

LAW WEEKLY

KEVIN BACON'S NOT AFRAID TO PLAY THE BAD GUY IN *THEY/THEM*

A NEW EXHIBITION AT ARTCENTER WELCOMES THE SEASON OF THE GOOD WITCH

THE DODGERS HONOR FAMED ANNOUNCER VIN SCULLY

AUGUST 12 - 18, 2022 / VOL. 44 / NO. 40
LAWWEEKLY.COM

PEACHES STILL TEACHES

The anniversary tour for *Teaches of Peaches* has most of the artist's focus right now. But don't think for one second that she's not planning her next move.

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

FOOD

CHEF CASEY LANE RETURNS TO PALISOCIETY, DETERMINED FOR RESTAURANT REBIRTH

BY MICHELE STUEVEN



It's been almost three years since chef Casey Lane became disillusioned with what he saw happening to the hospitality business. The pandemic just made things worse, forcing restaurants to minimize, get smaller and figure out how to survive. For the first time in his career, he had lost inspiration. Then suddenly, the same things that chased him away brought him back to the field.

The Los Angeles-based Palisociety of independent boutique hotel brands is expanding with the debut of the Palisociety Dining Group led by Lane, the new Creative Director of Food & Beverage. The group of carefully and meticulously renovated and restored properties currently operates 17 food and beverage outlets.

Later this year it will be adding four venues across three new hotels and in 2023, will be adding an additional 10 venues across nine new hotels.

"I went through a bit of an existential depression," Lane tells L.A. Weekly in the cozy courtyard of Simonette at the Palihotel Culver City, where he has debuted an all-new French menu. "I want to bring back the way that we were brought up and the respect we showed to restaurants and cooking and the chain of command that comes with it. The fact that you did things out of pride and integrity."

"I came back a little more energized than most people, but many have not wanted to come back to the food world," he says.



"The pandemic changed the business. I find that everyone in the kitchen wants to be an executive so they can stop actually doing the job and that disappoints me. I'm so tired of hearing people's professional path plans and their clipboard aspirations. Now I feel like it's very punk rock to want to actually cook again. I want the tradition of wanting to be a great cook to come back."

So Lane takes it one step at a time, one foot in front of the other with each restaurant, treating every concept like it's the only one on his plate and his most important project.

The revamped Simonette menu is unpretentious and inspired by his auto grill stops on road trips through France. There are classic dishes like mussels in a rich saffron cream broth with spinach and al dente fennel and delicate French breakfast radishes encased in sweet butter, dusted with fleur de sel. The Tunisian tuna tartine

is a North African take on the traditional Nicoise salad with marinated shell beans, tapenade and frisée lettuce. For purists, there's also the original version of the salad.

Other classics include steak tartare, croque madame, peppercorn beef filet and the traditional French omelet. Burgers (which are half price during happy hour Wednesday through Sunday 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.) include the Parisienne with caramelized onion, American cheese and bordelaise sauce, a traditional Americaine and Roadside Double with Swiss cheese and caramelized onions. The bouillabaisse is swimming with so much seafood it comes with a bib.

The Palisociety's penchant for preserving landmarks and his appreciation of founder Avi Brosh's respect for history were the inspiration for Lane's return to the hospitality world.

"They do a good job of renovation in

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Juliet Rohde-Brown, Ph.D. and
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Marissa Chibas

Reconsidering Individuation in the 21st Century: When Archetypal Patterns Shift
Joe Cambray, Ph.D.

Tradition and Lineage: Mythopoetics in the Writing of Africanist Women
Fanny Brewster, MFA, Ph.D.

The Imagination Matrix
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Juliet Rohde-Brown, Ph.D. and
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Depth Psychology is Transdisciplinary: Introducing Jungian Arts-Based Research as a Methodology for Learning and Being in the 21st Century
Susan Rowland, Ph.D.

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Mary Antonia Wood, Ph.D.

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Questions

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ways of restoration and that's important to me in how neighborhoods are crafted," says the Texas native. "We don't want to see things gentrified. We want to go in and restore. I missed that development. I get inspired to continuously create, thinking about breakfast, in-room dining, parties, dinners and so many other things and discovering the neighborhoods that we're in. Who are the people that live there? What do they need and what do they want? Not just what we want to show them."

Chef-partner at the Tasting Kitchen more than 10 years ago, Lane opened the Basque-inspired Brevia in the newly restored Hotel Figueroa in 2018 and followed up with the elegantly casual Viale dei Romani, designed by Parts & Labor, at the Kimpton La Peer Hotel a few months later. He oversaw every food aspect at the Kimpton – breakfast, lunch and dinner at Viale, service for the pool, the lobby bar, in-room dining for all 105 rooms, 120-person rooftop dinners, business banquets and breakfast buffets.

Now that the Simonette refresh is behind him, the four-time James Beard Foundation Rising Star semi-finalist will soon be reopening the Marco Polo Italian restaurant at the group's Silver Lake Pool and Inn as well as a Japanese concept on a popular corner in West Hollywood and a bistro in the Gaslamp Quarter of San Diego. His menu at Ar-

rive in Palm Springs features Southern California-inspired Latin favorites like huevos rancheros and street cart fruit with Tajin for breakfast and cauliflower grain bowls for lunch.

"The biggest adjustment to coming back was the loss of love for what we do," he says. "It's an incredibly hard job, the pay is bad, the working conditions are aggressive. It can be a thankless job. You don't get a ton of applause. We were punk rockers who grew up with the Anthony Bourdains and that's hard to find now. Everything is so PC. We were pirates and outcasts and now they are out of place there. There's no home for those people in that environment. It helped a lot of them find a path and find meaning and be additive to their family and society. Now they're all driving Uber. People would rather be drivers and delivery guys instead of cooks."

Still, the eternally youthful 39-year-old Lane – who spent those years off the reservation involved in a lucrative cannabis-growing enterprise in Portland – can't stay out of the kitchen.

"People are settling for mediocre. Those are the reasons I left and they are the reasons I came back. It's a beautiful thing when you get to take part in a craft that has heritage and history. I don't know what Excel does for those other people, but spreadsheets just don't inspire me." [E]

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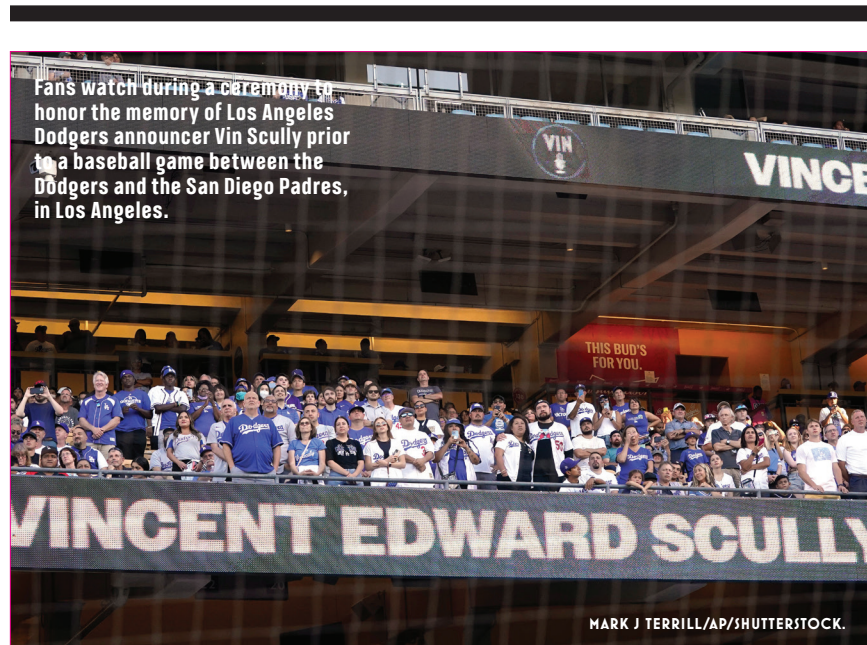
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THE DODGERS HONOR FAMED ANNOUNCER VIN SCULLY AFTER DEATH

The voice of Dodger baseball died on Aug. 2, and the team has gone out of its way to honor the former announcer throughout different areas of Dodger Stadium.

BY ISAI ROCHA



Fans watch during a ceremony to honor the memory of Los Angeles Dodgers announcer Vin Scully prior to a baseball game between the Dodgers and the San Diego Padres, in Los Angeles.

MARK J TERRILL/AP/SHUTTERSTOCK.

Vin Scully, known as the voice of Los Angeles, died on Aug. 2, and since that day, the legendary Dodgers announcer has been mourned and remembered by the team, fans and city.

Scully, 94, began his career as the Brooklyn Dodgers announcer in 1950 at the ripe age of 22, replacing former announcer Ernie Harwell.

The longtime announcer was in the broadcast booth to call the back end of Jackie Robinson's historic career, the Dodgers' last World Series for Brooklyn in 1955 and eventually followed the team to California when the Dodgers moved out west in 1958.

While he described himself as simply

a "kid from the Bronx," the city of Los Angeles adopted him as an honorary Angeleno, with his unmistakable voice documenting the team for decades, until his retirement in 2016.

On Friday, Aug. 5, the tributes for Vin began at Dodger Stadium, as the entire team met on the field before the game against the San Diego Padres, and Dodgers manager Dave Roberts spoke to the crowd, giving heartfelt words about the man who not only announced games during his managerial tenure, but his playing days with the Dodgers, as well.

"Vin, as he's looking down on us right now, hated the spotlight on him... this is going to be very uncomfortable for him because this moment right now, he really

deserves," Roberts said to the Dodger Stadium crowd. "Vin was a man of character, integrity and class. A true gentleman and he wasn't just a Dodger, he loved the game of baseball that we all love and care about."

After Roberts spoke, the two current Dodger broadcasters who occupy Vin Scully's booth, Joe Davis and Orel Hersher, unveiled a banner attributed to Dodger fans that read, "Vin, we'll miss you."

The tributes were not limited to Dodger Stadium, as the city acknowledged the passing of Scully with both Los Angeles City Hall and the colorful pylons outside of LAX glowing Dodger blue in his honor.

Travelers flying out of LAX also would be treated to a tribute from SoFi Stadium, as the LED illuminated rooftop that can be seen aboard flights displayed a logo with Vin's name and a microphone below it.

"Vin Scully was bigger than baseball. He was the soul of L.A.," the Mayor of L.A. Twitter account posted on Aug. 2. "It is impossible to think about the Dodgers without reflecting on Vin's incomparable way with words and the wisdom he shared with generations of fans around the world. Our hearts are broken by his passing."

Walking through the stadium during the weekend series against the San Diego Padres, Dodger fans may have noticed little tributes to Scully sprinkled throughout.

Just outside of the Vin Scully Press Box doorway stood a blue and white wreath, with another by a display case with mementos from Scully's final game in 2016.

On the field, the pitcher's mound has Vin's name and a microphone spray-painted on, which is visible on live telecasts.

Just outside the stadium entrance on 1000 Vin Scully Avenue, the welcome sign had been flooded with flowers, candles, balloons and notes addressed to Scully from fans.

While it is not clear just how long the tributes will stand, the Dodgers have been known to honor important team figures through at least the season, and this should not be any different.

L.A. VOTERS WILL DECIDE IF SUPERVISORS CAN REMOVE A SHERIFF

The Los Angeles County Supervisors voted in favor of putting a measure on the November ballot that would give them power to remove a sheriff.

After a third and final reading of the measure on Aug. 2, the supervisors took a 4-1 vote, and now Los Angeles County voters will have to decide if they want to give the supervisors power to not only remove current Sheriff Alex Villanueva,

but future sheriffs for conduct it deems an "abuse of power," or "violation of law."

The dissenting vote came from Supervisor Kathryn Barger, who voted against the measure all three times, arguing that options to remove a sheriff already exist and do not need to be extended to the supervisors.

"I want to be clear about my position," Barger said after the measure's final reading. "Giving the Board of Supervisors authority to remove an elected sheriff unequivocally takes away power from the public. It's a move that has the power to disenfranchise voters. It also overlooks the fact that a recall process already exists to remove elected officials who fail to perform their duties."

When presenting the measure, Supervisor Hilda Solis argued that the current sheriff and his staff had engaged in alleged misconduct and it is the supervisors' duty to protect its residents from law enforcement harassment.

"Accountability over law enforcement is public safety," Solis said in a statement after the measure's first reading. "Ensuring our residents have the ability to vote on being free from law enforcement intimidation, harassment, and misconduct and holding them accountable for any ensuing harm and trauma is the Board of Supervisors' responsibility, specifically over the Sheriff of Los Angeles County. This charter amendment would provide residents with the oversight they expect and the peace from law enforcement abuse they deserve."

The fate of the measure now lies in voter hands during the Nov. 8 elections.

OFF-DUTY OFFICER SHOT AND KILLED IN DOWNEY

An off-duty Monterey Park Police officer was shot and killed outside a Downey L.A. Fitness center Monday.

A call of shots fired was received by Downey PD around 3:30 p.m., and when first responders arrived, they found the shot officer, and attempted CPR before pronouncing him dead on scene.

While the identity of the officer has not been revealed by investigators, Monterey Park Police Chief Kelly Gordon said the officer was new to the force of 76 officers, just two weeks removed from academy training.

"This is a tragedy for his family, but this is a tragedy for the Monterey Park Police Department as well," Gordon said in a press conference Monday. "It's a tremendous loss. In the Monterey Park Police Department, we're a family and that's the bottom line."

Downey PD closed off the L.A. Fitness parking lot where the incident occurred and as of this writing, have not released many details about the possible suspect, or suspects involved. **LA**

ENTERTAINMENT

DEADLY DEGREES

Kevin Bacon's Not Afraid to Play the Bad Guy in *They/Them*

BY LINA LECARO



With the new socially conscious dark horror/drama *They/Them* (They “Slash” Them) debuting on Peacock TV last week, Kevin Bacon once again brings his star power to an unexpectedly sinister role that’ll leave people talking. Getting the opportunity to talk directly with the prolific actor himself, not only about the project but his approach to all of his roles — and improve our “bacon number” (more on this in a minute) — was an opportunity we couldn’t pass up. He’s one of Hollywood’s greatest actors, but he’s also a chill yet engaging interview.

Released by Blumhouse and premiering at Outfest LA before coming to Peacock, *They/Them* has some bloody moments, but the film (which counts Bacon as a co-producer) is mostly about the discrimination and the lack of acceptance faced by the queer community in modern times. Writer/director John Logan (*Gladiator*, *The Aviator*, *Skyfall*) explores the real terrors in our world — in this case, the psychological and physical abuse that takes place at gay conversion facilities — even while he satires camp comedies and slashers, in both lighthearted and heartbreaking ways.

“One of the things that John Logan

spoke to me about when he sent me the script was that he wanted to make a film that showed how disturbed he was by the idea of gay conversion, and that it could be still continuing and be legal in 20 states, and something like 50,000 young people a year go through some form of this,” Bacon tells us. “You could make a documentary, and actually Blumhouse did called *Pray Away*, or you could make a serious kind of drama, and maybe some people would watch it, but I’m sure many people wouldn’t. Or you could take that issue and frame it in a world that is a little bit heightened, and pays homage to the ‘70s slasher films. Make something that a young person — maybe in a very conservative community or someone that’s closeted or feeling bullied or just kind of struggling with issues of identity— could see someone like themselves up on the screen and feel a sense of empowerment and a sense of identifying with these characters. That was an interesting idea to me, and why I wanted to be involved.”

The cheeky title plays on today’s cultural emphasis on gender identity pronouns (those who prefer “they/them” tend to be nonbinary or gender fluid) but the movie also develops gay and lesbian characters, friendships and hookups. The cast includes both gay and

trans actors playing likewise, revealing the family struggles that brought them to a place set on changing who they are. It’s timely to say the least.

It also has authentic performances by its young actors, led by the highly watchable Theo Germaine (*The Politician*), and some creepy turns by seasoned ones including Carrie Preston (*True Blood*) and Anna Chlumsky, who grew up on screen herself with her first big role as a child in the tearjerker *My Girl*. But K.B. has the most work under his belt. The 64-year-old (who looks pretty much the same as he did decades ago) has been in dozens and dozens of classic movies including *Animal House*, *Footloose* (his breakout starring role), *Tremors*, *A Few Good Men*, *Apollo 13*, *Mystic River*, *JFK*, and on and on.

Unlike, say Nick Cage (who made no qualms about his choices when we interviewed him, by the way), most of Bacon’s projects have been memorable. He’s been in so many big hit flicks, his name will forever be attached to what could be called a meme before there were memes, or a hashtag before there were hashtags. We’ll just call it a concept: that we are all interconnected by six degrees (or less) of separation. Deemed “Bacon’s Law” and turned into a game at some point, the Hollywood version notes that any actor out there connects to Kevin in less than six jumps. It’s become an established part of pop culture, but we weren’t sure we should ask about it. Might he be sick of it by now?

He’s embraced it in recent years either way, founding the Six Degrees organization, a nonprofit launched in 2007 that connects people and causes, to raise money for grassroots charities. He also headed a campaign during the pandemic shutdown called the Six Degrees Social Distancing Initiative, encouraging people to stay home and away from each other during COVID’s height.

So how does he feel about it today? “Six Degrees was something that went viral before we even had the word viral... you know, in application to collective thought, and what’s weird about it is that it didn’t go away,” he answers. “But also that it spread just by word of mouth. There was nothing to hold in your hand. Eventually there was a physical manifestation of the game but that was many, many years later. Take me out of the game and it’s still a beautiful concept. We really are all connected and I believe that.”

Peacock has created a “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” section on its streaming channel as a way to highlight *They/Them* and the actor’s films available from their service, but even before its release last week, the competition was

doing the same thing. Netflix has its own Six Degrees section, though Bacon didn’t seem to know too much about it when we informed him. The category includes films he’s not even in, starring people who rank as “ones” on the Bacon meter, such as Tom Cruise.

Hollywood’s overall connection chain/“Bacon number” is staying in the one and twos for many, it seems. The actor tells us he has no intention of slowing down work-wise (he has a couple films coming up and has been producing more, too) and he’s stayed busy for good reason. Bacon is widely regarded as a down-to-earth, easy to work with, fun dude; something he’s been showcasing on TikTok as of late, winning new fans, many of whom weren’t even born when he started acting. He sings (which he always did: look up his band The Bacon Brothers), he cooks, and even performs with his daughter, Sosie Bacon, on the social media platform. Married to actress Kyra Sedgwick for 34 years, he’s got two kids, his daughter (seen in TV series including *13 Reasons Why* and *Scream*) and musician son, Travis, of the metal band Contracult.

They/Them is touted as “an LGBTQ-IA+ empowerment tale,” but its camp setting is reminding a lot of people of Bacon’s early role in *Friday the 13th*, which set the template for all slashers to come. After having sex and lighting up a joint in bed, he’s stabbed by an arrow protruding through his neck, spraying blood everywhere. There are similar kills in his latest, but the themes also bring to mind *Footloose*, which explored how older folks try to stifle the freedom and expression of youth due to fear and lack of understanding. In *Footloose* he was the rebellious young hero to John Lithgow’s conservative bad guy. In *They/Them* he’s the heartless elder trying to suppress young people from expressing their truth and, no shocker, he’s very good in this guise.

Recalling his dark/douchey characters in *Wild Things* and *Crazy Stupid Love*, we ask if he prefers doing them as the interview comes to a close. “No, I don’t really. I only really like good complex roles,” he replies. “Unlike a lot of other actors, I’m not afraid of these roles. I don’t look at doing terrible things on screen and say, ‘Oh, I can’t do that because people are gonna think that’s me. That’s Kevin.’ I really don’t care what people think about me personally. I just want to play different kinds of men and walk in different shoes. That’s why I became an actor. So if a bad guy is cookie-cutter or a one-note mustache-twirling type, that’s boring and I’m not interested. If a bad guy is complex and unusual and surprising, like this guy is, then I’m in.” ■

PHOTO BY
HADLEY
HUDSON

PEACHES STILL TEACHES

COVER
PHOTO BY
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ENDOM

The anniversary tour for *Teaches of Peaches* has most of the artist's focus right now. But don't think for one second that she's not planning her next move.

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

When Peaches emerged with the *Teaches of Peaches* album in 2000, she was a much-needed breath of fresh air. Her messages of female empowerment hit hard in a still male-dominated music industry, and her artistic stock rose fast.

Sonically, musically, nobody knew what to do with her. Peaches would appear in the pages of rock magazines and indie publications, on bills with artists as diverse as Nine Inch Nails, Bauhaus, Bjork and Chicks on Speed. Her minimalist sound, rich and undeniably heavy, uncompromisingly and un-

apologetically sexual, crossed genre lines, appealing to many subcultures.

The *Teaches of Peaches* album wasn't technically her debut; she had released the *Fancypants Hoodlum* record under her real name, Merrill Nisker, in 1995, following work with her rock band the Shit and, before that, folk trio Mermaid Cafe. But it was an artistic rebirth with a new name, sound, vibe... Peaches was here and she was ready to teach.

Twenty-two years later, the album doesn't sound like it's dated at all. Perhaps it's the aforementioned minimalist sound. More likely, it's the fact that her messages,

are still necessary. If the Supreme Court has taught us anything this year, it's that there is still much work to be done for women's rights.

"I wasn't really trying to follow any sort of trend at that point," Peaches says, via a Zoom interview. "So I think the testament to its minimality really is its longevity. I've done like 30 shows, and I play the whole album, and I'm never like, 'Oh this song is dated.' It is a little more challenging, when I was thinking about live shows, what to do with something like 'Felix Partz,' which is a completely instrumental song. But it really worked out. Something like 'Suck and Let Go,' I just do it more improvisational with my machine. Because you know it was all written on this Roland MC 505 Groovebox. So it's really nice to have that machine back also, to give it that improvisational quality. It doesn't have to be exactly the same every time."

Peaches also puts the continued popu-



larity of that album down to the fact that more people understand her now, and feel more comfortable with the music. Familiarity, in this case, breeds anything but contempt.

"I really feel, you can feel in the live shows, that people know why they're there," she says. "They know why they're there and they're really happy to be there to celebrate. I think that's a combination also of the pandemic and getting introspective — 'what do I really want, what do I really need, what is important to me.' And then obviously a certain sense of nostalgia. But not in a nostalgic sort of fluff way, which is, not dissing nostalgia, but I feel like people are understanding that 'I like this album and I have a reason to like it.' It's meaningful. I think when I started, there was a lot of very polarizing feelings about the music and 'is it political, is it personal, is this music, is this performance art?' And now there isn't any of that. Now it's like, people know what it is. It doesn't have to adhere to any sort of purist kind of strange genre. It's just a cultural phenomenon. If they feel they were a part of it from the beginning or they're joining this cultural phenomenon, that still has a power."

We put it to Peaches that the difficulty critics and fans had putting her into a genre box ended up working in her favor because everyone wrote about her, she could tour with anyone and most everyone seemed to like her.

"I'm gonna toot my own little horn here," she says. "It just crossed the boundaries



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PEACHES

and that confused people so they were like, 'this sounds electronic but there's something really powerful and rock about it, but then there's this sort of very modern feel, and then there's this very old school hip-hop 808 sound. But then there are these very new, direct lyrics that haven't been said before.' So it was just, it crossed over to queer scenes, to art scenes, rock scenes, to fashion scenes."

It certainly did and, as Peaches points out, it felt like a very zeitgeist moment. A line in the sand was drawn, and there was no going back.

"A lot of times with a zeitgeist moment, you look back and think, 'Oh that was then,'" she says. "But somehow it's really, because of what's going on in the world, it really has given people a sense to hold onto it and to use this as a way, not to be angry but to celebrate, to remember who they are and remember what they were like at the beginning. There's been a lot of people who have come after the show and been like, 'You know, I came to the show because of course I love you, blah blah blah, but then I remembered why I loved you and I remembered what I had changed about my life after listening to this album or seeing you live and how I was more confident in my decisions.' Which is a really powerful thing."

Powerful is right. The influence of Peaches can be felt in spirit, if not obviously musically, everywhere from Gaga to Megan Thee Stallion, the Weeknd to M.I.A.

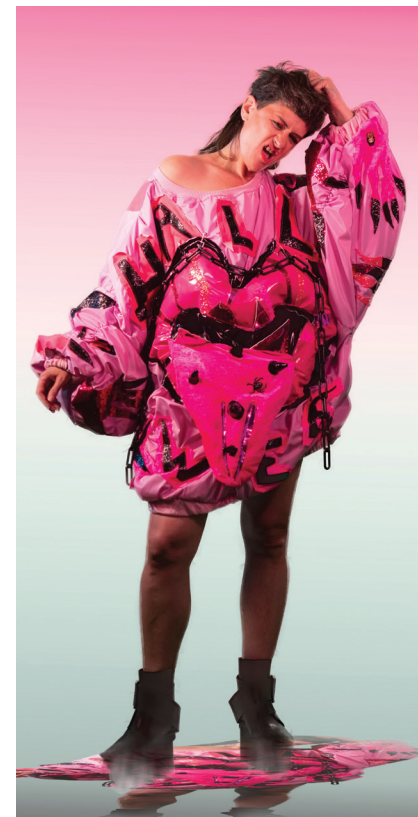
"I don't have a problem with that,"

Peaches says. "Also, I feel like someone like Megan Thee Stallion, she might not have a clue who I am, so it's almost just like a rite of passage at this point. You don't even know where it comes from or even a sense of ancestry. So what is she, 25 [she's 27]? She was like 3 [5 in fact] when that album came out. But I think that's exciting too, and it's also exciting that what I really have enjoyed about these live shows is that there's baby queers and baby everybody, and then there's 40- and 50-year-olds that are just like, 'this is my music, get out of the fucking way.'"

Peaches has been working on new music during lockdown, the most recent releases being the "Pussy Mask" and "Flip This" tracks. She says that her sound, at this point, is her sound. It's just about keeping it fresh.

"I feel like I adhere to a sort of minimalist vibe in that way," she says. "I'm not really a person who layers so much; I like each sound to have its place. There's that kind of a metal feel, which I love. If it sounds fresh to me, then it's cool. I'm not trying to make it like, 'this needs to sound exactly how it used to be,' but it sounds fresh to me. The evolution is about keeping it fresh."

Peaches is based in Berlin, though she says that she's not much for clubbing and feels like any "Berlin sound" is simply about being open-minded. Wherever, there's some comfort (if that's the right word) in knowing that she's still as genre-bending and spellbinding as ever. She returns to the Fonda Theatre this month for



two shows – the scene of so many glorious gigs past.

"I have a lot of fond Fonda memories," she says. "I've played the Henry Fonda probably five or six times. It feels very comfortable, which is nice to feel like home there. I have a lot of friends, that are coming out, because we didn't get a chance to do a proper show. I'm very happy that it's two nights, so you get to leave your stuff there. I'm really looking forward to having two nights in one place for sure."

This anniversary tour for Teaches of Peaches has most of the artist's focus right now. But don't think for one second that she's not planning her next move.

"I wrote a lot during the pandemic," she says. "I'm focusing more on this anniversary show. It's not so much of a cash-in – it's not making a lot of money. But it's a very satisfying and powerful feeling. I think I expected people to enjoy it, but I didn't expect the beautiful community and fandemonium pandemonium that's been going on. So I think we're going to try to take it further, see what other high trees we can expand to before I start on other live shows. But I am working with a nine-piece dance troupe. We started last year, developing a human installation, like sculptural and dance, collective, to go with new music. It's really cool."

Sounds sweet!

Peaches performs at 9 p.m., on Friday, Aug. 12 and Saturday, Aug. 13 at the Fonda Theatre. [L]

ART

CANTOS OF THE SIBYLLINE SISTERHOOD CONJURES A FEMINIST FUTURE

A new exhibition at ArtCenter welcomes the season of the good witch

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



A still (in the foreground) from Moriko Mori's video *Miko No Inori* (1996), in the ArtCenter exhibition *Cantos of the Sibylline Sisterhood*.

IMAGE COURTESY OF JULIE JOYCE.

Throughout history, and across cultures and continents, there have always been women, sibyls, who possessed secret, sacred knowledges from the healing arts to folklore — and especially clairvoyance. Depending on the context, these figures might be revered, worshiped, sought out or feared, shunned and persecuted, but they always helped usher in the future. Taking this historical archetype as its framework, *Cantos of the Sibylline Sisterhood* gathers a group of feminist, queer and trans artists working in a range of mediums, all of whom tap into that ancestry, setting ages-old potencies against modern-day threats.

In the many crosscurrents of theme, motif, material and symbolism, the group does function like a sisterhood, as each artist addresses interrelated issues of permeable identity and power dynamics playing out in their diverse cultural milieus and lived experiences, as well as in their individual styles and mediums. One thing they share is the understanding that the current halls of power could use some renovation, and that it's long past time to listen to women — or better yet, lose the stunted binary and

embrace a more ambiguous pluri-potentiality for a future that is actually new, and whose freedoms are truly available to all.

For now, that future is written in the language of fantasy, myth, sci-fi, dreams and visions — and in this compelling exhibition, in painting, collage, sculpture, textile, photography, video, installation, performance and printmaking. Planned by curators Julie Joyce, director of ArtCenter Galleries, and Christina Valentine, curator of Exhibitions before the pandemic, like many such exhibitions coming to fruition in its aftermath, the spiritual, political, personal and societal messaging of *Cantos* is timelier than ever. Most remarkable perhaps is how this urgent message is delivered with thoughtful wit, allure, flights of fanciful imagination, exuberance and even joy.

Throughlines and crosscurrents abound in a multilayered conversation between and among the artists and their work, reinforcing the rhizomatic structure implied by “sisterhood” and the resonant harmony of “cantos.” For example, large-scale mixed-media tapestries from April Bey’s *Atlantica* world-building project claim the

hefty material presence of historical wall-hangings such as might chronicle the faces and episodes of its history. But in their decolonized imagery, elevated swagger, and activated palette — as well as in the borrowing of somber civic memorial iconography in Poulet Wing War Memorial Park — Bey deploys this visual and material language to generate an improved, inclusive, empathetic, and frankly way more fabulous version of the timeline and the planet.

Bey’s tapestries bookend the main exhibition space, whose center is occupied by a phalanx of costumed mannequin sculptures by Mai-Thu Perret. In her *Les guérillères* series, female figures dressed in versions of military gear are themselves made of ostensibly delicate materials like wicker, silicone and ceramics. This both challenges the very notion of the fragile female while also critiquing the nexus of conflict, capital and oppressive gender norms. Like Bey’s figures, these women inhabit and protect a utopian realm, in this case, *The Crystal Frontier*. Facing this array are the ascendant mannequin-like wall sculptures in the video and installation by Saya Woolfalk, who also has created a utopian world for her figures to inhabit. These are spiritually and technologically advanced people known as *The Empaths*, whose purpose and special gift is to metamorphosize between realms of humanity, nature and technology, in the name of healing the planet and the psyche. Their avian and mycellic physical forms glimmer and levitate through a dense cosmos that speaks to both folklore and science fiction.

Chitra Ganesh also borrows from both fantasy and folklore in her intensely detailed re-imaginings of popular but problematic Indian illustrated stories. Both a valuable tool in keeping traditional cultural foundations alive for modern comics-obsessed youth and also a frequent source of reinforcement of toxic stereotypes, Ganesh reclaims the power of this legacy and reframes its female figures in new, empowering contexts. Adept at the intertwined visual language of both comics and Indian fine art vernacular, and with a saturated, eccentric palette and a flair for energetic action, this work speaks to the past and present, but also feels at home in the meta-verse of the future.

Marnie Weber performs a similar search and rescue in classic early collage works from 1997-1998, removing women from skin mags and creating new worlds for them to inhabit — surreal, intriguing, hospitable. Often in the company of animal companions and in desert landscapes of majestic power and sheltering skies — as in the cinematic proto-meme masterpiece *Blue Nude with Hamsters* — but always with the eccentric, jaunty sense of the strange that Weber is known for. Although the central images themselves, the tropes of the commodified female nude,

remain unchanged, through the essential and conceptual operations of the collage medium, they are nevertheless remade by their transportation into figures of self-determination, sisterhood, and almost shamanistic power.

Lezley Saar also has a knack for “rescuing” heroines from art, literature and history, reclaiming stories of women and especially black women who insisted on existing outside the proscribed lines of gender, race, and patriarchal religion, often at great personal peril. Women labeled as mad, as witches, as frigid, as perverted; women who dressed and lived as men; those who passed as white; those who sought refuge in and from marriage... Saar’s thoughtful paintings and collages redraw ancestral lineages and illustrate connectivities among these historical and present-day communities in which she sees herself reflected.

Molly Surazhsky actually also uses mannequins and conceptual garments, as well as the creation of a utopian, care-based world, in her installation. Within an expanded fashion-framed motif, the artist creates a storefront-scale photomontage and altar in homage to the women in her family, whose fortitude and folk medicine have ensured the line’s survival through war, migration and diaspora. *The Revolution School* focuses on healing and folk wisdom — as a cohort of multidisciplinary, systems-minded artists — explores the collective potential of magic, technology, the microbiome, game theory, digestion, metaphor, anti-trauma therapy, and collective dreaming to generate a better future for everyone.

Erica Ryan Stallones messes with time streams, too. In marvelous, strange tableaux paintings and accompanying audio tracks, she guides audiences through a collapsed psychological realm of archetypes from the Jungians to the ancient Greeks and Egyptians, to global folk and indigenous icons, to the alien visitors whose presence and awareness has and continues to connect and inform it all. Mariko Mori — the soundtrack for whose upbeat and ethereal 1996 video *Miko No Inori* permeates and enchants the entire exhibition space — explores the union of the bodhisattva, the human woman, and the cyborg in a new kind of being with a heroine’s journey through ancient archetypes in the present and future. Like so much of the work in the exhibition, whether made as recently as last year or presciently made decades ago, Mori’s videos begin with a feminist point of view but expand in every direction to encompass the whole of humanity, honor and ameliorate the past, and plot the possible future.

On view through Nov. 23, at the Alyce de Roulet Williamson Gallery, ArtCenter College of Design Hillside Campus, 1700 Lida St., Pasadena; free; artcenter.edu.

CANNABIS

PRESS RELEASE WEED: ACCESS DOESN'T EQUAL QUALITY

As the cannabis media landscape has expanded over the last decade, we saw the rise of press release weed

BY JIMI DEVINE



PHOTO BY WESLEY GIBBS ON UNSPLASH

As cannabis companies work to stay afloat in the most brutal marketplace of all time, they also have to battle against big-money PR firms attempting to carve a spot out for their press release weed on the top shelf.

The term Press Release Weed was something I first kicked around in jest, years ago. I couldn't put a date on it and someone else probably said it before I did, given the idea is so basic. Regardless, it's generally the idea of a public relations apparatus being used to define the quality of the product as opposed to what's in the jar.

It's fair to say the idea is a decade old. Some of the original cannabis PR firms are turning 10, and a bunch of New York and LA firms have joined them in the space over the years. At first, it was fun back in the day to mock the obvious boof. But it took a turn into the darkness.

The bullshitters only had so many

places to prove they had the heat, and the top dogs could see through their fake hype. The High Times crew back in the day, Leafly's California Bureau Chief David Downs, and a few other small- to medium-sized publications that came and went over the years, like West Coast Cannabis.

Downs would help kick off the nation's first cannabis column at a paper of record, and that was dope for the real heat getting some shine. But Hearst created a separate business entity to handle weed money for the San Francisco Chronicle and sister site SFGate in 2011, so people will mistakenly point to the founding of The Cannabist in Denver a few years later as the first "mainstream media" cannabis column.

But as cannabis got its first mainstreamer with an actual radar for quality, the tide of random weed blogs picked up. Every month, more and more cannabis blogs would be on a quest for content.

Many of them were backboned by random dudes and ladies in the flyovers who didn't actually have access to heat. Others would be in California or Oregon, but the spotlight seemed to trend very local and sometimes part of a clique.

It was kind of like the allegory of the cave. The bulk of the new cannabis media could only see the weed in front of them, mostly boof - they couldn't possibly articulate the mountaintop that never made it to shelves. In many cases that fire never made it to the legal market since it was super valuable to stay in the underground if you actually grow crazy good pot.

Even though you can't write about this pot in a consumer sense - I can't send grandma to the trap, no matter how dope Billy's first RS-11 run was - it's important to see that cannabis. People writing about

paign. Eventually, slotting fees became a thing, then people with boofy products could buy shelf space. This would make the PR push even more critical and heavy out of the gate to justify those fees.

The fees compounded the problem, but aren't everywhere. As I always tell dispensary owners, you can try and be the best in the world or you can have slotting fees.

We reached out to some people who are specifically affiliated with world class pot to get their take. Jon Cappetta from High Times has had one of the most prolific series covering elite pot in recent years.

"Just like there's press release weed, there are press release journalists. It's the easy way out - if it can even actually be considered doing the work," Cappetta told L.A. Weekly. "That's why knowing and trusting who you're reading is on par with the importance of knowing where your weed comes from. Most people take the easy way out, so naturally this stuff will proliferate, but it's why we don't usually cover stuff that has a release to begin with at High Times - everyone will have the easy story. Re-hash news is the lowest possible priority for our team.

Ted Lidie of Alien Labs finds himself in the unique situation where other people are essentially paying to pretend their weed is on the same shelf as his team.

"It definitely sucks for brands like us that pump out quality at scale, while we get overlooked for guys with PR agency's while also barely being able to use social media because they also don't really accept us," Lidie told L.A. Weekly.

Lidie went on to elaborate the scale of the social media PR wars as well connected agencies dabbling in cannabis use their wider contacts to get their clients the almighty blue checkmark. All the while bootstrapped efforts that have focused on the heat and not the corporate media game can barely keep their accounts open.

"Meanwhile MSOs not only get coverage from their PR firms in nationally recognized publications but also use that coverage to get blue checks and are able to skirt the social media guidelines," Lidie said. "The disparity in truly corporate cannabis and guys that started in their garages goes way beyond access to licenses and capital."

Joey Sullivan serves on The Emerald Cup competition committee and is one of the largest bulk buyers in the state in his role at Mercy Wellness. He pointed to education at the consumer level being the real fix.

"It makes me feel like we have a lot of work to do when it comes to educating consumers, and it goes to show just how much marketing has played a role in driving what sells post legalization," Sullivan told L.A. Weekly. [A]

pot need to understand how close the legal market's best is getting to that point after the dealing hurdles of regulation. It's the most fundamental basis for what the best rec weed is at any given moment.

It's fair to say the lack of access would become a double-edged sword. In the void of access to the best in the world or even the above-average, people started to take what they could get. A press release with a strain that none of the other 30 cannabis blogs of the moment had covered was like a juicy steak. Throw in some free pot? It was like a juicy steak after winning Survivor.

As the outlets were starved for clicks as the competition expanded, it got even worse. Then the PR teams that repped the boof would create little flash sales sheets for the sales reps to bring into the dispensary. "As seen in," now a selling point.

Has that place it was seen in ever even been to the mountaintop? Likely not.

And this became the cookie cutter cam-

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LA WEEKLY Bulletin

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[†]After monthly allotted 5G/4G LTE data, next 20 GBs at 512 kbps, and remaining data at 128 kbps. Video typically streams in SD (480p). Lower speeds may affect audio and video streaming, access to certain websites and content, or the use of available applications. 5G access requires a 5G-capable device. 5G is not available in all areas. Data usage is subject to our Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). After 55 GBs of data usage in a month, data service will be placed on hold to confirm usage complies with AUP; customers using data consistent with AUP may receive unlimited additional data in 10 GB increments for the rest of the month by contacting Customer Care. Available speeds will be determined by your particular service plan and may depend on other factors, including your device and network availability. For additional information about broadband speeds, including network limitations and our AUP, visit www.standupwireless.com/broadband. Promotional offers may be modified or withdrawn at any time. Taxes and fees included. Visit www.standupwireless.com for complete terms and conditions.

This is a Lifeline and Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) supported service. Lifeline and the ACP are separate federal government assistance programs operated by the FCC. Lifeline benefits may be combined with ACP benefits and applied to the same service plan or different service plans. Lifeline and ACP services may be obtained from different service providers. Eligibility for Lifeline and ACP is based on income or participation in certain government benefit programs and is determined by the National Verifier (documentation may be required). Promotional FREE service offer is subject to eligibility, and you must be eligible to be enrolled in either program. Lifeline benefits are non-transferable and limited to one per household (wireless or wireline). An eligible ACP household is limited to one monthly service discount and a single one-time device discount. Connected device benefits require a co-pay of \$10.01. For more information on available devices, visit www.standupwireless.com/support/devices. Monthly ACP service benefits may be transferred to another provider subject to applicable regulatory restrictions. For Lifeline and ACP eligibility criteria, applicable terms & conditions, and more information about the different programs, call us at 1-800-544-4441 or visit www.standupwireless.com. When the ACP ends or your household is no longer eligible, customers will be subject to our regular undiscounted rates. To enroll in Lifeline only, ACP only or a service plan that includes both Lifeline and ACP discounts, visit us at www.standupwireless.com. Lifeline plans include 1,000 Minutes, Unlimited Text and 4.5 GB of data. A complete listing of our plans, including plans that are fully covered (no co-pay after application of the ACP discount), is available at www.standupwireless.com/acp/plans. Offers may vary by state and service may not be available in all areas. Service provided by Global Connection Inc. of America d/b/a StandUp Wireless.

*Free phone offer is only available on a promotional basis for a limited time to customers signing up for Lifeline and the Affordable Connectivity Program (ACP) at the same time. Customers signing up for one benefit, Lifeline or ACP, and in states where Lifeline is not available through StandUp Wireless will receive a SIM kit and not a phone. StandUp reserves the right to remove this offer at any time.