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**WOMEN OF JAZZ UNITE
IN PALM SPRINGS**

**SONY PICTURES
ANIMATION AT DCON**

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GIADA DE LAURENTIIS: COMING FULL CIRCLE
THE CELEBRITY CHEF IS BACK TO BASICS WITH GIADZY • BY MICHELE STUEVEN

NEWS

NEWSOM HALTS HOMELESSNESS FUNDS, CALLS STATE PLANS 'UNACCEPTABLE'

Gov. Gavin Newsom paused funding for homelessness, rebuking the plans submitted by local government leaders.

BY ISAI ROCHA



(RON RETING/Flickr)

After reviewing homelessness plans submitted by California cities and counties, Gov. Gavin Newsom decided to pause state funding and asked state leaders to “do better.”

Newsom said the submitted plans would result in a 2% reduction in homelessness by 2024, with some city plans resulting in increases over the next four years. By that measure, it would take decades to make significant progress with homelessness issues.

“Californians demand accountability and results, not settling for the status quo,” Newsom said. “As a state, we are failing to meet the urgency of this moment. Collectively, these plans set a goal to reduce street homelessness 2% statewide by 2024. At this pace, it would take decades to significantly curb homelessness in California – this approach is simply unacceptable. Everyone has to do better – cities, counties, and the state included. We are all in this together.”

The governor had hinted at a more ag-

gressive approach during his gubernatorial debate on October 28, saying the state would hold local governments accountable for better plans.

“It’s unconscionable what’s happening on the streets and sidewalks, that’s why we’re requiring accountability plans,” Newsom said during the debate. “We’re not going to hand out any money any longer if local governments can’t produce real results. When I got here there was no homeless strategy. No plan. No resources of any merit.”

Newsom now plans to meet with local leaders in mid-November and if a plan can be agreed upon, the billion-dollar round of Homeless, Housing and Assistance Program funding may be distributed to the 13 largest cities in the state.

PROTESTERS WILL BE BARRED FROM CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS

The Los Angeles City Council barred protesters Friday and said it will no longer allow disruptions during its meetings.

City Council President Paul Krekorian

began Friday’s meeting by asking a handful of shouting protesters to take their seats. When they continued to shout, Krekorian had them removed from the council chambers by LAPD officers.

“There will be no more warnings for everyone who is in these council chambers. These disruptions will not go forward,” Krekorian said at the start of Friday’s meeting. “You will be excluded from the meeting if you do not immediately take a seat and be silent.”

Protesters have made their way to every on-site council meeting since the infamous leaked recordings between councilmembers Kevin de Leon, Gil Cedillo

from time to time and we’re going to deal with it as best we can, in a way that de-escalates the situation,” Krekorian said. “But one thing is very clear and very certain, and everyone in Los Angeles should understand, these meetings of the City Council will not shut down. We will proceed with the business of the people of Los Angeles despite people coming in here and trying to disrupt this meeting.”

L.A. CITY COUNCIL PLANS APRIL SPECIAL ELECTION TO FILL VACANT DISTRICT 6 SEAT

The Los Angeles City Council unanimously voted in favor of a motion to hold an April 4 special election to fill the council seat left vacant by Nury Martinez.

Council President Paul Krekorian stressed the importance of the council continuing to meet, despite public pressure to hold off its meetings until the resignations of Councilmembers Kevin de León and Gil Cedillo.

Krekorian said holding meetings is the only way to address “the very crisis... that so many of the members are talking about,” in relation to Martinez, de León and Cedillo.

“I think that it’s important to note that if this council were not meeting, we would not be able to set an election in CD6,” Krekorian said. “So over a quarter of a million Angelenos who are now deprived of representation because of the resignation of Mrs. Martinez, would be left without representation.”

Neither de León, nor Cedillo have been present for council meetings and have not followed Martinez in resigning for their roles in the infamous leaked recorded audio discussion.

Council President Paul Krekorian added that the council had done all it could do in terms of reprimanding de León and Cedillo, but it is exploring its potential options should the two councilmembers not be able to fulfill their duties. The council then voted on a motion that would allow them to investigate if additional actions can be taken by the council under those circumstances.

“The council has now taken, literally, every legal step that’s available to us under the city charter, to urge the removal, or resignation of Mr. de León and Mr. Cedillo,” Krekorian said Wednesday. “There is under the charter no provision by which the council can remove a member, other than... absence from the city, or failure to conduct the responsibilities of a council member.”

Budget discussions for the election will still be discussed by the council, as the special election would cost upward of \$7 million.

If needed, a runoff election for the district seat would occur June 27, 2023. [E]

and former member Nury Martinez, in early October.

Through the weeks, the council had allowed the public to audibly display their displeasure with the council members and had held their meetings despite continuous chants filling the chambers.

It took more than 20 minutes for all the protesters to be escorted out and those excluded individuals were told they may not be allowed to participate in the following council meeting.

The People’s City Council, an organization that often advocates for protesters, continued its call for de Leon and Cedillo to resign.

“These meetings are happening against the will of the people,” the group tweeted Friday. “NO RESIGNATIONS, NO MEETINGS.”

Before getting the rest of the meeting underway, Krekorian addressed the protesters and said the council meetings will not “shut down.”

“We understand that there will be attempts to disrupt this council meeting

CANNABIS

MICRODOSE WONDERLAND DOUBLES IN SIZE FOR 2022

Almost 3,000 of the world's psychedelic leaders converged in Miami, Florida for the biggest gathering in medical psychedelic history

BY JIMI DEVINE



PHOTO BY JIMI DEVINE

The world's premier psychedelic medical conference doubled in size this year as Microdose Wonderland returned to Miami.

The themes contributing to Year One felt like they had all been turned up a notch, but evenly. It never felt like it leaned entirely in the direction of science or money because the two are so intertwined in the psychedelic space. Much of the time, it was a celebration of both. There were 44 companies exhibiting, from magazines to labs that sell MDMA.

Much like last year, the event was a crossroads for all the new psychedelic data of the past 12 months. This new data included everything from the most extensive LSD microdosing clinical trials yet where 40 men received either six weeks' worth of doses or the placebo. After administering 1,102 microdoses over the course of the study, the researchers found credible evidence of an increase in energy, wellness, creativity, happiness and connectedness. And that's just a sliver of the various presentations the experts gave over the three days about

their latest findings.

Joining the scientists and billionaires across the two stages were representatives from various indigenous cultural groups who use entheogenic plants in their spiritual practices. The lineup included Chicago-based Dogon Priest Naba IriTah Shenmira, Apache elder LánéSaán Moonwalker, and Chief Mapu Huni Kuin from the heart of the Amazon Jungle. The trio would join the other indigenous representatives in leading ceremonies throughout the weekend that one might not expect to find at a business

conference. But they were a hit; the plastic bubble that would transform for ceremonies between sound baths was full for three days straight. At the very least, a healthy sign that some in the psychedelic space is trying to understand the roots of its healing traditions.

Microdose's Award Show was another highlight of the weekend. Paul Stamets took home a lifetime achievement award. Cybin, who we covered in January, took home psilocybin company of the year.

We caught up with Microdose's leadership during the weekend to see how its biggest event yet was going. Patrick Moher, Microdose's president, told L.A. Weekly the fact he could show up on time for day three was a sure sign things were running smoothly.

Moher went on to speak about maintaining the balance in the voices present.

"We really want this to be kind of a sounding board that represents what's happening in the industry, proportional representation, diversity and programming. Even just cognitive abilities, it's really important that we really drill down on that.

Moher was particularly hyped that Microdose's Director of Event Production Kristina Spionjakfor was able to get the FDA to participate.

"That was, I think, huge," Moher said.

As was the event compared to last year, Moher said it had basically doubled in every metric. The biggest surprise to him in this year's upscaling was how generous the psychedelic community was with its resources in taking Wonderland to a new level.

We asked Moher if the rapidly expanding world of ketamine therapy, on clear display at the conference, would help normalize the idea of psychedelic therapy to other substances?

"I think, honestly, it's doing a really good job and I think there's going to be a big boom after that," Moher replied.

The biggest surprise for Microdose's CEO Connor Haslam was just how much some of the companies had scaled up in the past year.

"I was talking to one company and they were talking last year, they brought three people. Now they're bringing eight and their entire platform has completely changed from the ground up," Haslam told L.A. Weekly. "And so many other companies have done that, where they've been able to develop products and come up with ideas and then get something at least close to fruition and close to market rather quickly. That has been incredibly productive."

We conducted almost 20 interviews at the conference, so keep an eye out for our continuing coverage in the weeks ahead. **LA**



GIADA DE LAURENTIIS: COMING FULL CIRCLE

The Celebrity Chef is back to basics with Giadzy

BY MICHELE STUEVEN

PHOTO BY AUBRIE PICK

Emma Award-winning celebrity chef Giada De Laurentiis has been on a 20-year marathon of nine cookbooks, countless episodes of 11 very personal shows on the Food Network including *Giada at Home*, restaurants, merchandise and is recognized by the International Hospitality Institute as one of the Global 100 in Hospitality, a list featuring the 100 Most Powerful People in Global Hospitality. She's crossed the finish line and is ready for the next race.

In June, she walked away from the Food Network after an intense 20 years, having been a significant part of the basic cable channel's international success, to return to the roots that propelled her to fame in the first place. The Italian-born chef is bringing it all under one roof with her own lifestyle and ecommerce platform, *Giadzy*, and kickstarting the catering business she started after college that attracted the attention of her former boss, super chef Wolfgang Puck.

"I've had lots of different homes for my different businesses and they've all been great," De Laurentiis tells *L.A. Weekly* at an intimate poolside dinner at her Pacific Palisades home. "I've learned a lot and want to give more of the 360 Italian experience and have control over it as much as I can. That's what I'm trying to create with *Giadzy* - to have the content and the products and have it all under one roof and really curate that whole experience and micro-manage it for a while. I wasn't able to do that through all of my other endeavors. I needed to go through all that to get to this place. It's a journey of experiences to understand what your end goal is. *Giadzy* is a culmination of all that experience brought into one home and innovating it with the digital world and going direct to consumer without the middleman. Food network was always my middleman."

The new platform features Italian products like panettone, pasta, sauces, antipasti, sweets, spices and books, as well as meal kits and gift sets. The Cinema Night Box is an homage to her grandfather Dino De Laurentiis, one of Hollywood's most famed film producers and the inspiration behind her love of food. It comes with a movie poster from one of his films including *King Kong*, *Bitter Rice* and *Barbarella* as well as amaretto truffles, Granisi Cookies With Manna Orange, Chocolate Cantucci from the third-generation bakers at Bonci and Guido Gobino hot chocolate. There are plenty of recipes, tips and an "Ask Me Anything" section, and for fans who will miss her shows, there are cooking demonstrations to come as well.

As for many of the Food Network's major stars like Pioneer Woman Ree Drummond and Michael Symon, the pandemic forced chefs to pivot and film



their shows at home with minimal family crews, which changed the cooking show landscape. Turns out, the public loved the more personalized, less stylized versions.

“Covid was the turning point,” she says. “It changed a lot of things for a lot of people, but for me it completely shifted my perspective and asked myself, what do I actually need to create content? Not very much. I went back to doing my own thing all the time - shopping for the food and prepping everything myself, setting up my demos and the recipes. I basically did it all myself and realized, oh man, I can do so much more if I can just focus my time on this one thing. That’s when I realized I can do all this on Giadzy. I don’t need to do it for the Food Network the way I was doing it anymore. I wouldn’t have realized it, if I hadn’t been put in the position of shooting at home with a phone. It was a lot easier than I thought it was going to be. I enjoyed it so much more and it was so personal. I could never get that personal on a set. I think Covid also gave us the permission to say, it’s OK, and people saying, we’ll accept it this way. It doesn’t have to be so perfect, and we really want to be more intimate and connect on a different level. Without Covid, I don’t think I would have gotten here so quickly.”

But getting here was at times a bumpy transition and her life wasn’t always charmed. She came to Los Angeles from Rome with her family at age 8.

“Coming to the states was rough,” De Laurentiis says. “In those days, it was rough for most immigrants no matter what. Kids can be cruel at times if you don’t fit into whatever they believe you should either look like or you should eat or how you should speak. I didn’t fit any of those characteristics. My parents were fierce about keeping our Italian



Top: Antipasti Board From Shop Products + Veggies
This photo: Mascarpone Cannoli Cheesecake With Fabbri Amarena Cherries



Top: Lemon Spaghetti
Apulian Almond Cookies With Italian Thyme Honey

culture and language intact. Family was above everything else. My parents were like, there’s four of you and you have all these cousins, why do you need all these friends? You can have fun at home!”

“I was embarrassed to have people over because my parents would just speak in Italian and make Italian meals, which was not what my friends would eat,” she says. “I’d get ridiculed at school or on the bus to school for my short hair, because my mother insisted on cutting my hair short so I would have golden locks when I was older. She insisted on nutella sandwiches and mortadella and leftover pasta. She would put it in little containers for my lunch. It was awkward. Kids teased me, so I would eat by myself a lot of the time. But then at times, when she made me a Toblerone sandwich, I could trade



Lake Como, Italy

with other kids. So I got in trouble for that, because in those days, you couldn't have chocolate for lunch. I was very shy about my name and my culture and my language and the food I was eating, and I was ashamed of it for a long time and angry. As a kid you just want to be like everybody else. As I grew up I realized how fortunate I actually was."

Long before there was Eataly, Dino brought childhood chef friends over from Italy to open the DDL Foodshow Italian specialty foods market and restaurant in Beverly Hills in the 1980s, where his granddaughter spent her free hours and developed a love of hospitality as she watched Dino hand out bread samples and toss pasta.

"It brought me to life," she says. "I realized how much I loved being around it and watching the 'AHH' moment on people's faces and that somehow I would like to create that for people. I spent a lot of time there as a kid after school eating, messing around and helping out.

I was just in Italy a few weeks ago with the Lazaroni family who make the little amaretti cookies and spoke to the grandfather who is in his 90s. We were in an upstairs room where he had all these historic artifacts, boxes from his parents. He said to me, 'You know I used to sell all these different cookies and ship them to your grandfather for DDL Foodshow.' He had some photos that he had saved of the two of them when he personally brought



Giada + Nonno Dino

a shipment to Beverly Hills and helped my grandfather set it all up. Sometimes life really takes you full circle."

Family has always been the core of the De Laurentiis brood and focus of Giada's shows. We've watched her 14-year-old daughter Jade grow up on the network, with her mother Veronica and aunt Raffy making regular appearances, as well. Stepping away from the grind of regular TV shows has offered the UCLA graduate flexibility and the chance to call her own shots.

"I can choose to do the things I want to do when I want to do them," she says. "I can work until 4 p.m., and then go watch Jade's volleyball game. I didn't have that flexibility before. When I was shooting, I'd shoot every day until 8 o'clock at night. You would think I could call the shots on that, but when you have a crew, it doesn't work that way. I want to take Jade to school everyday. I've only got about two years left to do that; she'll be driving herself soon. I want to be able to pick her up. I want to be able to go to her plays. I now



Dino De Laurentiis Pasta

have the flexibility to incorporate those things into my schedule. For the last 14 years, it's been rough. I used to think having her on the show was time spent together. Oh, she's coming to set right after school and I'll hang out with her then. But you never hang with them, because they're asking you things and want your attention and you can't. Hold on Jade, I have to finish this act, or hold on, i just have to do a quick voice-over or talk to the director for one second. Then by the time you're done, it's time to go to bed. Jade's had a lot of that in her life. It's too bad I didn't do this 10 years ago."

Moving forward, De Laurentiis is going full speed ahead with her catering business, which has been close to her heart since college and few high profile chefs are capable of taking on, save for her former boss Puck, whom she plans to challenge in the major event space. She already has two big galas scheduled for December. It will be a real test, as Puck pretty much has the corner on all of the major Hollywood events, including the Academy Awards.

"For now," says the diminutive former food stylist. "People are looking for change and a new experience in catering. Things that stay static die, so you have to be able to evolve. It's time for someone new to come into the game. I think we'll have restaurants forever, but people aren't looking to eat out like they used to and that's going to narrow down who's going to be successful in this business anymore. This is a good time for me to go back to where I started."

While she may have inherited a little of her grandfather's hubris, the free-spirited Italian California girl still understands the Hollywood pecking order.

"Somebody came up to my grandfather at the airport a few years back," says De Laurentiis. "They said, 'Oh my gosh! Are you related to Giada?!' He said no, she is related to ME.' That's how it goes." [L]



Lea DeLaria

PHOTO
BY TINA
TURNBOW

Nnenna Freelon

PHOTO
BY CHRIS
CHARLES

MUSIC

WOMEN OF JAZZ UNITE IN PALM SPRINGS

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

The 10th anniversary of the Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival takes place this week, on Nov. 11 to Nov. 13, and along the main attractions are Ledisi, Nnenna Freelon, Cyrille Aimee, Lea DeLaria and many others.

It's a wonderfully eclectic and impressive lineup, showcasing some of the different styles that encompass the jazz world. DeLaria, who is perhaps best known for portraying Big Boo on *Orange Is the New Black* but has spent years on the stage and screen, also has been singing jazz since he was a child.

"I used to sing with my dad who was a jazz pianist, in nightclubs back in the '60s," DeLaria says. "He noticed right away that I was very interested in music and he also saw that I wanted to sing. He taught me how to read music, and he taught me about bebop, swing and all the different styles. He taught me the language, essentially, but the one thing he always said was, 'Don't sing like a chick singer.' He used to say that to me all the time. Sing with gusto, sing with guts. Be musical. I always took that to heart. I always felt like that was, he really gave me the spine that I needed to pursue what I needed to pursue."

DeLaria released her debut album, *Play it Cool*, in 2001, and her fifth and most recent, *House of David*, came out in 2015. That one is a glorious jazz tribute to David Bowie, recorded with the full support of the late, great genius.

"Without David Bowie, this record would have never been made," DeLaria says. "It's that simple. I had a GoFundMe, and he tweeted out that everybody should go to there and give me money so that I could make this record. It was fucking crazy and amazing. He was saying that he'd heard me. I was like, 'When was David Bowie ever in my audience?' I figured it was the London Jazz Festival. I'm sure he must have seen me. I've been televised on that a couple of times, so I think that's probably what he saw."

As good as *House of David* (and particularly DeLaria's version of "*Modern Love*") is, it's been seven years since its release and fans want a new album.

"It has been a minute, for a couple of reasons," DeLaria says. "Orange is the New Black was keeping me incredibly busy. The pandemic really got in the way. And then I was cast in a new Broadway show that was a huge hit [*POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive*]. I had

six months where I had to be on Broadway. So we're scrambling now to get this record out, because we would like to have it out by Valentine's Day. It's called *Fuck Love*. It's all love-gone-wrong songs. It's got everything in it from a Betty Hutton song to Dua Lipa. I've got a couple of very modern ones and I've got some old ones. 'Goodbye Earl' – we do a gospel version that's really nice. The Cure's 'Boys Don't Cry.' I've always wanted to do that one. Dua Lipa – we're doing 'We're Good.' It's just Latin jazz. It's got the syncopated third, we just add the provocative chords."

Six-time Grammy-nominated jazz artist Nnenna Freelon's album *Time Traveller* was released last year, a body of work that she describes as deeply personal.

"It was of course created during COVID," Freelon says. "My husband [celebrated architect Philip Freelon] passed in 2019 and so I call it a sonic love letter to him. It's also where I was in my musical spirit, and in my personal spirit at the time. So it's the record I had to make. There are tunes that we loved, there are tunes that express my worldview from the shores of grief. It's not a sad record I don't think, but it points out that music does have the power to allow you to travel through time. Some of these tunes are 30, 40 years old. Others are more recent. I wrote a tune for the project. So it has that transformative and transportive power to take you to a space and time. That's power we don't always use."

Recent years have seen Freelon's voice evolve in a very natural, organic way, and the singer puts that down to grief in many ways.

"I really didn't know if I had a voice after my most recent sojourn with grief,"

she says. "I was a caregiver for three years prior to his passing, and then I was exhausted. Physically, emotionally, spiritually, in every way. So I didn't know if I had a voice. But my husband who was my partner all along my journey made me promise that I would keep singing. I promised, but I wasn't sure if I could keep the promise. What I found emerging from that space is that my voice was different. It was broken in some ways, but in a beautiful way."

As for this Women's Jazz Festival, Freelon is excited to bring her most recent album to an adoring crowd of like-minded souls.

"My record *Time Traveller* earned a Grammy nomination without the benefit of a tour, so I'm super stoked about doing music from that project and some other things," she says. "I started as a live performer, I was a recording artist after that, so I've missed my audience. I've missed my people, so I'm really stoked about performing this music in front of people. A Woman's Jazz Festival – how fabulous is that? To be surrounded by my sisters and expressing in this way. It's very, very joyous."

As for DeLaria, she'll be bringing the hits.

"I'm only doing five songs, so I'm probably going to pick the hits," she says. "I do 'Sweeney Todd,' and a couple of things off the Bowie record, probably Blondie's 'Call Me' off my second one. And I might preview one of the new tunes."

That all sounds good to us. Because a Women's Jazz Festival is a jazz festival worth celebrating.

The Palm Springs Women's Jazz Festival takes place on Nov. 11 to Nov. 13 at the Palm Springs Convention Center. [L]



ART

CHARACTER-DRIVEN: SONY PICTURES ANIMATION AND THE DCON-VERSE

DesignerCon welcomes back the animation powerhouse with an expanded art presence.

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

Everyone's favorite madcap weekend of art toys, collectibles, artisan merch, indie designers, fine art, digital drops, blind boxes, and international pop culture

gathering and emporium — *DesignerCon* — is back to its full in-person mayhem this month. And as it's done every single one of its 17 years before, it's grown. Enthusiastic audiences from lifers to newbies who descend in

their thousands on the Anaheim Convention Center (and visit the accompanying virtual platform) have come to expect the unexpected from the core of this arts-forward subculture.

Meeting international fan favorites in person, being the first on hand at anticipated releases, and impressive tech and curated art installations have always livened things up even more; past special projects highlighting the art of iconic films like *Back to the Future* and *Jurassic Park*, for example. This year is no exception, as *DCon*'s besties at Sony Pictures Animation return to the floor, celebrating the studio's 20th anniversary with a character-driven overview of its most appreciated titles.

Sony's memorable 2018 *DCon* debut featured a *Spider-Verse* AR experience. They've been back every year, but for 2022, the studio is showcasing the talent of its character and scenic artists — as befits the spirit of *DCon*, honoring the artistry behind the experience in both content and conversation, and looking back to pioneer moments in the genre's history, even as everyone's all agog for the next big thing.

"It's a great honor to have Sony Pictures



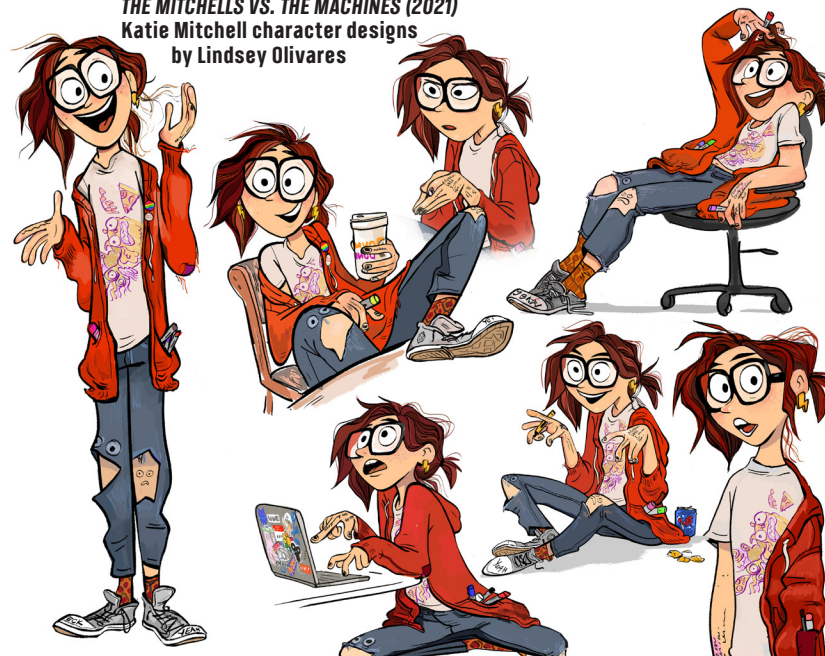
CLOUDY WITH A CHANCE OF MEATBALLS (2009)
Flint Lockwood character designs by Carey Yost

Animation celebrating their landmark 20-year anniversary at DesignerCon,” DCon founder Ben Goretsky tells the *LA Weekly*. “With their programming on the stage, we’re able to bring our communities together and add a whole new layer to the DCon experience.” Their presence features a colorful timeline, and a branded stage and programming schedule featuring exclusive, interactive presentations

and panels, hosted by Mark Brickey from Adventures In Design.

Sony Pictures Animation casts a fond look back at its first two decades as a fantasy factory, starting with their first full-length feature release, *Open Season* (2006), the Oscar-nominated mockumentary *Surf’s Up* (2007), the offbeat cultural touchstone *Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs* (2009), and 2012’s *Hotel Tran-*

THE MITCHELLS VS. THE MACHINES (2021)
Katie Mitchell character designs
by Lindsey Olivares



sylvania, the Golden Globe-nominated feature directorial debut from animation legend Genndy Tartakovsky that launched a franchise and broke the box office. Moving through sequels, *Smurfs*, and the truly revolutionary *Spider-Verse* (2018) — winner of the Academy Award, critical acclaim, and the hearts of a new generation of devoted fans — Sony celebrates more Oscar nods (*The Mitchells vs. the Machines*, 2021), the music of Lin-Manuel Miranda (*Vivo*, 2021), and perhaps a sneak peek at hotly anticipated future titles exploring the cosmos of *Spider-Man*, K-Pop, Elvis Presley, and Matthew A. Cherry.

“Our partnership with DCon began after the release of our first Oscar-winner,

Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, when we brought an immersive AR activation to the floor,” Kristine Belson, president, Sony Pictures Animation, features and series, tells the *LA Weekly*. “And we are ecstatic to be headed back to Anaheim to celebrate the 20th anniversary of our studio! DCon is such a wonderful celebration of the artists behind some of the most exciting art being made today — we will be showcasing top talent and creative leadership who will bring their collective experience in feature animation to the DCon audience via live demonstration and purposeful conversation.”

Explore the DCon-Verse for yourself at the Anaheim Convention Center, November 18-20; designercon.com. 📍

ENTERTAINMENT

CINEMA SLUSH: HALLOWEEN IS OVER, BUT THE HORROR-DAYS HAVE JUST BEGUN

Reviews of *Terrifier 2*, *Barbarian*, *Halloween Ends*, *Cabinet of Curiosities* and *American Horror Story NYC*

BY LINA LECARO



The hunger for horror most definitely is not going away with the Halloween season. Last month, people returned to theaters to catch titles such as *Halloween Ends*, *Barbarian* and *Terrifier 2*, and all three not only made an impact at the box office, they created anticipation for home viewing. The trio of terror is now available to watch at home via Peacock, HBO Max and Screambox, respectively. And there's more. Fiendish streaming fare currently in our caches, such as *American Horror Story NYC* (FX/Hulu) and Guillermo del Toro's *Cabinet of Curiosities* (Netflix) only add to the ghoulish goodness on TV, which shows no sign of waning as we move into

the holidays. In this edition of Cinema Slush, we review the best and the worst of the more-popular-than-ever genre available to watch right now.

Terrifier 2 (Screambox)

If you're a fan of gore, blood, guts, mutilation and pure merciless violence, you'll love this sequel from special effects artist/director Damien Leone. After watching the menacing and mute killer, Art the Clown, go wild in this, we started to question if we actually are fans of this level of carnage, and if so, what that might say about us and society in general. Seriously, with real world atrocities happening everyday, enjoying ultra-gruesome stuff like this

has to make you wonder why it's even entertaining anymore... Or maybe we're just getting soft in our old age?

T2 is gross for the sake of being gross and clearly out to outdo its predecessor. The original *Terrifier* – currently available to watch on the Roku Channel for free – depicts, among many inventive kills, a half-naked woman hung upside down and being hack-sawed in half. The girl was super-annoying, but still. In the sequel, the key moment, which is apparently making people vomit and pass out in theaters, is known as “the bedroom scene” and it sees another vapid teen tormented, bludgeoned

the antagonist as a soon-to-be iconic monster character. Art is truly the creepiest clown we've even seen on film (and that's saying something). We imagine we'll be getting chased by him at a branded haunted house next Halloween. This is a low-budget film that looks far more expensive than it is, too. In terms of brutal bang for your buck, it delivers. It was only in theaters, but as of yesterday, it's available to stream on any device via Screambox. Skip dinner before you watch and maybe shower and then go do something nice for humanity afterward?

Halloween Ends (Peacock)

We almost feel a bit hypocritical saying this after calling out the relentless brutality above, but Michael Myers has lost all ability to terrorize at this point. That old William Shatner mask has been through a lot and it was probably time to put it to rest. Sadly, *Halloween Ends* fails miserably at giving MM a proper send-off. How Jamie Lee Curtis, Blumhouse and John Carpenter could think for even a second that this lame, lifeless story was worthy of being the “final” installment is a true mystery. Ok, it probably won't be the last we see of that mask on film, but even if it wasn't positioned as the end, it's still a bad movie. Maybe even worse than the last one: *Halloween Kills*.

This time out, Myers takes on a partner in his killing sprees. Or something. We're still not sure exactly what the storyline was really trying to say, but the “exchange of evil” between the movie's new villain (a misunderstood young man who accidentally killed a kid years earlier) and *The Shape* kinda recalls another Curtis movie, *Freaky Friday*, and that's not a good thing. Some very irritating Gen Z kids get what's coming to them, which is nice, and whoever was in charge of the music has cool taste – the best two scenes include a truly campy kill set to *The Cramps* “I Was A Teenage Werewolf” and a euphoric dance party segment set to *The Dead Kennedys* “Halloween.” (RIP DH Peligro!) Other than these scenes, the best parts of the movie are spliced from the original film. Go watch that again instead or just wait til next year.

Barbarian (HBO Max)

We've been hearing great things about this one – which was released in theaters back in September and came to HBO Max just in time for Halloween season. As advised, we did not read about it beforehand so as to take the ride it provides. So we'll refrain from spoilers here and just say that writer-director Zach Cregger nails the sense of dread and discomfort anyone, but

especially a woman, might feel when she's in unfamiliar surroundings or in the company of a stranger.

Justin Long is relatable and real as a maybe good dude/maybe worthless douche, as is Georgina Campbell as the female protagonist/last woman standing who rents his home. When a creepy underground decent and mysterious "monster" move front and center in the story, there's also some comic relief and unanswered questions to keep the viewer engaged til the bitter end. That's when you'll realize that the film's title references something even far more disgusting than you probably thought. It's not exactly a twist, but it's a mother of a shift.

American Horror Story NYC (FX/Hulu)

Watching Ryan Murphy's AHS has been a complex kind of game for the past decade or so. How long did you stick with each season til you gave up? It's a question that gets asked a lot when discussing this show. Season One, aka "Murder House," sucked us in hard and we stayed glued til the bitter end. But only "Coven" and "Freakshow" also kept our attention for the full season runs after that. Even Lady Gaga could not save "Hotel" for us. And the retro slasher season was downright dumb. The AHS anthology of recent years was better, if only because it required less commitment. But after 10 years, this show ultimately feels like a chore more often than not. So far, AHS NYC is keeping our attention, but just barely.

Set in the '80s, it concerns a serial killer targeting New York City's gay community in the underground nightclub scene. "Big Daddy," the leather man killer targeting queer men here, could've been really interesting, but so far he's kind of a bore. This thing is slow, and it feels more like a True Detective-esque yarn than an in-your-face Murphy nightmare. The AIDS storyline, which takes much of its narrative from the real-life fears, conspiracies and prejudices of the time, was addressed so much better in Murphy's Pose, which offered Sandra Bernhard

in a similar role. It feels like redux and that might be OK for a standard horror story, but for a subject so important, it's almost as painful as what's shown on screen. The tone here is more serious than we've seen from AHS and the cast has some real heavyweights (Patti Lupone, Zachary Quinto), but so far, even the titillating BDSM aesthetic feels old hat. It's definitely not as intriguing as the promos might suggest.

Cabinet of Curiosities (Netflix)

Guillermo del Toro's eerily enchanting new series is one of the best anthologies of its kind, maybe ever. Growing up with *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *Night Gallery* and of course *The Twilight Zone*, most of us have fond and frightful memories of this kind of television. Later-era takes on TV anthologies were pretty campy (*Tales from the Darkside*, *Creepshow*, *Tales from the Crypt*, etc), but *Curiosities* is the first one that truly comes close to capturing the mystical macabre of masters like Sterling and Hitchcock. It's atmospheric, chilling, and downright beautiful. Maybe most important, it's reverent to the genre and

to the people who make it.

Each episode features an intro by del Toro and pronouncement about the story and the filmmaker showcased. The famed filmmaker speaks slowly and intently, making each episode feel like an event. And make no mistake, this is TV-MA grade horror that holds nothing back as it strives to weave blood-curdling tales of evil and mischief

from exciting movie minds including Guillermo Navarro (who won an Oscar as the cinematographer of del Toro's *Pan's Labyrinth*), Jennifer Kent (*The Babadook*), Ana Lily Amirpour (*A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*) and David Prior (*The Empty Man*). Prior's "The Autopsy" seems to be the favorite of the eight films based on internet chatter, but we also relished the extra-sensory foreboding feel of "The Viewing" and "The Outside," a topical yarn about beauty and acceptance that makes you think and feel things, even when it gets icky. *Terrifier 2's* Art the Clown would never understand! 📺



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