

LA WEEKLY[®]

JANUARY 9 - 15, 2026 | VOL. 48 | NO. 10 | LAWEEKLY.COM

REBUILDING AND RECOVERY: A YEAR AFTER THE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



CONTENTS



ON THE COVER:

Photo: Courtesy of Vanessa Nabhani
Design: Mark Stefanos

ENTERTAINMENT 2-3

Review: Timothée Chalamet proves his prowess in "Marty Supreme."

BY ASHER LUBERTO

FOOD - WHAT'S POPPING UP 4

Indian fine dining comes to Vegas.

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

CULTURE 5-8

One year after the devastating LA wildfires, Angelenos are still in the thick of rebuilding and recovery.

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

LA WEEKLY

EDITOR IN CHIEF: MARK STEFANOS
SENIOR EDITOR: MICHELE STUEVEN



ENTERTAINMENT

REVIEW: TIMOTHÉE CHALAMET COULD BE 'ONE OF THE GREATS' AFTER 'MARTY SUPREME'

BY ASHER LUBERTO



COURTESY OF A24

Timothée Chalamet sure plays a mean ping-pong. In the chaotically wonderful *Marty Supreme*, Chalamet serves up his best performance since *Call Me By Your Name* and proves his "one of the greats" speech wasn't a fluke. As Marty Mauser, a self-centered dork of a ping-pong player, he gets to showcase the exhilarating range he displayed early in his career but has shed since. With monotone performances in the *Dune* series — spice melange could have just been called Ambien — and a string of mediocre parts in recent indies, I was skeptical we would ever see another great performance from the actor. No longer — his kinetic, powder-keg performance as a real-life table tennis star is only matched by the cocaine-in-your-veins direction of Josh Safdie (*Uncut Gems*), who turns the game of ping-pong into a non-stop catastrophic thrill ride.

Of all the subjects to explore for a solo directorial debut, ping-pong might seem like an odd choice. Who doesn't enjoy throwing on some table tennis during the Olympics, but a 150-minute movie — that's crazy! What elevates this

beyond a silly sports homage is Safdie's ability to orchestrate a picaresque odyssey about the American dream, and the extremes people take to get there, around such a whimsical subject.

This is operatic, meaningful filmmaking, opening in a textured 1950's New York City. Scatterbained Marty, a born hustler, has a job selling shoes, but he has dreams of becoming the number one ping-pong player on the planet. He's got a long way to go, and a lot of money to make, so he starts by stealing from his boss, hopping on a flight and wiping the floor with the competition, only to lose to an elegant Japanese champ in the finals.

For the gritty, shameless Marty, this is just fuel for the fire, the wake-up call he needed to train to be the best there is. He might not have finished first, but he finishes first that night with a glamorous 1930s movie star, Kay (Gwyneth Paltrow), who caught his eye while sauntering through a ritzy hotel lobby. In a humorous scene, he gives Kay a ring while standing on his bed in socks, underwear and a bathrobe, convincing

her to spend the night. He swindles her out of a necklace, then wheedles his way into the bad graces of Kay's husband (Kevin O'Leary), who lures Marty into a scheme that involves selling pens but is really orchestrated to set up his demise. Meanwhile, a woman he knocked up wants revenge and his mother belittles Marty from the sidelines.

Wait, isn't this movie about ping pong? Sort of. Marty is a fraudster with the schemes of Leonardo DiCaprio in *Catch Me if You Can* and the insufferable greed of Adam Sandler in *Uncut Gems*, screwing over everyone in his path to greatness, making this more a case study in seedy opportunism than a conventional sports biopic. Don't expect *Rocky* training montages here. Instead, we watch Safdie's controlled tornado demolish everything in his path, until all that hot air runs dry and this hypocritical man dissipates, like a tornado, into utter nothingness — all that's left is wreckage in his wake.

While that might sound like a one-man show, movies are a team sport, a cumulative effort from hundreds of distinctive



COURTESY OF A24

pieces playing their role to perfection. In *Marty Supreme*, every piece is meticulously assembled in a whirlwind of controlled chaos. There are endless surface pleasures to enjoy in *Marty Supreme*, including the immersive grainy cinematography of Darius Khondji and the steamy sewers, trash-strewn alleys and basement-lit arenas that make up Jack Fisk's production design, every bit as lived-in as a New York City deli. Safdie's needle drops are equally electric, using 80's bangers in a 50's setting the same way Martin Scorsese did with *Mean Streets*.

At the center of it all is Chalamet's Marty, the locus of the film's energy. His ego complicates things, but his drive to become the greatest ping pong player ever pairs symphonically with Chalamet's drive to be the greatest actor ever. Scrawny, scrappy, a double shot of espresso and a line of cocaine, some soda and an unhealthy dose of Adderall, Chalamet delivers an energizer bunny performance that doesn't let up for the entirety of this sprawling epic, and his character's sheer determination to succeed is what propels this film to another level of filmmaking.

It's every bit as ambitious, spontaneous, unhinged and breathlessly entertaining as Marty himself — a 150-minute ping pong rally that keeps your head spinning



and your hands jittering until the final frame, which isn't so much victorious as it is cathartic, the realization that all this manipulation leaves Marty as hollow as the ping-pong balls he smashes into oblivion. Marty may never achieve gold, the sole purpose of his pathetic existence, but the same can't be said for Chalamet, who makes a strong case to receive a gold statue at the Oscars this March, starting off his legacy as one of the greats.

"Marty Supreme" is in theaters now. [A]



FOOD

WHAT'S UP POPPING UP

Indian Fine Dining Comes to Vegas

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

The elegant [Gymkhana](#) has opened at ARIA Resort & Casino in Vegas, marking the U.S. debut of the two Michelin-starred London restaurant and the first Indian fine-dining restaurant on the Strip. Founded by siblings Jyotin, Karam, and Sunaina Sethi, in partnership with MGM Resorts, Gymkhana Las Vegas delivers contemporary Indian cuisine under executive chef Srikant Kumar.

With interiors by [North End Design](#), the space reimagines the intimacy of a London townhouse for Las Vegas with nods to India's historic Gymkhana clubs and the Sethi family's heritage. Distinct spaces include The Vault and the VIP 42 Bar.

The beverage program features signature cocktails like the Bagheera, a green spicy mezcal margarita inspired by Chaprah, a bold Indian chutney made with ants from the jungles of India and the Gymkhana Punch Trolley Service, presented tableside for up to eight people to share, plus reserve cocktails, interpretations of classic and contemporary creations using premium spirits, like The Boss Hog, Gymkhana's spin on an Old Fashioned.

Also new to the Las Vegas strip, artisan ice cream brand [Salt & Straw](#) made its debut this week, opening new shops at [Paris Las Vegas](#) and [Flamingo Las Vegas](#). To celebrate the openings, both shops feature a special menu, The Icons Series, a variety of Salt & Straw's signature flavors created by co-founder and head ice cream maker [Tyler Malek](#).

Malek has created a menu of 13 classic flavors, including Sea Salt with Caramel Ribbons, Honey Lavender, Arbequina Olive Oil, and Chocolate Goopy Brownie. Salt & Straw also offers seasonal, [monthly rotating menus](#). The icon series includes:

- Pots of Gold & Rainbows - Hand-sorted rainbow marshmallows tossed into a cereal-steeped ice cream
- Birthday Cakes & Blackberries - Hunks of rainbow-sprinkled birthday crumble studded throughout double-vanilla ice cream and ribboned with blackberry jam
- Almond Brittle with Salted Ganache - Pieces of almond brittle and hunks of creamy chocolate ganache swirled in vanilla ice cream
- Chocolate Chili Crisp Peanut Butter Cups - Milk chocolate ice cream with bite-sized, housemade chili crisp peanut butter cups, swirled with peanut butter marshmallow fluff
- Death by Chocolate Chocolate Cake (v) - Chocolate barley oat milk swirled with chocolate caramel fudge and hunks of chocolate cake, finished with a chocolate ganache. 🍫



Beef short rib pepper fry at Gymkhana

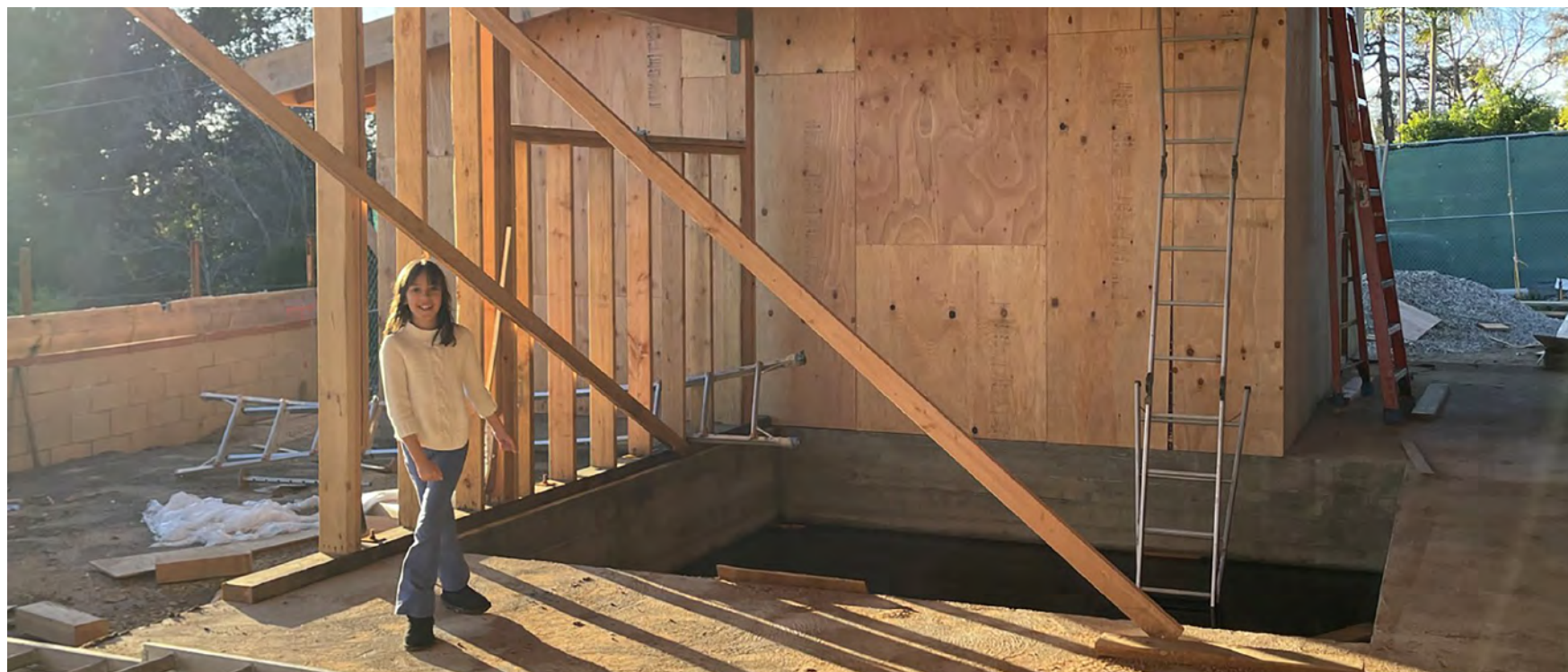
COURTESY OF AVABLU



COURTESY SALT & STRAW

REBUILDING AND RECOVERY: A YEAR AFTER THE CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



Soli Cooksey's Joonbird rebuild.

COURTESY SOLI COOKSEY

Six months ago, after the Eaton fire, we visited Soli Cooksey on her vacant lot in Altadena that used to be her home and business. Cooksey is the founder of Joonbird, a vintage-inspired children's clothing brand known for its cheery prints and bright colors. She and her family lost everything in the California Wildfires, including the business, which she ran out of her garage.

This week marks a year since the California wildfires devastated Altadena, Pacific Palisades, Malibu, and neighborhoods beyond that watched their homes go up in flames and turn into ashes.

We caught up with Cooksey, whose former vacant lot of sunflowers is slowly being replaced by house framing and the skeleton of a new home, as well as other Angelenos whose lives have changed forever, reflecting on rebuilding and recovery.

"One year out from the fires, I am feeling pretty low, but hopeful," she tells *LA*

Weekly. "Many of us are feeling 'disaster after disaster'. We're still struggling to find our footing in temporary housing while we rebuild, dealing with many rebuilding decisions and obstacles, trying to take care of our mental health after a year of feeling like we couldn't come up for air.

"Moving forward, I still feel like there is a lot to be done, but I'm glad that the brunt of it feels over," says the mother of two. "As for my business, I am still hard at work running around wearing all the hats it takes to re-start, but I have had many more setbacks than I expected, like ICE raids at many of my vendors downtown slowing down production, not having enough hired help, and generally feeling overwhelmed by it all. But I am not backing down. The current goal is to relaunch in the spring of this year. I'm excited to get that part of myself back, and I have learned this year that I can survive anything."





BEFORE: the Catapano Home

COURTESY OF JORDAN AND JOCELYN CATAPANO



Jordan and Jocelyn

Founded by sisters **Jordan and Jocelyn Catapano**, **This Girl Walks Into A Bar** opened in 2010, a boutique bartending company and family enterprise of organic mixers and snacks. Jordan lost her home in the Palisades fire, and with it, all of the company's bartending equipment, uniforms, mixology tools, and supplies, forcing them to close the business. They had just shipped their products from This Girl Mixers to a nearby shipping facility, salvaging the business. While Jordan is rebuilding her home, they are focused

on This Girl Mixers, which are now sold nationwide.

What did they learn and what advice did they share?

"Double-check your insurance to make sure you have the coverage you assume that you have," Jordan tells *LA Weekly*. "Feed your policy into ChatGPT and ask questions like — how many months of displacement funds do I have? What is my square footage coverage, and what does it cost per square foot to *actually* rebuild my house? Also have a grab bag of keepsakes. It turns out that all those important documents, like social security cards and passports, are easy to replace. It's the old family photos you never scanned, the baby books and birth stories, your children's time capsules, your wedding album. We evacuated on bikes because the streets were too jammed, and I'd like a do-over on what I grabbed and what kind of insurance I had for my home and my business."

Robert Flutie opened **Flour Pizza** in 2024, which quickly grew to become the spot in the Palisades for the local school kids. Flutie lost both his home and storefront in the fire. He was planning to open a Brentwood location but fast-tracked the opening to Valentine's Day 2025 with the motto "Pizza is Love." He's rebuilding the original storefront and opening new locations soon.

"It's hard to believe that it's been a year,"



Robert Flutie

COURTESY OF ROBERT FLUTIE

he says. "Some days it feels like it's been ages, on other days it was just a minute ago as we watched the fire consume our community and cause massive destruction. In the days and weeks after the fire, it seemed as if the fog that shrouded the Palisades would never lift, at times heavy and thick with sadness and despair. In time, we all collectively found our way out of that fog and into the bright sunshine that we love about Southern California. It feels like we are now more in reach of gaining back some semblance of the life that was changed by the fires. Pizza Is Love."



Robert and family



Flour pizza post-fire



Rosalyn working at home

COURTESY OF ROSALYN PHIPPS



Rosalyn visits the ruins



Rosalyn's Root + Petal pop-up

Rosalyn Phipps is the former manager and lead designer at Palisades Flowers, a beloved local shop lost in the Palisades fire. She spent a decade working her way up from part-time florist to a key figure in the shop. Despite a tough 30-mile commute, Phipps fell in love with the “whimsical little seaside cottage flower shop” and was grateful for the opportunities it provided. Now, she’s opened **Root + Petal**, a mobile florist operating out of her dining room and delivering from her car.

“I’m thankful for friends and family, especially my boyfriend, who helped me get through the first few weeks of fear and uncertainty,” Phipps tells *LA Weekly*. “I went from working at Palisades Flowers for six years to being unemployed overnight. Aside from the loss in a sentimental way and heartbreak for the community, I also

had to cope with the very real loss of income, of a daily routine, and stability. My boyfriend supported me and helped me with money while I made the big decision to start my own floral studio rather than apply for another flower shop. My advice would be to lean on your people. Accept help, ask for help.

I’m not someone who asks for help easily, and after the fire, I made a GoFundMe and asked for help from people within the florist community and beyond. I was so moved by how generous people were all around, so many donations and people giving away clothing, food, anything anyone needed. It was very vulnerable for me to ask for help, and the money we received absolutely helped my team and I weather the first few weeks after the fire. LA really showed up for their neighbors.”



Vanessa Nabhani, co-founder of **PlayLab Beauty** in Pasadena, lost her home in the Eaton fire, along with her home office, inventory, marketing, and business supplies. Because their business insurance only covered the storefront, everything was a total loss. After that, the tariffs made 2025 a year of resilience.

We asked Nabhani if anything good came out of it and how life looks moving forward.

“The incredibly kind, supportive, and inspirational women of LA Strong Comms Coalition came into our lives because this terrible thing happened, and because of them, we’ve had incredible media opportunities and met other amazing people wanting to share our story,” she says. “All over Altadena, I hear of neighbors who’ve never met before, now closer than ever. You see a lot of good in times like these, and it reminds us what matters at the end of the day. When you lose all of your material things in one night, it makes you realize, your relationships are all that you truly

have. I find myself using this principle as I think about what kind of business we want to build with PlayLab, what I want it to mean to people, our purpose, what drives us, and how we measure success. We’re more than just selling you a beauty product; we’re here to ensure trust, confidence, gratification.”

Project HOPE, a global health and humanitarian aid organization, is still on the ground supporting long-term mental health recovery through accessible art and music therapy.

The team of creative therapists works with children, caregivers, frontline workers, and historically underserved communities still navigating grief, displacement, and burnout – creating moments of calm, expression, and connection.

Support includes health consultations provided through local partners and distributions of air purifiers, air filters, PPE, re-entry kits, dignity products, clean water, over-the-counter medicines, and Psychological First Aid items for children. 📺



PlayLab co-founders at work

COURTESY VANESSA NABHANI



Vanessa's home