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BURGERS & BARS

THE BEST OF LA'S BURGERS

Beyond the Bun BY MICHELE STUEVEN

hether griddled, barbecued, smashed or vegan, L.A.'s burger diversity arguably offers an assortment of patties nestled between some crazy mixed-up buns to rival any other city in the U.S. Whether it's crazy hot burgers in Thai Town, a French-inspired Burger Americaine in Venice or a smashed burger in North Hollywood, here are 15 of our favorites.

The Smash Burger



While the smash burger has been around for years and is nothing new, its crusty beef patty with a caramelized texture and lacy burnt-end edges is currently L.A. 's burger du jour, and a pop-up favorite. Yellow Paper Burger was born out of the pandemic as a side gig for Colin Fahrner and Katie Burnett. Backyard pop-ups grew into multiple residencies at bars and breweries around town. You can catch the red jumpsuit-clad team every week, mostly on the east side of town by checking on Instagram for their schedule and updates. Based in Monterey Park, they log about 36 miles a day round-trip to sling burgers in "Wimpy," an old Ford Econoline from 1989. @yellowpaperburger on IG

Easy Street Burgers started out - and still



makes appearances - as a pop-up on Western Avenue. It's become enough of a cult favorite that they've opened a brick-andmortar in North Hollywood, with another coming soon to Hollywood. You can get a single, double, triple, 4 x 4 and continue with additional patties for \$3 after that. The current record is 12. Deliciously smashed to juicy flat perfection, add on a side order of wild fries with grilled onions, cheese and wild sauce, which can only be eaten with a fork. Veggie options are available as well.

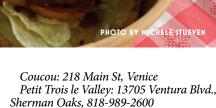
4143 Lankershim Blvd., Studio City, 818-966-3009

International Flare-Ups

While the hamburger may lay claim to

being an American invention, it hasn't stopped the LA immigrant population from creating international interpretations, both elegant and eclectic.

What the Royale with cheese was to Pulp Fiction, the Burger Americaine is to **Bar Coucou** in Venice. Made with a thick pastured wagyu beef patty, it's topped with grilled onions and smothered with cognac, everything sauce, cheese and frisee in between toasted brioche buns and crowned with cornichons. Also deserving of a chef's French kiss is Ludo Lefebvre's Michelinstarred Big Mec at L'Original Petit Trois in Hollywood and Petit Trois le Valley. Perhaps one of LA's most decadent burgers, it's made with a foie gras-infused red wine Bordelaise, gooey housemade American cheese and very little veg to distract from its rich beefiness.



L'Original Petit Trois: 718 N. Highland

Ave., LA, 323-468-8916 Another Michelin-starred burger worth its weight in gold is LeBurger at **Camphor** in the arts district — a combination of dry-aged beef and slowly cooked duck leg meat topped with caramelized onions and house remoulade sauce. The brioche bun is finished off with duck fat and is the perfect companion to a trio of house-made dipping sauces and pommes frites in an elegant setting. The burger is part of a new special 10-item limited menu available exclusively on DoorDash from the modern bistro helmed by co-executive chefs Max Boonthanakit and Lijo George.

923 E. Third St., #109, LA, 213-626-8888 Devouring a Crazy Thai Burger on a sidewalk table in front of the Silom Supermarket in Thai Town, it's easy to forget you're on Hollywood Boulevard. The signature burger is an intoxicating combination of Thai barbecue sauce, grilled onions, peppers and pineapple on a sesame bun that holds up to the challenge. The Crazy Krapow puts on the heat with a choice of chicken, pork or beef and is topped with a fried egg marinated in Thai bird chili sauce. Pair it with a glass of icy and smoky Thai tea for the perfect balance. The restaurant in Koreatown will be reopening soon, with the return of the Crazy Sticky Rice Burger with larb between two rice cakes. All come with a choice of house salad or fries.

5321 Hollywood Blvd., Thai Town, 323-

For the 10-year anniversary of the original Ramen Burger, Keizo Shimamoto, the new director of culinary events at The Jap-





anese American Cultural & Community Center, will bring back his famed novelty creation to the JACCC plaza during the 80th Annual Nisei Week Japanese Festival in Little Tokyo on Saturday, Aug. 19, and Sunday, Aug. 20. Shimamoto's \$10 viral sensation features fresh ramen noodles boiled and pan seared and pressed into buns that sandwich a juicy beef patty with a variety of toppings like arugula and scallions and a house-made shoyu sauce.

244 South San Pedro St., LA, 213-628-

Smokev BBO

You can already smell the wood smoke wafting down Ventura Boulevard when you open the door to **Boneyard Bistro** in Sherman Oaks. In addition to its popular barbecued 420 burger, which is a halfpound smoked barbecue burger with bacon chipotle onion jam, cheese, pickles and Texas aioli, there are revolving special burg-

ers like the Oklahoma onion double smash burger with double cheese, grilled onions, pickles and yellow mustard. If you're brave, try the heat-seaking Island Burn oak grill version with tropical habanero rum glaze, habanero jack cheese, shredded cabbage and pickled habaneros. Wash it down with an ice cold frothy Weihenstephaner Weissbier straight out of the tap.

13539 Ventura Blvd., Sherman Oaks, 818-906-7427

The Standards

With all due respect to the Original Tommy's on Rampart and the chili cheeseburger, both portions and quality have shrunk at the 77-year-old institution in the last few years, making room for offshoots that have come and gone. Big Tomy's on Pico under the 405 has resurrected the classic better than anyone else, with thick slices of fresh tomato, generous sour pickle chips and chopped onions, and topped with plenty







of rich house-made chili that can't be beat. Despite a long rebuild after a fire during the pandemic, the portions remain satisfyingly super-sized. One order of fries still feeds two and the tiny hot pickled peppers on the counter are a comforting sight.

1289 W. Pico Blvd., West LÄ, 310-479-0601

If you're feeling nostalgic, you still can find the tiny **Dave's Burgers** shack in the corner of the gas station on Atlantic Boulevard in Long Beach. Established in 1956, the Jumbo Cubby stuffed with sausages, grilled onions and crispy iceberg is only \$8.19, with prices descending on the rest of the 13 different burgers, including chicken and turkey.

3396 Atlantic Ave., Long Beach, 562-424-3340

The Snug Harbor has been in Santa Monica since 1941, when Frank Leight

fed local aircraft employees and soldiers his Zwiebel Burger and beer. In 1954, Christa Rosenloecher fled East Germany and landed at the Snug. She started mixing malts for Leight and eventually bought the place. Burgers were 55 cents at the time. In the late '70s, C.J. Rudolph, like many other Santa Monica natives and who was just a kid at the time, made the Snug a regular hangout. He hounded Rosenloecher for years about buying the diner and, about 25 years ago, she finally gave in. Gentrification has completely taken over the block, but the harbor is still snuggled in between progress. The Zwiebel comes from the original 1941 grill with grilled onions, lots of American cheese, lettuce, pickles and tomatoes, and their spicy Snug sauce.

2323 Wilshire Blvd., Santa Monica, 310-828-2991

And speaking of gentrification, we al-





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most lost it when it was forced to move from its original location in West Hollywood, but Irv's Burgers was able to relocate nearby on Santa Monica Boulevard and has found an additional new home on La Brea Avenue. Established in 1946 along what was Route 66, highlights include The Big Irv with Irv's sesame bun, burger patty, pastrami, hot dog, chili, cheese and Irv's sauce, as well as Irv's double with two patties, cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, onions, pickles, ketchup, mayo and mustard. As with most of our favorite burger joints, vegan options are available like the Beyond Burger.

7998 Santa Monica Blvd., West Hollywood 1000 S. La Brea Ave., LA, 323-690-1105

No Cow No How

While most burger joints carry vegan alternatives, we love No Moo New American Burgers. Housed in the original Johnny Rockets Diner location on Melrose, No-Moo features plant-based burgers, chick'n sandwiches, fresh-baked vegan brioche buns, a variety of non-dairy milkshakes, and locally sourced lettuce and produce. The BBQ Facon Burger is made with freshly baked brioche, house-made 'bacon', secret barbecue sauce, fried onion strings, an Impossible patty and vegan American cheese.

7507 Melrose Ave., West Hollywood, 323-433-4990

Roxanne's Lounge & Latin Grill in Long Beach has a mean portobello mushroom burger with grilled pineapple, coleslaw and house-made whiskey sauce. If you're dining with a carnivore, have them try the poblano burger with a 100% Angus beef patty charbroiled and served inside a fresh bun filled with a fire-grilled poblano pepper, chipotle aioli, melted swiss cheese and sunny side-up egg. Served with your choice of waffles fries or side salad. Or, try the pupusa burger — queso con loroco pupusas with an Angus beef patty and central American slaw served with fries and salsa roja.

1115 E. Wardlow Road, Long Beach, 562-426-4777

Celebrating its one-year anniversary this month, Kevin Hart's Hart House has already laid claim to four locations in the southland — Westchester, Monrovia, Hollywood and University Park South spreading its mission to be "plant-based for the people." Hart House ingredients are 100% plant-based with no antibiotics, hormones, artificial colors, preservatives, or high-fructose corn syrup. We love the barbecue burger with two signature plantbased patties, American cheese, smokey barbecue sauce, crispy onions, pickles, and plant-based mayo, alongside a summer lemonade made from ripe, fresh lemons and a dash of turmeric.

https://www.myharthouse.com/





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BURGERS & BARS

OUT OF SIGHT: FALLING DOWN THE L.A. SPEAK-EASY RABBIT HOLE

BY LINA LECARO



hen it comes to bars, dark and hidden away will never go out of style. Thrill of discovery and in-the-know exclusivity aside, drinking spaces that brand themselves as "speak-easies" tend to create a more let loose/feel good energy that's noticeably shared by all who enter. Bad vibes are rare.

Of course, the term "speakeasy" literally refers to the era during Prohibition, when imbibers had to hide to purchase and enjoy alcoholic beverages together. While everything that goes down in speakeasy style bars these days is legal, the atmosphere can conjure a subtle naughtiness nonetheless. It's not enough to simply "look for the back room," anymore, either. Modern speakeasies have a certain bygone elegance and an unmatched attention to detail, decor and the drink menu. We'd dare to declare that Los Angeles has some of the best in this regard.

As the author of a book called Los Ange-

it did not survive past the pandemic in the B.H. locale and vacated in 2020. The SLS's rooftop restaurant and bar, which is currently in the midst of a renovation, remains a relaxing place for drinks and bites, and it's particularly gorgeous at sunset when its infinity pool starts to reflect the light from modern gas fire pits and arty outdoor lamps.

les' Best Dive Bars, we love a hard to find

mini-mall hole in the wall, but that's not

what we're talking about here. Instead, we

are celebrating the L.A. bars with thematic

environments, immersive vintage touches

and boozy surprises- spots that live up to

The SLS Hotel Beverly Hills is one of the

most luxurious places to stay in Los An-

geles, but its art and design is anything

but stuffy or traditionally fancy. Whim-

sical pieces and comfort zones greet

guests from the moment they exit their

cars in the valet outside- and it just gets

curiouser and curiouser as you enter the

For several years, José Andrés' Bazaar

made for a complementary tenant, espe-

cially with its upscale yet whimsically-

the mystery of their exteriors.

front lobby.

But the hotel's newest destination is something altogether more fantastical and it tops our list of speakeasies worth investigating. Wasp in a Wig is inspired by the lost chapter of Lewis Carroll's Through the Looking-Glass and its intention is to transport visitors down the rabbit hole in more ways than one. Crystal chandeliers, baroque furnishings adorned with cheeky animal faces, vintage photographs and books, white velvet upholstery and colorful knick knacks referencing Wonderland and its beloved characters are everywhere, and many are hidden or subtle.

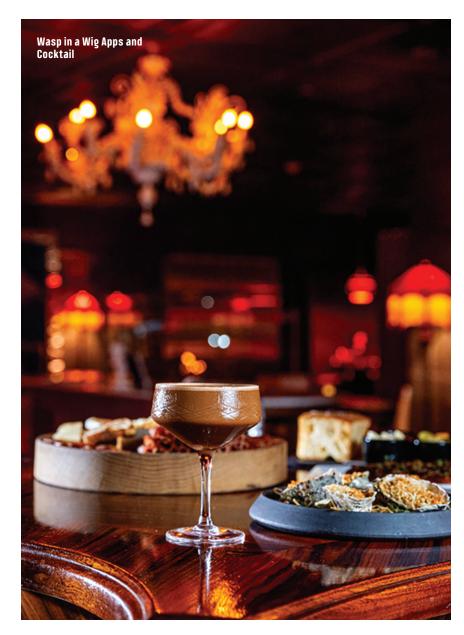
"The best way I would describe the speakeasy, and the SLS Hotel in general, is eclectic elegance," says Jordan Peterkofsky, Food and Beverage Manager at the SLS. "Stepping through the looking glass and into the world of Wasp in a Wig brings you to a whimsical fantasyland filled with easter eggs throughout. From the Mad Hatter rabbit that greets you at the portal into the speakeasy to the ancient literature displayed in vitrines throughout, it's truly a one-of-a-kind experience."

The cocktails alone are enough to make a hatter go mad. The "Drink Me" portion of the menu features indulgent sips that'll make you marvel, from Hendrick's gin driven The White Rabbit to Absinthe and vodka elixir The Fairy to our favorite, The Key Li-Me Softly, a scrumptious mix of tangy and tart that rivals any dessert out there.

The "Eat Me" section is no less wondrous There's an oysters dish infused with Korean spices and an oxtail chicharron. There's also special attention to mushrooms here— as apparently they "make you grow taller." Also Carroll happened to be a big fan of fungi. Try the mushroom carpaccio or flatbread pizza.

Find it: This speakeasy entrance is revealed when the clock strikes 5 p.m. and a funhouse-style mirrored entry opens up to the right of the SLS's check-in desk. Walk-ins are welcome but reservations are recommended. (465 La Cienega Blvd. Beverly Hills. Marriott.com/en-us/hotels/laxls-sls-hotel-a-luxury-collection-hotel-beverly-hills)

The Blind Barber aims to capture the community connections that are often found at the local barbershop- and more. With a bar in the back of a working haircut hub, they provide a place to bond and barfly after a snip or buzz- or not. With locations in New York and Los Angeles, the concept takes the welcoming environs of a man cave to new heights. There are two spots in town: in the original Culver city space, a dimly lit room has leather booths and relaxed upscale dive ambiance; and in Highland Park, with a sleek mod living room feel. Both bars serve a small food menu including grilled cheese, seasoned chips and truffle popcorn, but the focus is definitely the



drinks. Try the fruit flared Strawberry Fields, High +Tight and the Hot Heather.

Find it: *Walk to the back of the shop to* find the secret lounge and listen for DJs spinning an inviting multi-genre music mix. (5715 N Figueroa St., Highland Park, and 10797 Washington Blvd, Culver City. Blindbarber.com)

There are plenty of cool bars in minimalls around L.A. but only Adults Only recreates a retro video porn shop to enter. The "store" isn't real but it provides a sleazy fun welcome as you walk to the back and discover a surprisingly upscale and quite large looking drinking establishment. Campy films (not XXX ones, though) are projected on the walls and DJs spin a mix of rock, pop on hip-hop most nights. Spacious booths, a pool table and strong drinks make this bar the kind of place you stay for a while, i.e, it's worth more than a quickie.

Enter here: *Look for the red lit walkway* and neon name. (7065 ½ Sunset Blvd. Adultsonlybar.la)

If you're looking for a speakeasy with a bit of humor and hooch head over to Long Beach for the *The Exhibition Bar*, one of the few drinking joints that truly lives up to its name in terms of capturing what it might have really been like in the Prohibition era.

Candlelight, old movies (silent films) and music (often live) and mixologists who know how to elevate old fashioned alcoholic beverages with a modern twist

Find it: Walk through Roxanne's restaurant to the old phone booth and ring 'em up. Make your reservation beforehand to get the password. (1117 E Wardlow Rd. Long Beach. The exhibition room.com)







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"We don't refer to our hidden bars as speakeasies as they existed only at a specific time when bars were illegal for imbibing hooch," says nightlife impresario Cedd Moses, whose company Pouring with Heart, has helped Downtown remain the ultimate destination for old school bar culture. "We really like bars, hidden within other bars as they create a multi-layered experience for the guest. A sense of discovery and the unexpected."

PWH has several bars boasting either a somewhat hidden entry and/or a vintage feel, and while Moses doesn't use the word, we'll deem one of his bars the most speakeasy-esque, and maybe best overall. The Varnish, tucked non-descriptively behind the historic Cole's restaurant, is a hidden gem that often sees people crowding to get in. Tucked inside of the landmark restaurant known as home of classic French Dip beef sandwich, the history here (it opened in 1908) is palpable, and it makes for a multi-faceted flashback-flared night out.

The Varnish is an intimate, dark and woody with 20's touches both classy and sassy, making it a great place for a discreet date night or simply a post-dinner nightcap. Exposed brick, candlelight and spiffy bar staff make it feel like an escape from the modern world. The bartenders here know their business and there's an array of classics and inventive signature sips like The Poet's Dream, the Bitter Bee and the Sazerac. There's jazz music most nights, too. Get there early because it fills up nightly.

Find it: Walk to the back of Cole's dining room and look for the door with a framed picture of a cocktail. (118 E 6th St, Downtown Los Angeles. Thevarnishbar.com)



(Hidden) Honorable Mention:

The undisputed kings of the hidden entry must be lauded here- the Houston Brothers. Houston Hospitality (the nightlife company from twin bros and L.A. natives Jonnie and Mark Houston) has perfected it to the point of experiential art. From the secretive Havana themed hedonism found behind a vintage armoire (move the hanger over to walk inside) at La Descarga, to the garage fridge walkway of the 70's domicile known as Good Time at Davey Waynes to the auster wreckroom journey (enter behind a vending machine) at Breakroom 86, which also feature hidden karaoke rooms, the duo's attention to detail and guest discovery is unmatched. Each bar offers themed drinks, perfectly curated music (deejayed and live depending on the night) and decor that compliments the nightlife narrative. And while they might be a bit less secretive, a fittingly roaring 20s feel can also be had at their bars such as Black Rabbit Rose and No Vacancy. (More info on all of these and more at Houstonhospitalityla.com).

₹ ₹ ₹

FERNANDO VALENZUELA HONORED BY CITY AS DODGERS RETIRE HIS NUMBER

In celebration of former Dodger great, Fernando Valenzuela, the city honored the legendary Mexican pitcher, just before the Dodgers retired his uniform number 34.

BY ISAI ROCHA



he city of Los Angeles proclaimed August 11 "Fernando Valenzuela Day," honoring the Dodger legend as the team retired his number.

The city council chambers were filled with fans of the 62-year-old Mexican pitcher, as Valenzuela addressed the city in a Dodger blue suit.

"I don't have many words to say," Valenzuela said. "I played 11 years here and then after I continued to work but with another department. Thank you to the team for giving the opportunity to be in this beautiful city."

Before the Dodgers began their Friday game against the Colorado Rockies, a

ceremony was held for Valenzuela, as a stage filled with Dodger greats sat in front of the mound at Dodger Stadium.

From his former teammates Sandy Koufax and Mike Scioscia to former Spanish radio announcer Jaime Jarrin, Valenzuela was surrounded by his Dodger family as many spoke about his impact on the team and city.

"On this night, his number 34 will be immortalized," Jarrin said while speaking to the Dodger Stadium crowd in Spanish. "Thank you, Fernando. May you continue to be an inspiration to the thousands of children

His former teammates Orel Hershiser and Manny Mota were standing atop the

Dodger Stadium "Ring of Honor" above the Loge section, lifting the curtain and revealing Valenzuela's plaque number, which now sits between Koufax's No. 32 and Roy Campanella's No. 39.

As with the other 11 retired numbers, no other Dodger will be allowed to don the No. 34 again.

California Senator Alex Padilla joined in the ceremony, highlighting Valenzuela's influence and sharing a story about his family's excitement when "El Toro" would pitch.

"Fernando Valenzuela was more than an icon—he was our hero on the mound and the bridge that made our communities feel like we belonged," Padilla said. "The history of baseball isn't complete without Fernandomania."

FORMER COUNCILMAN RIDLEY-THOMAS MAY FACE 6 YEARS IN BRIBERY CASE

Former Los Angeles City Councilman Mark Ridley-Thomas may face 6 years in prison in a bribery case, as suggested by federal prosecutors.

On March 30, Ridley-Thomas was found guilty of one count of conspiracy, one count of bribery, one count of honest services mail fraud, and four counts of honest services wire fraud.

"This was a shakedown," prosecutors wrote in a 32-page memo. "Not the kind in movies with bags of cash or threats of force. But the kind that is polite and pervasive. The kind that happens too often by sophisticated, powerful people. The kind to which society, sadly, has become so accustomed that it often goes unreported and rarely yields consequences for the offender but strikes a devastating blow to the integrity of our democratic system."

The defendant, Ridley-Thomas, seeks at-home probation with no prison time served.

The charges could have amounted to 20 years in federal prison for each fraud count, 10 years for the bribery charge, and another five for the conspiracy charge, according to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Central District of California.

The charges stem from a scheme occurring when Ridley-Thomas served on the L.A. County Board of Supervisors in 2018. In the case, Ridley-Thomas was accused of voting in favor of an amendment for a Telehealth contract with the Department of Mental Health at USC, in exchange for his son, Sebastian Ridley-Thomas, being hired at the USC School of Social Work.

In September 2022, former USC Dean of social work Marilyn Louise Flynn, 84, agreed to plead guilty to charges connected to the Ridley-Thomas case. Flynn's guilty plea was for a federal charge that she bribed Ridley-Thomas by fun-

neling \$100,000 he provided from his campaign account to the United Ways of Southern California organization.

The investigation found that the \$100,000 payment was processed in May 2018, with Flynn saying she met with Ridley-Thomas to discuss his vote in favor of the amended Telehealth contract, or the "master contract stuff," as it was referred to in conversations.

In September 2022, the city council appointed Heather Hutt to represent the 10th district until there was further clarity on Ridley-Thomas' case. Days after Ridley-Thomas' conviction, Hutt was voted to serve out the remainder of the term.

The appointment of Hutt did not go without opposition, but Council President Paul Krekorian pointed to the 2022 resignation of Nury Martinez, which left the city's 4th district without council representation for more than nine months.

As of this writing, Ridley-Thomas has vet to be sentenced.

LAPD OFFICER ARRESTED FOR ALLEGEDLY STEALING A DEBIT CARD

An LAPD officer was arrested on August 9 for allegedly stealing and using a woman's debit card.

The LAPD Internal Affairs Division investigated the matter and put out a felony arrest warrant on Officer Edmond Babainas for burglary and theft after the woman complained about the card going missing.

"The allegations of an officer breaking public trust are extremely troubling and there must be accountability," LAPD Chief Michel Moore said in a statement. "This Department will fully cooperate with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office in this matter."

The woman claims to have last seen the card while inside an LAPD location, later seeing transactions going through without her consent. The woman allegedly obtained photos of the officer making transactions with her card at a home improvement store and presented them to LAPD.

That is when LAPD identified the person using the card as Officer Babainas.

"Our police officers must be held accountable to the highest standard," Bass said in a statement. "I want to acknowledge and thank Chief Moore and LAPD leadership for swiftly taking action on this serious matter. The integrity of our police department is of the utmost importance and we must continue to act with transparency and accountability to build trust with all Angelenos."

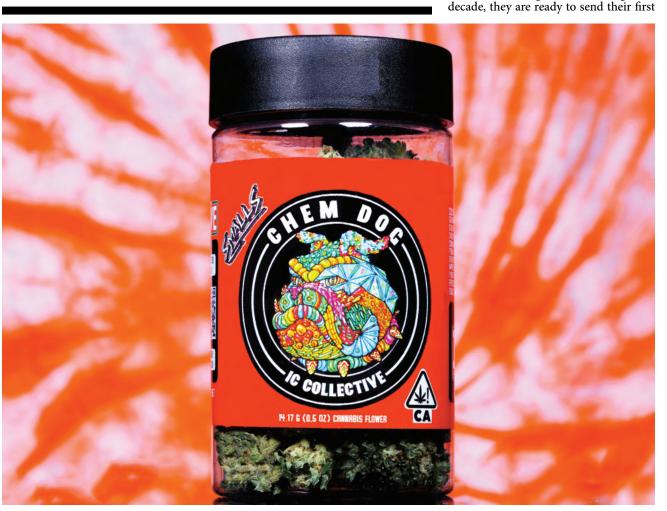
Babainas was booked at LAPD Valley Jail and released under his own recognizance. He was been relieved of his duties until the criminal investigation is completed.

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IC COLLECTIVE STRIKES RACK

The Legendary cultivators prep for their first Illinois drop and give an update on their return to California

BY JIMI DEVINE



ew things have been more devastating to the California top-shelf cannabis smoker in recent years than the night IC Collective burned down in July of 2021. We caught up with founder Ben Brown as he prepares to enter the Illinois market and return home when possible.

Backboned by Brown's links to the Chem Fam, the network of famous OG growers that ran the Chemdog strain found by Greg Krzanowski in Massachusetts over a quarter century ago, IC Collective was famous for having the gas. Over the years, Brown collected a variety of killer flavors he would pair with the Chem and each other. The results would start filling their trophy shelves in 2013 and lead to their famous mantra, "We run on fuel."

In a world of dessert weeds and new equatorial concoctions that breeders pray may end up the next cookies or Z, most still associate the most potent marijuana in the world with that petrol or fuel smell that much of IC Collective's catalog possessed in spades. And even the things that weren't fuelly smelling were amazing

product to retailers in over two years. In the end, it looks like there will be about a 26-month gap in production.

representations of whatever they were. I

stand by the statement the best Zkittelz I

ever saw that wasn't grown in Mendocino

Despite the large volume of cannabis

being grown in California, there are only

a dozen or so cultivators that can com-

pare to IC Collective. Hence, even with all that other weed, the void they left be-

hind was massive. Especially given how

few other people in that dozen actually

But things are looking up. After a massive 1800-seed pheno hunt of gear Brown

has been working on or hoarding for a

was grown by Brown.

specialize in fuel.

"I think our last delivery was July 2? Or July 1 2021. And then we burned down on the fourth. Two years dude," Brown told L.A. Weekly. "The only thing I say that at that building was some mom plants."

Thankfully the 12 strains he was able to rescue were some of his bangers. But not all made it, the Ziablo that was winning a lot of stuff was among the fallen. But Brown pressed on with what he was able to save until he finally got his Illinois

rooms going.

IC Collective got the permit for Illinois a week after the fire in Oakland. Needless to say, the week between was one of the more stressful of Brown's cannabis career. As the pound price has crashed in California, we asked if he ever considered throwing in the towel in The Golden State, despite the presumption it'll eventually be the production capital for the global connoisseur class of smokers that buy top-shelf products from people like Brown.

He emphasized he's plenty familiar with the challenges of California. But he's one of the people that grows fire that's good enough to deal with those headaches.

"We did the same amount of money every year because we didn't have the funds to build outright," Brown said. "So I know that challenges in California, like how expensive it was. Even though we were successful, we really didn't make any money or be able to progress our situation. So I was constantly trying to get better. Get my situation better in California. So that's how I got to Illinois."

When the firefighters let Brown rescue his plants the next day, he was but one of over 400 applicants hoping to cultivate in Illinois. He didn't know how the next week would play out.

"And so that was like a long shot, and then I had already been trying to get a bigger building in California. And on the 15th, we won the license. So July 15, 2021, 10 days later, we won the license in Illinois, and then later that night, I got approved for my conditional use permit for another town in California," Brown said.

That town was West Sacramento. He just needs time and revenue to get back to doing it properly in California. Come early October, he'll have both.

"I have the building, I have two licenses for distro and manufacturing. I have building permits. I have half of the equipment. Like it's a real thing," Brown said, "It's just you ask the question like you, you watch this, the 2021 market, and yeah, I'm scared and I think we can do it right."

Brown said anyone who can make it in California can make it anywhere, since they're basically selling bottled water next to a waterfall and still surviving.

"But yeah, it's hella scary to come back to work here," Brown said. "And before it was just all me, everything I work for I dumped in, and now I have supporters and like if a fear of disappointing other people, you know, or like failing is the ultimate fear for me. So we are slow rolling, California, but I mean, I was just on the phone with the municipality the other day telling them that we're still in the game."

When asked if he expected to have the gassiest weed in Illinois come September, Brown replied, "1,000%." [L]

OXY-GEN-ERATION

Trash punks look to shake shit up

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



espite ongoing reports to the contrary, rock 'n' roll doesn't need saving. Music isn't pie, cut into genre slices. Rather, people are capable of enjoying more than one thing. Certain genres might enjoy their time in the spotlight, but those things are cyclical.

With all of that said though, it is nice when a band comes along and shakes things up a bit, and the Oxys are doing just that (whether they know it or not). The Austin punk troupe released their debut album A Date With the Oxys last year, and have already dropped the sophomore effort, Generation Irrelevant. No rest for the wicked.

Dedicated Punks will already be familiar with guitarist Jason "Ginchy" Kottwitz – he was a member of a recent incarnation of the Dead Boys, led by Cheetah Chrome,

that played a string of strong shows in these parts

"Tumultuous and fun would be a great description of that," Ginchy says. "I had a blast doing it. It was a great time. I had already been playing all those songs with Cheetah before (in his solo band), so it was really nothing too new for me other than the fact that Cheetah had brought in a singer (Jake Hout) and Ricky (Rat, bass) got on board. It was chaos. A lot of opinions about that whole scenario. I just tried to go up there every night and do it justice, I guess."

The reformed Dead Boys was a total nostalgia fest, and that's fine. That's what everyone wanted from that band. But the Oxys is all about new material, and the band is churning it out at an impressive rate, without letting the quality drop one bit. The Oxys was, in fact, formed during

me, so we just started writing songs. It's been about seven or eight months, writing songs. I think we probably had 50 demos for that first record, and we just chose the songs that we thought sequenced best, and put it out. At the time, we didn't have any real intention of doing a band that played shows and stuff. We were just trying to occupy our time during the pandemic."

When A Date With the Oxys was done, Ginchy still had more songs ready to go, so the band immediately set to work on what would become Generation Irrelevant.

"We had a ton of songs, so we demoed another 50 songs, and same thing, just picked the songs that we thought sequenced into an album the best," Ginchy says. "That's the second record. We're still forging forward with tracking the third record right now. I have a fourth record ready to go, too. It seems to be the never-ending songwriting

binge?

the pandemic as an outlet for Ginchy's

band, I guess," he says. "I've been writing

a lot of music, when I was playing with

Cheetah and doing the Dead Boys thing -

I was constantly in a state of writing music,

and when the pandemic hit, I wanted to

put that music to use. I had met the singer (Phil Davis) in Austin, and had given him

"It was a little bit of a process to form the

That's 50 songs demoed for the debut album, then another completely separate 50 demoed for the new one, and so on. That's a frankly astonishing work rate, again considering that the songs all hit home with intensive precision. The sound is one that will appeal to fans of the Dead Boys, New York Dolls, and Stooges, but also contemporary punk and gloriously trashy rock 'n' roll bands.

"I try to write songs that I would want to hear," Ginchy says. "I definitely had a vision for what I was doing. Just the basic sound of the band, I'm looking at Malcolm Young on one guitar and Johnny Thunders on the other. That's how I write our stuff. All of our songs are written for two guitars and I write all those parts. I've heard lots of comparisons. I've had people tell me some of it sounds like early Replacements, some of it sounds like the Damned, some of it sounds like the Humpers — it's all across the board."

The lineup has shifted slightly between records, but bassist Gabriel Van Asher and drummer Chris Alaniz were both in Cheetah Chrome's solo band plus New York Dolls man Sylvain Sylvain & the Sylvains, with Ginchy. New guitarist Genocide has been in bands around Austin before, and she's a former adult movie star. It's perhaps a natural then that there's been some evolution in sound between records.

"Every album, we're demoing new stuff," Ginchy says. "I think on the third record, we did take one song from the batch from the first record of demos because it just happened to sequence well with that album. But for the most part, every time we get done with an album and start writing a new one, we're moving forward in a progressive manner. So the songs I think have a natural evolution to them for certain. You can hear that big time between the first and second record. They're similar, but clearly on the second record the tempos are more aggressive, the songs are just more aggressive in general, whereas the first record really sits more in that proto punk realm I would say."

Generation Irrelevant was tracked at Ice Cream Factory Studios in Austin, after which Ginchy took the songs home and mixed them himself.

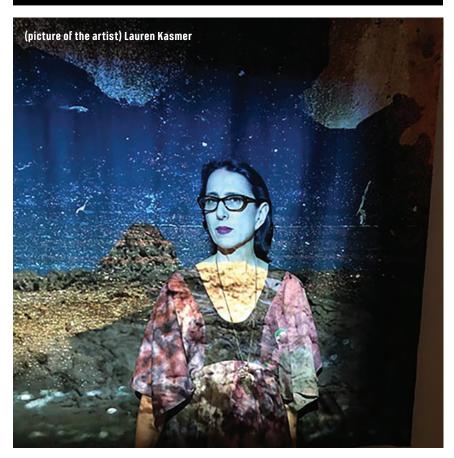
"I do audio professionally, so I guess it's considered DIY because we are actually doing it ourselves," he says. "It definitely saves a lot of money. But mainly I mix it just because I want to make it sound exactly how I want it to sound. It's really hard to convey that when you're working with a different producer or engineer."

The sound is wonderful — snotty and sleazy in all of the most delicious ways. Again, rock 'n' roll doesn't need saving, but the Oxys are going to do it anyway.

The Oxys' Generation Irrelevant is out now.

MEET MULTI-SENSORIA ARTIST LAUREN KASMER

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



nen it comes to the wideranging activities and interlocking mediums practiced by artist Lauren Kasmer, multidisciplinary doesn't begin to cover it. Across photography, textiles, wearable art, film and video, sculpture, installation, performance, storytelling, artist books, public gatherings, and thematic, narrative shared food, Kasmer investigates permutations of history, memory, intuition, identity, place-making, and somatic knowledge. By engaging and layering all the senses in complex structures of communion with the natural world and with each other, Kasmer's relationship to the elements is both documented and embod-

ied. Contextualized within her luxurious universe of texture and color, human stories shared through food—both recipes told and dishes served—expands the ways in which her message of beauty, life, and resilience can be experienced.

L.Â. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

LAUREN KASMER: Intuitively I have always known from the youngest consciousness, but didn't always know how to name the way I looked at the world, and wanted to create within and beyond it.

What is your work about?

Multidisciplinary/multi-media installations, often with collaborators and public participation, usually centered around a



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUKE PALASCAK



Lauren Kasmer, Flared (from the Flourish From Fire series), photographs on assorted materials, this image on aluminum

film, with thematic food, scent, sound, and wearables, as well as live events. The series of works sequentially build upon each other in response to time and placement. For instance, the UV installation was initially presented with an event called Bees are Fuzzy where the public was invited to hear Apiologists presenting, casual beekeepers sharing and other artists' poetic interpretations reflecting on the Honeybee crisis—all this while being served honey-based and indigenous plant-life snacks by fellow artists, donning photographic art wearables in fabrics of my abstracted images of native plant life, in silhouettes that referenced protective bee suits.

How does food play a part in your public practice?

Appealing to multiple senses has always been a part of a personal as well as the collaborative and participatory manifestations of my art practice. The preparation, serving and sharing of food and recipes, even in story form, is intrinsic to who we are and embracing this allows for an interaction and connection with greater community while referencing histories. My earliest food collaboration was hiring a homeless artist in the early 80's (who worked sporadically at a Ralph's bakery) to apocalyptically decorate a cake for a performance and an exhibition I co-curated called *Fallout Fashion*, a fundraiser for the L.A. Alliance for Survival.

A photograph I have included here is from an installation called *Tel* that comprised not only the filmed *UV* and the draped 58 x 130-inch photograph of a bees watering hole, but some of the photographic prints on metal of my home and studio's fire-ravaged walls from the series called *Flourish From Fire*. It was a natural inclination to have a fellow artist who loves to cook develop burnt serving platters and offer food that was charred to guests interacting with the alternative exhibition space.

In conjunction with the *Blue* exhibition at The Loft at Liz's gallery, I present-



ed *Not So Blue*, an evening of small bites, rhythm and blues, hip hop, projected video and wearable art. The event was free and donations benefitted the nonprofit organizations: Good Shepherd Center for Homeless Women and Children & A Window Between Worlds.

Most recently, with co-creator Joyce Dallal, I have brought back the active part of our decades-long Homesite project—a historic installation with community contributions, the *Homesĭtē Exchanges*, which are ongoing presentations and shares by the public of one's relationship to their food or food memories. The Homesite Recipe Exchange - Culinary Performances were most recently presented in Torrance at El Camino College Art Gallery and at the show I curated called Notions of Place for the San Pedro's Angels Gate Cultural Center. My individual projects allow for live intersections where I can provide activities that almost always allow me to host an edible experience.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

Probably an archaeologist or anthropologist as some books I devoured at an early age were accounts by John Lloyd Stephens and Dian Fossey.

Why do you live and work in Los Angeles?

Birthed in Hollywood of Eastern European heritage, I have an affinity for this place that goes beyond simply being born here and deciding to stay and work. Coming from a lineage of displacement I hold fast to investigating what a notion of place really means—and in fact, it is the name of the show I curated that just closed in June at Angels Gate Cultural Center, my most recent project.

In the exhibition's curatorial statement, I wrote: "Notions of Place examines what

it means to inhabit a complexity of different spaces that may be physical realities or imagined environments... The artists are responsive to the diverse community that makes up San Pedro, while also keeping in mind the importance that it is home to the largest port of international traffic in the US. Filtered through social, cultural, and geo-political frames, the artists explore relationships and systems of the urban, suburban, exurban, and rural landscape."

My notion of this place, Los Angeles, is a desire to honor its past, to retain what is indigenous and still has resonance today, and to also acknowledge my personal lineage and the exodus that eventually brought me securely here. During my personal activations, timed live events where I and others occupied my own installation within the gallery, I served Dobosh torte and poppy seed as a nod to the delectable that my mother coveted. My mother actually did not cook but she was a true appreciator so I assumed it reminded her of early times before her Austro-Hungarian Czechoslovakian mother was a victim and she was a survivor of the Holocaust.

The artists I selected to occupy the exhibition all had a very diverse response to my initial ask. As I wrote in the statement, "Their response ultimately transcended the singular city to reflect what one might call the Covid pandemic migration as well. As a whole society shifts its notion of home, so its idea of place transforms too. In ways that are both spiritual and physical, *Notions of Place* explores the contours of the artist's experience of the world."

Website & Socials:

Web: laurenkasmer.com
IG: @lauren_kasmer
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MWEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

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