

LA WEEKLY

LA WEEKLY AND VILLAGE
VOICE'S BEST FILM AND TV
OF 2022

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JANUARY 6-12, 2023 / VOL. 45 / NO. 1
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By Brett Callwood





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FOOD

HOTTEST TICKET IN MORONGO VALLEY? THE SPAGHETTI WESTERN WESTERN SALOON

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



PHOTOS BY MICHELE STUEVEN

Joshua Tree residents and Roman transplants Jasmine and Lorenzo Tomasso have resurrected the Willie Boy's building in Morongo Valley – the *Spaghetti Western Saloon* on the main drag that is the 29 Palms Highway just opened a few weeks ago and is already packing them in.

The space is a fan's wildest dream, with two bars, a pool room full of tables, a rambling dining room with a fireplace and a stage with live music featuring, among others, Lorenzo on guitar and Jasmine singing.

A limited opening menu that will continue to evolve is inspired by the couple's Italian roots. Jasmine grew up

in the countryside outside of Rome in the small town of Casali di Mentana. Famed Italian composer and conductor Ennio Morricone was her neighbor and sparked the singer's love of music from a young age. Husband Lorenzo grew up in Trastevere, in the same neighborhood as Sergio Leone. The pair bonded over a shared infatuation with music and spaghetti westerns, which is lovingly obvious in the care and detail of the saloon.

Starters include pizzetta Romana, Roman-style mini puff pastry pizzas as well as seasonal salads and soups like butternut squash with local Joshua Tree sage and pink peppercorns. The signature Spaghetti Western pasta is

a comforting bowl of smoked pepper bacon, San Marzano tomato sauce and Pecorino Romano. There are also vegan options like mushroom risotto.

But what will really make your spurs sparkle is the 12-ounce ribeye alongside a pile of roasted rosemary potatoes that only sets you back \$35. The skillet brownie a la mode is under \$10 as are most of the cocktails, beers and wines (which also come in half and full ca-fafes). The \$12 Redwood Rattlesnake is a mix of Redwood Empire Rye Whiskey, maple syrup, bitters and lemon. The prices and portions are a welcome relief and designed to stay reasonable for the local Morongo Valley residents, a stark contrast to the dinner bills on the other side of the 10 freeway.

Music and a strong sense of community fill the 7,000-square-foot space, a

much-appreciated and needed culinary addition to the neighborhood. Folks sit around the fire in the lounge dissecting the season five finale of *Yellowstone* while a piano plays in the background. Various musical acts and events are planned for the saloon, including spaghetti western movie nights.

The restaurant doesn't take reservations, it's first come first served, so get in early.

Hours: ~ ursday 4-9 p.m. Fri 4-10 p.m. Sat 4-10 p.m. Sun 4-9 p.m.
50048 29 Palms Hwy, Morongo Valley (Just look for the pastel bull on the roof, you can't miss it.)

CALENDAR

GO EDITORS' PICKS

ARTS

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6

Ercole Su'l Termondonte at Pacific Opera Project. The U.S. premiere of a rare Vivaldi opera based on the ninth Labor of Hercules, wherein Hercules is tasked with capturing the sword of Antiope, the queen of the Amazons. Vivaldi's 16th opera was written in 1723 and premiered in Rome, during the Pope's ban on women in opera. POP has a cast of tenors, countertenors, mezzos and sopranos — as intended — performing these roles with a period orchestra in a built-out and originally styled baroque opera house. *The Highland Park Ebell Club, 131 S. Avenue 57; Performances Fri-Sat, Jan 6-21; \$20-\$45/single tickets; \$100-\$320 group box seating & wine; pacijocoperaproject.com.*

SATURDAY, JANUARY 7

Amy Bennett: Open Season at Richard Heller Gallery. About her new paintings — gestural and empathetic, charming, and ever so slightly menacing views of quasi-pastoral lifestyles and landscapes — the artist writes, "These paintings were created while attempting to return to 'life as usual' amidst an atmosphere of political chaos, heightened vigilance against an invisible enemy, coping with our bodies' response to a mysterious sickness and, for a mind-numbing number, the grief of loss. It was also a period marked by an altered sense of home life and a reassessment of relationships and use of time. Hopefully the paintings touch on these themes with a sense of humor and optimism." *Bergamot Station, 2525 Michigan Ave, Santa Monica; Opening: Saturday, January 7, 3-5pm; On view through February 11; free; richardhellergallery.com.*

RYOL, Shinnosuke Hariya, Michael Polakowski, and Abi Castillo at Thinkspace Projects.

RYOL's new body of work, Caught in the Art, fills the space with paintings that showcase how light has become the essential medium, in a new series of experimental oil paintings. Hariya presents Power Up, a new series of 14 graphite drawings highlighting his favorite robots from the movies and

Ercole at Pacific Opera Projects



television. Polakowski's Anywhere & Here is a series of paintings depicting a shifting cast of characters grappling with reality while dreaming of potential futures. Abi Castillo's Allergic Party showcases 30 new ceramic works that preserve the essence of her sense of identity as a sweet, animated natural being. *4207 W. Jefferson Blvd., West Adams; Opening: Saturday, January 7, 6-10pm; On view through January 28; free; think-spaceprojects.com.*

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8

Hand Made: Recent Films by Dicky Bahto at L.A. Film Forum. Artist, curator, and educator Dicky Bahto is widely known for his extensive practice in photography, film, installation, performance, and his numerous collaborations with luminaries of experimental music. His varied and complex engagement with moving image and photographic media is steeped in a deeply felt humanity and empathy, manifesting through his inspired photographic eye and frequently direct interaction with and appreciation of the material vitality of film and cinema. This program of his work includes pieces made in collaboration with musicians Sarah Davachi and Raum (Liz Harris + Jefre Cantu-Ledesma), and concludes with a new expanded cinema collaboration with Tashi Wada. *2220 Arts + Archives, 2220 W. Beverly Blvd., Echo Park; Sunday, January 8, 7:30pm; \$12; lafilmforum.org.*

MONDAY, JANUARY 9

Jerry Saltz with Irwin Miller at Live Talks L.A. (In-person & Virtual.) In Art Is Life, renowned art critic and Twitter provocateur Jerry Saltz offers a survey of contemporary art as a barometer of our times. Chronicling a period punctuated by dramatic turning

points — from the cultural reset of 9/11 to the rolling social crises of today — Saltz traces how visionary artists have both documented and challenged the culture. Art Is Life offers Saltz's eye-opening appraisals of trailblazers and visionaries; celebrates landmarks; writes searchingly about disturbing events; and shares stories of his own haunted childhood, his time as a "failed artist," and his art history epiphanies. *New Roads School, 3131 Olympic Blvd., Santa Monica; Monday, January 9, 8pm, \$20-\$48/with signed book; Streaming Sunday, January 15, 3pm, \$40 (includes signed book); livetalksla.org.*

TUESDAY, JANUARY 10

Hùng Viet Nguyen at Casa Romantica.

Nguyen was born in Vietnam and studied Biology at Science University in Saigon before settling in the U.S. and transitioning to working as an illustrator, graphic artist, and designer. He developed his artistry skills independently, studying traditional Eastern and Western forms, media, and techniques to evolve a complex, labor-intensive style of richly textured oil paint. While aspects of Nguyen's work suggest the influence of traditional art forms including woodblock prints, Oriental scroll paintings, ceramic art, mosaic, and stained glass, his ultimate expression asserts a contemporary sensibility that values unity within a deeply personal hybrid vision. *415 Avenida Granada, San Clemente; Opening: Tuesday, January 10, 6-8pm; On view through March 5; free; casaromantica.org.*

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 11

Wise Children's Wuthering Heights at The Wallis. In a production shot through with music, dance, passion, and hope, Emma

Rice (Brief Encounter, Tristan & Yseult) transforms Emily Brontë's masterpiece into an intoxicating story of revenge for our time. Rescued from the Liverpool docks as a child, Heathcliff is taken to live at Wuthering Heights, where he finds a kindred spirit in Catherine, and a fierce love ignites. When they are forced apart, a brutal chain of events is unleashed. A National Theatre, Wise Children, Bristol Old Vic and York Theatre Royal co-production, in association with Berkeley Repertory Theatre. *9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Performances January 11-22; \$29-\$105; thewallis.org.*

MUSIC

JANUARY 6-12

Dr. Know Alex's Bar

Oxnard takes over Long Beach, as Alex's Bar welcomes a nardcore extravaganza. There's some debate over the legitimacy of the current lineup of Dr. Know, although Stalag 13 are making a fuss about the fact that original singer Ron Baird is back in the ranks. Dry Sockets also play. *8 p.m. on Friday, January 6 at Alex's Bar, \$19.32, alexsbar.com.*

Winter Mass Teragram Ballroom

They're starting the year with a bang at the Teragram — a two day ultra-hip festival right in the first week. Michael Seyer, Carter Ace, Grins, Zzzahara, Yungatita, and Alex Andre play night one. King Woman, Blackwater Holylight, Izzy Spears, the Mainliners, Urns and Argyles, and J-Mont play night two. *6 p.m. on Friday, January 6 and 4 p.m. on Saturday, January 7 at the Teragram Ballroom, \$25-45, teragramballroom.com*

TSOL/Dwarves The Regent

There's another punk mega-bill at the Regent, as Long Beach veterans TSOL join forces with Chicago punks the Dwarves. That's a lot of old school punk action. Corrupted Youth and Shock Therapy stack the bill. *7 p.m. on Saturday, January 7 at the Regent, \$20, regentdla.com.*

HR Whisky A Go Go

The former Bad Brains frontman is a much more chilled out proposition these days when he takes to a stage. He still pops out the occasional BB tune, but his hardcore fire has given way to reggae peace. Still worth seeing though. Osairis, Skirtboy, GhettoSongBird & the Roxploitation, Coffin Slide, Serratonin, and Class Acts! also play. *6 p.m. on Thursday, January 12 at the Whisky A Go Go, \$20+, whiskyagogo.com. [L]*

STRIKE VOTE IMMINENT AS LAUSD EMPLOYEES SEEK HIGHER WAGES

More than 30,000 employees working within LAUSD threatened to strike if the school district did not hear and meet their demands for higher wages.

BY ISAI ROCHA



Workers for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) have picketed and threatened to strike, as they feel higher wages, benefits and increased staffing have been long overdue.

LAUSD bus drivers, custodial staff, teacher aides and cafeteria workers all are being represented by Education Workers United, who stated negotiations “reached an impasse.” Now they will ask its workers to vote on whether or not to hold a strike against LAUSD.

“The main issue from our viewpoint, in schools, is there’s not enough staffing to keep the schools clean,” Executive Director for Education Workers United Max Arias told L.A. Weekly. “And the working conditions continue to be unsafe in school service. Understaffing contributes to that... and we think it is important to

address those issues so that every student in every school has a clean, safe and supportive school.”

The union and workers believe a lack of instructional aides and special education assistants have led to “learning loss and achievement gaps.” It also believes the current number of custodial staff is not sufficient for proper cleaning and disinfecting, an area of interest that was amplified during the pandemic.

Arias added that the pandemic had stalled negotiations between the union and school district for years, with talks resuming in April of 2022. Since then, the union said LAUSD has made no efforts toward “productive” bargaining.

“That is why workers are continuing plans to hold a vote in January to authorize a strike,” Arias said. “A strike is the last option but workers are preparing to take strong action to improve their liveli-

hoods and conditions for students in our schools.”

After a Dec. 5 walkout from the district workers, LAUSD issued a statement, stating it has met with the labor union multiple times and continues to listen to its demands.

“Los Angeles Unified continues to meet with our labor partners regularly,” LAUSD said. “We respect and acknowledge the dedication of our employees and the need to compensate them fairly in this current economic environment. We remain dedicated to avoiding protracted negotiations to keep the focus on our students and student achievement.”

Workers United expects a strike vote to take place this January.

MAYOR BASS TO MEET WITH LAPD CHIEF MOORE ABOUT REAPPOINTMENT

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass will meet with LAPD Chief of Police Michel Moore as he seeks a second term.

Moore’s current term is set to end in June of 2023 and he sent an application for a second term to the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners Monday.

“I have been notified of Chief Moore’s request for reappointment,” Bass said in a statement. “He and I will meet soon to discuss his request and my vision to keep Angelenos safe in every neighborhood.”

Mayor Bass, who assumed office on Dec. 13, had previously expressed having no plans of replacing Moore.

In his letter to the commission, Moore expressed a desire to address a reduction in staff and expand diversity within the department.

“Chief Moore is an outstanding law enforcement executive who is recognized nationally for his expertise,” Commission President William Briggs said in a statement.

Angelenos will have an opportunity for public comment before a decision is made and if reappointed, Moore will be able to serve a second and final five-year term.

Moore was first appointed to LAPD chief in 2018 by then-Mayor Eric Garcetti and has served in the department since 1981.

The police chief started his LAPD career as a police officer before moving on to serving as a detective, sergeant, lieutenant and assistant chief.

SOCCER LEGEND PELÉ DIES AFTER BOUT WITH COLON CANCER

Pelé, widely considered the greatest international soccer player of all time, died at the age of 82 on Dec. 29, 2022.

The announcement came from Pelé’s daughter, who posted a message to Instagram that read, “Everything that we are, is thanks to you. We love you infinitely. Rest in peace.”

In November of 2022, Pelé was hospitalized in Sao Paulo after experiencing respiratory issues that were reportedly due to COVID-19. The family, however, said the organ failure Pelé suffered was due to complications from his bout with colon cancer. Before his most recent hospitalization, Pelé had a colon tumor removed in January 2022, after which he began chemotherapy.

Born Edson Arantes do Nascimento, Pelé got his nickname from his own mispronunciation of his favorite Brazilian soccer player in the 1940s, who went by Bile.

His name became known worldwide not only because of his extraordinary play on the field on both a local and international level, but because of his vibrant personality that connected with the world.

A message was posted to Pelé’s social media accounts Thursday, written in both Portuguese and English.

“Inspiration and love marked the journey of King Pelé, who peacefully passed away today,” the post read. “In his journey, Edson charmed everyone with his brilliance in sport, stopped a war, performed social work around the world, and spread what he most believed to be the cure to all our problems: love. Your message in life will become a legacy for generations to come. Love, love and love forever.”

Pelé is Brazil’s all-time goal scorer, and to this day is honored in the soccer world, with the best player of most World Cup teams wearing the No. 10 in his honor.

The soccer superstar was part of three World Cup winning Brazilian teams in 1958, 1962 and 1970.

After the announcement of his death, the soccer world mourned and paid their respects, including Brazil’s current team captain, Neymar, who spoke on Pelé’s role in transforming soccer into a global game.

“Before Pelé, 10 was just a number,” Neymar said in a statement. I would say before Pelé, football was just a sport. Pelé has changed it all. He turned football into art, into entertainment. He gave voice to the poor, to the Blacks and especially: He gave visibility to Brazil. Soccer and Brazil have raised their status thanks to the King! He’s gone but his magic remains.”

One of the game’s current larger-than-life superstars, Cristiano Ronaldo, posted a photo of himself with Pele to Instagram, saying the soccer world will carry on Pele’s memory and legacy.

“A mere ‘goodbye’ to the eternal King Pelé will never be enough to express the pain that the entire football world is currently embracing,” Ronaldo said. “An inspiration to so many millions, a reference yesterday, today and forever.”

EVERYTHING EVERYWHERE LA WEEKLY AND VILLAGE VOICE'S BEST FILM AND TV OF 2022

LA WEEKLY



From big budget blockbusters to inspiring indies, 2022's movie releases were all over the place in the best possible way. Though audiences didn't necessarily crowd back into theaters as COVID-19 became more manageable, it was encouraging to see large and small films alike get big screen runs (however briefly) before making their way onto streaming services and our television sets. Home viewing is essential, but the thrill of going out to see a movie is not dead... yet.

Still, as Netflix, Amazon, Hulu, HBO and the rest vied for our attention and

subscriber dollars, there was a lot to watch and sometimes it was challenging to get to it all. During quarantine, we had all the time in the world, but when things opened up, not so much. We'll concede to lots of holiday break catch-up viewing based on our critics' and other publications' picks. We're still watching lots of great cinema and television, and plan to keep bingeing the best of 2022 till Oscar time in March.

Documentaries, dramas, thrillers, comedies and more on big and small screens continue to inspire thought, emotion

and escape, reflecting our lives in very real ways and offering respite from reality when we need it most. Great writers, directors, actors and behind-the-scenes producers and crews are working harder than ever, and the result is a resilience for the art of storytelling, and the entertainment business in general.

Here, Top 10 lists from *LA Weekly* and *Village Voice's* shared movie (and episodic TV) critics, alongside some key quotes from their reviews, illustrate the best of 2022 releases enduring vision and power to keep us engaged.

Read full reviews for these titles on LAWeekly.com and VillageVoice.com

THE BEST FILMS OF 2022

Lina Lecaro

Brett Morgen's vividly immersive new documentary-driven opus, *Moonage Daydream*, seeks to capture the music genius' otherworldly essence and bring something new to the cinematic universe in the process. It succeeds, and then some. This is the film hardcore Bowie fans have been waiting for. And it's the film David Bowie deserves.

1. *Moonage Daydream*
2. *Pinocchio*
3. *Weird- The Al Yankovic Story*
4. *Top Gun*
5. *Everything Everywhere all at Once*
6. *Elvis*
7. *The Black Phone*
8. *Don't Worry Darling*
9. *The Unbearable Weight of Massive Talent*
10. *The Batman*

Nate Bell

Jerzy Skolimowski's *EO* lands like a defibrillator to the chest, a jolting and immediate dose of cinematic verve designed to shock the stupefied viewer out of complacency and restore a normal heartbeat. As simple and powerful as Au Hasard Balthazar, Robert Bresson's animal film for art-house habitués, *EO* uses the central conceit of that 1966 classic as a jumping-off point to spin a parable about a gentle donkey and his misadventures across modern Europe.

1. *EO*
2. *Three Thousand Years of Longing*
3. *Petite Maman*
4. *Sundown*
5. *Avatar: The Way of Water*
6. *Decision to Leave*
7. *The Eternal Daughter*
8. *Benediction*
9. *Vengeance*
10. *Dual*

Michael Atkinson

Director Gaspar Noé's *Vortex* couldn't be simpler, narratively speaking: A very old couple, Lui and Elle (played by horror movie director Dario Argento and Françoise Lebrun), live in their book-cluttered Parisian flat, slowly succumbing to dementia and illness. Not a particularly fresh basket of bread, but look what Noé does with it — formalizes it, creepifies it, turns it into a chilling exercise in empathy.



1. *Vortex*
2. *Crimes of the Future*
3. *Hit the Road*
4. *Aftersun*
5. *Playground*
7. *EO*
8. *Brighton 4th*
9. *No Bears*
10. *The Cathedral*

Chuck Wilson

A'ersun, Scottish writer-director Charlotte Wells' exquisite debut film, has a sneakily complex time structure that may continue to arrange itself in moviegoers' minds after the film ends, like a personal memory that won't quite settle into place.

1. *The Fabelmans*
2. *The Black Phone*
3. *White Noise*
4. *Aftersun*
5. *Nope*
6. *Everything Everywhere All At Once*
7. *Three Minutes: A Lengthening*
8. *Causeway*
9. *Barbarian*
10. *Breaking*

Asher Luberto

Prepare to be astonished by *Every-*

thing Everywhere All at Once. Written and directed by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert, collectively known as The Daniels, this visual wonder is the product of a fierce and fearless team whose ideas are unlike anything you've seen before. Watching this film is akin to winning the lottery for cinephiles, especially those who find dark, strange, kinetic and eccentric movies to be in their wheelhouse.

1. *Everything Everywhere All at Once*
2. *Top Gun: Maverick*
3. *RRR*
4. *Aftersun*
5. *The Banshees of Inisherin*
6. *Hit the Road*
7. *Barbarian*
8. *All the Beauty and the Bloodshed*
9. *Glass Onion*
10. *Fire of Love*

Chad Byrnes

You'll feel inspired and exhausted by the end of *Tár*. But those emotions aren't cheap; you have to work for them. We are talking about a two hour and thirty-eight minute meditation on systemic power, the problematic nature of making art, and the consequences of an unremitting society. It's quiet and strange. And it's not

a movie for everyone. Then again, the best ones aren't.

1. *Tár*
2. *Armageddon Time*
3. *The Banshees of Inisherin*
4. *X*
5. *Both Sides of the Blade*
6. *The Northman*
7. *Pale Blue Eye*
8. *Emily The Criminal*
9. *Deep Water*
10. *All Quiet on the Western Front*

THE BEST TV SERIES OF 2022

Erin Maxwell

Everyone involved deserves praise for bringing this kind of mad, macabre hijinks to television. For a show that breezes by murder, death, destruction, the end of civilization, and the insignificance of the human experience as a whole, *What We Do In the Shadows* is a lovely escape from the times we live in right now. And that might be the darkest thing about it.

1. *Severance*
2. *Shorsey*
3. *What We Do In the Shadows*

4. *Better Call Saul*
5. *Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty*
6. *Dahmer - Monster: The Jeffrey Dahmer Story*
7. *The Sandman*
8. *Andor*
9. *House of the Dragon*
10. *The Bear*

Lina Lecaro

Embellished and heightened by a liberal use of archival footage, *Pistol* is an exhilarating musical kick in the bum as it was intended and a modern bookend to the slate of films that have attempted to tackle the mythic story of the infamous punk UK band.

1. *Pistol*
2. *Wednesday*
3. *White Lotus*
4. *Cabinet of Curiosities*
5. *Euphoria*
6. *What We Do in the Shadows*
7. *This Fool*
8. *The Bear*
9. *Hacks*
10. *Winning Time: The Rise of the Lakers Dynasty*



Deanna + Madison by Emily Herce

Deanna + Madison
by Sara Laufer

Enny Owl by Victorian Cottage of Wonders

The term “safe space” might be used as a pejorative at times – a device for mockery by the right. But fuck them, what do they know? It’s a bit of a self-fulfilling prophecy anyway – to attack trans and non-binary people’s very right to exist, and then attack them again for seeking safety. Again, fuck them!

Weird Sister Records – an indie label and collective founded in Brooklyn in 2021 by Deanna DiLandro and Madison Hetterly – provides such a safe space for women, trans and non-binary artists who are sick to death of the misogyny that still infects the music industry. They’ve taken matters into their own hands.

“I think considering just how new we are, I’m extremely proud of all we’ve accomplished this past year and a half,” says Hetterly. “We’ve definitely had our fair share of hard times and disappointments but we always make it to the other side and our community reminds us daily why we are doing this and to keep pushing forward!”

Prior to this, Hetterly had gained

Weird Sisters are Doing it for Themselves

Brooklyn label and collective launches in L.A.

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

experience in artist management, press and editorial at an indie label and at a venue. DiLandro had worked with other indie labels, press companies, radio stations, record stores and music venues, as well as developing her own music.

The germ of the idea for *Weird Sister* was born early in 2020 when DiLandro left a job that wasn’t proving to be as satisfying as she needed.

“It’s no secret that throughout entertainment industries (and all industries) women, trans and non-gender conforming people are unrepresented and misunderstood,” DiLandro says. “I was personally sick of combatting misogynistic viewpoints and a general lack of desire to make room for diverse identities. When considering the idea of starting a label, I immediately thought of

Madison because she had started her blog, *Indie Witches*, while we worked together at *The Wild Honey Pie*, so I knew she had similar desires to spotlight women and non-gendering conforming musicians from all over the world. I wanted to help out in any way I could when she started the blog and was interested in starting a label that intentionally carved out space for the same demographic. So, in

March 2020 I reached out to Madison and pitched her the idea of a companion entity to *Indie Witches* over tacos after we attended a BLM protest together in Brooklyn. At first she was hesitant since she was juggling several jobs at the time, but after she thought about it, she called me a week later and said, ‘Let’s fucking do it!’ From that moment, *Weird Sister* was set in motion.”

The first artist signed to *Weird Sister* was the Philadelphia-based Sug Daniels, an individual that Hetterly describes as having “a spark of light and effervescent joy that is contagious.”

“I had worked with Deanna in the past and had always had warm, professional,



Sug Daniels by Nathalie Antonov



Syd Silvair by Mark Silvair



JessX by Emilio Herce

and friendly interactions with her,” says Daniels. “When she told me about *Weird Sister* it aligned with who I am as an artist and person. I was, and still am, honored to be working with an organization that IS the change we want to see in the industry.”

Daniels is a great example of what the label represents – artists that have a clear vision for themselves.

“The best work gets done when all parties involved are passionate about what we are trying to achieve,” says Hetterly. “We never want to force things on an artist so working with folks who already know who they are and what they want is key.”

Now, there are 15 artists on the *Weird Sister* roster, 13 of which are signed for single releases.

“In 2022, we ran a single series called *the Zodiac Series* where we released a single for each zodiac season,” says DiLandro. “The latest release from our *Zodiac Series* was the Sagittarius single, ‘*Wheel of Fortune*’ from NY-based singer/songwriter, Raechel Rosen. Our final single from the series will be from the NJ-based queer, WOC band, *Valentine’s Day* out January 13th. Sug

Daniels, our first artist, was signed for her EP, *Franklin Street*, and we released Heather Cook’s latest full-length, *Quick! No One’s Looking*, this past year as well.”

“*Weird Sister* is special because they are not just about releasing music but want to create a community where artists feel safe to share their ideas,” adds the aforementioned Heather Cook. “Being on their roster has given me the chance to express creative ideas that I probably wouldn’t have felt comfortable sharing on a male-dominated label. It’s rare to feel heard in this industry but *Weird Sister* prioritizes their artist’s voices. On top of that, they have an effortless but well-curated aesthetic that breeds this feeling of fun and divine femininity.”

That feeling of comfort, of freedom, is a theme with the *Weird Sister* signees.

“It’s no secret that there’s a shortage of women-run labels, so that in and of itself makes them special,” says musician

Syd Silvair. “I think most women in music, on both the industry and artist sides, have experienced sexism in one way or another, so it was really refreshing going into a partnership with *Weird Sister* knowing that wouldn’t be an issue.”

Fellow *Weird Sister* artist Enny Owl notes that, “I love that it’s run by two women and it’s all about giving power to the artist. They let artists thrive in their individuality and guide them in the direction that benefits them. I was very intrigued by their equinox solstice series because I feel very connected to intentional releases according to the seasons and what they symbolize. Also as a black queer woman in this industry, it’s just so refreshing to see a label that takes inclusivity seriously.”

Their mission and motives are clearly magnificent. When all is said and done though, *Weird Sister* is a record label and, like every other record label, it has to find a way of selling product and generating income for its artists in the streaming age.

“[It’s] extremely hard and sometimes nearly impossible,” says Hetterly.

“The market is so saturated and people have gotten so used to on demand that getting people to purchase music feels inconceivable but that’s part of the challenge is figuring out unique ways to make our artists money and get audiences excited about what we’re doing.”

Hetterly and DiLandro are planning plenty of releases in 2023, as well as hosting events in New York and L.A. They have a launch party at the *Goldfish* in L.A. on January 27. It’s all a part of their growth.

“I hope we have a strong, loving, vibrant community of artists and creators in both L.A., NYC and beyond,” says Hetterly. “We hope to keep throwing live events that expand across the globe to bring other like-minded folks together and give them a night where they feel they can be their truest selves while also continuing to release music that brings people joy. We’d also love to have a multi-hyphenate physical space where we can provide resources to artists of all types.”

There’s nothing weird about that!

The *Weird Sister* L.A. launch party takes place at 8 p.m. on Friday, January 27 at the Goldfish. 📍

CANNABIS

DEATH ROW CANNABIS LAUNCH SHOWS SNOOP DOGG BRINGING IN THE EXPERTS

Last week's launch emphasized the company is working with the best on its search for top products

BY: JIMI DEVINE



We sat down with the team at *Death Row Cannabis* on Friday as the world learned about the iconic Los Angeles brand's move into the cannabis space.

Last February, word got out Snoop Dogg had acquired Death Row Records. At the time, Snoop Dogg was excited to take the reins of the brand he had started his career with and the rest of us were curious to see the types of things he'd do with it. Any rough patches the brand's identity had been through over the past 30 years were essentially cleaned up with the purchase, given Snoop Dogg's distance from everything.

After pulling the Death Row catalog from underpaying music streaming services and streamlining the rest of the company, three months ago the iconic label started eyeballing the cannabis industry. That culminated with last Friday's release of their first flower drop. We sat down to chat with two of the people

running point for Snoop Dogg on the project, his longtime sound engineer and cannabis inspector Shaggy and AK.

AK will be bringing a lot of heat to the table. Six years ago he came down to California on the hunt for funding something up in Washington. A year later he'd make the move seeing the obvious opportunity for people that speak flame in California's emerging legal industry. He'd even end up taking part in the Wizard Trees phenohunt where the RS-11 and Studio 54 phenos were selected, arguably the most influential hunt of the last few years. He even kept the #3 for himself, swearing to this day it's the best one. AK still owns a fertilizer company with Scott from Wizard Trees.

AK would go on to become VP of cultivation for TRP. Founded in 2019, the company has quickly amassed a footprint of 14 states growing for companies like Cookies and Dr. Greenthumb. But even before TRP was founded a few years ago, AK has been working on a deal with

Snoop Dogg. Arguably the most mainstream cannabis consumer in America next to his literal pals Willie Nelson and Martha Stewart, the latter now with her own CBD company.

"I ended up working for TRP, I've been within the last year and a half, about three or four months ago Shaggy reached out to me and said, yo Dogg hit me up, asking if you'd still be interested in doing something with us," AK told *LA Weekly* explaining how the deal finally came to fruition.

As they started pondering the possibilities, Shaggy quickly realized the lack of red tape at Death Row Records compared to doing another "celebrity line" with the boss. And while last Friday's launch was certainly intertwined with its new owner heavily in the cannabis news cycle, they still did a good job pushing the Death Row identity to the forefront.

AK had his foot on the gas over the last three months in the buildup. From designing the brand's identity from packaging to promo to selecting the weed, he had it all covered. While they did look at a lot of cannabis, much of it was grown at their distribution partner's facility.

"There's a grow here at the distro, as well, and that's where three out of the four strains that we're gonna drop were grown around here by us using my nutrient line," AK said. "I personally wasn't involved in growing it, but we literally run the same program. The guys that built that garden and I have done consultations together. And I'm here all the time, so I'm not hands-on but I'm hands-on, if that makes sense."

AK also emphasized the brand won't be exclusive to the \$60 price point. A big part of the plan is making sure the brand is accessible to all.

"Even if we have more affordable price points we're still not going to put boof in those bags," AK emphasized. "I can go get fire ass depp that rival indoor, like fakers (The stuff nice enough to tell east coast people it's indoor) and then price them correctly instead of just trying to hit people as fakers and gouge them on it."

The four flower stains for launch will be Tropicanna Cookies, SFV OG, LA Runtz, and Strawberry Gary. TRP-affiliated shops will be the first to get them in San Diego, Brentwood and San Bernardino. They're shooting to get the number of stores up to 50 to 100 in the first quarter, but are much more focused on making sure the consumer understands they're getting heat and it has some real grassroots people behind it.

Shaggy, who is leading the effort for Snoop Dogg's team, has been working with him as a recording engineer since he was 19, he's 33 now. Over those years, he started helping Snoop Dogg source his flower and taking the responsibilities that



come with it, specifically, making sure it's proper. If someone showed up to the studio with something that wasn't up to standard, it was up to Shaggy to be the heartbreaker.

"And so that just rolled over when he started doing some cannabis initiatives. He put me and Tiffany in charge of, you know, getting some of his cannabis initiatives up and going. I know a lot of people like AK," Shaggy explained to *LA Weekly*.

We asked Shaggy when Snoop Dogg knew it was time to pull the trigger on something like *Death Row Cannabis* given the plethora of pot opportunities that must have been piling up at his door over the years.

Shaggy argues *Death Row Cannabis* made sense, and the brand has been going through a lot since the purchase. Now we know that most of that time some kind of cannabis discussions were happening in the background, but since February, Death Row has started to revive its merch line with spins on old concert T-shirts and into NFT-embedded albums.

"With the cannabis market, it just made sense, because like AK said, right now a lot of the celebrity brands come out and they hit the really high price point and they don't offer the value for what you're paying for," Shaggy explained. "Like the best price point is like that 30 to 40 range, you know, maybe like \$45 because, like this top tier stuff is just too expensive and it's not always operating to value you know, I've been very disappointed you know."

Shaggy admitted to getting out into the rec market a bit more over the last year as things came together. He regularly left with \$65 dollars worth of disappointment as he sees it. His experiences with growers over the years have convinced him that good weed doesn't have to be really expensive and cheap weed doesn't have to be bad.

"There's weed that's not as expensive, that's really really good. And basically with us, we want to kind of help stimulate the culture, a little bit of a miseducated culture, and kind of give them good flower at a good price showing that this is possible," Shaggy said. 🍀

MEET MANDALIC SYSTEMS ARTIST DAVID ORR

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



Artist David Orr is engrossed in the pursuit of knowledge, seeking through study and experiment the mandalic systems that form the natural order of the universe. Like a host of artists, musicians, philosophers, and scientists whose investigations into everything from the atom to the psyche to the weather have progressed human insight for millennia, Orr is omnivorous in his curiosity and eclectic in his expressions. At the heart of his visual art is a layered process of observation and interpretive design that yields compelling patterns giving shape to invisible forces—mandala-like and meditative, responsive to sacred geometry, and availing of digital cosmology. An exhibition of Orr's new work in photography and video opens this week in Santa Monica, offering a space of wonderment and reset at the start of a new year.

L.A. WEEKLY: When did you first know you were an artist?

DAVID ORR: Much later than I should have.

What is your short answer to people who ask what your work is about?

My work is about the ways we seek and create patterns to both discover and impose meaning. There are areas where art, philosophy, and science overlap—which I believe is where truth resides.

What would you be doing if you weren't an artist?

Honestly, I'm already doing it.

Did you go to art school? Why/Why not?

I went to film school at Temple University in Philadelphia. There was a kind of bridge to art in David Lynch, who'd studied painting and made his first films in Philadelphia (he famously called Eraserhead "The Philadelphia of the mind"). I quickly learned the most interest-

ing people seemed to be in art schools, which was where I would hang out. Those friendships have lasted to this day, and continue to influence me, but ultimately I suppose I'm self-taught.

Why do you live and work in L.A., and not elsewhere?

I lived in New York for many years, was shaped by it, loved it, and still visit often, but I get more done here. There's more breathing room and I can focus. L.A. is an incredibly subtle place which continues to surprise me, and I find the combination of the art scene, the 'Dream Factory,' and the aerospace presence irresistible.

laborations with musicians John Cale, Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, and poet Jorie Graham for The Birdsong Project. I will be debuting *Invisible Light*, a collaboration with New York violinist and composer Concetta Abbate, with a live performance at the closing reception at OMAS on Saturday, February 11.

What artist living or dead would you most like to show or work with?

How do you pick?!? And would they want to? I love James Turrell, Edmund de Waal, Mona Hatoum, Andy Goldsworthy, Nancy Holt, Robert Irwin, Michael Heizer, Ruth Asawa, Agnes Martin, Mauricio Cattelan, Georgia O'Keeffe, Harry Callahan, Bridget Riley, Francis Bacon, Vija Celmins, Saul Leiter, Gerhard Richter, Agnes Pelton, Jenny Holzer, Félix González-Torres... really, too many to name here—but they all changed the way I think and see.

Assuming I could speak the language, however, I'd love some time with artists like the Lascaux Cave painters who created works we now find enigmatic. What were they really thinking? Trying to represent or communicate? The more we learn, the more we realize that there's nothing primitive about 'primitive work.' It's always been more rich and layered than we assume.

Do you listen to music while you work? If so, what?

I actually work in silence most of the time, because I'll always forget to put something on, but when I'm driving and thinking, or in the studio doing other things, I listen to a lot of music. I tend to gravitate towards musicians whose work falls between genres. Scott Walker, Joni Mitchell, Chris Whitley, Sturgill Simpson, Talk Talk, Leonard Cohen, Patti Smith, Neil Young, Agnes Obel, Brian Eno, Steve Reich, Beth Orton, Kendrick Lamar. Lots of Jazz, mainly from the late 50s/early 60s, but recent folks, too, like Chief Xian aTunde Adjuah (Christian Scott). I always like a blending of styles—I used to love going to Giant Step in New York.

But Bach never fails to astonish me. The Goldberg Variations as performed by Glenn Gould, or the Cello Suites (there are many superb recordings and interpretations, but I keep coming back to Pablo Casals and Yo-Yo Ma) remain my favorite deadline/focus soundtracks. A friend once described Bach's music as "architecture that glows" and I can't think of a better characterization.

Website and socials, please!

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