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**'GOOD
LUCK,
HAVE
FUN,
DON'T
DIE'**



Director Gore Verbinski

BRINGS THE AI APOCALYPSE TO NORMS ON LA CIENEGA

BY JORDAN RIEFE

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Digital Marketing Specialist - DTF OneStop - Walnut, CA. Master's in Communication, Mktg, or related; 12 mos exp in digital mktg analysis; Proficiency in digital mktg tools, such as HubSpot, MS Suite/Google Suite, Adobe Creative Suite, Google Analytics, & Tableau; Proficiency in Ad tools, such as Google Ads, LinkedIn Ads, Meta Ads, or Reddit Ads; Detail-oriented and organized, w/ strong comm & analytical skills. Email: ttz@dtfonestop.com; \$72,885/Yr.

CULTURE

COMEDY Q&A: ANJELAH JOHNSON-REYES HAD A WILD NIGHT AT NEVERLAND RANCH

BY MARK STEFANOS

For audiences who grew up quoting viral sketches and discovering stand-up on the internet, [Anjelah Johnson-Reyes](#) stands out as a rare breed. The San Jose native of Mexican and Native American descent has built a career that spans viral internet fame, six comedy specials, acting roles, a memoir, and now a major national stand-up tour.

Johnson-Reyes first caught widespread attention as an Oakland Raiders cheerleader before transitioning to comedy. Her breakthrough “Nail Salon” sketch went viral, leading to a series regular role on *MADtv* and the unforgettable fast-food character *Bon Qui Qui*, which racked up tens of millions of views.

She got her start doing stand-up in LA, and has since released specials on platforms including Netflix, Hulu, and YouTube, with her 2023 special *Say I Won't* racking up over 5 million views on YouTube alone. Her acting credits include guest spots on *Life & Beth*, *Superstore*, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, and films like *Enough Said* and *Candy Cane Lane* alongside Eddie Murphy and Tracee Ellis Ross. In 2022, she published the memoir “Who Do I Think I Am?: *Stories of Chola Wishes and Caviar Dreams*,” and she recently launched the comedy and mental health podcast *Funjelah*.

This season, she’s hitting the road with “The Family Reunion Tour,” a sprawling stand-up run with over 100 dates. Her current hour draws directly from what she’s up to these days: “I always write about my life and what I’m currently going through, so this current hour is very much shaped by my motherhood journey,” she tells *LA Weekly*. She gave birth to her daughter Rosalie in June 2023.

Catch the hilarious and endearing comedian on her tour later this month at Yaamava’, The Wiltern and El Rey Theatre. Visit [anjelah.com](#) for tickets and information, and read ahead to find out about her dream role of playing Jodi Arias.

LA Weekly: What can fans expect from your LA shows?

Anjelah Johnson-Reyes: They can expect a fun night with family as I get vulnerable about how my life has changed becoming a mom in my 40s and how that has affected my marriage and identity.



PHOTO CREDIT SEAN HAGWELL

How do you balance your career with raising your daughter?

I've learned to draw boundaries and prioritize what really matters in life.

What has been the best part of taking your comedy on a global tour to over 100 cities? And the most challenging?

The best part has been introducing my daughter to my career and to the world through travel and adventure. The most challenging part has been managing my mental health.

Any memorable stories about performing in Los Angeles?

I got my start in LA. My very first open mic was at Buzz Cafe, across from The Grove, if it's still there [Editor's note: sadly it's not]. I used to be really nervous to go up at the local clubs like the Comedy Store or Laugh Factory and I would get diarrhea every time. The first time I realized I had fans was in LA when people showed up to see me do a 10-minute set at Lucky Strike Bowling Alley because they saw on MySpace that I was going to be there.

What was your first job?

My first job was at Paramount's Great America theme park. I was 14 years old and I had to get a permit to work there. I rotated between games, stores, and restaurants.

What kind of person were you in high school?

I bounced around to a bunch of different high schools and made friends with everyone. I didn't have just one crew, I would sit at different tables and lunch and just talk to everybody.

Who's the funniest person in your family?

The funniest person in my family is my brother Kenny. He's super quick-witted and creative. He's just too introverted to do it for a living.

When/where/why did you start doing or studying comedy?

I started comedy by taking a joke writing stand-up comedy class at a church because it was free. I had no intention of becoming a stand-up comedian, I just thought it would be fun to take the class. And again, it was free.

How'd you learn to be a better comedian?

Practice and discovering my own point of view and realizing that being myself was better than trying to be the person who I thought people wanted me to be.

Who are your comedy heroes?

Brian Regan, Ellen DeGeneres, and George Lopez

What's your favorite city to do comedy?

LA, always LA. However — and it changes over the years — but it's usually a city in Texas. Currently San Antonio.

What's your favorite venue to do comedy?



PHOTO CREDIT MAL HALL

All the sold-out venues.

What's your favorite joke of your own?

My favorite joke is usually my newest joke I'm working on because I'm excited to do it on stage.

What's your favorite joke by someone else?

Probably any joke from Mal Hall's newest special, "What Are We Doing Today?" on YouTube. Executive produced by me, Anjelah Johnson-Reyes. [Watch and tell me your favorite!](#)

What's the craziest thing that's happened to you?

Two months after moving to

Hollywood, I got invited to Michael Jackson's Neverland Ranch for his birthday party and it was the most wild night of my life. To hear all the details, read my book, "[Who Do I Think I Am? Stories of Chola Wishes and Caviar Dreams.](#)"

How's your health?

Pretty good. I try to stay pretty crunchy.

Do you have any allergies we should know about?

If you consider seasonal allergies a need to know, then yes.

If you could play someone in a movie or show, who would you play?

When the Jodi Arias crime story was

going viral, I thought I looked like her and wanted to play her in a movie. Then I found out they already did the movie and I didn't even get an audition for it.

If someone could play you, who would it be?

I don't know, but I always wanted to play Sandra Bullock's sister in a movie.

Who's your doppelganger?

People always said I look like Minnie Driver.

Who's your nemesis?

The 405 between 2:30 p.m. - 7 p.m.

Rank the meats: beef, pork, chicken, fish, lamb, other

Beef, chicken, pork, fish, no lamb, no other.

FAVORITES:

Movie: *The Wizard of Oz*

TV: "Friends," "Law & Order: SVU," "Chicago PD," "FBI," Ms. Rachel

Genre of music: 90s R&B & Hip Hop

Musicians: Bruno Mars, Selena, Bad Bunny, Elena Rose, Andy Mineo

Late Night Host/Show: I've always loved Jay Leno. I think they're all great, but my favorite interview is between Jimmy Fallon and Nicole Kidman where he finds she had a crush on him.

Book: The ones on my nightstand right now are "Everybody Poops," "Curious George," "Brown Bear Brown Bear," and "Tad & Dad"

News publication: *LA Weekly*, duh.

Sport to play: Growing up I played soccer, softball, track & field, cheerleading, and flag football, but I don't play any of them now. Nowadays I play pilates and yoga.

Sport league: NFL & MLB

Team: Raiders, duh, and Dodgers and The A's.

Athlete: Tim Brown, Steph Curry, Ohtani

Video game: I don't have a favorite, but fun fact, one of jobs as a young adult was a video game tester in Silicon Valley.

Viral internet trend: I used to do all the dance trends in 2020 when we were all locked down.

Viral internet video: The video of this little girl trying to buckle her carseat and when the dad asks if she needs help she says, "worry about yourself."

Internet personality: [@yoleendadong](#) [@leogonzall](#) [@jimmydarts](#) [@concretelive](#) [@csapunch](#)

Neighborhood in LA: The Valley, I rep that 818 homie.

City in America: New York City

Food: Mexican

Cuisine: Mexican

Meal: Mexican

Restaurant: *Cafe de Olla* in Burbank

Cereal: Rice Chex

Swear word: Shoot!

For everything Anjelah Johnson-Reyes, including tickets to her upcoming LA shows, visit [anjelah.com](#). [📧]

IN 'GOOD LUCK, HAVE FUN, DON'T DIE' MISFIT DIRECTOR GORE VERBINSKI BRINGS THE AI APOCALYPSE TO NORMS ON LA CIENEGA

BY JORDAN RIEFE

Your phone might be ushering in the end of civilization as we know it. It's already driven up societal and mental health ills, including rising rates of depression, anxiety and loneliness. It's also decreased your attention span and fostered addiction, cyberbullying and misinformation, often leading to reduced self-esteem and suicide. And yet no one has been held accountable, and most of us don't care, so long as we can keep scrolling.

"I think there is a species being born," Gore Verbinski tells *LA Weekly* in a conversation about his giddy dystopian new sci-fi comedy, *Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die*. "It's been asked to study us and look at how we consume, what we like and what we hate, and how to keep us engaged. In some ways our worst attributes are written into its source code. And it will be birthed in some crazy warped reflection of us. Right now, it's ingesting so much off the internet and spitting it back out exponentially, I think it's drinking its own piss. What is it doing to us? What are we doing to it?"

Sam Rockwell plays the "man from the future," a scrappy looking homeless guy who turns up one night at Norms, the popular LA diner. He bears a dire message from the future, but most ignore him until he reveals his explosive vest. His objective is to select five everyday citizens for a team that can outwit AI-driven forces and infiltrate the home of a suburban teen who is brewing up a form of AI that will change the very nature of human existence.

Ultimately chosen are high school teachers Mark (Michael Peña), and Janet (Zazie Beetz), stuck in a passionless marriage, Uber driver Scott (Asim Chaudhry), Susan (Juno Temple), a mother who lost her son in a school shooting but has recently had him cloned, and Ingrid (Haley Lu Richardson), a birthday princess for hire who loses her luddite boyfriend to an irresistible new AI driven technology.



Gore Verbinski



PHOTOS BY SELA SHILONI

The man from the future has been on this journey many times, but has always failed, which he attributes to the wrong combination of teammates. “Our future didn’t send us Arnold Schwarzenegger, they sent us Sam Rockwell,” laughs Verbinski. “That’s how fucked things are. All the heroes are dead or they’re playing ‘Call of Duty’ or something. We didn’t go to the Navy Seal Academy in San Diego, we went to Norms on La Cienega to find the heroes to save the world.”

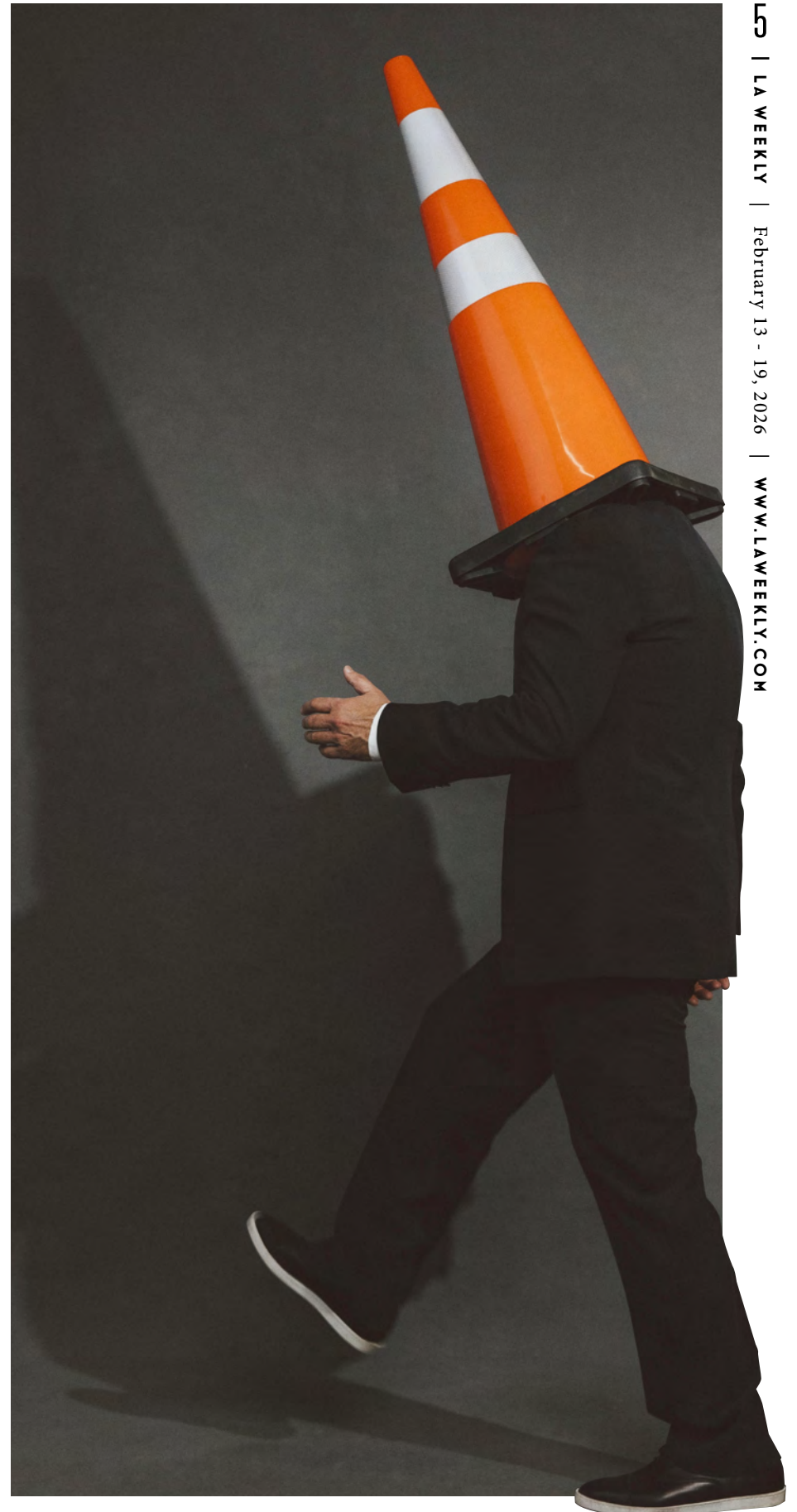
An Oscar winner for the 2011 animated western, *Rango*, Verbinski is known to most as the man behind the first three *Pirates of the Caribbean* movies as well as *The Ring* and its sequel. In the past, he was a mainstream filmmaker who distinguished himself by making movies that weren’t mindless dreck, sadly uncommon in the current studio climate. A unicorn in Hollywood, he would never last until he started dumbing down. But he didn’t,

instead he embraced this bizarre screenplay by writer Matthew Robinson.

“No studio was interested in making it,” Verbinski says, recalling reading it six years ago. “When he wrote it in 2017, AI was still something on the horizon. After we got the script in shape, I sent it to Sam and he was like, ‘I’m the guy, this is me.’ And then we still couldn’t quite get the funding, kept reducing the budget and the shoot days, and the complexity.”

Money remained a problem until casting director Denise Chamian suggested they just put out a casting call, which usually happens after the film is financed. Subsequent meetings with Richardson, Beetz, Rockwell and the rest resulted in a cast they could take to investors, mainly German financier Constantin Film.

An unconventional movie, *Good Luck* opens in an unconventional way — an 11-minute monologue delivered by Rockwell. The scene starts with a bravura



sequence roaming through the diner, introducing the characters, often with just a glimpse at what they're scrolling. Once Rockwell makes his entrance, it's all on him as he introduces the premise and tone in a rambling and vibrant discourse.

"I'm drawn to things that scare me," says Verbinski, who prepared by recording the monologue as a radioplay. After editing it, he replaced it with a recording by Rockwell. With that, he broke it into five chapters and blocked it out. That's when the crew began building the set on stages in Cape Town, South Africa, designed to fit Verbinski's blocking, rather than the other way around.

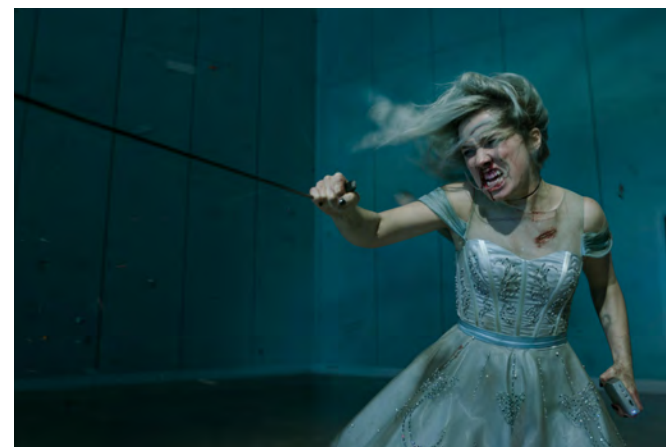
"Sam is a professor. He makes it look easy, but man, he does the work. Intention and discovery are the things you have to balance with him. You orchestrate a kind of circumstance that allows the awkward moment," he says about Rockwell. "The best thing that can happen when you're directing an actor, you get to the place where you're pleased. Then you go to do it again on a different lens, but the actor says, 'I don't remember what I did.' So, you want to make sure you can catch that, you're not so strict about your marks and frame and composition."

Originally from Tennessee, Verbinski moved to SoCal at the age of three and grew up in La Jolla, surfing and later rocking guitar in local bands like the Little Kings, which played with Stiv Bators on his cover of *Have Love, Will Travel*. Graduating UCLA Film School in 1987, he was soon working with director Julien Temple at his company Nitrate Films.

"I used to buy him a beer at the Frolic Room, and I could ask him any question. And Julien had a kid named Juno, crazy frizzy hair, running around the set on his videos," Verbinski recalls his early mentor, known for classic videos from the eighties, including the David Bowie feature film, *Absolute Beginners*. On *Good Luck*, Verbinski found Juno to be an indelible part of his cast, and was happy to welcome her father and mother on set.

"Her narrative has some darker comedic social satire aspects of it," he says of Temple's character, Susan, who suffers the death of a child, then suffers the death of hope when the cloned version turns out to be an ad-copy-spewing stranger. "Having her play it real, that's the Kafka of it. She's human in an increasingly inhuman world. The fact that Juno was den mother to the cast, and they spent so much time together, I think that helped. So when you're ready to roll, they're not at different tempos."

Playing Ingrid is Haley Lu Richardson, who has been on a roll since season two of *White Lotus* in which she played Jennifer Coolidge's subjugated assistant. Her current show, *Ponies*, about two Cold War spywives who fill in for their deceased



Scenes from "Good Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die"

husbands, has been well reviewed since bowing last month. And later this year she'll be in *Zi* by *Columbus* director Kogonada. In *Good Luck*, her character freelances as a princess at birthday parties and lives with a guy who leaves her for a videogame.

"As an actor, she's really honest," Verbinski says of her. "She can get to a very specific and very real place. I think it's exhausting. I think she actually fully commits to the process." For Verbinski, who turns 62 next month, having a digital native like Richardson (30) on set, was indispensable.

"It's life consuming and it is not real," Richardson says of social media. "The reminder that it's not real has to be an intentional thing that I tell myself, cause if I don't, then I will start to believe it's real. The way the algorithms work, things don't get likes and views unless it's a stupid funny brainrot reel or a picture of an



Gore Verbinski directing behind the scenes



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ass! Unfortunately, I've succumbed to that a couple of times to post pictures of my butt to sell my poetry book. I want to fucking sell my book, this art I care about, and if I have to post a picture of my ass in a bikini ... I'm kind of mad at myself that I've succumbed. I'm feeling kind of depressed right now thinking about it. But I guess that's kind of the point of this movie, to make people thoughtful about these topics."

Briarcliff Entertainment is planning a wide release of *Good Luck*, which can mean from 600 to 2,000 screens. It's Verbinski's first film since his 2016 psychological horror movie, *A Cure for Wellness*, a critical and box office failure. Since then, he's spent years developing *Cattywampus*, a sci-fi musical with space felines, but it's been stalled since 2022. Next up for him is anyone's guess.

"I don't fit in. I just don't. I'm a misfit. I've never really tried to fit in. You tinker and shit blows up, and sometimes it doesn't," he explains about the vagaries of the business and AI's creep toward dominance. "I think there's a tsunami coming. Some live in fear, some live in denial and the rest of us are going to have to surf this thing. I think that's the mantra of our time: 'good luck, have fun, don't die.'" [A]



Scenes from "Go od Luck, Have Fun, Don't Die"

COURTESY OF BRIARCLIFF ENTERTAINMENT

FOOD

WHAT'S UP POPPING UP

A Banana Pudding Bar and Gimme Gummy Bar

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Magnolia Bakery is bringing its popular Banana Pudding Bar to West Hollywood starting this week, featuring four over-the-top, made-to-order pudding creations, each layered with fun toppings and served in a branded dome-lid cup for \$10.95, including toppings.

The lineup includes:

- Caramel Brownie – banana pudding, brownie bits, salted caramel drizzle
- Cookies & Cream – banana pudding, Oreo cookie pieces, mini chocolate chips
- Red Velvet – banana pudding, red velvet cake pieces, mini chocolate chips
- Chocolate Hazelnut – banana pudding, Nutella drizzle, mini chocolate chips (contains nuts)

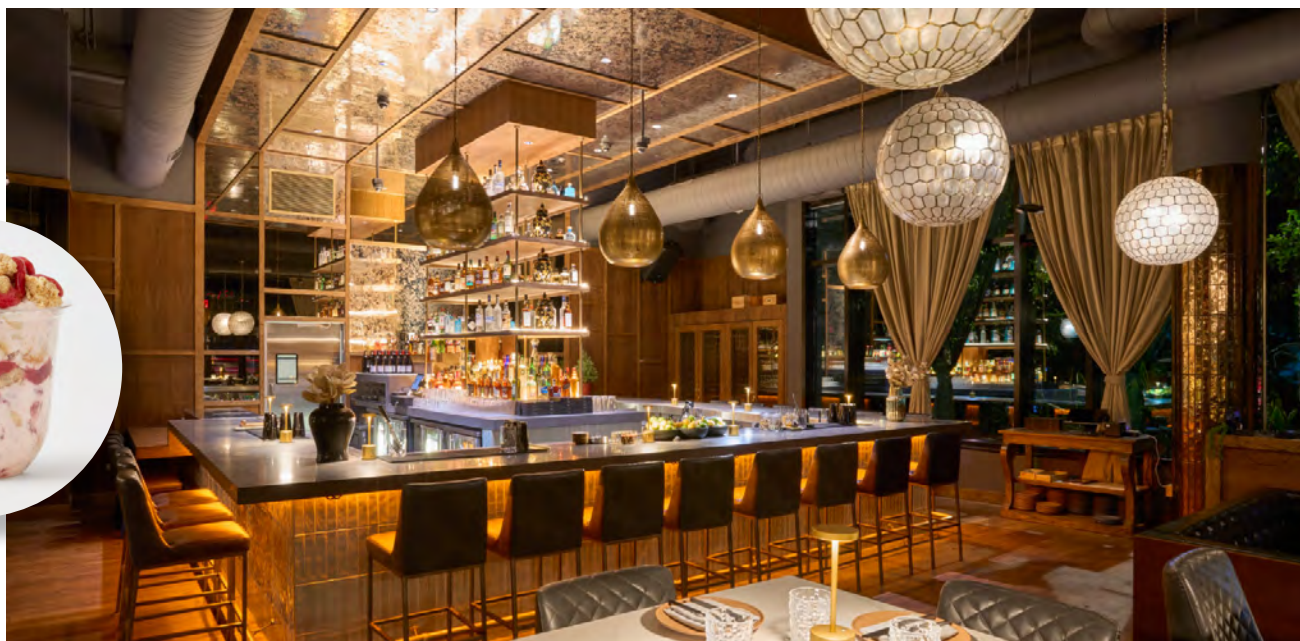


Strawberry Crisp Pudding at the Banana Bar
COURTESY OF MAGNOLIA BAKERY

On Friday, Feb. 20, and Saturday, Feb. 21, [Pinterest](#) and [NYX Professional Makeup](#) will be popping up at [Westfield Century City](#) with [Gimme Gummy Bar](#), a two-day immersive experience inspired by [Pinterest Predicts'](#) Gimme Gummy trend for 2026.

The pop-up brings the Gimme Gummy trend to life through a candy-colored, ASMR-inspired oasis where guests can snag complimentary NYX Professional Makeup Jelly Job lip glosses, customize gummy-inspired accessories at a Chewy Charm Bar, and enjoy surprise-and-delight gummy moments throughout the space.

Indian grill and lounge [Fitoor Santa Monica](#), will be celebrating its first anniversary with a full week of programming from Monday, March 2, through Saturday, March 7, including champagne toasts, belly dancing tutorials, live music, and a finale at LA's largest Holi celebration, [Holi & The Beach](#) festival.



Fitoor

COURTESY OF RYAN TANAKA

All Week (Monday–Saturday)

- \$5 Anniversary specialty cocktail with zero-proof option
- Daily featured anniversary dish specials
- Complimentary champagne toast nightly at 6:30 PM (Monday–Friday)
- Launch of the restaurant's new [Happy Hour menu](#)

Monday, March 2 – Anniversary Kickoff

- First Anniversary Monday Night Supper – three-course prix-fixe menu
- Option to add on a wine bottle pairing

Tuesday, March 3 – Neighborhood Love Night

- Resident perk for Santa Monica local guests of one complimentary appetizer or cocktail (with proof of ZIP code)
- Locals-first evening welcoming Santa Monica hospitality professionals and creatives
- Industry perk of complimentary

cocktail or food/drink discount (with proof of employment)

Wednesday, March 4 (Holi) – Belly Dancing Happy Hour

- Limited-time Holi-inspired menu at Fitoor Santa Monica
- Guided belly dancing experience during happy hour, hosted in the restaurant's bar and lounge area
- A 20–30 minute interactive activity, which will be first-come, first to participate

Thursday, March 5 – Live Music

- Live music during dinner service

Friday, March 6 – Official Anniversary Night

- DJ-led dinner service set in a high-energy atmosphere with festive decor to celebrate the milestone
- Champagne toast for all seated dinner guests



Girls Night Out

COURTESY OF OUR SEASONS HOTEL LOS ANGELES AT BEVERLY HILLS

Saturday, March 7 – Holi & The Beach Celebration

- 4:30 p.m.: Fitoor Santa Monica will be the premier food vendor at one of the Largest Holi Festivals in the country, Holi and the Beach, in Redondo Beach.

[Four Seasons Hotel Los Angeles at Beverly Hills](#) is giving the girl dinner a glamorous upgrade at [Veil & Velvet](#), its seasonal speakeasy in The Lounge. Offered every Tuesday through Thursday through April 30, the new Girl Dinner experiences an evening of sharing, sipping, and savoring with friends. For \$50, guests select one item from *To Begin* (caviar olives, salmon dip, or a little gem Caesar) and one from *And Then* (the Royale with Cheese smash-burger, golden chicken nuggets, or a hot honey pizzetta), all served with fries on a silver tray. The experience is rounded out with a build-your-own martini with vodka or gin, shaken or stirred, olives or a twist. 🍸