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# Music And Culture In Los Angeles

By Dillan Marsden

Los Angeles County is a cultural and artistic hub, offering live art and music. This region is a convergence point for various genres and forms of artistic expression, making it a unique destination. With venues ranging from historic theaters to underground spaces, the live



art and music scene in Los Angeles reflects the city's commitment to creativity and innovation. **The Music Scene in Los Angeles**

Los Angeles has long been a global leader in music. The city's scene spans all genres, including rock, jazz, hip-hop, classical, experimental, and electronic. For fans of large-scale concerts, venues like the Hollywood Bowl and the Walt Disney Concert Hall provide world-class performances. The Hollywood Bowl is a particular standout, an iconic open-air amphitheater that hosts symphonic performances by the Los Angeles Philharmonic, as well as concerts by top-tier pop, rock, and world music artists.

The Greek Theatre, another gem, provides an intimate setting for music lovers, offering impeccable acoustics and a cozy atmosphere. This historic venue is perfect for enjoying performances by established legends and emerging artists. For those seeking an alternative or underground music experience, Los Angeles is home to venues like The Smell, The Echo, and Echoplex, which host indie, punk, experimental, and electronic artists. These spaces often feature local musicians and emerging talent.

Los Angeles is also home to experimental music. Venues such as The Broad Stage and Redcat (Roy and Edna Disney CalArts Theater) frequently feature avant-garde music performances. **Live Art and Performance in Los Angeles**

Los Angeles is also a prominent center for live art and theater. The city's scene

includes the Mark Taper Forum, the Ahmanson Theatre, and the Geffen Playhouse, which stage an impressive range of productions from Broadway hits to cutting-edge, experimental works. Center Theatre Group regularly produces thought-provoking and diverse performances.

Los Angeles has also become a stronghold for performance art. Venues like the Hammer Museum host live performances by contemporary artists, often exploring forms that combine visual art with physical performance. At REDCAT, audiences can experience experimental works, from multimedia performances to immersive installations.

In addition, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has been instrumental in merging live art with visual art. Their outdoor spaces become stages for performances that integrate dance, theater, and experimental installations.

## Immersive and Experimental Experiences

Los Angeles is also prime for immersive and experimental performances. LA hosts a growing number of interactive, immersive theater productions where the audience is a participant. These productions often take place in unconventional spaces.

In music, LA continues to push boundaries, integrating multimedia art and visual projections



into live concerts. Music festivals like Echo Park Rising and the LA Music Festival blend live performances with art installations, street performances, and interactive experiences.

## Street Performances and Public Art

The streets of Los Angeles serve as a venue for live art and music. Public spaces are filled with street performers, from musicians on Santa Monica Pier to dancers and artists in Venice Beach. These performances add an ever-changing, spontaneous element to the city's cultural landscape. Moreover, public art installations throughout the city are often paired with live performances. These events celebrate the vibrant visual arts scene.

Live art and music reflect the city's creative spirit. The variety of venues, the genres, and the boundary-pushing artistic expression make Los Angeles one of the most exciting cities in the world. LA continually redefines what it means to engage with art and performance.



# The Most Anticipated TV Shows & Events This Winter 2025

Including The Americas With Tom Hanks  
And The Super Bowl

**T**he most anticipated TV shows and events set to premiere or take place this winter, including Tom Hanks' highly awaited documentary series The Americas, as well as the grand spectacle of the Super Bowl 2025. These programs represent just a fraction of the captivating experiences coming to TV screens in early 2025, as the industry continues to innovate and evolve.

## The Americas with Tom Hanks – A Documentary Series to Enchant and Educate

One of the most anticipated TV events of the winter season is the release of The Americas—an ambitious new documentary series hosted by the legendary actor and producer Tom Hanks. This multi-part series will delve into the diverse landscapes, cultures, and histories of the Americas, from the frigid tundra of Canada to the tropical rainforests of the Amazon.

The Americas aims to explore the rich tapestry of the continents by focusing on their geographical features, indigenous cultures, and the profound impact that both historical and contemporary human activities have had on the land. With Hanks' soothing narration and the stunning cinematography that accompanies the show, The Americas promises to transport viewers to some of the most breathtaking and untouched regions of the world.

Tom Hanks, known for his versatility as an actor and his thoughtful approach to storytelling, brings a certain gravitas and warmth to any project he's involved with. Viewers can expect a blend of educational content with a deeply human connection to the subjects explored, as Hanks reflects on the environmental and social challenges faced by the Americas.

In addition, the series features on-location footage shot in some of the most remote and visually stunning areas of the Western Hemisphere, making it not only an informative journey but also a visual feast.

As the world grows increasingly concerned about climate change, environmental destruction, and social inequality, The Americas is poised to offer valuable insights into how different cultures have interacted with and adapted to the land over centuries. This will likely spark important conversations about sustainability, preservation, and the future of these regions.

### Premier Date & Platforms:

The Americas is expected to debut in early 2025, with the first episodes available on both traditional broadcast television and streaming platforms. Its availability on streaming services such as Apple TV+ will allow global audiences to join in on the experience, further cementing its status as one of the most eagerly awaited shows of the season.

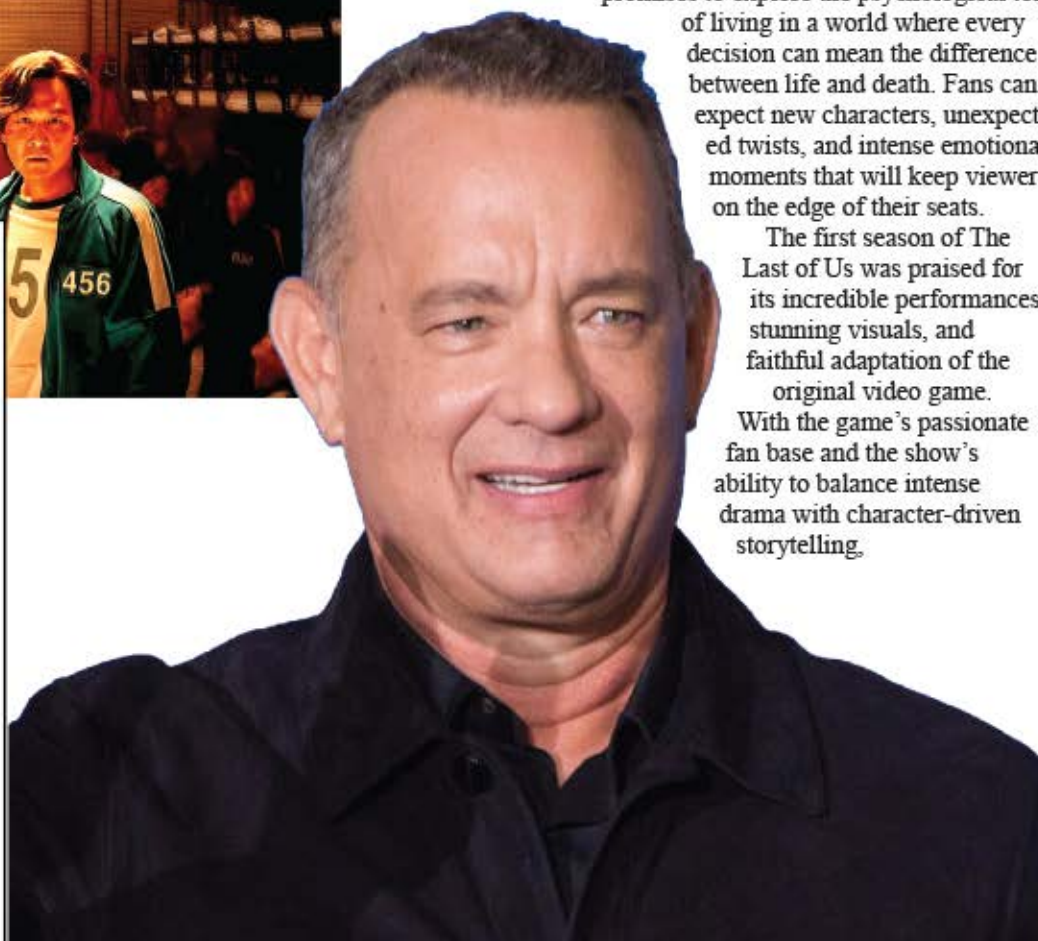
### The Last of Us – Season 2

After the smash success of its first season, The Last of Us is returning for its highly anticipated second season in early 2025. Based on the critically acclaimed video game of the same name, the series follows Joel and Ellie as they navigate a post-apocalyptic world ravaged by a fungal infection.

Season 2 of The Last of Us will adapt the events of the game's sequel, The Last of Us Part II, diving deeper into themes of survival, loss, and revenge. As Ellie's journey becomes more complex and morally ambiguous, the series promises to explore the psychological toll of living in a world where every decision can mean the difference between life and death. Fans can expect new characters, unexpected twists, and intense emotional moments that will keep viewers on the edge of their seats.

The first season of The Last of Us was praised for its incredible performances, stunning visuals, and faithful adaptation of the original video game.

With the game's passionate fan base and the show's ability to balance intense drama with character-driven storytelling,





the second season has generated massive buzz. The transition from the first game's events to the more complex and darker narrative of the sequel has fans eagerly speculating about how the show will handle key plot points and character arcs.

With a strong following and high expectations, the return of *The Last of Us* in 2025 is a TV event that promises to be one of the most talked-about releases of the year.

**Premier Date & Platforms:** Season 2 of *The Last of Us* will be released on HBO Max, likely in early 2025, with episodes dropping weekly. Fans can expect a thrilling continuation of the story that captivated audiences in its debut season.

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#### **The Mandalorian – Season 4**

Another highly anticipated return this winter is *The Mandalorian*, the hit *Star Wars* series on Disney+. After a cliffhanger ending in Season 3, fans are eager to see what happens next in the galaxy far, far away.

Season 4 of *The Mandalorian* will continue the adventures of Din Djarin and Grogu (Baby Yoda) as they navigate the complexities of the post-Empire *Star Wars* universe. With new alliances, old enemies, and the ongoing saga of Mandalore,

the series will explore deeper facets of the *Star Wars* universe, including the politics of the New Republic and the ongoing threat of the Imperial remnants.

The *Mandalorian* has been a standout success for Disney+, capturing the magic of the *Star Wars* universe while introducing new characters and stories. Fans are particularly excited to see how the relationship between Din and Grogu evolves, as well as how the series continues to tie into the broader *Star Wars* mythology. The return of beloved characters like Bo-Katan Kryze and the possible appearance

of more iconic *Star Wars* figures makes Season 4 one of the most eagerly awaited shows of the winter season.

The global phenomenon that is *Squid Game* took the world by storm when it premiered in 2021. The South Korean survival drama, which mixes violence, social commentary, and a twisted game of chance, became one of the most-watched Netflix series in history. Now, as we move into 2025, the long-awaited second season is set to continue the story of the deadly competition that pits desperate individuals against one another for a chance at wealth.

#### **Squid Game (Season 2)**

*Squid Game* Season 2 is expected to expand on the world introduced in the first season, delving deeper into the origins of the mysterious game, the people behind it, and the psychological toll it takes on the participants. While much of the plot remains under wraps, viewers can expect even more intense challenges, unpredictable twists, and shocking moments.

The first season of *Squid Game* captivated audiences with its unique premise and memorable characters, and there is high anticipation for how the second season will build on that success. Creator Hwang Dong-hyuk has hinted at even darker themes and more complex character arcs, which could make the second season even more thrilling and thought-provoking than the first.

**Why It's Anticipated:** *Squid Game* became a cultural touchstone, and fans are eager to see what twists and turns the next season will bring. With the first season's enormous success, there are high expectations for Season 2 to live up to its predecessor and continue delivering the same shocking, high-stakes drama that made it a global sensation.

Season 4 of *The Mandalorian* is expected to premiere in early 2025 on Disney+. As always, the episodes will be released weekly, keeping fans engaged and speculating over the course of the season.



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**Succession – The Final Season**

Though this may not be a winter premiere, the upcoming final season of *Succession* is worth noting as it will likely dominate the cultural conversation into the new year. The explosive drama about the Roy family, their media empire, and their cutthroat pursuit of power, will draw to a close in 2025.

*Succession* has captivated audiences with its sharp writing, complex characters, and biting social commentary. The stakes have never been higher, as the Roy family's battle for control of their empire comes to a head. Fans are eager to see how the series will conclude and whether the fate of the central characters—Logan, Kendall, Shiv, and Roman—will satisfy the intense build-up of tension throughout the show's run. The final season of *Succession* is expected to premiere in 2025, and with its epic conclusion, it's sure to make a lasting impact on television.

**The Super Bowl 2025 – The Ultimate Sports Showdown**

When it comes to TV events that transcend the realm of regular programming, the Super Bowl is the undisputed champion. This winter, the Super Bowl LVIII (58) will bring fans from all over the world together for a night of intense football action, explosive halftime performances, and jaw-dropping commercial moments.

**The Game:** Super Bowl LVIII, scheduled for February 2025, will see the NFL's two best teams clash for supremacy. While we don't yet know which teams will face off, anticipation is already building among football fans as they speculate on which quarterbacks, running backs, and wide receivers will lead their teams to victory. With a league as dynamic as the NFL, this year's matchup is sure to offer dramatic moments and unforgettable plays.

**The Halftime Show:** Of course, the Super Bowl is not just about the game itself; the halftime show has become a cultural phenomenon in its own right. Last year's performance by pop superstar



Rihanna set the bar high, and fans are eager to see which musical acts will take the stage in 2025. Previous years have seen major artists like Beyoncé, Lady Gaga, and Shakira electrify the audience, and the speculation surrounding the 2025 performer is already reaching a fever pitch. Will we see another powerhouse performer, or perhaps a surprise collaboration?

**The Commercials:** Another iconic feature of the Super Bowl is the ads. The Super Bowl commercials have become a central part of the cultural conversation, with brands spending millions of dollars on creative and memorable ads. These commercials often feature celebrity appearances, cutting-edge visual effects, and a blend of humor, heart, and emotional appeal. Companies go all out in their Super Bowl campaigns, hoping to grab the attention of the 100+ million viewers watching from their homes.

The Super Bowl is more than just a sporting event—it is a global spectacle that brings together viewers from diverse backgrounds to celebrate the thrill of competition and entertainment. Whether you're a die-hard sports fan or simply tuning in for the halftime show and commercials, the Super Bowl is an event that consistently delivers excitement and surprises. In 2025, with so many unknowns regarding the teams and performers, the stakes are higher than ever.

The game will be broadcast live on multiple networks, with extensive coverage leading up to the event, making it an unmissable TV experience.

Winter 2025 promises to deliver a wealth of exciting television content across multiple genres and platforms. From Tom Hanks' educational adventure in *The Americas* to the electric atmosphere of the Super Bowl, the season is packed with unmissable events. Whether you're a fan of high-stakes sports, heartfelt dramas, or groundbreaking documentaries, there's something for everyone this winter. As the TV landscape continues to evolve, audiences can look forward to an unforgettable season of entertainment that will leave them talking long after the credits roll.



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# MINUTIA

## WHAT ARE THE MEANINGS BEHIND OUR DREAMS?

By Taylor Brown

Dreams have long fascinated and mystified humans. From ancient civilizations to modern psychology, people have sought to understand the meaning behind the images, emotions, and narratives that play out in our minds while we sleep. But what do dreams really mean? Are they merely random firings of neurons, or do they hold deeper significance? **The Science of Dreams**

From a scientific standpoint, dreams are understood as a product of brain activity during

sleep. During the rapid eye movement (REM) phase of sleep, the brain becomes active. Neurotransmitters like dopamine and serotonin are involved, while the prefrontal cortex, the area responsible for logical thinking and self-control, is less. As a result, the brain weaves together thoughts, memories, and emotions into the surreal, fragmented narratives we experience as dreams.



However, while the scientific community acknowledges dreams are linked to brain activity, there's still debate over why we dream. Some scientists propose that dreams serve as a mechanism for memory consolidation. Others believe dreams may serve as a form of emotional regulation, allowing us to work through unresolved emotions or

stress. Still, others hypothesize that dreams may have an evolutionary purpose. Despite the progress made in understanding the mechanics of dreaming, the



exact meaning of specific dreams remains elusive. Scientists agree, that the content of our dreams often reflects the thoughts, experiences, and emotions we encounter during our waking life.

### Psychological Perspectives on Dream Meaning

Sigmund Freud is one of the most well-known figures associated with dream interpretation. Freud theorized that dreams represent unconscious desires, thoughts, and unresolved conflicts. He believed that many dreams are a form of wish fulfillment. For example, a dream about flying might represent a desire for freedom, while a dream of losing teeth might symbolize feelings of powerlessness.

Carl Jung expanded these ideas with his theory of the collective unconscious. Jung believed that our dreams tap into a shared reservoir of symbols and archetypes that all humans can access. For example, images of the "shadow" (the hidden or repressed aspects of ourselves), the "anima/animus" (the feminine or masculine aspects of the psyche), and the "hero" are archetypal symbols that may appear in dreams. According to Jung, dreams help us integrate these elements of our psyche, promoting personal growth and self-awareness.

In modern psychology, dream interpretation often focuses on the individual's personal associations with dream symbols. For example, if someone dreams of a snake, the meaning may depend on that person's own experiences or cultural background. For one person, a snake might represent danger, while for another, it might symbolize transformation or healing (as in the case of the ouroboros, a snake eating its own tail).

### Common Dream Themes and Their Potential Meanings

Although the meaning of dreams is highly personal, certain themes and symbols appear with surprising frequency across cultures and individuals. Here are some common dream themes and their possible psychological interpretations:

**Being Chased:** Dreams in which a person is being chased often reflect feelings of anxiety or avoidance. The dreamer may be running from an emotional issue, a difficult decision, or

a problem in their waking life that they're trying to escape. The identity of the pursuer can also provide insight into what is being avoided—whether it's a person, situation, or even an aspect of the self.

**Flying:** Flying dreams are often associated with feelings of freedom, empowerment, or transcendence. However, they can also symbolize a desire to escape from problems or a need for control in one's life. The way in which the dreamer flies (e.g., effortlessly or struggling to stay aloft) can provide additional insight into their emotional state.

**Teeth Falling Out:** This is one of the most common and widely interpreted dream symbols. Teeth falling out may symbolize feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, or fear of aging. It can also indicate concerns about appearance or the loss of power in a situation.

**Nudity:** Dreaming of being naked in public can symbolize vulnerability, embarrassment, or a fear of being exposed. It may also reflect a desire for authenticity or a feeling of being "stripped down" emotionally or psychologically.

**Water:** Water often symbolizes emotions, the unconscious mind, or the flow of life. Calm waters may represent tranquility or emotional balance, while turbulent waters may suggest emotional turmoil or instability.

### Cultural Interpretations

Across cultures, dreams are interpreted differently, with some viewing them as prophetic or divine messages. In many indigenous cultures, dreams are seen as a way to communicate with the spiritual world or ancestors. For instance, Native American tribes often view dreams as a source of guidance or a tool for healing.

In contrast, some Eastern traditions, such as Buddhism and Hinduism, see dreams as a reflection of the illusory nature of reality. Dreaming is viewed as part of the cycle of samsara (the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth), and thus, understanding dreams can help one gain insight into their own spiritual journey.

Ultimately, the meaning of dreams is multifaceted and complex. While scientific research provides insight into the mechanics of dreaming, psychological theories offer valuable perspectives on how dreams may reflect our unconscious thoughts, emotions, and personal growth. Whether interpreted through the lens of Freudian theory, Jungian archetypes, or cultural beliefs, dreams remain a powerful source of self-reflection and understanding.

By paying attention to our dreams and exploring their possible meanings, we can tap into a deeper awareness of ourselves and our emotional landscape. While not all dreams may carry significant meaning, many provide clues to our inner lives, guiding us toward greater understanding, healing, and self-actualization.

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# A Complete Unknown



// “A Complete Unknown” lives up to its title. You are hardly closer to understanding the soul of Bob Dylan after watching this look at America’s enigmatic troubadour.

Mangold — who directed and co-wrote the screenplay with Jay Cocks — doesn’t do a cradle-to-the-near-grave treatment. He concentrates on the few years between when Dylan arrived in New York in 1961 and when he blew the doors off the Newport Folk Festival in 1965 by adding a Fender Stratocaster.

The last big non-documentary attempt to understand Dylan was Todd Haynes’ “I’m Not There,” which split the assignment among seven actors. Chalamet does it all, moving from callow, fresh-faced songsmith to arrogant, selfish New Yorker to jaded, staggering pop star to Angry Young Man. There are moments when Chalamet looks at the world slyly. There are others when the resemblance is uncanny, but also moments when forced. You cannot deny he’s got Dylan down.

The movie’s title is pulled from Dylan’s lyrics for “Like a Rolling Stone” and it’s adapted from Elijah Wald’s book “Dylan Goes Electric! Newport, Seeger, Dylan, and the Night That Split the Sixties.” Dylan isn’t a producer but did consult on the script.

It’s not the most glowing profile, though the brilliance of the songs show Dylan’s genius. Chalamet’s Dylan is unfaithful, jealous and puckish.

In some ways, “A Complete Unknown” uses DNA from “I’m Not There.” The best clues are the refracted light from others, like Joan Baez, Johnny Cash, Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger and a girlfriend called Sylvie Russo, based on Dylan’s ex Suze Rotolo.

Edward Norton is a hangdog Seeger hoping to harness Dylan. Monica Barbaro is a revelation as Baez, Dylan’s on-again-off-again paramour. Boyd Holbrook is a sharklike, disrupting Cash. And Elle Fanning is captivating as Russo.

It’s Baez and Russo who dig the deepest into trying to find who Dylan is. They don’t buy his stories. “I don’t know you,” Russo says, calling him a “mysterious minstrel” and urging him to “Stop hiding.”

There are some lovely moments, especially the morning after Baez spends the night and she wakes to him working on “Blowin’ in the Wind.” They spar a bit but they come together.

“A Complete Unknown” is fascinating, capturing a moment when songs had weight, when they could move the culture — even if the singer who made them was as puzzling as a rolling stone.

# One of Them Days

By Contributing Writer



**H**orror, not comedy, has been the go-to movie genre, but a movie like “One of Them Days,” starring Keke Palmer and SZA, is a reminder of what we’ve been missing.

Creepy stuff and jump scares have proved better suited for channeling our abiding contemporary dread. But the communal joys of big-screen comedy have, and always will, suit dark days as much as light ones. “One of Them Days,” happens to arrive while Los Angeles, where the movie is set, has been decimated by wildfires. The Southern California skies, though, are crystal clear in “One of Them Days.”

“One of Them Days,” which had its premiere cancelled by the fires, is a welcome breeze for a movie landscape that has largely frozen out the comedy. There’s one reason for this: Keke Palmer.

This is a buddy comedy, so it might seem unfair to single out one half. SZA, in her first feature, acquits herself well. But this is Palmer’s show.

Palmer plays Dreux, a Los Angeles waitress who, when her artist roommate Alyssa (SZA) gives their rent money to an untrustworthy boyfriend, Keshawn (Joshua David Neal), goes on a madcap, day-long odyssey to raise the money before they’re evicted. This premise is itself a kind of throw-back. The antic spirit of F. Gary Gray’s “Friday” can be felt throughout “One of Them Days.”

The tone here, courtesy of director Lawrence Lamont, producer Issa Rae and screenwriter Syreeta Singleton, is amiably realistic. Aside from a few cartoonish flourishes, “One of Them Days” is grounded in a working-class reality where every step toward upward mobility for Dreux and Alyssa is knocked backward.

They live in a dilapidated apartment in the neighborhood of Baldwin Village, nicknamed the Jungles. When they’re forced to raise \$1,500 — a race complete with a ticking-clock countdown to eviction, and, as things develop, until “certain death” — Dreux is also scheduled for the biggest job interview of her life.

The satire of “One of Them Days” is directed at the feeble opportunities afforded to those striving to break out of a paycheck-to-paycheck cycle. When the roommates seek a loan, their payday center advertises a comical APR of 1,900.5%. (The

agent, who takes great pleasure in their credit scores, is memorably played by Keyla Monterroso Mejia.)

That’s just one of the characters the two encounter in their journey to raise money via everything from blood donation to Air Jordans



hung on power lines. Some of the characters along the way include Katt Williams, as a homeless man who warns against predatory lending; Vanessa Bell Calloway’s stripper-turned-blood-bank-worker; a new white neighbor named Bethany (Maude Apatow); and Keshawn’s new hook-up (Janelle James), who proves the movie’s most regular villain, despite the fearsome gangster (Amin Joseph).

Anyone familiar with Rae’s “Insecure” will recognize some of the hallmarks, namely the struggles of Black women trying to get a leg up in Los Angeles while also juggling romantic interests. Here, that’s Dreux’s crush, Maniac (Patrick Cage), who drives a Mercedes and who she suspects is a criminal.

If all of this sounds low stakes, that’s more of a pleasing feature than a bug in “One of Them Days.” Filling this movie with anything more would be a mistake. That would leave less room for the interplay between Palmer and SZA.

“One of Them Days” hinges on buddy comedy, which Lamont seems to recognize. SZA’s uber-cool transfers easily.

But it’s a testament to Palmer’s dynamism that “One of Them Days” would work no matter where their day takes them. There’s freewheeling wit and ever-shifting subtlety. Only a theatrical comedy can really showcase charisma like hers. For an actress who’s hustled to get to this point, “One of Them” days is perfect platform, scrappy and unstoppable.



## James Domine Symphony #3 In A Major With Ray Ushikubo

By Angela Stansbury

**T**he Third Symphony in A major (Mountain Scenes) by James Domine is composed of five selections extracted from his opera Luke and Sarah, specifically the Prelude, Hoedown, Prayer Meeting, Tavern Men's Dance and Train Song. The complete work is a program symphony such as Rimsky-Korakov's Scheherazade, or Berlioz's Symphonie fantastique. Each of the successive Mountain Scenes conjures a rustic atmosphere unique unto itself, imbued with the untamed spirit of Appalachia. On a personal level it should be noted that the composer's mother's family originally comes from the Ohio River Valley of West Virginia and this symphony is to some extent a musical autobiography.

As the first of five movements that comprise the symphony, the Prelude or Daybreak depicts an early morning scene that sets the stage for the agrarian industrial conflict that is to follow.

The Hoedown is a medley of square dances is combined to exploit all the instrumental colors of a traditional barn-dance. The music is structured as a battle of the bands, each of the warring clans being represented by the banjo, fiddle, mandolin or guitar, and as the dance gains momentum, the competition becomes more intense, erupting climactically into an all-out drunken brawl.

The Prayer Meeting is based on a Civil War banjo tune, Goin' Across the Mountains, and recreates the atmosphere of a camp-meeting Gospel revival. Each successive verse is an exhortation by the Preacher for sinners to repent, answered by a penitent hymn sung by the congregation. Eventually the people work themselves into a religious frenzy, inevitably resulting in an all-out drunken brawl. The Preacher fires a gunshot into the air that has the effect of restoring order, and the music ends harmoniously in a mood of blissful peace and tranquility.

The Tavern Men's Dance is based entirely on authentic Irish folk songs and dances arranged and orchestrated in a way that is rhythmically compelling and full of bittersweet memories of the Emerald Isle, left far behind, but not forgotten.

The final movement of the symphony is the Train Song that takes place in a local tavern where railroad men, loggers, miners, farmers, mountain men (hillbillies) and bar girls congregate for the purpose of drinking, dancing and carousing. The rough nature of the setting and characters are reflected in the music,

based in part on authentic old smoky mountains folk tunes. The indomitable pioneer spirit of American territorial expansion and industrial progress is represented by the railroad as the inexorable motion of a locomotive train travels onward into the future.



### Ray Ushikubo Biography

Ray Ushikubo is a Japanese-American pianist and violinist who has soloed with orchestras across the nation. Ushikubo's highlights include performing Piazzolla's Four Seasons with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra, Gershwin's Rhapsody in Blue with the Winston-Salem and Portland Symphony Orchestras and Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Ravel's Tzigane with the Dream Orchestra, Mendelssohn's Piano Concerto No. 1 and Saint-Saëns's Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso with the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra, and Sibelius's Violin Concerto with the Colburn Orchestra led by conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen.

A recipient of the prestigious Davidson Fellow Laureate Award in 2014, Ushikubo was named a Young Steinway Artist, won the 2017 Hilton Head International Piano Competition and the 2016 Aspen Piano Concerto Competition, and was a prize-winner at the 2023 Klein International String Competition. Ushikubo made his orchestral debut at the age of ten, performing Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 1 with the Young Musicians Foundation Orchestra and conductor Teddy Abrams at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. Since then, Ushikubo has soloed with the orchestras of Aspen, Buffalo, Florida, Fort Collins, Hilton Head, Kansas City, Modesto, New West, Oregon, Pasadena, Reno, San Diego, and Westchester on both piano and violin - often in the same concert. Ushikubo has worked with conductors including Rodolfo Barráez, Paolo Bortolameolli, JoAnn Falletta, Norman Huynh, Laura Jackson, Jeffrey Kahane, Wes Kenney, David Lockington, Michelle Merrill, Sameer Patel, Rafael Payare, John Morris Russell, Jeff Tyzik, and Thomas Wilkins.

Ushikubo has shared the stage of Segerstrom Concert Hall with pianist Lang Lang, with whom he later reunited and appeared together on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno. Ushikubo has performed with pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet on the international radio broadcast Radio France, and as

part of the festival Musique & Vin au Clos Vougeot, where he also performed with cellist Gautier Capuçon. With the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Ushikubo was one of the violin soloists of Vivaldi's Concerto for Four Violins with violinists Martin Chalifour, Phillipe Quint, and Cho-Liang Lin,



and was one of the piano soloists of Bach's Concerto for Two Keyboards with pianist Jeffrey Kahane.

Ushikubo also thrives in musical settings beyond classical, having shared the stage with acclaimed

singer-songwriter Jackson Browne as part of a peace ceremony honoring victims of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, hosted by the Los Angeles Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC). In 2015, he performed as piano and violin soloist in a concert presented by Grand Performances in Los Angeles featuring traditional classical works alongside jazz pianist Alfredo Rodriguez and electronic musician Daedalus, who "remixed" and improvised around the classical works, crossing the genres of classical, electronic music, and jazz. In 2019, Ushikubo recorded an improvisation session with cellist and beatboxer Kevin Olusola, member of the Grammy award-winning group Pentatonix, on the radio program From the Top.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, California, Ushikubo double-majored and received his Bachelor's degrees at the Curtis Institute of Music, where he studied piano with Gary Graffman and Robert McDonald and violin with Shmuel Ashkenasi, Pamela Frank, and Aaron Rosand. Currently, Ushikubo double-majors at the Colburn Conservatory of Music, where he studies piano with Fabio Bidini and violin with Robert Lipsett.

www.sfsymphony.com



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## Meet BeachBot!

The Robot Cleaning Up Beaches

By Contributing Writer

In the fight against pollution and environmental degradation, solutions are emerging to tackle some of the world's most pressing ecological challenges. One such initiative is the BeachBot, a robot designed to help clean up beaches and keep coastal environments pristine.

This innovative technology is revolutionizing the way we approach beach clean-up efforts.

### The Genesis of BeachBot

BeachBot was developed by researchers and engineers at the Institute of Robotics and Industrial Automation. The project was spearheaded by the idea that technological advancement could play a role in reducing waste and litter that accumulates on beaches. Every year, millions of tons of waste are deposited on beaches around the world, and this pollution poses a threat to marine life, ecosystems, and tourism.

The BeachBot was conceived to address this problem, harnessing robotics, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning to remove

litter from beach areas. What sets BeachBot apart is its ability to autonomously navigate the terrain of beaches, detecting and picking up litter.

### How BeachBot Works

The BeachBot is designed to work in the sand and coastal environment, where traditional



methods of litter removal are either labor-intensive or damaging to the ecosystem. The robot is compact and lightweight, with a design that allows it to traverse a variety of terrains.

Equipped with sensors, including cameras and object recognition technology, BeachBot is

able to identify various types of litter. This includes everything from cigarette butts and plastic bottles to larger debris like straws, wrappers, and even pieces of larger plastic. The sensors help the robot distinguish between natural objects and harmful waste, enabling it to selectively pick up unwanted materials.

Once BeachBot detects trash, it uses an automated scooping mechanism to pick it up. The

trash is then stored within the robot until it can be emptied. The design is efficient and effective.

In addition to its waste-collection, BeachBot has the potential to operate around the clock. It can work autonomously for long periods, driven by its onboard AI systems, and it can be

recharged quickly when needed. It also has the ability to work in a team with other BeachBots.

### Environmental Benefits

One of the biggest challenges when it comes to cleaning up beaches is the sheer scale. Beaches are often littered with debris from a wide range of sources, including plastic, food containers, and even harmful chemicals. The presence of such waste not only pollutes the environment but also poses significant risks to marine wildlife.

BeachBot provides a solution by offering a scalable and sustainable method for removing waste. The robot is designed to be gentle, meaning that it can clean beaches without disturbing the natural habitat. The design and lightweight materials used in the robot minimize the impact, unlike heavy machinery.

BeachBot helps prevent degradation of beaches and minimizes the impact of waste. This proactive approach is crucial in curbing the problem of marine pollution, especially given that plastics and other materials can persist for hundreds of years.

### The Future of Beach Clean-Up

BeachBot represents a glimpse into the future. This robot offers an efficient, sustainable, and scalable approach to environmental conservation. BeachBot's potential opens the door for large-scale, continuous clean-up, which could reduce the cost and labor associated with beach maintenance. The potential for robots to monitor and maintain environmental health on a global scale is limitless.

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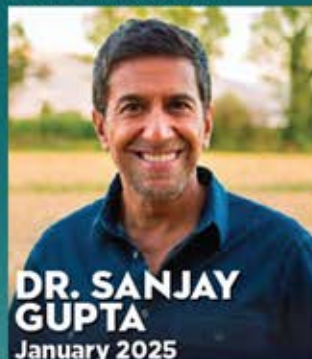
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by Michael Parker

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# SPIRITS/TASTES

## Sommeliers Pick 9 Non-Alcoholic Wines A New Era for Wine Lovers

By Contributing Writer

Non-alcoholic wines have come a long way from their humble beginnings as lackluster, overly sweet alternatives to their alcoholic counterparts. With an increasing number of consumers seeking healthier lifestyles, including those who choose to abstain from alcohol for various reasons, the demand for high-quality non-alcoholic wines has surged. Sommeliers and wine experts have embraced this shift, curating

selections that maintain the essence of traditional wines, while offering an appealing experience for those who prefer not to drink alcohol.

Here's a selection of nine non-alcoholic wines that have been highlighted by sommeliers for their exceptional quality, taste, and innovation:

### Nonino Pinot Grigio (Italy)

Nonino Pinot Grigio is a standout in the world of non-alcoholic wines. Known for its crisp acidity and fresh fruit notes, this Italian wine offers the delicate citrus, green apple, and pear flavors typical of a traditional Pinot Grigio. The wine undergoes a process called vacuum distillation, which allows for the extraction of alcohol without compromising the wine's complex flavors. Nonino Pinot Grigio is a refreshing option for those seeking a dry, aromatic white wine experience without the alcohol.



### Lussory Organic Chardonnay (Spain)

Lussory Organic Chardonnay offers a compelling experience for fans of white wines with a smooth, rich mouthfeel. This wine is crafted from organically grown grapes, ensuring that it's free of synthetic chemicals or pesticides. The flavor profile includes notes of ripe apple, melon, and a subtle hint of oak, which creates a wine that's both complex and approachable.

The balance of acidity and fruitiness makes it an excellent pairing with seafood or creamy dishes.

### Seedlip Grove 42 Non-Alcoholic White Wine (United Kingdom)

Seedlip is widely recognized for revolutionizing the non-alcoholic spirit world, and its non-alcoholic wine, Grove 42, continues this tradition of excellence. It's not technically wine, but rather an alcohol-free option that captures the essence of a white wine with its citrus-forward flavors and a touch of herbal notes. This option is ideal for those who want the brightness and refreshment of a white wine without the alcohol content. It pairs well with light fare, such as salads and grilled vegetables.

### Freixenet 0.0% Alcohol-Free Cava (Spain)

For those who enjoy sparkling wines, Freixenet 0.0% Alcohol-Free Cava is an excellent choice. Cava, Spain's answer to champagne, is known for its crisp and refreshing bubbles, and this alcohol-free version captures the effervescence and tartness of the original. The wine is crafted using the traditional method, ensuring that the fresh, lively character of the sparkling wine is preserved even without the alcohol. It's perfect for celebrating any occasion or for enjoying as an aperitif.

### Pierre Chavin 'Le Petit Chavin' Rosé (France)

Pierre Chavin's "Le Petit Chavin" Rosé is a refreshing, fruity option for those seeking a non-alcoholic wine with a lively character. This rosé features bright berry notes and a crisp, dry finish. Made using high-quality grapes from the south of France, the wine is produced using a technique that preserves its fresh fruit flavors while eliminating the alcohol. It pairs well with light dishes like salads, seafood, or grilled chicken, offering a delightful alternative to traditional rosé wines.

### Curious Elixirs #1 (United States)

Curious Elixirs #1 is an innovative non-alcoholic wine alternative that blends botanicals, fruit, and herbs to create a complex, sophisticated drink. While it's not a traditional wine in the sense of being made from fermented grapes, this creation mimics the complexity of a well-crafted wine. The infusion

includes flavors like pomegranate, hibiscus, and rose petals, creating a drink that's both aromatic and refreshing. This non-alcoholic beverage is ideal for those who are seeking something beyond conventional wine but still want a complex and nuanced drinking experience.

### Château de Calavon Non-Alcoholic Rosé (France)

Produced in the heart of Provence, Château de Calavon's non-alcoholic rosé is a beautiful option for those who love the fresh, floral notes of a Mediterranean-style wine. This wine retains the delicacy and lightness characteristic of its alcoholic counterpart, with aromas of rose petal, citrus, and subtle herbaceous undertones. The non-alcoholic version maintains the signature dry and crisp finish, making it an excellent choice for pairing with light appetizers or Mediterranean dishes.

### Noughty Non-Alcoholic Sparkling Chardonnay (United Kingdom)

For those who appreciate a bubbly, alcohol-free option, Noughty Non-Alcoholic Sparkling Chardonnay delivers an elegant, crisp experience. This wine combines the effervescence of a sparkling wine with the vibrant fruit flavors of Chardonnay grapes, resulting

in a refreshing drink that's perfect for any occasion. The clean, dry finish ensures that it pairs well with seafood, poultry, or soft cheeses. Noughty's dedication to quality makes this a top-tier non-alcoholic wine option for connoisseurs.

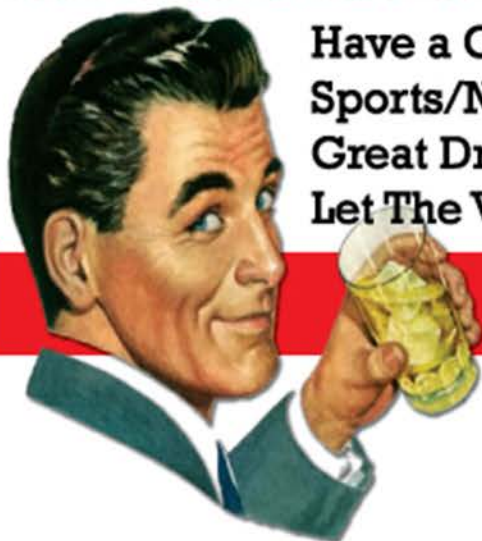
### Ariel Vineyards Non-Alcoholic Cabernet Sauvignon (United States)

Ariel Vineyards is one of the pioneers in non-alcoholic wine production, and their Non-Alcoholic Cabernet Sauvignon is a fantastic representation of what's possible in this category. With deep, rich flavors of dark fruit, blackberries, and a touch of oak, this wine provides a bold, full-bodied experience that rivals traditional Cabernet Sauvignons. It's an excellent choice for those who enjoy a robust red wine but want to avoid the alcohol content. Pair it with hearty dishes like grilled meats or pasta in a rich tomato sauce.

As the non-alcoholic wine industry continues to grow, these selections highlight the diverse and exciting possibilities that await wine enthusiasts. Whether you're abstaining from alcohol, moderating your intake, or simply looking to explore new flavors, the above nine non-alcoholic wines provide a range of options that cater to different tastes and preferences. Sommeliers and wine experts alike are excited to recommend these wines, which showcase that it's possible to enjoy a sophisticated wine experience without the alcohol.



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# THE BEST KOREAN CUISINE IN LOS ANGELES

By Contributing Writer

Los Angeles County is a culinary melting pot, offering a vast array of dining options from every corner of the world, and Korean cuisine is no exception. One dish that has captivated the hearts of many Angelenos is bibimbap — a delicious and colorful Korean rice bowl typically topped with a variety of sautéed vegetables, a fried egg, a choice of protein (often beef), and gochujang (spicy chili paste).

Known for its perfect balance of textures and flavors, bibimbap can be found all over the city, including Koreatown and the San Fernando Valley. If you're looking for the best bibimbap in Los Angeles County, here are some of the top spots to try.

**BCD Tofu House**

If you find yourself craving both hearty tofu stew and bibimbap, BCD Tofu House in Koreatown is a must-visit. Known for its specialty in soft tofu stews, BCD Tofu House offers a delicious bibimbap option that is a local favorite. The bibimbap here is served with a variety of fresh vegetables, your choice of protein (beef, chicken, or tofu), and a fried egg on top. The gochujang is tangy and spicy without being overwhelming, and the rice, which is served in a stone bowl, gets crispy on the bottom for an added layer of texture. It's a comforting dish that pairs well with their signature tofu soups.

www.bcdtofuhouse.com/los-angeles

**Chosun Galbee (Koreatown)**

For those who love Korean BBQ but also want to indulge in a satisfy-

ing bibimbap, Chosun Galbee is an excellent choice. This Koreatown institution is famous for its grilled meats, but its bibimbap deserves just as much attention. The bibimbap here comes with thinly sliced beef, sautéed vegetables, and a perfectly cooked egg. The dish is served with a side of gochujang, allowing you to adjust the spice level to your liking. The high-quality ingredients and traditional preparation make Chosun Galbee's bibimbap a must-try for any Korean food enthusiast.

www.chosungalbee.com

**Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong (Koreatown)**

Famous for its Korean BBQ, Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong also serves a fantastic bibimbap that rivals its grill offerings. This vibrant and bustling restaurant offers a bibimbap that comes with your choice of

protein (typically bulgogi beef or pork), a selection of sautéed vegetables, and a fried egg on top. The stone bowl version is the go-to for

many, as it provides a satisfying crispy layer of rice at the bottom. The dish is served with a dollop of gochujang, which adds the perfect amount of spice and umami. Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong's bibimbap is a solid choice for anyone looking for a high-quality, well-executed version of this Korean classic.

www.baekjeongkbbq.com

**Shin-Sen-Gumi (San Fernando Valley)**

For those in the San Fernando Valley, Shin-Sen-Gumi offers an excellent version of bibimbap. While the restaurant is more known for its ramen, their bibimbap should not be overlooked. The dish is made with fresh ingredients and is customizable with your choice of protein, including beef or pork. Shin-Sen-Gumi serves its bibimbap in a traditional stone bowl, allowing the rice to get crispy and adding a delightful texture to the dish. The gochujang is flavorful but not too spicy, and the balance of

ingredients makes it a hearty and satisfying meal. If you're in the Valley and craving bibimbap, this spot is worth checking out.

www.shinsengumigroup.com

**Bulgogi Hut (West LA)**

While not in the immediate area of Koreatown, Bulgogi Hut in West LA offers a stellar bibimbap worth mentioning. The restaurant offers generous portions, and the bibimbap is served with a variety of vegetables and a perfectly fried egg. The bulgogi beef, marinated and grilled to perfection, is a great addition, and the house-made gochujang adds just the right amount of heat to the dish. The flavors are well-balanced, and the crispy rice from the stone bowl adds an enjoyable textural contrast. For



those looking for a solid bibimbap in West LA, this spot is a great pick. [www.bulgogihut.com](http://www.bulgogihut.com)

Whether you're in Koreatown or the San Fernando Valley, Los Angeles offers a wide variety of places to enjoy a satisfying bowl of bibimbap. From traditional stone bowl versions to modern interpretations, these spots provide a range of flavors and textures that highlight the versatility of this beloved Korean dish. Each restaurant offers something unique, whether it's the quality of ingredients, the level of spice, or the attention to detail. For anyone craving bibimbap, these locations in Los Angeles County are some of the best places to explore.





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## The Basics Behind Beautiful Eyebrows

By Luke Ballas

When it comes to eyebrow grooming, the most popular methods are threading and waxing. Both have their own benefits and drawbacks, and the best choice depends on various factors like pain tolerance, skin type, and desired results.

### Threading: The Basics

Threading is an ancient hair removal technique that involves using a thin cotton thread, which is twisted and rolled over the skin to trap and pull out unwanted hair. It's commonly used for shaping eyebrows.

### Pros of Threading

**Precise Control:** One of the advantages of threading is the precise control. The practitioner can target individual hairs with accuracy, which is especially important when shaping eyebrows.

**Less Skin Irritation:** Because threading doesn't involve chemicals or hot substances, it tends to cause less irritation, making it a good option for people with sensitive skin.

**No Risk of Burns:** Threading doesn't use hot wax, so there's no risk of burning the skin. This makes it a safer choice.

**Great for Sensitive Areas:** Threading is preferred for shaping the delicate skin around the eyes and eyebrows. It is less likely to cause damage compared to other hair removal methods.

**Long-Lasting Results:** Threading can provide results that last longer than tweezing or shaving. You can expect the results to last 3-6 weeks.

**No Chemicals or Wax Residue:** Threading doesn't require chemicals or wax, which can leave residue on the skin. For those who prefer natural beauty treatments, threading is a great option.

### Cons of Threading

**Painful for Some People:** Threading can be painful. The process involves pulling hairs from the root, which can

cause discomfort. For people new to threading, the experience may feel more intense than waxing.

**Takes Longer Than Waxing:** Threading takes longer than waxing because each hair is pulled individually. For larger areas, this method can be time-consuming.

### Requires Skill:

Threading requires a level of expertise, and it can be difficult for beginners.

Inexperienced practitioners may not achieve the desired results, and it's recommended to go to a professional for the best results.



### Can Cause Skin Redness:

While threading causes less irritation, it can still lead to redness or slight bumps in the area treated.

### Waxing: The Basics

Waxing is another popular hair removal method. Waxing is used for larger areas of the body, but it is also effective for eyebrows.

### Pros of Waxing

#### Quick and Efficient:

One of the advantages of waxing is that it's fast. The wax can remove large patches of hair at once, which makes it ideal for those in a hurry.

It's effective to remove hair from areas like the upper lip or chin, in addition to eyebrows.

#### Long-Lasting Results:

Waxing removes

hair from the root, so results last longer than shaving or tweezing.

**Can Remove Shorter Hair:** Waxing can remove hair as short as 1/8 inch. This makes waxing great for people who may have fine or shorter hair in their eyebrows.



**Less Time-Consuming:** Waxing is generally faster than threading. The procedure can take less than 15 minutes.

**Home-Friendly:** Waxing can be done at home with DIY kits, which makes it an option for people who prefer to take care of their grooming without visiting a salon.

### Cons of Waxing

**Potential for Skin Damage:** Waxing can cause irritation or even damage the skin, particularly for sensitive skin. If the wax is too hot or technique is incorrect, it can cause burns or strip off the skin.

**Painful for Some People:** Waxing can be painful. The act of ripping off the strip can cause a sharp sting.

**Allergic Reactions:** Some may be allergic to wax, leading to redness, swelling, or bumps. If you have sensitive skin or allergies, patch-test the wax.

### Requires Regrowth Time:

Waxing requires hair to be of a certain length before it can be removed. This means you need to wait for hair to grow to the right length before scheduling your next waxing.

### Which is Better for You?

Choosing between threading and waxing comes to personal preference, skin type, and tolerance for pain. If you want precise control, less skin irritation, and a more natural approach, threading may be better. If you prefer a quick method with longer-lasting results, waxing might be the right choice.

Both methods have pros and cons, and trying each can help you determine which technique best suits your needs. Consult with a professional before making a decision.

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# Macbeth Opens February 15 At A Noise Within

By Andrew Hansen

Delve deep into the turmoil of a man fighting from a place of loss and tortured by guilt, fate and the corrupting influence of his own desires when Andi Chapman directs William Shakespeare's tragedy. Presented by acclaimed classical theater company A Noise Within, Macbeth runs February 15 - March 9 at the company's home in Pasadena. Previews begin February 9.

Set for this production against the



Julianne Chidi Hill As Lady Macbeth

backdrop of New Orleans from the late 19th century through the 1920s, Macbeth may be the Bard's most disturbing play: a tale of witches, hallucinations, ambition, power and Shakespeare's bloodiest couple. Macbeth and his wife thrash against the rise of their own consciences in a gripping psychological and political thriller that follows Macbeth's transformation

from a celebrated battlefield hero to a bloody tyrant. "Macbeth's trajectory is forged by the three weird sisters, who can see into his mind... or perhaps he is projecting his mind



Kamal Bolden As Macbeth

onto them," says Chapman. "We are inside the darkness of his heart, and the three sisters reflect that. The Macbeths, a tightly bonded couple, very much co-dependent, are reeling from the loss of a child, leaving them emotionally shattered. Their ambition and struggle for power emerge as a confrontation with their grief and a quest to secure his legacy. It is an intensely human story that I hope resonates with us all."

A cast of acclaimed A Noise Within regulars will take the stage, with Kamal Bolden starring in the title role opposite Julianne Chidi Hill as Lady M.; Ben Cain as Macduff; Mildred Marie Langford as Lady Macduff; Alex Morris as Duncan; Ned Mochel as Ross; Michael Boatman as Banquo; Randy Thompson as Malcolm; and Joy DeMichelle, Roshni Shukla and Langford as the weird sisters. The ensemble includes Noemi Avalos, Brooklyn Bao, Norman Campos, Joseph Darby, Robert De Loza, Tony Jimenez, Daniel Kim, Howard Leder, Angel Monzon, Koa Spiegel and Ahkei Togun.

The creative team includes scenic designer Stephanie Kerley Schwartz; lighting designer Andrew Schmedake; sound designer Jeff Gardner; projections designer Nicholas Santiago; costume designer Wendell C. Camichael; wig and makeup designer

Tony Valdés; and properties designer Stephen Taylor. Indira Tyler is dance choreographer; Ned Mochel is fight choreographer, and original music is composed by Dontae Winslow. Dr. Miranda Johnson-Haddad is the dramaturg; Jessica Williams is the assistant director; and Sami Hansen is the production stage manager.

One of Shakespeare's most compelling works, Macbeth is based on the story of Mac Bethad mac Findlaich, who reigned as king of Scotland.

A Noise Within has been called "an oasis for those who love classic stories" and is a leading regional producer based in Pasadena, California. Under the leadership of Elliott and Rodriguez-Elliott, the award-winning resident company is committed to representing the entire community at its state-of-the-art, 324-seat performance space. In addition to producing world-class performances of classic theater, the organization runs education programs with the goal of inspiring diverse audiences of all ages. ANW believes in working hard on its anti-racist practice across the whole organization. By interpreting its mission to fully engage audiences through community and artist-centered work in multiple creative disciplines, ANW is striving to be a theater that better serves the community.

Performances of Macbeth take place February 15 - March 9 on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., with matinees on Saturdays and Sundays at 2 p.m. Four preview performances take place on February 9 at 2 p.m., February 12, February 13, and February 14, each at 7:30 p.m.

A one-hour Insiders Discussion Group will take place prior to the matinee on February 16 beginning at 12:30 p.m. Post-performance conversations will take place every Friday (except the preview) and February 23.

Student matinees are scheduled on select weekdays at 10:30 a.m.; interested educators should email [education@anoisewithin.org](mailto:education@anoisewithin.org).

# ONSTAGE

Tickets start at \$51.50 (including fees). Student tickets start at \$20. Tickets to the previews on February 12 and February 13 will be Pay What You Choose, with tickets starting at \$10 (available online beginning at 12 p.m. the Monday prior to that performance). Discounts are available for groups of 10 or more.

A Noise Within is located at 3352 E Foothill Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107. Macbeth is recommended for mature audiences ages 14 and up. For more information and to purchase tickets, call (626) 356-3100 or go to [www.anoisewithin.org](http://www.anoisewithin.org)



Mildred Marie Langford As Lady Macduff

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## THE BEST OFF-SEASON BEACH VACATIONS

By Contributing Writer

Each vacations are often associated with summer, but off-season getaways can offer a peaceful, affordable, and enjoyable experience. Whether you're looking to escape crowds, savor lower prices, or enjoy a different atmosphere, off-season beach vacations can provide a refreshing and relaxing retreat.

### Maui, Hawaii (Late Fall and Winter)

Maui is one of Hawaii's most beautiful islands, renowned for lush landscapes, beaches, and snorkeling. While Hawaii is a popular year-round destination, the off-season offers a quieter and more affordable experience.

You'll find fewer crowds and lower accommodation rates. The island's famous beaches are less crowded, allowing for an intimate and relaxing experience. The weather is still warm, making it perfect for lounging by the ocean or enjoying water activities like snorkeling and whale watching.



### San Diego, California (Fall and Winter)

San Diego is known for pleasant weather year-round, but visiting during the off-season provides a laid-back experience. The city's beaches are less crowded during cooler months, allowing visitors to appreciate the stunning coastline.

Fall and winter temperatures remain mild, making it perfect for outdoor activities like walking along the coast, hiking, and exploring local attractions. The off-season also means more affordable hotel rates and fewer tourists.

### Amalfi Coast, Italy (Fall and Early Spring)

The Amalfi Coast, a stretch of coastline in southern Italy, is a dream destination for

beach lovers, offering dramatic cliffs, charming villages, and clear Mediterranean waters. The off-season—especially in the fall and early spring offers a serene atmosphere and lower prices.

During the off-season, the weather on the Amalfi Coast remains mild, perfect for sightseeing and strolling along the coastline. The towns of Positano, Ravello, and Amalfi are far less crowded, allowing visitors to take in picturesque views, enjoy quiet meals at local trattorias, and explore the area's historical sites. Fall months also bring the harvest season, so visitors can enjoy the region's delicious local wines, citrus fruits, and olive oils.

### Tulum, Mexico (Late Spring and Fall)

Tulum has become one of the hottest destinations, thanks to its idyllic beaches, eco-chic resorts, and vibrant culture. However, the off-season provides a quieter and more budget-friendly alternative. The weather is still warm, making it perfect for enjoying Tulum's beaches. Many beach clubs, boutique hotels, and resorts offer discounts during the off-season. Additionally, this time of year is perfect for visiting the nearby cenotes and exploring ancient Mayan ruins.

### Barbados (Late Summer and Fall)

Barbados in the Caribbean, is a dream beach destination known for crystal-clear waters, white sandy beaches, and vibrant culture. While the island is a year-round destination, the off-season offers lower prices and fewer tourists.

Though late summer and fall months coincide with hurricane season, Barbados is often spared from direct hits, making it a safe bet for an off-season vacation. The weather is still warm. The beaches, including Carlisle Bay and Crane Beach, are less crowded, allowing for peaceful sunbathing and beach activities.

Off-season beach vacations offer a unique blend of relaxation, affordability, and tranquility.

Whether you're visiting a popular destination like Maui or exploring lesser-known locales like Seychelles, traveling in the off-season provides a chance to enjoy the beauty of the

beach without the overwhelming crowds and high prices of peak season. With warm weather, lower accommodation costs, and an overall more peaceful atmosphere, off-season beach getaways are the perfect way to unwind and experience some of the world's most stunning coastal destinations.



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# CONAN O'BRIEN TO HOST THE 2025 OSCARS WHAT TO EXPECT

By Alex Gordan

The announcement that Conan O'Brien will host the 2025 Academy Awards has sent waves of excitement throughout the entertainment world. O'Brien, known for quick wit, sharp humor, and an established track record of hosting high-profile events, is stepping into one of the most coveted—and scrutinized—positions. With his style,

it's natural to wonder how he will shape up. We'll explore what Conan O'Brien's hosting style brings to the table, what audiences can expect, and how this choice could impact the Oscars telecast.

## Conan O'Brien's Signature Style

Conan O'Brien has long been celebrated for his eccentric and unconventional comedic style. From his tenure as the host of Late Night with Conan O'Brien (1993–2009) to The Tonight Show (2009–2010), and his podcast Conan O'Brien Needs a Friend, Conan has cultivated a reputation for being a master of absurdist humor, self-deprecation, and surreal sketches.

While O'Brien's humor can be irreverent, it has always been sharp and intelligent, appealing to a broad demographic. His ability to balance slapstick with smart wordplay and clever cultural references has earned him a loyal fanbase. This mix of accessibility and sophistication could be precisely what the Academy needs to rejuvenate the Oscars.

## Injecting Energy Into a Stale Formula

The Oscars have faced criticism for being formulaic and out of touch with the current entertainment landscape. Viewership has been on the decline, with some critics arguing the show has become stale. In this context, Conan O'Brien's appointment offers a refreshing shift. Known for his

high-energy, fast-paced comedic delivery, O'Brien could inject the Oscars with vitality.

One of Conan's trademarks is his ability to keep an audience engaged through funny yet oddly charming bits. His playful banter and willingness to embrace the absurdity of celebrity culture—whether through sketches or interactions with stars—could help break the tension often associated with the high-stakes nature of the Academy Awards. The result could be a show that feels more vibrant and less rehearsed.

## Breaking Boundaries with Pop Culture References

O'Brien's involvement in pop culture, along with his knack for staying current, will be a key asset in modernizing the Oscars. His ability to reference latest viral trends, meme-worthy moments, and hot-button cultural topics will resonate with a younger audience—many of whom might otherwise be less engaged with a traditional awards show. Conan's comedic voice has always been attuned to the pulse of the cultural moment, and this will help the Oscars remain relevant.

Expect Conan to pepper the broadcast with tongue-in-cheek references to popular TV shows, movies, and viral moments that dominated the conversation in the year leading up to the ceremony. Given his love for poking fun, he could also take jabs at the industry itself, lampooning the sometimes bloated and self-important nature of awards ceremonies.

## Engaging the Stars

One of Conan's talents is his ability to interact with celebrities in a way that feels both casual and comedic, while never crossing the line.

His famous "Conan Without Borders" segments—where he's traveled around the world interacting with local cultures—showcase his adaptability and willingness to engage with others in a genuinely humorous yet respectful way. At the Oscars, this means that while he will undoubtedly poke fun, he will do so with warmth and respect.

Moreover, Conan's relationships with many stars in Hollywood—having spent decades working with top-tier talent—could result in memorable moments with A-list presenters, nominees, and performers. Imagine the back-and-forth banter between Conan and the likes of Meryl Streep or Leonardo DiCaprio, or even a playful impromptu sketch featuring Hollywood legends. By striking the balance between comedy and camaraderie, Conan could foster a sense of unity and fun that would make the event feel less like a formal awards ceremony and more like a celebration of creativity and talent.



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## GENTLE YOGA POSES TO FIGHT LOWER BACK ACHES AND PAINS

By Angela Walk

Lower back tension is common that affects people of all ages and activity levels. The discomfort can significantly impact life. Gentle yoga poses can be effective in relieving this tension, promoting relaxation, and improving flexibility and strength. By focusing on gentle movements, stretching, and breathing, these yoga poses can help release tight muscles and reduce pain.

### Child's Pose (Balasana)

Child's Pose is one of the most restful yoga poses. It stretches the spine,

hips, and thighs, helping to release tightness in the lower back. The key is to allow the body to relax into the stretch.



How to do it: Start on your hands and knees in tabletop position. Bring your big toes together and separate your knees. Lower your hips back toward your heels, stretching your arms forward on the mat and focus on deep breathing. Hold the position for 30 seconds to a few minutes.

Benefits: This pose helps to stretch and lengthen the lower back, easing muscle tension. It calms the mind and reduces stress.

### Cat-Cow Pose (Marjaryasana-Bitilasana)

Cat-Cow Pose helps to increase mobility in the spine and loosen muscles in the back. By moving between flexion and extension, this sequence massages the spine and encourages fluid movement.



How to do it: Start in tabletop position with your hands beneath your shoulders and knees under your hips. On an inhale, arch your back, drop your belly, and lift your head and tailbone. On an exhale, round your back, tuck your chin toward your chest, and pull your belly button toward your spine. Continue moving between these two poses for 5-10 rounds, linking to your breath.

Benefits: This helps to warm up the spine, release tension in the lower back, and promote better posture. The movements encourage spinal flexibility and mobility.

### Seated Forward Fold (Paschimottasana)

Seated Forward Fold is a gentle stretch that targets hamstrings and the lower back. By folding forward at the hips, you encourage the release of tightness in the lower back and lengthen the spine.



How to do it: Sit with your legs extended in front of you. Flex your feet and engage your thighs. Inhale to lengthen your spine, and as you exhale, hinge at your hips and fold forward, reaching for your feet, ankles, or shins. Keep your back long and avoid rounding your

spine. Hold for 30 seconds to a minute.

Benefits: This pose stretches the hamstrings and lower back, which can often become tight and contribute to lower back discomfort.

### Reclining Bound Angle Pose (Supta Baddha Konasana)

Reclining Bound Angle Pose is a restorative pose that opens up the hips and release tension in the lower back. This pose is particularly beneficial for individuals who experience tightness due to sitting for extended periods.

How to do it: Lie on your back and bring the soles of your feet together, allowing your knees to drop open to the sides. Place your hands on your belly or by your sides with palms facing up. Let your spine and pelvis relax into the ground, allowing the weight of your legs to gently stretch the inner thighs and lower back. Hold for 1-3 minutes, focusing on deep breathing and relaxation.

Benefits: This pose opens the hips and stretches the groin, which can alleviate tension in the lower back.

### Bridge Pose (Setu Bandhasana)

Bridge Pose is a gentle backbend that strengthens the lower back and glutes while also stretching hips and spine. It can help alleviate tension in the lower back by promoting better alignment and mobility in the pelvis.

How to do it: Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor, hip-width apart. Press your feet into the ground and lift your hips toward the ceiling. Keep your arms by your sides with palms facing down. Engage your glutes and lower back muscles to lift your hips, and avoid arching your neck. Hold for 20-30 seconds and lower back down gently.

Benefits: Bridge Pose strengthens the lower back, glutes, and hamstrings, which helps to improve posture and reduce tension in the lower back. It also stretches the chest and hip flexors, which can become tight from prolonged sitting.

Gentle yoga poses can be incredibly effective. Incorporating poses into your routine can help release tight muscles, improve flexibility, and reduce pain. By practicing these gentle stretches regularly and focusing on deep breathing, you can help alleviate lower back discomfort and support long-term spinal health.

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## Birdify's Smart Birdbath

A Solar-Powered Fountain To Attract Avian Friends

By Contributing Writer

As the desire for sustainable, eco-friendly products grows, companies continue to design new items that serve a practical function but also enhance our connection with nature. One such is Birdify's Smart Birdbath, which features a solar-powered fountain designed to attract birds while promoting environmental consciousness. By combining modern technology with the beauty of nature, this birdbath offers an interactive and sustainable way to bring birds into your outdoor space.

**The Concept Behind Birdify's Smart Birdbath**

Birdify's Smart Birdbath is more than a place for birds to drink and bathe; it is a thoughtfully designed product that appeals to birdwatchers and garden enthusiasts. The primary feature is its solar-powered fountain, which circulates water in the basin. This movement of water acts as an inviting signal to local birds, encouraging them to visit.

The fountain uses solar panels to generate energy, which powers a pump to create a flow of water. This means the birdbath operates completely off the grid, making it both energy-efficient and environmentally friendly. Additionally, solar-powered systems are low-maintenance, meaning the fountain will continue to work for hours as long as there is sufficient sunlight.

**Benefits of a Solar-Powered Fountain**

One of the main advantages of having a fountain in your birdbath is that moving water attracts birds. In nature, birds are more likely to be drawn to water sources that are moving because they are less likely to be contaminated by stagnation. Birds instinctively seek out clean water, and a bubbling fountain gives them just that. Whether it's songbirds, robins, sparrows, or hummingbirds, a solar-powered

ered fountain provides a constant, appealing water source.

### Encouraging Natural Bird Behavior:

A birdbath with running water encourages a wider range of bird activities, such as drinking, bathing, and even preening. Bathing in water helps birds maintain healthy feathers, which are vital for flight and insulation. With the moving water in Birdify's smart birdbath, birds are more likely to stay around for longer periods of time, giving you the opportunity to enjoy their natural behaviors.

### Sustainable and Eco-Friendly Design:

Solar power is one of the most sustainable energy sources. Birdify's smart birdbath takes full advantage by utilizing solar energy to power the fountain. Solar panels on the birdbath absorb sunlight, converting it into electrical energy that powers the pump.

This eliminates the need for batteries or electrical outlets, reducing the carbon footprint. Additionally, the solar-powered system ensures that no electricity is wasted, making the birdbath a green addition to any outdoor space.

**Low Maintenance:** Traditional birdbaths often require regular maintenance, from refilling water to cleaning

out debris. Birdify's smart birdbath reduces the need for constant upkeep due to its self-circulating water system. The solar-powered pump circulates water continuously, keeping it fresh and reducing



the likelihood of it becoming stagnant. The birdbath's design also includes easy-to-remove components for cleaning.

**All-Weather Durability:** Built to withstand elements, Birdify's smart birdbath is made of high-quality materials. The birdbath is designed to stay in excellent condition year-round.

### Aesthetic Appeal and Garden Integration

Beyond functional features, Birdify's smart birdbath is designed to seamlessly integrate into any outdoor environment. With its elegant, modern design, the birdbath complements a variety of garden aesthetics, whether you prefer a sleek, minimalist look or a more rustic, traditional style.

The birdbath's solar-powered fountain not only attracts birds but

also adds a beautiful visual element to your yard. The flowing water and the shimmering sunlight create a soothing, tranquil atmosphere. It acts as both a functional bird habitat and a stylish focal point.

**Why Choose Birdify's Smart Birdbath?**

By using solar power, the birdbath reduces the need for traditional energy sources.

**Enhances Wildlife Habitats:** This birdbath provides a resource for birds, especially in urban areas or during dry seasons.

**Low Maintenance, High Reward:** The self-circulating system and solar-powered pump make it easy to enjoy the benefits of a birdbath without upkeep.

**Attractive and Soothing:** The flowing water and natural beauty of birds enhances the outdoor experience.

Birdify's Smart Birdbath is a perfect example of how technology and nature can harmoniously coexist. It makes enjoying wildlife easier than ever.



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# THE MOST EXPENSIVE NFL COLLECTIBLES

By Monica Simone

**T**he National Football League (NFL) is home to iconic athletes, historic moments, and record-breaking achievements. For fans and collectors, memorabilia connected to the NFL offers an invaluable connection to the game. These collectibles, ranging from jerseys to autographed footballs and game-worn equipment, have become sought after, with some fetching extraordinary prices. **Tom Brady's 2000 Playoff Contenders Rookie Card**

One of the most celebrated and expensive pieces of memorabilia is Tom Brady's 2000 Playoff Contenders rookie card. Known as the "Holy Grail" of Brady cards, this card features an on-card autograph from the seven-time Super Bowl champion. In 2021,

a Brady rookie card in pristine condition sold for \$3.1 million, making it the most expensive football card ever sold at the time.

Brady's legacy plays a significant role in the card's value.

His achievements, including

numerous

Super Bowl

victories

and MVP awards, have

cemented his place in history.

Additionally, the card's rarity and

demand drives up its worth. The Playoff Contenders rookie card is especially

coveted due to its limited print run.

**The "Immaculate Reception" Football**

The football used in Franco Harris's "Immaculate Reception" is one of the most famous pieces of NFL memorabilia. Harris's iconic play, which took place during a 1972 playoff game between the Pittsburgh Steelers and the Oakland Raiders, is widely regarded as one of the greatest plays in NFL history.



The ball that was used was sold at auction in 2022 for \$2.5 million.

What makes this football so valuable is the its historical significance, the rarity of game-used memorabilia, and the fact that it was directly involved in one of the most memorable moments in NFL lore.

**Super Bowl I Championship Ring – Green**

**Bay Packers**

Super Bowl I

marked the beginning of the NFL's modern era. The first-ever Super Bowl ring, awarded to a player from the Green Bay Packers after their victory over the Kansas City Chiefs in 1967, holds immense value.

In 2017, a Super Bowl I ring owned by former Packers player Jerry Kramer was sold at auction for \$125,000.

The rarity of the ring—the first of its kind—and its connection to the Packers' historical dominance, particularly under head coach Vince Lombardi, contribute to its value. Super Bowl rings have long been coveted by collectors, with rings from early Super Bowls generally commanding much higher prices due to their rarity and significance.

**Peyton Manning's Game-Worn 2006 MVP Jersey**

Peyton Manning's 2006 season was one of the most impressive of his career. Manning not only led the Indianapolis Colts to a Super Bowl XLI victory, but he was also awarded the NFL MVP for his performance. His game-worn jersey from the 2006 campaign sold at auction in 2021 for \$631,000.

The combination of Manning's legendary status and the significance of this jersey, which represents his MVP season and the Colts' first Super Bowl win in over three decades, contributes to its high value. Game-worn jerseys, particularly those worn by iconic players like Manning, are highly coveted by collectors due to their tangible connection to some of the NFL's most memorable moments.

**Brett Favre's 1997 NFC Championship Ring**

Brett Favre, another NFL legend, led the Green Bay Packers to victory in the 1997 NFC Champi-

onship, a win that secured their place in Super Bowl XXXII. Favre's personal NFC Championship ring from this victory fetched \$187,000 at auction in 2018.

Favre's impact on the NFL is undeniable, with his record-breaking career and longevity cementing him as one of the greatest quarterbacks in league history. The rarity of championship rings, as well as the emotional significance of owning a piece of the career of such an influential player, contributes to the price tags of these items.

**Jim Brown's 1964 Cleveland Browns Game-Worn Jersey**

Jim Brown is widely considered one of the greatest running backs in NFL history. His dominance on the field and his influence off it make his memorabilia highly sought after. One of the most expensive pieces of Brown's memorabilia

is his game-worn jersey from the 1964 season, which sold for \$110,000 in 2021.

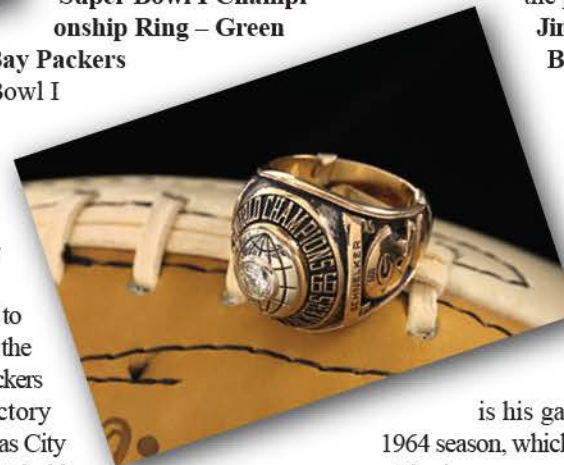
The jersey represents not only Brown's legendary career but also his role in the Cleveland Browns' 1964 NFL Championship victory, a moment that remains one of the franchise's proudest. As one of the most iconic players of his era, Brown's game-worn items are highly valued by collectors seeking to own a piece of NFL history.

**The Football from the "Deflategate" Incident**

In 2015, the NFL was rocked by the "Deflategate" scandal, in which New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady was accused of deflating footballs during the AFC Championship game. Although the controversy resulted in a suspension for Brady, the footballs involved in the incident became a unique piece of NFL lore.

In 2021, one of the footballs allegedly used in the "Deflategate" incident was sold for over \$200,000. The controversy surrounding the footballs only added to their mystique and value, and for collectors, the story behind the ball made it an intriguing piece of NFL history.

NFL collectibles hold a unique place in sports memorabilia, with certain items achieving extraordinary prices at auction due to their rarity, historical significance, and connection to legendary athletes and iconic moments. From Tom Brady's rookie card to the football from Franco Harris's "Immaculate Reception," these items are more than just physical objects—they represent passion, dedication, and history of the NFL itself. Whether you're a seasoned collector or a casual fan, these pieces are a testament to the enduring legacy of the game.



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# Turning Your Bathroom Into A Luxurious Lounge

By Contributing Writer



**B**athroom lounges have emerged as a new trend, particularly among those looking to elevate their bathrooms into spaces of relaxation and indulgence. Combining the functionality of a bathroom with the comfort of a living area, bathroom lounges feature cozy seating, plush furniture, ambient lighting, and even entertainment options, allowing homeowners to enjoy their baths or showers in a whole new way. But as this trend gains popularity, the question remains: are bathroom lounges worth the investment? **What Is a Bathroom Lounge?**

A bathroom lounge goes beyond the traditional setup of a bathroom. While bathrooms are primarily designed for hygiene, bathroom lounges aim to create a space where relaxation and self-care are the main focus. In these areas, you might find deep soaking tubs with reclining chairs nearby, soft armchairs or benches for lounging while you enjoy a bath, and calming decor such as candles, plants, or even artwork. The idea is to transform your bathroom into a luxurious retreat, turning it into a mini spa or a tranquil space for unwinding after a long day.

In some bathroom lounges, you might even see features like heated floors, massage chairs, mood lighting, and even televisions or sound systems for entertainment. Essentially, it's about reimagining the bathroom as not only a functional space but also a sanctuary where you can relax, recharge, and indulge in a bit of luxury. **Why Are Bathroom Lounges Becoming Popular?**

The growing popularity of bathroom lounges can be attributed to several factors. First and foremost, people are increasingly prioritizing wellness and self-care. The global wellness industry is booming, and with more individuals recognizing the importance of mental health and relaxation, creating a spa-like experience at home is seen as a way to invest in personal well-being. Bathing, in particular, has long been a ritual for relaxation, and by expanding the bathroom experience into a full-fledged lounging area, homeowners can elevate that experience even further.

Another reason bathroom lounges are taking off is the rise in home renovations and luxury home features. With many homeowners choosing to stay in their current properties longer, they are looking for ways to make their living spaces more comfort-

able, personalized, and enjoyable. Since bathrooms are often small spaces, creating a comfortable lounge area within them may seem like a clever way to add a bit of luxury and functionality without needing to expand or redesign large portions of the home.

Finally, social media platforms like Instagram and Pinterest have helped fuel the trend. As bathroom lounges are typically designed to be visually appealing, they lend themselves well to being photographed and shared online. For many homeowners, showcasing their lavish bathrooms is another way to demonstrate their sense of style and sophistication. **What Are the Benefits of a Bathroom Lounge?**

**Ultimate Relaxation:** A bathroom lounge offers the opportunity to unwind in a serene and private space. With seating areas and soothing decor, it's easy to turn a quick bath into an extended self-care session. This can be a great way to de-stress after a busy day, encouraging a sense of calm and relaxation.

**Increased Home Value:** High-end bathroom remodels, including bathroom lounges, can increase the value of your home. Luxurious features like heated floors, deep tubs, and stylish furnishings can appeal to potential buyers, particularly those who enjoy spending time at home. For those looking to make a long-term investment, a bathroom lounge could be an appealing upgrade.

**Personalized Space:** A bathroom lounge can be tailored to reflect your personal style. Whether you prefer a minimalist, zen-inspired space or something more glamorous with rich fabrics and plush seating, the versatility of bathroom lounges allows you to design a space that feels like your own private retreat.

**Increased Comfort:** Having a designated lounge area in the bathroom means you don't have to rush through your bath or shower. You can sit back, relax, and enjoy the experience for as long as you want, whether that's through reading a book, listening to music, or just soaking in the calm ambiance.

**Are Bathroom Lounges Worth the Investment?**

While bathroom lounges may seem luxurious, they aren't necessarily practical. For one, not every bathroom is suitable for this transformation. Many bathrooms are too small to accommodate seating or additional furniture without feeling cramped. In these cases, investing in a bathroom lounge may not be the most sensible use of space.

Another consideration is the cost. Bathroom lounges often require high-end furniture, quality materials, and additional features



like ambient lighting or massage chairs, which can be expensive to install and maintain. The initial cost of creating a bathroom lounge, in terms of both construction and design, can quickly add up, and not everyone may find the benefits worth the price tag.

For those with limited space or budget, the idea of a bathroom lounge might be less appealing. A simpler spa-inspired bathroom, with a luxurious tub, shower, and thoughtful design, may offer similar relaxation benefits without the need for a full lounge area. Alternatively, focusing on creating a relaxing atmosphere with candles, soothing music, or a heated towel rack could deliver a similar sense of comfort and tranquility.

Bathroom lounges are undoubtedly a stylish and appealing trend, catering to those who prioritize wellness, relaxation, and luxury. They can offer a serene space to unwind and enhance the bath experience, and they may increase the value of a home when done right. However, for many people, the cost and space limitations make bathroom lounges an impractical



option. For those with the means and space to spare, these lavish retreats can certainly enhance the bathing experience, but for others, simpler upgrades may offer the same benefits without the hefty investment. Ultimately, whether a bathroom lounge is worth it depends on personal preference, budget, and how much value you place on a high-end bathroom experience.

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Magnus Carlsen, 34, the No. 1 chess player in the world, dropped out of the Fide World Rapid and Blitz Chess Championship in New York on Dec. 27 because he didn't want to change out of his blue jeans, Sky News reported. Officials said he had broken the dress code; Carlsen wasn't moved. "I didn't even think about it. ... They said I could (change) after the third round today. I said, 'I'll change tomorrow if that's OK' ... but they said, 'Well you have to change now.' At that point it became a matter of principle for me." Carlsen said he'd head somewhere with better weather.

A Florida family got just what they wanted for Christmas when they answered a 2:30 a.m. doorbell ring on Christmas Eve to find their missing dog. Brooke Comer, a Green Cove Springs resident whose 4-year-old German shepherd, Athena, went missing on Dec. 15, spent the ensuing nine days receiving tips from neighbors and people in nearby towns about Athena sightings, but the frustrated family would always arrive too late, NEWS10 ABC reported. After several heartbreaking near-misses and with Christmas just one day away, Comer received an early morning notification from her Ring doorbell. "I was kind of like in a daze, and the dog was barking, and as soon as I heard that ring, I looked at my phone and you could see in the video it was Athena and she was jumping at the door, ringing the doorbell," Comer said. Athena seemed no worse for the wear after her journey, but will receive a full exam (and a microchip) soon.

A shark caught in the net of a fisherman is nothing new, but when it's the first Lego shark find since a cargo ship lost its load of nearly 5 million pieces at sea 27 years ago, the news makes waves. The BBC reported on Dec. 28 that hundreds of pieces from the Tokyo Express cargo ship have been recovered this year; the ship was hit by an unexpected wave on Feb. 13, 1997, and lost 62 shipping containers some 20 miles off Land's End, England. Since then, the BBC reports that the pieces have been washing ashore in southwest England, the Channel Islands, Wales, Ireland and even the Netherlands and Norway, but the shark find in August by fisherman Richard West, 35, of Plymouth, England, was the first of the 22,200 dark gray and 29,600 light gray Lego sharks lost in the incident. "The sharks sink, which explains why so few have been found," said Tracey Williams of the Lego Lost at Sea project. "There are probably some

50,000-plus still lying on the seabed, some making their way ashore, others heading into deeper waters."

In early November, Emily James, 27, of Kansas City, Missouri, underwent a most unusual and expensive (\$17,000) body-altering surgery, the New York Post reported. The trans woman had six ribs removed from her ribcage in order to achieve a smaller waist. The recovery gave her plenty of time to think about what she wanted to do with those extra ribs -- yes, the hospital gave them to her -- and her options seemed limitless: Make them into dog toys, boil them down for broth, have an "Emily barbecue." But eschewing all the cannibalistic notions, James has come up with the perfect project: "I plan on having someone make a crown and, like, incorporate my bone pieces in there," she said. "Getting my ribs removed doesn't change the fact that I'm a kind, loving trans girl. It's my money, my body and I'm going to do what I want with it." Yas queen.

A 12-year-old boy from Grand Traverse County in Michigan was charged with joy riding, operating a motor vehicle without a license, carrying a concealed weapon and possession of marijuana on Jan. 12, MLive.com reported. The boy's parents contacted the county sheriff when they realized their 2000 Chevy Blazer was missing, saying their son had taken it. They had tracked his progress south into Clare County, where deputies were alerted to be on the lookout. By the time he was stopped, he had driven more than 90 miles; officers found a 12-gauge pump-action shotgun and ammunition, along with a little weed, but said there was no indication that he planned to use the gun. He did tell deputies he was unhappy at home.

San Mateo, California, police arrested a Kentucky man early on the morning of Jan. 12 for a suspected hit-and-run incident, CBS News reported. Frank Falcone, 62, told officers that he was driving northbound on Pacific Boulevard when a southbound car came toward him with its high beams on. The lights disturbed Falcone "because of the brightness and potential radiation," he said, so he rammed the other car. When it stopped, he allegedly rammed it two more times. Falcone fled the scene and told officers he evaded them because people impersonate cops. He was arrested on suspicion of assault with a deadly weapon.

Crossword by Myles Mellor

Print this Page! Ctrl + P

- Across
- 1. 2012 US Open winner, Simpson
  - 5. Last word of "America, the Beautiful"
  - 8. Way off
  - 12. Seaweed gelatin
  - 13. Prone
  - 14. Drift
  - 15. Needled
  - 16. Bag thickness
  - 17. Urged a right turn
  - 18. Popular salad ingredient
  - 21. Distress call
  - 24. Safe places
  - 28. Sight reported
  - 29. Hot drink
  - 31. Experiences
  - 32. Offensive
  - 34. Pigment
  - 36. Looks at
  - 37. Lowest moldings
  - 39. Relative of an ostrich
  - 41. Prior prefix
  - 42. Thing referred to
  - 44. Burst in
  - 46. Absolute rule
  - 48. Not for
  - 51. Top race car driver
  - 52. Pull
  - 56. Tinted
  - 57. Lodging
  - 58. French currency
  - 59. Cutting the mustard
  - 60. Give leave
  - 61. Raise a stink

- Down
- 1. "\_\_\_ and Peace", Tolstoy
  - 2. Vanity
  - 3. No longer edible
  - 4. Moolah
  - 5. Siberian breed
  - 6. Kind of proportions
  - 7. Book with legends
  - 8. Region of France
  - 9. Enemy
  - 10. Penn. is one
  - 11. Singers, Simply \_\_\_
  - 19. Wine barrel
  - 20. E. Indies transportation relay
  - 21. Muslim scholar
  - 22. Happening
  - 23. Complimentary close

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56					57				58			
59					60				61			

- 25. SA aquatic rodent
- 26. Dweeb
- 27. Positive attribute
- 30. Affirmative vote
- 33. It moves in the direction of the wind
- 35. Famous
- 38. "Rocky" actor
- 40. Large vase
- 43. Slight
- 45. Golf's \_\_\_ Cup
- 47. Clearasil target
- 48. Exclamation of mockery
- 49. Center
- 50. Rolodex no.
- 53. Repent
- 54. "Chances \_\_\_"
- 55. Used by Chinese cooks

Bad Dad Jokes

"I thought the dryer was shrinking my clothes. Turns out it was the refrigerator all along."



Previous Puzzle

1	J	O	3	N	4	C	I	R	7	C	8	A		9	I	10	L	11
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			18	M	E	19	A	N		20	E	V	A	21	D	E		
					22	N	U	R	S	E		24	I	R	25	K		
26	G	A	27	G	G	L	E	S			29	M	A	C	E		30	R
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42	P	R	O			44	U	S	U	R	P			46	L	A	B	
48	H	I	S			49	T	I	D	A	L			50	I	L	O	
51	D	O	T			52	E	N	E	M	Y			53	O	F	T	





# Before and After School & Winter Programs



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**Join Discovery Cube Los Angeles for Camp Discovery** as you travel beyond the classroom to explore and engage in fun, hands-on science. Campers will take a walk on the wild side during Curious about Creatures, which features animals from prehistoric past to present. Kids will go out of this world during our Space camp, as they explore "strange new worlds" through space crafts, engineering

and experiments. In World of Motion, campers will explore the exciting principles of physics and motion as they experiment with racecars & build flying machines. In California STEAMin' campers will engineer their own solutions to real-world problems. t: (714) 263-3837 w: <http://www.discovery-cube.org>

**SVCAC's Young Artists Playground (YAP) Youth Arts Education Program** features interactive arts workshops and camps for youth ages 5-14 years old. YAP is dedicated to enriching the lives of local youth through quality arts education and performance based programs. YAP builds visual and performing arts skills through programs that foster confidence, compassion and resilience in students of all abilities. We offer opportunities for youth to develop and share their creative voices. For more information contact: Stephanie Lesh at 818-601-0582

**Destination Science** is a warm, wonderful science camp where kids feel comfortable making connections with others! Parents tell us that their child loves that everyone at camp shares the idea that it is cool to be smart! Multiple locations: [destinationsscience.org](http://destinationsscience.org) 888-909-2822 Enrollment special until March 1, call today!

## Mind Crafters - West Hills

The future for our children is now, and there's no time to waste. Mind Crafters Mission is to bring STEM knowledge to kids, as early as possible. Grasping these concepts at an early age guarantee "OWNING THE FUTURE". Programs combine expert instruction, hands-on learning, and real world tools. As a result, they're interactive, engaging, and effective. And most important, kids genuinely enjoy them. Call Today (747) 263 0821

## YMCA West Valley Before and After School Programs

The Y makes the most of your child's before and after school time by offering active learning opportunities designed to engage and expand their growing minds. [afterschool@ymcaLA.org](mailto:afterschool@ymcaLA.org).

## Teenage Drama Workshop (TADW) TADW 2024 Registration IS NOW OPEN

**Dates: June 13-July 26, 2024**  
**Ages: 12-18** TADW is a conservatory-style program at CSUN. Our goal is to teach teens ages 11-18 about the theatre arts. Join us for our 65th summer, which will culminate with SPONGEBOB THE MUSICAL

## Kol Tikvah Youth Groups and Teen Programs

Temple Kol Tikvah provides numerous extraordinary youth programs for our students in Kindergarten through 12th grades. Creating friendships, strengthening Jewish identity, developing leadership, and communication skills, while also having fun. Now enrolling for Sunday Hebrew School Call 818.348.0670 x209

**After School Conservatory** is a music based program located on Ventura Blvd. near the border of Woodland Hills and Calabasas. We are conveniently located near Woodlake elementary, Woodland Hills elementary, Calabash charter academy, Hale charter academy,

El Camino high school and many more. After School Conservatory has a spacious facility (over 3000 SF) and is equipped with top-notch quality musical instruments including Schimmel and Kawai grand pianos, Roland TD 17 series electronic drum set and the Yamaha LC4 music lab system with 8 Yamaha P-45 digital pianos for a group piano teaching environment. (818) 436-2675

## Star Galaxy- Academic, Homework lab, Sports

STAR Galaxy offers a balance of academic support, enrichment classes, fitness and recreation programs as well as special events on campus, community events and activities. It's a recipe for a balanced childhood and a preparation for future success! STAR Galaxy offers a daily dose of scheduled classes, August through June, from the end of the school day until 6 PM. Students rotate through group tutoring, homework lab, sports/fitness/recreation. [registration@starinc.org](mailto:registration@starinc.org)

## LeXT Robo Academy

LeXT Robo Academy uses LEGO education concepts and curriculum to provide a hands-on learning experience and fun environment for our students while developing their skills in science, technology engineering, robotics, coding and mathematics. Our robotics program covers all age groups from 3 to 18+ students. Agoura Hills: (818)-699-2388

**The Leonis Adobe Museum** is announcing its annual summer program, Lil Ranchers, Tuesdays from 7/11 - 8/8 between 9:30 am - 11:30 am. Enjoy a different theme and activities each week! Leonis Adobe Museum 23537 Calabasas Road Calabasas, California 91302 Phone: (818) 222-6511 Members are free or \$8 for non-members.

## Camp Woodland Hills

2025 Program includes NATURE CENTER With Live Animals GAME ROOMS - The game rooms include Wii systems, Xbox 360s, computers, iPads, pool tables, air hockey, Foosball, and more. For Adventure Camp, there are basketball, gaga, and handball courts and playing fields for soccer and volleyball. Junior and Explorer Camps enjoy a tree-shaded playground pools and swimming as well. For more information or to register call (818) 348-6563

## Golden Performing Arts Center After School Programs

- a non-profit organization that offers children, teens, and young adults, ages 6-22, the opportunity to experience exhilarating feelings of success, belonging, pride and accomplishment by working together as a theatre family and presenting a Broadway-style musical production. Established in Canoga Park in 1985 for the purpose of building self-esteem in young people through the performing arts. Each workshop is designed to build confidence, skills, and lasting friendships in an environment of mutual respect, acceptance, and encouragement. Workshops are presented in the spring, summer, and fall. <https://www.goldenpac.org/> Now in a brand new location!

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## TEEN DRIVING STATISTICS: A DEEP DIVE INTO THE RISKS AND REALITIES

By Samuel Deanno

teenagers are more likely to engage in risky behavior due to the overactive limbic system—the part of the brain responsible for emotions and reward processing—while the prefrontal cortex is still maturing.



### Factors Contributing to Teen Driving Accidents

Several factors contribute to higher incidence of accidents among teen drivers, including distractions, alcohol and drug use, and a lack of seat belt use.

**Distractions:** Distracted driving is a leading cause of accidents, but it is particularly dangerous for teens. According to the CDC, in one year, 39% of high school students reported texting or emailing while driving. Distractions like texting, talking on the phone, or using in-car entertainment systems take a teen's attention away from the road.

**Alcohol and Drugs:** Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is a significant factor in teen crashes. In 2021, nearly one in five teen drivers involved in fatal crashes had been drinking, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA). Furthermore, the use of marijuana and other substances is rising among teens, and impaired driving increases the likelihood of accidents by slowing reaction times, impairing judgment, and reducing coordination.

**Seat Belt Use:** Despite the proven safety benefits of seat belts, teens are less likely to wear them consistently. In one year, around 43% of teen drivers and passengers who were killed in car crashes were not wearing seat belts. Seat belt use is particularly low in areas where teens are driving with passengers, especially other young passengers, which increases the risk of fatal crashes due to distracted driving or poor decision-making.

**The Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) System: A Lifesaver for Teens**

To address the risks associated with teen driving, many states have implemented a Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) system. The GDL system phases in driving privileges, starting with a learner's permit, followed by a restricted intermediate license, and eventually an unrestricted full license. The goal of GDL is to limit high-risk situations,



such as driving at night or with passengers, during the early years of a teen's driving experience.

Research indicates that the GDL system has been effective in reducing teen fatalities. According to the IIHS, states with strong GDL laws have seen a 20% reduction in teen crashes compared to states without such laws. For example, many GDL programs impose curfews or limit the number of passengers a teen can carry, both of which significantly reduce the likelihood of a fatal crash.

### How Parents Can Help: Education and Supervision

Parents play a critical role in shaping safe driving habits for their teens. Research shows that teens whose parents are actively involved in their driving experience are less likely to engage

in risky behaviors behind the wheel. Here are a few steps parents can take to reduce the risks:

**Set Clear Expectations:** Talk to teens about the dangers of distracted driving, alcohol and drug use, and speeding. Establish rules for when and how they can drive, such as curfews, limitations on passengers, and no use of phones while driving.

**Model Safe Driving:** Set a good example by always wearing a seat belt, obeying traffic laws, and driving without distractions. Teens are more likely to follow safety guidelines when they see their parents practicing them.

**Practice Supervised Driving:** Provide plenty of opportunities for supervised practice, especially during high-risk driving situations like night driving, rainy weather, or driving on highways. The more experience teens gain under safe conditions, the more confident and competent they will become as drivers.

Teen driving presents significant risks, but with the right education, supervision, and adherence to safety measures, many of these risks can be minimized. The statistics are sobering, but they also highlight the importance of focused intervention at home, in schools, and at the policy level. As we continue to educate young drivers and implement laws to curb risky driving behavior, there's hope that we can reduce the number of teen driving fatalities and ensure that the road to independence is a safe one.

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# Meet California's Most Imaginative, Bizarre, And Creative Playgrounds

By Lee Mador

California is renowned for sunshine, sprawling beaches, and iconic landmarks, but it's also home to some of the most inventive and unusual playgrounds. From futuristic structures to whimsical designs, these playgrounds push the boundaries of what play can be.

## The Adventure Playground in Berkeley

Arguably one of the most famous—and unique—playgrounds in California, Adventure Playground in Berkeley invites children to build, climb, and create their own play spaces using wood, tools, and other materials. Situated in the scenic marina area, the playground is a haven for young minds to engage in free-form play. Here, children can use hammers, nails, and saws to help build treehouses, forts, and other structures. The playground encourages a sense of independence and creativity, allowing kids to play in a way that most traditional parks don't support. Volunteers and park staff are there to supervise and guide, but the primary emphasis is on child-led construction and imaginative play. [www.berkeleyca.gov/community-recreation/parks-recreation/facilities/adventure-playground](http://www.berkeleyca.gov/community-recreation/parks-recreation/facilities/adventure-playground)

## Hillside Park, Cordova Rec and Park District

This park, designed by Stantec, brings a truly unique play experience to this new community. Instead of seeing a hill as an obstacle, the design integrates topography into the play area, by incorporating UPC concrete hill slides, hillside rope climbers and a banister slide. The park also features a swing set, multiple spinners, and a 2-5 play structure. The park is now open, so come by and be ready to play! [www.crpdc.com/staging/parks/hillside-park](http://www.crpdc.com/staging/parks/hillside-park)

## The 100-Year-Old Playground in Los Angeles (Ernest E. Debs Regional Park)

In the heart of Los Angeles, Ernest E. Debs Regional Park features a playground that's been around for over 100 years. Known for its historic design, this playground has kept its charm while evolving to meet modern safety standards. The most distinctive feature of this space is the giant dragon slide—an oversized, serpen-

tine slide that is as delightful as it is intimidating. The dragon is so large that it looms over the rest of the playground, offering both a sense of adventure and a tangible piece of LA's past. It's a throwback to an earlier time in playground design, and it stands out as an enduring



symbol of both creativity and nostalgia. [www.laparks.org/park/ernest-e-debs-regional](http://www.laparks.org/park/ernest-e-debs-regional)

## Cabrillo Marine Aquarium Playground in San Pedro

Located near the Cabrillo Marine Aquarium in San Pedro, this playground is an aquatic-themed wonderland. It incorporates elements of the ocean, from sculpted sea creatures to water-inspired features, encouraging children to interact with their surroundings. The park's design is both educational and fun, offering opportunities for kids to learn about marine life while playing. Slides resembling fish, ocean wave structures, and large whale sculptures make this playground stand out. The location itself is ideal for a day out with family, combining the joys of playing in nature with an educational experience. [www.cma.recreation.parks.lacity.gov](http://www.cma.recreation.parks.lacity.gov)

## The Central Park in Santa Clara

The Central Park in Santa Clara features one of the most bizarre playgrounds in California, shaped like a giant flying saucer! This UFO-inspired design is one of the best examples of the innovative playgrounds California is known for. The central structure resembles an alien spaceship, complete with curved platforms, ramps, and slides. The design encourages children to imagine extraterrestrial adventures, flying through space or exploring otherworldly planets. The play structures, which also include a spaceship bridge and tunnels, evoke a sense of curiosity and creativity, making it one of the most fun and imaginative play spaces in the Bay Area. [www.tclf.org/landscapes/santa-clara-central-park](http://www.tclf.org/landscapes/santa-clara-central-park)



# KIDS FORUM

## The Urban Playground at Children's Creativity Museum in San Francisco

For those seeking an interactive, technology-forward experience, the Urban Playground at San Francisco's Children's Creativity Museum is an exploration in creativity.



Designed to spark imaginations, this playground features hands-on, multimedia activities. Kids can engage in digital art creation, interactive music stations, and large-scale building projects. The space is designed for kids to engage with technology and art in a playful, constructive way, fostering creativity through its innovative, forward-thinking design. The playground incorporates elements that blend urban life with artistic expression,

making it one of the most dynamic spaces in the city. [www.bayareadiscoverymuseum.org](http://www.bayareadiscoverymuseum.org)

## Fremont "Dinosaur Playground"

If you're looking for a playground that combines nature, imagination, and adventure, the Dinosaur Playground in Fremont's Central Park is a must-see. As the name suggests, the park features enormous dinosaur sculptures that kids can climb, slide, and explore. These life-size models of prehistoric creatures offer an educational experience while providing ample space for children to run, jump, and interact with the environment. The giant dinosaurs create a sense of awe and wonder, allowing kids to engage in pretend play and learn about prehistoric times in a fun and exciting way. [www.fremont.gov/government/departments/parks-recreation/parks/central-park](http://www.fremont.gov/government/departments/parks-recreation/parks/central-park)

From the whimsical to the historic, California's most imaginative playgrounds reflect the state's creativity and commitment to fostering fun, educational, and adventurous environments for children. These unique play spaces encourage kids to use their imaginations, connect with nature, and, most importantly, have fun. The next time you're planning a family outing, make sure to visit one of these inventive playgrounds—they're sure to spark joy for kids of all ages.





# FASHION

## VINTAGE CLOTHING IS SO POPULAR RIGHT NOW

A Look at the Trend's Resurgence

By Lucille Hale

Vintage clothing has become a central component of fashion. What was once considered an underground niche has emerged as a dominant force in both high fashion and casual streetwear. Whether it's a classic pair of Levi's, a 1980s graphic tee, or a glamorous 1920s dress, vintage clothing offers something unique, sustainable, and nostalgic.

But what is driving this surge in popularity? **The Appeal of Nostalgia and Timelessness**

One of the biggest factors is its connection to nostalgia. Many of today's shoppers are drawn to styles from decades past because they offer a connection to a bygone era. For millennials and Gen Z, vintage clothing brings back memories of childhood or of eras they never lived through. Iconic styles from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s evoke cultural history, with each piece often telling a story.

Fashion is cyclical, and trends are being revived. Vintage clothing offers a direct link to timeless styles, making it a powerful symbol of individual expression. Many consumers are drawn to the fact that vintage clothing is not just about looking good, but also about wearing something with a sense of history.

### Sustainability and Environmental Impact

Sustainability has become a major concern, particularly for younger generations who are more aware of environmental impact. The fashion industry is one of the largest contributors to environmental degradation. By purchasing vintage clothing, consumers are making a more sustainable choice.

Vintage shopping supports the circular economy by reusing clothing. By opting for second-hand or repurposed garments, shoppers are taking a stand. **Uniqueness and Individual Style**

In today's mass production, it's easy for people to feel like they're wearing the same things as everyone else. Vintage clothing offers an antidote to this lack of individuality. Shoppers can

express themselves in ways that go beyond the standard offerings. Whether it's a custom-made leather jacket, a rare 90s windbreaker, or a vintage band tee, each item is one-of-a-kind.

The quest for originality is especially important to younger generations. By incorporating vintage items into their wardrobe, consumers can curate a personal style that feels fresh and authentic.

### Celebrity Influence and Social Media

The resurgence of vintage clothing has been heavily influenced by celebrities, influencers, and fashion icons.

Social media platforms have played a massive role in bringing vintage clothing back. Vintage-inspired fashion accounts, thrifting challenges, and styling tips have made it easier than ever to find and showcase unique vintage pieces.

### The Rise of Online Vintage Marketplaces

The convenience of online shopping has also fueled popularity. Depop, Poshmark, and Etsy have made it easier for people to buy and sell vintage clothing.

The popularity of vintage clothing reflects a shift toward sustainability, individuality, and nostalgia. With its ability to evoke memories, and offer unique pieces, vintage clothing has found a permanent place in today's fashion landscape.





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**PLANETARY TRANSFORMATION**





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grubhub.com, post-  
mates.com, doordash.com  
Phone: (818) 876-0105

**Universal Bar and Grill**  
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(818) 805-3201  
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Northridge, CA 91324  
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