

SEGO Reader

VOL. 46 | NO. 13 | APRIL 1, 2021

Ghost kitchens

“Survival.
That’s what
prompted
the idea.”

Sara Jacobs’ shady investments ■ Melodies that should be famous ■ God surf the queen

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LETTERS

We welcome letters pertaining to the contents of the Reader. Submit them at sreader.com/letters or phone them in at 619-235-3000. Include your name and neighborhood. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Influential homie

I assume the photos depict some of the most deteriorated spots on the street ("After 10 years, Gold Coast Drive finally to be fixed," Neighborhood News, March 15). They look much like the North Pacific Beach street I live on, which is lined with houses appraised at up to \$2 million. It's been over 10 years that our road has been in need of repair and repaving. Lucky for them that there's a city councilman living in the neighborhood!

Glenn Walker
Pacific Beach

Comments from SDReader.com — not edited for punctuation, spelling, or grammar.

"Can Edco get San Diego to cut food waste in half?"

Cover Stories
March 24

This looks expensive, but I can find no mention of any attempt in this endeavor to quantify whether it will do any good. State Bill 1383 mentions reducing methane gas in order to reduce the impact of climate change. If this is the purpose, I wish there were some effort to

quantify what impact this would have on the overall problem.

I believe climate change is happening, but am skeptical if there is anything that can be done to reduce global warming. If California succeeds in making a sizable reduction in methane reduction world wide, what actual impact would it have globally? I think that the impact might be infinitesimal, and if citizens knew this they would scoff at spending money for such projects. Currently all such suggestions for the public to reduce emissions seem profoundly naive. "Everyone should do their part, no matter how small"? That seems little more than a feel-good measure.

—*fralmond*

It is a recognized fact that there is tremendous waste in the food supply system. Fresh produce is wasted massively between what is grown, and what is actually eaten. At every step along the way much of it is discarded, starting in the field, in the packing shed, in the produce warehouses, in the backrooms of retail stores, and finally in the home.

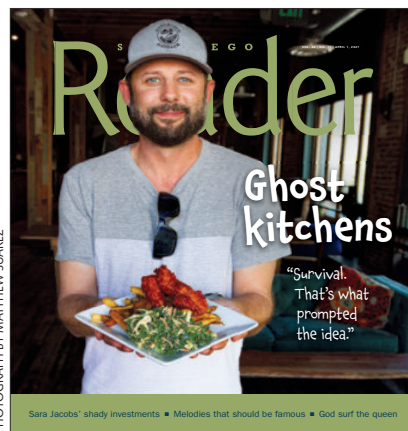
If folks didn't overbuy perishables, there would be far less in the trash system, and a smaller problem of where to put it all. But our ideas of living standards demands that our food be ultra-fresh (or at least look that way) and discarded if not eaten quickly. Leftovers? What's wrong with them? Nuthin'.

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San Diego Reader

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April 1, 2021



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SUAREZ

Don't let celebrities ruin it — page 14



It's what hipsters from Jalisco eat — page 25



Sham Black talks "pay to playlist" — page 31

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NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

By Reader stringers

MIRA MESA

Density city dreams

A place where more people means less traffic

Mira Mesa, located in north central San Diego, has far more jobs than homes or sidewalks. And that has led to an unsurprising disconnect. In 2018, over 80,000 people commuted into Mira Mesa, while over 32,000 residents commuted out. Only about 7,900 people both live and work in Mira Mesa. And a typical household in Mira Mesa spends over \$10,000 annually in transportation costs. So planners are looking to intensify residential and employment land uses within transit priority areas. And while some neighborhoods view the prospect of new housing as a scourge, a number of Mira Mesans are welcoming density — and with it, the possibility of actually walking to work. In fact, surveys for the community plan update found that slightly more residents support this approach



Skip the highway, take the skyway!

Planners centered on the two main employment centers, where 85 percent of jobs are clustered: Sorrento Mesa, which is mostly industrial parks, and Miramar, with its light industrial uses such as warehouses and breweries. According to senior planner Alex Frost, after survey results were in, SANDAG proposed a higher density for Sorrento Mesa to reflect their latest ideas for high speed commuter rail. Other focus areas are Mira Mesa Gateway off I-15, where residents preferred a business park designation, and Mira Mesa Town Center, where the preference was for community village (54 dwelling units per acre) and urban village (73 dwelling units

employers, places like Alexander Real Estate and other life science developers, about the possibility of subsidizing middle-income housing. But all the update can provide is the zoning shift. “I think the biggest incentive is to first allow for some kind of residential mixed-use within this employment setting.”

SHEILA PELL

OTAY MESA

Becerra balks then walks AG fires off fire warning before heading to feds

Located one mile east of Chula Vista’s city boundary in Eastlake, and 12 miles southwest of rural Jamul, Otay Ranch would be San Diego County’s largest development to date. In Otay Ranch’s area 13 and 14,

with Governor Gavin Newsom’s, the state has slowly been chipping away at local municipality’s growth controls in the name of helping the state’s housing crisis. The state has forced cities into housing planning elements that require a mandated number of low-income units to be built each year — a mandate that is changing the character of some communities by forcing condos or apartments into predominantly single-family residential neighborhoods. Further, the offering of density bonuses to developers for including some low-cost housing in their plans is state-mandated, overriding local cities’ long-term planning.

On March 17, Becerra filed motions on behalf of Californians to

intervene in lawsuits challenging the County of San Diego’s approval and certification of the Environmental Impact Reports for Otay Ranch. Specifically, Becerra noted that the planned Otay Ranch Resort Village 13, Resort Village 14, and future planning areas 16 -19, are “located in a very high fire hazard severity zone. The Otay Ranch Village 13 project site has experienced numerous fires, including the October 2003 Mine/Otay Fire, which burned the entire project area and nearly 40,000 acres overall,” Becerra posted to media. (In 2007, the Harris Fire burned 90,440 acres, including the majority of the Otay Ranch project site.) Regarding the undeveloped area, Becerra argued, “The County of San Diego’s EIRs repeatedly underplay the severity of the wildfire risk, concluding despite all scientific

“When you provide enough housing choices close to where people work and shop, driving becomes optional.”

than oppose it. For each of three land-use scenarios, locals clamored for ways to get around without a car.

One goal is to create “15-minute neighborhoods,” 15 minutes being the time it would take to walk to work or a shopping center. Even commuting by aerial skyway makes it into the proposal. “San Diego has such a big housing shortage,” said resident Sonali Kumar, who has struggled with the lack of options. “I support scenario three because it’s the more housing dense one, creating more housing near employment centers.” Scenario three would provide the greatest boost to the number of residents and workers within a 15-minute walk to an “activity hub,” and would also boost potential new housing in transit priority areas — nearly twice that of the least intensive option.

Not everyone likes the idea, of course. “Many of my neighbors are concerned about the possibility of increased congestion” due to upzoning, said Aaron Barral. But greater density is actually the solution to the traffic problems, he added. “When you provide enough housing choices close to where people work and shop, driving becomes optional.”

per acre) designations. “Most of the results were for change” instead of keeping the existing land use, Frost said of the survey. People wanted higher density and more mixed-use village settings for a lot of the shopping centers and employment areas. “I think a lot of the younger participants wanted to see more change.” Craig Jackson, a member of the Mira Mesa Community Planning Group, also spoke for change, but focused on seniors. “Transportation along the corridor that is Sorrento Valley Boulevard and Calle Cristobal, a collection of single-family homes, has been mostly ignored,” he said. “Transportation from this area to the hubs will be important, particularly for seniors.”

Two large projects in Carroll Canyon had the support of the planning group, in part because they added a lot of new parkland: 3 Roots, an 1,800-unit project with 10 percent of units deed restricted for low income; and Stonecreek, with 4,450 units. In contrast to this, Frost said, the community plan update proposes to add 12,023 housing units with no new parkland.

Frost said they have been in “long discussions” with Qualcomm and other large



Becerra says bye-bye, but serves Otay Ranch burn notice first.

around 3,000 homes are planned, along with the needed infrastructure of roads, schools, businesses, and public safety for thousands of new residents. But California Attorney General Xavier Becerra surprised developers, planners, and community activists when he came out against the county’s approval of the 23,000-acre development. They were surprised because, starting with former Governor Jerry Brown’s administration, and continuing

evidence to the contrary that the introduction of structures and people will not increase wildfire risks.”

Becerra stated he intervened because his action will ensure “the County of San Diego does all it can to mitigate the risks of the Otay Ranch projects before they are built.” The Attorney General claimed he had a responsibility to enforce CEQA — the California

continued on page 6



YOUTUBE SPOT FOR LINCOLN DEALERS

Katherine Kirschenmann is hitting the road after hitting her head.

The company you keep in your company

Police problems for partner of potato potentate (and Faulconer donor)

A Bakersfield-based potato magnate has kicked in \$32,400 to the putative California gubernatorial campaign of ex-San Diego mayor Kevin Faulconer. But in so doing, he has brought fresh attention to domestic violence allegations bought against his partner and fellow San Joaquin Valley tater king. Jason Davenport, a Republican high-roller and president of Allied Potato, Inc., who made his contribution to Faulconer's cause on March 1, started the company back in 2007. Two years later, he was joined in the firm by fellow potato grower and packer Brian Kirschenmann, per Allied Potato's website. "Since Davenport and Kirschenmann partnered in 2009, the company has expanded to its current state of growing and shipping about several thousand acres of potatoes — most of them for the chip market — in California, Washington, Oregon and Colorado, and today is perhaps the most prolific exporter of U.S. potatoes," says a 2019 profile of the pair by *PotatoGrower.com*. "I think exporting potatoes is one of the most challenging things you can do," Davenport is quoted as saying. "Not everyone succeeds at it. We enjoy the challenge, the successes, and the mistakes. You learn through the mistakes, and it makes you better."

The pair have long been donors to GOP causes, with Davenport coming up with a total of \$61,400 for national campaigns over the last two years, including \$2800 to Trump for President last August 18, \$6350 to the Trump-aligned Great America Committee in May and July, and \$11,400 for the WinRed committee of the Republican National Committee. Kirschenmann has similarly supported GOP campaigns, including those of Republican House leader Kevin McCarthy with \$19,000, California Victory 2018 with \$25,000, and Take Back the House 2020

with \$5600, for a total of \$86,200. In October 2016, He and his wife Katie threw a lavish fundraiser at their downtown Bakersfield mansion for state Assembly Republican Vince Fong.

Both Davenport and Kirschenmann are high-profile in the potato business, with Davenport a member of the board of Potatoes, USA a marketing group. "Davenport has been married to his wife, Nichole, for 20 years. They have two sons, Brayden (age 19) and Trennyn (age 15), and two daughters, Kaitlyn (age 17) and Ashlyn (age 10). He enjoys basketball, snow skiing, wakeboarding, travel, golf, and flying," says an April 2016 account by industry trade outlet *Spudman*. In October 2018, Kirschenmann was named by Trump Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue to the Department of Agriculture's Fruit and Vegetable Industry Advisory Committee at the behest of GOP House member McCarthy, reported *Bakersfield.com*. McCarthy, along with fellow House Republicans Devin Nunes and David Valadao, "signed a letter sent to Perdue last May in support of Kirschenmann's nomination. They noted the veteran grower is a recognized leader in his field, and not only serves on the Kern County Farm Bureau's board of directors but is also chairman of the California Potato Research Advisory Board."

Last month, Bakersfield T.V. station KGET reported that Kirschenmann was freed on \$25,000 bail after pleading not guilty to charges of assaulting Katie in the wake of a nasty divorce case. "According to a police report, Katherine Kirschenmann, 45, told police Kirschenmann shoved her during an argument September 22 in their home in Bakersfield's Westchester neighborhood," per the T.V. station's report. "Katherine Kirschenmann told police she fell backward and struck her head on a hardwood floor. She was treated at the scene for a cut, but a doctor later told her she had suffered a concussion, she told police."

Matt Potter

UNDER THE RADAR

Fraud on the House A controversial radioactive waste cleanup and rainforest restoration contractor accused by the U.S. government of faking soil tests and related fraud at San Francisco's Treasure Island Navy base has turned up on the list of recent investments by first-term, super-rich House Democrat Sara Jacobs. According to a Periodic Transaction Report filed with the Clerk

of the House of Representatives on March 12, Jacobs purchased stock in Tetra Tech, Inc., valued between \$15,000 and \$50,000 on February 19. "Tetra Tech's fraud was initiated and directed by Tetra Tech's corporate managers," per a Justice Department complaint cited by an April 2019 San Francisco Chronicle account of the case. "In the complaint, the Justice Department says Tetra Tech submitted at least \$58.5 million in false invoices; under the law, the government could demand triple that amount, or \$175 million," the newspaper noted. In November of last year, Tetra Tech sued the Navy and Environmental Protection Agency, claiming that two of its workers, not the company, were solely to blame, but charges are still flying. "More than a half dozen whistle blowers have said that to speed up the job, Tetra Tech took soil samples from areas known to be clean and passed them off as coming from areas known to be heavily contaminated," the Chronicle said.

Tetra Tech has also come under fire by environmentalists for its role as a U.S. government contractor in 2019 deforestation at Cambodia's Prey Lang Wildlife Sanctuary, as reported by the *Voice of America* last June. "Prey Lang lost 'more than one football pitch' of forest cover every hour in 2019, equaling 0.71 hectares of loss an hour," according to the account. "We are concerned that the Ministry of Environment and their partners, U.S. Aid for International Development and the American company Tetra Tech, has either not detected the forest disturbance or has chosen not to communicate it to the public," University of Copenhagen professor **Ida Theilade**, emailed VOA. A letter by Theilade and associates attacks the Cambodian government for its "actions to prevent the Prey Lang Community Network, which patrols the fast-disappearing evergreen forest, from conducting its work. It also points to the 'silent approval' by U.S. Aid for International Development and implementing partner Tetra Tech, which provides millions of dollars under the 'Greening Prey Lang' project, for the intimidation tactics used against the PLCN."

Other recent investments by Jacobs include between \$15,000 and \$50,000 of stock in LHC Group, acquired on February 19. During a March 2020 media event touting his administration's corporate response to the covid-19 pandemic, then-

president **Donald Trump** cited the home care behemoth as a "tremendously talented group of people," *New York Magazine* reported.

"One of the executives, LHC Group's **Bruce Greenstein**, didn't take Trump's proffered hand at the news briefing but gave him an epidemiologically correct elbow bump instead. 'OK, I like that,' Trump said. 'That's good,'" added *Geekwire*.

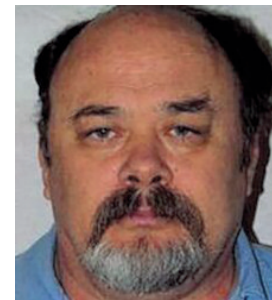


Super-rich democrat Sara Jacobs bought a House seat and some shady stock.

The death of Dad **Patrick Jay Lipe**, proprietor of the Poway swingers' dive Dad's, died February 16, 2021, of heart failure at age 66. Dad's is where child murderer **David Westerfield** partied with friends and neighbors, including his victims' parents. "Patrick built several successful restaurant businesses over the decade," says Lipe's obituary on *Legacy.com*. "Pat loved

life. He knew how to appreciate the little things and make the most out of any situation. He was scrappy, a fighter, and he hustled to get himself off the path that most unloved foster care kids are set on. He made something out of nothing and was successful in a way that many never are. He gave the best advice about life, could make a joke out of anything. He was a father figure to many of his employees and was always willing to teach those that wanted to learn."

Dad's "got the name because Pat wanted a family-oriented place in Poway, and Dad's is a conservative name you can trust, and it's a conservative place," bar manager **Sean Brown** told a *San Diego Reader* reporter in an August 1, 2002 profile. By then, Dad's had become infamous as the hangout where **Brenda van Dam**, mother of slain seven-year-old Danielle van Dam, "may or may not have lasciviously rubbed her hipbones and good-



David Westerfield still awaits his fate on San Quentin's death row.

sized bosom against 50-year-old design engineer David Westerfield's hulking frame. Westerfield is alleged to have kidnapped and murdered the van Dams' second-grader, Danielle. He is alleged to have committed these heinous deeds only hours after Brenda van Dam is described in court as 'having her tail feathers up' and 'acting frisky' and 'acting huggy-huggy' on the dance floor at Dad's"

Found guilty and sentenced to die, Westerfield remains sitting on San Quentin's death row two decades later. "Honestly, I feel the longer he's in his box, he's being tortured," van Dam told KUSI-TV on March 14 after word came that Democratic Gov. **Gavin Newsom** had suspended the state's death penalty. "I hate to say this as a person, but whatever is worse for him is better for me."

— Matt Potter (@sdmattpotter)

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Dear Hipster:

I have always wondered about the allure of weird, hipster businesses concepts that combine unlike elements under one roof. I'm thinking of things like a combination laundromat and bar, or a garage that only works on vintage Volkswagens and also sells music on vinyl and 8-track. It seems like the more different the concepts are, the more hipster and cool the combination is. Like, if you have an ice cream shop that also purveys a limited selection of imported dry goods, that's regular and boring, but if you have a combination ice cream shop and used book store it's hipster AF. Why is it cool to put together two totally random things that do not go together?

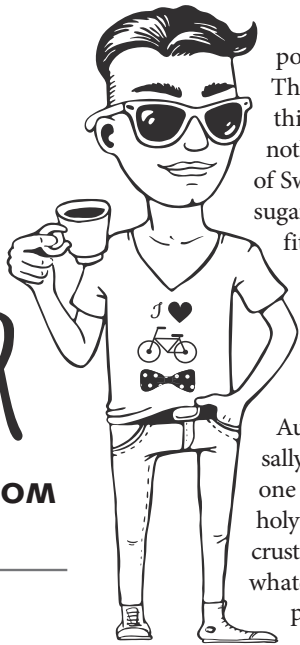
—CARLEEN



Unholy mashup or brave combo?

I think I know what you mean, like there's a place called "General Store" but it only sells donuts and used costume jewelry on Tuesdays and Saturdays. You have to doubt there is much need for one-stop barbering and electrical supplies, and even a single such store would oversaturate the nonexistent market if there weren't some other factor at play.

Maybe it's like barbecue chicken pizza. When you consider it from a purely objective standpoint, barbecue chicken pizza might be one of the stupidest ideas ever to spring from a human imagination. In their own rights, both pizza and barbecue are two of the most amazing things humans have ever invented, but the way the two things have been combined seems to highlight the worst



possible versions of each. The "barbecue" aspect of this atrocity amounts to nothing more than a splash of Sweet Baby Ray's-caliber sugar sauce. That's hardly a fitting tribute to barbecue, which may well be the greatest American contribution to world cuisine. As for the "pizza" part, it's an Austenian "truth universally acknowledged" that as one strays further from the holy trinity of sauce/cheese/crust, one strays further from whatever passes for god in pizza form. It's almost as if the creators of the barbecue chicken pizza

combed the vastness of the multiverse to find the most un-pizza, un-barbecue thing that could possibly contain the words "barbecue" and "pizza" in its name.

And yet you wouldn't be alone if you thought I'm being way harsh on the barbecue chicken pizza as a concept in and of itself. People love that garbage. They indiscriminately order it from fast casual chains and from fancy pants hipster pizza parlors that serve pies with raw egg on them. They douse it in ranch dressing and feed it to their children as if it's the most natural thing in the world. It may simply be the case that people are drawn to the sheer incongruity of the thing, but it may also be the case that this abomination somehow creates an entity far greater in concept and execution than one could ever guess by measuring only the sum of its parts.

(On a side note, I've recently learned there is a restaurant in Des Moines, Iowa that conceptually combines pizza with American-style Chinese food and tiki drinks in those cool mugs that look like Easter Island mo'ai — I'm low key planning a field trip to find out if crab rangoon pizza is anything other than exactly what it sounds like, the only problem being I would need to go to Iowa to get the answer and that's a pretty big ask.)

—DJ Stevens

LETTERS

continued from page 1

But not cooking or preparing too much to be eaten is the best way to handle incipient leftovers. Saves money, too. Some thought and some discipline at the store and in the kitchen could render this new way of getting rid of wasted food moot. It simply would not be needed. Ahh, but we are such wonderful producers of food in excess of what is needed that it will never happen.

—Visduh

The U.S. Citizens feel like they're in a clean sink; as that clean sink only getting more dirtyed up, because a garbage disposal is refusing to accept waste. As this be when it comes to undocumented or illegal citizens from south of the Border coming into the sink of the U.S. Border. !What if this problem was resolved by an theory EQUAL to these "massive turbines." (but) Rather then entering food for compost. Enter those unqualified coming into the U.S. illegally, but if it was a method equal to the "massive turbine";

So that once a certain amount been entered: the RESULT be that once the result coming out be all clean, legal, ethical. (a high hope of) No future problems.

—ised

"Border Field park closed tighter than a drum" Neighborhood News March 22

BFSP is an embarrassment to the State Parks system. Not the local administration

fault; it's because Sacramento doesn't give a rats a\$\$. It's famous all over the world but not a money maker, so there. This park is written up in every European travel guide, 'come see the SW corner of the USA!'. but when they get here, closed. unprofessional. embarrassing. Sacramento, Newsom, get your act together

—cvret

"A chip off Faulconer's donor"

News Ticker

March 25

Probably potato-magnate Kirschenmann is sorry for pushing his wife around after getting that bad publicity and wonders if his former political pals will still take his calls. I'd bet not, but those handsome ambitious GOP Kevins will always take his money.

—monaghan

"Pizza delivery has its own app"

Feast! Restaurant

Reviews

March 19

Thanks for this article. I've been wondering, for so long-time, why a "small" pizza business that I have been a longtime customer of, has chosen to charge a "\$5.00" delivery fee, be it that the order be done online or phone-in. As this business not having a dine-in to its structure.

That current dollar amount already is a big % of the value of the pizza I have ordered in my past times. (yes, that is my theory that I base my decision of judging if a delivery rate be accepted; even more to debate when within so short a driving distance)

—ised



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Environmental Quality Act. The next day, March 18, Xavier Becerra was sworn in as President Biden's new Secretary of Health and Human Services.

KEN HARRISON

SAN YSIDRO

The border is closed And so is Border Field State Park

Six years after the legislature set aside \$6 million to address the damaged road at Border Field State Park, the road remains closed — neither repaired or replaced. Instead, cyclone fencing blocks all access to the 788-acre state park, and sources say the public area on Monument Mesa is overgrown with weeds. The road was often closed most of the year — weekends during summer was the most likely time to find it open. But many people — and horses — entered and made the 1.5 mile hike to the park's cornerstone, Monument Mesa. A high point of land adjacent to the beach, the mesa provided the only U.S. access to Friendship Park. Volunteers crafted a garden of California native plants inside the 100-foot wide area owned by the Department of Homeland Security; on weekends, people used to gather on both sides of the border fence to visit with loved ones in Mexico under the watchful eyes of border patrol agents who facilitated the visits.



Reserve manager Chris Peregrin closed Border Field in December 2019 after flooding left sediment on the road. He has cited flooding, personnel shortages, and even the presence of *e.coli* bacteria in the soil near the enormous catch basins in Goat Canyon as reasons for the prolonged closure. (An Imperial Beach group, Citizens for Coastal Conservancy, spent eight months trying to get a report on those bacteria from the agency under the California Public Records Act.) At the same time Peregrin eliminated public access, the county's Tijuana River Valley Reserve, immediately east of Border Field, began been working diligently to increase that access to outdoor space in the valley. The Reserve undertook the construction of a new campground and trails, and expanded its ball fields and community gardens, as well as maintaining and improving trails used by horses, hikers and cyclists. But the county park has no beach access; hikers and equestrians who reach the boundary with the state park are met by fencing, and often a state parks cop who turns them back.

No one from state parks — neither reserve manager Chris Peregrin nor anyone

else — has submitted a formal proposal to obtain a California Coastal Commission permit, coastal commission staff say. The commission is very interested in approving the project, because it not only promotes public access generally, but also stands to improve beach access for San Ysidro, Chula Vista, Otay Mesa and other South Bay communities that have limited access to coastal resources. "It isn't just disabled people who could benefit from the road," says Coastal Program Analyst Toni Ross. "It's older people, families with children. It's events that could be held on Monument Mesa at the coast without the one and a half mile hike in. It's the kind of project we embrace." Instead, Peregrin and the parks staff have spent 75 percent of the \$678,000 awarded immediately in 2015 evaluating plans for a range of solutions, including a suspension bridge. (State parks spokesman Jorge Moreno didn't respond to questions about the remaining \$5.3 million.)

"It's a major bummer that the park is always closed," says Ben McCue, executive director of Outreach Outside. "I know it's not an easy issue, but it's time state parks prioritize public access to the beach." McCue's nonprofit works with youth who haven't had access to open spaces and outdoors experiences, including kids in the South Bay and Southeast San Diego. Outreach Outside takes them hiking and mountain biking, for example. "Border Field was a great place to take the youth we work with — it's significant for historical, cultural, environmental and so many other ways," he says. "It's such a treasure and such an opportunity for the youth in our community." It was those communities that retired county supervisor Greg Cox was thinking about when he asked the legislature to earmark the money, which was obtained



Part of the beach cut off from the public.



Get it done? Six years is a long time to wait for road repair.

from a settlement with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, for the project in 2015. As a past coastal commission chair, he was able to connect the dots quickly, engaging Toni Atkins to add it to Assembly Bill 93, which sent the \$5.95 million to the state parks recreation fund earmarked for the improvements.

In 2015, with the money secured, reserve manager Peregrin told me "A project of this

written response. "Alternatives that avoid wetland impacts are costly, alternatives that are financially viable impact wetlands, presenting regulatory challenges and uncertainty of final approval. Alternatives that do not provide year-round vehicular access fall short of requisite public access to the park." (The fact that the road sometimes floods has long been given as the reason to close the park

"Border Field was a great place to take the youth we work with — it's significant for historical, cultural, environmental and so many other ways."

scope can take up to five years to complete, provided no unforeseen delays." More than five years later, the project seems to have fallen to the bottom of the list of work to be done. "Planning and design to establish year-round vehicular access was initiated in 2016 and has remained in the preliminary planning phase due to substantial regulatory and project cost constraints," spokesman Moreno said in a

road for most of the year.)

But Ross says the commission has worked to find ways to eliminate or reduce the obstacles typical to projects that cross valued wetlands. For example, mitigation to provide habitat for plants and creatures displaced by a road can be done inside the park boundaries. And the commission supports using construction methods like berms that are not expected to last 50 years or more, reducing the scope of any climate adaptation study. "We'd really like to see a proposal," she said. "Interest in getting this in front of the commission for approval goes all the way to the top of commission management." Still, none of those conversations have prompted the parks to turn in a written proposal, and that's where the process of getting a permit to build begins. Without a proposal, it's hard to seek funding. Sources say that Peregrin has similarly implied to the commission that the U.S. Border Patrol has been an obstacle, though the agency has little say over what is done on park land — and has actually used its own resources to improve park roads.

MARTY GRAHAM

continued on page 20

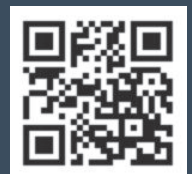


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“Queen, seen on surfboard in La Jolla!”
But nobody said she was actually surfing.

God surf the queen

My buddy Erik and I do a double take.

“Did you see that?” Erik asks? “The Queen of England, on a surfboard?”

I turn around. There she is sure enough, and wow! She has her eyes closed, looking like, “What on God’s earth am I doing on a surfboard?”

Actually, it’s a bigger-than-life photo of her, crown and all, laminated onto this really cool-looking surfboard.

“For a surfboard, that’s weird art,” says Erik.

We’re in La Jolla, Westbourne Street, in front of a prosperous-looking boutique surf shop. “You’re looking at one of the most revered shaper shops in the country,” says Erik. “Tim Bessell. He has been making boards here for 50 years. And now, many of them are regarded as art as much as surfboards.”

We knock on the door, but no sign of the man himself. I end up calling him next day.

“I’m 63, I started making surfboards at 13 years old, I’ve been making them for 50 years,” Bessell says. “By now, I’ve made 50,000 of them.” These days, he sells to a lot of famous people such as Mick Jagger and Kate Moss. And the price? “‘The Queen’ board would fetch about nine and a half. Because it is functional art!”

He means nine and a half thousand dollars.

“Boards as art? Oh sure. Really big,” he says. “My boards are not sold in surf-art galleries. They’re sold in art-art galleries. And you can quote me that functional art is far superior to fine art, because it really has to work. If you ever go to MoMA, you’ll see a race car, and it’s up on the wall. They understand that functional art is real art.”

One of Bessell’s biggest coups was getting the exclusive rights to feature Andy Warhol art on his surfboards.

He makes Warhol boards for a maximum of twelve boards per art piece reproduced. In a way, it’s natural. “Andy Warhol moved to La Jolla in 1968 to make a movie called *San Diego*



Tim Bessell, with Andy Warhol-sanctioned Elvis boards.

Surf,” Bessell says.

That movie did not get finished because right after Warhol went back to New York, Valerie Solanas shot and wounded him.”

And what a selection! “Andy Warhol produced 48,000 images. I have a lot of say-so on what I put on my boards, and the Warhol foundation either approves or doesn’t approve. Now we have over 50 Warhol designs. But you can’t go wrong with Andy’s Marilyn, or with Andy’s Elvis.”

So how did he come to discover the Queen? “Well, the Queen came to me. I have a dealer in London, Justin Easton, from the Drang Gallery. They sell really good artists. Justin Easton represents Christopher Levine, who’s very famous for photographing the queen. That closed-eye portrait was his.”

“But who’s going to buy a \$10,000 picture of the queen who’s forever going to be there tut-tutting on your surfboard?” I say to Erik as we head out of La Jolla.

“Well, at least she’d be someone to talk to,” Erik says.

That’s called Sonification

This started off as I was in the Barrio, listening to some live jazz. Overheard this guy talking with a friend about how planets sing?

I had to go and respectfully bust in. Victor Minces, academic, originally from Argentina, looks up. “This is not a good time to talk,” he says. “But come to my house and I’ll show you.”

Two days later I’m at this charming cottage under attack from a wild garden. I notice what look like siege machines, five-foot high pyramids of hanging pipes - marching out of the wilderness.

“Come in, come in,” says Dr. Minces. He has a PhD in computational neurobiology. But you can tell he’s also a fun guy.

“Here: Put the little ball right up top and see what happens.”

We’re standing next to a four-foot high

board jiggling with googly eyes. He calls it his Pachinko board (he named it after the Japanese gambling game. Reminds you of pin-ball). I place the marble-sized wooden ball at the top and let go.

“Tinkle, blop, dingo, boop, snaggle, bing!” goes the ball. Each nail it hits reacts with a different musical note.

“Science in action,” says Victor. He does it again, this time with half a dozen balls. Full orchestra!

It’s all part of the month-long courses he

Notre Dame.

“So this whole thing is a research project whose goal is to understand if music might be a good way to engage students in science,” Victor says. “In particular, low-income and underrepresented students, because there’s a crisis of representation in this country. Minority kids are not becoming scientists.”

The best thing? “We have done surveys that show kids really do come away from these courses with the confidence that they could see themselves as scientists.”

“Planets definitely have a frequency. We could convert their electromagnetic signal into a sound signal.”

gives 8-9th graders, through a National Science Foundation Grant.

“The notes depend on the size of the nail, the type of metal, and how far I drove it in. It’s about wave lengths. Sound waves. Now try and make this ring.”

He grabs two one-inch diameter lengths of pipe. He hits one with the other. Pipes come out with a pure bell tone. When I try, they produce an atonal clack. “I leave these with the kids,” he says. “Solving why I can do it and they can’t engages the kids in experimenting,” he says. “They eventually work it out, and as a result, we actually create musical instruments of all sizes. The kids love it. They have to work out the science of their orchestra.”

Now we’re outside, in that wild garden. The pipes hanging on trestles turn out to be giant tubular bells, cut to length to create musical notes. Soon the garden is sounding like

So how about these singing planets? Possible project for the kids? “Absolutely. Planets definitely have a frequency. We could convert their electro-magnetic signal into a sound signal. So in a way, you’ll be able to hear the planets! That’s called sonification.”

Another project for the kids?

“Absolutely,” says Dr. Minces. But he has a look like he needs to check with the National Science Foundation first. ■



Victor Minces and his Pachinko game.



Victor plays his base xylophone.

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SD ON THE QT

Almost factual news

There's No Place Like Home

Biden Administration begins Operation Staycation in effort to convince would-be migrants to remain in-country.

"The President of the United States believes that families are the bedrock of a healthy society," says Sam Turnback, head of the Biden Administration's Operation Staycation. "That may seem obvious, but when you hear that the US Government detained more than 11,000 unaccompanied minors at its southern border in the first three weeks of March alone, you realize

that something's been lost in translation. People have got to understand that what a child needs, more than anything, is a stable home life in the care of loving parents. That's what's going to make for a healthy, productive, decent member of society. Not some pie in the sky dream of striking out on your own while you're just a teenager and chasing economic fairies and their tales of

the Promised Land. And one way to build a stable home life is to have dedicated time set aside to staying home as a family - a staycation, if you will. Time to play games, time for generations to talk to one another, time to make memories that will last a lifetime. To facilitate this, we're sending over four million Spanish-language, locally themed Monopoly board games to

countries throughout Central America, along with free DVDs of *Coco*, the wonderful Pixar movie built around the traditional Hispanic holiday *Dia De Los Muertos*. We hope the recipients 'Remember Us' and our message that the border is closed. We're also sending in some Black Ops teams to help deal with the cartels, but that's not really my department."



One prong of the operation involves placing vintage travel posters along the border wall in an effort to get migrants from the Northern Triangle to reconsider the virtues of the places they have left behind. Says Turnback, "I look at these images and think, 'Who wouldn't want to live there?' It's like the song says: you never know what you've got til it's gone, or at least until it's 1600 miles behind you. Sure, there are troubles, but you know what? You can't get away from your troubles by running. Or walking, for that matter. You've got to stand and face them. Besides, it's not like we don't have troubles of our own on this side of the border fence. Sure, everybody wants to come live in a country that elected Joe Biden president, especially after he said they should come during the debates. But this is also a country that elected Donald Trump just five years ago. Clearly, we've got some issues, issues that should give anyone pause. Plus, murders are way, way up. So are suicides. You've got mass shootings, hate crimes, systemic racism... Sometimes, I'm amazed we even have to make the case for staying at home."



Transient in transit: a group of ICE officers encourage Granny to pack it up and move it on out.

Migrants vs Transients

Homeless residents of Convention Center moved out in favor of Unaccompanied Minor Migrants

"Everybody knows that homelessness is the single greatest humanitarian crisis facing the city of San Diego," says Mayor Todd Gloria. "But some crises are bigger than just one city. Some crises are national in scope. Like the crisis currently unfolding at this coun-

try's southern border, where thousands of migrant children are being kept in facilities that might have been called cages in another era. It's unconscionable and intolerable, and something has to be done. So when the Biden Administration reached out and asked if I wouldn't mind moving the homeless folks who have been

living in the Convention Center through this pandemic back to their former situations, I knew I had to oblige. Besides, things are quieting down now on the covid front."

Republican critics of Gloria were quick to seize on the move as a classic example of "Democrats who care more about immigrants than actual American citizens" — as Republican City Councilman Todd Bluster

put it. "What makes it worse is, many of these homeless people being kicked to the curb are military veterans. Our American heroes are being cast aside in favor of foreign invaders." Homeless vet Mike Petiesdie said he was touched by Mr. Bluster's support, adding that it was the first time he could remember a Republican even acknowledging his existence, let alone his military service.

Seal Gets Real Councilman LaCava calls for redesign

"The current seal of the City of San Diego erases the history of the Indigenous People who occupied this land long before us, and glorifies the people who stole it," says newly elected councilman Joe LaCava. "Words matter, symbols matter, actions matter. It's time we take action to right this wrong. My redesign reflects the true origins of San Diego — and, for that matter, most of what we call civilization. Always, always, money and the quest for wealth lies at the very center of our efforts. And to achieve that end, people use a combination of violence,



symbolized by the sword, and behavior modification, symbolized by the cross. You tell people what to think, threaten them if they don't fall in line, and step three, profit. That's San Diego, right there. Or at least, that's how it's been. It's why the 'Semper Vigilans' motto can stay. We must always be vigilant in our watch, ever on guard against the forces of oppression that got us where we are today."

WHO PLAYS WHO

DEPT. OF EDUCATION EDITION



On *The Handmaid's Tale*, **Ann Dowd** plays Aunt Lydia, a woman who explains to a victim of sexual assault that she brought it on herself.



District Superintendent **Cindy Marten** has been accused of enabling a predator by covering up Martin Teachworth's behavior at La Jolla High.



In *Minority Report*, **Max Von Sydow** plays an authority figure who successfully diverts attention away from his crimes.



President Biden, who nominated Marten for Deputy Secretary of Education, successfully diverted attention away from sexual assault accuser Tara Reade.



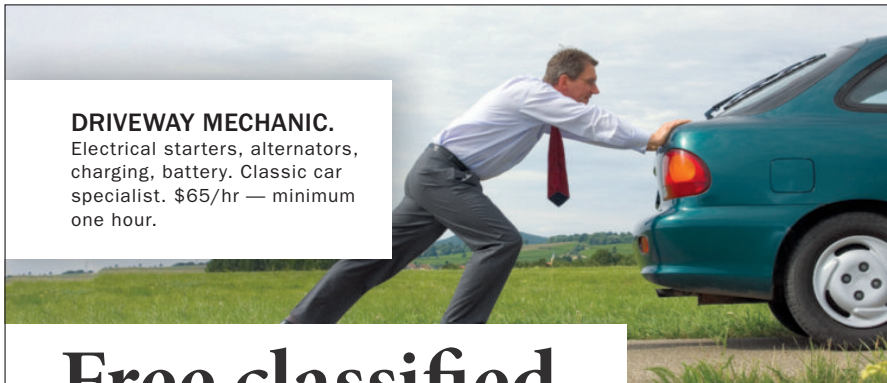
In the film *Veronica Mars*, **Kristen Bell** plays a woman who refuses to be shamed into silence after her sex tape is played in public.



San Diegan **Loix Gant** has filed suit against the school district over Teachworth's alleged groping, and says Marten implied she was doing it for publicity.

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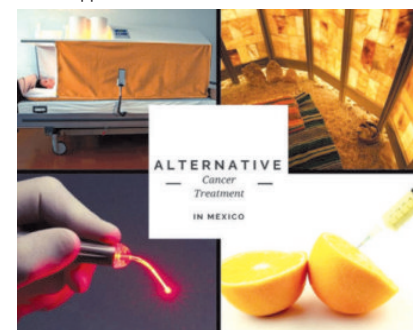
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Wings are huge in the ghost kitchen realm. If you see a wings shop on a delivery app, assume it's a ghost.

Ghost kitchens

PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SUAREZ

They didn't know it at the time, but Alexandra Garcia and Jorge Santillan were about to start a ghost kitchen.

Garcia had lost her cooking job to the pandemic. She wanted to open her own place, but didn't have a lot of resources, and restaurants were mostly doing delivery-only anyway. With pandemic shutdown orders still going strong, a low-risk idea occurred to Santillan, her husband. A way to hedge their bets with an all-delivery concept.

Their restaurant would exist only as a digital storefront, a name and logo appearing on the search results of a delivery app. Orders for Fluffy's Waffles & Pancakes would go to a business called GreatFoods2Go, which is really Garcia, cooking in a rented commercial kitchen. The business would need no dining tables, no expensive remodel, no sign welcoming customers through the door. The only people who needed to show up were the city's gig economy fleet of delivery drivers.

“Survival. That’s what prompted the idea.”

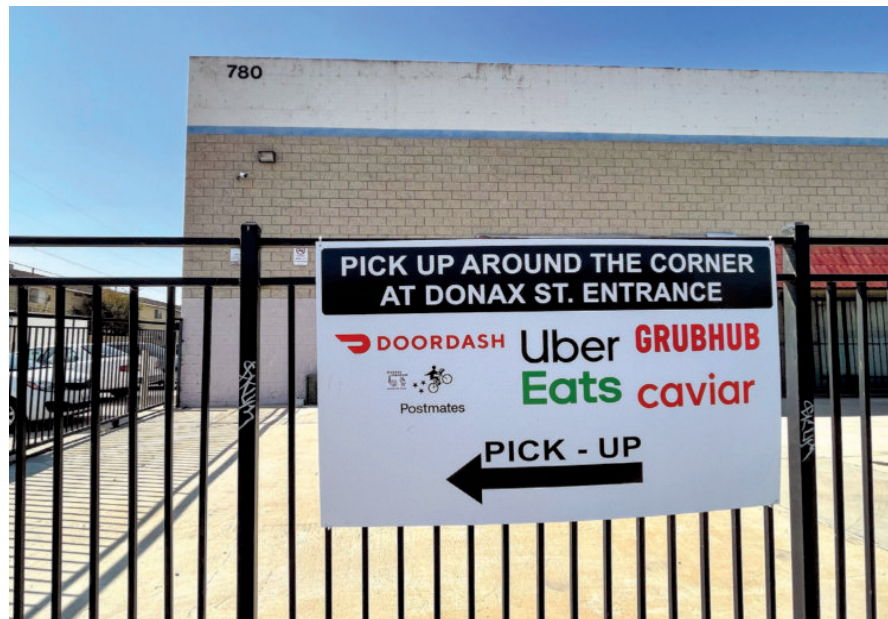
Santillan would soon realize he'd recreated the idea behind ghost kitchens. “At that time, I didn't know this was a trend,” Santillan insists with a laugh. “I was feeling like the smartest guy alive for ten days!”

Also known as virtual restaurants or cloud kitchens, delivery-only restaurant brands first emerged several years ago as a romanticized offshoot of what is now a \$45 billion a year restaurant delivery industry.

The original zeitgeist of ghost kitchens resembled Garcia's and Santillan's story. Hopping on the backs of delivery tech was held up as a clever workaround that upstart chefs could exploit to find a market for their food, without having to invest in pesky,

archaic concepts such as real estate, atmosphere, or service staff. Ghost kitchens were disruptive. Cool. They had an air of mystery.

But as ghost kitchens evolved, these same attributes have obscured who exactly is making the food behind such quirky digital facades as Fluffy's. Increasingly, the kitchens behind the ghost brands aren't run by upstarts at all. They don't normally advertise themselves as ghost kitchens, content to pass as just another new restaurant you haven't tried yet. And in most cases, they aren't using ghost brands to create a new business so much as they are trying to obscure one. Because, if you pull at the thread of a ghost restaurant, you will probably be surprised to find that a familiar face is making



PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN ANDERSON

One commercial kitchen owner, Yossi Reinstein, told me roughly half of the 24 rentals in his Hollister Kitchens are now occupied by ghost kitchen operations.

food at the other end.

Like when I went looking the source of a fried chicken virtual restaurant, Roost Republic. And found myself standing in-

side the Sherman Heights Jack in the Box.

Finding the kitchen behind the ghost isn't super challenging: delivery apps usually list the pick-up

address somewhere on the virtual storefront. What allows familiar restaurants to hide their ghost kitchens in plain sight is that a delivery

customer doesn't have a need to think twice about the kitchen's location.

But with only a little googling, you can quickly figure out the real restaurant behind the virtual one. For example, Aussie Grill is really selling Outback Steakhouse food. Most famously, it was revealed that ghost restaurant Pasqually's Pizza was really just a front for Chuck E. Cheese. A tacit admission that customers never visited its arcade pizza chain for the food.

Perhaps the ghostliest of a ghost kitchens I found is a Fatburger in South Bay. The chain died off everywhere south of Escondido years ago, but reappeared recently on apps, exclusively available for delivery. That address leads to the newly opened Hurricane Grill & Wings in Chula Vista.

Turns out, the same restaurant group owns both brands. In fact, Hurricane Grill was first introduced to Southern California as a virtual restaurant operating out of physical Fatburger locations.

It's not just national chains that have caught on to the possibilities of ghost kitchens. Plenty of small local businesses have likewise created virtual brands. For example, the menu of Taco Bout Breakfast comes right out of Porkyland Mexican Grill in Carmel Valley. The Miramar counter shop Pastalini also does business as Mothership Pizza. Delivery sushi joint Chris's Sushi repurposes the sushi menu always available at southeast Chinese restaurant Asia Wok.

One of the more interesting is a South Asian-styled fast-food menu

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for ghost brand Heer Ranja. It takes its name from a classic Punjabi tale of star-crossed lovers: a nobleman's daughter and a farm boy forced apart by the caste system. It's a heartbreaking story, but it provides a unique brand for a restaurant that only exists as a construct of Hillcrest restaurant India Palace. And a provocative brand story can make a difference when your customers are scrolling through lists of restaurants on their smartphones.

It probably goes without saying that restaurants doubling as ghost kitchens has become more likely during the pandemic. Most of the above businesses are only looking to pad their delivery sales, because the steady flow of in-person customers they've come to rely on



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SUAREZ

Gaslamp Tavern's Chef Nick Brune says, "We were kind of working our way towards a cloud kitchen model for the future... covid just fast-forwarded that."

has disappeared. They're working from home now, or out of work, or staying away from restaurants and scrubbing down their takeout packages with hand sanitizer.

It's the same reason downtown San Diego looked so empty this win-

ter, bereft of the conventioners, tourists, and office workers who usually keep its restaurants cooking. In East Village, the storefront of nationwide hot dog chain Dog Haus Biergarten looked all but abandoned, its large windows barricaded with plywood boards. Some had been tagged with graffiti, and a cluster of homeless men loitered nearby.

However, the door wasn't locked. And though its indoor dining room remained off limits, Dog Haus was open for business. Only delivery drivers drifted in and out, at whatever frequency people ordered chili dogs and sausages for home delivery.

Except, the drivers weren't all there for Dog Haus orders. Some were there picking up orders for Bad Mutha Clucka, the brand Dog Haus ownership designed to resemble an irreverent Nashville hot chicken startup. There's also an all-day breakfast concept called Badass Breakfast Burritos.

Last spring, Dog Haus splintered off a whole slew of virtual brands to pad its franchises' take-



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SUAREZ

You won't find Superior Soul Food on delivery apps. Though the kitchen is licensed and its dishes prepared by certified food handlers, third party apps won't deliver for cottage businesses, only restaurants and commercial kitchens. Instead, the business handles its own orders, and Watkins' roommate, a partner in the business, handles deliveries.

out business. The team behind Dog Haus has been relatively open about their affiliation with these brands — they've been written about in restaurant trade magazines. But it's safe to assume customers who order vegan *bánh mì* burgers delivered from the virtual vegetarian restaurant Plant B aren't exactly aware that it comes from the same kitchen responsible for creating the pastrami-topped Ital-

ian sausage.

It turns out, the most ingenious turn of Santillan's business plan for GreatFoods2Go wasn't the idea to invent a delivery-only restaurant brand. It's that he quickly jumped ahead to reach the same logical conclusion that Dog Haus has: if you're taking delivery orders through a web site, what's to stop you from opening a second restaurant from the same kitchen?

Or a third? Why be one just one brand, trying to stand out in the crowd, when you could just as easily pretend to be the whole crowd?

"This is like fishing," Santillan explains, "If you have a restaurant, you are fishing with a line. But if you create a multi-brand virtual kitchen, you are fishing with a big net."

Within three months of launching, GreatFood2Go was churning out meals for five different virtual restaurants, with plans to add more. In addition to Fluffy's Waffles & Pancakes, Garcia cooks menus for brands including Here Comes the Sun, Las Ingrata Hamburgers, and Juan Smokey's Pork Sandwiches.

Finding Fluffy's Waffles & Pancakes proved a little more complicated than ghost kitchens operating out of established restaurants. That's because GreatFoods2Go does ghost kitchens the old fashioned way, so to speak. Out of a commercial kitchen.

Early in my search for ghost kitchens, I had thought I would track

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PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SUAREZ

Robert Watkins secured a cottage license and started cooking up a menu of fried chicken, wings, and pork chops in his Logan Heights apartment, going by the name Superior Soul Food.

Future Foods. Along with competing agencies Next Bite and Virtual Dining Concepts, Future Foods is a sort of virtual restaurant marketing company that helps ghost kitchens refine their brands and menus. These digital marketing companies neither cook, take the order, nor deliver the food they sell. But they do know how to capture customers.

They have inserted themselves into the restaurant delivery supply chain as brand developers. And what the brand developers have really done is drive the virtual kitchen concept to its algorithmic conclusion. The companies track the user data of delivery apps (DoorDash, Uber Eats, GrubHub, Postmates) to learn how delivery customers shop. Then they reverse engineer brands to rise to the top of search results, usually by targeting our habitual cravings.

“We leverage data from thousands of restaurants across the country,” says Next Bite’s web site Future Foods’ notes: “Our marketing is backed by data, so nothing is left to chance.”

While the delivery apps fulfill their role of processing meal orders and farming them out to delivery drivers, the brand developers turn around and farm out the meals themselves. For those, the agencies turn to — you guessed it — local restaurants and commercial kitchen tenants.

As the Future Foods web site rather bluntly pitches it: “We create brands... You cook the food... They deliver the food... We pay you.”

It’s been a couple of years since brand developers have emerged as an intermediary market within the restaurant delivery ecosystem. But

their pitch to chefs and restaurateurs during the pandemic has felt inevitable: make up for your lost business by putting your underworked kitchen to use cooking the delivery orders we capture.

Some kitchen operators speculate that the delivery apps themselves might be behind the branding agencies, but whether or not it’s true, there’s not a lot of transparency either way. I got no replies from these agencies for this story, but their enlisted kitchen partners described to me how the operation works. They take your existing restaurant style and match it to a library of brands the company has created. Usually, the agency will recommend signing on for several brands, to increase total volume of orders coming in.

They flooded the apps with their made-up

down more commercial kitchen tenants. But commercial kitchen operators turned out to be a reticent bunch. They’re not willing to share which or how many ghost kitchens worked out of their spaces.

One commercial kitchen owner, Yossi Reinstein, told me roughly half of the 24 rentals in his Hollister Kitchens are now occupied by ghost kitchen operations. But he refused name any, for fear they would be poached by competitors once this story published.

Sure enough, I learned two or three well-funded commercial kitchen brands from outside San Diego have imminent plans to open locations here. Tenants tell Reinstein, “Just so you know, they’ll give me a month free if I come over there...”

I knew Fluffy’s Waffles

& Pancakes and other brands cooked in Hollister Kitchens, an unmarked rectangle of a building just off the 5 freeway where Chula Vista meets Imperial Beach. But to link the brand to GreatFoods2Go I had to call nearly every number on the building’s tenant list, leaving messages asking about ghost kitchens. Only Jorge Santillan called back.

For all his marketing creativity, not every brand concept cooked by GreatFoods2Go is Santillan’s doing. Just throwing a bunch of brand concepts across a few delivery apps won’t automatically generate orders. The competition out there is more sophisticated than you think.

It wasn’t long after Santillan’s ghost kitchen eureka moment that he hooked up with one the industry’s biggest players,

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brands, occasionally boosting their visibility by sponsoring discounts to be highlighted as special deals for those looking to save money on their order. A single brand will pop up on delivery apps across the country, as if it were a national franchise. But whenever an online customer bites, the order goes to a hired restaurant kitchen for fulfillment.

Which highlights one unadvertised difference between these reusable virtual brands and traditional franchises: from city to city, ghost kitchen brands don't make the same food. A Big Mac may taste the same wherever you buy it, but the same ghost kitchen order turns out differently depending on who cooks it.

The restaurants taking orders for these ghost brands use their own ingredients and their own approach to cooking the menus the brand generators give them. Fried chicken has proven a particularly successful virtual restaurant model, for example. However, a downtown San Diego ordering fried chicken from ghost kitchen Thick

Chick will get it from a local purveyor who brines boneless chicken thighs in buttermilk before frying them. Someone ordering Thick Chick in Edison, New Jersey will have a different experience.

The brands aren't devised for continuity or even longevity. One ghost kitchen cook told me he'd viewed well over a hundred different brands catered by Future Foods, and another source suggested that could be the tip of the iceberg.

Occasionally, the brand may be intentionally quirky to attract attention, such as the case of Bitch, Don't Grill My Cheese. But most of the time, they seem internationally unmemorable, so you can't be sure whether or not you've heard anything about the place, positive or negative. Most important is that the name of the ghost kitchen strongly hints at, or explicitly spells out, specific, popular food items it sells. So you get names like Ranch Burger, Brooklyn Calzones, Wham Bam Burrito, Wild Wild Wings, Just Wingin It, Wings Dynasty, or Wings Squad.

Oh yes, a lot of Wings. Wings are huge in the ghost kitchen realm. If you see a wings shop on a delivery app, assume it's a ghost.

Prior to the pandemic, the Sorrento Valley deli On A Roll Café never served wings. Located on the first floor of a small office tower, it operated as a caterer and deli serving the many business campuses surrounding it. Owner Darin Loesch, who started the shop going on 15 years ago, explains that this business went south once the coronavirus showed up. "With the pandemic," he says, "there's maybe 10-15 percent of that population left."

So he looked to the ghost kitchen model as a way to replace what business he could. He went to the delivery apps to set up a virtual storefront that would generate business among a new set of customers. "They were saying," Loesch tells me, "the number one item being delivered at that time, was wings."

Loesch entered the space with Bombshell Wings, launching the



PHOTOGRAPH BY MATTHEW SUAREZ

Chef Phillip Esteban established Rice Bowls For All under a one-for-one model. Meaning that, with every meal delivered to San Diegans at home, Esteban and team would provide a meal to someone who needed it.

brand on his own. Then he linked up with Future Foods. Wings again.

"They sent us three or four wings names and menus," he says. "You choose what you can make, then they post it for you on a majority of the third party delivery

platforms." Sure enough, I managed to track down no fewer than four other wings ghost kitchens to his address: Killer Wings, Szechwings, Cupid's Wings, and Just Wingin It.

He's not in sole possession of those Future

Foods brands. I found another instance of the Just Wingin It virtual restaurant that sends its wings orders to Brewski's Bar & Arcade, not too far away, in Miramar.

But then, the whole point with these brands is to cast a wide net. "We get more breadth on their platform," says Loesch. "There's more of our brands listed, so you get more clicks. It works fairly well. I would say our wings business is probably up by 30 to 50 percent since we started with Future Foods."

Loesch will likely continue to cook for the virtual brands once the pandemic ends — wings are easy to make, and its simply a matter of responding to orders as they come in. However, he has no illusions that it's a viable long-term solution. Before he's even received the orders generated by the virtual wings brands, both Future Foods and the delivery app have taken their cuts, leaving behind the slenderest of margins for the restaurant itself.

"If it's an add-on to your current, successful business model, you can make it," he says, "but you can't sustain with

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just a third-party business.” But he’ll also apply lessons learned from the experience to put more resources behind his own ghost kitchen, the Bombshell Wings brand he first started with, using the On a Roll catering vehicle to deliver orders without all the middlemen.

Caterer Josh Feinberg might agree with Loesch that fulfilling ghost restaurants for brand developers isn’t enough to sustain a business. But an entire stable of ghost kitchens might — at least in the near term.

One of the more active ghost kitchen purveyors in San Diego, Feinberg’s pre-covid specialty was St. Louis style baby back ribs. Before the pandemic began, he established his Rolling Rib catering business in Los Angeles, and last year moved down here with the goal of expanding to San Diego. A year later, he is instead cooking food behind as many as 12 virtual restaurant brands.

“Survival. That’s what prompted the idea,” he says. “My catering company got shut down by California... I had to pivot to something.”

Feinberg has been working with all three of the aforementioned brand generators — Future Foods, Next Bite, and Virtual Dining Concepts — preparing food under the brands Bitch, Don’t Grill My Cheese, Thick Chick, and Ranch Burger, among others. He’s also generated several of his own brands, including Stuff Yo Face Bomb Ass Burgers, Philly Original Cheesesteaks, and Mama’s Golden Fried Chicken.

Though he remains hopeful his own brands will gather some momentum, he’d much rather be catering right now. But



PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN ANDERSON

Darin Loesch will likely continue to cook for the virtual brands once the pandemic ends. He plans to put more resources behind his own ghost kitchen, Bombshell Wings, using the On a Roll catering vehicle to deliver orders without all the middlemen.

ghost kitchens keep him cooking, and working with the brand developers has everything to do with how the delivery apps order the results when users search for restaurants or cuisines. “The way the algorithms work, it’s better to have multiple things out there,” Feinberg says.

When working with the brand developers, he adds, it’s critical to sign on for as many brands as possible to create the volume in orders necessary to overcome the high cost of doing business with them and delivery apps both. “You’re looking at 40- to 45-percent off the top.”

The real trick to operating so many distinct concepts at once, according to Feinberg, is “using a lot of the same ingredients.” Hence multiple concepts focusing on burgers and fried chicken. It’s the same reason the Seaport Village Mexican restaurant Margarita’s Cantina doubles online as Wham Bam Burrito, while its sister restaurant, San Diego Burger Co., fulfills the ghost brand ASAP Burger.

Though data may be the divining force for those seeking to top search re-

sults, there’s another pillar of virtual restaurants that drives its own traffic: celebrity ghost kitchens.

Social media celebrity, first of all. One of the more successful is MrBeast, a YouTube stuntman and ersatz performance artist who commands 53 million subscribers. The guy pulled more than 60 million to watch him eat “the world’s largest slice of pizza,” so I guess it stands to reason his fame can support a virtual network for MrBeast Burger virtual restaurants — claiming to cover 250 cities, over three dozen states.

Most celebrity ghost kitchens operate this way, directing fans to ghost kitchens burrowed within hundreds of cities across most of the country. Probably the most well-known celebrity attaching her name to delivery is Mariah Carey. The Grammy award-winning diva solicits fans for the brand Mariah’s Cookies, pledging “freshly baked cookies directly to your door!”

In his Southeastern San Diego catering kitchen, Josh Feinberg bakes some of those cookies.

But order cookies

closer to downtown, and they’ll be baked by Buca di Beppo, the Italian restaurant chain built around the atmosphere of checkered tablecloths and walls cluttered with vintage photos. With

interior dining banned, the chain has sealed off its inner rooms, and repurposed its host stand into a streamlined takeout operation, frequently trafficked by delivery drivers picking up for no fewer than five brands in addition to its own.

All the celebrity business comes through the third marketer in the brand development trifecta, Virtual Dining Concepts. The agency has its share of generic concepts — City Burger Co., House of Subs, all the way to Soup N Greens — but key to its business is a roster of celebrity hawkers having nothing to do with food, whether it’s *Saved By the Bell*’s Mario Lopez or chart topping rapper, Tyga, whose ghost kitchen TygaBites serves nothing but chicken nuggets.

On behalf of these as-

sociations, Virtual Dining recruits caterers and restaurant kitchens — someone standing by in a kitchen ready to bake Mariah’s cookies on cue.

Actual food celebrities have also been getting more into ghost kitchens during the pandemic, and all went straight for the ghost kitchen tried and true: fried chicken, burgers, and wings.

YouTube food host Sam the Cooking Guy sends burgers and sandwiches out of a restaurant he plans to open in Seaport Village. Food Network star Guy Fieri has instantly taken his Flavortown ghost kitchen national. And out of his restaurant, International Smoke, celebrity chef Michael Mina has lately announced a pair of ghost kitchen con-

continued on page 40

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NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Continued from page 6

TIJUANA

Border burrito ordeal Coach blows whistle after crooked cop stop

On March 1, Mauricio Rodriguez, a Mexican-American life coach, was coming back from a special event in Playas de Tijuana at 1 am. Before crossing the border to the U.S., he bought a burrito and a soda. Suddenly, three Tijuana policemen appeared from the shadows under the last pedestrian bridge. "They showed up from nowhere and asked me to stop despite having no reason to," he explained. "They told me that they would search me and asked me to come under the bridge. At that point, I said to them that if they wanted to search me, do so in the spot where I was. Then one of them showed me his nightstick and said, 'You will do as we said.'" Mauricio said the officers asked him if he was carrying a gun, and if that was the reason he didn't want to be searched. He said that was impossible, because he was trying to cross into the U.S. Then he continued on his way



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUIS GUTIERREZ

Mauricio made a different sort of run for the border.

to the border crossing. "I thought that they wanted to rob me. I felt a threat to my physical integrity, because I was not a danger for them and I was not doing anything illegal. I just had a burrito and a soda in my hands," he stated.

After that, they blocked his way and tried to push him under the pedestrian bridge. Mauricio started to cry for help to people around, but nobody intervened. Then he remembered that where he had bought food, there were two other officers. So he approached them, but they refused to help him because they were not in their area and had just come to eat. The original officers followed him and said, "Are you dumb? They are on our side." After that, Mauricio was pushed against the patrol car and the officers started to search him. "At that point, they were pretty upset and got violent due to my request to give me their names. Then they began to say that I would be taken to the police station, and I said that I wanted to go and report them to the judge."

Dreadful stories told to him by friends regarding police came into his mind. "I started to think that they

will put me in the patrol car to get beaten so I wouldn't have any desire to report them, so my sense of surviving turned on. While I was getting searched against the patrol car, I

"I started to think that they will put me in the patrol car to get beaten so I wouldn't have any desire to report them."

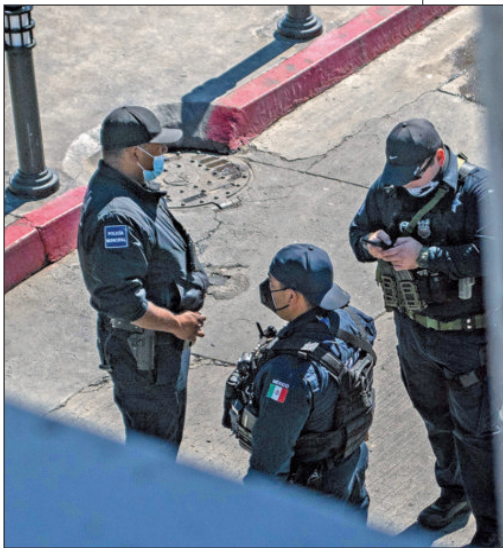
sneaked out and ran towards the border." The police didn't chase him. But people working at businesses he passed screamed to him, while themselves slipping away. "They said, 'Run - you would not imagine what they would do to you.'"

Yards before getting to the Port of Entry, he stopped running. Suddenly, the police in their patrol car drove on the Ready Line track to catch him right before he could cross. His reaction was to run again, but when the Border Patrol officers realized he was being chased by the cops, they blocked him and yelled at him to stop. "I threw myself against the Border Patrol officers in order to

land in U.S. territory, to be out of Tijuana's police jurisdiction," Mauricio explained. He was handcuffed by three border patrolmen, who let the Mexican police take a picture of Mauricio's California ID. Officers then escorted him to San Ysidro and told him that two other people had suffered something similar that same day. "Now, I'm scared for my life," he said. "That was the first reason to report them to the *Sindicatura* (a Tijuana city department set up for functionality of public services), and feel a bit more protected." Mauricio published his case on several Facebook groups, and other people told him they had had similar experiences, but no one actually reported one. And according to him, that was his very reason to make it public. Mauricio's dad called him the next day, and asked him why he reported what happened, because the police won't get punished. Mauricio said he believes that reporting these events is the only way to change things in Mexico. If people don't report these issues, they will continue to live in fear. "I think that's my duty as a life

coach," he concluded. "I need to be consistent with that, and not just complain, but try to change our situation by doing things right."

IVÁN MOLINA



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUIS GUTIERREZ

"They told me that they would search me and asked me to come under the bridge."



PHOTOGRAPH BY LUIS GUTIERREZ

"I threw myself against the Border Patrol officers in order to land in U.S. territory."



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SDReader.com

San Diego Reader

Your Week

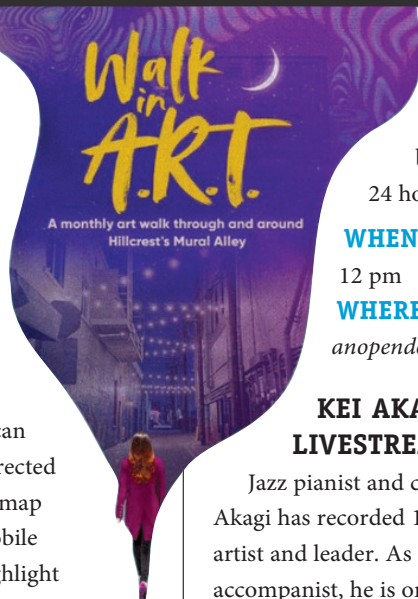
AND WELCOME TO IT

Thursday | 1

WALK IN A.R.T.

Walk In A.R.T (Allyship, Resilience and Truth) is a Hillcrest art celebration presented by the Hillcrest Business Association. Attendees can expect entertainment directed by an interactive digital map accessible from their mobile device. The map will highlight selfie-booths, psychic readings, live art, music, complimentary Reeds Ginger Beer, and a paint & sip with specialty drinks.

WHEN: First Thursday of the month from Thursday, April 1 through Thursday, August 5; 5 pm to 11 pm
WHERE: Mural Alley, 500 Block of University, Hillcrest. fabuloushellcrest.com



account to view. A replay of the stream will be available for 24 hours.

WHEN: Friday, April 2, 12 pm
WHERE: anopendoor.bandcamp.com

KEI AKAGI LIVESTREAM

Jazz pianist and composer Kei Akagi has recorded 14 albums as a solo artist and leader. As a sideman and accompanist, he is on over 60 albums worldwide, including Miles Davis' last recorded works. The CSUSM per-



KEI AKAGI

formance will be a remote solo piano concert. There will also be an interview and a Q&A with the audience.

WHEN: Friday, April 2, 6 pm to 7:30 pm

Friday | 2

SOFT KILL LIVE FROM CRYSTAL BALLROOM

Soft Kill will livestream a professionally shot concert, filmed at the Crystal Ballroom in Portland. Alongside cuts from their recently released album *Dead Kids, R.I.P. City*, the band will be performing *An Open Door* and *Choke*. There will be a limited variant of *An Open Door* available to ticket holders only. The livestream is hosted on Bandcamp, and requires a free Bandcamp fan



SOFT KILL



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7: FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF AT ROOFTOP CINEMA CLUB

WHERE: csusm.edu/calendar

Sunday | 4

EASTER BRUNCH CRUISE

Cruise on San Diego bay aboard a flagship yacht. Take in the San Diego skyline as you sip complimentary champagne mimosas, and choose sweet and savory selections from a brunch buffet. Also choose between two departure times

on Easter Sunday.

WHEN: Sunday, April 4, 9:30 am to 12 pm and 1:30 pm to 4 pm

WHERE: Flagship Cruises & Events, 990 N. Harbor Drive, Downtown. flagshipsd.com

takes a journey through the streets of Chicago. On Ferris' trail is high school principal Rooney (Jeffrey Jones), determined to catch him. Rooftop Cinema opens at 6:30 pm, allowing guests time to enjoy the sunset, table games, food, and drinks. Watch the movie from a lounge chairs with sanitized headphones, and enjoy cocktails, craft beer, or wine.



Celebrate Easter ON THE SAN DIEGO BAY

Wednesday | 7

FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF AT ROOFTOP CINEMA CLUB

Ferris Bueller (Matthew Broderick) is skilled at skipping school and getting away with it. Intending to play hooky one last time before graduation, Ferris calls in sick, "borrows" a Ferrari, and

WHEN: Wednesday, April 7, 6:30 pm to 11 pm
WHERE: Manchester Grand Hyatt, One Market Place, Downtown. rooftopcinemaclub.com

HOW TO SEND US YOUR LISTING: Have an event? We want it! Festivals, lectures, sporting events (including surfing, kayaking, and sailing), Meetups, conventions, book signings, art gallery openings, conferences, dance performances, expos, poetry readings, classes & workshops — all are welcome. You can submit an event at sdreader.com/events/submit.

ANIMAL FRIENDS

Spring Critter Camp Kids in San Diego can spend spring break with awesome animals at Critter Camp! Your child's appreciation for all animals will flourish as they interact with cute critters, create crafts, play games and more. Contact us at education@animalcenter.org or (858) 756-4117 x 318. Thursday, April 1, 9am; Friday, April 2, 9am; Monday, April 5, 9am; Tuesday, April 6, 9am; Wednesday, April 7, 9am; \$65-\$85. Helen Woodward Animal Center, 6461 El Apajo Road. (RANCHO SANTA FE)

ART

Memories at the Museum Take part in a discussion and virtual tour of several Balboa Park museums. Docents with the Memories at the Museum program engage people with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease and an accompanying family member or friend in discussions about the artwork to stimulate visual and verbal abilities, and to spark memory. Tuesday, April 6, 2pm; **free**. 21 and up. <https://bit.ly/3w1hGzD>. (ONLINE)

Stations of Creation Outdoor Multimedia Gallery An outdoor multimedia gallery where seven original art pieces—to reflect the genesis creation story—will be paired with seven live performances of poems and music. This will be in our park, socially distanced, and masks will be required. Sunday, April 4, 9am; **free**. Westminster Presbyterian Church, 3598 Talbot Street. (POINT LOMA)

Walk In A.R.T. Walk In A.R.T. (Allyship, Resilience and Truth) is a monthly Hillcrest art celebration presented with the Hillcrest

Business Association on the first Thursday of the month. Attendees can expect a night filled with selfie-booths, psychic readings, live art, music, complimentary Reeds Ginger Beer and a paint & sip with specialty drinks. Thursday, April 1, 5pm; 500 Block of University

BEER

Trivia Night Sunset Trivia is coming back with the No Leftovers food truck, team sports, and social distancing. Wednesdays, 7pm; through Wednesday, April 28, **free**. 21 and up. Duck Foot Brewing Company, 8920 Kenamar Drive. (MIRAMAR)

BOOK SIGNINGS

Warwick's Author Livestream: Donna Freitas This Couch Surfing Book Tour event features Donna Freitas as she discusses her new book, *The Nine Lives of Rose Napolitano*, in conversation with Liz Fenton and Lisa Steinke. Tuesday, April 6, 4pm; **free**. warwicks.com/event/freitas-2021. (ONLINE)

Warwick's Author Livestream: Gina Barreca Warwick's will host Gina Barreca as she discusses her new book, *Fast Funny Women: 75 Essays of Flash Nonfiction*, in conversation with Darien Hsu Gee. Thursday, April 1, 4pm; **free**. warwicks.com/event/barreca-2021. (ONLINE)

CLASSES & WORKSHOPS

Botanical Bundle Dyeing Class Explore the technique of bundle dyeing, using flowers and plant-based food scraps to infuse natural pigment into fiber. If you like, gather a handful of your favorite flowers to use in your bundle. Please register in advance. \$48 Bravo member / \$57 non-member + \$12 Supplies fee Wednesday, April 7, 10am; \$60-\$69. Bravo School of Art South Park, 2963 Beech Street. (SOUTH PARK)

Rhyme & Verse

A poem for Easter by John Keble

Easter Eve

At length the worst is o'er, and Thou art laid
Deep in Thy darksome bed;
All still and cold beneath yon dreary stone
Thy sacred form is gone;
Around those lips where power and mercy hung,
The dews of deaths have clung;
The dull earth o'er Thee, and Thy foes around,
Thou sleep'st a silent corpse, in funeral fetters wound.

Sleep'st Thou indeed? or is Thy spirit fled,
At large among the dead?
Whether in Eden bowers Thy welcome voice
Wake Abraham to rejoice,
Or in some drearier scene Thine eye controls
The thronging band of souls;
That, as Thy blood won earth, Thine agony
Might set the shadowy realm from sin and sorrow free.

Where'er Thou roam'st, one happy soul, we know,
Seen at Thy side in woe,
Waits on Thy triumphs—even as all the blest
With him and Thee shall rest.
Each on his cross; by Thee we hang a while,
Watching Thy patient smile,
Till we have learned to say, "'Tis justly done,
Only in glory, LORD, Thy sinful servant own."

Soon wilt Thou take us to Thy tranquil bower
To rest one little hour,
Till Thine elect are numbered, and the grave
Call Thee to come and save:
Then on Thy bosom borne shall we descend
Again with earth to blend,
Earth all refined with bright supernal fires,
Tinctured with holy blood, and winged with pure desires.

Meanwhile with every son and saint of Thine
Along the glorious line,
Sitting by turns beneath Thy sacred feet
We'll hold communion sweet,
Know them by look and voice, and thank them all
For helping us in thrall,
For words of hope, and bright examples given
To show through moonless skies that there is light in Heaven.

O come that day, when in this restless heart
Earth shall resign her part,
When in the grave with Thee my limbs shall rest,
My soul with Thee be blest!
But stay, presumptuous—CHRIST with Thee abides
In the rock's dreary sides:
He from this stone will wring Celestial dew
If but this prisoner's heart he faithful found and true.

When tears are spent, and then art left alone
With ghosts of blessings gone,
Think thou art taken from the cross, and laid
In JESUS' burial shade;
Take Moses' rod, the rod of prayer, and call
Out of the rocky wall
The fount of holy blood; and lift on high
Thy grovelling soul that feels so desolate and dry.

Prisoner of Hope thou art—look up and sing
In hope of promised spring.
As in the pit his father's darling lay
Beside the desert way,
And knew not how, but knew his GOD would save
E'en from that living grave,
So, buried with our LORD, we'll close our eyes
To the decaying world, till Angels bid us rise.



John Keble (1792-1855) was an English poet and Anglican priest, best known as one of the founders, along with John Henry Newman (1801-1890) and Edward Pusey (1800-1882), of the Oxford Movement, which sought to reform the Anglican Church in accordance with Church tradition. Among his most important works in verse is *The Christian Year*, a book of poems, which includes

"Easter Eve," written as a series of meditations on the Sundays and feast days of the Anglican liturgical year. It is considered the most popular book of verse in the 19th century with 109 editions published by 1856, the year after Keble's death. It was first published anonymously as a companion to the Book of Common Prayer, the main liturgical book of Anglicanism. The authorship of *The Christian Year* was revealed when Keble, in 1831, became Chair of Poetry at Oxford University, which he held until 1841. One of England's great poets, William Wordsworth (1770-1850), held *The Christian Year* in high esteem and offered to even edit the book for Keble free of charge.

Find more poetry online at SDreader.com/poetry

Building Confidence with Meditation This class is for anyone at any level who'd like to build more confidence in their meditation practice and their life. Meditating in a group builds a stronger energy to tap into, which you can take with you into your daily meditation practice. Thurs-

days, 7pm; through Thursday, April 29, **free**. 18 and up. dharmacenter.com. (ONLINE)

Construct Your Own Traditional Compost Bin This 1-hour webinar will teach how to construct a simple, economical, and effective backyard compost bin. Tuesday, April 6, 6pm; **free**. solanacenter.org/free-compost-workshops. (ONLINE)

Gourmet Coffee Making Class Learn how coffee goes from bean to brew and how to craft the perfect cup while making meaningful connection in a community setting. Saturday, April 3, 9:30am; **free**. <https://bit.ly/3w1jtol>. (ONLINE)

Intro to Sketching: 4 Week Virtual Class La Jolla Community Center presents: Learn about renowned artist Minnie Valero's artistic process in sketching. Thursday, April 1, 10am; \$49-\$59. ljcommunitycenter.org/series. (ONLINE)

Retro Tapestry Weaving Class Practice plain weave, twills, tapestry, sumac, fringe making and more. Weave traditionally and create four 1960s and 70s inspired,

richly textured and tactile samplers of fiber art. Please register in advance. \$156 Bravo member, \$180 non-member + \$29 Supplies fee Wednesday, April 4, 10am; \$185-\$209. Bravo School of Art South Park, 2963 Beech Street. bravoschoolofart.squarespace.com (SOUTH PARK)

The Art of Sitting in Stillness Peace is accessible to us all the time. When we are centered in our Hearts and connected with our Body and Mind there is an inherent doorway that we gain access to, a doorway to inner peace and serenity. Tuesday, April 6, 5:30pm; **free**. 18 and up. dharmacenter.com. (ONLINE)

Traditional Composting Workshop Series Hone your composting skills, or to get started for the first time. Each part of the 4-part webinar series builds upon the previous offering, covering how to build your own backyard composting bin, what to add for optimal decomposition, utilizing the bokashi method, and how to harvest and use your finished product.

Tuesdays, 6pm; through Tuesday, April 27, **free**. solanacenter.org/free-compost-workshops. (ONLINE)

DANCE

La Jolla Music Society: Joffrey Ballet Rehearsal Q&A Open rehearsal livestream, followed by a live moderated conversation with Ashley Wheeler MBE, artistic director, and Nicolas Blanc, choreographer. Another rehearsal will be livestreamed April 7, and the actual performance of *Under the Trees* will livestream April 30. Wednesday, April 7, 1pm; <https://lajms.org/>. (ONLINE)

Zoom Dance Performance: Ta La Anusree Bonnerjee and Nilesh Singha, lead dancers of Drutam Dance Ideas Lab along with script writer Sudipta Dhruva present a thematic, multimedia performance in the Bharatanatyam style, the oldest classical dance practice in India. Wednesday, April 7, 10am; **free**. <https://bit.ly/31soZSQ>. (ONLINE)

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SHEEP AND GOATS

I ANSWERED THE CALL

Community Congregational Church of Chula Vista

Contact: 276 F Street, Chula Vista, 619-422-9263, chulavistachurch.com

Neighborhood: Chula Vista

Membership: 187

Pastor: Elizabeth Aguilar

Age: 53

Born: Chicago

Formation: North Park University, Chicago; Andover Newton Theological School, Newton Center, MA (since relocated in merger with Yale University)

Years Ordained: 23

San Diego Reader: How long does it take to prepare a sermon?

Pastor Elizabeth Aguilar: Because of the pandemic, my full rhythm of work, worship

and sermon preparation has changed, because now we are pre-recording our worship services. I prepare my sermon by Wednesday, which is when we record. Final edits and everything have to be done by Friday morning. It's completely different from how I was preaching live in front of the congregation on a Sunday morning. The time of preparation varies week to week because it depends on what else is going on with ministry. For instance, this week we have a lot of people sick, not all with the virus, but with other serious illnesses too. That shortened my sermon prep time. I say my research of scriptures, meditation, thinking about how the scriptures

speak to me, and writing the sermon varies. It could go anywhere between five to 10 hours a week. It depends also on the scripture, because some are harder than others to understand, and speak to me in a different way. I tend to follow the lectionary and I try to incorporate current events into my sermons; I also look at what the author was originally saying, and the reasons for what was written — to draw practical every-day lessons for today's disciples.

SDR: Why did you become a minister?

PA: At the very beginning, I felt an urge. I didn't know what shape it would take, but I wanted to show people that God was real and that

God loved them. That was my original call at the age of almost 18 years old. It evolved since then, obviously.

SDR: What is the mission of your church?

PA: This isn't our official mission statement, which is in development, but we are a church that needs to demonstrate Christ's love in our community and beyond by serving our neighbors. We're a very diverse congregation; most United Church of Christ churches, even in California, tend to be mostly white. But we have Filipinos, Latinos, young and older white folks. It demonstrates the diversity of this part of the country really well. It is exciting to minister in this kind of community.



Elizabeth Aguilar

We're also seven miles from Tijuana, and we've been supporting a migrant shelter there for a few years now. Also, people have been at this church for generations. We're the oldest church in Chula Vista — 230 years old.

SDR: Where do you go when you die?

PA: Because God is full of love and grace, God wants all of

us to be with God when we leave this place, and it's up to God to decide who that is and how that is. When I've heard people speak about what they saw and heard after-life experiences, it's always been peaceful, beautiful and full of love and joy and kindness. God has given us free will. Some people reject God and will reject God, but I'm going to leave it up to God to decide what happens to those people. But if we choose God, even at the last minute, we will be with God, and it's going to be beautiful. Even if we look at the sky, we see only a glimpse of what's in store for us.

— Joseph O'Brien

Find more Sheep and Goats columns at SDReader.com/worship/

DISCUSSION GROUPS

San Diego County Careers in Education Fair The virtual event will provide an opportunity to discuss current and anticipated openings in credentialed, classified, and substitute teaching with San Diego School District hiring representatives and review the process. Wednesday, April 7, 3:30pm; **free.** allianteducationfair.easyvirtualfair.com/prefair/. (ONLINE)

Victorian Spring Tea & Floriography The Gaslamp Museum at the Davis-Horton House virtually welcomes a new season with an afternoon of tea and Victorian floriography! Tune in through Zoom as our staff guides you through the Victorian Language of Flowers. Saturday, April 3, 1pm; \$50-\$95. gaslampfoundation.org/product/virtual-victorian-spring-tea/. (ONLINE)

EASTER

Easter Bunny Enchanted Spring Gardens Take picture-perfect photos with the Easter Bunny at the Easter Bunny Enchanted Spring Gardens. Reservations are recommended. Saturday, April 3, 12pm; \$34-\$44. Westfield Plaza Bonita, 3030 Plaza Bonita Road. (NATIONAL CITY) & Westfield North County Shopping Center, 272 E. Via Rancho Parkway. (ESCONDIDO)

Find The Golden Egg The golden egg can be found in a new location daily. Find the golden egg somewhere on property, snap a photo and post it to your Insta Story tagging @WestfieldUTC. Each day of the hunt, the first 25 families to show Concierge their photo will win a special prize. Visit Bunny's helpers at the Concierge Cabana

near Express for more information. Thursday, April 1, 11am; Friday, April 2, 10am; Saturday, April 3, 10am; Westfield University Towne Centre, 4425 La Jolla Village Drive. (LA JOLLA)

LECTURES

Exploring Ethics: Neuroscience & Social Justice How does a kid from Compton, CA embark on a life-long journey and academic career path to Full Professor in Neurobiology? The answer is simple: Access, Mentorship and Advocacy. Dr. Gentry Patrick's experiences as a first-generation college student doubting that he belonged, and the many emotions that colored his story, shaped his STEM- and self-identity as they developed and merged. Wednesday, April 7, 5:30pm; **free.** <https://bit.ly/2PCN6eL>. (ONLINE)

Sierra Club Sierra Talks: Black Bears, The Human-Animal Link Black bears are one of the most intelligent land animals of North America. They are faced with ongoing threats from habitat destruction, over-hunting, international trade, and human ignorance. We will discuss the plight of the black bears and the work to save them from a grim fate. Friday, April 2, 7pm; **free.** facebook.com/sierraclubsd. (ONLINE)

OUTDOORS

Indian Hawthorn, one of the most common flowering shrubs used in landscaping as hedges and dividers in San Diego, is blooming best right about now. The plant, which has several varieties, covers itself with blossoms ranging in hue from pinkish white to vivid pink.

Mexican Coral Trees or "naked corals," are showing their stuff this season by bearing and baring scarlet, flame-like flowers on the tips of their twisting, leafless branches. Commonly planted as park and freeway landscaping, this and other species of coral are blooming along Freeway 94, Interstate 5 through Oceanside, along Harbor Drive near the airport, at the San Diego Zoo, on the lawns in front of San Diego City College downtown, and on the San Diego State University campus. The bloom may continue into late spring, when the naked corals will cover themselves with eightinch-long leaves, just in time to provide shade for the warm months.

African Daisies are bursting into bloom around San Diego, especially along the freeway embankments. The name refers to a wide variety of species belonging to the genera *Arctotis*, *Dimorphotheca* and *Osteospermum*, with flowers ranging in color from yellow, orange and white to purple. These hardy ground covers require little water except when in active growth, and help to hold soil in place during heavy rains.

Arcturus, the bright Spring Star climbing in the east, shortly after the end of twilight around this time of year, stands just as high as Sirius, the brighter Winter Star descending in the southwest (for skywatchers at mid-northern latitudes).

These are the two brightest stars in the sky at the time. But Capella is a very close runner-up to Arcturus. Spot it high in the northwest.

SPOKEN WORD

Storytelling Celebrated April Fool's in storied glee online. Members of Storytellers of San Diego pull out the stops and find the face

of the fool in many cultures, many guises. Folktales, literary tales and personal tales meant to cause wonder, giggles and reflection. Thursday, April 1, 7pm; **free.** 18 and up. storytellersofsandiego.org/events.html. (ONLINE)

SPORTS & FITNESS

Walk The Block: Barrio Logan Shop owners and local vendors set up their outdoor booths all along Logan Avenue. Food, Drinks, Clothing, & Gifts all available with

a chican@ twist. Every Saturday in Barrio Logan on Logan Avenue from Chicano Park to 26th Street. Masks Required Social Distancing Enforced Saturdays, 12pm; through Monday, May 31, **free.** Chicano Park, Between National and Logan Avenues under the Coronado Bridge. (BARRIO LOGAN)

WIN A MOVIE

Win a movie rental of *Chaos Walking*.
Deadline to Enter: Monday, April 5 at 1pm

WIN TICKETS

Win movie tickets to see *Voyagers* in theaters.
Deadline to Enter: Friday, April 9 at 1pm

WIN A GETAWAY

Win a 2-night stay at CasaGogo in Joshua Tree.
Deadline to Enter: Tuesday, April 20 at 1pm

Enter to win at sandiegoreader.com/contests

Pump House Gang hang

Gloom is the first sign of a bona fide dive bar.

Tom Wolfe! Too freakin' much! Here? And the pump house gang? Where the heck are they? Tom, John, Nealy, Artie, Pam, Liz, Vicki, Jacki Haddad, Kit, and hey, Jack MacPherson, the crazy instigator of the Mac Meda Destruction Company, which specialized in pulling down houses just for the hell of it?

This was the gang who surfed, drank, and partied their way into La Jolla lore in the late sixties, down at the pump house, Win-dansea, and later, here at the West End dive bar where Turquoise meets La Jolla Boulevard. Tom Wolfe made them famous in his collection of stories, *The Pump House Gang*.

So hey, have to check this out. "This is the perfect bar," says the #30 bus driver as he lets me off. "You walk straight out of the bar and onto the bus. Stop's right there. No roads to cross."

He's right. Here's "London's West End," still going after 40-some-odd years. The corner pub's side door's open. I come up, shivering a little,



of men, mostly, hooped over their drinks, eyes up at the basketball game on the five screens. If you look, you can see mini-screens shining in their eyes.

"Meatballs, pretzels, pizzas," says Trevor, "hot dogs, chips. That's it." The pretzel's \$4, pizza (8-inch) is \$6, hot dogs are \$3.50 each, two for \$6, and meatballs in a cardboard bowl are only \$2. What a deal! I've definitely got the late-afternoon hollows, so I go for the meatballs, plus two hot dogs.

"These are good prices," I say. "About as cheap as it gets around here," says Trevor. He says he's been working behind this bar seven years. "And drinking here 17 years."

While I'm waiting, an elderly gent comes in. Jim, I think he says. He starts hauling out some money. "No," says Trevor. "Enough. You fell asleep over your last one."

But we start talking. "That pump house gang, Jack MacPherson was the leader," says Jim. "He had seen Pearl Harbor happen when he was a little kid in Hawaii. Grew up here. Sportsman. Wild and crazy guy. Formed a company, Mac Meda. Him and Bob Rakestraw and all the other surfer kids. See their sign up there? 'Mac-Meda Destruction Company.' And guess who they made their president? Albert. Albert was the zoo's silverback gorilla. They specialized in tearing things apart, like barns, houses. Only if the owners wanted them down. But mostly, these guys were about celebrat-

ing. They were rich La Jolla surfer kids. Money wasn't the problem. Okay, okay."

He's saying this to Trevor, who wants him out. Me, I'm feeling kind of bad, but my hot dogs and meatballs arrive. And Jim kind of waves that it's not food he's interested in, and with Trevor, drink's out of the question. He heads on his way.

I need to chow down quick, before everything gets cold.

I add a bag of chips (\$2), and start in on these meatballs. They're not huge, but big enough. Golf-ball size. They're good and herby. Garlicky too. And the hot dogs I sex up by squirting the packets of ketchup, mustard, and green pickle relish on top. They give enough flavor and heat to make them pretty luscious. I'm drinking an IPA (\$8), but should've gone for the PBR, less than half the price and a more cheery beeriness for the dogs and meatballs.

Whatever, for \$10, this is totally filling, and with the combination of company, dive bar food prices, and history to match, spending it in the



Half the pleasure is the feast for the eyes

because this late afternoon's c-c-c-cold. Couple of guys stand outside, taking grateful drags from their cigarettes.

"Any hot food in here?" I ask.

"Well I'll tell you what," says the lanky guy. "You've lucked out. These people have the finest meatballs anywhere. Anywhere! At least four for two bucks, in a sauce. And hot! Get your butt in there son, and eat till you bust."

Wow. What you call a *recommendation*. So I walk from glaring sunlight into what feels like the tomb of Tutankhamen. Total darkness, except for the lighted bottle display. Hmm. This is good. Gloom is the first sign of a bona fide dive bar.

I feel my way to a bar stool. Order up a cerveza (they're mostly cans, bottles, around \$5, with PBR and Rolling Rock only \$3.50). And gradually, this snake-shaped bar materializes in front of the wall of bottles.

"I hear you have meatballs," I say to the barkeep. Trevor. I see now there's a collection



Covid forces changes to old school dive bar

shrine to one of La Jolla's great sixties moments gives me goose bumps. I spend the last ten minutes reading a wall tribute signed by dozens of fans of Jack MacPherson. "He ended up becoming a mail carrier, Bird Rock area," says this gent everybody calls The Grinch, as he brings someone a beer. "Jack was a legend, but he also was a barman. He worked this bar from 6am to 10am, Wednesdays thru Sundays."

Jack would have been shocked to see what they've done today. Okay, they've left the bar intact, but because of covid, they've built an outside, which means you can take your grandma and auntie here without apologizing. Nice sunny day, it should be great out there, specially at these prices.

I finish up my beer. I've gotta go find the



Five meatballs, a beer, chips: perfect dinner?

actual pump house, down where Gravilla street meets the ocean, and Jack MacPherson and the Pump House Gang would hang out. And where, for a month back in 1965, they fed stories to a pale-skinned New York writer named Tom Wolfe, and suddenly found themselves the most famous surfers on the planet. ■

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Birria + ramen = yum

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Birria El Rey gives noodles a shot

Birria El Rey, 1015 25th Street, Golden Hill. Birria must be rising in popularity around San Diego, because it's gotten easier, not harder, to find the stewed meat dish during the pandemic.

Mainly, we're

talking about Tijuana-style beef *birria* (Jalisco, the Mexican state credited with creating the uber savory dish, traditionally cooks it with goat. I don't think San Diego's ready to popularize goat just yet).

The latest *birria*-centric eatery opened up a few weeks ago in Golden Hill. Birria El Rey operates out of an extremely small kitchen, in a sort of brick shed that juts off a small office building to be part of a shopping strip next door. Fans of Humberto's Taco Shop will know the spot.

I half-knew what to expect at El Rey. Like most *birria* shops, it lets you order shredded beef with onions and corn tortillas (\$10.50, or \$7.50 for a half order).

There's



A "quesabirria" taco made with Monterey jack cheese (left) is worth the 75 cent upgrade over the regular taco (right).

Golden Hill's Birria El Rey offers "birriamen" — beef *birria* + ramen.



A brick shack that specializes in birria dishes.

the usual *consomé* (the stewed meat's signature beef broth — \$3 with beef, \$1.50 without), plus a *birria* burrito made with beans and rice (\$9), and a *torta* with melted cheese (\$8.50).

As usual, the easiest way to try this *birria* on the spot is by ordering tacos. At \$2.50 per taco, it's tough to go wrong. But if there's ever a time to fork over an additional 75 cents for cheese, this is it. The melted layer of griddle Monterey Jack makes the \$3.25 *quesabirria* taco irresistible. In my heart, I wanted to keep eating those, and skip the rest of the menu.

Except, further down the menu, Birria El Rey offers a *birria* modification too interesting to pass up: "birriamen" — *birria* and ramen.

In retrospect, the simple move seems rather obvious. This is a ramen-loving town, so why not dump noodles in with the *consomé*, and beef on top of that? Traditional ramen toppings such as pickled bamboo shoots and wood ear mushrooms are easily swapped out in favor of common *birria* gar-

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Eventually, Baba's Hot Chicken will serve indoor diners like the pandemic never happened.

nishes: cilantro, diced onions, red onions, and radish.

Now, there's an obvious difference between the soy-based *shio* and *shoyu* broths of ramen, and a stock made from aromatic cuts of beef. Even the pork broth, *tonkotsu*, has a wholly different flavor profile than the slightly offal tang of a birria *consomé*. But the thick noodles of El Rey's ramen don't seem concerned about any deviation from the usual palate. They just do what noodles do; act as a vessel for a soup or sauce to shine.

Birriamen will never supplant tacos or burritos as my preferred mode of birria glutony, nor replace *tonkotsu* with *char-siu* pork in my heart. But it's not a bad way to get your birria fix on a cold day, and I have to applaud the effort.

by Ian Anderson

The year of hot chicken and picnics

Baba's Hot Chicken; 406 University Ave Unit B, Hillcrest. Right about now, I'm supposed to be indoors dining somewhere and reporting how great it feels that we're trending back toward normalcy. But not so fast! Yes,

restaurant owners and their bottom lines may be thrilled to host diners once again. And yes, many San Diego eaters are happy to reclaim the option to meet and linger over table seating while having grown-up conversations (versus the type that take place online).

However, some of us are content to wait for the vaccination train to reach our stops before we step inside to 25 percent capacity (or whatever it is this week). And besides that, we've developed a couple of pandemic-era habits we might not be willing to let go just yet.

Personally, I've picnicked more in the past year than I have during any other period of my life, and possibly more than all of them combined. That's the sort of thing that happens when you can't or don't want to dine on premise. Or when you order takeout in North County but live in the south. Or when you live in one of the most outdoor-friendly metropolitan areas in the country.

Meanwhile, as I've been enjoying my little picnic renaissance, the San Diego area has been witnessing the emergence of Nashville Hot Chicken. Even as many in the restaur-

ant industry have struggled through the pandemic, something like ten dedicated hot chicken shops have opened county-wide. I honestly don't know if I'll ever be able to take a bite of hot chicken without thinking about covid-19. Will vaccination raise my heat tolerance? Probably not, but I'll enjoy finding out for sure.

Point is, it's no coincidence that more than a couple of my picnic ventures have included a box of spicy fried chicken. The latest to fire up my taste buds came courtesy of Baba's Hot Chicken. Like Dave's Hot Chicken and Main Chick, Baba's is a Los Angeles hot chicken brand that expanded its way south to capitalize on our city's sudden hot chicken addiction.

I found Baba's mustachioed chicken mascot smack in the urban center of Hillcrest, at University and Fourth Avenue. Which made it an easy grab on the way to a sunny afternoon outing in Balboa Park.

I'm not spilling any secrets by pointing out Balboa Park's value to this city has somehow increased during recent times of isolation. We're only just getting our museums back, but



An extreme chicken tender with a side of macaroni, in a box ready to picnic.

a blanket in the grass is all it takes to appreciate the park's ornate, century old buildings and landscaping. Somehow, I never found it as crowded as I assumed it must be. Thank you parklets, I guess.

While a lot of the hot chicken places come up with cute ways to describe their various levels of spice, Baba's sticks to five grades of heat, ranging from no spice to *extreme*. And I've got to give the place credit: it's *extreme* tenders (two, plus fries, for \$11) sit exactly at the point where spice still tastes great to me, without tipping over into tears and hiccups territory. I'm always willing to go hotter, if only on a dare, but this crispy bird, fried in peanut oil, is the baby bear's juuust right.

Baba's offers sauces for dipping, and counts fried pickles among its side dishes. Of course, any place that offers to put mac and cheese on a chicken sandwich is going to grab my interest. Regular size sandwiches go for \$9, while smaller versions go for \$6. Add a buck-fifty for mac, then grab a spot near the botanical building and duck pond for picnic supremacy.

by Ian Anderson

EASTER BRUNCH

Celebrate Easter with Mediterranean Cuisine Enjoy traditional Greek dishes to celebrate Easter Sunday. Choose to dine-in, eat on the outdoor patio or bring food home. Sunday, April 4, 11am; \$15-\$50. Spiro's Mediterranean Cuisine, 909 Prospect Street Ste 100B. (LA JOLLA)

Champagne Easter Brunch At Café Bahia, chefs have created a memorable Champagne Easter Brunch experience this year. Enjoy a three-course menu with a first-course platter. Enjoy bottomless champagne as part of your prix fixe meal as well. Sunday, April 4, 11am; \$15-\$49. Bahia Resort Hotel, 998 West Mission Bay Drive. (MISSION BEACH)

Easter Brunch Enjoy a holiday brunch featuring the freshest local ingredients, flavorful updates to classic favorites, exceptional service and our picturesque ocean views. Open 10am-3pm for brunch and 4pm-10pm for dinner. Sunday, April 4, 10am; George's at the Cove Ocean Terrace, 1250 Prospect Street. (LA JOLLA)

Easter Brunch This Easter, enjoy a three-course outdoor dining experience. Linger over a delicious brunch menu. \$85 Per Person, \$20 Free-Flowing Champagne, \$45 Children 11 and Under Sunday, April 4, 11am; \$45-\$85. A.R. Valentien, 11480 N. Torrey Pines Road. (LA JOLLA)

Easter Community Meal The San Diego Rescue Mission will be celebrating Easter and the hope of the Risen Christ with San Diegans who are low-income or experiencing homelessness by offering a hot boxed "to go" meal, giveaways of essential items, prayer, and encouragement. Saturday, April 3, 1pm; **free**. San Diego Rescue Mission, 120 Elm Street. (BANKERS HILL)

Easter Dinner Embrace the warm sunshine and indulge in our weekend brunch menu. If you prefer to celebrate in the evening, order from our à la carte menu or enjoy a special three-course Easter dinner in La Jolla. Sunday, April 4, 5pm; \$54. Grill at Torrey Pines, 11480 N. Torrey Pines Road. (LA JOLLA)

Gelson's Traditional Pass-over & Easter At Home Pass-over meals are portioned for four people. Easter dinner options are available in servings for two, six or eight people. Sunday, April 4, 11am; \$50-\$200. gelsons.com/deli-and-catering/holiday-dinners.html. (ONLINE)

Live Music Easter Brunch & Dinner Enjoy a three course Prix-Fixe Easter Celebration with live music by Celeste Barbier for brunch and Carlos Valesco & Kevin Morraire for dinner. Wear your Easter hats and win a prize. Easter Brunch 10am-3pm \$64.95pp ~ Kids 12 and under \$19.95 Easter Dinner 3pm-8pm \$74.95pp. Taking reservations for outdoor, indoor and in bar area. Reservations only. Sunday, April 4, 10am; **free**-\$74. Parc Bistro Brasserie, 2760 Fifth Avenue. (BANKERS HILL)

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DOWNTOWN SAN DIEGO

Asti Ristorante: Daily, 3-6pm: \$5 beers, \$7 house wine and cocktails, bites from \$5.

Cheesecake Factory Downtown: Monday-Friday, 4-6pm: \$3.95 select beer bottles, \$4.95 select beer drafts, \$7.95 Mojito, Long Island ice tea, Margarita, JW's Pink Lemonade, Cosmopolitan, select well drinks and wines by the glass.

Gaslamp Fish House: Daily, 3:30-6:00pm: \$4 Fireball shot, McCormick bourbon, shot of Torado Silver tequila, \$5 craft beer on tap, vodka soda, select wine by the glass, \$7 skinny margarita, select signature cocktails.

Gaslamp Tavern: Monday-Friday, 3-7pm: \$2 off drafts, wine, specialty cocktails, \$5 wells.

Knotty Barrel: Monday, Friday, 4-7pm: \$2 off craft beer, \$6 premium wells, house red and white wines. Tuesday, 4-7pm: \$2 off craft beer, \$6 premium wells, house red and white wines. Half off craft beer all day. Wednesday, 4-7pm: \$2 off craft beer, \$6 premium wells, house red and white wines, half off wine bottle all day. Thursday, 4-7pm: \$2 off craft beer, \$6 premium wells, house red and white wines, half off wine bottles all day.

Maryjane's: Monday-Friday, 3-6pm: \$5 wells drinks, beer, \$6 wine.

Rockin' Baja Lobster — Gaslamp: Monday-Friday, 3-6pm: \$4.50 any 14-oz. draft, well drinks, fireball shot; \$5.50 Jameson shot, house margaritas; \$6.50 wine by the glass, Jack Daniels, Grey Goose.

The Tippy Crow: Monday-Thursday, 3-8pm: Drink exchange (prices vary). Friday-Saturday, Noon-8pm: Drink exchange (prices vary).

Werewolf American Pub: Tuesday-Friday, 3-6pm: \$4 drafts, house wines, and wells.

Whiskey Girl: Monday, 7-9pm: \$3 off drafts, \$4 wells, \$4 Stella, \$5 select wine, \$6 Don Julio Tequila. Tuesday, 7-9pm: \$3 off drafts, \$4 wells, \$4 Dox XX, \$5 select wine,

BOOZE NEWS

BY IAN ANDERSON

San Diego wine survived the pandemic

San Diego's wine industry had its best year ever in 2019, totalling \$46.2 million in gross sales — a nearly 13 percent increase over 2018. Then came 2020, and a novel coronavirus. A year of pandemic closings and service restrictions brought that number down to \$37.1 million in 2020, a nearly 20 percent drop.

That's according to the newly released "2021 San Diego County Impact of Wineries Report," commissioned by the San Diego County Vintners Association, and authored by local craft beverage industry stats guru Vince Vasquez, executive director of the Policycraft Institute.

But it wasn't all bad news for the San Diego wine industry. With the number of active wineries up to 150, winery jobs notched up 2.6-percent. Its now 720 winery employees

took home an average of \$40,716, continuing a five year upward trend that makes San Diego wine wages, as the report says, "competitive with industry wages paid in Santa Barbara County and Santa Clara County."

Which isn't to say service employees weren't affected. Ed Embly, president of the San Diego County Vintners Association and owner of the Escondido winery Hungry Hawk Vineyards, explains that covid's impact on winery employment differed based on the type of job and type of winery. "The vineyards and the winery operations themselves were considered essential functions," he says. "It was really the tasting room staff that was laid off."

While winemakers and growers continued the work of producing a 2020 vintage, many servers experienced two rounds of furloughs — the first during last year's spring shutdown, the second during the winter on-premise service ban. Urban wineries likely bore the brunt of ever-changing regulations, which at different times included meal requirements, outdoor service only, or reserved seating only.

Embly knows of one or two wineries that closed during the year, for reasons not related to covid, but for the most part, it looks as though San Diego wineries weathered the storm. The report shows that one-third of the wineries received help from government programs, either the PPP (Payment Protection Program) or EIDL (Economic Injury Disaster Loan). Benefit amounts ranged from \$1000 to \$364,100 for each winery, totalling \$3.5 million for the region.

However, for many wineries, it wasn't an option. "Maybe 50 percent of the boutique wineries probably don't have employees," Embly points out. Rather, they're family owned and



A rainbow breaks over Highland Valley Vineyards in Escondido.

COURTESY OF HIGHLAND VALLEY VINEYARDS

operated. "A lot of the programs didn't address their issues."

The great majority of San Diego wineries are very small, producing fewer than 5000 cases per year. During the shutdowns, many were buoyed by loyal customers ordering bottles and cases for curbside pick up or home delivery. Winery employees and even owners, including Embly, became de facto delivery drivers. However, while direct-to-consumer shipping in the wine industry nationwide increased 27-percent in 2020, most of those gains were experienced by large brands. For small wineries, the growth was more modest. For San Diego's wineries, direct-to-con-

sumer shipping rose 4.3-percent, ultimately not enough to overcome the report's tally of, "tasting room losses in the range of 18-38-percent, and bottle sale losses in the range of 30-50-percent."

However, given that winery tasting rooms were closed roughly a quarter of the year, it could have been worse. Embly sees reason for optimism, beginning with customers who are already seeming to view outdoor winery tasting in rural east county as a pandemic-friendly activity.

"Once it was opened back up, people returned," he says — at least when the weather was nice. Lately, that means customers have been reserving tasting times and

showing up to try wines in person. When they do, they'll probably sip one or more of the top five wines produced in San Diego, by volume: Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Sangiovese, Merlot, and Cabernet Franc (which, for the first time, this year surpassed Zinfandel).

While overall production dipped in 2020, Embly expects it to return in 2021. "Our industry will bounce back," he says. "It might not have been easy, but it's a resilient group of people who have wineries in this county."

For more craft booze news, see sandiegoreader.com/news/booze-news

\$6 El Jimador Tequila. Wednesday, 7-9pm: \$3 off drafts, \$4 wells, \$4 Firestone Walker 805, \$5 select wine, \$6 Sailor Jerry. Thursday, 7-9pm: \$3 off drafts, \$3 Truly Hard Seltzer, \$4 wells, \$5 select wine, \$5 Patron Tequila.

The Whiskey House: Wednesday-Sunday, 4-7pm: \$4 French pale lager, \$5 Moscow mule, whiskey sour, Daiquiri, house wines (red, white, sparkling), \$9 Carsberg Danish pilsner (1 liter can). Add a shot of house whiskey to any beer for \$1.

EAST VILLAGE

Bootlegger: Tuesday, \$10 build-your-own-nachos and beer all day. Saturday-Sunday, 9am-1pm: \$25 per person bottomless mimosas.

Duck Foot East Village Taproom & Kitchen: Tuesday, \$5 pints gluten-reduced beers on tap all night

El Dorado Cocktail Lounge: Tuesday-Thursday, Sunday, 7-9pm: \$6 signature cocktails. Friday-Saturday, 5-9pm: \$6 signature cocktails.

LA MESA

Brigantine La Mesa: Daily, 3:30-6:30pm: \$1 off well drinks, drafts, featured wines, \$4 glass sparkling wine, \$5.75 margaritas, \$6 happy hour red wine, happy hour white wine.

Hooleys Irish Pub & Grill La Mesa: Friday, All day: Clam chowder \$5 cup, \$7 bowl. After 4pm: Prime rib \$24. Sunday, 11am-2pm: \$4 Bloody Marys, \$5 Champagne.

MISSION BEACH

Coaster Saloon: Monday, 3pm-6pm: \$3 Jager shot with any beer purchase, \$4 select Bud draft, \$5 well drinks. Tuesday, 3pm-6pm: \$3 Jager shot with any beer purchase, \$4 select Bud draft and El Jimador shots, \$5 well drinks, house margarita. Wednesday, 3pm-6pm: \$1 off all IPA, \$3 Jager shot with any beer purchase, \$4 select Bud draft and Fireball shots, \$5 well drinks. Thursday, 3pm-6pm: \$3 Jager shot with any beer purchase, \$4 select Bud draft, Mission Blonde draft, Polish Pie shots, \$5 well drinks. Friday, 3pm-6pm: \$3 Jager shot with any beer purchase, \$4 select

Bud draft, \$5 well drinks, Captain Morgan, Jack Daniels, Jager shots. Saturday, All day: \$15 Champagne bottles. Sunday, All day: \$3 Jager shot with any beer purchase, \$12 Champagne bottles.

MISSION HILLS

Shakespeare Pub & Grille: Monday-Friday, 3-7pm: All draught pints (excluding cask, \$6 Anytime, and Black Velvet) and bottled beer \$1 off. well liquor \$4.50, \$5 house wine, appetizers \$5.95-\$7.95.

MISSION VALLEY

Cheesecake Factory Mission Valley: Monday-Friday, 4-6pm: \$3.95 select beer bottles, \$4.95 select beer drafts, \$7.95 Mojito, Long Island ice tea, Margarita, JW's Pink Lemonade, Cosmopolitan, select well drinks and wines by the glass.

Lazy Dog: Monday-Thursday, 3-6pm and 9pm-close: \$3-\$8: Housemade sangrias, well drinks, drafts, house wine, Asian pear martini. Friday, 3-6pm: \$3-\$8: Housemade sangrias, well drinks, drafts, house wine, Asian pear

martini. Sunday, 9pm-close: \$3-\$8: Housemade sangrias, well drinks, drafts, house wine, Asian pear martini.

North Italia Fashion Valley: Monday-Friday, 3-6pm: \$5 glasses red wine, white wine, sangria, beers, \$16 wine bottles and beer pitchers.

PACIFIC BEACH

Ambrogio15: Monday-Friday, 3-5pm: \$19 per person biodynamic (organic) wine flight with three selected biodynamic wines (two ounce pour) and focaccia bread, olives, artichokes.

Latitude 32: Wednesday-Saturday, 4-6pm: \$3-\$5.50 beer and wines.

The Local Pacific Beach: Monday, 4-7pm: Half off appetizers.

Mavericks Beach Club: Monday, 5-6pm: \$4 beer, wine, and wells, \$6 margaritas and mai tais. \$2 off snacks. 3-10pm: Half off one pound orders of all wines, no limit. Tuesday, 5-6pm: \$4 beer, wine, and wells, \$6 margaritas and mai tais. \$2 off snacks. 5-10pm: \$10 all you can eat taco bar. 5pm-2am: \$4 all Mexican beers, \$4

Margaritas, \$4 shots of Eljimidador. Wednesday, Friday, 5-6pm: \$4 beer, wine, and wells, \$6 margaritas and mai tais. \$2 off snacks. Thursday, 5-6pm: \$4 beer, wine, and wells, \$6 margaritas and mai tais. \$2 off snacks. 9pm-2am: \$3 Natural Lite seltzers and Naturdays, \$4 shots of Jameson, Altos, Absolut, Malibu, Jagermeister.

The Turquoise Café-Bar Europa: Tuesday-Sunday, 5-9pm: Bottles cocktails to go.

POINT LOMA

The Pearl: Monday-Tuesday, 4-6pm: \$4 select beers, \$5 well drinks, \$6 house wine, half off specialty cocktails. Wednesday, 4-6pm: \$4 select beers, \$5 well drinks, \$6 house wine, half off specialty drinks. Thursday-Saturday, 4-6pm: \$4 select beers, \$5 well drinks, \$6 house wine, half off specialty drinks.

RANCHO SAN DIEGO

Hooleys Irish Pub & Grill Rancho San Diego: Friday, All day: Clam chowder \$5 cup, \$7 bowl. After 4pm: Prime rib \$24.



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blurt the inside track

Streaming waters

Once upon a time, playlists were nothing more than a collection of songs grouped together on your iPod whose only purpose was to make your workouts less miserable.

“No, those people went MIA, and I didn’t hear from them no more,” he said with a laugh.

The world of pay-to-play playlists on Spotify is a bit of a cat-and-mouse game. The



Local rapper Sham Blak has had mixed results with paid playlisting.

The value of playlists has changed drastically since the early 2000s, as they now make or break artists on streaming platforms such as Spotify.

As a result, an entire ecosystem of businesses has developed that assist artists in getting their songs onto these playlists. The simplest model paying a company a fee to get your songs on their playlists. Local rapper Sham Blak has had mixed experiences going this route. He has paid \$39.99 twice to get a total of four of his songs on playlists. He generated impressive streaming numbers in Los Angeles with his song “Cycles,” while another song of his, “Bounce,” didn’t fare so well.

“I saw the numbers shoot-up and then I guess the bots or something trigger something where it stops playlisting,” he explained. “When I went to check the playlist the songs in the playlist were deleted. It was just a playlist with a title, but there were no songs in there.”

So, did Sham Blak get a refund from the third-party company when the playlist shutdown?

investment is small, there is some risk as the practice itself violates Spotify’s terms of service, but the payout can give a song added credibility via inflated streaming numbers.

Plus, the third-party gets a nice payday.

Singer-songwriter Adam Townsend explained how the pay-to-playlist operations operate. Note: he’s not a fan.

“It’s easy. You can create a fake playlist brand and buy a bunch of followers for your playlist and actually buy plays off of those playlists so it looks like it’s generating streams,” he said. “Then they’ll set a website up, and it looks all clean and slick. They’ll probably get a couple 100 artists to pay for placements with them, and by the time that Spotify figures it out that company has closed-up shop and they’ve probably made quite a bit of money.”

Townsend giggered around San Diego from 2010-2016, but now lives in Tucson. Besides being a full-time musician, he has also become a successful curator of playlists. When requests in his inbox for song placement

became too overwhelming, he switched to using a service called SubmitHub, which allows users to buy credits to have their songs screened by playlist curators. He gets about 50 cents per-song that he listens to and considers.

“It’s less than a dollar per-submission, but that small fee prevents people from spamming out their song, and it makes people think twice before sharing it with whoever,” he said.

Sham Blak also shelled out \$150 on a Buzz Music package deal for his song “Bounce” (featuring Legion X). The package included an interview, review of their song and video, and getting added to their playlist, “and their playlist does well,” he added.

“The song got a lot of spins on Spotify, and the video got a lot of hits from their web page, but it wasn’t hot views,” he said. “It wasn’t 10,000

or 20,000 views. It was maybe about 100 or 200 views, but real. It was very organic. You could tell they were trying to introduce us to their market.”

As for navigating these complex streaming waters, Sham Blak has simple advice, “I would say go into it with a strategy. Go into it with a plan. Don’t just submit your music and think that’s all you do. It’s more work than just paying 30 or 40 dollars and sitting back and thinking that’s gonna push you to the next level.”

— Dryw Keltz

The Mexican Ramones

“It’s go time. This is not a drill. The Zeros documentary is in production,” says Javier Escovedo, who is working with filmmakers Anthony Ladesich and Michael Webber on a movie about his influential 1970s punk band. “Interviews with Baba Chenelle are in the can, and Robert Lopez will be interviewed in Seattle in April.”

Escovedo lived in Huntington Beach before moving to Chula Vista in his teens and forming the Zeros, aka “the



Mexican Ramones,” in 1976. After debuting at a dance in Rosarito, Mexico, their first major gig was the following year in Los Angeles at the Orpheum Theater, with the Germs and the Weirdos. Their debut vinyl single, “Wimp” b/w “Don’t Push Me Around,” released by Bomp Records in 1977, is now a highly collectible punk rarity. They went on to play storied venues such as CBGB’s and Max’s Kansas City in New York City, the Masque and the Whisky in L.A., and San Francisco’s Mabuhay Gardens and Deaf Club.

The band’s songs have been covered by Hoodoo Gurus (who took on the first Zeros release “Wimp,” which was also once covered by Swedish band Nomads), Spain’s La Secta (who tackled the sophomore Zeros single “Wild Weekend”), Wednesday Week (“They Say That Everything’s Alright”), the Muffs (“Beat Your Heart Out”), Mudhoney (whose singer Mark Arm once sang on the Zeros track “No Fun”), and Sator, whose cover of “Black and White” reached number two on the Swedish charts.

The Zeros were known for offbeat covers, including a B-side featuring the Righteous Brothers’ “Little Latin Lupe Lu.”

When the Zeros initially split in the early 80s, Escovedo played alongside his brother Alejandro with Austin-based True Believers, and then founded the band City Lights. After spending 12 years in Hollywood, 2 in New York, 5 in Austin, and 3 in San Francisco, he moved back to Chula Vista in 2007.

Guitarist/singer Robert Lopez would later gain fame as El Vez, the Mexican Elvis. Many El Vez bios, as well as several online articles and bios

about the Zeros, claim he and the Zeros are from L.A. When they broke up, Lopez had already quit to join the band Catholic Discipline. Various partial reunions have taken place, including 1992 recording sessions.

Until 2009, Zeros bassist/singer Hector Penalosa (Squiddo) declined to take part in most Zeros’ reunions. In a *Reader* interview, he accused Javier Escovedo of “stepping over people... just because he can get money out of it, because some people will pay good money for the Zeros.” Penalosa said he took part in some of the 1999 Zeros recordings, but that only Escovedo got paid. “[Other band members] didn’t get

west coast concerts; Penalosa, Baba Chenelle, Escovedo, and Lopez. European dates were subsequently booked. That September, the band picked up a Lifetime Achievement nod at the San Diego Music Awards. When the Zeros played the September 2014 San Diego Music Thing, the lineup featured Escovedo, Chenelle, Hector Penalosa on bass, and Victor Penalosa on guitar (Robert Lopez, aka El Vez, was MIA).

A new Zeros single was released in late 2019 on Munster Records in Madrid, “In the Spotlight,” with a video filmed and edited by Kelly Paige Standard and David Robles. Documentary filmmakers are seeking any



Javier Escovedo: “It’s go time. This is not a drill. The Zeros documentary is in production.”

diddly-squat,” according to Penalosa at the time. Escovedo responded that “It’s a set of circumstances that I can’t talk about...a certain amount of money that was expected was not earned, didn’t come into the band.” They subsequently settled those differences.

In summer 2009, four Zeros reunited for several

photos of the Zeros, together or individually, as well as cassettes, Polaroids, flyers, and especially any film or video footage.

— Jay Allen Sanford

Find Blurt online at SDReader.com/blurt

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LOCAL *five*

JAY ALLEN SANFORD

Find LIVE FIVE online at sandiegoreader.com/music

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THE UNDERTAKING

Hardcore punk rock band the Undertaking was founded in 2018 by Brent Jasperse (drums), Keith Butsko (guitar), and Austin Visser (vocals), later joined by bassist James Moyer (Mainsail) and singer-guitarist Johnny Mercuri. The following year, they dropped their debut EP *Scavengers*, produced by Daniel Bourget. The group recently signed to Solid State Records, who'll release their album *Funeral Psalms*, produced by the Used's Joey Bradford, on April 30. A single is streaming online for "No Friends," which the band says is "A brash reflection on how difficult it is to be a good friend. What starts out as an accusation attacking others quickly

digresses into the realization that we so often push people away and create our own walls of isolation. We've all had those situations where someone expected too much out of you, and you ended up letting them down. Looking back, your response was to walk away instead of working through your insecurities and making the relationship better. The riffs also just keep punching people in the nose." Other album tracks carry titles such as "The Problem With Being Included in the Apocalypse," "Nostalgia Can Be A Nasty Beast," and "And Everything Worked Out Just Fine" featuring Cove Reber of Saosin.

PHOTOGRAPH BY MIKE KAMOO



JACKSLACKS

Based near SDSU, Americana/roots rocker Chris Giorgio, aka Jackslacks, was a founding member of Forbidden Pigs, Hot Rod Lincoln, and Dead Engines. Taking the name Jackslacks from the 1957 Sparkletones hit "Black Slacks," he embarked on his solo career in 2002. His most recent solo release came out in 2018, *Earthling Sessions*, which featured an ode to O.B. called "The 92107" and included guest appearances from Billy Joel guitarist Tommy Byrnes and Giorgio's Forbidden Pigs bandmate Billy Bacon. "I've got a new full-length coming out this spring called *Inside*

Out on the indie label Shield of Love," says Giorgio. "I wrote the new songs during the quarantine, and the title track conceptualizes our world spinning out of control, upside down, and inside out. It mostly leans upon roots rock, like rockabilly, blues, country, and a surf instrumental with my old San Diego guitar-slinging mates Buzz Campbell from Hot Rod Lincoln, Jerry 'Hot Rod' DeMink from Forbidden Pigs, and Gig Fortier from the Hooligans." The album was recorded with Mike Kamoo at Earthling Studios in East County and mastered at local Golden Track.



RYAN ANTHONY

30 year-old Ryan Anthony grew up in Spring Valley and attended school in Paradise Hills. As a rapper, many of his tracks are local-centric, such as "Da[Y]Go," and he has collaborated with E-40, Tech N9ne, and others. His *Barely See the Beach* EP was released in 2016, supported with a video for the track "Never Been" featuring fellow local rapper Mitchy Slick, who grew up in Lincoln Park. Anthony recently teamed up again with Slick, as well as singer-actress Andra Day, to release a song and video about living in San Diego called "Southeast Summers." Neighborhoods earning a shout-out in the track include Logan Heights, Lincoln Park, Paradise

Hills, Skyline, Emerald Hills, Mountain View, Lomita Village, and Shelltown. The video features Oscar-nominated and Golden Globe-winner Andra Day (currently starring in the Billie Holiday bio-pic *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*), Slick, and Anthony all together at various southeast spots such as Barrio Logan's Chicano Park, the Willie Henderson Sports Complex, the Skyline Convenience store, and Imperial Fish Market. The trio are seen amidst footage of area murals, graffiti, low riders, motorcycles, neighborhood signs, and locals having fun south of Route 94 and east of downtown. Ryan Anthony's third album, *Barely See the Beach 3*, drops this week.



GLASS SPELLS

Synth-pop group Glass Spells released their debut single "I Feel It" in 2014, followed two years later by a self-titled album recorded at Emprise Soundlab studios in Mexicali with Gerardo Montoya (aka Letters From Readers, who has also worked with FAX and Maniqui Lazer). All the band members at one time were from Imperial Valley, but the group has since experienced several lineup shifts. When they turned up last year with a video for their track "Mirrors," members included founding bassist-keyboardist

Anthony Ramirez backed by Tania Costello (vocals) and Michael Buehl (drums). "We're finishing up a new LP called *Shattered* that will be out later this year through our label, Negative Gain," says the band. In February, a video for their synth-drenched track "Empty Road" premiered on YouTube and has already racked up over 13,000 views. Scenes shot around San Diego include footage of the drive into downtown, the Mission Beach boardwalk, and the roller coaster at Belmont Park.



ART OF ELAN

After over a year of virtual programming, the ensemble will combine music, dance, and art for an in-person outdoor garden performance at the Education Pavilion of the Lux Institute in Encinitas. The program is inspired by Lux artist-in-residence Baseera Khan, who identifies as a queer femme Muslim American. Guests will have access to an exhibition of works which employs fashion, photography, textiles, and music to explore how assimilation becomes part of how identity can be hidden. Performances will include the folk music of female Polish composer Grazyna Bacewicz and Turkish composer Erberk Eryilmaz, as well as the world premiere of a commissioned work by New York composer LJOVA (Lev Zhurbin), written during

the pandemic for Elan Artistic Director Kate Hatmaker and her husband, cellist Alex Greenbaum. This will be the second time Art of Elan has commissioned LJOVA, who created a clarinet quintet in 2017. The program closes on a collaboration with dancers from San Diego's Disco Riot, performing Jessie Montgomery's "Rhapsody No. 1 for solo violin" alongside violinist Kate Hatmaker. This collaboration was originally featured in a world premiere video entitled "Reflections," presented in November 2020 during the ensemble's year of creative virtual programming. Capacity will be limited to 50 people who will be socially distanced throughout the outdoor performance area, with Covid safety protocols in place.

You can submit a listing, download mp3s, watch videos, subscribe to event alerts, get directions, and find more information about these shows online at SDReader.com/music.

THIS WEEK'S SHOWS

Arrowood Golf Course:
Friday, 5pm — Cowboy Jack. Free.

Online Internet Events:
Thursday, 7pm — DJ Z Trip's A Journey Into Sound. Free.
Thursday, 12pm — Girlpool: Live in Hollywood. Free.
Thursday, 5pm — U2: The Virtual Road.
Friday, 6pm — Kei Akagi Livestream. Free.
Friday, 10am — Lucy Spraggan Livestream: The Album Party Show. \$17-\$44.
Friday, 6pm — Mimi Naja EP Release Stream. Free.
Friday, 6pm — Noga Erez: Kids - A Livestream. \$15-\$25.
Friday, 5:30pm — Purely Red, the Pine Drape, We the Generation. \$6-\$39.
Friday, 12pm — Soft Kill Live From Crystal Ballroom.
Friday, 7pm — Stephen Percy Live From The Whisky A Go Go. \$10-\$109.
Friday, 7pm — Zach Gill: Magic Egg & the April Fool. Free.
Saturday, 5:30pm — Apex, Spearhead Horizon, Pupal. \$6-\$100.
Saturday, 7pm — Danny Green Trio Livestream.
Saturday, 2pm — Obituary Studio Livestream Sessions.
Saturday, 7pm — Tech N9ne and ¡MAYDAY! Livestream. \$20.
Saturday, 4pm — The Harbor Boys. \$10.
Saturday, 6pm — The Head and

IMMORTAL BEAUTY

BY GARRETT HARRIS

Melodies that should be famous

If there is one thing I've bemoaned about modern music, all modern music, it's the lack of melody. From the concert hall to the opera stage to popular music, melody is on the decline.

Within the realm of classical music, there are certain melodies that everybody knows. They are legion. Think about it for a moment. How many can you name and hum? We could all do Beethoven's greatest hits such as the *Fifth* and *Ninth* symphonies, *Moonlight Sonata*, *Fur Elise*, the *Pathétique Sonata*, the second movement of the *Seventh Symphony*, and on and on we go with just Beethoven.

Mozart has even more. There are scores of famous melodies from Bach and Handel. Tchaikovsky wrote a few memorable tunes the

1812 Overture, and parts of *The Nutcracker* chief among them. Edward Elgar wrote a little tune we all know as *Pomp and Circumstance*. Bizet's opera *Carmen* features half a dozen famous melodies on its own.

We all know the most famous melodies, but what about some fantastic melodies that are somewhat off the beaten path? Let's take a look at four melodies that have not found household status.

Prokofiev once said, "I have never doubted the importance of melody. I like melody very much, and I consider it the most important element in music, and I labor many years on the improvement of its quality in my compositions."

Of all of Prokofiev's melodies, his "Montagues

and Capulets" from the ballet *Romeo and Juliet* is probably the most famous, due to its inclusion in several commercial endeavors. However, "The Balcony Scene" is resplendent with melody. Tchaikovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* might be more famous, but Prokofiev's is ever so much finer.

A melody of a similar ilk is the transfiguration theme from Richard Strauss' *Tod und Verklärung* (*Death and Transfiguration*). This tone poem is not Strauss' most popular so, relatively speaking, not many casual classical music consumers get to experience this melody. Of course, everyone knows the opening theme of Strauss' *Also Sprach Zarathustra* — think *2001: A Space Odyssey*. But the fully fleshed-out



Dancers Angel Corella and Alessandra Ferri from Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet*

transfiguration theme, almost 15 minutes into the piece, is much less known.

J.S. Bach wrote many a famous tune. We all know *Air on G String*, *Jesu Joy of Man's Desiring*, and the most famous of all organ pieces, *Toccatina and Fugue in D minor*. One of his finest melodies is hidden within the Cantata *Wachet Auf*. The melody is carried by the strings at the beginning of the fourth section of the cantata entitled, "Zion hört die Wächter singen".

No one wrote a better melody than Giacomo Puccini. Some of the most famous melodies of all time dripped from his pen. There is one, quite short melody in *Madama Butterfly* that always astounds me. Prince Yamadori has come, again, to offer himself to Cio Cio San. The character of Yamadori is of little consequence, yet the melody with which Cio Cio San sings his name leaves no question as to why he repeatedly wants her to be his bride.

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the Heart Livestream. \$9.
Sunday, 11am & 5pm — Dionne Warwick: At Home With You. \$20-\$40.
Monday, 12pm & 4pm — Andrew Peterson: Easter Monday at Ryman Auditorium. \$20-\$250.
Tuesday, 6pm — Isolation: Concerts For No One 2. \$10-\$30.

Wednesday, 12pm — Black Peaks: Live From Brighton Centre. \$12.
Wednesday, 5pm — Rock The RoC. Free.

UPCOMING SHOWS

Arrowood Golf Course:
Friday, May 7 — Cowboy Jack. Free.

Balboa Theatre:
Thursday, Apr. 22 — A.I.M.: An Untitled Love. \$9-\$51.

Belly Up Tavern:
Friday, Apr. 16 — Robert Cray. \$42-\$74.
Sunday, Apr. 18 — Stephen Malkmus.

California Center for the Arts, Escondido:
Friday, Apr. 30 — Monster Energy Outbreak Tour.
Saturday, May 1 — Monster Energy Outbreak Tour.

Casino Inn Bar and Grill:
Saturday, Apr. 10 — The 8 East Band. Free.

El Cajon Harley-Davidson:
Saturday, May 1 — West of 5. Free.

Loft:
Thursday, Apr. 15 — Sean Jones' Dizzy Spellz. \$9-\$39.

Online Internet Events:
Thursday, Apr. 8 — Ali Gatie:

The Idea of Her.
Thursday, Apr. 8 — Midland: Three Nights, One Joint. \$12-\$36.
Friday, Apr. 9 — Philip H. Anselmo: A Vulgar Display Of Pantera Live.
Friday, Apr. 9 — Maggie Lindemann Live From the Roxy. \$15.
Friday, Apr. 9 — Belly Up Livestream: Atomic Groove.
Friday, Apr. 9 — Midland: Three Nights, One Joint. \$12-\$36.
Saturday, Apr. 10 — U2: The Virtual Road.
Saturday, Apr. 10 — Music of Davis, Dresser & Dessen. \$25.
Saturday, Apr. 10 — Levitation Sessions: Osees.
Saturday, Apr. 10 — Midland: Three Nights, One Joint. \$12-\$36.
Sunday, Apr. 11 — The Lion's Daughter: Skin Show Livestream.
Tuesday, Apr. 13 — Isolation: Concerts For No One 2. \$10-\$30.
Friday, Apr. 16 — Sharon Van Etten: Epic Ten Livestream.
Saturday, Apr. 17 — Puscifer: Billy D & the Hall Of Feathered Serpents.
Saturday, Apr. 17 — Barenaked Ladies: Flip N' Hits With BNL.
Saturday, Apr. 17 — Sharon Van Etten: Epic Ten Livestream.
Sunday, Apr. 18 — Barenaked Ladies: Flip N' Hits With BNL.
Tuesday, Apr. 20 — Isolation: Concerts For No One 2. \$10-\$30.
Tuesday, Apr. 20 — Shwayze & Cisco Adler.
Thursday, Apr. 22 — eTown's 30th b'Earthday Celebration.
Saturday, Apr. 24 — Korn: Monumental Livestream.
UCSD Price Center:
Friday, Apr. 16 — San Salvador. \$9-\$28.

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The old man and the car

Confession is good for the soul: campy sci-fi has never been my bag, particularly when it comes bearing the stamp of network TV. Having never made it all the way through an episode of *Star Trek*, I bailed on the big screen bump-ups after Ricardo Montalban bit the dust.

But my appreciation for William Shatner dates back to 1962,

when he played a “social reformer” — a white supremacist weaving a campaign of hate through the deep South in Roger Corman’s *The Intruder*. (It was the only one of Corman’s independent productions that failed to turn a profit and one that I cannot recommend highly enough.) Shatner turned 90 last week — he doesn’t look a day over 65 — and I can’t think of a better way to celebrate the milestone than by sharing in his *Senior Moment*.

Victor Martin (Shatner) plans to live out his golden years with the love of his life, a vintage silver Porsche. The retired, never married NASA test

pilot calls Palm Springs home, and as submitted, it’s a sleepy desert resort community where everybody knows everybody. (Even if it’s not true, in order to help grease a path through some of the film’s more fortuitous encounters, it’s best we go with it.)

On a good day, that could lead us to supporting characters like Pablo Torres (Carlos Miranda), the sweet-tempered guy in the cherry Chevy Impala next to Victor, waiting for the light to change while deciding whether or not to accept the crazy old man’s invitation to a game of chicken. Spying a police car up the road keeps Pablo’s foot on the brake, while Victor’s blast off burns a strip of rubber into the asphalt. It’s no surprise that the local traffic cop and Victor are on a first-name basis. She lets him off with a warning, followed by a bit of advice: there’s a new Judge in town, and she’s gunning for speed-addicted seniors driving souped-up

MOVIES



Senior Moment: the only thing worse for William Shatner is a revoked license to drive.

sardine cans.

One can’t really call Caroline’s (Jean Smart) first encounter with Victor a “meet cute.” By then, director Giorgio Serafini and his writers have done an ace job of drawing their characters together; they’re unknowingly sharing space in close, ever-narrowing proximity. She didn’t realize it at the time, but the Porsche doing donuts

beneath her window, the silver one that came close to causing a fatality, was being piloted by the man whom she was courting. You know, the same schmuck who, as a result of the incident, had his car impounded and license temporarily revoked.

His cry of outrage echoes throughout the Coachella Valley: “Victor Martin does not take the bus!

Not now, not ever!” To spoiled Victor, public transportation is for losers, old people, and, unbeknownst to him at the time, Caroline. She isn’t the first woman we’ve seen draw Victor’s eye. There’s Kristen (Katrina Bowden), the swimsuit model who poses opposite his Porsche on the cover of *Sweet Ride* magazine. Shatner sweats charm, so much so that he persuades her to join



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EVERYWHERE YOU RENT MOVIES APRIL 2ND

GEORGE SEGAL, RIP (1934-2021)

George Segal, a major luminary in my cinematic firmament, died last week, and with him went a galaxy of outstanding performances. Peter Guseberg in *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre* was to be my launching point, my first sighting of an actor whose lure, range, and mile-wide shmuck streak made for a welcome cinematic companion, one whose dependability spanned almost two decades. (I sorta lost track when he made a near-permanent transition to television, starting in the late '80s.) Doctor, soldier, spy, cop, inveterate gambler, junkie, lawyer, cowboy, or computer scientist, Segal played them all with style, reliability, and a touch of boyish charm. This streak of adolescent energy wasn't reserved for light comedy, as evidenced by his performance as Guseberg, Bugs Moran's (Ralph Meeker) sadistic head gunman. It predates *The Godfather* with its depiction of the mob as a corporate entity, and contains some of the best ironic narration this side of Scorsese. It also marked Roger Corman's entry into the big leagues. After years of making films on the cheap, this was to be the maverick filmmaker's first assignment as a hired gun.

The four signature voices destined to boom eternally from high atop Hollywood's Mt. Rushmore of *sotto voce* raconteurs are those belonging to Rod Serling, James Earl Jones, Orson Welles, and Paul Frees, the man Corman hired to narrate *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre*. By sheer coincidence, Welles was considered for Al Capone, a role that later went to Jason Robards. (The heads of 20th Century Fox thumbs-downed the idea, fearing that Welles wasn't the type who took to taking



The St. Valentine's Day Massacre: George Segal dots the barkeep's eye with a shot of Cagney Spritz on the house.

direction.) Frees' exactly written narration sets the scene: Hoover was president, Mickey Mouse made his debut, and flagpole sitting was the rage — six months before the stock market crash paved the way for the Great Depression. The sly sanctimoniousness in Frees' delivery comes off as a less frantic, more reliable (if not laconic) variation on Walter Winchell's voice-over contributions to *The Untouchables*.

Frees also acts as an aural timestamp, rattling off, in order of introduction, each major player's date-of-birth, rap sheet and/or identifying traits (drinking heavily but never getting drunk, etc.). The voice-over also brings a touch of sobering reality by adding a character's date and cause of death to the expository "to do" list. All traces of irony vanish when, on February 14, 1929, grim reaper Frees greets the day by introducing each of the seven victims with, "On the last morning of his life." Scenarist Howard Browne spent most of his career working in episodic TV. This was his second of three forays onto the big screen, all of which involved gangsters. It was also the first film devoted entirely to the massacre, which opens the picture, unfolding from the points-of-view of those passing by the Clark Street garage where Dan Cupid's arrows became forever caught in the crossfire of tommy gun bullets. Corman stalwart Barboura Morris gets to throw out the first scream when she discovers the aftermath. She's just one

of the many regulars Corman brought with him through the Fox gate. Graduates of the Corman School include Jack Nicholson, Bruce Dern, Leo Gordon, Jonathan Haze, His Majesty Dick Miller, and Harold J. Stone, going full Chico Marx as Frank Nitti. How liberating an experience it must have been for director Corman, accustomed to working on cramped sets and even tighter budgets, to roam freely through the fully dressed Fox backlot. True to form, when presented with a \$2.5 million budget (his largest to date), Corman brought the film in ahead of schedule and \$200,000 in the black.

Robards gets top billing, but it feels like Segal has more screen time. Frees informs us that upon returning home from school to find his mother dead, 13-year-old Guseberg proceeded to pry the wedding ring off her finger and deliver it to the nearest pawn shop. Guseberg and brother Frank (David Canary) are the first gangsters to whom we're afforded a formal introduction. In true *Public Enemy* fashion, the boys strongarm a Capone-stocked saloon keeper into changing their house brew in for a few kegs of Bugs' suds.

Segal's most memorable scene is also one of the film's more brutal confrontations. While trying to retrieve his mink-on-a-string from a reluctant moll played by Jean Hale, the two engage in a dustup that makes Cagney's grapefruit-to-the-face look like a polite serving. The fight resulted in a bruised back for Hale and a knee to Segal's groin that managed to connect.

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him for a few drinks with his friends. When asked point blank why a man his age still chases younger women, he backs down a bit with, "I don't want to come off as a chauvinist pig." "Pigs are very smart," is her pointed reply. Given one's generally low expectations of material such as this, both Caroline and Kristen are surprisingly well-written characters. The strength of these two women is somewhat overshadowed by the more lecherous exchanges Victor and pal Sal (Christopher Lloyd) share over Kristen and her model friends.

Walking does have its advantages. "I must have driven past this place a hundred times," Victor tells Caroline after stumbling into her Cuckoo Cafe. He's able to help solve the mystery behind the bird in the broken clock, but when it comes to getting his license back, he needs the help of Rock Kendall (Don McManus), a huckster who doesn't so much cheat as he teaches Victor how to best the system at its own game. Even Pablo returns to act as Victor's driver. Then there's the mysterious Diego Lozano (Esai Morales), whose relation to Caroline gives the film a touch of mystery that, unless it's your first time at the movies, shouldn't pose much of a puzzle.

It would be thoughtless to write this off as entirely Shatner's show. But his ability to make everything that comes out of him sound unrehearsed and effortless makes him a delight to watch. Ditto Lloyd, whose presence in the courtroom not only provides backstory, but also gives one a sense of just how important a friend he has in Victor. And other than not coming clean about her relationship to Diego, Smart's Caroline provides Victor with just cause to swap out his love affair with a four wheel roadster for a woman capable of handling his curves. ★★★

—Scott Marks

Video on Demand New Release Roundup

Boogie — Each generation has a defining high school basketball picture to call its own (*One on One*, *Love and Basketball*, *Above the Rim*, etc.). The dialogue may coarsen, the off-court violence intensify, and the ethnicity of its lead may fluctuate over time, but the events outlined in the narrative basically remain the same, right down to the differing parents, compulsory teen love angle, and/or championship games that closes each picture. Not having seen the poster, at what point do we know this is a coming of age story? Just before Boogie's (Taylor Takahashi) English teacher assigns *Catcher in*

the Rye, he informs his class that each student is currently inhabiting their own coming-of-age story. But as far as temperamental Boogie and his contemporaries can tell, Asians are second-class citizens living in a country steeped in resentment. He seconds the rancor of his parent's generation: his people have earned their place in the kitchen or behind an accountant's desk, but when it comes to team sports, they're the last to be picked. Boogie stands above it all. Voted best in-city, it's a wonder he can dribble with a chip the size of the Great Wall teetering on his shoulder. As always, it's the differences that keep us watching: for once, the reconciliatory romance casts the star athlete, not the head cheerleader, in the role of virgin. And while Boogie's parents are at constant loggerheads when it comes to securing a scholarship, watching them spar is far more engaging than anything that takes place on the court. But after a series of fits and starts, the tipping point was reached with a romantic rivalry that caused first time writer-director Eddie Huang to take his eye off the ball. 2021 — S.M. ★★

Nobody — Everything moves so fast at the outset. In a little over a minute, two weeks of Hutch's (Bob Odenkirk) life are condensed with thudding rapidity. The problem with *Nobody* is that our eponymous neb-bish was once a notorious somebody: a retired mob "auditor" — a high-paid contract killer who traded in his violent ways for a quiet suburban life with his family. (Hutch is at his best when breaking his enemies down with exposition.) When his home is ransacked by a pair of punks, one of whom draws a bead on his son, Hutch appears to go full wimp, allowing the boy to take a punch knowing full well that his assailant's revolver had an empty chamber. As written, it's hard to swallow Hutch as either a good family man or multi-layered mafioso when a character such as his bleeds stereotypes. In spirit, the film's high point — a dragged-out knock-down-drag-out that takes place aboard a bus — owes much to John Carpenter's amusingly unremitting bare-knuckle brawl in *They Live*. And if the old adage about "the meaner the villain, the better the film" is true, Russian gangster Yubian's (Aleksey Serebryakov) one-take entrance, that follows him from back seat to dance floor, heralded a sexy beast. We are instead served another helping of reheated sociopathy: connected, funded, and otherwise unexceptional. Ilya Naishuller directs. 2021. — S.M. ★

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PERSONALS

DREW AND KATIE Happy Easter. On the property, I have hidden some eggs...One has cash in it. The other ones have goodies. Enjoy Easter Sunday.....Gary and Nancy....

GOD'S WILL The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance. CMR

IF ANYONE KNOWS THE WHEREABOUTS of my friend Lynn McConnell, please contact me at kittycatmartha@gmail.com.

LOOKING FOR MALE OR FEMALE widow or widower, middle age. I am a compassionate and loving female living in Mission Valley, seeking friends who would be inclined to meet for breakfast, lunch, or outdoor outing. Carmen, please leave a message (619) 269-3434.

HAPPY EASTER Happy Easter Shawshank....Love ya Gman

HEAVENLY FATHER Please heal my Dawg, Marvin whose liver is riddled with cancer. I need a miracle....In God's name I pray....Amen Gman

TOMMY M Still thinking of you every day. Love getting the pictures of you. Talk to me again sometime. I love hearing your voice. Patti D

CAMPO INDIAN RESERVATION the community still feels the loss of an elder who passed last year Uncle Pete Pablo he was truly a great man.

ELISA LANDSMAN of San Carlos, hope you have a good Pesach. Bruce & Brian

GOD'S LOVE (CON'T) For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. CMR

HI BECCA from Ernie. Remember Encinitas

IF YOU ARE VISITING VIEJAS CASINO and your drink server is a Filipino girl named Mel. Wish her a great day. From David thank you.

PLEASE LORD I PRAY that our mom is with you and doing great. love you mama Judy, Kelly & Sarah.

READILY AND GLADLY GIVE and graciously accept, nothing less than anyone should naturally expect, merely common courtesy and only due respect. DEJ

KYLE YOU WERE THE BEST ROOMIE I have had an absolute blast living in San Diego with you and I wish I could stay. But life is calling. Hold down the fort, I'll be back soon. Love, your buddy Phil.

NANCY FROM OCEANSIDE your dear friend Carmelita has been admitted to a board and care, please reach out to me at (858) 282-4370.

LOOKING FOR MY HUSBAND, WILL HOOVER AKA Isreal Dyson. An upright person. Please don't be so hard on yourself: that's my job. Breezy

PIXIE ROSE FROM ENCINITAS Rhett 619 is looking for you. (619) 368-6886 rhettondrums619@gmail.com

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NOTICES

A+ COMPUTER PERSON: If you have a driver for Epson Action Laser 1500, please call me. (619) 523-1872 (after 9am please)



ALOHA 'OE TOMMY HOM The young Tom Hom, age 21, died February 13, 2021. Services at Community Presbyterian Church in Lakeside on April 10th at 11 am. Zoom: [https://bellring.zoom.us/j/\(957\)159-95344](https://bellring.zoom.us/j/(957)159-95344) Passcode: 80993988. (619) 831-5296 / sue4easyaccess@gmail.com

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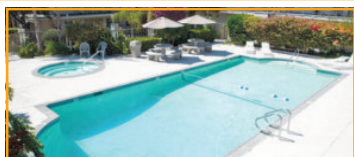
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SUBJECTS NEEDED FOR UC SAN DIEGO RESEARCH STUDY Dr. William Perry and his associates at UCSD are conducting a research study on how cannabis affects thinking and behavior. We are seeking adults ages 18-50 who either use cannabis at least 4 times a week or do not use cannabis at all, with a history of Bipolar Disorder or with no psychiatric conditions. You must have no serious medical or neurological conditions, including heart problems, seizures, or

significant head trauma. Study Procedures: One visit lasting about 6 hours; saliva, blood, and urine tests; computer and paper and pencil tests; wear a device that measures the movements of your body. Participants reimbursed up to \$20 per hour for study participation. Located at the UCSD Medical Center in Hillcrest. For More Information, call us at the UCSD Psychiatry Department

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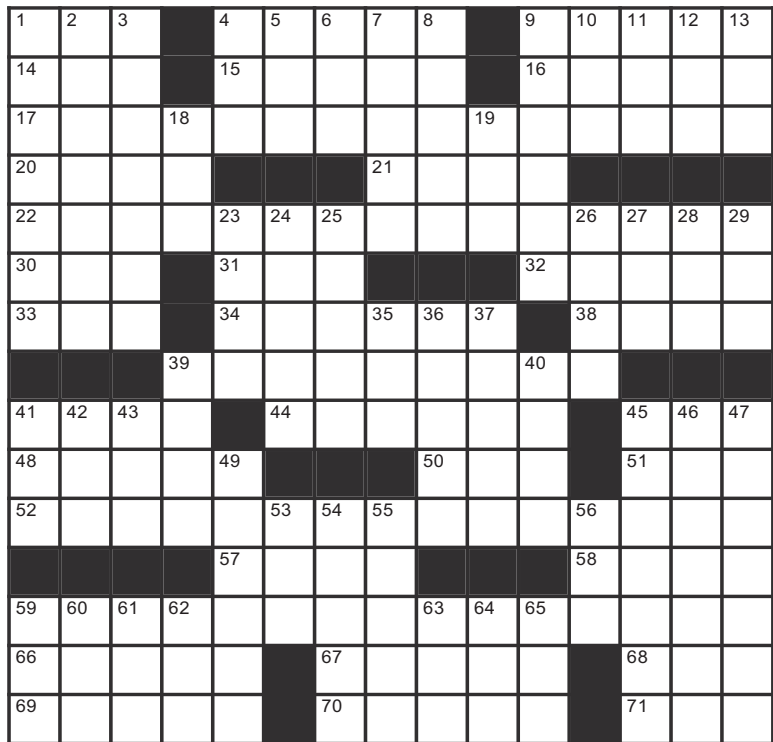
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Across

1. Unconfident utterances
4. Take ____ at (try)
9. Hybrid fruit also known as an aprium
14. Karachi's country: Abbr.
15. Do the Thanksgiving honors
16. "Good As Hell" singer
17. Literary movement of Emerson and Thoreau
20. Analogy phrase
21. Cameron of "Bad Teacher"
22. In 1582, it was proclaimed by the Pope as a reform of the Julian one
30. She/____ pronouns
31. German agreements
32. Filling in between lasagna layers
33. Some ESPN highlights, for short
34. Michael who played Cochise on '50s TV
38. Like some pockets
39. Some football linemen ... or what's contained in four squares in this puzzle's grid
41. Wrestler in a mawashi
44. "Old ____" (1957 Disney classic)
45. Chem. pollutant banned in 1979
48. Eye-deceiving designs
50. Finish, as a cake
51. It fills la mer

52. Make extreme efforts
57. Physician who was once a regular on "The Oprah Winfrey Show"
58. Some whiskeys
59. Protector of free speech
66. Group seen in gathering clouds?
67. Prefix with biology or chemistry
68. Dye variety
69. Evening news hr.
70. One may have a flat head
71. Megan Thee Stallion genre

24. Slender and long-limbed
25. Joe Jackson's "____ Really Going Out With Him?"
26. Young fellows
27. Provide, as with a quality
28. Star pitcher
29. Serve as an agent (for)
35. WNBA's Dream, on scoreboards
36. Archaeologist's find
37. By ____ (just barely)
39. Anna of "Fringe"
40. Doodled, e.g.
41. Blubber
42. Tip
43. Portrait seen on renminbi bills
45. Annually
46. Passage near the end of an aria
47. Spot about every two blocks on a major city street
49. Monotony
53. Trio in elem. school
54. Cap'n's underlings
55. Tenochtitlan resident
56. Something up one's sleeve
59. Bit of ink
60. ____-haw
61. "Ich bin ____ Berliner"
62. One vain about his looks
63. Gold: Prefix
64. Army fare, for short
65. Provide, as with a grant money

Down

1. Unable to relax
2. Color named for a planet
3. Some Winter Olympians
4. Apt. coolers
5. Cul-de-____
6. Be currently popular, as a Twitter topic
7. Big name in cosmetics
8. Country between Togo and Nigeria
9. Public squares
10. Wee, informally
11. Submachine gun named for its designer
12. Abbr. in a birth announcement
13. Male turkey
18. Yuletide beverage
19. Tic-____-toe
23. City east of Santa Barbara

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE:

M	O	U	T	H	F	U	L	B	E	A	S	T	S
C	A	N	O	E	I	N	G	O	X	T	A	I	L
S	R	I	R	A	C	H	A	S	E	T	T	L	E
B	A	R	T	C	O	M	P	L	E	X			
A	R	R	T	H	E	A	I	S	L	E			
T	A	O	S	O	N	A	N	A	D	L	I	B	
H	G	W	E	L	L	S	F	A	R	G	O	N	E
S	E	E	M	E	T	A	L	L	E	N	D	S	
M	A	G	L	E	N	D	E	A					
M	T	N	D	E	W	M	A	D	E	B	A	N	K
C	H	E	E	S	Y	A	P	A	R	I	C	I	O
L	A	W	M	E	N	C	R	Y	S	T	A	L	S

RULES OF THE GAME

- 1) Submit your completed puzzle to the *Reader* each week for our ongoing contest. Your submission will only be counted when you successfully complete a puzzle AND get it to us by 7:00 a.m. Monday.
 - 2) Submit the correct answers to the puzzle along with your name.
 - 3) Entries must be faxed to **619-231-0489** or mailed to *Reader* Puzzle, 2323 Broadway Suite 200, San Diego, CA 92102; or scanned and emailed to puzzles@srdreader.com. Submissions by email must be attached in JPG format, maximum file size of 1MB. Submissions that don't fit the format will not be counted or viewed. One win per person within a 4 week period.
- And now for the really small print:
- 1) All answers must be legible and entered in the spaces provided.
 - 2) Late entries will not be considered.
 - 3) We will draw **1** name from weekly puzzle submissions.
 - 4) One entry per person per week or you will be disqualified.
 - 5) Employees of the *Reader* and their immediate families are not eligible.

Win a Reader hat or t-shirt

THIS WEEK'S WINNER:

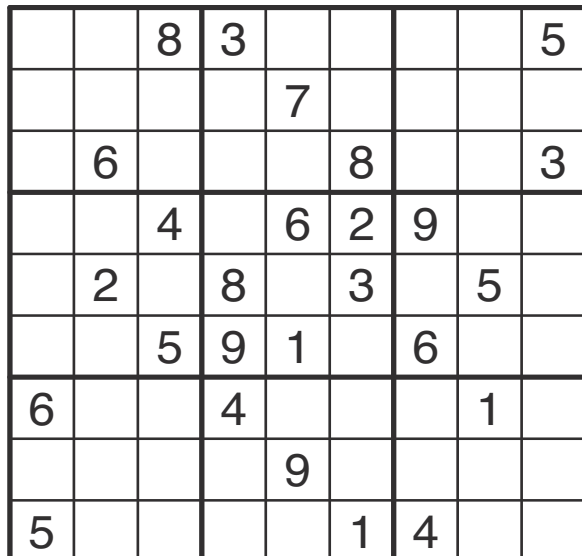
Winners will be contacted for prize redemption.

📍 **K.J. Rayner, San Diego**

Name: _____
 City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____
 Email: _____ Phone # _____

SUDOKU

EVIL:



RULES OF THE GAME

- 1) Submit your completed puzzle to the *Reader* each week for our ongoing contest. Your submission will only be counted when you successfully complete a puzzle AND get it to us by 7:00 a.m. Monday.
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 - 5) Employees of the *Reader* and their immediate families are not eligible.

THIS WEEK'S WINNER:

Winners will be contacted for prize redemption.

📍 **Jerry Nuser, San Diego**

Name: _____
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Win a Reader hat or t-shirt

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S SUDOKU PUZZLE:

EVIL:

3	5	9	6	1	8	7	2	4
1	6	2	5	7	4	3	9	8
4	7	8	9	2	3	6	5	1
9	4	6	3	5	7	1	8	2
5	1	7	8	9	2	4	3	6
8	2	3	1	4	6	5	7	9
6	3	1	2	8	5	9	4	7
7	8	5	4	6	9	2	1	3
2	9	4	7	3	1	8	6	5

continued from page 19
cepts, Tokyo Hot Chicken and Bourbon Burger Bar.

And unlike the furtive ghost kitchens working like stabs in the dark for our attention, these projects are announced with press releases. Advertising your own ghost kitchen has itself become a marketing tool; we've exhausted the cycle, and now the ghostwashing backlash can begin.

Yes, it's a cold, cynical, ghostly world out there right now, dominated by data and crass endorsement. But that doesn't mean we can't find underdogs to root for in the ghost kitchen world. They can still be pretty inspiring. And they might prove virtual brand generators don't hold a monopoly on data.

Chef Nick Brune has taken up with downtown's Gaslamp Tavern to help convert it into a food hall.

In other words, a collection of several discreet food kiosks, each with specific, narrowed down menus. Exactly what the algorithms have taught virtual brand developers to recreate online.

If it sounds like something ready-made for the modern ghost kitchen industry, Brune says that was the end goal. "We were kind of working our way towards a cloud kitchen model for the future... covid just fast-forwarded that."

Eventually, the food hall will serve its original purpose — giving bar patrons plenty of fast options between rounds. But until that lifestyle returns, it's been launching as a delivery concept instead. "We scraped together a few brands, started testing them out and collecting some data," Brune says, adding, "A lot of people don't focus on that ever



PHOTOGRAPH BY IAN ANDERSON

Esteban will soon give his Filipino rice bowl concept a physical location at the Liberty Public Market, going by the name White Rice.

in the restaurant world, but I think it's time to be a more data-driven industry." Among other things, Brune has been tracking customer acquisition costs, determining which kind of marketing attracts traffic, and which kind of foods convert to sales.

And what does their data show?

"That people like fried chicken."

The first brands to emerge from Gaslamp Tavern have been Ghost Fried Chicken, followed by Tacos El Tuerto, and the San Diego Tuna Company. They're also developing a salad concept, and a breakfast brand, Killer B's.

"It's like anything else, when you see the top growing food companies out there, they all do one thing really, really well."

Not to be forgotten in all this is that one thing people can do really, really well to run a successful ghost kitchen is cook.

Robert Watkins, for example. The former Navy

chef is another example of someone who lost his cooking job during the pandemic, and seized his opportunity by opening a low-risk delivery restaurant. Watkins secured a cottage license and started cooking up a menu of fried chicken, wings, and pork chops in his Logan Heights apartment, going by the name Superior Soul Food.

"I decided, 'Hey, I can cook pretty good,'" Watkins says. "Let's start a restaurant."

Though the home-cooked fare echoes the data-friendly choices we've grown used to, Superior Soul Food genuinely delivers on its name. You won't find it on delivery apps, anyway. Though Superior's kitchen is licensed and its dishes are prepared by certified food handlers, third party apps won't deliver for cottage busi-

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nesses, only restaurants and commercial kitchens. Instead, the business handles its own orders, and Watkins' roommate, a partner in the business, handles deliveries.

This set-up requires a different set of marketing rules, managed by another Watkins friend and partner, marketing professional Derrick Dixon. They've advertised the business with Instagram and Facebook ads, but also relied on positive word of mouth around the neighborhood.

Some of that word of mouth grew out of some old-fashioned hustle. "I cooked up a few sample plates," says Watkins, "and I walked them over to the shipyards and handed out cards."

Most days, the home restaurant sells out, so Watkins and partners are starting to look towards their next step. "We're

definitely outgrowing the kitchen we're in right now," he says, "We're looking to expand into a food truck in the next two months."

In 2020, none plied the ghost kitchen concept better than chef Philip Esteban.

When the first stay-at-home order dropped, Esteban had already left his role developing globally inspired recipes for the Consortium Holdings restaurant group. As a young chef, he'd paid his dues cooking every cultural cuisine imaginable in vaunted eateries around San Diego, Los Angeles, Portland, and New York City. Now, he would put his experience toward opening the first restaurant of his own. His goal was to bring an elevated take on the food of his own Filipino heritage to his home turf, National City.

The pandemic would prove disruptive, not only to that project, but to the catering business Esteban has kept running on the side. He was operating Craft Meals out of a commercial kitchen, working with a small team to prepare a quantity of weekday lunches to feed corporate clients, mostly office employees. Usually simple takes on California cuisine.

When offices closed, Craft Meals' business dried up. Esteban might have closed up shop. He went with a better idea.

Within days of losing his lunchtime contracts, he revamped the Craft Meals concept, converting it to a home delivery restaurant taking orders over Instagram, under the name Rice Bowls for All. It became arguably the best local restaurant story of the year, for a couple of good reasons.

First of all, it has succeeded in popularizing Filipino dishes. Not with the fine dining approach he still plans to bring to a future restaurant, but with \$12 rice bowls based on traditional Filipino garlic rice dishes called *silogs*. He constructed approachable versions of Filipino dishes such as chicken *tocino*, *lechon* pork, and vegetarian-friendly *sisig*, turning them into photogenic dishes that local Instagrammers would find irresistible.

The concept has caught on so well that it won't be going anywhere when the pandemic ends. In April, Esteban will give his Filipino rice bowl concept a physical location at the Liberty Public Market, going by the name White Rice.

But this ghost kitchen has had impacted much more than Esteban's ca-

reer. That's because he established Rice Bowls For All under a one-for-one model. Meaning that, with every meal delivered to San Diegans at home, Esteban and team would provide a meal to someone who needed it.

Initially, the plan was to provide meals for first responders and health care workers. But early on, Esteban says family members who worked in health care pointed out to Esteban that people working the front lines were by default in possession of the one thing that guaranteed they could remain well fed: a job. Meanwhile, untold thousands of San Diegans were out of work, cut off from their regular food sources, and in many cases, going hungry.

So Rice Bowls started delivering meals to the hungry instead. Working in conjunction with

chef Jose Andres' World Central Kitchen, Father Joe's Villages, and other charitable organizations, Esteban's efforts have provided meals to nursing homes, to out of work restaurant professionals, and others in need. He's worked with local fishermen to likewise distribute seafood dishes under the concept Fish for Families.

To date, Rice Bowl and the concepts branching out from it have fed 250,000 meals to San Diegans who need them most. A quarter million full bellies, not counting all the ghost kitchen diners who crave them.

It's without doubt an inspiration. It's amazing what a ghost kitchen concept can do, especially when delivery giants, analytics companies, and celebrities aren't standing by to take their cuts.

— Ian Anderson

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San Diego Reader April 1, 2021 41

Can't Help Herself

— Two weeks after a plea deal fell through in connection with a 2019 attempt to stow-away on a flight at Chicago's O'Hare International Airport, Marilyn Hartman, 69, was arrested and charged with trespassing March 16 as she attempted to sneak onto another flight at O'Hare, the Associated Press reported. At the time of her 2019 arrest, Hartman was on probation after having bypassed security in January 2018 and boarded a flight from Chicago to London without a ticket. The Cook County Sheriff's Department says it plans to seek a felony escape charge for Hartman.

Perspective

— In March, Einstein Cafe, an upscale dessert chain with outlets across the Gulf Arab states, started a fad by selling its thick, milky drinks in plastic baby bottles, complete with nipples. The Associated Press reported the cafe was inspired by photos of trendy bottles on social media, and the idea was an instant hit. People lined up at Einstein stores, they "took photos, they had fun, they remembered their childhood," said Younes Molla, CEO of the chain, but others "were so angry they said horrible things." In Dubai, Kuwait and Bahrain, the government cracked down on the new cafe offerings, saying the bottles violate the countries' customs and traditions; in Oman, citizens were asked to report sightings of the baby bottle confections to a consumer protection hotline.

Recurring Themes

— Raffaella Spone, 50, was arrested in early March in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, after prosecutors say she created "deepfake" videos and photographs of at least three girls on her daughter's cheerleading squad in an apparent attempt to embarrass them and force them off the team. Prosecutors said Spone allegedly sent the manipulated images to the girls - shown drinking, smoking and naked - anonymously and suggested they kill themselves, *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported. Parents of one of recipients contacted police, and detectives traced the IP address where the messages originated to Spone's home. Investigators believe Spone's daughter was unaware of what her mother was doing.

Least Competent Criminals

— Robert Radek, 29, of Marlboro, New York, scored a hat trick on March 7 when he was arrested three times in one day, the *Daily Freeman* reported. First stopped that morning in the city of Newburgh, driving a Jeep Cherokee, Radek was found by the trooper to have a suspended license and crack cocaine with him, for which he was charged with a misdemeanor and released, according to authorities. At 2:30 p.m., police said, the same trooper stopped him again, this time in a Honda Civic, and again found him in possession of crack cocaine, along with heroin. His final arrest came at 5:45 p.m., when Radek was stopped driving the Cherokee again and detained after the trooper determined he appeared to be under the influence of drugs, said police. Radek was released with tickets on all three vio-

lations and ordered to appear in court in April.

Home Sweet Home

— Vietnam veteran Tom Garvey, 78, of Ambler, Pennsylvania, has released a new memoir, not about his service in Southeast Asia, but about the "secret apartment" he maintained for two years in an empty concession stand in Philadelphia's Veterans Stadium, once home to both the Phillies and the Eagles, reported *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. From 1979 to 1981, Garvey lived in an "off-the-wall South Philly version of the Phantom of the Opera," he said, furnishing the apartment with a bed, sink, refrigerator, stereo, coffeemaker, hot plate and seating for guests, who included players' wives waiting for their husbands after games. Leftover AstroTurf served as the carpeting. Cousin Terry Nilon said being in Garvey's apartment, located literally in leffield, felt like "Vet stadium was in his living room."

Blessing or Curse?

— Work had begun on the small bungalow retired banker Charles Pole, 81, of Wiveliscombe, England, was building for himself on his property when excavators unearthed the remains of a 13th-century bishop's palace, simultaneously solving a local mystery and bringing construction to a halt. Historians had been looking for the site, once home to bishops of Bath and Wells, for 200 years, and a spokesperson for the South West Heritage Trust described it to the *Somerset County Gazette* in early March as a "significant find." In the meantime, though, Pole is stuck

with the bill. "The cost of the investigation is going to cost me around (\$26,000)," he said. Building will continue after the site is protected and covered over again.

Fine Points of the Law

— Lawyers filing briefs for the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit were advised on March 16 the court would be officially discouraging the use of the Garamond typeface, a centuries-old font widely used in printed books, because it "can be more difficult to read," wrote court clerk Mark J. Langer. Fox News reported the font is popular among attorneys, but author and web designer David Kadavy, gets it: "Garamond is considered one of the best fonts in existence, (but it) "can be a disaster on the web. ... It's better to use a modern font that has been drawn with the screen in mind."

Police Report

— Police in the Japanese community of Funabashi City have arrested Ryusei Takada, 26, for allegedly stealing more than a dozen toilets from houses under construction. *The Daily Mail* reported the thefts began in October and continued, with local media dubbing the elusive thief the God of Toilets, until Takada flushed himself out by selling a brand-new fixture to a second-hand store in the city. Takada, a construction company office worker, admitted to the thefts and said he did it "to cover my living expenses."

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