

LA WEEKLY

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INDIE SLEAZE FLASHBACK

**COBRASNAKE AND THE PRE-INSTAGRAM
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BY LINA LECARO





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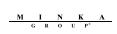
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GO EDITORS' PICKS

ARTS

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 2

Dahlak Brathwaite: Try/Step/Trip at the Wallis.

In a spoken-word, multi-character musical performed through the language of step dance, the story follows the journey of an anonymous narrator as he reimagines his experience in a court-ordered drug rehabilitation program. Layering characters, poetic verse, and dialogue over music to create a theatrical piece that blurs the lines between hip-hop and dramatic performance, Try/Step/Trip emerges from the belief that the criminal justice system functions as a normalized rite of passage for too many young Black males. 9390 N. Santa Monica Blvd., Beverly Hills; Performances ~ursday, February 2 - Sunday, February 5; \$40-\$50; thewallis.org.

Bastiaan Woudt: Cadence at Fahey/Klein.

Bastiaan's distinctive point of view is directly influenced by the photographic masters of yesteryear, while his monochromatic imagery is wholly contemporary. His modern approach to keeping the tradition of portraiture evolving is evident through his use of attenuated depth of field and two-dimensional perspective. Woudt's unique perspective finds new ways to see the human form. His work is minimalistic yet moving, playing with the beauty of imperfection to push the traditions of portraiture. 148 N. La Brea, Hollywood; Opening reception: ~ursday, February 2; Book signing: February 4; On view through March 18; free; faheykleingallery.com.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 3

Dorian Wood: Canto de Todes at REDCAT. A 12-hour composition and installation inspired by a lyric of the late Chilean singer and songwriter Violeta Parra, Wood's Creative Capital-awarded project emphasizes the urgency of folk music as a vessel for social change. A genre-defying canon of songs arriving as a durational spatial experience, the work is divided into three movements.

The first (8:30pm) and third (7:30am) are live hour-long chamber pieces influenced by folk, popular, and experimental music.



The Billboard Creative
Amanda Lopez

The second (9:30pm-7:30am) is a 10-hour pre-recorded piece unfolding in multiple spaces within REDCAT over the course of a single night. 631 W. 2nd St., downtown; Friday, February 3, 8:30pm-8:30am; \$20; redcat.org.

We the People at The Billboard Creative

(Outdoor). A new exhibition turns billboard ad spaces into an open-air art exhibition for all, featuring 30 emerging and established artists working in photography, painting, drawing, mixed media, and collage. "My intent was not only to narrate TBC's vision, but also the world in which TBC belongs: the streets...and the people in the streets, coming from all walks of life, all of us together," says its curator Mona Kuhn. This year's featured guest artist is Bryan Ida, who addresses the political zeitgeist through fragmented portraits of artists and curators. This year also inaugurates TBC artist grants — awarded to Lola del Fresno, Gail Postal, and Werllayne Nunes. On view in neighborhoods across the city from February 3; free; thebillboardcreative.com.

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 4

The Marriage of Figaro at L.A. Opera. Something old, something new, something borrowed and something... threatening to throw Figaro's wedding plans into disarray. Count Almaviva's wandering eye has landed on his wife's maid Susanna, who's about to marry his own manservant Figaro. Racing against the clock, Figaro quickly concocts a plan to outwit his master. Will the wily duo outwit the Count in time to save the day? Mozart's greatest comedy sparkles with disguises, wit, trickery and humanity, all under the masterful baton of Music Director James Conlon. *Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, downtown*; Performances February 4-26; \$29-\$399; laopera.org.

Trulee Hall: Plays on Foreplays at Rusha & Co.

"Trulee Hall gathers...the myopic histories

of her individual mediums, the funny camp quality of craft coupled with desire, pop spirituality, sex, "inappropriateness"—and creates a world where there is no embarrassment in pleasure," writes Christina Catherine Martinez in the exhibition text. "A suite of paintings plays with the forced fantasy relationships we bestow upon animals, the unspeakable subtexts coming out to sun themselves. My favorite is the mermaid on the couch whose yishtail doesn't even cover her pasty human ass. It's like being mooned by mother nature." 244 W. Florence Ave., South L.A.; Opening reception: Saturday, February 4, 6pm; On view through March 11, free; rusha.co.

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 5

The Hidden Meanings of Ancient Nubian Jewelry Getty Villa (Live & Virtual). Located where extensive trade routes met the Nile River, ancient Nubia was a complex and cosmopolitan region and a major exporter of gold. Over thousands of years, jewelers used gold and other precious materials to create works of astonishing beauty and technical skill. What does this jewelry tell us about Nubian beliefs, tastes, and world view? Denise Doxey, curator at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, traces the geographical and historical contexts of Nubian jewelry to draw out its hidden meanings and intriguing questions. In tandem with the exhibition Nubia: Jewels of Ancient Sudan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, on view through April 3. 17985 PCH, Pacific Palisades and on Zoom; Sunday, February 5, 2pm; free; getty.edu.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 6

Kristina Wong: The Auntie Sewing Squad Guide to Mask Making, Radical Care, and Racial Justice at ALOUD. Performance artist, comedian, activist, and local elected official Kristina Wong began sewing masks three days into the COVID-19 shutdown and spreading the word through her social me-

dia. Due to the overwhelming response, she enlisted friends and strangers to form the Auntie Sewing Squad to provide PPE and other relief to people all over the country. Tonight's program tells the stories of these primarily BIPOC folks who took up the call to fill in the gaps of the U.S. government response by creating a model for mutual aid in the 21st century. Join Wong and the Aunties as they share their stories. *Central Library, 630 W. 5th St., downtown*; Monday, February 6, 7pm; free; la.org.

MUSIC

FEBRUARY 3-9

Cheat Codes

The Fonda Theatre

Los Angeles-based electronic trio Cheat Codes is composed of DJs and producers Trevor Dahl, Matthew Russell and KEVI (real name Kevin Ford). The group put out the Level 1 EP in 2018 and followed it, appropriately enough, with Level 2 the following year. Their most recent album is One Night in Nashville, released in January, so expect plenty of that at the Fonda. Dixie D'Amelio and Space Rangers also play. 9 p.m. on Friday, February 3 at the Fonda Theatre, \$33, fondatheatre.com.

Ari Lennox

The Wiltern

R&B star Lennox is performing two shows at the Walter — this one on Saturday, and one on the preceding Thursday. The DC artist released her Age/Sex/Location album in September and it's been pretty much universally loved so expect another big year from her. 7 p.m. on Saturday, February 4 at the Wiltern, concerts.livenation.com.

Agent Orange

Alex's Bar

"Inevitably, if you know what you're doing, [the sound] becomes more refined and it becomes more of a focused version of what it was," frontman Mike Palm told us back in 2017. "I have to say, it's kinda working like that for me." No kidding. Agent Orange is in Long Beach this week, and they have 3LH, Shock Therapy, and Hex Code with them. 8 p.m. on Saturday, February 4 at Alex's Bar, \$21.38, alexbar.com.

Famous Dex

The Regent

Chi-Town rapper Famous Dex dropped his Lost on Saturn mixtape at the tail end of last year, though it's been a while since his last full studio album, Diana, in 2020. Hopefully we'll get plenty of new material at the Regent. He is, after all, dubbing it the Revival Tour. 7 p.m. on Wednesday, February 8 at the Regent, \$25, regentdla.com. 📍

FIDEL'S AND CARROTS DROP COLLAB MADE IN L.A.

We caught up with Fidel to talk about the popular new clothing capsule collaboration with Anwar Carrots.

BY JIMI DEVINE



Fidel's x Carrots is proving to be the hottest cannabis industry clothing drop of Q1.

As we've covered many times here at L.A. Weekly, Shant "Fidel" Damirdjian is one of the local faces shining during these dark times in the cannabis industry. He had a wild 2022 with his victory over some of the best cultivators in the world at Transbay Challenge IV — the Hash Hole exploded to the most famed 'preroll' in California if you're even comfortable calling it that, and he opened up his own spot in the desert without the help of the corporate oppressor. A great year for anyone in cannabis.

So how does he top it? He comes out of the gates early in 2023 with a fantastic collaboration with Anwar Carrots. Carrots got into the fashion game in 2007; in 2015, he'd launch the Carrots by Anwar line. Vibrant oranges among other colors, and stylized carrots and rabbits are par for the course with the popular menswear line.

The collaboration with Fidel's started just over a year and a half ago.

"Anwar blessed us with complete creative control the entire project," Damird-

jian told L.A. Weekly. "Dabber Dan and I, my right-hand man, designed every bit of the box, the bags, and the clothing was in. Even the cut and sew on the hoodies."

They would eventually settle on a 50/50 cotton and bamboo blend made in Los Angeles and find that bright orange they were looking for, after some trial and error over the last 18 months.

Each box in the limited edition of 500 includes the hoodies and sweatpants set made, screen printed and packaged in LA. There also is a Fidel's x Carrots T-shirt, headwear, four Croc Jibbets, a commemorative 3D printed carrot with a hash hole, and a half ounce of Fidel's popular weed.

It's very fair to argue the cannabis aspects of the box are easily worth more than half its \$600 price tag.

After the entertainment industry, many would argue cannabis and fashion is where Los Angeles has some its biggest global influence. We asked Damirdjian his take on that sentiment.

"100% it's something you don't see done often; if it has, it didn't catch my attention and I apologize," Damirdjian replied. "But I feel like fashion and cannabis have



so much to do with one another. They are different audiences within the same audience. It's a great thing to work with another cannabis company and within our community, but to branch out of it to get the attention of people in the clothing industry, it's amazing.

Damirdjian argues it triggers so much more love crossing his audience and Anwar's audience he's built over the years. He appreciates how wowed people from both sides of the fence have been after months of effort trying to get it right to their vision.

Damirdjian is excited about what's next; don't expect to see these boxes again.

"This is like one and done. I'm trying to touch as many people that follow my following, Anwar's following with this,"

Damirdjian said. "This cost \$600 for the box; it's not something that everyone can afford. But the true collector is getting so much in the box. I'm not just taking money from the consumer, I'm giving so much more."

Again, a lot of it comes back to being a unique spirit in a crowded space for Damirdjian.

He knows everyone's trying to do something different. He considers the Carrots collaboration a sought-after project for anyone, and when he got the chance, he was not letting it slip through his fingers.

"It took so much time, finances and we did it with so much cadence, but it opened up a lot of doors for me now. I can already see it this early on. I can't wait till more people consume it," Damirdjian said. ■

CHEESEMONGER KURT GURDAL BRINGS THE CANYON GROCER TO SANTA MONICA

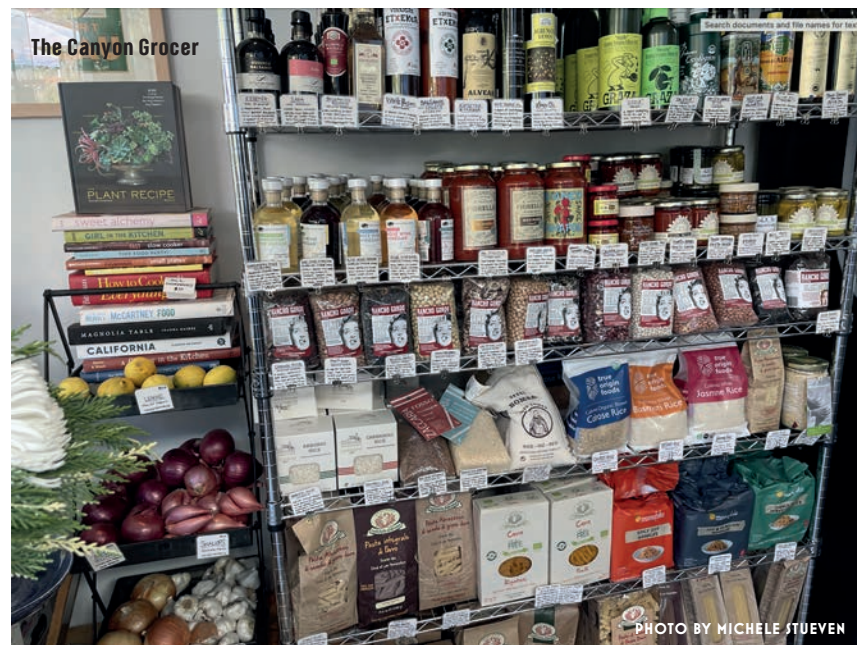
BY MICHELE STUEVEN



It's just under 150 square feet — smaller than most walk-in closets in Santa Monica Canyon — but second-generation cheesemonger Kurt Gurdal has managed to squeeze close to 1,000 different products into the Canyon Grocer. Everything from beans, pasta, vegetables, cheese, juices, meats, nuts, sauces, vinegars, oils, olives, condiments, flowers and books that stack up to the ceiling have their own reason and story for being there.

“The majority of the products here have stories that are close to me,” Gurdal, who

grew up in his parent's famed Formaggio Kitchen in Cambridge, Massachusetts, tells L.A. Weekly. “I carry one brand of pasta that my family has carried since I was a little kid, Rustichella d’Abruzzo. I remember going out to dinner with the importer when I was very young and he taught me to mix greens with my hands so I wouldn’t bruise the lettuce, and I’ve always loved his pasta ever since. It’s good quality and it’s close to me. On the other end of the spectrum, I carry my wife’s favorite beef jerky from Bishop, California.



We were ordering by the pound during the pandemic and realized we should just carry it at the grocer. Bonnie’s Red Pepper jelly started out in copper pots in my family’s kitchen on Sundays. I also have a selection of local products from around here like Ely’s honey, who got his start right up the street and other people I’ve met along the way. There’s an abundance of really great local producers, so I base it on taste, who these people are and what I think the community needs.”

Being the first recorded grocer in the Santa Monica canyon, the tiny pantry is a welcome gift for the neighborhood that would otherwise have to drive through traffic to pick up that forgotten carton of milk. He also carries frozen pizzas, caviar and bread. Gurdal picks up frozen Peads & Barnetts sausages from the Santa Monica farmers market every Wednesday and sells them without any markup. He also loads up on berries and stone fruit for neighbors who can’t make the market.

The shop opened Labor Day of last year, after a few months of doing a pop-up in the courtyard of his current space on West Channel Road, where he created cheeseboards from his vast knowledge and experienced cheese lineage.

While the UC Irvine graduate still creates those cheese boards for customers, he’s got a cheese-of-the-month club and advice on how to make your own.

“It’s like trusting a barber or a stylist, you trust what they’re going to do for you,” he says. “A local cheesemonger or butcher is the same thing, you trust them to get the job done correctly. Secondly, remember what you like. Start breaking cheeses down to different styles rather than actual names. There are only so many styles, but so many different producers. Once you’ve got your styles, you can pick them out based on sight. I always recommend to go out of your comfort zone and try one or two new styles every time you make a cheese plate, just so you’ll know whether or not you like it.

“Some of the cheeses here are from producers I really like and would use for a cheese plate at home and standard things that people really love like a good triple creme or cheddar,” Gurdal says. “You mix textures, strengths, milk sources from Indiana to California to Wisconsin to France, Spain and Italy. I have a few staples I love and then I’ll switch up six to seven different varieties here just because of the space.”

In addition to his cheese obsession, Gurdal also is a second generation volleyball player, a perfect fit for the canyon crowd, which includes customers like olympic champion Sinjin Smith and wife Patty. Gurdal’s father Ihsan came to the U.S. as part of the Turkish Volleyball team and later coached at Harvard.

“I’d carry more if I could,” he says. “I just applied for my beer and wine license and have no idea where I’m going to put them. I guess I’ll have to hang them from the ceiling.”



INDIE SLEAZE FLASHBACK

Cobrasnake and the Pre-Instagram Y2K Nightlife Scene Revisited

BY LINA LECARO

It's hard to imagine or barely even recall now, but once there was a world in which "selfies" did not exist. Print and TV media were the biggest influencers of culture. Typing messages or "texting" as it came to be called, was a weird and novel way to communicate. And a bold new social ecosystem was emerging on the internet, allowing us all to redefine ourselves by creating something we never had before: an online persona. Friendster was fun, providing a place on the web that showed us who we knew and who our pals knew, inspiring connections. But it was quickly crushed by MySpace, a sexier, savvier online meetup and "place to share friends" as the slogan touted, where we posted our interests and music lists, building a network of BFFs both real and faux (all starting off with the same guy, co-founder Tom Andersen).

Imagery was, of course, the most important part of this equation, but we didn't always have pictures to choose from like we do now; definitely not digi-

tal ones. We didn't document every move, meal, outfit, concert or sunset, mostly because there really wasn't a convenient way to do so. If you wanted snapshots of a wild night out on the town, for example, you had to bring a camera or hope that the party or club had a photobooth, or more preferably, a real, roaming photographer who might post pics on the event's website the next day. In the early aughts, Mark "the Cobrasnake" Hunter, a bespeckled, curly haired teenager from Beverly Hills and one-time assistant to artist Shepard Fairey, took the concept and made it his own, strapping on a Canon SLR and diligently documenting the nightlife scene in L.A., just because he could.

Anybody could have and eventually many did try to do what he did, but nobody got what he got on film. Cobrasnake's colorful workout-wear aesthetic garnered attention and his unassuming yet ironically hip aura attracted equally freaky and fabulous young adults who

liked to go out — some famous, some infamous in the underground, most neither until he chose to feature them in a photo.

These kids were always eager to mug in front of his lens like drunken supermodels at an elevated fantasy fashion shoot, and when he saw certain scenesters had something special, he made them his muses. But beyond the effortless appeal of anti-model Cory Kennedy and her messy-tressed ilk, his ultimate inspiration was Los Angeles itself, at least until he started traveling the world for runway shows and sponsored soirees. It was mine, too, as I found my own niche covering nightlife for *LA Weekly*, first in the early '90s as assistant for this publication's beloved and feared *La Dee Da* column (which luminaries like Courtney Love still eulogize to this day in interviews) and then as a columnist myself.

With *Nightranger*, my early 2000s scene column, I sought to convey the debauchery and the diversity of L.A.'s

wildest happenings with celebratory, less snarky words than my predecessors and a wider scope: drag clubs, punk parties, art shows, red carpets, goth grottos and "hipster" shindigs. But event photos were a harder endeavor, and when I met Mark, I saw the magic in what he was doing immediately. So did the *Weekly's* editor-in-chief, Laurie Ochoa (now at *LA Times*). Soon enough, Hunter was shooting images to accompany my writing in this publication. Eventually, we had side-by-side columns in print — his was called *Snakebites* and it was a sampler platter from his website — changed from *Polaroidscene.com* after a cease-and-desist to *Cobrasnake.com*. In 2004, only a year after we met and first collaborated, the *LA Weekly* featured Hunter's photos in a cover story about the new nightlife renaissance. After he went on to work on other projects and commercial photography a couple years later, I bought a fancy camera and created a new column, "Lina In LA," to chronicle



became the epicenter of “indie sleaze,” as this era is referred to today. I was a regular at Cinespace Tuesdays, which later became Dim Mak Tuesdays, when promoters Franki Chan and Steve Aoki parted ways and rising star DJ Aoki came to prominence for his record label and riotous turntable sets. This was the Cobrasnake’s homebase. His documentation of what was happening there and around the corner on Cahuenga Boulevard (dubbed “the Cahuenga Corridor” by my friend and LA Times nightlife columnist Heidi Cuda) resulted in a culture-shifting moment that put L.A. clubbing and L.A. lifestyle in general, on the media map beyond movie stars and velvet ropes. So much so that actual celebrities (Paris Hilton, Lindsay Lohan, Hilary Duff) started to rock and roll with the hip cliques, too. It fed into the popularity of course, as did the emergence of Facebook and later, Instagram, which probably also killed it. Subversive subcultures

people have been reminiscing about our columns in the LA Weekly since the book came out. That was almost 20 years ago. Everything was so different – no social media, no Uber, no smartphones. It was a simpler time.”

But how did Hunter’s visuals outshine others and ultimately set the standard for what was cool? “I think it was the curation, that’s what people always credit,” he answers. “My blog told a story about the night. It wasn’t just about everybody and everything. It was what I thought was cool, and what I thought was interesting, and it was also the very early indie days. I loved celebrating bands, art and the culture that was so exciting to me and I wanted to showcase that on the blog. It was untraditional at the time because most mass media just put a few photos in a magazine, you know, the rock shots in the front of Spin and Rolling Stone, one image or a couple. But what about the crowd? What about the backstage? What about everything else that paints the pic-

and Aoki’s first encounters with Hunter at their early 2000s It spot called Fucking Awesome at the Beauty Bar. “He just looked the part and captured the spirit of what we were doing, and the photos were great. From the perspective of being in the party, you can have an amazing night but you really can’t see the other perspective of what it was like to live it from the outside – you’re in the DJ booth, or you’re on the dance floor or you’re making out with someone or you’re smoking a cigarette in the back. I’d never really seen such a complete picture of what it was like to be at the party. Ever. For the first time we had the full experience of it. He came back the next week and he immediately became an essential element.”

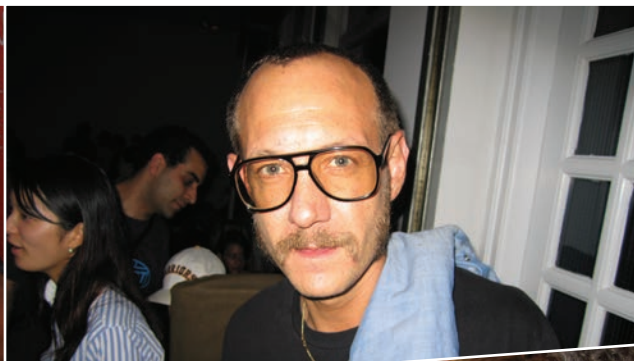
Fucking Awesome not only broke down barriers in nightlife musically (they regularly played hip-hop, indie rock, classic rock and even pop in the same sets) but their crowds were the most mixed I’d seen covering clubs in a long time. From Brent Bolthouse-promoted bottle service boites

like, ‘who is this kid?’” remembers Chan, of his

raver who did the map points and illegal warehouse hunts in the early ‘90s, and a fan of the Larry T-inspired electro scene out of New York and later, the U.K., it was interesting to observe everything become new once again in L.A. Cobrasnake, Chan and Aoki were on the forefront of bringing these elements to a new generation, and it was amplified and perfected by the internet like never before, ultimately becoming a world-wide phenomenon.

Sleep When You’re Dead

Hunter’s book and its representation of the era is “nostalgic to say the least,” shares Aoki, who’s not only a top DJ where he now lives in Las Vegas, but an accomplished producer, and the subject of a Netflix bio-doc about his life. “It was definitely the birth of ‘Steve Aoki the DJ.’ Being in L.A. having Cobrasnake documenting every single thing I did, it made me more recognizable, not just as a DJ but as a cultural figure in the world in which we existed, you know, that bubble. It was what pre social media looked like for club kids – how we thrived, how we communicated and socialized, and con-



manager, went on to found the electronic music label Ed Banger Records, signing artists like Justice, Cassius, and more. After pioneering the trend of musicians as DJs, featuring bands such as Interpol, the Killers and Mickey Avalon on the decks at their first clubs, Chan and Aoki quickly embraced more techno-tinged sounds at their clubs and Banger's roster was tops. When they parted ways, Chan went on to do a competing night called Check Yo Ponytail and started his own marketing agency IHeartComix, while Aoki did a host of clubs around town, most memorably with his friend DJ AM. He also got into remixing and producing, creating music with Moving Units Blake Miller under the banner Weir Science, and releasing his own DJ mix album, Pillowface and His Airplane Chronicles in 2008. From there, his credits and his touring history is dizzying – collabs with the likes

into it – the lifestyle behind the music. Mark documented it really well."

As I've written before, the first time I met Hunter was in the VIP section of Coachella in 2003. Clad in dyed, dayglo jogging short-shorts, sweat socks and a matching terry cloth headband, he was a site to behold. But what I really noticed was his ability to hone in on the most charismatic fest-goers, not only snapping their ensembles, but their essences, sometimes in just a few seconds. When he asked to take my picture, I was flattered – I made the cut – and like everyone else, I was excited to go to his website the next day and see my image alongside the beautiful/bodacious party people.

His website was narrative entertainment and at one point, we all wanted to be in the story. He was forging an exciting new frontier, as the pre-Instagram, post-paparazzi zeitgeist was priming it-

the connective tissue for what culture is, but there's so much more that goes

butted its own slate of blog content, including party girl collective reports I contributed to, called the Style Council. We had no idea how big blogging and later, social media, would be or that technology would take over to the extent it did. Imagery has always helped define culture, but the accessibility that computers and smartphones would bring to our interactions was unfathomable back then, not to mention the damage it would do to real media.

The Big Picture

Beyond the clubs and the festivals, sponsored soirees – in the desert during Coachella, at South by Southwest, at Sundance, etc. – became more and more a part of the aspirational amusements people wanted to voyeuristically ogle through an insider lens like Hunter's. Swag and celebrity started to outshine the nitty gritty nightlife stuff, but he kept his eye steady, shooting the big names (the likes of Kim Kardashian and Katy Perry are seen in his later pics)

self for something bigger. It was at this time that *LA Weekly* de-

alongside the nobodies, with an egalitarian enthusiasm. And since everybody knew who he was, he had access that few others could match.

Publications like *Vice*, *Anthem*, *Filter*, *Urb* and *Paper* (the latter two, outlets I wrote for alongside freelancing for *LA Times* and the *Weekly*) employed their own scene-driven photographic spreads, viewing them as complementary components to written journalism online and in print. The coverage conveyed the street chic and messy mystique of the time, and the marketing potential. *Vice* in particular, honed a similarly glam-trash aesthetic with its magazine, which evolved and grew over time via its TV channel. As online platforms began to take shape, branding became more important than ever, and media outlets began hosting their own big bashes, a practice that continues today, even as magazines like the aforementioned are either hanging by a thread or long gone.

Like Aoki with his record label, Chan tapped into the power of marketing with *IHeartComix*, the logo of which was on all the early flyers – remember actual paper-printed flyers? -- alongside Dim Mak and the Cobrasnake's URL. In 2006,



Chan recalls his first solo Comix event with *Peaches*, *She Wants Revenge*, *U2* and *Simian Mobile Disco* at SXSW. I remember it as well: not only did I deejay a few events that year myself, but I covered the festival for LA Weekly, all while pregnant.

Today, IHeartComix is one of the most successful creative marketing content studios in the business, working with everyone from Disney and Marvel to Interscope and Beats by Dre. As technology and PR progressed, it elevated things to a more sophisticated level, and Chan says he started to see things in “whole branding package” terms. “Ever since I was a kid, I was obsessed with movies, comic books, TV, and music, via MTV,” says Chan. “It’s all I absorbed all the time. So even when I was promoting a show, whether it was a punk show or a nightclub, my mind was very wired to think about things like a movie or like a comic. That approach really stood out because it was different from how most people were doing it.”

Of course, photography has always and will always be a big part of marketing a lifestyle to consumers. As Hunter’s work became a familiar part of the pop culture landscape, he started to score big gigs that took him out of L.A., including New York Fashion Week. Others filled the gap. NYC’s Merlin Bronques, by the way, had his own photoblog called LastNight’sParty, and it was fun to see the two fellows trade off, shooting each other’s cities from time to time. Shadowscene, Rolling Blackouts, Rony’s Photobooth and Polite in Public all came up around this time, providing party images for the millennial masses hungry for more documentation of their exploits to share on then-brand new social media platforms. Dov Charney’s T-shirt company commodified the vibe for the masses, and sold lots of tube socks and T-shirts in the process. None of it was by accident.

“My images started circulating on the internet, and then when brands would be like, what’s the new cool thing, and some intern would point to my blog,” Hunter shares. “I was really sort of resourceful in the way I worked with brands, sort of like a Robin Hood. Anytime I got hired for a



job, I would book all my hipster friends. We were getting into the American Apparel nontraditional model aesthetic and that was so special to me because we were taking people out of obscurity, and celebrating them with these campaigns.”

Flashing Back

For better or worse, turning everybody, especially unconventional looking people, into models might be the Cobrasnake’s biggest media contribution of all. A new generation of youngsters reared on Instagram and TikTok seem to understand this. The launch party for Hunter’s Rizzoli tome late last year was held at the Dolls Kill store on Fairfax, and he was seen slithering around just like the old days. Chan even deejayed the event, which was packed with Gen-Z kids in Electric Daisy Carnival-style skimpy outfits, face-jewels, and lolita get-ups. Clearly, the 20-year trend cycle is in full rotation and there’s no turning back. Low-rise jeans and visible g-strings, metallic accessories, clashing geometric patterns, Dolls’ revamp of the Delia’s brand – all contribute to the nouveau retro enchantment happening right now.

Around the same time that Y2K’s Archive was released last year, a Bloghouse book called *Never be Alone Again* came out, plus a documentary, *Meet me in the Bathroom* (based on a book about the NYC music scene in 2001-2011), and a podcast called *Date with the Night*, celebrating everything aughts. Festivals are also nodding to the era— this Spring’s “Just Like Heaven” fest is headlined by some of the biggest bands of the early 2000’s including the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, MGMT, Hot Chip and Ladytron, and there’s even a “Cinsepace DJs” lineup touted on the year.

As for Hunter, after branching out into retail with a vintage store in Hollywood for a few years and creating a fitness crew focused on hiking and health, he now has a side hustle doing property management. When he goes out, he’s still the king of the scene, of course, and his gift for bringing gusto to every snap

has not waned whatsoever. He says he’ll be doing more events soon and he probably has more publishing in his future as well. “The archive has over half a million photos... we cut it off at like 2010-2011 for the book, which is sort of when social media took hold and changed the landscape,” he reveals. “There’s photos from 2010 to 2015 that would make another great book.”

Beyond the novelty of millennial hipster hedonism, Hunter’s images exhibit unfiltered joy (both literally and figuratively). They remind us of the past, and for younger fans, they inspire the present. Camera phones were inevitable and social media was growing either

way, but the Cobrasnake brand of self-promotion as narrative art encouraged a realness and revelry that’s missing, if seemingly making a comeback. As his friend Aoki expresses, “he was really good at grabbing that moment of complete candid rawness, at the most interesting, engaging, vulnerable moments of people’s lives. Super high on the music or super high on drugs or super high on life – whatever it might be, he was there and he did it consistently and created his own subculture in the process.”

Mark Hunter’s Y2K Archives available wherever books are sold and at rizzoliusa.com. [A]



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MUSIC

HYPER RYLO RETURNS TO THE DARK SIDE

BY BRETT CALLWOOD



For Los Angeles-based alt-pop artist RYLO, everything went pretty much to plan in 2022. Collaborations with the likes of Sabby, Fraxiom and Sousa, plus disarmingly catchy singles such as “Fancam” and “Superpop,” saw her stock rise as the months passed.

In 2023, she has to take advantage of her blossoming status and she’s off to a great start with the latest single, “Thru My Chest,” a return to her darker electro-pop roots after a period of manic hyper-pop activity. It’s all part of the evolution of an artist who has been singing all her life.

“I guess I officially started singing when I was around fifth grade,” she says. “My parents didn’t even know that I could sing, I just signed up for a talent show. The first time I ever sang in public was in front of my entire school. From that point, I was a musical theater head, I was in a capella groups for maybe 10 years. I didn’t start writing music myself until college, 2019. While I was in college, I was pursuing film, so music wasn’t on my brain at all. But I was feeling inspired so I started learning how to produce myself. It was fun, but I was still pursuing film.”

RYLO graduated from the University of Southern California (USC) in 2020 and threw herself into music because it felt more accessible than film. Her debut live performance came in the summer of 2021.

“I came from this dark electronic avenue, and that definitely didn’t have a space in what was already going on in the USC scene,” she says. “But my first show was at a USC house party. I finally got booked to play a USC show, after I had graduated. The stage was the front patio at this campus house. The turnout was pretty good. I approached it seriously. It ended up going well and I’m proud of how that first show went.”

The artist says that her own tastes are cyclical, something which accounts for her return to that dark electronic vibe on her new single.

“I follow what I’m feeling,” she says. “That’s how I approach my career – making what I want to make because I think it sounds cool. For the past three years, I’ve been very much a part of the hyper-pop scene. Fully immersed in that community, both online and the local L.A. community. My music has obviously been extremely impacted by that. But with ‘Thru My Chest,’ I’ve acknowledged that it is a return to center and what started me in music in the first place.”

It’s certainly working. RYLO is also having success cultivating her online presence, a fact that she puts down to simply being herself.

“Social media is so important, and if you’re new to establishing an online presence, it’s probably in your best interests to be more strategic about it than I am or was,” she says. “But how I exist online is truly how I’ve always existed online. I just think it’s a really fun outlet. When I take social media super seriously, I just feel dumb then I’d end up never posting anything. So my philosophy has always been to post in the spur of the moment, what I’m feeling, just what feels true to me. Be yourself online and you will attract the people that will be interested in that, and you as a result.”

“Through My Chest” sees RYLO collaborating with songwriter Christina

Galligan (aespa, Lexi Jayde), the latest in a long line of collabs. RYLO says that she enjoys the process.

“I love collaborating,” she says. “Looking back, my career has been extremes. When I was doing my dark electronic, that was all me. I wasn’t established in the music community, so I relied on myself to carry the team. Looking back now, having worked with so many collaborators, I don’t prefer how I was operating before. I feel like I’ve been exposed to the gateway drug of collaboration, and now I know I can do it 10 times faster — why would I go back to doing it 10 times slower by myself?”

Dave Burreis is the producer on “Thru My Chest,” while the process with Galligan was quite new because RYLO had never shared her songwriting process before.

“She’s an amazing vocalist right off the bat,” RYLO says. “She started singing gibberish over a chord progression Dave was building. It was a crash course in how I could be maximizing my songwriting skills. Just going for it. Together we were able to tell the story that I came in wanting to tell in the most concise way possible. There’s 15 seconds of verse, right into a pre-chorus. It’s still really emotionally compelling.”

“Thru My Chest” is a great start to the year for RYLO, and there’s much more to come. She’s just not entirely sure of the form that will take yet.

“There’s definitely another single coming out in February,” she says. “I’ve been thinking about larger projects for a long time. I did a few mixtapes in 2021 and 2022. I’ve been back and forth about what I want to do next. The mixtapes did feel like a level up in a lot of ways. I approached them almost as the same project. After that process, I’ve been thinking about it for months. I’ve been in and out of sessions for all of 2022 so I have a lot of music. Basically, coming towards the end of last year, my manager and I were going back and forth about the plan about what we were going to do with all the music. At one point we were talking about an album in 2023, and then maybe some more mixtape rollouts. Ultimately, I’m a project-based person. So it’s definitely leading up to a larger project, but we’re still brainstorming what that story will look like.”

Ultimately, RYLO sees 2023 as a blank slate, upon which she can craft her career as she sees fit.

“I’m excited to move into a more fully fledged pop space,” she says, in conclusion. “I haven’t even scratched the surface of what that sounds like. That’ll be exciting when it’s eventually out.”

Sure will!

RYLO’s “Thru My Chest” single is out now.

ART

PAINTER BEN SANDERS' LUMINOUS LUNAR LANDSCAPES AT OCHI

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

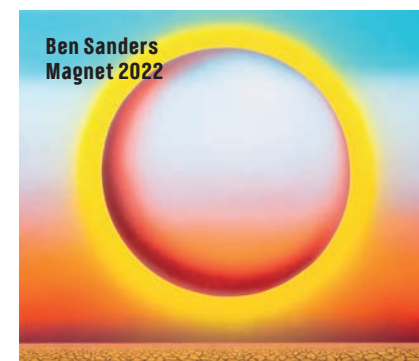
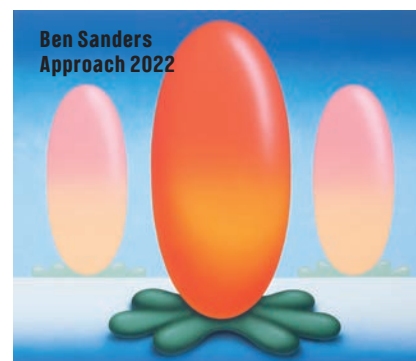


Ben Sanders "Deep Time" at OCHI Gallery installation

Each of Ben Sanders' large-scale paintings is technically a landscape. Radiant, supersaturated biomorphic shapes — egg, orb, moonrock, celestial body, spouting botanical, cylindrical satellite, mountain peak — hover in firmaments whose chemical gorgeousness is either extraterrestrial or post-apocalyptic or both. The seductive forms are rendered in smooth, curvaceous, crisp contours that are alluring and sublime, and a little bit overwhelming. All the action is in the pageant of pigment skins — chartreuse, blood orange, sunflower, robin's egg, indigo, pine, pink, peach — and the dimensionality of the singular shapes. But the works are anchored by a clean horizon line and perspectival foregrounds of tightly patterned cracked earth or slick snowy expanse, and that makes them read as landscapes rather than as freeform fantastical abstractions.

Their planetary surfaces are of inde-

terminate location but infinitely expansive pictorial space, and in their current installation at West Adams gallery OCHI, extend their atmospheres into the physical space of the gallery-goer by means of a cheeky, loud, and unavoidable bed of crunchy black lava rock covering the gallery floor. There is no way to approach the paintings without navigating this field. The dark, noisy rock is more than visually active, as crossing it literally grounds the viewer in gravity and a sense of a millennial scale of time. But it also forms an energetic oomph of contrast with the magical, feather-light forms and the floating worlds extending up and away inside the images. The optical brain massage of the uncannily supreme forms and their pulsating chromatic personalities is balanced by the imaginatively uneven ground beneath your feet, and the impulse toward hushed ae in the presence of the works is thwarted and replaced with the mirth of



the gesture's conceptual inconvenience.

Inside the paintings themselves various ecosystems and atmospheric temperatures evoke phenomena of sky and dream — from eclipses of the sun and phases of the moon, to condensation on meaty petals and nesting life-pods, or the craquelure of dry lake beds and cracking ice. Each work in *Deep Time* contains a paradox of beauty and poison, and an affecting aura of presence and sentience. It's a strange exhibition, a neuro-optical sensation, a charming

micro-adventure (high heels not recommended), and an unexpected but completely plausible singularity of sci-fi abstraction and hyper-stylized landscape, luxurious painterly technique, and sensuous color theory. These sumptuous views into worlds whose air might not be breathable and whose gravity might be too weak are nevertheless full of wide-eyed, surrealist, operatic pleasure.

Deep Time is on view at OCHI, 3301 W. Washington Blvd., West Adams, through Feb. 25; ochigallery.com. [L]

LA WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

EMPLOYMENT & EDUCATION

Business Support Designer – Buena Park, CA. Create and design marketing materials and other designs involved in a printing company's promotional events, including flyers, logos, displays to meet specific promotional needs and budgets. Associate Degree in Graphic Design, or a related field. Send res/tr to All Americanlook Inc., 495 E. Erie Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19134. Attn: Tony Lee.

Real Estate Development Financial Manager. 4 yrs. experience req'd. Submit resumes by email to The McGregor Company, Beverly Hills, California info@themcgregorco.com

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Civil Designer (Mult. Pos.) (Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.; Pasadena, CA): Prepare studies, design criteria, design reports, plans, and specifications for construction and maintenance projects for Civil Engineers' review. **Req'ts incl.:** Bach's deg. or foreign equiv. in Civil Engg, Mechanical Engg, or a rel. field, & 5 yrs of post-bach's, progressive rel. work exp.; OR a Master's deg. or foreign equiv. in Civil Engg, Mechanical Engg, or a rel. field, & 3 yrs of rel. work exp. Travel to various locations throughout the US is req. up to 10%. Employer will accept any suitable combo. of edu., training, or exp. Salary is \$128,045 - \$135,400/yr. Interested applicants email CV to HRApply@stantec.com & specify "Civil Designer" in subj. line.

Bioinformatician; Fulgent Therapeutics, LLC: Devel. analyz & manage d/base for medical genetic testing. Bachelor's is req'd. \$57,325/yr. Work loc. Temple City, CA. Mail CV

to: HR Director, 4978 Santa Anita Ave, Ste 205, Temple City, CA 91780

Market Research Analyst; Fulgent Therapeutics LLC; (Temple City, CA); Collect data & ID market opps for bio-medical testing company. Salary \$44,803/yr. Mail res to Attn: HR Director, 4978 Santa Anita Ave, Ste 205, Temple City, CA 91780

Bioinformatician; Fulgent Therapeutics, LLC: Devel. analyz. & manage d/base for medical genetic testing. Doctorate deg req'd. \$93,080/yr. Work Loc.: Temple City, CA. Mail CV to: HR Dir, 4978 Santa Anita Ave, Ste 205, Temple City, CA 91780

Youth Pastor in Gardena, CA: Please send resume to Gardena Presbyterian Church, 1340 W. Gardena Blvd., Gardena, CA 90247, wage ranges from \$45K to 50K.

Field Engineer/Inspector needed: Send resume to Fountainhead Consulting Corporation, 2400 E. Katella Ave., Ste. 800, Anaheim, CA 92806, wage ranges from 105k to 110k.

Senior Project Engineer in Los Angeles, CA: Perform daily jobsite inspections for compliance with safety standards; coordinate job site set up & develop site logistics plan. Review field inspection reports & communicate deficiencies. Salary: \$100,048 - \$104,400/yr. Mail resume & Ref Job#ME005: Webcor Construction LP, Attn: Recruitment Dept, 2320 Blanding Ave, Ste 200, Alameda, CA 94501

Financial Svc Co. looking for Head of Strategic Finance to help lead its equity & debt capital raising processes in addition to general capital structure mgmt. Req: bachelor's in Bus. Admin, Acct., Econ, or rel., or foreign equiv., plus 3 yrs. exp. as Bus. Consultant, Associate, or rel. Exp. must include work in digital content creation business, a deep understanding of various forms of revenue generation / business models for digital content creators, & how they relate to credit/working capital needs, exp. with MS Excel financial modeling; Mode Analytics sw for growth / unit economics acct & analysis; & credit underwriting best practices for a card portfolio. \$130K - \$175K. Jobsite LA, CA. Work Auth. req'd if hired. Send resume to Karat Financial Technologies via email jlokum@trykarat.com. Principals only.

Slalom's West Hollywood, CA office has multiple openings for Technology Consultant, Database Architecture (various types/levels): \$116,085 - \$153,698/yr. Recommend & design strategies for client enterprise database, data warehouse systems &/or multidimensional networks. Must be available to work on projects at various, unanticipated sites w/n commuting



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Lead Artist, Character Modeler (Company 3/ Method, Inc., Santa Monica, CA) to create three-dimensional assets (i.e., models). Salary: \$124,800/year. Resumes: HR, Company 3/ Method, Inc., 3401 Exposition Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90404.

Computer Programmer: Develop & write prog. for bus. sys; in CS req'd. **Send resume to** Solomont America, Inc. 10540 Talbert Ave., Ste. 200, Fountain Valley, CA 92708

Business Development Analyst sought by Accelerated Global Solutions Inc. to analyze & forecast

sales trends, and devise business development strategies, etc. Salary: \$60,715 per year. Job site: Compton, CA. Resume to 1111 W. Artesia Blvd., Compton, CA 90220. Attn: Maggie Leung.

Business Intelligence Developer - Los Angeles, CA. Responsible for formulating BI content, educ other units on how to create BI content by leveraging Enterprise Data Warehouse. BS or higher degree, IT, CS or closely rel. 2 yrs IT exp, incl. some solid exp in each: QlikView 12/11X/10X/9X; QlikSense 3.1.2.0/2.1/2.2.4; SSRS; SQLServer 2008/2005; MySQL; MS Access; Informatica; SSIS; Data Stage; Oracle PL/SQL; VB Script; JavaScript; Shell Scripting; HTML \$117,915.20 to 138,080.80. DOE. Send cvr ltr, resume to: Gabriella.Twigg@med.usc.edu or Gabriella.Twigg, University of Southern California, 2011 N. Soto St, Los Angeles, CA 90032 w/i 30 days, ref. Job 190.

Electrical Engineer: Wholesaler in Torrance, CA. Bachelor's Degree in Engineering, Electrical Engineering, or related req'd. Mail resume: HEXEL TECH ENGINEERING Corp., 3625 Del Amo Blvd. #130, Torrance, CA 90503; Attn: Yamamoto; Salary: \$78,562/yr

Market Research Analyst: Exporter/Wholesaler in Torrance, CA. High School Diploma/GED + 2 yrs. of exp. as Market Research Analyst, Marketing Manager, or related req'd. Mail resume: Next Creative USA Inc. (dba SmileUS): 22395 S. Western Ave. #304, Torrance, CA 90501; Attn: Nakagawa; Salary:\$44,803/yr.

Accountant sought by ANI CPA, Inc. in Cerritos CA for the preparation of financial statements as per accounting standards & principals. Req.: MS + 2 yr. exp. Salary range- \$106,974 - \$115K/yr Qualified applicants please send resume to: Aamir Irshad, Managing CPA, at Aamir@anicpa.com, REF: ANS-22.

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LA WEEKLY Bulletin



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