

The mechanism for this shitty deliverance will likely be the new Effort to Prevent Illicit Cannabis (EPIC) program. The program is essentially a rebranding of the state’s 40-year-old Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP). A major difference will be the way the actual enforcement efforts are directed.

Attorney General Rob Bonta noted when announcing EPIC that his reforms would be focused on the environmental, labor, and economic impacts of illegal cultivation. Much of the resources directed to CAMP went to monitoring the national forests of Northern California for grows during the peak of the growing season, but the EPIC program will have a permanent presence.

One aspect of the program is the fact that it’s expected enforcement on unlicensed gardens located on private parcels will pick up a lot this year. As it destroyed 30 million cannabis plants over the decades, there wasn’t anyone in the forest to charge. With the move to heavier enforcement on private parcels, we’re bound to see more people facing legal trouble.

It’s being viewed as a double-edged sword by many up north. As they hear of the risk of enforcement, many laugh, presuming it can’t be anything compared to what they faced during the hardest era of enforcement up north. They also expect the enforcement will see prices bounce back up.

It might have never got to this point of increased enforcement had the farmers had a real shot in the first place. And as the last 40 years have proven, you can’t enforce cannabis out of California, especially when it’s more popular than ever. [A]

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