

BURNTZILLA'S SIGNATURE FRENCH TOAST • IRVINE ELECTION RESULTS • LOCAL ARTIST PROFILE: SCULPTOR MÁRTON VÁRÓ

IRVINE WEEKLY

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THE SILVERADO FIRE

LOCAL FIREFIGHTERS SUCCESSFULLY DEFEND IRVINE AND SURROUNDING CITIES FROM HARM.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE CITY OF IRVINE

“Wildfire – we need to go.” Those were the words Irvine City Councilmember Melissa Fox used Monday morning, Oct. 26, to wake her son Max, a trained firefighter, warning him about the swelling Silverado Fire burning a few miles from the Fox’s home.

Fox’s neighborhood, near the Tomato Springs Trail, became one of the first areas that required evacuation in Irvine.

Moments earlier, at 7:17 a.m., Fox received a photo via text of a large smoke cloud over the Irvine area from lawyer and Irvine City Council candidate Lauren Johnson-Norris. It read: “Good morning. OCFA got this?”

Fox, who served as a director for the Orange County Fire Authority for more than three years, said she is familiar with the spread of wildfires, and began checking active fire maps to determine if OCFA was aware of the smoke Johnson-Norris was seeing.

“My commissioner Lauren Johnson-Norris, who lives across town from me in University Park, texted me a picture of a plume of smoke – behind her house,” Fox explained in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*.

“I looked at the information on Orange County Fire Authority, and saw there was indeed a vegetation fire – but it was on my side of the town.”

Fox contacted the station chief to report smoke in the area, to ensure a dual fire event was not in progress.

“It turns out the winds were so strong, [it was] pushing the fire along the ground like fog,” she explained. “So when it was getting to the other side of town, that’s when it was lifting.”

Thanks to the text, and Fox’s prior knowledge of wildfires, the Fox family decided it was time to start packing belongings and prepare for a potential evacuation.

“Around 7:30 a.m., we started to smell the smoke and ash was coming in the windows, I know what these things can do, so we were packing – never really thinking that we were going to go,” she said.

By 9:00 a.m. on Oct. 26, the Silverado Fire had grown to nearly 2,000 acres as Orange County Fire Authority closed the portions of Highway 133 and the 241 Toll Road.

With the cars packed, the area quickly filled with smoke and ash had already begun falling.

At 9:16 a.m., Fox sent a text to her son Max, a trained hazmat firefighter, who was knocking on doors in the neighborhood, encouraging people to gather belongings and leave as soon as possible.

“Let’s go,” she wrote.

They would drive separate, and later reconvene at the Newport Beach Residence Inn.

While the Fox’s were somewhat prepared for the evacuation, as the family left the neighborhood Fox described driving into a scene of smoke-caused low visibility, jammed streets, and the inability to determine exactly where the fire was.

In one word, Fox described the disorienting scene as she and her husband drove along side streets with the family dog, a husky named ‘Chief’, trying to avoid traffic and make their way out of Irvine – at the same time as 60,000 other Irvine residents.

“Terrifying,” Fox said without hesitation.

“Portola was jammed [at the 133] – you could smell the smoke and the ash was blowing, but the skies were blue – I had no idea how close the fire was,” she said. “Then all of a sudden it was dark, you couldn’t really see over the hood – and it was scary.”

With the traffic backing up, and the conditions worsening, Fox said her husband made an illegal u-turn onto Irvine Blvd., by Highway 133, and headed south toward Portola High School, eventually making their way to Alton Parkway, toward the 405 Freeway and out of Irvine.

“I saw hundreds and hundreds of cars coming down Irvine Blvd., going to the 133 like we were doing, I called the police chief right away and told him we have hundreds of people evacuating into the fire.”



Once the Fox's made it to Newport Beach, an overhead shot from a news broadcast on the hotel television finally revealed the true size of the blaze, which still had yet to reach any level of containment.

Others experienced similar traffic issues during the unexpected Monday morning evacuations.

On Monday, Oct. 26 at 10:20 a.m., Nicolas Del Rossi was forced to evacuate Irvine from his work. Del Rossi said a co-worker told him about the fire and that the company would be evacuating the building.

Del Rossi described similar circumstances, with traffic jammed near Interstate 5.

"Either freeway or side street there was traffic, I tried to get through where I could to get away from the cars, before more folks began evacuating. I took the 5 freeway from Barranca Ave., to Jamboree, then I got off the freeway and took side streets along the freeway following my Waze driving app to get to the city of Orange quick to be with my family," Del Rossi explained in interview with *Irvine Weekly* via Facebook Messenger.

On Monday at 12:15 p.m., the Orange County Fire Authority reported that two hand crew members were critically injured battling flames on the ground.

By 1:00 p.m., the Silverado Fire had grown to 4,000 acres, prompting the mandatory evacuations for more than 20,000 homes across parts of Irvine and Lake Forest.

At the Orange County Fire Authority command center, Post-it Notes were used to mark the waves of mandatory evacuations across the city.

Fox added that once all evacuations were all accounted for, more than 70,000 people were forced out of their homes in less than two hours.

As the Silverado Fire continued to spread east, the smoke began to catch the attention of 22-year-old Baker Ranch resident Amal Abdallah, as she was driving home from Anaheim around 3:00 p.m.

Abdallah, who lives with her parents and seven siblings, said it was difficult convincing her parents that the fire posed a real danger. However, she became more concerned as she saw the fire getting close through her bedroom window.

"My parents are super old school. They think they can defeat anything, so they were not wanting to evacuate," Abdallah said in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*. "But when I saw it getting really close, I started packing my stuff, around 4:00 [p.m.]"

Abdallah said she was able to drive to her aunt's house in Irvine on Walnut Ave., but then drove back

to Baker Ranch, because her family was hesitant to leave.

"I had to come back, because my family didn't want to leave – my parents, actually, that didn't want to leave – but the smell was getting really bad – it was getting to the point where it smelled like we were camping, it smelled like we were in front of the fire," she said. "Then, finally we heard the cops, going around the neighborhood, going door to door telling people you have to evacuate."

Abdallah said reality set in at that point for her parents, and they grabbed what they could as they were forced to leave. The Abdallah family is a large family, with two adults and six children living in the home, who all fled the home in four cars.

"We're a big family, I have six siblings, I have four sisters and two brothers, so in total we're nine, so getting us out of the house was not that easy," she said. "It was just really scary because when we were leaving, it was chaos – people were cutting each other off, speeding, there was no order."

Street closures around Alton and Bake Parkway created a giant bottle neck of traffic, leading to confusion and panic among those evacuating.

"People were coming to turn right on Alton, then they'd see it blocked off, so they're making a U-turn,

going on Bake, and then right when you make a U-turn there's like tons of cars coming from three directions, all wanting to go on Bake too."

By 5:13 p.m., Monday, Oct. 26 the Silverado Fire had grown to more than 7,200 acres and the Irvine Police Department announced mandatory evacuation orders for all residences between Great Park and Bake, and north of Toledo until the city limits.

"It was like a scene out of a movie, it was just very chaotic," Abdallah explained.

Overnight Monday, the Silverado Fire continued to burn and scorched more than 11,000 acres by Tuesday, Oct. 27. As the fire burned for a second night into Wednesday, Abdallah said her brothers went to go check on the families home, and the roads were open, but the flames were still largely visible.

In total, the Silverado Fire burned nearly 13,000 acres from Oct. 26 to Friday, Oct. 30.

On Tuesday, Oct. 27, at 1:45 p.m., more than 90,000 residents were still evacuated between Irvine and Lake Forest, but Irvine Mayor Christina Shea told *Irvine Weekly* that the city "was out of danger."

"We are waiting to hear when families can return. Still a few hot spots but OCFa did a great job protecting Irvine," Shea said via text to *Irvine Weekly* on Oct. 27.

Partial evacuations were lifted later Tuesday afternoon. All mandatory evacuations in relation to the Silverado Fire were lifted on Wednesday, Oct. 28.

On Friday, Oct. 30, Cal Fire reported that the Silverado Fire was 70 percent contained. The following Monday, Nov. 1, Cal Fire reported the fire was at 98 percent containment.

In a tweet on Nov. 7, 12 days after the fire was reported by Councilmember Fox, Cal Fire declared the Silverado Fire "Incident Final."

While the cause of the Silverado Fire has yet to be determined. Southern California Edison is now investigating a "lashing wire" as a potential catalyst in igniting the fire.

In total, the Silverado Fire burned 12,466 acres.



ELECTION

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ELECTION RESULTS

HOW THE 2020 GENERAL ELECTION PLAYED OUT IN IRVINE

IRVINE VOTES IN NEW MAYOR. CITY COUNCIL RACE REMAINS TIGHT.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

The 2020 General Election brought many new changes to California, and especially to Irvine. As of Nov. 11, Irvine voters selected a new mayor-elect and while the City Council race remains neck-and-neck, there are sure to be new faces, as well as familiar faces, on the council when the dust settles. With several races still too close to call at the state and local level, this election recap will help you keep track of all the changes to come.

As results were released on election night, current Irvine City Council member and candidate for mayor, Farrah Khan, quickly jumped out to a double-digit percentage lead over incumbent Mayor Christina Shea.

Khan took a 52 percent to 32 percent lead, and while Shea closed the gap into Wednesday, Khan managed to emerge victorious in Irvine.

On Wednesday, Nov. 4, Shea announced that she conceded the election to Khan. In an exclusive text Irvine Mayor Christina Shea shared with *Irvine Weekly*, Shea said she sent a text to Khan:

"Farrah, Congratulations. I wish you my best in the years ahead! You are always welcome to call me if you need support or help! My best, Christina."

In a statement through social media, Khan thanked her supporters in Irvine on the evening of Nov. 4.

"Thank you to the residents of Irvine who have put their faith in my leadership. I am excited to get to work as your next mayor. Together, we will ensure we continue to protect our great city's quality of life, build back our economy, and restore transparency in local government," Khan wrote in a series of tweets. "Even

Farrah N. Khan



if I didn't earn your vote, I look forward to serving as a mayor for all Irvine residents! Lastly, I would like to thank Mayor Christina Shea for her decades of service to Irvine and her gracious words of encouragement as we transition."

With Khan's mayoral win, her seat on the Irvine City Council will be vacated once she's sworn into her new office, which opened a third seat on the City Council.

However, even with the additional seat in play, the race was still close post-election night. In fact, there

was a difference of less than 1,000 votes separating second place and fourth candidates on Friday, Nov. 6.

Irvine City Council candidate Tammy Kim, founder and managing director of the Korean American Center, currently leads all Irvine City Council candidates with 43,223 votes (14.85%), followed by current Vice Mayor and Irvine City Council candidate Mike Carroll with 38,089 (13.08%).

Tammy Kim



In an interview with *Irvine Weekly*, Kim explained that her campaign worked hard targeting multicultural groups, in a variety of languages.

Mike Carroll



"Our campaign was reaching out to people in Chinese, in Mandarin, both simplified, as well as traditional, as well as Korean, and Vietnamese – we reached out to all of them."

Kim spoke about her election night experience, and said she was excited to learn she received more votes than any other candidate in Irvine history. Kim, who is a first-time candidate, pointed to her fundraising, which exceeded \$70,000, credited multiple democratic endorsements, and the ability to campaign in different languages, as the keys to her success among voters in Irvine.

"I'm still in complete surprise. I think the voters spoke loud and clear. It's amazing to be the highest vote-getter in Irvine history. As a first-time candidate, I was able to get really key strategic endorsements, ranging from Katie Porter to our State Controller Betty Yee, to [Congresswoman] Judy Chu," Kim said Thursday, Nov. 5, during a phone call with *Irvine Weekly*.

By that evening, Kim had surpassed 40,000 votes in Irvine.

The Irvine City Council race remained close through the weekend after election night, with Larry Agran, a former Irvine mayor and councilmember, trailing Kim by a few thousand votes.

Larry Agran



In a phone call with *Irvine Weekly* on Nov. 5, Agran expressed happiness for the current Irvine election results. He added that while his election night experience was much different than years before, due to COVID-19, he was pleased with his initial position in the polls.

"It's clear to me that the people of the city of Irvine decided to elect a new mayor and a new City Council, and I'm happy to be a part of that," Agran said of his second place position. "It was a good feeling. I'm looking forward to returning to the council."

While Agran is still on track to return to the Irvine City Council, he has slipped down to third place, behind Carroll.

As of Wednesday, Nov. 11, Carroll's campaign had surpassed both Larry Agran's and Lauren Johnson-Norris' votes totals by 360 votes and 566 votes respectively.

Carroll has expressed optimism about his chances to continue serving on the Irvine City Council and added that he did not foresee a third seat opening up.

"I think it's gone really well, I'm not here to declare that we won, but I'm optimistic that when the count is finished, that we will come out ahead," Carroll said on Thursday, Nov. 5, during a phone call with *Irvine Weekly*. "I was really surprised that it looks like we'll have three seats open. It's definitely a new fact that we have to take into account, and it provides another opportunity for me to try and continue to serve on the City Council."

Lauren Johnson-Norris



As Carroll began to climb the polls over the weekend, the returns began to look unfavorable for lawyer and Irvine City Council Candidate Johnson-Norris. In a Facebook post, on Sunday, Nov. 8, Johnson-Norris remained optimistic.

"Good morning everyone! While we celebrated a great victory on the national stage last night, here in Irvine the returns from yesterday bumped our campaign out of the top 3. As there are still more ballots to count and ballots to cure, we hope we will be able to come back again. Looks like anything could happen. Thank you for your support," she wrote.

Johnson-Norris was still out of the top three candidates at the time of this report.

Vote totals as of Nov. 11 at 12 p.m.:

Tammy Kim – 43,223 – 14.85%
 Mike Carroll (I) – 38,089 – 13.08%
 Larry Agran – 37,729 – 12.96%
 Lauren Johnson-Norris – 37,523 – 12.89%
 John Park – 32,048 – 11.01%
 Carrie O'Malley – 27,084 – 9.30%
 Mark Newgent – 15,634 – 5.37%
 Diana Jiang – 14,549 – 5.00%
 Laura Bratton – 10,139 – 3.48%
 Dylan Green – 8,598 – 2.95%
 Christina Dillard – 8,163 – 2.80%
 Anshul Garg – 6,268 – 2.15%
 Abigail Pole – 6,215 – 2.13%
 Hai Liang – 5,839 – 2.01%

As of Nov. 11, the County Registrar of Voters reported that there were approximately 19,000 ballots still to be counted county-wide. The Registrar also reported that 100 percent of precincts in Orange County are fully reported and Early Voting Ballots are complete.

Outside of the local races in Irvine, voters had the opportunity to vote in a Congressional election, a state Senate race and two state Assembly races.

In the battle for the 45th Congressional District, which includes Irvine, Villa Park, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest and North Tustin, first-term Democratic Representative Katie Porter beat out her challenger, Republican Mission Viejo City Councilman Greg Rath.

California Congressional 45th District

Katie Porter 218,512 – 53.46%
 Greg Rath 190,202 – 46.54%

In the 37th District of the state Senate, there was more Democratic success for first-time Democratic candidate, Irvine resident and UC Irvine law professor, Dave Min. Min leads career politician and Republican John Moorlach by a little over 2 percent of the vote.

State Senator 37th District

Dave Min – 266,872 – 51.17%
 John Moorlach – 254,688 – 48.83%

In California State Assembly District 68, Irvine City Councilmember Melissa Fox lost to Republican incumbent Assemblyman Steven Choi by more than 10,000 votes.

California State Assembly 68th District

Steven Choi – 134,684 – 53.06%
 Melissa Fox – 119,153 – 46.94%

And in Assembly District 74, which covers portions of Irvine, Costa Mesa and Huntington Beach, incumbent Cottie Petrie-Norris leads Newport Beach Councilwoman Diane Dixon in a close race.

California State Assembly 74th District

Cottie Petrie-Norris – 132,051 – 50.53%
 Diane Dixon – 129,306 – 49.47%

For up-to-date election results, visit www.ocvote.com/results

THE ULTIMATE FRENCH TOAST

BURNTZILLA DEBUTS JAPANESE BRICK TOAST-STYLE FRENCH TOAST IN IRVINE

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

If you love French toast, then this Japanese brick-toast style French toast at Burntzilla in Irvine is your perfect match. Now available during weekend brunch, this is the latest game-changing concept brought forth by the Orange County food truck entrepreneurs who created Irvine's brick and mortar Burntzilla.

"It's French toast on crack," Phi Nguyen, chef and co-owner of Burntzilla, explained to *Irvine Weekly*. "When we did brunch over here, I realized we need to have something sweet, because at Burnt Crumbs, our sister restaurant, we have the Soufflé pancakes."

Japanese brick toast is a very extravagant dish, consisting of a hollowed out bread loaf and sweet toppings. Once removed, the center of the bread is usually cubed and added back into the hollowed-out loaf as a "stuffing," then topped with ice cream and honey.

"I thought, let's do a brick toast, but make it breakfast, by doing French toast, then just top it in the same manner," Nguyen said. "The bread is in the shape of a rectangle log, from a local bakery in Santa Ana, called Bread Artisan Bakery, and I think their brioche is the best in the county. We soak it overnight with our french toast mix."

From Nguyen's perspective, the problem with most French toast is that he finds it difficult for the bread to soak up the egg mixture, which results in crispy exterior, but ultimately a French toast-less interior.

To fix this tasty dilemma, Nguyen explained that Burntzilla's brick toast-style uses a special technique to ensure that all the French toast flavors are present within the dish.

"It doesn't soak enough into the bread," he added. "So we actually take the turkey brine needle, and we pump that into the inside of the bread. So, when we sear it, and bake it, the injection that we put inside turns into custard, so when you cut into it you actually get a swirl or a marble of the French toast cinnamon mix."

In 2015, the Irvine-based Burntzilla became the culinary amalgamation of like-minded Orange County food truck operators Martin Tse, owner of Dogzilla, which once roamed Southern California serving up Asian-inspired hot dog concepts, and the owners behind The Burnt Truck – founder and chef Paul Cao, who recently won *Chopped*, and his two business partners Minh Pham and Chef Phi Nguyen.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BURNTZILLA

Finding themselves working alongside each other at the same Orange County-based commissary kitchen, the group became good friends and decided to merge their culinary concepts, creating one signature location in Irvine.

Serving up Cheeseburger sliders and chicken sandwiches on King's Hawaiian Bread rolls, Burntzilla has kept the same comfort-food-first mentality.

Debuted on Nov. 7, Burntzilla is currently serving its brick toast French toast three different ways – chocolate, strawberry and original.

"So far the response has been great," Nguyen explained. "At first, I was a little afraid they weren't going to stand up to the hype of our Soufflé Pancakes – but it's been 100 percent [approval] across the board so far."

Martin Tse, co-owner of Burntzilla and Dogzilla said that he was part of the Orange County Food truck phase a few years back, but now, considering how the pandemic has taken a toll on the restaurant industry, he wonders if brick and mortar establishments will experience the same trends. But, Tse said they are hoping their new push for weekend brunch will pay dividends.

"We're adjusting," Tse explained. "We're trying it out – we have brunch on the weekends from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and we're also doing two King's Hawaiian buns instead of one bun, on every item. So, it's like double food for half the price."

While COVID-19 is something all restaurants have learned to cope with, a seasonal change is also on the horizon.

"Winter time is always bad," Tse said. "I thought it was only the food trucks, but there is an effect with the restaurants too. It makes more sense now, but basically, everybody's dream is to get a restaurant," he said.





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SCULPTOR MÁRTON VÁRÓ

EVOKING CENTURIES OF GREAT ARTISTRY THROUGH MARBLE CREATIONS

BY LIZ GOLDNER

PHOTOS SUPPLIED BY MARTON VARO, JR./BRANDEFY

In our SoCal art scene where contemporary work proliferates, a classically trained sculptor has labored tirelessly for three decades, creating in his Irvine studio sculptural pieces that are inspired by ancient Greek and Renaissance art.

Working with Carrara marble mined from the quarry that Michelangelo used centuries ago, Márton Váró designs figurative sculptures, along with abstract cubes, displayed in public and private spaces throughout our country and the world.

From his outdoor studio, overlooking UC Irvine's campus, the septuagenarian fashions sculptural works evoking centuries of great artistry. For his finely detailed pieces, some with unusual juxtapositions – as combining raw blocks of marble with classical figures in one piece – he eschews appropriation. Or as English poet/art critic Edward Lucie-Smith wrote: "These echoes and cross-references make Váró a typically post-modern artist. Post-Modernism has been defined as the propensity to recombine elements from existing artistic

languages in new ways, rather than striving to invent languages which are completely new. What he lacks, fortunately, is the cynicism which informs so much Post-Modernist art."

A profound influence in his work is the 16th century polymath Michelangelo who was known for his paintings, architecture and especially for his sculptures. Váró's pieces reflect the Italian master's expertise in figuration. And like the Renaissance artist, he is enamored with the translucent, white Carrara Marble – also known as "Statuario" marble – that

he collects from Italy's Tuscany region.

Váró believes as Michelangelo did that his completed sculptures are already contained within the raw marble blocks, and that he simply takes away the excess stone to reveal the flawless artworks that were always there. "I see the sculpture in the stone," he told me. One example is "Breaking Free" (1991) of an elegant young draped woman, emerging from the stone that contained her. It is installed in the UC Irvine Arboretum right near his studio. As Lucie-Smith wrote, "A major part of Váró's

sculptural output consists of draped female torsos and female figures. These are obviously inspired by Greek sculptures of similar subjects, but they are never merely imitative."

Along with his classical pieces, Váró sculpts contemporary abstract cubes. Stephen Barker, Ph.D., Dean, UCI Claire Trevor School of the Arts explained: "Márton Váró's cubes reveal the suppleness of marble, making them seem to float in space. They are like isolated quotations of classical drapery, digitized into block form." Váró added, "In creating figures, I found reducing torso size fragments to cubes opened a unique way for me to build compositions that were both abstract and realistic."

Barker also said: "Váró is a master sculptor whose subtle treatment of Carrara marble is incredibly powerful. He is one of those rare artists in complete command of his materials and technique."

Indeed, the materials that artists use often reflect their integrity and devotion to their work. And Váró's penchant to hand-select Carrara marble from quarries in Italy – a time-consuming and physically challenging process – is grounded in his understanding of and appreciation for his materials. (Carrara marble is rock formed by metamorphosis from small calcium carbonate crystals, approximately 190 million years ago.) In our discussions, Váró also

indicated that marble is like a living entity that he communes with. And when asked about what happens if he carves off too much stone, he replied that he never makes that kind of mistake while sculpting.

Váró grew up in Transylvania in what was Hungary and is now Romania. He learned to sculpt from master wood carvers and later applied this skill to sculpting in stone. He studied the work of 20th century figurative sculptors, especially Constantin Brancusi, Henry Moore and Isamu Noguchi. Moore was a particularly important influence, as he carved his sculptural pieces directly from the material as Váró does.

His move to UC Irvine in 1988 coincided with his receipt of a Fulbright scholarship. At UCI, he developed a lasting friendship with Stephen Barker and studied the relationship between architecture and sculpture. He has also been Artist in Residence for a public art project in the city of Brea.

One of Váró's favored sculptures is the seven-foot-tall "Emerging" (2016). This classical work, depicting a draped woman with her head hidden behind a large block of raw marble, elicited awe and delight when displayed in the Laguna Art Museum in 2016. His marble sculpture, "Maestro Carl St. Clair" (2019), of Carl St. Clair, elevates the Pacific Symphony conductor to the eminent status he embodies. The life-size statue

is installed in Costa Mesa's Pacific Symphony Headquarters.

Other classically inspired pieces on view in SoCal are "Vestal" (1995) at the Tustin Ranch Market Place, and "Ladies of the Nile" (1990) at the Embassy Suites in Brea. His "Standing Figure" (1994) depicting a fearless contemporary woman, in red Persian travertine stone, is installed at the Laguna College of Art and Design.

Váró's "Palm Desert Peace Memorial" (1992) in Palm Desert, designed with architect Ross Andrews, includes four white marble sculptures of flames, resembling draped female figures, representing peace; and four rigid pillars, clad with granite, representing the threat of war.

Váró's latest project is volunteering for a fundraiser to benefit the Visual Snow Initiative. Specifically, he will create a life-size sculpture from Carrara marble for the winner of an auction organized by VSI to fund research for a rare neurological disorder. That sculpture will depict the winner's person of choice – a loved one, an ancestor or him/herself. On December 1, the link, VSIAuction.com, will direct interested parties to the Initiative's auction page.

The auction winner and a companion will also accompany Váró to the Tuscany marble quarry to hand-select the stone for the sculpture. When he returns home, he will labor for several months



Breaking Free II (1991)
UCI Arboretum

in his outdoor Irvine studio, carefully removing the excess stone to uncover the marble's unique aspects of the "person of choice."

Márton Váró's diverse sculptural works, installed all over the world, are monuments to humankind's artistic evolution. As he is full of energy and has no plans to stop working, history may well grant him the significant acclaim he deserves.



Emerging (2016)
Artist's Studio



Vestal (1995)
Tustin Ranch Market Place

MUSIC

TREVOR DANIEL KEEPS IT REAL WITH NEWEST SINGLE

BY TARA FINLEY



Photo by Cian Moore

Fresh off the debut of his newest single "Kill Me Better" with Don Diablo and Imanbek, Trevor Daniel spent an hour with us recording a podcast, opening up about the realities of being a chart-topping artist with host and Publisher Brian Calle.

"Whenever I make fun songs [like "Kill Me Better"] nine times out of ten it's just me and my friend in the studio jamming out having fun ... and we hope that'll spread to other people too," explains the artist of his latest song's vibe. "Everybody likes to have fun."

If anybody knows how to get people smiling, it's Trevor. Almost a year after the release of his debut EP, *Homesick*, the young artist reached #1 on the US.

Viral 50 with the project's first single "Falling." It was this hit that would later usher him into the Top 40 in over 20 other countries, peaking at #25 on the Billboard Hot 100 Charts.

Does he feel that because he's had such a successful song and album so early in his career, that he has to keep hitting that same high bar?

Honestly? Not really. "I don't feel that much pressure," he shares. Fans are constantly pressuring him to make a "Falling" part two, but he doesn't want to make the same thing twice and get limited by the confines of others' expectations of his sound. "I don't limit myself too much on the type of songs I'll make," he explains. It depends on what he's feeling that day. Some days he's got an

'80s vibe going, other days he's recording over Amy Winehouse tracks (which we really want to hear).

"There's a time and a place for a really massive song," he tells Brian. Not every song has to be a huge hit, people are still going to get something from it regardless, which is all he wants.

Inarguably authentic, Trevor opens up about the difficulties of navigating his work as an artist while managing the expectations set by public perception.

"I'm super appreciative of my fans. I love them to death – I wouldn't be here without them," he makes clear. "But sometimes I don't understand why people build other people up in their minds and create idols of them ... ride or

die for them ... I'm not the perfect human. If I do something I don't want to influence other people [just because of who they think I am]."

He explains that it's a hard thing for an artist to keep from speaking their mind and expressing themselves fully for fear of influencing people the wrong way. There's certain aspects of his influence that he hopes people will find a positive message in but there's other things he hopes they understand is just him as a human, going through his emotions as we all do.

To learn more about Trevor Daniel, and to hear about his latest release, listen to the podcast on spotify or find it here: <https://www.wkabc.com/laweekly>



Photo by Cian Moore



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In one of his first lines in *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, former activist Tom Hayden (Eddie Redmayne) lays out his plan. “We are coming to Chicago peacefully,” he claims. “But whether we have permits or not, we’re coming.”

That’s the line walked in the film written and directed by Aaron Sorkin, which depicts the case that imprisoned eight anti-war protesters in 1969. This isn’t a revenge tale, or a comedy, or a drama, though sometimes it seems like it can be all of those things. But for the most part, this is something more stimulating and genre-defying: a legal procedural on how to stand up for what you believe.

This foot-stomping, fist-raising tale doesn’t ask you to love or even like the men at the center of the story, only to see them as humans fighting to be treated as such. The activists of the Chicago 7, who were charged in federal court for conspiracy, unlawful assembly, and more, relating to the violence surrounding the 1968 Democratic National Convention, included a Dream Team of activists: Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis of the Students for a Democratic Society; Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin of the Youth International Party; John Froines and Lee Weiner of the Independent Party; Bobby Seale of the Black Panthers; and David Dellinger, a pacifist who at

AARON SORKIN'S *THE TRIAL OF THE CHICAGO 7* POPS WITH POWER OF PROTEST

BY ASHER LUBERTO



NICO TAVERNISE NETFLIX © 2020

54, was the oldest in the group.

The trial for seven of them – Seale ended up being tried separately – started a year after the convention. It took months, a mistrial, 24 citations and hundreds of bystanders to render the whole thing a circus. Also, costumes. Just when you think things couldn’t get any crazier, Rubin and Hoffman dressed up as judges while on trial.

Because the trial works as both popcorn entertainment and cautionary tale, Sorkin’s second outing as director is a more taut and timely affair than his first, *Molly’s Game*, and he interweaves archival footage of Vietnam protests to create a visceral authenticity that’s reminiscent of the protests you see on the news today.

The courtroom stuff, however, is where he truly shines. Remember his snappy dialogue in *The West Wing*? How about in *The Newsroom*? Sorkin dials it up even more here, his speeches echoing off courtroom walls like thunder after lightning strikes. As always, he has a major ensemble to deliver those lines, including a trio of Brits leading the charge: Redmayne as Hayden, a clean-cut golden boy of the movement; Sacha Baron Cohen as hippie prankster Hoffman; and Mark Rylance as defense attorney William Kunstler. Factor in Jeremy Strong as Rubin, John Carroll Lynch as Dellinger, Frank Langella as Judge Hoffman, Michael Keaton as Ramsey Clarke, Joseph Gordon Levitt as chief prosecutor Richard Schultz, and Yahya Abdul-Mateen II as Seale, and you don’t know who to focus on.

In one of the film’s best sequences, Seale is taken out of the courtroom by police and returns handcuffed to his chair. While most directors would cut to a close-up, Sorkin pulls back to read the room. He wants us to see Judge Hoffman while keeping the Chicago seven in frame, a wide-shot used to showcase their composure. To see them transform from “hoodlums” into a source of power and strength, truly owning their identities is moving and inspiring.

With its inside-out format, *The Trial of the Chicago 7* has the energy of a legal drama crossed with the urgency of a sociopolitical documentary. The bulk of the events happen in court, and when the story moves outside to cops and riots and tear gas, things take a perilous turn. In our current moment, *The Trial of the Chicago 7* is less a chapter in history than a first draft still being written today, and Sorkin asks us all to take a stand for civil rights, even if it means taking the stand.



THE FORTY-YEAR-VERSION PROVES YOU'RE NEVER TOO OLD TO FIND YOUR FLOW

BY CHUCK WILSON

"Potential has a shelf-life," Margaret Atwood wrote in her novel *Cat's Eye*, a brutal assessment writer-director-star Radha Blank disproves with élan in her wonderful first film, *The Forty-Year-Old Version*. Drawing on her own life, Blank, who is African American, plays Radha, a once heralded playwright whose career is at a stand-still. Nearing 40 and close to broke, she's teaching writing to high-school students who aren't very impressed by the 'most promising playwright' award Radha won ten long years ago. "She's no Tyler Perry" one student declares.

Radha has the chance to see her new play produced at an influential theater but only if she agrees to the producer's suggestion (a.k.a. demand) that she add a socially conscious

white character. That's sure to please the theater's tony patrons, including two older white women who can be heard excitedly discussing a "multi-racial" staging of August Wilson's *Fences*, "now integrated!"

If Radha had heard those women, she'd have likely made them characters in the songs she's been secretly writing. One night, she allows herself to wonder: Can a 40-year-old woman become a hip-hop star? To find out, she visits D (Oswin Benjamin), a Brooklyn beat maker who hears in Radha's life-specific rhymes a gift for "storytelling" missing from the clichéd language of the young rappers who stand before his mixing board each day.

When D takes her to an underground rap club in the Bronx, Radha proves herself to be a natural, if only she

could learn to get out of her own way. (Watch the closing credits for footage of a real-life Blank club rap.) Sharp as a tack and also completely clueless, Radha is slow to realize that D finds her attractive. When they make love, the scene is intimate and sensual but also quite funny, as such moments often are in life. A bit stunned by this turn of events, Radha can't stop commenting on the proceedings, right down to a delightfully inspired riff on her lover's alphabetic name.

The next morning, the two lie around talking, asking questions the other isn't ready to answer – challenges only love can resolve. As Radha and D speak of their mothers, both gone now, Blank intercuts photos of her own late mother and soon Radha and D are sitting at the foot of the bed (filmed in Blank's real apartment) conjuring a hip-hop song that calls out to their respective mothers. It's a beautiful scene and a powerful reminder that musicians live within their music, 24/7, even when there's no audience.

It's hard not to think of Woody Allen's *Manhattan* as a confused Radha walks the city while the soundtrack plays a hopeful tune, but Allen was in love with the city skyline, not its people. He was always looking up. Blank's gaze is ground level, where the people are. Radha looks left and then right, as if trying to include everyone, as if calling on them to give her strength. Supremely entertaining, *The Forty-Year-Old Version* is a love song to the power of being real.





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