

# LAW WEEKLY

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# A.I.

THE THREAT, PROMISE, AND  
APPEAL OF ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE IN ART

# GOOD FOR ART, BAD FOR ARTISTS?

BY SHANA  
NYS DAMBROT





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FOOD

# YANGBAN SOCIETY HOSTS K-FOOD LOVERS COOK OFF

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



Three home cooks from across the country converged in downtown Los Angeles at [Yangban Society](#) on Thursday to compete for a cash prize and the chance to have their dish featured on the menu of the restaurant, which was just named one of the Top 10 Best New Restaurants of 2022 by *Bon Appetit* magazine.

Hosted by the Korea Agro-Fisheries and food trade corporation at Center

LA, the K-Food Lovers Cook-Off is part of the K-Food Lovers initiative that invites all those interested in discovering and learning about Korean cuisine and ingredients to join [K-Food Supporters](#), a community of Korean food enthusiasts nationwide.

Of the contestants from across the U.S. who submitted recipes and videos, three finalists were chosen for the downtown smackdown.

Hector De Haro of Glendale presented Kimchi Poseidon Waffle filled with kimchi and the brine, scallions, shrimp, cockles, gochujang, ginger, serrano chile and three types of flour — all-purpose, rice, and potato starch. Presentation included a side of rice wine.

Latesha James from Alexandria, Virginia grilled up a Kimchi Bulgogi Burger topped with pork belly, and Dong Hyun Kim from San Francisco, a vegan K-Mush K-Asserole of mushrooms and Asian pear over rice.

The first-place winner of the competition, for which the contestants across the US submitted videos of home chefs cooking Korean-inspired recipes, took home \$2,000 and will have their recipe featured on Yangban Society's menu for a limited time. The second-place winner scored \$700, and third garnered \$300.

An intimidating lineup of judges included star Yangban owners Katianna and John Hong, as well as star chefs Walter and Margarita Manzke of Republique, Jason Neroni of Rose Café,

and New York's Iron Chef Esther Choi.

While the chefs cooked, Yangban Society bites like its signature sweet and spicy wings and Korean sausage with sauerkraut in mustard sauce kept spectators and judges occupied. After 45 minutes of intense competition under challenging circumstances and honest criticism from the judges, an L.A. winner emerged.

Glendale's De Haro, whose day job is actually as a lawyer, came in first; James took second place; and Kim, third.

"I love Korean pancakes," De Haro told *L.A. Weekly*, as he basked in the thought of having his dish officially featured on the Yangban Society menu. "I make those pretty regularly, and got a new waffle iron a little while ago and had to figure out something to do with it, and this just came to mind."

So what's he going to do with the grand prize?

"Buy more kitchen toys, which is what I do with most of my money already," the winner admitted. [E]

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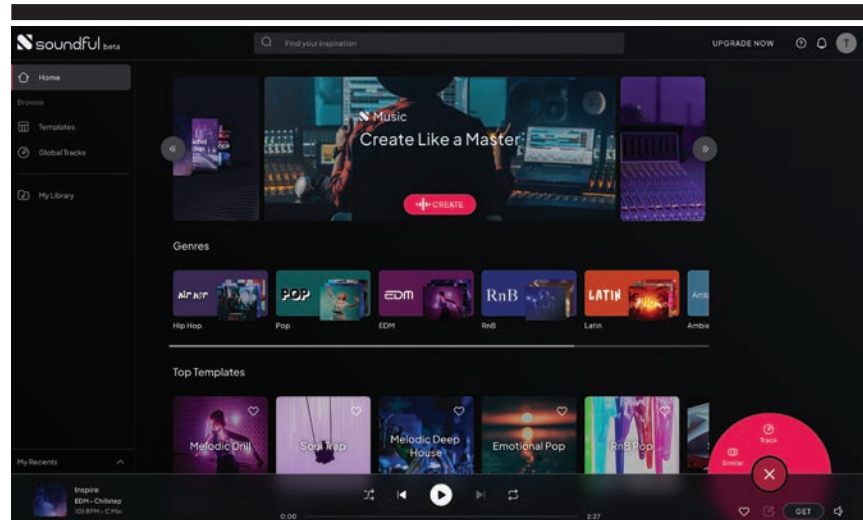
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## MUSIC

# THE RISE OF THE MACHINES

AI music is very much here, but is that a bad thing?

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



**Y**ou may have seen the videos on Youtube by now – regular people sitting in their home and using an Artificial Intelligence music app, sometimes more than one in conjunction, to create a song from scratch. The results are often mixed, to put it kindly. But importantly, they’re proving that it’s possible to instruct these programs to create an original song, and they will.

You may also have heard about FN Meka, the virtual rapper that was signed to Capitol Records on August 14 of this year, and then dropped on August 23 due to controversy about the developers’ stereotyping of black people through the character.

“FN Meka blurs the line between humans and computers,” read a press release at the time of the signing. “With his over-the-top flexing and extravagant sense of style, he has rapidly amassed billions of impressions across the internet since the independent release of his singles ‘Moonwalkin,’ ‘Speed Demon’ and ‘Internet.’ With over one billion views and 10 million followers on TikTok alone, he is the #1 virtual being on the platform.”

So let’s be clear – FN Meka was dropped due to cultural insensitivity, not because signing a virtual being is in any way insane. Next time, they’ll likely get the details right, and all of the industry’s might will be thrown behind a musician that

does not exist.

It would be tiresome to complain about the technology. Back when electronic music started to emerge in the ‘70s and ‘80s, and when DJs received the attention previously reserved for “musicians,” older music aficionados would complain and younger eyes would collectively roll. We don’t want to do that.

But the larger question is: if virtual musicians are getting signed, and if just about everybody can use these AI tools in their home to create original music at the push of a button, how many working musicians, producers, etc are going to be put out of work? And could the day arrive when we don’t need human musicians at all?

Perhaps, but it’s worth remembering that people don’t buy recorded music anymore — live music is where musicians make their money. Still, in this era of electronic music it’s not to imagine a show featuring an AI character beamed onto screens, while somebody watches over a laptop. In a world where Gorillaz exists, is it so hard to imagine going to see an animated artist?

Diaa El All is the CEO of Soundful, which he describes as “a human aided AI music creation platform. It helps artists, producers, content creators to TV and film production houses etc to create CD quality music at the touch of a button.”

El All is a musician himself, having played piano from the age of three. He

also has a degree in sound engineering and production, so he’s lived the life of a working musician and producer. He’s also heard all of the fears and concerns about AI taking over.

“It’s a very interesting thing,” he says. “Music or not, we’re surrounded. Everything around us is powered by machine learning and artificial intelligence, period. From Siri to Alexa to Google Home to everything really. I look at Soundful a little bit differently. I look at Soundful as, we’re democratizing music creation for everybody, the same way that the phone has democratized video creation. The phone is just a tool in your pocket. Photographers are able to just take videos or photos right away, high quality. There hasn’t been something to really break the barrier of entry to music creation the same way that Soundful has achieved. Not only that, but also helping well established producers and artists by really being a tool to augment human creativity rather than replacing it. And build on it.”

The key, El All says, is to make the tool simple enough for anyone, literally anyone, to use. Those aforementioned Youtube videos show people, while not using any noticeable musical skills, still getting tangled from a tech perspective.

“This is something that we’ve been working for really hard – how we can simplify it enough so, exactly like the iPhone, you can give it to a 13 year old and they’ll figure it out,” El All says. “Soundful is the same thing, and it’s a powerful tool for the 13 year olds all the way up to the Grammy award winning producers and musicians that use our platform as well. It helps to get started on ideas, get creative. In the studio if they want to come up with a few ideas really quickly, they’re able to use Soundful at the touch of a button.”

Kanru Hua is the CEO and research engineer at Tokyo-based Dreamtonics, the company responsible for creating Synthesizer V. In Hua’s words, “You come up with the lyrics and melody. Synthesizer V sings that for you. And, if you don’t like how it is performed, you can tweak it however you like (e.g. sing this part with POWER). What it means for musicians: there’s tremendous flexibility gained because you don’t need to worry about recording the vocals again following a last-minute change.”

So you can see how the puzzle comes together. You create the melody with a tool such as Soundful or AIVA, lyrics using a random lyric generator (of which there are plenty online) and have Synthesizer V sing them. It sounds scarily futuristic – like if Skynet tried its hand at songwriting. But Hua says that it’s all about how the tech is applied.

“It is probably hard to discuss AI music as a single topic because it depends on how you apply the technology,” he says. “In our

case, we’re making a tool for music creators. We’re trying to simplify and accelerate the workflow of vocal production. We heard people worrying that AI is robbing the jobs from musicians. While the creation of certain types of music, in particular when function is preferred over artistic values (e.g. ‘just add some background music there so it doesn’t sound awkward’) can indeed be automated to some point, it is up to the listeners to decide, and one thing AI alone cannot replace is the very notion of a humane identity behind the voice.”

El All agrees, saying that he absolutely does not ever see a world where human musicians are obsolete.


“What will make in my opinion a top song a hit is not the perfection of it,” he says. “It’s the human element that adds the imperfection to the song that makes it unique, that makes it human. Anything is possible, but to me personally it’s the artistic way of the human adding something very unique to the song is what will make it speak to other humans. That’s what will differentiate it. It’s about the art – if it’s a vocal, or if you export the whole project and manipulate it, what makes it unique is what they add on it. At the end of the day, it will never replace humans.”

Reassured? Not yet? A spokesperson for AI tool AIVA said, “AIVA does not intend to replace the human composers but to enhance their creativity and save time for them. AIVA is just a tool that functions under the composer’s supervision and the end result will always depend on the taste and the skills of the user.”

Looking at AI tools as something that can be used alongside existing instruments and technology rather than indulging in fear-mongering does make sense. These interviewees do make some solid points. After all, the invention of the DJ decks didn’t make the guitar obsolete. Even after drum machines came to be, people preferred drums. But it’s worth bearing in mind the fact that AI is still emerging technology, and it’s going to keep growing.

“There are a lot of companies that say they’re AI music but just tackle the content creator side of things, or are just helping with composition,” says El All. “There hasn’t been something that is end to end, that produces studio quality music at scale. That’s where you see Soundful playing a part. However, I see our machine learning and algorithms getting more and more advanced, and how we can really tailor everything based on user behavior, also incorporating on the video side of things so that music will be created along with the images in the video. There are no limits to where it’s going to be going, but in the short term I see it as a massive tool to empower the whole ecosystem of creators.”

Hau says that there are two fronts where vocal synthesis technology is changing the



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music industry. "If you look at what has happened to music tech in the past 50 years or so, there had been changes preceding the AI boom," he says. "It's like when virtual instruments got matured enough people would create the instrumentals in a DAW then decide to record it using real drums and guitars or not. We're now on the turning point when a 'prototyping' stage for vocals is becoming possible. I imagine in a few years this will be part of the standard workflow." "The other area is in connection to 'a humane identity behind the voice,'" he continues. "It doesn't need to be a human - if you have heard of virtual idols (e.g. Hatsune Miku), they have been a big thing in Asia. The idea is to create a virtual character that people can relate to, and let users create vocal synthesized songs for that charac-



Diaa El All

ter, essentially a distributed form of music creation. We are yet to see this idea becoming popular in the western world." Frankly, the whole thing is both exhilarating and terrifying, depending on your viewpoint and level of cynicism. When discussing AI rappers such as FN Meka with TMZ, hip-hop artist Hitmaka said, "The concept of AI is just a culture vulture type of thing, that AI doesn't give back to the culture, it just gives back to Capitol Records. We need more people inside of these buildings who are in the culture and are going to say, 'This is not right, I don't care if you fire me, but I'm not standing for this.'" Perhaps he's right. But we have a feeling that this technology is only going to become more prevalent, in music and beyond. [E]

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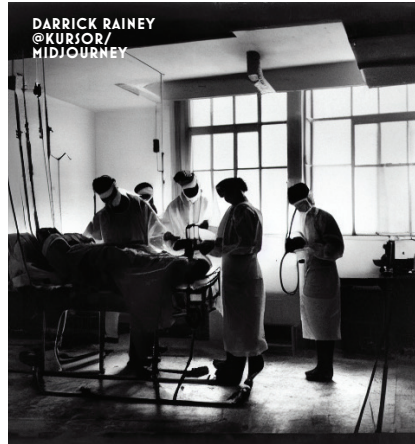
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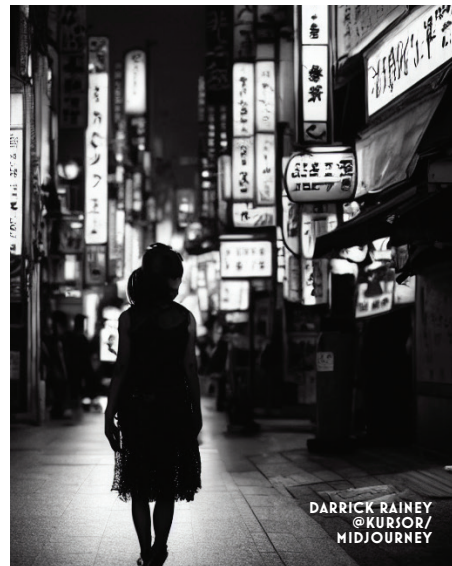




# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: GOOD FOR ART, BAD FOR ARTISTS?

The Threat, Promise, And Appeal Of Widely Available Ai Engagements In Art

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



**E**merging artificial intelligence models operating in the art world are the subject of a wide ranging discourse full of promises and threats, whose potential implications are only barely beginning to be felt. Many are captivated by the universe of possibilities that open up when an artist is in direct contact with an archive of visual learning stretching back and across all recorded history; many remain skeptical of what they see as outsourcing human creativity to a database machine. The former will make the case that the study of art history, for example, is already akin to accessing such a database, except now it's one that's more complete and quick than a human brain; the latter will remain unconvinced and evoke the notions of mistakes and the soul of intuition.

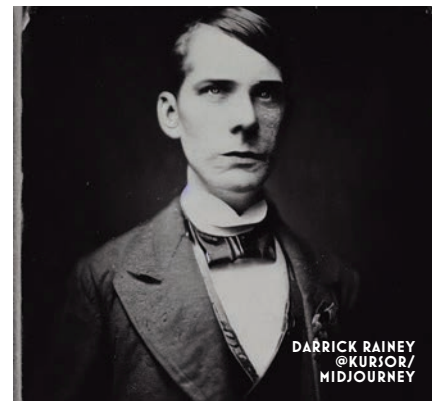
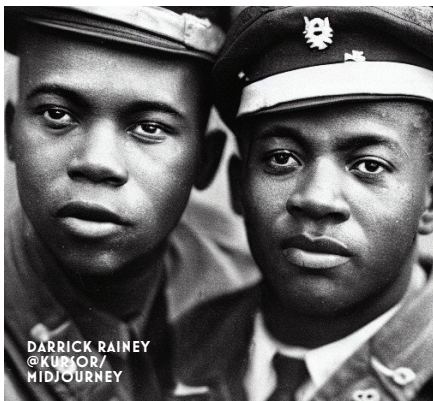
This conversation about the nature of cognition and creativity is itself a fascinating exploit, well suited to the kinds of

conversations artists and philosophers entertain. The exuberance of being in contact with a cosmos of ancestors in your field is a moving proposition. But there's another side to this, and that's the impact on graphic and commercial illustration, animation and character design, and the like — professional commercial artists who, without reference to the philological debate, are daily seeing their role erode, their very job itself being rendered obsolete in a way that few are worried will happen in fine art. At the same time, since so many of the AIs currently available to the public are prompt-based, it's ludicrously easy to borrow and steal another artist's style — just by typing their name into the creative process a tool, a collaborator, or the competition? Yes.

For artists keen to explore the nexus between their own creative process and the augmentation and innovation of AI, there is also a difference between analytical and generative models — one which sorts through datasets on the us-

er's behalf, and the other which creates "new" content based on everything it has learned so far, which is more analogous to a human brain having an idea. This and other points along the way are where questions of originality, authorship, and intellectual property come into play, occasionally in stark relief. An artist tells Midjourney, Dall-E, Night Cafe, Stable Diffusion, Dreamstudio or a host of other apps that they'd like "a landscape with a distant city skyline at night in the style of Henry Cole," or "a statuesque elf queen with ancient weapons aboard a tall ship sailing toward the horizon in the style of Rembrandt," or "jazz-era alley cats on a spaceship in a folk-art woodcut like Grant Wood," or — well, you get the idea. This is a fun game that will eat thousands of waking





hours in its addictive entertainment. Taken seriously, it could be a great way to achieve the instant gratification of an embodied idea, as a sketch; many programs let the user customize the file once generated. Not to mention all the fun to be had with nonsensical, poetic, or nonlinear language.

But what happens when an artist enters the prompt referencing the style of a living artist, one who would not like to be the learning model fodder for a

global network of instant competitors who seem to be flirting with copyright infringement by deliberately evoking their name in work they plan to claim as their own? And as a practical matter, what happens when a magazine's art director or an advertising company can take what would have been an email specifying the themes and parameters of a commissioned illustration — a public park in winter with playing children, dogs, and snow in the trees; a medical office wait-

ing room with a diverse group of patients all on their iPhones in photocollage style; a buffet table laden with exotic desserts and wildflowers in a Pop art style — and type those same words into Midjourney instead and get their result for free? Yeah, that is going to be a problem.

But back in the fine art world, with its higher tolerance for academic experimentation and breaking things, painters and photographers, poets and sculptors, filmmakers and animators, and all kinds

of artists whose work requires a profound engagement with world cultures, hidden histories, literature, architecture, politics and other expanded data sets — artists who truly view their relationship to AIs as collaborative, mutually informed, and the harbingers of a future in which the singularity is not only a physical union with our technology but a cognitive and consciousness-based one as well — are exuberant and quite bullish about the possibilities. [A]

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# BIDEN'S NEXT CANNABIS MOVE?

Advocates Plan To Push For Pardons For Those Convicted Of Nonviolent Cannabis Distribution Offenses As The Industry Continues To Cash In

BY JIMI DEVINE



President Joe Biden's move to pardon federal marijuana possession convictions is a step, but much work is left to be done.

First off, this isn't meant to be mopey. As Biden noted, his actions will help thousands who may have had difficulty accessing things like a good-paying job, housing, or educational opportunities. His call for governors to do the same thing at scale also would have a massive impact that would see tons of people get relief.

While nobody walked free last week thanks to Biden's pen, the people that did see relief from simple federal possession charges are now the test subject for helping people get their life back on track. The Congressional Cannabis Caucus had been calling for this move based on the standard Jimmy Carter set with draft offenders since February of 2021.

Some observers told L.A. Weekly they found Biden's move similar to the strategy advocates put in front of him last summer, but with less teeth. That plan would have seen additional relief for those with nonviolent federal distribution charges among others.

That is where much of the core of the legalization debate currently sits. Why are so many people still sitting in jail

for what the industry is making billions a year off of? Furthermore, how many of those convicted of possession with intent to distribute are there as a direct result of the racism study after study has shown us on the way we enforce cannabis crimes in America?

During his time at NORML, Justin Strekal organized congressional marijuana reform efforts as political director and went on to found the Better Organizing to

Win Legalization PAC. He was quick to give Biden credit and called his actions the first by a president that chipped away at criminalization, as opposed to past efforts that mitigated it like the Cole Memo during the Obama administration.

"Still, much more needs to be done," Strekal said. "And we need to be relentless and addressing how this review is going to go because should the administration come back with a recommendation for rescheduling, that would maintain criminal penalties for adult possession without a specialized prescription. But this serves as a first viable real pathway toward removing marijuana from The Controlled Substances Act."

Strekal also found last week's move to be a clear sign Biden would likely sign anything Congress is able to get all the way to his desk.

But with all the positives of the last week, there has been a little bit of confusion over how many people would see relief from Biden's move.

"It is profoundly difficult to message this in a 10-word answer," Strekal replied. "And that's the trouble here, right?"

Strekal explained under our Federalist system, the overwhelming majority of possession charges that have resulted in any amount of incarceration were a re-

sult of judges taking into consideration state and local criminal codes, not federal.

"And the president doesn't have the power to be able to pardon somebody for a state or local effects. It's just a lack of civic literacy that we have for the layperson, to be able to fully digest what just happened with a 10-word message," Strekal said.

If Strekal woke up tomorrow with the power to push marijuana reform in whatever direction he chose from here, he would first want to build upon this progress of last week and expand the

scope of those who are being pardoned to include those for our nonviolent distribution and immigrant populations who were deliberately excluded from this order.

Strekal offered his second move, too: "Then to have the Department of Justice issue enforcement guidelines for US attorneys to not take action against or to not enforce federal marijuana criminalization, a la an expanded Cole Memo," Strekal said. "Because we still, to this day, have not seen action taken for enforcement guidance since Jeff Sessions rescinded the Cole Memo on Jan. 6, 2018." 📌

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# LA WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

## EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

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Inc., 1711 W Temple S., Ste. 3600, Los Angeles, CA 90026

Property Administration Manager, F/T, Bachelor in Management or Related. Mail resume: Regency Apartments, Inc. 1120 West 6th Street Suite 1626, Los Angeles, CA 90017

S/W DVLP/ PDGC, LLC has an oppty for a Sr Engr II. May wrk from our HQ office in Los Angeles, CA or reside anywhere in the US & amp; wrk remotely from home. May wrk at other US locatns not prsntly known. Email resume w/Ref# LALWA to careers@pdgc.com. Must be legally auth to work in the US w/o spnsrshp. EOE\*

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Controls Programmer: Req. BA/BE/BS in CS or Engr. Mail Resume: Western Allied Corporation 12406 Florence Ave. Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670

Logistics Analyst: Req. BS/BA in Bus. Admin. or rel. Mail Resume: Hew H Kim CHB, INC. 17807 S Hobart Blvd. Gardena, CA 90248

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Construction Services Project Manager. Reqs: Bachelor's degree + 1 year of exp. Travel required 50% of the time within U.S.A. Submit resumes to the attention of Joseph Rivani, Global Investment & Development, LLC, 3470 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 1020, Los Angeles, CA 90010 or jrivani@gidlco.com.

System Integrity Engineering, Inc dba Structural Integrity Engineering Inc. in Chatsworth, CA seeks Design Engineers I to conduct parts dsgn & integration of structures into commercial aircraft. No trvl, 3 days a week WFH. Send CV: rvartanian@sieinc.com.

Director, Platform Build Services (Science 37, Inc; Culver City, CA): Direct, manage, develop, coach, and evaluate the software platform build services team. Telecommuting permitted from anywhere in the U.S. Send resume to: Katie Norris, Science 37, Inc., 600 Corporate Pointe #320, Culver City, CA, 90230

IT City National Bank has an oppty in Los Angeles, CA for a Bus Process Analyst. Email resume w/Ref# LALPA to TalentAcquisition@cnb.com. Must be legally auth to work in the US w/o spnsrshp. EOE

L.A. Care Health Plan seeks Environment Systems Engineer II in Los Angeles, CA to interface with technical & business stakeholders on design/construction/ implementation/evaluation of systems & applications. Req's: Bachelor's or foreign equiv. in CS, Comp. Eng., IT & 5 yrs in software configuration management, software or systems engineering, software project management, or software QA. Remote role, can be performed from anywhere in the U.S. CV to CVillalobos@lacare.org and reference job title.

Marketing Analyst needed at LAC Products. Job location: Glendale, CA. Send resume to 724 Thompson Ave., Glendale, CA 91201. Attn: Ara.

Senior Software Engineer (Los Angeles, CA) Responsible for analyzing users' needs & s/ware reqmts, testing & modifying s/ware systems, & suov'g subordinate s/ware engineers, Master's deg in S/ware Engg or a related & professional knowl in JavaScript, Flutter, & Python reqd. Mail resume to Outlier Collective Inc. at 10900 Wilshire Blvd, Ste #420 Los Angeles, CA 90024.

# LA WEEKLY Bulletin

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## SECURITY GUARDS NEEDED

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