

KOREAN BBQ OUTDOORS IN IRVINE • FIVEPOINT DONATES 1 MILLION FACE MASKS • WILD RIVERS NEW SITE DESIGN

IRVINE WEEKLY

AUGUST 5,
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NO. 20

At The Drive-In

IN-CAR ENTERTAINMENT IS ROLLING BACK INTO THE SOCIAL (DISTANCE-MINDED) CONSCIOUSNESS



AUGUST 5, 2020 NO. 20

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COVER: PHOTO COURTESY OF LEVEL 8 DRIVE-IN

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KOREAN BARBECUE HEADS OUT-DOORS

BAEKJEONG BRINGS ITS POPULAR IRVINE FARE OUTSIDE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

PHOTOS - COURTESY OF BAEKJEONG

Restaurants everywhere are continuing to adapt to new state guidelines when offering dine-in options. Yet for establishments like the popular Korean barbecue chain Baekjeong, the inability to offer dine-in service was challenging. However, new guidelines have created new opportunities.

Kang Ho Dong Baekjeong, a well-known Korean barbecue chain, visited by the likes of Anthony Bourdain, has opened its first-ever outdoor dining patio at Irvine's Heritage Square.

While some restaurants can easily shift to serving food outdoors, bringing the concept of Korean barbecue into a different environment, in the middle of a pandemic, was a challenge.

Michael Chon, CEO of Kijung Hospitality Group, which operates Baekjeong, spoke with Irvine Weekly about the obstacles

the chain needed to overcome in order to begin outdoor operations for the first time ever.

"In offering outdoor dining, it is critical for us to provide a very pleasant physical environment for our customers," Chon explained. "That required us to procure tents, turf, tables, dividers, plants, etc. and in many cases it has been a real challenge to find what we need."

Chon added, however, that Baekjeong was able to lean on local community vendors for support.

"For instance, we were fortunate to get the last tent from a local vendor that met our specifications. Lots of equipment was simply sold out," he said. "So the challenge is that we have had to cast our net wide in order to obtain what we needed so as to offer Irvine outdoor dining."

With a half-dozen locations in Southern California including Koreatown and

one in New York City, the K-BBQ chain gained major social media recognition in 2015 when the late Anthony Bourdain visited with a group of friends.

It was clear at the time that Bourdain knew about the excellence of Baekjeong's selection. The prime boneless short rib, ribeye, thinly sliced brisket, beef tongue, and marinated pork collar are perfect starting points.

Obviously, if a dish receives even the slightest hint of approval from Bourdain it becomes a must-try. Since then, Baekjeong has attracted countless popular entertainers and celebrity chefs.

Baekjeong's Heritage Square location is currently offering 17 tables. All tables are spaced to accommodate social distancing and will be open Monday – Friday from 4:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. Baekjeong's weekend hours are 12:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

While the pandemic has presented its share of hardships for restaurateurs and workers, Chon's outlook remains optimistic. In fact, Chon mentioned that the reaction to Baekjeong's outdoor dining in Irvine was so positive that the chain will be expanding its outdoor dining into more locations in Orange County and Los Angeles County.

"We have only been open for outdoor dining in Irvine for a few days and the response has been fantastic," he explained to Irvine Weekly. "Our customers love eating outside in the shade of the tent where they can still smell the meats barbecuing, listen to Kpop music and relax in a socially distanced open-air environment. It is our plan to offer a similar outdoor dining experience at both our Buena Park and Temple City locations in the next 10 days."

Since the pandemic began, the city of Irvine has offered outdoor dining across multiple community centers, thanks to an efficient permitting process introduced to the city council in May. Additionally, through Irvine's Dine Al Fresco program, restaurants around the city have been able to serve guests in a safe, socially distanced outdoor environment.

If there's one thing that's been on the minds of everyone during quarantine, it's finally being able to enjoy a meal with friends. So, it's great to see more restaurants opening for outdoor dining in Irvine – especially Korean barbecue.



SUPPORTING FRONT-LINE WORKERS

IRVINE RECEIVES DONATION OF 1 MILLION FACE MASKS FROM FIVE-POINT HOLDINGS.

BY: EVAN J. LANCASTER

PHOTO BY: MACAU PHOTO AGENCY ON UNSPLASH

Through a valiant effort to ensure public health and help support those in Irvine working on the front lines of the COVID-19 pandemic, FivePoint Holdings LLC has donated more than 1 million face masks to the city of Irvine.

On July 27, The city of Irvine and FivePoint issued a joint news release detailing a new donation of 1 million face masks that will be provided to health care workers, law enforcement personnel and distributed throughout the community to slow the spread of COVID-19.

Since the state began lockdown in

March, even as PPE was extremely limited, FivePoint was able to meet an incredibly high demand to supply and distribute more than 100,000 face masks to health care workers, law enforcement and essential workers within the city.

"From the start, FivePoint has supported health care workers, first responders and all of the heroes on the front line of this pandemic, including here in the city of Irvine, our public partner in good times and moments of crisis like this," FivePoint Chairman and CEO Emile Haddad said. "We believe deeply in the safety and well-being of this great city,

its residents and those who work here, and FivePoint will continue to do as much as we can to help this community be prepared for what lies ahead."

This comes after Irvine saw its largest month-to-month increase of COVID-19 from June to July. In one month, Irvine saw nearly 600 cases, more than twice the total number of cases reported in June.

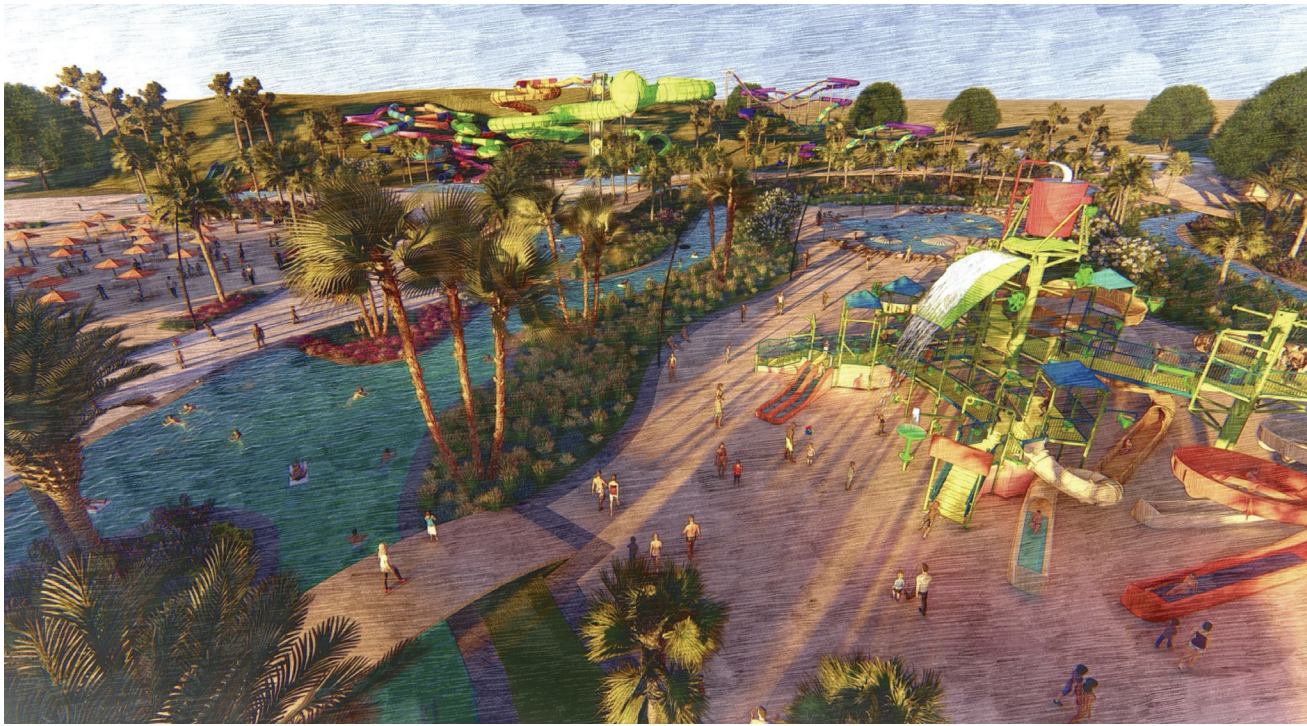
Earlier this month, Irvine became the first city in Orange County to offer free COVID-19 testing to residents and workers within the city. The program has filled up twice since it began on July 10.

The site, located at the Orange County

Great Park can accommodate between 200 – 260 tests per day.

Irvine Mayor Christina Shea thanked FivePoint Holdings for its generous donation, and said the city is committed to keeping the community safe and healthy.

"The health and safety of all residents, and especially health care workers and first responders on the front lines, remains the city of Irvine's highest priority as we continue closely monitoring the COVID-19 crisis," Shea said. "We extend our deepest appreciation to our partner FivePoint for their dedication to the Irvine community and continued collaboration."



WILD RIVERS UNVEILS NEW SITE DESIGN

UPDATED PLAN INCLUDES SOME OLD FAVORITES ALONG WITH NEW RIDES.

BY: EVAN J. LANCASTER • PHOTOS COURTESY CITY OF IRVINE

Irvine's soon-to-be water park broke a four-month social media silence by posting an image of the new Wild Rivers site design on Facebook. While the project has yet to break ground, Irvine residents didn't hesitate to share their excitement.

The July 24 post included an aerial rendering of the proposed design, and indicated that Wild Rivers had submitted the new plans to the city of Irvine: "We submitted our site design to the City of Irvine this week. We hope to have the design and environmental reviews completed and in front of the Planning Committee in September. This will let us break ground at the beginning of 2021 and open in May of 2022."

Since then, the post gained more than 600 likes and had nearly 300 comments from users recalling childhood memories and displaying excitement over the new Wild Rivers site design. Mike Riedel, president of Wild Rivers



Waterpark, said he's thankful for the community's continued enthusiasm, considering how long the project has taken.

"We've been lucky that we've had such great support all the way through this process, and it's been a long one,"

Riedel said during a phone interview with Irvine Weekly. "Everyone's been really supportive, that includes all the members of the council as well."

Project roadblocks

Riedel has spent more than a decade

trying to reopen Wild Rivers. The two most important aspects of the project – land and funding – have been difficult to acquire at the same time.

During an April 28 Great Park Board Meeting, the board cited an "unforeseen delay" in the land transfer of the planned construction site and recommended the City Council approve a new 20-acre site for Wild Rivers.

"I've been working on this project since 2006 or 2007. We've been working on it a long time. We got some lease extensions closed in 2011 and have been trying to find new dirt and get financing – both are difficult, and we never seem to have one and the other at the same time," he explained. "Now everything seems to be lining up. We've got the right partners in place."

Rieder said the new Wild Rivers site design will include some aspects of the old park, but mainly will become a new, improved version of the Irvine-based water park.

"Where we found success in Wild Rivers 1.0 was that we were able to segregate the bigger kids from the little kids by putting all the little kid attractions on what we called The Island, in between the Lazy River," he said. "That theme works well in the new park."

What to expect

In terms of rides, Rieder was excited to announce the new design does include some old favorites from the original 1986 design. However, there will be significant upgrades to the look and feel to the new Wild Rivers Water Park.

"We brought back the Bombay Blasters slide, which is an iconic Wild Rivers ride. It's a tube slide that goes underneath the ground. And a ride that will be called "Switzer," which was kind of a transitional ride for the little kids, before they start riding the bigger rides."

Despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, Rieder says he thinks the project is on track – considering the hurdles that it has already cleared. While he expects the pandemic to keep attractions closed for the foreseeable future, he's optimistic about targeting 2022 for opening.

"The city has continued to work on the project. I'm not sure we would want to open in 2021, just because I don't know if we would move forward understanding that COVID is there, and obviously attractions in California, theme parks, haven't opened yet and probably won't for quite some time. So, I think we would have ended up in 2022 anyway."

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COURTESY OF
LEVEL 8 DRIVE-IN

AT THE DRIVE-IN

IN-CAR ENTERTAINMENT IS ROLLING BACK INTO THE SOCIAL (DISTANCE-MINDED) CONSCIOUSNESS.

BY LINA LECARO

While technology and the array of distractions it provides is helping most of us get through pandemic times, simpler forms of entertainment – especially those that allow us to leave home and do so safely – have a special appeal.

As the movie industry adjusts its release schedule due to Covid-19 by premiering new titles online, alternative ways of going to the movies are also gaining interest. Out of necessity –

perhaps also a hunger for back to basics film-going, before mall-adjacent multiplexes took over the cinema landscape – drive-in entertainment is having a moment, and it's rolling back into the social (distance-minded) consciousness in a myriad of ways.

In Southern California, where car culture is ingrained into our history, drive-ins are a source of nostalgia and childhood memories for many. Boomers went to them as teens mostly to make out (as depicted in films like *The Outsiders* and

Grease) and a decade or two later, Gen-Xers like myself caught the tail end of in-auto movie amusement, going to the drive-in with more wholesome intentions. If you're of a certain (pre-millennial) age, you probably have memories of the family hatchback or truck getting backed into a drive-in's giant outdoor screen, your parents attaching tiny speaker boxes to their car windows for the movie's audio, or wearing pajamas and bringing the comforts of home along. Often, we'd fall asleep during

what was usually a double feature, and why not? It was like a mega-slumber party in public. Yep, family night at the drive-in was special.

In 2020, kids are used to more stimulation, especially with current movie theater sound and picture quality systems, though it seems an appreciation for something less tech-driven is emerging. It just may have to. Coronavirus is showing no signs of ceasing spread anytime soon, and the drive-in provides a way to be out in public without potentially

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COURTESY OF MISSION TIKI
DRIVE-IN & SWAP MEET

getting exposed to others' germs. This fact has led to an exploration of the drive-in format and drive-in venues as a showcase not just for movies, but concerts, comedy shows and even drag extravaganzas, as well.

"I think it's fantastic because it gives a whole new generation the opportunity to do something they've never done before," says Southern California pop culture expert/author/speaker Charles Phoenix. "It's the time-honored tradition of watching a film under the stars from the comfort of, as I call them, your private motor cars. Car culture saves the day!"

The drive-in resurgence goes beyond movies too. Phoenix thinks drive-thrus can be just as much fun as drive-ins and when we're all looking for things to do, we need to open our minds to the possibilities.

"My whole thing with drive-in and drive-thru culture is not only is this an opportunity for us to save our own lives and the lives of others, we have the opportunity to learn history at the same time," he says, adding that historic locales such as the Randy Donuts in Inglewood, the original Wienerschnitzel in Wilmington, the world's oldest McDonalds in Downey, and The Donut Hole in La Puente (in which guests drive through a giant donut) should be added to anyone's flashback foray into drive-in and drive-thru culture.

Though Phoenix, known for his '50s and '60s slideshow presentations and a YouTube channel celebrating retro



COURTESY OF THE
TRIBECA DRIVE-IN

car culture, touts visiting old landmark drive-ins in SoCal (which have become better known for flea markets and swap meets in recent years) versus the newer makeshift drive-in experiences with blow up screens such as those popping up at sports stadiums or mall parking lots, drive-in entertainment remains inherently old school cool either way. Which is why one of the biggest film festivals in the world recently decided to get in on the trend. Tribeca Film Festival has been holding weekly screenings at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena and since they started back in June, they've been selling out.

"We hope that the drive-in serves as a reminder of the magic of the movie-going experience," says Tribeca

co-founder and CEO Jane Rosenthal. "As an immediate and safe solution [to indoor theaters], we're excited to bring new and classic works from filmmakers, creators, and artists to communities across the country. We aim to bring people together through the arts to send a signal of unity and resiliency to the world during challenging times."

Robert De Niro, Tribeca's other co-founder, concurs in promo for the program, "The Tribeca drive-in series is a tribute to movies and the shared experience of watching them, even if from our cars," he says. "In anticipation of theaters reopening imminently, we look back at what we love about the big screen experience."

Street Food Cinema, a group known for

picnic-like outdoor screenings similar to the Cinespia events at Hollywood Forever Cemetery, has been offering hit movies at its new in-car series with Caruso (owners of both The Grove next to Farmer's Market on Fairfax and the Americana shopping mall in Glendale). In conjunction with Toyota, the screenings, called the "Level 8 Drive-in," are currently taking place on the top level of the Americana's parking lot. Classic movie refreshments, including complimentary popcorn, bottled water, and boxed candy are included with the ticket fee, but guests can enjoy another level of culinary components, with options from the shopping center's hottest eateries including Bourbon Steak, Katsuya and Shake Shack.

Both the Tribeca series and Level 8 have presented mostly classic films (*Jaws*, *Wizard of Oz*) and fan favorites (*Mean Girls*, *Lala Land*), but few new titles. That may change as more dates are hopefully announced for both. New releases in general are still being premiered via streaming services at home, but studios seem to be testing the waters more and more at both pre-existing drive-in locales and pop-ups.

Fatima, Marco Pontecorvo's story of religious revelation in Portugal near the end of World War I, was previewed on a giant screen in the parking lot of the Hollywood Palladium recently, allowing four guests per car to watch the film and giving away keepsake face masks and prepackaged concessions. Similarly, Dave Franco's new thriller *The Rental* also held preview screenings for press at the drive-in last month. In association with Arclight Cinemas, Franco debuted his new thriller in the City of Industry at the Vineland Drive-in, taking the opportunity to speak to fans before the movie started on the big screen and do a Q&A afterward.

Other locales providing drive-in events include Ontario Airport, which launched a drive-in movie series last month; the "Movies Under the Moon" series in Anaheim and the City of Irvine's drive-in series featuring movies and concerts (beginning in August).

Though they are also streamed online, drive-in music performances from the likes of Garth Brooks, Blake Shelton and Gwen Stefani and more have brought the idea to the entertainment forefront too. Voss Entertainment's Drive-in Drag Shows scheduled for August should add to the car show craze too.

As we discovered at Franco's event, some things have changed since our

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childhood drive-in days. Those who haven't been to one in years will note that they did away with the old speaker boxes of yore a while ago. Now, patrons tune into a frequency on their car radios to get audio for the film, which provides better sound than we remember as a kid, though it can drain older cars' batteries. In the corona era, cars are parked 6 feet apart, and bathroom and concessions have staff on hand making sure masks and socially distanced restroom lines are enforced. Some also employ extra cleaning people to make sure these areas are sanitized.

Of course, the novelty of catching a flick in your car provides a refreshing alternative to watching one at home, and movie-lovers seem to be getting into it. Still, some hardcore cinephiles don't think they're optimal if you're going to see an anticipated film.

"People are getting out and seeing movies which is great and the drive-in can be fun, but I've always said it's a terrible way to watch a movie," says Jordan Dobbs Rosas, co-host of *The Basic Pitch Podcast* (the seasonal rom-com screenwriting game). "I guess I see it as a social activity as opposed to a cinematic one, the equivalent of a group in a living room who have all seen the movie many times and are going to talk over much of it because they know the good parts to quiet down for, but if you've ever been the one person in the living room who is seeing that movie for the first time, you know it's a miserable place to be, which is mostly how I feel about all of the various outdoor movie events."

Rosas, who was also a movie theater manager in his youth and worked as a production coordinator at Netflix, says that many grew up loving movies largely because it is an indoor activity. Enduring the traffic jams to get in and out of a drive-in, not to mention lesser picture and audio quality, is not really worth it for some movie buffs like him. "Especially with a projected situation, outdoors just isn't a controlled enough environment for picture or sound," he explains. "Headlights bouncing across the scene, slamming car doors, idling cars, long distance from the screen itself are all a bummer if it's a movie you really want to see."

Perhaps this is why classic films rather than new ones seem to fill the roster at most drive-ins at the moment. There are exceptions, however. Mission Tiki Drive-in in Pomona - one of the most popular local destinations since indoor movie theaters shut-down - has been offering new films, though most of them have also been available via video on demand (VOD) or on streaming services at the same time. Two anticipated 2020 titles - *Spies Like Us* and *Palm Springs* - were screened at local drive-ins while simultaneously debuting on Amazon and Hulu, respectively.

"It harkens back to a time when going to movies was just a thing to do to pass the time," adds Rosas. "But for me personally if I can't watch the movie with no distractions (which to be fair hasn't been the case in the theaters for a long while, and seems to be getting worse with things like table service) I'd rather just stay home and have a better experience there."

Without a lot of other options for safe outdoor activities, even movie fans like Rosas seem to be opening up to the drive-in experience, regardless of prior opinion. If coronavirus has taught us anything, it's an appreciation for a lot of the things we used to take for granted. Being entertained while in our cars and sharing an experience - even if we are somewhat separated while doing so - is all we got right now and when we start to go stir-crazy indoors, it's still a novel option.

If you decide to incorporate some history lessons into the activity as the colorful Mr. Phoenix advises, novel and nostalgic are what you'll be in store for. He has suggestions, too.

"The best drive-in movie theater experiences in all of Southern California include four original old school classic spots still standing," he shares. "The Rodium in Redondo Beach, where the screen tower is a Mid-Century modern architectural masterpiece and the sign out front will blow your Mid-Century space-age style lovin' mind!"

"Then there's the Mission Tiki," he continues. "It's been there since 1956. It's got four screens and it was made over by lovers of master tiki craft about 10-12 years ago. They gave it a tiki overhaul which is fantastic because now it looks genuine of the era."

Phoenix's other two faves include the Rubidoux Drive-in in the Inland Empire ("it's a total time warp") and the Van Buren Drive-in located in Riverside. "Those are the four drive-ins that are survivors. They're out there and I'm glad they're out there because if you want layers of

time, and if you want the time honored authentic traditional experience, they are where you must go," he enthuses.

Though Wilmington and Pomona might seem like quite a drive out of L.A. just for a movie, Phoenix thinks they are "destination experiences that are worth traveling for." As a movie critic who sees a lot of films, and a mom looking for safe outside distractions, we agree.

"It's about getting out of the house and staying out of the house and having a time-honored experience while just feeling like you've done something," insists Phoenix. "It is a classic American experience. Car culture invaded America a long time ago but we do it better and more frequently than everybody else. At the end of day, the way things are going, we're gonna have a drive-thru and drive-in culture once again, so let's enjoy it."

Roll into the following next time you need to get out and be entertained:

City of Irvine Summer Drive-In Series, Orange County Great Park
<https://www.cityofirvine.org/orange-county-great-park/great-park-calendar-events>

Paramount Twin Drive-In, 7770 Rosecrans Ave., Paramount

Vineland Drive-In 443 N Vineland Ave, City of Industry

Mission Tiki Drive-In 10798 Ramona Ave., Montclair/Pomona

Van Buren Drive-In 3035 Van Buren Blvd, Riverside

Rubidoux Drive-In 3770 Opal St, Riverside

Rodium Drive-in, 2500 W. Redondo Beach Blvd., Redondo Beach

Tribeca Drive-in at the Rose Bowl, 1001 Rose Bowl Dr. Pasadena <https://tribecafilm.com/drive-in>

Level 8 Drive-in at the Glendale Americana, 889 Americana Way, Glendale <https://americanaatbrand.com/events/level-8-drive-in-summer-movie-series-at-the-americana-at-brand-with-street-food-cinema-7/>

Voss Events Drag N' Drive at the Rose Bowl, 1001 Rose Bowl Dr. Pasadena <https://vossevents.com/drive-n-drag/>



CHARLIZE THERON IN THE OLD GUARD
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IRVINE WEEKLY'S MOVIE GUIDE

MUCHO MUCHO AMOR, THE OLD GUARD, THE RELIC, DIVOS! AND MORE ...

BY CHUCK WILSON AND LINA LECARO

Irvine Weekly's Movie Guide is your look at the hottest films available on your TV sets, electronic devices and in select drive-ins throughout Southern California. Theaters remain closed, but the good news is that there's no shortage of diverse and engaging films to see at home. And as always, we let you know what's worth the watch-time – from indie art house gems to popcorn-perfect blockbusters to new movies garnering buzz, indicating where you can catch them whether it be digital Video on Demand (VOD) or streaming subscription services.

Mucho Mucho Amor: The Legend of Walter Mercado / NETFLIX

Don't let Walter Mercado's over the top look fool you. He's no Joe Exotic type wacko with delusions of meth-head grandeur. And this is not another salacious doc exploiting queer eccentricity, thank heavens. The Puerto Rican TV astrologer was a true superstar who might have been unusual and over the top (even for the '70s) but garnered a loyal following nonetheless, and the filmmakers here are clearly included.

If you're of Latin decent, odds are your abuela loved him and you grew up fascinated by him. Despite getting parodied often for his unusual look, Mercado repre-

sented not weirdness, but campy wonder thanks to his popular horoscope-driven show *Walter y Las Estrellas*. The glamorous self-help extravaganza offered a refreshing dose of androgyny, astrology and audacious theatricality that clearly resonated beyond Spanish speaking TV fans too.

Mucho Mucho Amor, the new doc chronicling Mercado's life, is aptly named as it's a loving look at an unforgettable figure who broke all the rules (he was gender fluid before it was a thing, after all). Despite retreating from the public eye many years ago, Mercado opens up his home to the filmmakers here and proves that his charisma continued to glimmer just like his famous capes (and yes, we get to see his marvel of a closet!).

He passed away last year so this Sundance-produced film makes for a fitting tribute, packaging interviews and archival footage into a cohesive look at his impact, the most significant of which was probably the way he hammered at the homophobia inherent in Latino culture not by trying to, but simply by being himself. **-L.L.**

The Old Guard / NETFLIX

Charlize Theron is our favorite amiable badass (*Mad Max: Fury Road*, *Atomic Blonde*, etc.) and she nails it once again

in this nuanced take on comicbook heroes and villains concerning a covert band of immortal mercenaries and their lonely but extraordinary lives, filled with never-ending combat against those who might threaten the world as we know it.

When the group takes on an emergency mission and their healing powers are exposed, leader Andy (Theron) and new member Nile (Kiki Layne), must fight harder than ever to protect themselves and save humanity, and which of course they do with violent aplomb.

Adapted from Greg Rucka and Leandro Fernandez's graphic novel and directed Gina Prince-Bythewood (*Love & Basketball*, *Beyond the Lights*), this one is a slick popcorn flick with substance boasting diverse characters, believable backstories and -ironic, considering they can't die- an engaging humanity that draws you in and makes you care, even with a contrived sequel/potential for franchise tease near its climax. **-L.L.**

The Relic / VOD

Relic, the elegantly creepy debut film from writer-director Natalie Erika James, may not be the film to watch if you have an aging parent in distress. That's the dilemma facing Kay (Emily Mortimer), whose mother, Edna (Robyn Neill), briefly disappears from her Australian country home only to return and begin acting out in strange and unnerving ways. Edna is clearly struggling with dementia but Kay and her daughter Sam (Bella Heathcote) begin to wonder if Edna, or her rambling old house, or the family itself, is being taken over by a malevolent force.

In this house, the walls groan like a sailboat adrift at sea, a shadowy figure hovers at the end of hall, and everywhere, black mold is growing, including, most disturbingly, in a round patch on Edna's chest. Aided by Brian Reitzell's jangly score, director James and cinematographer Charlie Sarroff slowly build a sense of menace and dread, even as the three gifted leads dive deep into the tangled emotionality of this fractured family.

In the last half hour, all hell breaks loose, with Sam trapped in a hidden, shape-shifting part of the house and Kay forced to battle her mother, who's evolving into something else, something other. The film's last moments, which shift daringly from the horrific to the tender, may frustrate horror fans in need of a clear explanation for all that's come before, but anyone who's watched a loved one age and fade is sure to feel a resonant ache. **-C.W.**

Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets / VOD

"When nobody don't want your ass, you can come in here and have a good time," says a patron at the Roaring 20s, a dive bar on the outskirts of Vegas. It's just after lunch on a shimmering hot desert day and the bar's regulars, young, old, and culturally diverse, are already arriving for what will be the joint's last day.

In the sneakily haunting *Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets*, filmmaking brothers Bill and Turner Ross (*Contemporary Color*), who make documentaries that redefine the term, roam the bar with their cameras, capturing snippets of conversation, song, and lament as a never famous Vegas staple prepares to close its doors.

For a good long time, nothing much seems to be happening. Folks greet each other fondly. Bad jokes are told. The bartender curses Jeopardy on the big TV.

And people drink, but never sloppily. Drinking, you come to realize, is what these folks do. They know how to stretch out the day, just as they know to lean in to humor and intimacy, for surely that's the payoff for living your best hours in a bar.

Nothing happens in *Bloody Nose, Empty Pockets* except funny, quotable conversation – "You're sweet on me now but just you wait. I'm a destroyer" – and the passing by of a dozen lives filled with enough love, fury, and regret to fill three Hollywood movies. This is a scruffy, gorgeous movie. **-C.W.**

Divos! / VOD

Of course, Ricky Redman (Matt Steele) will land the lead role in this year's San Fernando Catholic Church high school musical. He does so every year. A proud show queen, with epic plans to be a Broadway star, Ricky is a true diva, but wait, who's the hunky blonde boy walking into auditions, the one backlit like Jesus?

That would be Josh (Timothy Brundidge), the school's injured baseball pitcher who's decided that he too is destined to be a Broadway sensation. Ricky takes him under his wing but a bitter rivalry ensues, and *Divos!*, a deft indie comedy written by Steele and directed by Ryan Patrick Bartley, takes off.

If the cast seems a bit past high school age, no matter, their energy and general fabulousness carry the day. Steel's script takes some unexpected plot turns, including a mid-turn shift to Josh's home life, and a welcome avoidance of opening night clichés. A trifle to be sure, but an accomplished one, *Divos!*, is a charming surprise. **-C.W.**



RICHARD DOYLE, HAL LANDON JR.,
WILLIAM FRANCIS MCGUIRE AND
KIMBERLY SCOTT IN SCR'S 2018
PRODUCTION OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL.
PHOTO BY JORDAN KUBAT

EXPLORING LIVE THEATER'S MANY POSSIBILITIES

**SOUTH COAST REPERTORY THEATRE SCHEDULES ONLINE COMMUNITY-
ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS.**

BY LIZ GOLDNER

With theaters throughout Southern California continuing to be dark, South Coast Repertory theater in Costa Mesa will hold its first online "Community Engagement [theatrical] Initiative," titled "MASA," on August 17. This first of three SCR community-centered readings will address the historical and cultural importance of masa – or corn meal. MASA and two

subsequent presentations, to be held later this summer, are part of the "El Teatro de la Comida" (Theatre of Food) series.

The MASA readings, as announced by SCR's Artistic Director David Ivers and Managing Director Paula Tomei, are curated and directed by Juliette Carrillo, Professor of Drama at UC Irvine's Claire Trevor School of the Arts. The Yale School of Drama graduate, previously an SCR Artistic Associate, brings

nationwide theatrical experience to this production.

The MASA readings are divided into the following topics: "The Gardens of Aztlan" by Luis Alfaro (from California Scenarios, a 2001 SCR-commissioned work); "El Maiz" by Lisa Loomer; "Tejuino" by Amilcar Jauregui; and "The Path to Divado" or How to Make Fat-free Tamales in G minor, by Diane Rodriguez.

Tickets to this online presentation are

free, but ticketholders are encouraged to support the "Second Harvest Foodbank of Orange County." To reserve tickets, visit www.scr.org.

In early 2019, I spent an illuminating hour interviewing Ivers who began working as SCR's new Artistic Director just a few months previously. He explained that his plans included continuing the theater's successful formula of balancing new work with classical

ART

RICHARD DOYLE, HAL LANDON JR.
AND KIMBERLY SCOTT IN THE 2018
PRODUCTION OF A CHRISTMAS CAROL.
PHOTO BY JORDAN KUBAT



SCR MANAGING
DIRECTOR PAULA
TOMEI
PHOTO BY
JORDAN KUBAT



SCR ARTISTIC
DIRECTOR
DAVID IVERS
PHOTO BY
JORDAN KUBAT

dramas, musicals and contemporary theater.

"SCR is one of the most prolific theaters in the country in terms of new play development," he explained. "Few theaters in the country are able to produce such a range of plays. I am also interested in entertaining our audiences. It's not all about laughs, but about expanding how they see the world and opening up their hearts. It is both humbling and thrilling to work here."

Reflecting on the theater's early days, he said, "Founding Artistic Directors David Emmes and Martin Benson created

one of the first regional theater companies committed to new work, and that is an important touchstone for us. They can answer some important questions about how things developed here over time ... and why. That will help me as we move forward."

Looking to the future of the theater, Ivers said, "Telling stories in our plays illuminate the human condition. The theater is a tool for social justice. It is cathartic, expanding our view of how we see the world, while examining everything we do."

He then rhetorically inquired, "What

would happen to Orange County if this theater ceased to exist?" He described his vision of how the SCR campus could be alive with activity in the future with outdoor presentations linked to the on-stage productions. He added that these complementary events could attract theater-going patrons with event-driven outings.

Community engagement might also include collaborating with other arts institutions, or "sharing talents." Ivers' plans then include meeting with other Orange County arts groups, talking and learning from them about possible collaborations. "I'm still young in my tenure here and I've got a lot to learn," he said.

Ivers, a tall, lanky 40-something the-

pian grew up in Toronto and Calabasas, California, and fell in love with acting when he played the Wizard of Oz in the third grade. His parents supported his theatrical aspirations early on. "They were hard working, beautiful, inquisitive people. They were progressive in their thinking, and felt that it was important for my brother and me to be individuals."

In high school, he pursued theater aggressively, performing in *Li'l Abner*, *Grease* and *The Music Man*, among other plays. He received his BFA from Southern Oregon University and his MFA from the University of Minnesota, a curriculum including performances at the nearby Guthrie Theater.

Ivers has worked at the Utah Shakespeare Festival as actor, director and Artistic Director, and as a resident artist at the Denver Center Theatre Company. He has directed plays at the Guthrie Theater, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Berkeley Repertory Theater and SCR (the British farce, *One Man, Two Guv'nors* in 2015). He has performed in farces, comedies and in most Shakespeare plays.

As an educator, he has taught theater at the Universities of Michigan and Minnesota, Southern Utah University and Southern Oregon University. He balances his career with involvement with his family, with his wife and two sons.

Paula Tomei who works closely with Ivers said, "David is a passionate artist with a deep understanding of collaboration at all levels. When he directed *One Man, Two Guv'nors*, it was a delight to watch him work with the cast to bring out the most outrageous comic moments in the show. He listens carefully, asks questions that elicit thoughtful ideas and responses, and he's all about finding the joy in theater."

Richard Doyle, an SCR founding actor, was asked about Ivers' role at the theater last year. His response: "Taking on the leadership of one of America's premier 'League of Regional Theatres' is a huge undertaking. At this moment in time, with the changing way our theatergoing audiences access live entertainment, doing so will require energy, innovation and heart, all things that David has in abundance."

Hunkered down at home with his family these days, David Ivers envisions South Coast Repertory Theater as a dynamic center for inspiring live plays in the future. In the meantime, he continues to plan online productions and to announce these events in videos.



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