

VIRTUAL BLIZZCON 2018 · IRVINE'S THE GALLERY AT WORKWELL · THE BEST OF COMPLEXCON · POPPING UP WITH ADIA

IRVINE

WEEKLY

NOVEMBER 14, 2018 · No. 3

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DIRTY JOHN

INSIDE THE NEW BRAVO SERIES BASED ON ONE OF ORANGE COUNTY'S MOST NOTORIOUS CRIMES



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IRVINE WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

Employment

Accountant: Prepare/examine accounting records. Req'd: BA/BS in Bus. Admin., Econ., or related. Mail Resume: Blue Accountancy Corporation, 3660 Wilshire Blvd., STE 524, Los Angeles, CA 90010

Corporate Development Specialist sought by Get Heal Inc., dba Heal in Los Angeles, CA. Bachelor's plus 6 months exp. in related field. Send resume to: Alexandra Shapiro, General Counsel, Get Heal, Inc. dba Heal, 1880 Century Park East, Suite 711, Los Angeles, CA 90067, Phone: (424) 652-6495

ENGINEERING
BYD Motors Inc. has an opening in Los Angeles, CA for Technical Support Engineer (Job Code: LA-WZH) for electric bus debugging before products are shipped to customers. Ref job code & mail resume to: BYD Motors Inc., Attn: HR, 1800 S. Figueroa Street, Los Angeles, CA 90015.

SOFTWARE
Electronic Arts, Inc. has a job opening in Chatsworth, CA: Software Engineer (LA183): Write C/C++ code, w/ deep knowledge of gameplay. Work closely w/ designers, artists, & animators to design systems & make video games great.

To apply, submit resume to EAJobs@ea.com and reference ID#.

Notices

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Legal Notices

PUBLIC NOTICE OF APPLICATION FOR POLICE PERMIT
Notice is hereby given that application has been made to the Board of Police Commissioners for a permit to conduct a Dance Hall business. Name of applicant: **Andrew Meieran**

Doing business as: **The Edison Downtown**
Located at: **108 W. 2nd St. Unit #101, Los Angeles, CA 90012**
Any person desiring to protest the issuance of this permit shall make a written protest before 10/16/2018 to the: **LOS ANGELES POLICE COMMISSION, 100 West First Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012**. Upon receipt of a written protest, protesting persons will be notified of date, time and place for a hearing.
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

SUMMONS (Family Law)
Notice of Case Assignment
NOTICE TO RESPONDENT: Humberto Monje, YOU ARE BEING served by PETINONER: Erika Chavira an individual.
CASE NUMBER: 18VEFL00642.

NOTICE! You have been served. The court may de-

side against you without your being heard unless you respond within 30 days. Read the information below. You have 30 CALENDAR DAYS after this summons and legal papers are served on you to file a written response at this court and have a copy served on the Respondent. A letter or phone call will not protect you. Your written response must be in proper legal form if you want the court to hear your case. There may be a court form that you can use for your response. You can find these court forms and more information at the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), your county law library, or the courthouse nearest you. If you cannot pay the filing fee, ask the court clerk for a fee waiver form. If you do not file your response on time, you may lose the case by default, and your wages, money, and property may be taken without further warning from the court. There are other legal requirements. You may want to call an attorney right away. If you do not know an attorney, you may want to call an attorney referral service. If you cannot afford an attorney, you may be eligible for free legal services from a nonprofit legal services program. You can locate these nonprofit groups at the California Legal Services Web site: (www.LawHelpCalifornia.org) the California Courts Online Self-Help Center (www.courtinfo.ca.gov/selfhelp), or by contacting your local court or county bar association. NOTE: The court has a statutory lien for waived fees and costs on any settlement or arbitration award of \$10,000 or more in a civil case. The court's lien must be paid before the court will dismiss the case. The name and address of the court is:

Van Nuys Courthouse E. 6230 Sylmar Ave Van Nuys, CA 91401
The name, address, and telephone number of Petitioner's attorney, or Petitioner without an attorney, is:
Matias Flores, Esq. 10846 Paramount Blvd. Downey, CA 90241
Filed: April 16, 2018
Executive Officer/Clerk: Phillip Yap

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DIRTY JOHN

Inside the new Bravo series based on one of Orange County's most notorious crimes

BY: SUSAN HORNİK

PHOTOS BY: JORDIN ALTHAUS / COURTESY OF: BRAVO

Cable network Bravo is bringing the chilling events that led to the murder of John Meehan to life in the crime anthology series "Dirty John." Meehan, a surgeon who in actuality was a con man, became romantically involved with Irvine/Newport Beach interior designer, Debra Newell.

The beautiful Newell had what looked to many like a perfect Orange County life, living in California's most desirable area. But like many people, what was really missing in her life was love.

When she met the handsome doctor John Meehan, she found herself drawn into an all encompassing relationship. The two met via an internet dating site, where the charismatic Meehan charmed his way into Newell's heart, resulting in a whirlwind courtship and marriage.

Her daughters Terra (played by Julia Garner in the series) and Veronica (played by Juno Temple) had concerns; Debra and John's rapidly moving romance caused tension between the mother and her daughters, who were forced to investigate the new man in their lives.

Newell was drawn into John's web of lies and manipulation, ultimately resulting in terrifying consequences for the family.

The show is based on real life events that occurred in Orange County from 2014 to 2016.

Evolving From the Podcast

Los Angeles Times reporter Christopher Goffard found out about the murder and became so intrigued he created the "Dirty John" podcast, which began airing in 2017.

During the six episode series, the successful, attractive, yet gullible, Newell slowly discovers Meehan wasn't who he said he was. The podcast follows her family as they make several attempts to rid Meehan from their lives once they discover his secret.

The podcast's popularity caught the eye of writer and executive producer Alexandra Cunningham.

"I actually had read the articles before I even knew there was a podcast," said Cunningham at a panel during the Television Critics Press Tour. "I was captivated by the story and people kept saying, 'Have you listened to this great podcast?'"

To adapt the script from the podcast, Goffard was in the writers room with Cunningham. "I had access to the

hundreds and thousands of pages of research that was done and vetted by the L.A. Times, so that actually gave me a very complete picture of everything, and it was fantastic."

Goffard is now a producer on the series.

#metoo

With the #metoo movement, Cunningham feels the timing of the Bravo series is perfect.

"To tell a story about why women don't listen to their intuition and why they can't throw off their conditioning is very relevant," she commented. "A story about people meeting people on the internet and being conned, when we're obviously living in a moment where even internet trolling is showing us that everybody wants to matter."

Cunningham acknowledged that online predatory behavior will continue.

One of the things that pains Cunningham the most is when people ask "How could Debra be so stupid?" to not recognize that Meehan had a dark, bullying, manipulative side.

"I actually think that it's a defense mechanism by people when they say that about Debra. They like to believe that this wouldn't happen to them, and I know for a fact that it would."

"If somebody wants to do this to you and they're focused on you, taking everything that you believe is good about yourself and using it against you, they're going to get you the way John got Debra. Debra was a hopeful and generous and kind person looking for somebody to recognize that in her, and John took advantage of that."

Executive producer Richard Suckle pointed out that people have a "preconceived notion" of Southern California and Irvine, Newport Beach, etc.

"It almost feels like things like this don't happen in places like that. But there's a real darkness. That's also something that really plays well in terms of the juxtaposition of the beauty of Southern California and the way (director) Jeffrey Reiner is shooting it. ... The story gets darker and darker as the narrative moves on."

Britton and Bana

Eric Bana stars as John Meehan and has enjoyed the challenge of sinking his teeth into an evil character.

"I enjoy being in the skin of someone else, and it doesn't bother me if they inhabit me more than they should or stick around for a bit longer than they should," he acknowledged. "I think



that's a bit of a privilege. I really like that feeling at the end of a production, when you find yourself still feeling something about who you're playing."

"So he's welcome to take over part of my brain for as long as I'm contracted, and hopefully, I can shake him off at the end," Bana quipped.

Bana regards Meehan as a bit of an enigma.

"Whilst there's a lot of factual information about John, I actually find him really mysterious. There's a lot of stuff about him that I don't want to know," he admitted.

"Ultimately, when you're dealing with something that's based in reality, you can choose to do something that's 100 percent traceable to the exact facts of how they were, which can potentially be a little bit boring to watch, or, you can try and come up with something that has a sense of that person, that might be more interesting."

Meehan's behavior and the mysterious type of character was fascinating for Bana to portray.

"I think that's why people find the podcast so interesting, because he's such an unusual person ... studying how sociopaths behave and think was more

important than just focusing on specific events that occurred in his life, putting them in some sort of memory bank," he asserted.

"It's important to come up with a character for the show that's a little bit further developed than what we know to be factual."

Bana believes that John Meehan really

"IT ALMOST FEELS LIKE THINGS LIKE THIS DON'T HAPPEN IN PLACES LIKE THAT. BUT THERE'S A REAL DARKNESS."

did fall for Debra Newell, though.

"From everything I've heard, the attraction in the early parts of their relationship is a hundred percent real. And I don't feel like it's someone who's arriving on a potential crime scene to do a swindle; I think John genuinely fell for Debra."

The fact that the early stage of the relationship was genuinely passionate and

real, made it easier for Bana to play.

"I also do like the idea that at what point did the acting begin and at what stage does the more dangerous elements of his character take over and poison that part of the relationship?" said Bana. "And I spoke to the director about this early on, before we started shooting ... I also really like the idea that John may not even know himself, you know. So there's a lot of scope to explore in terms of that sociopath behavior."

Actress Connie Britton plays the woe-fully unlucky-in-love Debra Newell, and has spent a good deal of time with her in real life.

"I really like her a lot. It's been such a great experience for me to sit down and really get to ask the character that I'm playing questions. It's a very unique, privileged experience. And also, it's helping give me so much insight into the story in a way that maybe we weren't able to experience in the podcast."

For Britton, it was important to really have a better understanding of what Newell's experience was and how she was lured in by this man.

"Because ultimately, we're telling the story of how a con man can be so effective. It's important to make Debra re-

ENTERTAINMENT

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latable so that we can all see ourselves in her and not just say, 'Oh, well, that's because she's this or that.' So that's my goal. And she's been really wonderful and helpful with that."

Britton said it had been fun to talk to Newell and hear her speak about her life honestly, describing her as a self-made woman and an "exceptional" businesswoman.

"She was married four times prior to this, which is her cross to bear. It's kind of her Achilles heel. But because of that she ended up as a single mom. So she started this (interior design) business on her own, which flourished and she actually started hiring single mom employees. She was really dedicated to helping/employing them. She knew what that struggle was."

Britton has been shocked by how many women relate to Newell's character.

"I've been amazed since I started work-

ing on this, there are people in my life who have come out of the woodwork, that I've known for years, who have been like, 'Oh, my gosh. Yeah, I was in a relationship with a sociopath.' And I'm like, 'Really!?'"

She continued: "And the one thing that they say is, 'They can say anything to get you to stay.' That is amazing. And it's also coercive control, which is a really viable thing that happens particularly to women. And so we're being able to show what that looks like and that it's really about John and what he's capable of doing, because that's how his brain works."

Ties to Irvine

To prepare for the series, costume designer Ruth Ammon spent time in Irvine recreating the couple's footsteps. Her first meeting there was a field trip with the creative team.

"We (Suckle, Cunningham, Reiner and

director of photography Todd McMullen) started out at the Irvine restaurant, Houston's, where Debra and John first met. It was extremely exciting, and honestly, a little sexy," she said.

Ammon described the space as very atmospheric without much detail, but strong on ambience. "There are dark black glossy walls with glowing hidden lighting. It's a fun atmosphere at lunch. It feels good to be there. There's a huge bar to see and be seen."

Unfortunately, Houston's does not allow filming at the restaurant, so Ammon had to find another location that gave them the same feeling.

They took a walk around the Irvine Park Place area, which is mostly residential buildings around chain businesses, restaurants, gyms and banks. "Irvine appears very safe. It is super manicured and organized without a lot of history weighing it down. A world to leave the past behind."

To get ready to build the home set, Ammon and the team looked at the building where Debra's penthouse was located, but were not allowed past the security desk. "But it gave us the idea. We also looked at other apartment tower communities."

Newell owned both a big Irvine warehouse and an Irvine penthouse. While Ammon did not visit Newell's warehouse, she did extensive research online.

"I looked it up on Google Maps and tried to recreate the idea in Calabasas. Both were in upscale business parks. We rented a commercial space and built her offices and storage there. We also used a top-end prop house (Objects) for the wider shots of Debra walking up and down massive aisles of furnishings."

When Debra and John first moved in together, they were living in an apartment near the Irvine Spectrum. "I also researched this online. We wanted the most up-to-date version of a penthouse





in Irvine."

She added: "Debra was a very successful designer, business owner and manager of people. She seemed ready to start a new life with a new man. The apartment (created on set for the series) should feel affluent and open to new life, not weighed down by furnishings and tchotchkes of her former life."

Newell's Daughters

If you haven't heard the podcast, you may not know how much Newell's daughters tried to persuade their mom that Dirty John was up to no good. Unfortunately, Debra Newell was perhaps too much in love to listen to reason, much to their chagrin.

In the trailer, Newell's oldest daughter, Ronnie (played by Juno Temple) says to her mom: "There's something wrong with him." When Newell insists Ronnie just doesn't know John Meehan well enough yet, Ronnie responds, "You don't know him, at all."

"They were reacting to what was happening, that the romance was a whirlwind," explained Cunningham.

"Everything was happening very quickly and getting serious. And they had opinions on that. One of the things that intrigued me about that was 'Why are they not reliable? Why were they not listened to?'"

Cunningham added: "If my mother met someone on (the dating site) PlentyOfFish and I said, 'I really don't like that guy. He gives me the creeps. Don't go out with him,' my mother would go, 'Oh, okay. Then, never mind. I'll lose his number.'

"What is it about the history between this woman and her daughters that means that she's going to stick to her opinion, that they have their opinions and why are they not listened to? Because they're not necessarily reliable narrators. They're great people and they have opinions that turned out to be correct."

Newell's youngest daughter, Terra, killed Meehan in self-defense, just as he attempted to kill her.

Dirty John premieres on Sunday, November 25, at 10/9c on Bravo

MORE ON DIRTY JOHN

Next year, Bravo's sister network, Oxygen, will air the documentary, "Dirty John," which will interview the real people involved in the murder.

Bravo already has a second season planned for "Dirty John," with the focus on a different court case.

At the start of the production, director Jeffrey Reiner walked around the production office and told the whole crew that he loves John Meehan and what a great guy he is. "Everybody looked at me like I was crazy. But it was our way in, because if we know from the get go that he'd be swarmy or swarthy or icky, then we don't have a show. And I really do hope that by the first episode, people are going to root for this couple to work. Because at first, there is this incredible chemistry between them. And so through Connie's character's eyes, John comes across as just a fantastic, loveable guy and their chemistry is fantastic."

Reiner loved casting Bana for the role. "It's a really hard role to cast, because you need somebody who can bring that good natured joy, giving her something that she needs. And then, later on, Dirty John rears his head."

According to Meehan's sisters, he was a smart guy in school but grew proficient at being deceptive. His father ran numerous con games and taught John all sorts of illegal things, like insurance fraud.

Prior to meeting Newell, Meehan was in prison for stalking and felony firearm possession after threatening another woman in Orange County. His ex-wife was so scared she recorded their phone calls to send to the police. He also violated a restraining order put in place by a third woman.

This is Bana's first U.S. television role. "TV is something that hasn't really been a viable option for me, simply because I live in Australia. So the film landscape has lent itself perfectly to my lifestyle. But this was one of the first occasions where something came along that was doable, which was extremely attractive. I've looked at a lot of TV stuff over the last 10 years, and this was the one that got me."

The producers have tons of material to work from: "Any road I wanted to go down there was probably 500 pages of stuff to read related to that. It's within that that we're going to play around."





STAFF FROM L-R: BEVERAGE DIRECTOR BRAD FRY, CHEF JARED VENTURA, CHEF KARLO EVARISTO, FRONT OF HOUSE OPERATIONS IAN WHITNEY

RENEGADE HIGH ART CUISINE

POP-UP DINNERS IN O.C. AND L.A. BY ADIA

BY: KAROLYN KAY

PHOTOS BY: KAROLYN KAY

Nowadays, in the age of social media, the art of creative audacity has never been more vital in order to be seen, heard and relevant. The line between crafted photo opps and #IRL experience is blurring, as the global digital ecosystem ups the collective standard of what makes the cut as fresh and interesting, online or off.

Chefs Karlo Evaristo and Jared Ventura are at the top of their game - set on pushing the boundaries between what is and what is possible. Using a medium that encompasses the sensory spectra of taste, smell, touch and sight, they - alongside beverage director Brad Fry and front of house operator Ian Whitney - are the forces behind brand new Orange County-based, Los Angeles-for-

arying pop-up restaurant concept Adia, launched in August.

High cuisine enthusiasts outside of Orange County might have seen Evaristo's work displayed prominently on his 772k+ follower Instagram showcase account The Art of Plating, which as the name suggests, is a visual feast of intricately crafted high-definition food porn, from cutting edge fine dining chefs from around the world. While the sense of taste is incommunicable through a phone screen, @ArtofPlating brings visual presentation to the forefront for museum-like observation; thankfully unhindered by the real life constraints of not being able to stare at something for an extended period of time before eating it.

In sublime detail, every post is a celebration of food as a multisensory art form, labor of love, and the result of countless hours of training from world class talents who treat the plating experience as an exploration of composition and craft. What's striking is the bold exposition of colors, textures and shapes - not only studies in aesthetic innova-

tion, but also enticing the evocation of taste and smell that occupies the realm somewhere between idealism and fantasy.

Such a high-end area of the food spectrum occupies a relatively small niche in the grand scheme of things, but it's just another one of those sectors where interest runs deep at a visceral, real level. It's no surprise then, that over the span of three years, @karloevaristo has built a cult following of over 55k who are undeniably captivated by his expressions of art, regardless of if they've ever stepped foot in Orange County. "The kind of style (Jared and I) have is

"ONE THING THAT'S REALLY IMPORTANT TO US IS THAT WE, AS THE CHEFS, TOUCH EACH TABLE MULTIPLE TIMES, KIND OF LIKE HOW (AT OUR POP-UPS) WE'RE GOING OUT AND EXPLAINING EACH COURSE"

-JARED VENTURA

that we like new flavors," Evaristo says. "The best thing about an item or dish is if I haven't tried it before, if it surprises me - like, wow I've never had this before. So the dishes we do, we don't really base it off of anything. We get some influences here and there from classical dishes and techniques, but to make our own thing is very interesting to me. That's where we flow well together because we have that type of approach."

"We kind of just imagine the flavors," Ventura adds. "We look at the season, what's at its peak, what (ingredients are) really good right now."

Locally, Evaristo and Ventura's pop-up concept Adia is a culmination of four years of mentorship and R&D from their time at Studio at Montage Laguna Beach, an oceanfront restaurant situated on the lawns of a cliffside destination resort overlooking miles of palm tree-lined coastline.

Under the guidance of Michelin-starred former executive chef Craig



Strong and former sous chef Scott Livingston, the amuse bouche station essentially became an experimental lab where Evaristo and Ventura were given the support and freedom to refine their craft, bounce their creative synergies off each other, and develop the kind of vibrant culinary experience that only happens when artists are given free reign with their passions. This is also where Evaristo and Ventura met Adia's front of house operator Whitney, who was at Studio as a server's assistant before leaving for Nobu in San Diego.

So why leave that behind to set out on their own?

Ventura: At Studio we had creative freedom to put stuff on the menu, but when it's busy and you're doing 180 covers, you can't plate things or think about dishes the same way in that kind of setting, and we wanted to do something a little more focused. If it's just the two of us, doing 30 or 50 covers (in a day) it is way more focused.

Evaristo: We're into super long tasting menus (with small individual portion sizes), which is our passion. But there the most we could do for a guest was something like 7 courses. (Editor's Note: The upcoming L.A. seatings have 17. No,

Angeles supper clubs - a sort of R&D in itself for its vision of becoming a brick and mortar location that showcases a chef-driven experience, sans the formality that is sometimes attributed to fine dining. Currently, there are four upcoming dates for dinners in the next two months - two in Orange County

table just steps away from where the chefs work their magic. The atmosphere is relaxed and cordial; guests are free to roam and check out what's cooking, chat and enjoy their tastings of drinks specially created by beverage director Brad Fry, who Ventura met while he was sous chef at Chianina Steakhouse

All this pairs beautifully with the 'Fish and Chip.'

"For that first snack, since the chefs use the blue butterfly-pea flower to dye an element of the dish blue, I use that in my 'Terroir' porthole flask to infuse in the guests' Spritz, which has a yellow tint to it from the 'Citrus' porthole. When I pour



that's not a typo. We recommend taking an Uber or Lyft.)

Ventura: And then you have different dishes on there (from other chefs). For Karlo and I to work on these together because we think so similar, it just makes a better experience, more fluidity throughout the menu.

Glimpses of this intensely refined freeforming style can now be found at Adia's Orange County and Los

and two in Los Angeles.

As it stands now, Adia is held in Orange County at The Hood Kitchen Space (@thehoodkitchen), a commercial culinary facility that provides food entrepreneurs a space for classes, events and workshops.

Adia's current dining room and kitchen is about the size of a typical residential space, comfortably holding a dozen or so people at a long candlelit

in Long Beach.

Formerly the beverage director of Michael's Restaurant Group, which includes Chianina in its portfolio, Fry was a 2016 finalist in the United States Bartenders Guild's (USBC) World Class South West competition, and before that was the bar manager of venues within the Elysian Hotel in Chicago, now a Waldorf Astoria.

Upon arrival, guests are greeted with a fluted Spritz cocktail to wake the palate.

"I start with ginger beer and add orange bitters and champagne to a flute garnished with tricolor sage and amaranth," Fry says. "Once the guests are seated, I'll top them off with champagne, and then we get the first snacks served to the table. The first snack is a play on a classic 'Fish and Chip.' I take porthole cocktail flask #1, which I call 'Citrus' (filled with vodka, simple syrup, lemon wheels, cardamom and juniper), and I pour half an ounce over the Spritz that the guest is enjoying. So, now they have a bubbly glass with a bit of spice from the ginger beer and juniper, and citrus from the lemon and cardamom.

the 'Terroir' over the 'Citrus,' it immediately infuses into a vibrant purple. So now the guests have a visual experience on top of palate."

Adia's remarkably cohesive execution between food, beverage and hospitality runs as a well-oiled machine, drawing on the creative functional synergy and world class backgrounds between all four partners. The result is a spectacularly crafted dining experience that seems to actually be a celebration of food and drink in itself, a testament to pure creative liberty.

The end goal, currently in stages of exploration with potential investors, is to secure a space where food, drink and service can be delivered with a level of focused execution only possible with small seatings and individualized attention.

"One thing that's really important to us is that we, as the chefs, touch each table multiple times, kind of like how (at our pop-ups) we're going out and explaining each course," Ventura says. "We just have a strong desire to feed people and make them happy."



BLIZZCON 2018

BLIZZCON VIRTUAL TICKETS ARE EVEN BETTER THAN THE REAL THING

BY: SCOTT FEINBLATT

PHOTOS BY: HELENA KRISTIANSSON COURTESY OF: BLIZZCON

The ultimate weekend for geeking out over games has come and gone. For the 12th year of Blizzard Entertainment's epic BlizzCon, tens of thousands of people packed the Anaheim Convention Center to join the festivities centered around the 27-year-old Irvine company's PC-based gaming products. On November 2nd and 3rd, fans basked in previews of upcoming gaming content, Q&A panels featuring game developers and voice actors, exclusive demos of new gaming content, cosplay displays and international gaming competitions. As we discovered first hand, there were far more people interested in attending BlizzCon 2018 than there were tickets available; however, for those who still wanted to get in on the action - or for those who wanted to experience the glory for less than the \$199 ticket cost - the convention offered virtual tickets. As it turns out, the virtual ticket was probably the most convenient way to experience everything that BlizzCon

had to offer.

Short of the obvious conveniences that the virtual ticket provided - such as not having to deal with parking, long lines or fighting for good seats to every activation of the convention - virtual ticket holders experienced a first-class presentation. The virtual convention

experience began prior to any of BlizzCon's scheduled events, with a newsroom-like line-up of commentators welcoming viewers to the virtual experience, cutaways to "field reporters" interacting with fans and warming up both the in-person and home-based viewers, and a clear indication that no



expense had been spared to produce the first-class, multi-camera experience of the convention.

Each aspect of BlizzCon took place in a different exhibition hall within the convention center. Every one of the eight stages/arenas featured sleekly designed sets, which generally ranged in style from a standard game show set design to one that looked like the medieval Prancing Pony pub, from "The Fellowship of the Ring." All of the events throughout the convention were represented on an interactive timeline schedule, which allowed viewers to navigate per their interest throughout the programming. The only exception to this was the opening ceremony.

The opening ceremony took place across several stages, which happened in turns. For those in actual attendance, the opening remarks taking place in other areas were broadcast on the projection screens of their respective stages. For virtual attendees, all opening presentations were edited together, and except for a sound issue, all presentations took place without a problem.

Many of the remarks of the opening ceremony, as well as much of the panel content throughout the convention, were geared toward dedicated gamers. For example, John Hight (executive producer, *World of Warcraft*) began his opening remarks with an esoteric battle cry, which was followed by an enthusiastic recollection of highlights of various *Warcraft* campaign moments. Jeffrey Kaplan (game director, *Overwatch*) revealed fan comments that he'd fielded, such as: "I really hope you're planning to remove Moira from the game" [a comment that drew generous laughter from the crowd] before suggesting home viewers were in an enviable position since they had the immediate ability to log into their Blizzard accounts and download BlizzCon's various demo content. Pete Stillwell (senior producer, *World of Warcraft*) began his presentation by testifying that *Warcraft III* had changed his life; he then went on to talk about how the game has made people think differently, forge new friendships, empowered creators to bring new visions to life, and has ultimately given rise to new gaming genres.

The anticipated announcements of the opening ceremony - which also included numerous beautifully animated trailers and promotional narratives - featured: *Diablo: Immortal*, a game app for use on mobile devices, a remas-

tered version of *Warcraft III: Reign of Chaos*, called *Warcraft III: Reforged*, a new Clint Eastwood-type Western hero, named Ashe, for *Overwatch*, an original *Heroes of the Storm* character, named Orpheus, daughter of the Raven Lord (free for in-person and virtual attendees), an expansion pack for *Hearthstone* called *Rastakhan's Rumble*, and other similarly Blizzard-branded drops.

Once the opening ceremony had concluded, virtual ticket holders could navigate through the various streams to experience everything the convention had to offer. In the event that viewers were late to one session - after viewing an overlapping scheduled program - they could scroll back to rewind the missed footage. Throughout the convention the panels featured different



aspects of promotion for Blizzard's varied product line. There was one panel that focused on Blizzard gear (past, present and future), one that centered on crafting the cinematic aspects of games, with emphasis on the voice actors, performances of animated characters, and technical aspects of generating CGI characters, and another very technical panel called "CodeCraft: Exploring Engineering" featured talks regarding the development and programming of game generator systems.

Naturally, there was also a non-competitive cosplay showcase. The event consisted of cosplayer/presenter Jackie Craft reading the names and characters of the participants, who would then walk across the stage - while Miss America-esque music played - and pause to offer an in-character pose before exiting the stage. The event was a bit awkward at times, as Craft seemed understand-

ably miffed that the names she read off didn't always correlate with the cosplayers. Additionally, the large stage necessitated that each cosplayer hustle across to keep the pace of the event, and with many of the cosplayers in bulky or dainty outfits, speed was an issue. Many of the cosplayers seemed stage shy - at least one didn't even make it all the way across the stage. Apart from these issues, the costumes (and respective props) on display demonstrated brilliant craftsmanship and were marvels to behold.

The most palpable excitement of the convention had to be in the gaming competitions. The lead-up to these events included grandiose professional sports-like pomp and circumstance. Apart from the ubiquitous talking-heads style anchor commentary, the international teams and players were introduced in a manner commensurate with Super Bowl athletes. I even caught a

sort of inspirational documentary about 20-year-old Finlandian Joonas "Serral" Sotala, a *Starcraft* player (of the Zerg race), who revealed that gaming wasn't everything in life and that he looks forward to going to college. As soon as the games had begun, the individuals and teams competed within their respective ornate stage environments, while announcers provided commentary. Depending upon the game, the commentary ranged from the mellow cadences of those announcing the virtual card games to the adrenaline-fueled enthusiasm of those announcing the combat games.

The numerous aspects of Blizzard Entertainment promotions and exhibitions were topped off with a dose of com-

munity-centered content and several musical acts. The acts included: Train, Lindsey Stirling and Kristian Nairn. For anyone well-versed in all or any of Blizzard's various brands, BlizzCon must seem like paradise. It was not without some glitches, but overall, the sheer production of the event was mesmerizing even for a total outsider (such as myself). That said, the versatility and convenience enabled by the purchase of the \$50 virtual ticket was a perfect introduction to this world, and unless future wannabe attendees want the freedom to wander and gaze as they see fit, the lower cost and freedom from logistical real-world traffic issues make the virtual experience seem particularly appealing.





THE GALLERY AT WORKWELL

FINDING INNOVATION AND INSPIRATION AT IRVINE'S NEWEST ART GALLERY

BY: EVAN SENN

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: GALLERY AT WORKWELL

In the nooks and crannies throughout Irvine, there are small hubs being built, neighborhoods being transformed, and needs being met. As the city evolves into a mecca for innovation and inclusivity, spaces like the membership-based coworking destination WorkWell will be much more common. For now, it is a unique and gorgeous gem that can be found in a sea of conglomerates and large companies. WorkWell is a place for independent businesses and self-employed go-getters struggling to find their own small workspace with all the amenities. On top of that, WorkWell has been

designed to be a gathering space with weekly, monthly and special events, as well as an open-floor concept fine art gallery.

The Gallery at WorkWell is a contemporary art space that offers WorkWell members and the public an opportunity to view interesting and innovative works of art by contemporary emerging artists from all over the world. Although an untraditional art gallery, The Gallery at WorkWell is just as enchanting and inspiring as the WorkWell workspaces. Currently on view at The Gallery at WorkWell is "Mind the Gap", an exhibition that explores the gaps or limitations

in concepts, materials, experiences, and time with three artists as our tour guides. Contemporary artists James Thistlethwaite, Travis Grant, and Olivia Elia have starkly different styles of artwork but all manage to muse on the concepts of limitations that they find in their experiences, and in the world around them.

British born, Laguna Beach-based James Thistlethwaite's work is a reflective and isolationist experience of material existence. Although his bold use of color in his graphite, charcoal and acrylic artworks is striking, the experiential isolation of his subjects evokes a

sense of adventure in a desolate space or place. Much like the WorkWell space itself, Thistlethwaite's work is sterile, hypnotic, and familiar all at once. His subjects feel dramatic, his backgrounds or settings - when present - feel post-apocalyptic or juxtaposed against the casual



ART BY: JAMES THISTLETHWAITE



ART BY: TRAVIS GRANT

yet iconic looking figures.

His use of the color yellow feels symbolic but the meaning is vaguely represented. A bright yellow usually symbolizes enlightenment, energy, clarity, optimism, or joy, but his slightly tarnished looking yellow has a sharpness to it that may lean more toward caution, jealousy, sickness, or fear. These figures are photorealistic, and in most cases, covering their heads with hoods or hats, perhaps as a way to protect themselves.

The materials Thistlethwaite uses are also limited - graphite, charcoal, acrylic, paper - these are not forgiving art materials. You can see his determination and meticulous observation in his work. He is approaching the materials with an inquisitive yet defying sensibility,

like he is looking for a way to push these materials to their limits.

Travis Grant is a Kansas City-based artist whose train series of paintings is on view in "Mind the Gap." These deconstructivist style paintings investigate the gaps between memory and action, past and present, and tangible versus imaginary. His large-scale oil paintings of forgotten or abandoned trains are evocative representations of our collective innovations as human beings while at the same time being a representation of our folly and hubris as we simply leave these huge machines behind like gravestones of our past lives. These huge machines that once may have transported people and items thousands of miles from one place to another, now sit isolated and abandoned

in a desolate area like relics.

These paintings sit on the walls in the WorkWell space like ghosts hovering over the quietly working business professionals, silently commenting on the concept of innovation and the advancement of technology and comfort being simultaneously lost and found in the same moment. The irony that stands strong in these gorgeous paintings is the second loudest noise in this space, next to the serene babbling water feature that runs throughout the gallery. Olivia Elia's photographs also adorn the walls and halls of WorkWell and offer a seemingly calm and minimal aesthetic to the space. However, upon closer inspection, viewers realize that the photos all touch on an aspect of human limitation in our natural world. Specifically exploring the world of fly-fishing and the aftermath of the Tubbs fire in Northern California, Elia finds quiet moments of abstraction, serenity, or hypnotic creativity and captures these moments through her photography.

Although a very strange subject matter, fly-fishing proves to contain beautiful moments of clarity and artistry. Elia's photos find the simple limitations of our humanity and the innovation and invention that humanity has had to create in order to cope with those limitations. The moments she captures through her photography are thoughtful and reflective, where humanity's coping mechanisms step forward into the limelight and mingle with innovation, fragility, vulnerability, and the beauty of design.

WorkWell on the whole seems to explore the communal cooperative ideal but offer boundary-pushing, sensory-pleasing experiences in office environments for businesses big and

small, while the art in The Gallery at WorkWell also examines this dichotomy of individual versus shared experience, identity and life. The Gallery at WorkWell has weekly gathering nights, every Wednesday, where they offer live music, fine art, snacks and refreshments to the public, hoping to encourage the community to make WorkWell a place for not just collab-working but also co-mingling. With quarterly exhibition programming and talented artists from all over the country, the art on display at The Gallery at WorkWell hangs as additional inspiration and engagement for the members of and visitors to this coworking space, further empowering them to transform, interpret, and defy the rules and limitations previously recognized.

"Mind the Gap" is on view at The Gallery at WorkWell through December 31, 2018. The Gallery at WorkWell, 17322 Murphy Ave. Irvine, 92614.



ART BY: JAMES THISTLETHWAITE



ART BY: OLIVIA ELLA





PHOTO BY: JEN J PHOTO

COMPLEXCON 2018

TOOK OVER LONG BEACH FOR ITS 3RD YEAR!

Taking place over two days (November 2 and 3) at the Long Beach Convention Center, tens of thousands of fans gathered in the 500,000 square feet space to bring to life Complex's underlying vision of pushing culture forward: ComplexCon 2018.

With endless music, fashion, art, food, style, sports, activism and education (the list goes on and on), the highly anticipated tradeshow festival hybrid can best be described in three words: chaos, growth, enlightenment. For the third year in a row, what Complex calls "this generation's world fair" celebrated creators, curators and most importantly: you.

If you went last year, you already knew what to expect: a very large

room full of the hottest names, brands, sneakers, clothes, artwork ... you name it. After initial feelings of being overwhelmed and not knowing where to go or what to see first fade, you soon realize it's all part of the experience. At that point, it becomes a playground. Whether you're an adult or a kid (no discrimination here), you were bound to find a booth that excited you.

With legendary artist Takashi Murakami on this year's Host Committee, it was only fitting to see his standout work all around the main floor. Back in July, Takashi posted a picture to his 905K followers on Instagram previewing the new OVO hoodies, which boast his signature animated design encrusted on the OVO owl. At Compl-

exCon, guests were able to view the three original paintings from the OVO collaboration.

With doors opening at 11 a.m., Murakami hosted an epic "Sneakers for Breakfast" event, bringing in sneakerheads to curate a variety of custom shoes, which would later be sold in a silent auction with proceeds benefiting various charities. If there's one thing you can count on with Complex, it's their values and beliefs in giving back to the community.

While you had the option of utilizing the map/booklet handed to you at the front - which showcased a blueprint of the exhibition floor - most attendees decided to freehand it. With nearly every booth offering something unique, different and

enticing, half of the fun was stepping into unfamiliar territory and discovering new brands and artists.

Overhead at ComplexCon: "ComplexCon is cool if you got hella money."

With most of the exclusive drops happening earlier in the day, it wasn't uncommon for a store to be completely sold out of the item you were looking for. For example, NBA legend Allen Iverson dropped his first kicks in over four years at the impossible to miss Reebok shop, which was much more a store than a booth. With two

"SEEING PEOPLE THAT DON'T NORMALLY KNOW MY WORK, SEE MY WORK. IT'S GREAT. IT'S A COLLISION OF CULTURES. I THINK IT'S INTERESTING CAUSE IT'S KIND OF THE LAST OF THE OLD SCHOOL MUSIC SCENE."

-CHARLES PETERSON

colorways to choose from, the I3 Legacy's were gone instantly.

If you were looking for liquor, you couldn't miss the glorious 1800

BY: SHIRLEY JU

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: COMPLEXCON

Tequila pop-up posted in the middle of the madness. In addition to the speciality cocktails, select raffle winners were able to customize an exclusive vintage denim jacket designed by Nicky Diamonds, with patches and pins created by Adam Lucas - only available at ComplexCon.

Nicky Diamonds, founder and owner of Diamond Supply, shared his own run-ins with exclusive product launches, which resulted in a riot with "50 security and LBPD trying to keep the peace." As he shook his head, we can only imagine all the kids who waited patiently in line for the Canary Diamond SB Dunks.

Most attendees didn't leave empty handed, though. If you played your cards right, you definitely were able to score some freebies. For example, Pharrell gave out free "i am OTHER" t-shirts for people who registered to vote. Throughout the legendary producer's career, he has always used his platform for a greater good. This was no different.

Speaking of learning, the popular ComplexCon(versations) were the place to be. Taking place throughout the day, fans were able to join artists, leaders and influencers such as Nas, DJ Clark Kent, Don C, Lena Waithe, Trinidad James, Wale and more, as they spoke on topics near and dear to them.

On Day 1, *Vince Staples with a Long Beach Legend* at 2 p.m. had two LBC natives, Vince Staples and Snoop Dogg, go head to head: question for question, statement for statement. As always, the panels quickly sold out of seats, leaving standing room only. Regardless, the attention to detail was



COMPLEXCON(VERSATIONS); WOMEN IN STREETWEAR

remarkable, having the original rap legend Snoop and the new rap savior Vince on stage in their hometown of Long Beach. While thousands flew into to the city for the sole purpose of enjoying the festivities, the hometown love was palpable.

If you didn't get the opportunity to see Vince on the panel, you were able to a couple hours later on stage in the Pigeons & Planes Arena. With the release of his most recent project, *FM!*, it was only right to bring out TDE's own Jay Rock. Of course, it's not a party in SoCal unless Ty Dolla \$ign pops up, as both artists ensue nostalgia into the arena performing "Feels Like Sum-

mer."

One of the best things about ComplexCon is the fact that it showcases some of the world's biggest names, while giving an opportunity for aspiring talent and newcomers to shine. A Chicago artist by the name of Louis De Guzman states, "Being at ComplexCon is a blessing, I'm super humbled. I worked the booth for somebody in my first year at ComplexCon, with a friend behind the register. I'm very humbled by today. To be able to share my personal art with the team, and for us to reach levels, it's continued growth for everybody. I'm inspired for myself and these kids."

Posted in the middle of his booth is his life-size "Elevate" vinyl sculpture, standing almost as tall as its designer.

Trucking along to the K section, it's almost impossible to not stop at Mariella's booth. In addition to gracing the cover of L.A. Weekly's Best of L.A. Arts issue, her signature hip-hop oil paintings are highly favored by the masses, including the artists themselves. In between running the booth next to her partner Jake and leaving only to get food before she starved to death, the Norwalk native reveals she was put on FaceTime with Lil Yachty earlier that day. Another day in the life.

Heading back towards BAIT, which featured golden photo opps with statues of your favorite NBA teams

and called all Dragonball Z fanatics to come shop their limited-edition collectibles, stood Pleasures x WAV, which surprisingly was the only booth in the whole hall that played rock music. Fans were able to choose from the four shirts hanging, each featuring the work of iconic photographer and author Charles Peterson.

Peterson, the photographer best known for shooting artists such as Kurt Cobain and Nirvana, revealed the best part of ComplexCon is "seeing people that don't normally know my work, see my work. It's great. It's a collision of cultures. I think it's interesting cause it's kind of the last of the old school music scene."

With hip-hop being the world's most popular music genre in 2018, it's important to remember what music was founded on.

Peterson states, "I know that streetwear is normally associated with hip-hop, but rock n roll grew up with hip-hop. Back in the grunge days when we threw a party, we put on Public Enemy and N.W.A., so the two were mutual. You could listen to 'Love Buzz' by Nirvana and then 'Straight Outta Compton' by N.W.A., and the party is full."

As a whole, ComplexCon did an incredible job of bringing back the fun in streetwear, and meshing it with the existing crossover of live music, DJs, food and culture.



TPAIN
PHOTO BY: CALVIN LEE

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Cannabis



MedMen[®]

California

Abbot Kinney
Beverly Hills
DTLA
LAX

Venice
West Hollywood
San Diego
Orange County

Nevada

Downtown Las Vegas
North Las Vegas
Paradise (Coming Soon)

New York

Buffalo
New York City
Lake Success
Syracuse