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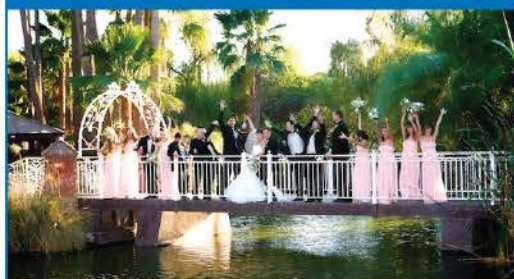
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'TWELVE O'CLOCK TALES WITH AVA GARDNER' REVEALS LIFE AND LOVES OF HOLLYWOOD SCREEN ICON AT WHITEFIRE THEATRE

By Contributing Writer

Movie star. Femme fatale. Homewrecker. Civil Rights activist. The Whitefire Theatre plays host to a new solo play that reveals the contradictions and complexities of the passionate and deeply flawed woman behind silver screen icon Ava Gardner. Written by Alessandra Assaf and Michael Lorre, directed by Michael A. Shepperd and starring Assaf in the title role, the world premiere of *Twelve O'Clock Tales with Ava Gardner* will run every Sunday at 2 p.m. from January 15 through March 5 at the Whitefire Theatre in Sherman Oaks.

Hollywood, California... 1974. On the set of the blockbuster disaster film, *Earthquake*, Oscar nominated screen siren Ava Gardner is focusing on her first big budget starring role in over a decade. Tucked away in her dressing room bungalow, the "queen of the scandal sheets" does



battle with her past. But only a fool would bet against Ava.

"Ava was a star in the '40s and '50s, but she had the sensibility and morés of today's millennial," says Assaf. "She enjoyed her sexuality and had agency over herself in a way that women were not permitted to at

the time. She fought against racism and believed in the right to choose."

Famous for her tumultuous life that included marriages to Mickey Rooney, Artie Shaw, and Frank Sinatra as well as numerous love affairs, the Academy Award-nominated actress was raised the daughter of poor tobacco sharecroppers in Grabtown, North Carolina. She never forgot her rural roots, always calling herself a "country girl." Although raised in a small Southern town, she was a life-long advocate for Civil Rights. As a child, she ignored Jim Crow laws to sit with Black children in the segregated section of movie theaters. She supported 1948 presidential hopeful Henry Wallace, who opposed school segregation and would not speak in front of crowds unless they were desegregated. She counted Lena Horne and Dorothy Dandridge among her close friends, and her longtime assistant, Mearene "Reenie" Jordan, became her closest personal confidante. In 1968 Gardner became a member of the NAACP.

Turner Classic Movies named Gardner "Star of the Month" in November, writing,

"She was stunningly beautiful and glamorous, yet earthy and uninhibited at the same time. Once dubbed 'The World's Most Beautiful Animal' in a publicity campaign, her image was often distorted by the gossip columnists, news of divorces and Hollywood myths. Born Dec. 24, 1922, her legend is still discussed 100 years after her birth."

"No matter how evolved we think we've become, eye candy remains a powerful force," notes Assaf. "Could our sense of sight be the most flawed or corrupt of our senses? What Mother Nature affords us physically is mere chance. For some, that chance can shape a destiny — from the elephant man to Ava Gardner."

Twelve O'Clock Tales with Ava Gardner runs every Sunday at 2 p.m. from January 15 through March 5. General admission to all performances is \$25. The Whitefire Theatre is located at 13500 Ventura Blvd. in Sherman Oaks, CA 91423. For more information and to purchase tickets, call (818) 687-8559 or go to www.whitefiretheatre.com.



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PROGRAM

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Overture

Tchaikovsky: *Symphony #1 in G minor (Winter Dreams)*

Korngold: *Violin Concerto in D major*
- Alena Hove, violinist

(Pre-Concert Lecture starts 7:30 pm)



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Program subject to change

SPECIAL EDITION:

2023

RESOLUTIONS: TOTAL MAKEOVER, SWITCH IT UP, OR KEEP IT STEADY?



By Barbara Beckley

MAKE 2023 THE YEAR THAT COUNTS! SURE, WE ALL VOW TO LOSE WEIGHT OR IMPROVE OUR TIME-MANAGEMENT. THIS YEAR, THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX. LIKE VOLUNTEERING YOUR TIME TO CHARITY OR TAKING UP A NEW HOBBY OR SPORT – PICKLEBALL ANYONE? THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS TO CREATE A TRULY HAPPIER AND HEALTHY LIFE IN THE NEW YEAR. THE ONLY QUESTION IS – HOW CAN YOU PICK JUST ONE?

IDEAS FOR EVERYONE

Start a new hobby! Maybe art. Think Origami! The Japanese art of paper folding. Check out YouTube for tutorials (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=origami) and wow your friends with jumping paper octopi! Or painting. Both the Valley Art Work Shop (www.valleyartworkshop.com) in Woodland Hills and the Mission: Renaissance Fine Art Classes (www.fineartclasses.com) studios in Northridge, Studio City and Woodland Hills are highly recommended. Also ceramics – learn how to throw pots and sculpt statuettes – at Clay Play & Arts (www.clay-playarts.com) in Northridge and Creative Ceramics (www.creativeceramicstudio.com) in Sherman Oaks.

Join the hottest sports craze -- pickleball! Check out the San Fernando Valley Pickleball Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/656458258104568/>) for lessons, tournaments and clubs. Take a cooking class. The Academy of Culinary Education (www.academyofculinaryeducation.com) in Woodland Hills is an excellent start. Or go all the way!!! Fly to France and enroll in short-term courses at Le Cordon Bleu Paris (www.cordonbleu.edu). Learn a new language. Babbel (www.my.babbel.com) and Rosetta Stone (www.rosettastone.com) language schools are at the ready.

KIDS

Teach the kids how to make a New Year's Resolution – and how to choose one they can stick with. Like helping with daily chores; and giving them an allowance to add to their self-esteem. Or painting small rocks as gifts for friends and neighbors. “The Art of Stone Pairing” handbook, featuring 30 designs, is \$11.79 on Amazon.com along with craft acrylic paint pen sets (recommended for



rock painting) in 24 colors for \$15.69. If they love horses, suggest riding lessons. Ohanu Riding Stables (www.ohanustables.blogspot) in Woodland Hills and the Los Angeles Horseback Riding Ranch (www.losangeleshorsebackriding.com) in Topanga have kids' lessons.

Or summer camp. Perhaps a day-camp like Camp Keystone (www.campkeystone.com) in Agora Hills, with fun programs for ages 3-5; 6-12 and 13-15. Or overnight camp such as Pali Adventures (www.paliadventures.com) in the San Bernardino Mountains. Geared to ages 8-16, it's week-long sessions let every child nurture their own interests by signing up for one of 29 unique activity

programs: aviation, motor sports, fine art, street art, cooking, rock star, acting, movie make-up, fashion and more. Join Discovery Cube Los Angeles (<https://www.discoverycube.org/los-angeles/>), the playful and educational museum in Sylmar, with cool exhibits like the Cloud Ring, where kids make a real cloud. Annual memberships begin at \$78 and include admission to its OC location.

Are they into sports? Sign up for t-ball. Check out the Granada Hills Little League (www.ghllplayball.com), Encino Little League (www.encinoll.com), Sunrise Little League (www.sunrisebaseball.com) in Woodland Hills and others. Or tennis. The Match Tough Tennis Academy at the Warner Tennis Center (<https://www.facebook.com/MatchTough10s/>) in Woodland Hills makes a good start. Also Sahara Tennis Lessons (www.saharatennis.com) in Sherman Oaks features lessons for all ages and playing levels by its tennis pro founder Joshua Sahara. Or!

Think outside the box – think bowling! The whole family can join a league at Harley's Valley Bowl (www.harleysbowl.com) in Simi Valley or Pickwick Bowl (www.pickwickbowl.com) in Burbank. Take bowling lessons from USCB Silver Certificate coach John Struckman at the Bowling Guys (www.bowling-guys.com).

Make 2023 the year you get your first job! Teenlife.com has lots of after-school suggestions. Babysitting, catering companies, grocery store cashier or stocker, landscape assistant, beach life guard – YES! Customer service rep, retail sales associate, referee – some schools pay teenage refs – tutoring, if you're really smart in math, science and the like. Or take a CPR class and be ready to save a life. The California Medical Training Center (www.calmedtrainingcenter.com) in Mission Hills is an American Heart Association authorized site. Fun CPR Training Los Angeles (www.funpr.com) at Topanga Plaza in Canoga Park is renowned for making this serious skill fun, and therefore easy to learn.

WOMEN

ACTIVE

Start a team sport—baseball, football, soccer. In school or out. Community leagues include Conejo Youth Flag Football (805-379-5644) in Thousand Oaks; the Simi Valley Baseball League (www.eastvalley-baseball.org) for ages 3-16; and the San Fernando Valley Rush (www.sfvrush.com) with football, the “Valley Rush Buckeyes,” and basketball teams for ages 4-17. Also the San Fernando Valley-based Los Angeles Soccer Club (www.lasoccerclub.org/sfv) for up to 17 years old.

Exercise your vocal chords and sign up for a chorus. At your church or in the community. The San Fernando Valley Youth Chorus (www.valleyyouthchorus.org) in Canoga Park features ages 3-18. The Community Chorale – MUSYCA (www.musyca.org) in Granada Hills welcomes ages 18-plus. Also the Burbank Chorale (www.burbankchorale.org) is the longest continuously performing arts organization in the Valley established in 1920. Play an instrument! The well-respected Conejo Valley-based California Music Academy (www.californiamusicacademy.com) teaches piano, singing, guitar, drums, saxophone and clarinet. The School of Rock (www.schoolofrock.com) in West LA has guitar, drums, piano and bass guitar lessons. Look to the Angeles Academy (www.angelesacademyofmusic.com) in Brentwood and Westwood Village for – out of the box – Ukulele lessons! Plus piano, guitar, violin, drum, bass guitar and cello.

Attend a DJ or Cooking or Science camp! Pali Adventures (www.paliadventures.com) offers a DJ camp and a Cooking camp as two of its 29 week-long particular interest programs for campers ages 8-16. It doesn't get any more science-y than Camp iDT (www.idtech.com), a six-week stay at Cal Tech in Pasadena, learning robotics, math and coding. And Camp Tech Revolution (www.lavnercampsandprograms.com) at UCLA for ages 6-16.



Join a hiking club. The local Sierra Club chapter – the Angeles Sierra Club (https://angeles.sierraclub.org/san_fernando_valley_group/) – has twice-weekly morning hikes, destination weekend hikes, and day and night treks in the Santa Monica, Santa Susana, Simi Valley and Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area. Also the Community Hiking Club (<https://www.communityhikingclub.org/>) in Santa Clarita treks throughout SoCal including San Diego-adjacent La Jolla Canyon's five hour hike.

Or an aqua club. The Canyons Aquatic Club (www.canyons.org) in Santa Clarita since 1978 has swim lessons, competitive swimming, masters swimming and more. Check out the Simi Valley YMCA (www.sevymca.org) and Ventura Aquatic Center (www.cityofventura.ca.gov/617/Aquatics) for lessons and club recommendations. The Rose Bowl Aquatics Center (www.rosebowlaquatics.org) is headquarters to the Rose Bowl Aquatics Swim Club. Learn to scuba dive! The Aquanautics Dive (www.aquanauticsdive.com) in Sylmar has full service dive everything including instruction from beginning to pro and dive trips locally and around the world.

Try a new recipe. Maybe chocolate fondue? It only takes 15 minutes, according to www.simplyrecipes.com, blending and heating 1 cup heavy cream, a pinch of salt and 12 oz. of crumbled milk or dark chocolate. Delish with strawberries or – out of the box idea – candied ginger. Better yet – create a recipe book with the combined efforts of family and friends. Easy as pie using www.createmycookbook.com. Type in favorite recipes, upload photos, create a design theme, choose paper and cover types, the binding style (maybe spiral). Voi la! It's done. Gift Your Cookbook to everyone who participated.

Have a penchant for reading? Join a book club. Maybe a friend's club. Or ask an independent book store – like The Open Book Simi Valley (www.theopenbook.net) in Canyon Country or the Westlake Village Library (lacountylibrary.org).



SUNDAY, JANUARY 22, 2023
11A.M. - 3 P.M.

Photo by Rebecca Theresa Photography



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Become a mover-and-shaker! Join your neighborhood community council. Google “neighborhood councils” and your location. Then scroll for yours. For instance, there’s the Granada Hills North Neighborhood Council (www.ghnnc.org), Mission Hills Neighborhood Council (www.mhnconline.org), Winnetka Neighborhood Council in Canoga Park (www.winnetkanc.com), Reseda Neighborhood Council (www.resedacouncil.org), Northridge East Neighborhood



Council (www.nenc-la.org) and Sylmar Neighborhood Council (www.slymarneighborhoodcouncil.org).
 Council ([https://www.losroblesgreens.com/](http://www.losroblesgreens.com/)) in Thousand Oaks that looks and feels like a private club (you can buy memberships for preferred tee times and other perks); or Ted Robinson-designed Westlake Golf Course ([https://westlakegc.com/](http://westlakegc.com/)) in Westlake Village. Join new friends



who belong to a country club – maybe the Jack Nicklaus-designed Sherwood Lake Country Club in Thousand Oaks. Or Ted Robinson Sr.-designed Porter Valley Country Club (<https://www.invited-clubs.com/clubs/porter-valley-country-club/amenities>) in Northridge. Or Spanish Hills Club (<https://www.thespainishhillsclub.com/golf-course>) in Camarillo with courses designed by Robert E. Cupp.

Donate your time and expertise to a women’s shelter. Alexandria House (www.alexandriahouse.org) in LA’s Larchmont district helps homeless women get back on their feet in 39 affordable housing units. Volunteer work ranges from teaching art classes to driving residents to appointments and cooking work-night meals for the resident women. Also Elizabeth House (www.elizabethhouse.net) in Pasadena helps pregnant women and their children experiencing homelessness. Volunteers help with tasks including office work and supervising the children while their moms are taking classes, counseling and at events.

Golf! Take lessons! But not just any lessons. Go to high-tech GOLFTEC Woodland Hills (<https://www.golftec.com>) for their amazing customized video imaging of your swing and other high technology that truly improves your game.

Make a standing weekly or monthly date with your golf buddies. And your significant other!! Choose a top-rated public course. Perhaps Knollwood Country Club (www.knollwoodgc.com) in Granada Hills; Los Robles Greens Golf

If you’re a veteran, meet fellow vets (and play for free!) at veteran dedicated courses such as the nine-hole Heroes Golf Course (<https://heroesgolfcourse.com/>) in West LA.

Donate your time to a charitable organization. Perhaps a local library like the Oak Park Library (<https://www.vencolibrary.org/branch/oak-park-library>) in Ventura County, Thousand Oaks Grant R. Brimhall Library (www.tolibrary.org) and Agoura Hills Library (<https://lacountylibrary.org/agoura-hills-library/>). Or the American Cancer Society (www.cancer.org), American Red Cross (www.redcross.org) or – outside the box – a military give-back non-profit like Chatsworth-based Operation Gratitude (www.operationgratitude.com), which makes and sends gifts and goodies to our troops actively deployed around the world. Happy New Year!

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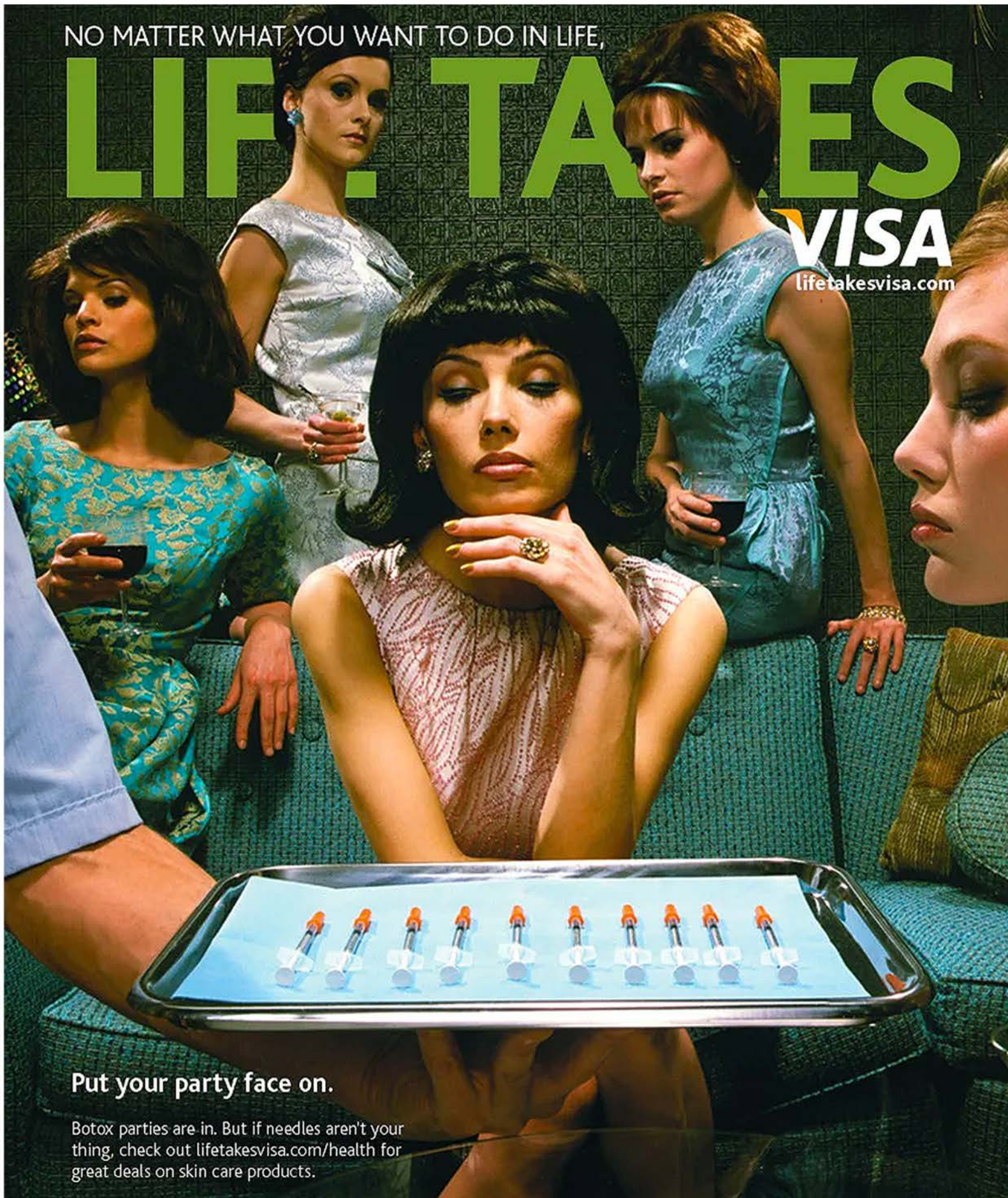
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MICHAEL GRECCO'S "DAYS OF PUNK" TO HAVE ITS FIRST WEST COAST EXHIBITION AT MOAH:CEDAR

by Laura Grover

Los Angeles-based photographer and director Michael Grecco's multi-media solo exhibition celebrating punk music and culture, will open on Saturday, February 4 at MOAH:CEDAR in Lancaster, CA with an artist's reception from 4-6PM. The show is presented in partnership with the Lisbon, Portugal-based production firm Terra Esplendida. It will run through March 19, and marks the first time the "Days of Punk" museum exhibition will be on the west coast of the United States. The show originally premiered with a special public installation at the interna-

tional photography fair Photo London in 2021, and is currently touring in the U.S. and Europe.

The photographs featured in the exhibition date back to the late '70s through the early '90s, when Grecco documented the nightclub and concert scenes in New York and Boston as punk roared into the U.S. He was working as an Associated Press photographer, lensman for legendary rock station WBCN-FM, and was a self-described "club kid" who had a unique opportunity to embed himself into this revolutionary scene as both a chronicler and



a participant. Grecco captured for posterity a riotously outspoken time in pop culture history, with all its raw energy and outrageous antics.

On view at MOAH:CEDAR will be Grecco's photographs of artists including Adam Ant, B-52s, Billy Idol, Bow Bow Wow, The Clash, Dead Kennedys, Devo, Human League, Human Sexual Response, Aimee Mann, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Talking Heads, Wendy O. Williams (Plasmatics), and more. In addition to the photographs, visitors to the exhibition will experience soundscapes specially created for "Days of Punk" in collaboration with Roger Miller and Peter Prescott of the cult band Mission of Burma. The video component was put together in collaboration with Jeremy Troy, and includes archival footage that Grecco himself shot during the punk era.

Additionally, posters, magazines and other memorabilia from back in the day – all from Grecco's personal collection – will be displayed. These notably include concert posters created by Dini Lamott, a photographer, artist, and member of the punk rock band Human Sexual Response, who are featured in both the book and the MOAH:CEDAR exhibition. The museum is also making special wallpaper collaging magazine covers and Lamott's images to hang in the bathrooms and back hallway to harken people back to dates in rock clubs with punk posters and flyers plastering the walls.

MOAH:CEDAR is also presenting additional programming in conjunction with "Days of Punk." On Saturday, February 25 starting at 6PM, the MOAH:CEDAR Concert Series will feature a show with multiple punk rock bands (lineup TBA). On Sunday, March 19 – closing day for "Days of Punk" – the MOAH:CEDAR Zine Social workshop will focus on creating punk-centric zines, 5-8PM, with a panel discussion at 6PM. Michael Grecco will be signing books.

Grecco's punk photographs had been dormant in his flat files for decades until his archivist suggested revisiting this previously unseen body of work five years ago. After they did a deep dive into the past, their efforts lead to Grecco's most recent book, the best-selling Punk, Post Punk, New Wave: Onstage, Backstage, In Your Face, 1978–1991 (Abrams Books, 2020), which introduced these images to the public for the first time. In addition to the 162 photographs, the book features a foreword by Fred Schneider of the B-52s, an essay by veteran rock journalist Jim Sullivan, and Grecco's personal anecdotes from his times hanging out with the musicians he was shooting.

The images then became available as limited-edition prints on Ilford Gold Fibre Gloss paper to collectors for the first time. Plans soon got underway for the inaugural public show at Photo London, and the now touring gallery and museum exhibition "Days of Punk."

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I Wanna Dance With Somebody

By Contributing Writer

Naoimi Ackie, who plays Houston in “I Wanna Dance With Somebody,” turns in a fierce performance but is asked to lip-sync throughout to Houston biggest hits. The effect is, at best, an expensive karaoke session.

The dilemma that Houston’s prodigious gift put everyone in is understandable: The chances of finding someone who resembles the singer is hard enough; finding someone who also has the awe-inducing, fluttery vocal ability is a fool’s errand.

But the solution would have been choosing between focusing on Houston’s story or making a documentary that features her singing. It’s unfair to ask Ackie to act her heart out and also have her execute large parts of Houston’s iconic live performances in mimic mode.

The movie is written by Anthony McCarten, who told Freddie Mercury’s story in “Bohemian Rhapsody.” McCarten has impressed producers with an ability to tell the stories of modern icons but with Houston the hook is, well, business pressure.

“I Wanna Dance With Somebody” is more like a hyped-up “Behind the Music” episode set to Houston’s greatest hits album. It leans on all the clichés: overbearing parents, bad-boy boyfriends and giddy, champagne-popping montages on the way up and sullen montages on the way down.

Houston is portrayed as a woman who seizes her destiny only late in her cut-short life after struggling with the burden of being the family breadwinner. “Everyone is using me as an ATM!” she screams.

Stanley Tucci plays a subdued and concerned Clive Davis — the record executive helped produce the film — and Nafessa Williams is superb as Houston’s best friend, manager and lover.

McCarten frames the climax of Houston’s life at the 1994 American Music Awards, where she won eight awards and performed. It is where director Kasi Lemmons’ camera starts and ends, part of an excruciating final section goodbye to the icon that lasts for what feels like an hour.

Credit to the Houston estate for not sanitizing Houston’s life, showing her early love affair with a



woman, her demanding parents, the backlash from the Black community and not shying away from the descent into drugs. “To sing with the gods, you sometimes need a ladder,” Houston rationalizes.

Some highlights include Houston and Davis picking hit songs in his office and the recreations of the video “How Will I Know” and Houston’s national anthem performance at Super Bowl XXV. Costume designer Charlese Antoinette Jones has joyously remade key looks.

Less well-realized is the section exploring her filming of “The Bodyguard” — the filmmakers try to pass off an old clip of Kevin Costner on the set, a trick they try again later with

Oprah — and the portrayal of husband Bobby Brown is not nuanced, leaving him the clear villain. Lemmons (“Harriet”) also uses an image of a faucet dripping, foreshadowing her death.

Ackie’s performance is something to be cheered, reaching for the the kind of authenticity that Andra Day channeled when she also tackled a doomed musical icon in “The United States vs. Billie Holiday.”

But so much clumsiness, scenes featuring unnaturally heightened drama with little insight and the compromised authenticity of the performances drag “I Wanna Dance With Somebody” down — ultimately, it’s not right but it’s just OK.

The Pale Blue Eye

By Contributing Writer

Set during an unrelenting winter in upstate New York in 1830, this frosty movie with snowy vistas, flickering candles and howling winds will get your teeth chattering. Even lovers romping in bed are fully clothed. The only thing to get the blood moving here is a spot of murder.

Actually, it’s no mere killing that brings Augustus Landor, a retired New York City police constable to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point on this winter. Yes, a cadet has died, found hanging from a tree. But someone has also harvested his heart.

To crack the case, Landor, played with taciturn intensity by Christian Bale, enlists the help of one of the cadets, who is an odd sort of military man. This is when things get weird: The cadet is future famous macabre poet Edgar Allan Poe, who really did spend time at West Point.

“The man you’re looking for is a poet,” Poe says, acted by an equally intense Harry Melling, who once

played bad guy Dudley Dursley in the “Harry Potter” franchise. Poe recognizes that a heart is just a muscle, but its symbolic value is crucial to cracking the case.

The title comes from a line in Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” and the source of this movie is a novel of the same name by Louis Bayard. Director and screenwriter Scott Cooper builds tension with a series of seemingly unconnected clues — a note fragment, a military jacket missing a decoration, some animals disemboweled.

This is a film grounded in its time and space, where you hear creaking wooden floorboards and owls hooting and darkness. You feel the 1830s and the greasy, unkempt hair and heavy woolen uniforms.

The R-rated whodunit takes an unfortunate turn into the occult as our two heroes — a gruff, tragic-stricken detective and a romantic, hyper-intellectual poet — uncover each other’s secrets. Poe falls for a classmate’s sister — he gives his heart, get it?



— and may be letting love blind him. But perhaps the detective is not telling us all we should know.

Aside from all the cold drama by pale people, there’s also a meta twist. The leaders of the military academy want the detective to solve this quickly because they’re catching heat from Congress. Look closely and catch Pennsylvania Sen.-elect John Fetterman and his wife.

There are also some talented folks — Robert Duvall plays an expert in the occult, Gillian Anderson is a matriarch, and Charlotte Gainsbourg plays a love interest for Landor. This level of talent is cheeky.

The film has a few odd jumps and seemingly comes to a fiery conclusion — but it’s a false ending. A much better one awaits, one that’s unexpected and very, very satisfying. Stay to the end — as long as you’re bundled up.

CARPENTERS LEGACY

By Pam Froman



Sally Olson and Ned Mills as Karen and Richard Carpenter

In their illustrious career, from 1969-1983, The Carpenters received 3 Grammy Awards, 5 Billboard Top Ten Albums, 3 Number One Singles, 12 Top Ten Singles, and 20 Billboard Top Forty Hits. Now you can experience their music and stage presence once more with the amazing Carpenters Legacy impersonation show starring Sally Olson and Ned Mills as Karen and Richard Carpenter.

Sally Olson, artistic director, and lead vocals for this amazing tribute performance grew up listening to music such as the Beatles, Carole King, James Taylor, Crosby Stills Nash and Young, Simon & Garfunkel, and of course, The Carpenters. "I started with the idea of putting together a one-woman show – it was just going to be a bunch of songs of artists that I liked," says Sally. "Then it quickly started to turn to The Carpenters because my voice naturally is a really good fit with Karen Carpenter's."

She needed somebody not to just accompany herself by playing piano – but

actively performing the role of Richard. That was when Ned Mills came on board.

Ned Mills, musical director, and pianist grew up hearing wonderful hits by Judy Garland, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and Frank Sinatra. But he soon got into The Beatles and The Carpenters. "One of the earliest things on the radio that I remember was Karen Carpenter singing 'This Masquerade' and 'Top of the World,'" he says. "I quickly came to realize after meeting Sally that one of the most underappreciated pianists of the 20th century is Richard Carpenter. When we decided we were going to put this project together I knew I had a lot of brushing up to do and I had some very big shoes to fill."

Carpenters Legacy: A Re-creation of the 1976 UK Tour is the definitive show celebrating the music and legacy of the famed brother-sister duo. Carpenters Legacy maintains a Las Vegas residency at The Modern Showrooms at Alexis Park Resort Hotel. But they are coming to Thousand Oaks in 2023!

"Karen Carpenter's voice was really special," says Sally. "She was the type of singer who doesn't sing with any vocal acrobatics. It's very straight ahead, pure, and of course, there was that deep contralto voice quality and timbre that she had."

"When you hear Karen's voice, the first thing that you notice is the intimacy of it," says Ned. "She was known for holding the microphone very close and it makes you feel like she's singing directly to you. That recognizable voice – it's like taking a warm bath – just gorgeous and unforgettable."

The brother/sister duo was so inspirational and popular because of Karen's recognizable voice and Richard's arrangements with beautiful harmonies. Richard got his influence from everyone from Burt Bacharach to the Beatles, as well as the harmonies of Brian Wilson and the Beach Boys. "The Carpenters had a total commitment to perfectionism – having everything sound perfect," says Ned. "That is what identifies their music."

The Carpenters Legacy show in Thousand Oaks is a recreation of the Carpenters'

live performances in 1976, specifically their tour in the UK that year. Sally and Ned chose to revive that tour because it was the most dynamic and successful part of the Carpenters' career and truly showcased their talents. It will feature hits including "We've Only Just Begun", "Yesterday Once More", "Superstar", Karen's drum solo, Richard's classical piano feature, a Spike Jones parody of "Close To You", comedy antics, and much more. It's going to be a lot of fun!

Carpenters Legacy: A Re-creation of the 1976 UK Tour starring Sally Olson and Ned Mills is coming to the Bank of America Performing Arts Center – The Scherr Forum Theater, 2100 Thousand Oaks Blvd, Thousand Oaks on Saturday, February 11 at 3 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Cost is Adults: \$46, Seniors: \$44, Children: \$38, Groups: 10% Off Adult Price
For tickets and information, call (805) 449-ARTS (2787) or log onto www.CivicArtsPlaza.com

For more information on Carpenters Legacy, log onto www.carpenterslegacy.com

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Wear Your NFT with Jewelry of the Future



By Contributing Writer

Billionaire CEO Video Game Visionary Aleksandr "Shurick" Agapitov states "the next revolution in web3 is happening in hardware," and that is why he is investing in Pillz, a new fashionable physical shell for

NFT games. Pillz presents its own game – environment to breed, grow and progress digital pets. Each device comes with its own unique character.

Shurick single-handedly built a \$3 Billion video game payments powerhouse with his industry-leading company Xsolla



your NFT. A Charm, bracelet, keychain or necklace, Pillz is the jewelry of the future.

Wearables of the future are phygital, and Pillz enables people to wear their NFTs as an accessory. Pillz is an extension of a digital identity - the fashionable device makes NFT-collectibles and NFT games tangible so users have a deeply immersive experience interacting with their NFTs in physical reality. Users can upload to Pillz NFTs they own without transferring the token to the device, only verifying its ownership. The leading fashion and jewelry brands have the opportunity to collaborate with Pillz creating their limited NFT collections and producing unique accessory designs.

The functionality of the device also allows users to interact with characters from

that currently runs the video game payment world. He founded Xsolla in 2005, which allows video game producers to sell in-game items in exchange for a 5% portion of each sale. His clients include Epic Games Store, Ubisoft, Twitch, & hundreds more.

He also recently launched the creator economy monetization platform X.L.A Foundation which allows Web3 & metaverse builders to earn money as they create spaces in the virtual world. Shurick's mission with X.L.A is to democratize wealth building and revenue distribution for IP creators, owners, and holders who are powering the Metaverse and Web3, the same way he pioneered for video game creators.

Pillz aims to be the leading phygital ecosystem for people to interact with their NFTs in real life, extending their digital identity.

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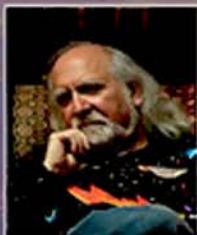
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Beverages On The Lighter Side Take A Break From The Heavy Alcohol

By Contributing Writer

So we ushered in the new year with a big bang! Along with that comes the residual hangover, but after looking at your credit card bills, you may be thinking “and I decided to quit drinking why?”

No worries, you’re not alone, but you could probably use a sharp slow-down, so here are a few lighter options to consider before reaching for the Martini shaker.

Willie's Superbrew More-jito Real Limes + Mint

After a slew of sweet, fruit-forward seltzers, Willie's Superbrew's More-jito Real Limes + Mint brought us back to life. Like a mojito without cloying sweetness, I was immediately transported to warm



weather and tropical breezes. Though the herbaceousness of fresh mint can be tricky to maintain in a canned beverage, Willie's use of real ingredients and whole fruit make this drink shine. Comes in 12 packs at drizly.com

Vervet Pale Mary
Bring on brunch! Vervet's fizzy take on a classic Bloody Mary gets top marks. Its likeness to the complex tomato cocktail is uncanny; celery on the nose, a lingering habanero pepperiness, and a ripe tomato flavor that hits both sweet and savory. The canned craft cocktail gets its distinctive flavors from small-batch, handmade ingredients. While the slim, tall can is the iconic vessel, try pouring the Pale Mary over some ice for a low ABV spritz perfect for the AM. \$22 for 4 pack, drinkvervet.com

Ranch Rider Tequila Paloma
Straight out of Texas, Ranch Rider has mastered flavorful seltzers that are not overly sweet. Sharp grapefruit, lime, and orange bring the classic Paloma flavors to this Tequila seltzer. The addition of sea salt is totally key to adding a savory, mouthwatering finish that leaves you wanting more. Grab one (or six) and head to your nearest beach; this seltzer is a gateway to a good day. \$14 for 4, ranchriderspirits.com



High Noon Grapefruit
With a juicy balance of fruit and a hint of bitterness, High Noon has nailed packing the flavors and aromas of fresh grapefruit into a 12oz can. While High Noon's seltzers were impressive across the board, the Grapefruit's puckery punch made it a clear Food & Wine-favorite during our tasting. \$11 for 4 at drizly.com

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BBQ in Los Angeles

Get Ready for your SUPERBOWL Extravaganza!

By Danial Byrd

Die-hard BBQ fans will argue for days on end about why Memphis has the best pulled pork over Texas, or why Kansas City makes better brisket than the Carolinas. But here in Los Angeles, we have a great mix of all of the above (not to mention stellar Korean BBQ and our own regional spins).

Chinatown. Look for dishes such as spare ribs coated in a tamarind braise; mac and cheese with roasted poblano peppers; and some seriously flavorful al pastor pork belly burnt ends. Superbowl packages available for catering or pickup.

<https://www.eastlossoulbarbecue.com/>



Despite the noticeable influx of BBQ spots in L.A. the past few years, there's still seemingly a debate as to whether this city has legitimately great barbecue—of course we do, and all without breaking the bank.

Try these –

A's BBQ

Pitmaster Alan Cruz imbues his slow-smoked meats and his tortas, smash-burgers and sides with “East Los soul,” underscoring one of Southern California’s biggest and best BBQ movements: Latin flavor woven into classic briskets, ribs and more—a true reflection of L.A. and an evolution of the art of the smoker. A's BBQ can be preordered online and picked up at Cruz's home in East L.A., or found at pop-ups such as Wednesday night appearances at community kitchen Lokels Only in

Bludso's Bar-&-Que

This famed BBQ hot spot specializes in Texas-style ribs, brisket, chicken and anything else you can think to throw in a smoker. The lines can be long, especially during the summer and on holiday weekends, but good things come to those who wait. Founder and Texas native Kevin Bludso's ribs practically fall off the bone; in the massive Bludso's Tray, a pile of ribs, sausage links, pulled pork, half a chicken, rib tips also comes with every side available—and with options like potato salad, baked beans, slaw, greens and rich mac and cheese, you're going to want it all. Not as hungry? Sandwiches and even smoked jackfruit are on the menu, too. Save your appetite for dessert, where banana pudding is spooned out into

styrofoam containers. Not anywhere near La Brea? Bludso's also ships nationally, so you can get great BBQ wherever you are. 609 N La Brea Ave - Los Angeles

Gus's BBQ

Great BBQ doesn't always have to come from a hole-in-the-wall shop in the middle of nowhere. At Gus's BBQ, a South Pasadena landmark that's been around over 70 years, you might find some of the best cornbread you've ever had. Arriving in a cast iron skillet, the bread is both creamy and crumbly, with a heavenly sugar glaze on top that is perfect for pairing alongside Gus's St. Louis-style spare ribs. Or maybe you'll go for the Texas brisket, smoked 16 hours using pecan wood. The tender meat is served with your choice of two sides—the braised greens are killer with a little hot sauce on top, while the mashed potatoes feature roasted garlic—but the real star is the boneless Southern fried chicken, a juicy slab of meat that's enveloped in a spicy crust. No matter what you order, drink some Southern sangria out of a

mason jar, for best results. series on more BBQ, Asian, Vegan and more.

Glenwood Smokehouse

With meat smoked onsite, classic sides done right, plenty of queso and massive BBQ platters at the ready, Glendale's brand-new Glenwood Smokehouse is a little slice of Texas right across from the Americana at Brand. The sleek, modern-styled restaurant—with one of its owners also behind AJ's Tex-Mex Barbecue in Valley Village—offers classics such as rib combo plates, smoked tri-tip steaks, pulled pork sandwiches and hearty meats available by the pound, plus more unique concoctions such as brisket nachos, corn fritters with Calabrian honey and loaded fries smothered in queso. Eventually (the spot just opened in mid-May), the beer will flow from over a dozen draft lines and into growlers so you can bring some beer and BBQ home with you.

Keep an eye open for Valley Scene's upcoming “best of” BBQ, Asian Cuisine, Vegan, Coffee and more.

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5 Health Tips to Help You Succeed in the New Year

By Contributing Writer

The new year brings a time to reassess health. New Year's resolutions are often focused on weight loss or exercise. Although these are important indicators of health for many people, overall health is important, too.

Registered dietitian, author and nutrition consultant Manuel Villacorta offers these tips to start the new year healthy.



Create a Meal Plan You'll Want to Eat

For well-balanced meals, think ahead and plan a weekly menu that matches your taste to stay interested. When you feel like you're on a diet, you're more likely to stop the plan. It's helpful to make something to enjoy together with family or friends and make sticking to a meal plan easier.

Try these three tips:

Make shopping lists; Check your cupboards to avoid overbuying; Schedule a day of the week to shop.

Fill in Dietary Gaps with Supplements

A balanced diet is key to overall health, including your heart and brain. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics released a first-of-its-kind recom-



mendation to eat 400-600 milligrams of flavanols daily to support cardiometabolic health. Flavanols are bioactive compounds found in foods like cocoa, tea, apples and berries; however, levels can vary, and it can be difficult to get everything you need from food alone.

A flavanol supplement like CocoaVia can help fill dietary gaps. The flavanols in CocoaVia are clinically proven to promote cardiovascular and brain health for the long-term, supporting a strong heart and better memory. Each Cardio Health product serving provides 500 milligrams of cocoa flavanols in two capsules or one powder scoop. Additionally, Memory+—containing 750 milligrams of cocoa flavanols per three-capsule serving—is ConsumerLab.com's Overall Top Pick for cocoa products with the highest concentration of flavanols. Only CocoaVia is made with Cocopro™ cocoa extract, the most concentrated and clinically proven flavanol extract ingredient.

Try adding CocoaVia capsules to your routine or a scoop of Cardio Health powder to smoothies, or coffee. Learn more at CocoaVia.com.

Fuel for Energy

Not having enough energy can impact performance. What you eat can impact energy levels. Manuel suggests eating every 3-4 hours and including carbohydrates, protein and fat—at mealtimes.

Many people eat salads with greens and protein, but you can bulk them up with broccoli and carrots. Aim for meals packed with vitamins, minerals and nutrient-dense foods.

Make Fiber a Focus

Fiber is often overlooked. Soluble fiber helps maintain glucose levels. Oats, beans and avocados are all good sources of soluble fiber. Including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and whole grains can increase your fiber intake and benefit your gut health.

Be Strategic About Stocking Your Kitchen

Try strategies to get what you need in the fewest trips possible. Not everything has to be fresh. Frozen produce are often stored at their peak freshness to offer the same nutrients. Choose low-sodium, canned options when possible and rinse before eating.

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New Year New Mindstate!

Tips To Improve Happiness And Health In 2023

By Contributing Writer

2 022 was a challenging year. As a result of the pandemic, we saw a rapid rise in mental and physical health issues. Depression was the leading culprit. Fortunately, the New Year presents opportunities for growth and revitalization. Here are tips to a New Year, new mind state.

Ask for help

Find and obtain a coach. Someone came before you and has useful knowledge that could save time, money, energy and prevent mistakes. If there is no candidates in your immediate circle, go online.

Identify goals and break them down into plans

By breaking goals down into short to long-term goals, helps maintain the vision and keep progress on track. Chipping away at the plan day by day will ensure that you're consistently hitting milestones.

Try meditation

Visualization meditation is very beneficial for improving physical and mental health. The method suggests that while visualizing various scenarios we



can create real life results. Positive affirmations subconsciously motivate the mind to act.

Achieve your weightloss resolution

2023 presents fresh opportunities to rid unhealthy habits. People say weight loss isn't a race, it is a journey. Which is why nearly half of the people lose sight and fail.

The first thing to do for effective weight loss is set realistic goals that can be monitored and measured. People are more likely to stay the course if they can see and feel results.

Monitor your calorie intake

You don't have to shock your body with a brand-new diet to lose weight. Instead, slowly ween yourself off the unhealthy foods. That means if you usually eat a whole bag of chips, cut the portion in half and so forth until you find healthier options that you enjoy eating.



Calorie counting is often used for a short-term solution for weight loss but can have a long-term effect on eating patterns. To monitor caloric intake. Track the foods you eat and try to get intake down to 1500 calories (2,000 calories to maintain weight) a day. You

can find the calories for every food serving on the labeling in the back of packaging.

Do 20 mins of cardio exercises in the morning

Boost your energy, mood, and metabolism with a 20-minute cardio routine in the morning. Save the breakfast for after the workout to burn calories from the night before with an empty stomach. Also known as fasted cardio, you can expect to lose up to 20% of body fat and to get leaner faster.

Replace breakfast meals with protein shakes

Two days out of the week substitute breakfast meals for protein shakes. In addition to being quick for people on the go. Whey protein helps, increase the metabolism, while aiding fitness and nutritional goals. Some people get caught up in the stress of what to eat on their weight loss journey. Protein shakes help alleviate some of the stress around what to eat, making it easier to stay on track with dietary plans. Not only will it help with curbing your appetite for day but restoring the vitamins your body needs to power through the day. There are so many flavors on the market it shouldn't be hard finding one you enjoy consuming.

Here's to a happy and healthy 2023!

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WHAT'S YOUR 2023 TRAVEL RESOLUTION? AROUND-THE-WORLD BLIND DATE ADVENTURE

By Contributing Writer

What are your 2023 travel resolutions: Swimming with baby elephants? Learning to cook from a Michelin-starred chef? Taking part in an archeological dig? Lending a helping hand at a Tibetan refugee camp? Attending a gala opening of an international cultural event? Perhaps it is just taking a revenge makeup trip? No matter what it is, the best travel-related New Year's resolution is simple: Go!

The 2023 edition of The Global Scavenger Hunt can scratch your travel itch and help you fulfill your wildest travel resolutions in one grand adventure. It is a mystery travel adventure that combines Indiana

Jones daring with an Around the World in Eighty Days-like travel competition.

And the event turns creative travel in 2023, taking savvy travelers on A Blind Date with the World adventure to ten countries over three weeks. But which ten countries they will be going to—they are not telling! Call it: Destinations Unknown. And adding to the mystery adventure is the immersive focus of travelers having to trust strangers in strange lands—just another of the annual adventure's transformational features.

Known internationally as the world travel championship, the 2023 edition of



The Global Scavenger Hunt will take place between the 14th of April and 6th of May 2023.

The deadline to enter the 2023 edition of the travel world championship is February 1st, with only a few spots open for those wanting to compete for "The World's Greatest Travelers" title and trophy—and a chance to earn a free trip around the world with their triumph. But, of course, serious travelers are a competitive breed, from:

"How many countries have you been to?" and "We've been there, did you do...?" to watching travel shows saying, "I could do that!" Well, now they can with a trip, trophy, and title on the line.

"Sometimes travelers take trips, but our grand adventure takes travelers to mysterious unknown destinations," says William D. Chalmers, the Event Director. "Our secret places serve as a fun playing field on which the event plays itself out. Being a passive participant is not an option when you don't know where you are going on this authentic, challenging, and participatory international travel adventure. Simply transformative. It is life-changing for our travelers."

And the winners earn a free trip around-the-world with The World's Greatest Travelers title and crown after proving their mettle, testing their situational awareness, and challenging their Travel IQs. Traditionally, travel writers and bloggers, social media influencers and travel agents, along with some of the world's "most traveled people" and Amazing Race wannabe's, join the competition. But often, well-traveled curious people are the winners. This event is truly "the Amazing Race for real travelers."

The 23-day around-the-world event is limited to 15 teams of two. The US\$28,000 team entry fee includes: all international airfare, first-class hotels, 40% of meals, and special event-sponsored travel gear. Single travelers are welcome to apply, and all travelers will be interviewed for suitability.

Please contact GreatEscape Adventures at +1.310.281.7809 or apply online at GlobalScavengerHunt.com

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Female Bruce Lee Talks Viral Content Shawn Mendes Hype House and World Records

By Contributing Writer

Coined as the “Female Bruce Lee” with the accolades to back it up, world record holder, 4th degree Black Belt and 13x Taekwondo World Champion Rayna Vallandingham is the content creator, actress and martial arts expert taking over in 2023 at just 19 years old. Gaining over a million followers on TikTok for her unique martial arts content, the Indian American Taekwondo master prides herself on “kicking like a girl,” while inspiring young girls. Other projects include co-hosting “The A THREAT League” podcast. Rayna is also one of the only martial artists supported by the Bruce Lee Family, having collaborated with the family brand to launch their bomber jackets. She earned her Black Belt at the age of 6 years old and her first world title at 8. Rayna is also well known for starring and choreographing her scenes with mega star Shawn Mendes in his music video “Youth,” and will next be seen alongside Lenny Tavarez in a new music video.

Hosted by Rayna and her friend Samantha Long (celebrity dance choreographer and creative director), “The A THREAT League” is a fun and adventurous podcast. Come along in real-time as they navigate the New Hollywood in a series of conversations where everything is on the table: Dating, drama, business and fighting to take down the patriarchy. Literally. Welcome to the world of The A THREAT League. Grab your sword and heels for new episodes every Wednesday.

Rayna began her martial arts journey at the age of 2 and has been intertwined ever since. Now with 17 years of experience, Rayna



is truly a unique individual leading the new generation of fighting experts! Her accolades include being the youngest Black Belt martial artists to attain 13 World Championship titles. In 2011, at age 8, Rayna won 4 World Titles in Little Rock, Ark (the Triple Crown in Traditional; Forms, Weapons, Sparring and Creative Weapons) making her the youngest black belt ever to win a Championship (competing against girls twice her size and a number of years older). The next year she won 6 more world championships (Triple Crown in Traditional, Creative Weapons, XMA Forms, and XMA Weapons), and in 2013 she won the XMA Forms World Championship. After winning her latest World Championship she debuted in Phillip Rhee's film "Underdogs" as Leticia. Rayna has traveled across the globe, performing, teaching, and making appearances. She has also modeled and explored other areas of the entertainment industry, such as writing, stunts, and more. She is a Brand Ambassador for the American Tae Kwon Do Association; as she films campaigns, videos, does interviews, photo shoots, appearances, etc. She was the youngest to compete in the 12-14 group on ESPN and performed in front an audience of thousands of people. Throughout her career in the martial arts industry, Rayna has constantly had to unfairly prove herself to her male counterparts, former masters as well as competitor and is a strong advocate for female empowerment in the industry traditionally favoring men as a “male dominated sport.”

When Rayna is not busy creating content, acting or practicing Taekwondo, she can be found spending time with her friends in LA. Rayna is also currently learning both Hindi and Spanish in her spare time. Ultimately, Rayna would love to open her own dojo one day.

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—Ava Gardner*

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The Evolution of the Cheerleading Uniform

By Contributing Writer

In the 1960s, cheerleaders were more athletic, so cheerleading uniforms became more comfortable. Sweatshirts and cotton shirts took the place of heavy sweaters, and cheerleaders wore pants and skirts with pleats.

The sport became more popular among girls than boys. Guest Posting and uniforms changed to include tighter knit sweaters and tennis shoes. Today's uniforms are more similar to those of the 1980s.

The first company to market cheerleading uniforms was Jean Lee Originals. The company was started by

sporting goods store in the Midwest and Indiana. The company made custom cheerleading uniforms for high school squads and cheerleaders. It also produced its own cheerleading shoes.



Jean Marie Harter, the daughter of Arthur V. Harter. Harter owned the House of Hohner Sporting Goods, the largest

The earliest cheerleading squads wore saddle shoes or flat canvas sneakers. Their uniforms consisted of high dress socks and skirts that were

tailored to the shape of the athletes' bodies. The styles of cheerleading uniforms from that time period remained the same until the early 1970s. The modern version of the traditional uniform features a tighter fit, more colorful top and skirt, and more coverage in the middle.

Today's cheerleading uniforms are less like a costume and more like bathing suits. The sport used to be more about pumping up the crowd with chants and cheers. While cheerleading still looks strong in modern attire, it's important for the girls to be given a little more autonomy in choosing their look. You can also expect the uniforms to be more functional than trendy.

The evolution of cheerleading uniforms began in the '80s. During that time, the skirts became shorter and the torso grew longer. In the '90s, cheerleaders started standing on each other's thigh. In the 1990s, they embraced the use of unisex clothing. In the '80s, this became known as the Thigh Stand. This dance requires no tumbling skills and requires the

cheerleader to be flexible enough to stand on the thigh of her partner.

In the 1980s, cheerleading uniforms were waist-length button-down vests with a turtleneck under them. Later, teams changed their uniforms to make them look more feminine. The modern day counterparts of cheerleaders wear a midriff-revealing dress. In the 1990s, the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders introduced a more revealing costume that featured a white boot.

In the 1990s, cheerleading uniforms evolved from saddle shoes to athletic sneakers. This allowed the athletes to be more flexible and athletic. The 1990s uniforms were more athletic, sleek, and functional, with an A-line skirt and slouchy socks. But these changes were gradual, and cheerleading has continued to adapt to the changing times. However, it is important to remember that the style of the youth cheerleading uniforms has always been an important element in the game.

The evolution of the cheerleading uniforms is ongoing, and it is a constant change of uniforms.

During the 1950s, men's cheerleading uniforms were made of leather and featured large, colorful letters. By the 1970s, the uniforms were more athletic and more comfortable, and the slouch socks and A-line skirts became popular. By the 1990s, most of the cheerleading outfits were form-fitting and fitted.

The 1980s cheerleading uniforms were waist-length button-down shirts with a turtleneck underneath. The 1990s had skirts that were mid-thigh-length. This was a sign of the time when cheerleading was more competitive and fashionable. Then, the trend of wearing the same color became a tradition and a part of everyday life. And now, women's uniforms are just as important as the men's.

The 1990s cheerleading uniforms were similar to those of today, but they also had some notable changes. For example, the uniforms included slump socks, canvas sneakers, and t-shirts with a hood. The new decade also saw the rise of the A-line skirt, replacing the pleated skirts of the previous decade. This decade was also characterized by the introduction of a range of new trends in cheerleading apparel.

An advertisement for Orangetheory Fitness. It features a woman in a grey tank top looking to the side. The background is a warm, orange-toned gym setting. The text reads: "Orangetheory FITNESS", "1 FREE CLASS", "SIGN UP NOW", and "www.orangetheory.com/".

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How Your Pets Have Proven Benefits to Your Health and Happiness

By Contributing Writer

Your furry friend at home have proven benefits that help you have a happier, healthier mind.

Millions of people around the world love their pets -- they're part of the family! We enjoy their companionship and going for walks, playing with them and even talking and singing to them.

Evidence suggests that attachment to pets is good for human health and even helps build a better community.

It's no secret that pets can contribute to your happiness. Studies show that dogs reduce stress, anxiety and depression; ease loneliness; encourage exercise and improve your overall health. For example, people with dogs tend to have lower blood pressure and are less likely to develop heart disease. Just playing with a dog has been shown to raise levels of the feel-good brain chemicals oxytocin and dopamine, creating positive feelings and bonding for both the person and their pet.

Pets can be especially helpful as we grow older. In a survey on healthy aging, adults over 50 reported these top 3 benefits:

1. Less stress
2. Better sense of purpose
3. More social connection

To further support the benefits of having a loving pet, here are five ways pets help your mental health

Pets can reduce work-related



Pets help manage anxiety. Now more than ever, many people are feeling anxious or struggling with mental health. Pets provide companionship and support.

Pets can help you be more active. They give you a reason to get outside, get some fresh air and get active, which is proven to improve your mood, sleep and mental health.

Pets provide a sense of togetherness. The bond with a pet helps you to not feel alone.

When owners see, touch, hear or talk to their companion animals, it brings a sense of goodwill, joy, nurturing and happiness.

of their health. Studies show that pets in the workplace help reduce stress and improve employee satisfaction. Pets can help increase produc-

tivity, wherever you work. When a dog joins a virtual meeting, group members rank their teammates higher on trust, team cohesion and camaraderie.

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Upgrades When Flipping A House

By Contributing Writer

Kitchens and bathrooms are considered hotspots by many flippers and upgrading them is crucial. Home flipping shows on TV have also constantly pointed to the essence of updating the kitchen and bath in terms of gaining profit. One of the reasons behind this is the appeal they give to potential home buyers who may be in search of a classier home. In addition, upgrading the kitchen and bath is not at all very costly and not difficult to do. Normally, only minor work is involved like installing ceramic floor tile, refinishing kitchen cabinets and updating fixtures.

Changing the flooring can reap great profits too. Ceramic tiles are recommended more than the vinyl especially for the kitchen and bathroom while hardwood is great for the living room. Laminates are a good alternative to hardwood and are cheaper



Flipping homes not only entails buying and reselling. An important component of this real estate investment is renovation. Obviously, if investors buy rundown homes, they need to fix it up to make it more attractive.

Real estate investors have to have funds to finance their flipping projects including the renovation. However, with careful planning they can still save money on the repairs. Upgrades don't have to be expensive. It's just a matter of knowing the right areas of the home to highlight.

Painting walls, sidings and ceilings is one inexpensive way to upgrade a house. This is relatively cheap and very easy to do and vital to most flipped properties. There seems to be no renovation that does not involve repainting work. Keep in mind that paint is a surefire way of attracting attention and evoking emotion from prospective home buyers. Painting jobs require no special skills and you can even do it yourself along with a friend to save funds. As for the color to choose, it's best that you pick a neutral and light color to create a comfortable ambience and space in the home.

as well. This job is easy and can be accomplished by flippers although a lot of patience is needed.

Changing old lighting fixtures with newer models as well as cabinet doors either in the kitchen, bath and bedrooms are also less costly to do. They involve few materials that are at reasonable cost to boot and once they're done, they give a whole new look to the house. If possible, light fixtures should be coordinated with the new color theme of the home.

Landscaping is another cheap way to upgrade a flipped home. The materials are usually very affordable and you don't have to spend on labor as the work can be done by most flippers. Remember that the front yard is the first part of the home viewed by buyers and a well-trimmed lawn, trees, healthy growing plants and flowers are definitely a great attraction. In the backyard, it evokes a quiet place to relax in for the couple or the whole family.

Author of "Find It, Fix It, Flip It" Michael Corbett strongly suggests using mature plants in landscaping and installing inexpensive low-voltage outdoor lighting to improve the home's evening appeal.

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By Andrews McMeel Syndication

Top Stories

On Dec. 11 in Katwe Kabatoro, Uganda, a 2-year-old boy was playing near a lake when a hungry, hungry hippo "grabbed ... the boy from his head and swallowed half his body," the Telegraph reported. Bystander Chrispas Bagonza witnessed the event and started chucking rocks at the hippo, which caused it to spit the toddler out. As the beast lumbered away, onlookers rushed the child to the hospital, where he was treated for injuries sustained in the attack. Police warned residents in the area to be on the lookout for the hippo, as they can become aggressive when they feel threatened.

'Tis the Season

-- If you don't mind sharing a ride with the quintessential bah humbug, you stand a chance at beating traffic in the HOV lane. At least, that's what one driver in Arizona was hoping on Dec. 13 as he cruised along Interstate 10 with an inflatable Grinch in the passenger seat, CNN reported. "While we appreciate the festive flair, this is illegal & the driver received a citation for the HOV violation," the Arizona Department of Public Safety noted on Twitter.

-- Motorists in Marathon, Florida, who didn't heed the school zone speed limit on Dec. 13 were met with a choice: a citation, or an onion presented by the Grinch himself. Monroe County Sheriff's deputy Lou Caputo, a 37-year veteran of the force, started dressing up as the surly green character more than 20 years ago, the Associated Press reported. "It's about education, awareness that our school zones are still operating even though it's the holiday season," Caputo said. "It catches them off guard." Some speeders have even elected to eat the onion right on the spot.

The Catalonia region of Spain has a quaint tradition at Christmastime that features "caganers," or "poopers" -- figurines of shepherds with their pants down, relieving themselves, Reuters reported. The figures are usually placed among nativity scenes, but more recently, they've morphed into caricatures of famous people such as Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin and King Charles III. And now, inmates at a prison north of Barcelona are getting in on the action: They've been trained to produce the clay figurines for a

private family business, Caganer.com. Working four-hour shifts, prisoners mold, bake, polish and paint the figures. David Fernandez, an inmate at Puig de les Basses prison, said he feels like "an elf." "I feel very good working all year to get the job done and spread illusion. It's very cool. It's something from deep inside."

Art = Pain

Elito Circa, 52, a Philippine artist, creates his paintings with an unusual medium: his own blood. Circa told Reuters that using his blood started when he was young and had little access to painting supplies. Now he sources his "paint" every three months when he goes to Manila's health clinic to have 500 ml extracted, which he stores in a cooler in his studio. "My artwork is very important to me because they come from me, it is from my own blood, my DNA is part of it," Circa said.

Awesome!

This week's "And What the Heck Have YOU Done?" story comes from Golden, Colorado, and 8-year-old Maddock Lipp. On Dec. 1, The Denver Post reported, Lipp skied with his family on Mount Heogh in Antarctica, achieving in his short lifetime a big feat: He has skied on all seven continents and is unofficially the youngest person to do so. Lipp said he liked Antarctica best because he "got to ski next to the penguins." He hopes to nab a Guinness World Record for the accomplishment. [Denver Post, 12/16/2022]

Extreme Measures

An Argentinian soccer superfan became alarmed on Dec. 13 as he headed home to watch his team's match with Croatia in the World Cup semifinals, Oddity Central reported. The 53-year-old was frustrated at the slow progress of the bus he was riding, so when the driver stopped and stepped out to buy something at a kiosk, the soccer fan allegedly hopped into the driver's seat and took off toward his home. He drove about 4 miles, then abandoned the bus and its occupants and continued on foot. But police officers caught up with him and took him into custody -- and he missed the whole game.

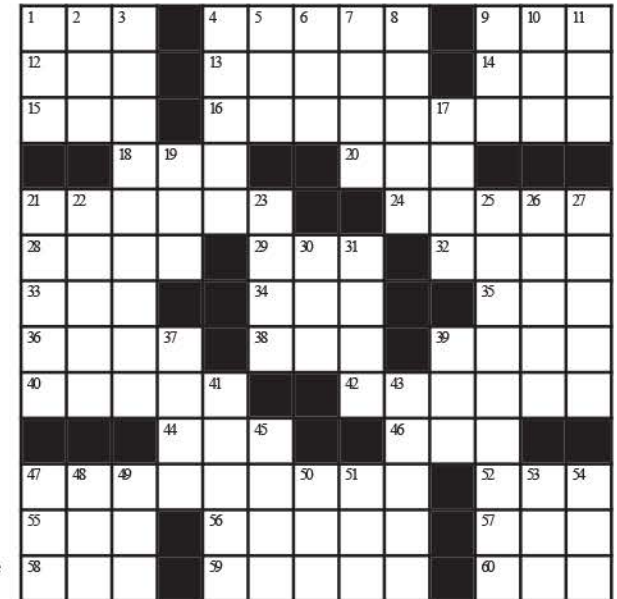
Across

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- Lady's wear
- Life basic
- Garland
- Robber's haul
- Entice
- Horse's bit
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- Flower receptacle
- Energy unit
- Comes up at threshing time
- Shoot the breeze
- Bar request
- Fraternity letter
- Wight, for one
- Young's partner
- Take for granted
- Overwhelming admiration
- Rock blaster
- Accurately
- Vex
- B & B
- Flightless birds
- Reply to a captain
- Air, land and ___
- Orangutan
- Stage of a journey

Down

- Lamb's cry
- Routine
- Keyboard instrument
- Turkish porter
- Japanese sash
- Sun follower?
- "See no ___, 2006 film"
- VCR button
- Tire meas.
- Make known
- Explosive imits.
- Chicken ___
- Pen point
- Temper tantrum
- More refined
- Exude
- Kangaroo, for one

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- Religious song
- Siouan "dwelling"
- "Go, team!"
- Opera solo
- Romanov ruler
- A belief
- Annoying kid
- Discretion
- Say again
- JAG spin off, Naval ___
- Joined
- Genetic info carrier
- Sawbuck
- Hang back
- "Catcher in the ___" by J.D. Salinger
- Small cask or barrel

DAD JOKES



"How do you follow Will Smith in the snow?"
"You follow the fresh prints."



PLAN YOUR DREAM WEDDING AT THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY BRIDAL PREMIERE WEDDING EXPO!

By Barbara Beckley

Are you a prospective bride and groom? Then don't miss the Bridal Premiere (<http://bridalpremiere.com/>), 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., Sunday, January 22, 2023, at the Hyatt Regency Westlake. As one of SoCal's finest and oldest bridal shows, since 1983, Bridal Premiere is more than a wedding expo – it's a party!

"The Bridal Premiere is so much fun! Filled with ideas, expert advice, fun activities and prizes galore. Everyone is happy and in love; so excited to be planning the best day of their life!" says founder/organizer Diane Boyd. She even remembers the day a groom proposed to his girlfriend

right at the show entrance! You'll visit with seasoned wedding professionals in 35 categories, see the latest fashions, and sample tasty treats from caterers and bakeries! Dance to hip DJs, pose for photographers, be snapped at the photo booth and win great prizes through fun casino play.

The 40th Anniversary Bridal Premiere will be an even bigger party. A one-stop-shop with 99 fun and interesting wedding vendors including the Stagecoach Museum, the Girl Scouts (beautiful Camp Arnaz in Ventura County) and bridal hand-castings. Meet top bakeries, beauty,



bar-tending services, bridal accessories, wedding gown designers, tuxedos, DJs, music, entertainment, photo booths, photographers, videographers, fiancé/insurance/realty experts, rentals, florists, restaurants/caterers, gifts & favors, travel, hotels, bridal registries, invitations, jewelry, wedding magazines and websites, ceremony officiates, limos, carriages, wedding planners, venues, (first) dance instructors, marquee lights, lawn games, wedding event producers, medical spas and destinations. Plus, receive a copy of Southern California Wedding magazine.

Move and groove to live entertainment: a guitarist, a harpist, four DJs, Felix and Fingers The Traveling Dueling Pianos. Enjoy The Leap Lifestyle Podcast with host Deanna Nash Events. And Domestic Bliss – the Book by Elly Salter. Sip complimentary cappuccinos, and mocktails from Saddle-Up Mobile Bar. Enjoy delicious lasagna, rice and chicken, BBQ, charcuterie, churros and cakes. This year only, the special 40th Anniversary Cake from Sweet Arleens Bakery.

Enter the Grand Prize Drawings to win a \$1,000 dollar shopping spree at one or more of the participating vendors; complete DJ

Services for your wedding party, Courtesy of Doubletime Entertainment; a \$500 Gift Certificate towards your wedding gown, courtesy of Bella Bridal Couture; and two on-trend 14K Forever Bracelets, courtesy of Moyer & CO. Jewellers. One free Grand Prize Drawing entry is included with admission. Get additional entries at the Hyatt Regency's Vista Ballroom Casino.

Play Bridal Show Bingo and be the lucky winner of a Las Vegas package including accommodations by La Quinta, a wedding under the famous Las Vegas sign and photo tour, courtesy of LV Wedding Connection.

No surprise the Bridal Premiere has everything you need to make your wedding dream come true. "The vendors and I are so excited to be able to meet and greet our soon-to-be wed couples. The brides and grooms have this wonderful day to look forward to and we are so happy to be a part of it," says Boyd.

Tickets are \$15 at the door, \$12 at www.bridalpremiere.com or snag a free ticket from a participating vendor (check the site for the list of vendors). For more details, call 805-341-2538.

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KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS LEAD MINDFULNESS CLASS

TEACHES TO BREATHE, RELAX AND LIVE IN THE MOMENT DURING STRESS

By Contributing Writer

Inflation has caused financial strain on many families. A Gallup poll found that 55% of Americans say inflation is placing hardship on their household, with 66% of lower-income Americans experiencing the most impact. The stress can be felt by all members of a family. For this reason, at Valor Academy Elementary School, a tuition-free charter public school that is part of the Bright Star Schools network and serves 88% of students on free-and-reduced-price meals, kindergarten students lead mindful moments of breathing and relaxation that help identify and regulate emotions, while decreasing anxiety and stress.

The global pandemic disrupted learning for most students, and financial stressors can continue to upend family life. "At Valor Elementary, we provide holistic support for students, which includes mindfulness and meditation, so that they thrive in and beyond the classroom," said May Oey, principal for Valor Academy Elementary

Schools. "We focus not just on strong academics, but our students' overall well-being," she added.

Every day, after recess and lunch, for about five minutes each time, 4-5-year-old kindergarten students dim classroom lights, turn on ocean sounds and sit quietly. Then, led by one of their classmates and with an understanding of the power of breath, they gently place their hands on their bellies as they take deep relaxing breaths. Slowly, they move their heads and arms, and lie down at the end of each session.

"Our transitional kindergarteners were a year old when the pandemic started," says Anna Hagen, a kindergarten teacher at Valor Academy Elementary School. "We help them identify and gain a better understanding of their emotions, develop vocabulary to express these and ways to respond. Students know that when they feel a certain way, they can stop, put their hand on their belly and breathe," she said.

Mindful moments are practiced daily. These are part of Valor Academy's social emotional learning



(SEL) curriculum, which is guided by the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence RULER Program.

RULER is designed to offer schools a systemic approach to social and emotional learning. It supports educators and helps students develop emotional skills, improve academic performance, decrease attention and learning problems, improve social and leadership skills, lessen anxiety, depression, stress, and burnout,

and improve overall school performance.

The work at Valor Academy Elementary School starts with RULER, but the commitment to support families and students runs deeper. Pride assemblies are held regularly to invite families and students to awards along with other community-building activities.

For more information about Valor Academy Elementary School's mindfulness moments,

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Teenagers and Social Media

By Contributing Writer

As a teenager there are many pressures. School life, maybe the stress of leaving one school for another, fitting in, being accepted, studying, keeping family happy, are all stressful considerations.

Then, there may be stresses at home, family concerns, problems with siblings and personal issues; feeling different, uncertain about themselves, comparing themselves to others, fear of missing out.

Social media is a part of life for many people. We check our phones every 12 minutes and spend an average of 3 hours 15 minutes every day on the internet.

It can also help tap into unexpected audiences, reach people we would never have been able to introduce ourselves to and their friends. We have the potential with social media to speak to a vast audience.

But there are others aspects of social media. Caution needs to be exercised. Living in a virtual world can persuade us that online is the real world. **Which is why it's important to:**

Choose who to follow with caution and recognise their agenda. Be alert to dangers of being groomed by someone who's not who or what they claim to be, is encouraging you to do things you're



Decide not to spread negativity on your social media. Commit to share only good news. You may think one person cannot make a difference but when each of us takes a stand we can sprinkle sunshine in our corner of the world.

Set a limit for time online, and use that time more efficiently. You may see your online family as a real, key element of your life, relationships that are genuine and supportive. But actual person-to-person relationships are important too. Many people work, shop and manage their lives online, so it can provide less and less reason to leave the house. But relationships, learning to interact with others, develop social skills, understand yourself better all require movement away from devices.

Meet others in person. Incorporate personal development and growth by accepting that sometimes things may not go well. You may make mistakes, be rejected. It's part of life.



Step outside your comfort zone. Join a class, a gym, a group. Visit the same places regularly.

In the same way you've found your place online remember too to keep a tentative toe in the offline world.



Whilst it's valuable to be connected to the world outside there are also worrying aspects about the internet and social media that cause concern regarding teenagers.

Social media can be good or bad. Chat rooms and forums can be a place for someone who feels friendless and alone. Finding reassurance, answers to questions from people experiencing similar issues can stop a teenager feeling isolated and alone.

not comfortable with. Or they're aiming to become an influencer, are allied to specific products, introducing and recommending certain goods or services.

It's your call, you can unfollow if you want to. If something doesn't suit you or you've become unhappy you can choose to disengage. And if posts are appearing you don't like, that distress you, affect you negatively or you're uneasy trust your gut. It's your device, close the door and don't let them in.

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FASHION

Bohemian Style Guide

By Contributing Writer

When it comes to conquering bohemian style, it can be pretty daunting. Free-spirited, the 70s inspired and romantic are all words to describe bohemian fashion. But how can you bring boho style clothing into your everyday wardrobe? While we all may not want to look like we just got back from a music festival, there is nothing wrong with adding a touch of boho attire whimsy to your outfit.

Bohemian style is one of those trends that never go out of fashion. Boho chic clothing is always trendy.

It's hard to say when bohemian style appeared, but there was a group of artists in the 19th century that made this style famous. We're talking about Pre-Raphaelite artists who started wearing boho clothes to show uniqueness. If you wanted to be stylish, you needed to follow rules that were often complicated and required a lot of money.



They were rebellious and decided to dress in more casual, relaxed way with bohemian chic clothing. It wasn't until the 1960s that it expanded worldwide. Everyone went crazy for boho style, comfortable clothes, floral prints, maxi dresses, etc. Today, the boho style remains very popular. Nowadays, plenty of stars take on the boho clothing trend.

Kate Moss

Even celebrities who always have to be glamorous and elegant can't resist boho style's charm. We have seen stars like Kate Moss wear boho

clothes on various occasions. She is the quintessential ambassador of rock chic bohemian style and one of the most stylish celebrities in the world.

Zoe Kravitz

Zoe Kravitz is proof that young celebrities love this way of dressing too. Zoe is, above all, an international girl who is known for her sophisticated style. She linked up with top fashion brands like Balenciaga, Saint Laurent, and Calvin Klein for advertising campaigns. The artist cultivates bohemian style through fabulous outfits.

Vanessa Hudgens

Vanessa Hudgens is a talented actress who first came to fame in the Disney Channel's High School Musical movie series and then excelled as an actress in adult roles. Vanessa is known for her strong sense of personal style. The actress is a young ambassador of bohemian style and has worn boho outfits to music festivals like Coachella and other events.

Stevie Nicks

Stevie Nicks is a talented and successful singer who has excelled in her solo career and as a member of the iconic rock band Fleetwood Mac. She is a pioneer of the bohemian style. Stevie has worn hippie outfits, embroidered capes, flowing dresses, maxi skirts made from gauze with asymmetrical cuts, ruffled dresses, and shirts with worldly prints.

Layering

Layering is vital for the bohemian style. Think about long maxi skirts, relaxed blouses, and flowy pants. Top it off with a richly brocade adorned coat for the ultimate bohemian look. It is not only about your clothes but jewelry and accessories as well. Longline necklaces, glittering rings, and wide-brimmed hats will have you looking like a boho dream.

Oversized and Relaxed

Another key to conquering bohemian style comes down to the oversized silhouette. Although roomy styles can look amazing, ensure you do not look sloppy. So if you wear a relaxed pair of pants, wear them with a fitted top or vice versa. Focus on proportion.

In significant part to music festivals and fashion bloggers, the flower crown has become ubiquitous with bohemian style. This youthful accessory can easily bring some fun to any outfit. And although the floral crown can take your outfit to the next level, you can easily tone it down for everyday wear.

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