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Marissa Hermer

OPENS

Chez Mia

MUSIC

SABRINA SONG GOES BACK HOME WITH BILLY JOEL'S 'THE STRANGER'

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



COLUMBIA

Sabrina Song

LIVY WICKS

one from Long Island, but *The Stranger* is one of my favorite albums. Not just because I've heard each track since before I could walk, but rather the opposite — I grew to love the album only after getting older and moving away.

There's something incomparable to hearing a once-in-a-generation artist describe the exact place you're from with perfect execution. Songs like "Scenes From An Italian Restaurant" developed into all-time favorites, partly because they make me nostalgic for things I would never think to miss. He writes and sings with a matter-of-factness and humor across the record that I love and find deeply moving.

I've always had a soft spot for piano ballads — I grew up singing songs like "Vienna" and "New York State of Mind" at

restaurants and school talent shows. But I think my favorite Billy Joel songs now are the ones you sing loudly and obnoxiously while driving around visiting home (aka "Moving Out").

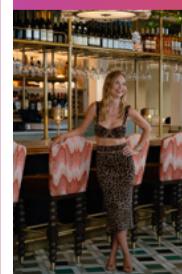
The Stranger is woven into the fabric of my life — "Vienna" sung at graduations, "Just The Way You Are" slow-danced to at weddings. The album is simultaneously universal while painting intimate slice-of-life portraits of people who sound like my grandparents.

I finally saw him live for the first time in January at the 98th show of his Madison Square Garden run, and I surprised myself with how emotional I became. I'm sure I'll only love it more as I get older.

Sabrina Song's album *You Could Stay in One Spot and I'd Love You the Same* is out now. [E]

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PRODUCTION AND DESIGN
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WHAT'S UP POPPING UP

The Helms Bakery Market Opens In Culver City

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

The long-awaited opening of the [Helms Bakery](#) made its debut last week in Culver City. More of a market than just a bakery, it's got everything from candlesticks and flowers to books, drinks, dried goods, and jams. In addition to the bakery, which offers brownies, slices of cakes like olive oil and pistachio buttercream, and a selection of cookies that includes chocolate chip, corn and caramel, oat and Medjool date, there's also a deli for salads and sandwiches. The 14,000-square-foot space also houses a coffee bar with drinks and smoothies. Get there early, most items are sold out by noon, and don't come feeling nostalgic. It's a brand new bakery with no nods to the family-owned historic landmark that opened its doors in 1931 and baked the official bread of the Olympics or signature Helms items the traveling coaches were famous for, like cream puffs and pavlovas.

This holiday season, the [Japanese American Cultural & Community Center](#), in Little Tokyo, presents [Holiday Afternoon Tea: A Harmonious Blend of East and West](#) in collaboration with Japanese and Korean American [Chef Laura Ochikubo](#).

Ochikubo blends her classical training techniques acquired at The French Laundry, Providence, and Gusto Bread with the flavors and history of Japanese and British tea-time traditions. Offerings include Japanese tea sandos, kabocha squash scones, and shoyu caramel bonbons, in addition to delicacies like wagashi, confections found in traditional tea houses in Japan. Uji tea, the most premium tea leaf in Japan, served to the imperial family and used in tea ceremonies, is sourced directly from Kyoto for the experience. On exhibition is a special collection of antique Western-style tea wares dating back to the Meiji era.

The JACCC Holiday Tea must be re-

served [online](#) for \$110 per person, which includes a complimentary glass of sparkling sake. There are two seatings across the first two weekends in December. Dates: Saturday, Dec. 7, Sunday, Dec. 8, Saturday, Dec. 14, and Sunday, Dec. 15, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.

[Crudo e Nudo](#) in Santa Monica welcomes autumn with a new trattoria menu. At an affordable \$40 per person, the tasting menu is available seven days a week and includes the crudo of the day, bread, chicories or Caesar salad, and a choice of cioppino or gnocchi.

Starting Thursday, Nov. 14, [Fairmont Century Plaza's](#) Swiss Chalet returns with a festive après-ski dining experience that brings the charm of the Alps to Los Angeles. Featuring cozy décor and a new prix-fixe menu priced at \$115 per person, Alpine favorites include duck confit and wild mushroom risotto, along with seasonal beverages such as a warm glass of Glühwein. Additional enhancements to the menu include the cheese fondue combining Emmental, Gruyere, and white wine, served with gherkins, pearl onions, carrots, mushrooms, baby potatoes, and baguette. To end the meal on a sweet note there will be an interactive "Make Your Own Hot Chocolate" experience. With five chalets accommodating groups of two to eight, reservations are open, and the Swiss Chalet experience will run through January 1, 2025.

Thursday, Nov. 14, is National Pickle Day, and to commemorate this sacred occasion, cult favorite Grillo's Pickles is partnering with LA staple [El Compadre](#) to bring pickle lovers the ultimate pickle-inspired menu. Available for a limited time only from Thursday, Nov. 14 through Sunday, Nov. 17, dive into pickle-infused cheeseburger tacos, Chupacabra fries loaded with savory toppings and Grillo's pickles and tangy Skinny pickle margaritas. 🥒



Holiday Afternoon Tea

JACCC



Helms Bakery

MICHELE STUEVEN

'CONCLAVE' EXAMINES THE MACHINATIONS — AND SCANDALS — SURROUNDING A PAPAL ELECTION

BY NATHANIEL BELL



It's a shrewd move to release *Conclave*, a slick drama about the election of a pope, less than two weeks before the most contentious U.S. election in recent memory. Edward Berger's tightly wound follow-up to *All Quiet on the Western Front* is essentially a treatise on voting ethics wrapped in a legal thriller. (Suggested alternate title: 12 Angry Priests.) It's a timely reminder that spiritual values almost always become entangled with worldly ambition.

For the uninitiated, the papal conclave refers to the gathering of the cardinals of the Catholic Church to appoint the next pontiff by way of a two-thirds majority. (The process was colorfully depicted in the first episode of Paolo Sorrentino's streaming series *The New Pope*.) Conclave gives us Ralph Fiennes as Cardinal Lawrence of the Vatican, the de facto dean of the College of Cardinals, whose job is to ensure a fair and smooth election. Troubled by rumors around the

unexpected death of the previous pope, Lawrence finds himself caught in a power struggle between warring factions within the conclave. On one side stands liberal Cardinal Bellini (Stanley Tucci) of Italy, who's totally fine with birth control and gay marriage, and on the other, conservative Cardinal Tedesco (Sergio Castellitto) of Italy, who wants to turn back the clock and Make Catholicism Great Again. Also in the mix are Cardinal Tremblay of Montreal (John Lithgow) and Cardinal Adeyemi of Nigeria (Lucian Msamati), both of whom seem to be hiding something.

Speaking of secrets, the recently deceased pope was apparently harboring a whopper when he died, and the gradual discovery of that secret provides enough intrigue to fuel *Conclave* for a solid two hours. Berger, whose *All Quiet on the Western Front*, despite the Oscar nominations, was dinged for aestheticizing the atrocities of WWI, proves himself atten-

tive to the visual possibilities of the story, balancing the solemn weightiness of the drama with an almost anthropological eye for exotic ritual: the locking and sealing of St. Peter's Basilica from the outside world; the stabbing and burning of ballots after every voting session; the trundling of richly robed cardinals sporting identical white umbrellas. No cutaways to news anchors offering live coverage. No subplots involving laymen and their ordinary problems. Ben Baird deserves special mention for his emphatic sound design, which luxuriates in every unsettling sound one can possibly imagine, from the zip of body bags to the snipping of scissors as they shear through the papal ring. Give this man a horror film.

The cast, as you can imagine, has a blast cosplaying this ostentatious pageant. Fiennes, who can seem equally at home playing a beloved intelligence chief, a Nazi, or Lord Voldemort, sinks

easily into his role as the pious, conscience-troubled Lawrence. He gets the lion's share of screenwriter Peter Straughan's good lines. Isabella Rossellini is on hand as a wise and wily nun to provide relief from the boys-only club that decides who becomes the most influential Catholic on the planet. Carlos Diehz also has several fine moments as a soft-spoken, almost silent, cardinal whose unheralded arrival seems to upset the balance of power.

If *Conclave* has all the juicy intrigue of a fat airport novel, that's because it's based on one. And while the book doesn't aspire to the highest planes of literary art, the 2016 Robert Harris bestseller has the benefit of being passionately researched, which lifts it above some of its trashier competitors. The same can be said for Berger's film, which

might be the most serious film about faith and organized religion since Hlynur Pálmason's *Godland* and Phạm Thiên Ân's *Inside the Yellow Cocoon Shell*. Inevitably, as is usually the case when Hollywood takes up the subject, the physical easily upstages the spiritual. Every theme is spelled out, underlined, preached from the pulpit, and handed down as if from God on high. But instead of being a salve for our own scandal-ridden times, the speechifying eventually becomes an encumbrance, a stumbling block, and yet another flashpoint in our endless culture wars. Most of the blame rests heavily on the twist ending, which reveals the film's closest-kept secret in a manner akin to the twist in one of Rod Serling's more famous *Twilight Zone* episodes, "To Serve Man." This revelation and its aftermath will not only test the credulity of the audience — it will also split them right down the middle. **👁**

FOOD

L.A.'S MOST GLAMOROUS HOSTESS MARISSA HERMER OPENS CHEZ MIA

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Chez Mia is the latest restaurant concept from Marissa Hermer and Matt Hermer of the Boujis Group which includes nearby Olivetta and The Draycott in Palisades and Hermer's most glamorous

yet, a 220-seat Provençal-inspired escape on Melrose Avenue's restaurant row.

Originally dubbed Lalou, the renamed space was once home to celebrity hotspot Ago, previously owned by actors Robert DeNiro, Christopher Walken, and direc-

tor Ridley Scott.

Named after Marissa's maiden initials, Marissa Ilamae Anshutz, the stunning design feels like a separate village tucked away on one of West Hollywood's busiest intersections, a reflection of the Hermers' travel memories throughout Southern France and Coastal Europe.

"We came up with the idea when we spent a summer in Provence," Marissa told L.A. Weekly on a previous tour of the space. "It's inspired by my favorite restaurant in France, the historic Colombe d'Or in St Paul de Vence. Famous artists would pay for their lodging by painting pictures in the hotel. The Provençal food is much like California, with great simple ingredients prepared well with a few drops of olive oil."

Culinary Director Ivo Filho's shareable menu is a blend of coastal cuisines, incorporating California flavors with lots of fish



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and local produce, including sustainably caught seafood, slow-baked wild Gulf shrimp, and whole fish baked in salt, an homage to the original Ago menu. The artful queen scallop crudo in the shell is a standout, as well as the crispy squash blossoms with ricotta and honey and a French onion tart topped with olives and anchovy. Warm fougasse bread comes with salted Normandy butter, and there are a variety of caviar services. The delicate and subtle truffle frites are the best in Los Angeles.

Main dishes include a 32-oz Snake River Farms prime bone-in dry aged rib eye served with a choice of peppercorn, Béarnaise, chimichurri, red wine shallot, or horseradish crème fraîche sauces. The desserts are light and elegant, like baked-to-order Madeleines with hazelnut butter, a peach melba with vanilla bean ice cream and raspberries, and a sweet pineapple carpaccio with lime and coconut sorbet.

A testament to Marissa's natural flare for glamor and style, the fun and playful design of Tom Parker uses rich textures, geometric patterns, blown glass and lush landscape design. The patio is bathed in soft green and pink seating and canopies, reminiscent of the Beverly Hills Hotel mise en scène. It's dotted with kumquat trees, the fruit of which is featured in





the signature Le Mia tequila cocktail. The expansive garden is anchored by a sweeping outdoor bar under vintage Sicilian heads from LA-based sculptor Stephanie Morton-Millstein. Parker and the Fettle team used 6,000 square

feet of handmade Italian tile throughout the warm and inviting restaurant. “It’s a real honor to be in this space and a real responsibility to preserve the nostalgic past,” says the mother of three. 



LA WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Vercel Inc. seeks a **Software Engineer** in Covina, CA to scale and improve our infrastructure, availability, and reliability. Telecommuting permitted. \$249,654.40 to \$259,654.40/year. Apply at jobpostingtoday.com/ Ref # 23344.

Albany Farms, in South Pasadena, CA, seeks **Business Development Specialist**. Bachelor's degree required. Resume to: William Saller, 625 S. Fair Oaks Ave., Suite 125, South Pasadena, CA 91030.



OPENING DOORS

HEMOCARE Choral Music + Climate Advocacy

Performed by Grammy Award-winning group Tonality

Saturday, November 16



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