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BY: PAUL ROGERS

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COVER: Transviolet • PHOTO: Courtesy of Chris Greenwell

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SPONGE - COURTESY TRACY KETCHER

MARCH CONCERT GUIDE

FROM '90S ROCK TO QUINTESSENTIALLY MODERN POP

SAT 3/7 SPONGE

While Detroit's Sponge hit their creative high watermark with wonderfully tense 1996 single "Wax Ecstatic (To Sell Angelina)," their robust blend of anthemic classic rock and hooky alt-pop has proven durable, with frontman Vinnie Dombroski continuing to perform under the name ever since. While they rode in on grunge's coattails, with '94's gold-certified *Rotting Piñata* album, Sponge simply never stopped touring and – unlike many so-called "legacy" acts – recording new material (and high-quality stuff, at that). Recently championed by Howard Stern, and benefiting from something of a grassroots resurgence in interest for '90s rock, Dombroski and his current Sponge incarnation (which has retained a stable lineup for longer than the original band) represent the both the best of the post-grunge era

and a heartening example of a band sticking around long enough to enjoy a second wave. *Gallagher's Pub, 300 Pacific Coast Highway Ste. 113, Huntington Beach.*

SAT 3/14 YVES TUMOR

Tennessee-raised Yves Tumor occupies an ever-changing creative space sufficiently artsy to earn simultaneous shunning from the masses and cult-like devotion from the few. His recent output reflects a Throbbing Gristle-esque fascination with sounds both hypnotic and ominous, soothing and disruptive. A former fixture on SoCal's experimental music scene, he crafted post-chillwave bliss as Teams and toured with alt rapper Mykki Blanco before re-emerging in Europe under his current name. Critically embraced from the get-go, Tumor made a paranor-

mal leap forward with 2018's *Safe in the Hands of Love*, an unusually transparent outpouring of coexistent conviction and vulnerability all the more resonant for refusing to pander to either genre or audience expectations. Gambling carefree through UK bass, plunderphonics, rock and noise, the incongruously easy-to-listen-to experimentalism of *Safe* is a small revolution unto itself. *Constellation Room @ The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.*

Karla Bonoff and Livingston Taylor

Best known as a songwriter for the likes of Linda Ronstadt, Bonnie Raitt and Wynonna Judd, SoCal native Karla Bonoff is also a popular performer in her own right, who scored a 1982 hit with "Personally" (ironically, a song she didn't write). Bonoff's solo performances are

a joy for anyone with a passion (or nostalgia) for the sort of folk-tinted soft rock that wafted from radios in the 1970s, full of lamenting melodies and soaring hooks, immaculately delivered. Her peer Livingstone Taylor – brother of singer-songwriter James Taylor – enjoyed a trio of successful singles straddling the turn of the 1980s. Livingston, who turns 70 this year, still tours extensively, punctuating his acoustic guitar-accompanied singing (which, yes, can sound very like his more famous bro) with warm, relatable tales from his 55-year career and beyond. *Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Drive, Irvine.*

THU 3/19 ARTURO SANDOVAL

Ten-time Grammy winner Arturo Sandoval preserves a palpable passion for jazz trumpet that defies the rigors of a 40-year career and a list of accolades that would spill off this page. Born in Cuba, Sandoval, who defected to the U.S. in 1990 while touring with his mentor Dizzy Gillespie, has retained the inclusive swagger of his Caribbean street-performing roots, even as his virtuosity has found him at the world's most stately venues (including the White House in 2012) and most glamorous occasions (such as 1995's Super Bowl Halftime Show). Also an accomplished composer and pianist, Sandoval has been both a prolific band leader since the early '80s and an in-demand sideman for the likes of Gloria Estefan, Frank Sinatra, Johnny Mathis, and Paul Anka. Every Sandoval performance remains an ode to music itself, lovingly transcending both genre and fashion. *Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine.*

SAT 3/21 TRANSVIOLET

Quintessentially of their time, Transviolet originated as an online collaboration (since centralized in L.A.) and creates radio-ready, intelligent indie pop that feels like it was conceived in a laboratory backstage at Coachella. Centered upon the sometimes detached yet oddly soulful croon of Sarah McTaggart, the foursome indulgences subtly danceable, xx-indebted arrangements, and production influenced as much by hip-hop and electronica than anything guitar-based. On stage, McTaggart's interpretative dance-y gyrations and delicate self-as-

BY: PAUL ROGERS



LIVINGSTONE TAYLOR - COURTESY MIM ADKINS

sureness bring a transfixing humanity to the sleek and contemplative, come-down moods created by her bandmates (with some digital support). Championed by the likes of Katy Perry and Harry Styles, Transviolet join a super-cred clique – including Sia, Lana Del Rey and Børns – that has made shameless pop music once again palatable to hipsters and even self-styled music snobs. *Constellation Room @ The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.*

FRI 3/27 MNOZIL BRASS

Austrian septet Mnozil Brass was founded more than a quarter-century ago by graduates of the prestigious Vienna College of Music. As their educational pedigree suggests, these are virtuoso musicians (trumpet, trombone and tuba players), yet they're on a mission to remind us that classical music needn't be – and maybe *shouldn't* be – po-faced. Their sets comprise original compositions alongside classical faves, jazz standards and popular hits (including happy-go-lucky Austrian and German schlager songs) brilliantly enmeshed with borderline slapstick, Monty Python-ish humor. Delving into various historical strands of European brass band music, Mnozil Brass references circus bands, village bands, vaudeville orchestras and marching bands in

crafting musical foils for its clever skits, mimes and even magic. Not always hilarious, but nonetheless a fun night that asks serious questions about the artificial constraints so often imposed upon classical music. *Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Drive, Irvine.*

MON 3/30 THE WARNING

Mexico's The Warning initially earned YouTube notoriety in for what was, in retrospect, a fairly unremarkable 2014 cover of Metallica's "Enter Sandman." Unremarkable, that is, were it not for the fact that these three sisters were then aged just 14, 12 and 9, with bassist Alejandra Villarreal little taller than her instrument. Unlike most viral cover sensations, the Villarreal sisters have followed through – assisted by GoFundMe, *The Ellen Show*, and even Target – in crafting a legit career that has already included opening for the likes of Aerosmith and The Killers, and now, after two albums of robust original rock, their first full-blown tour. While the entire trio has hugely matured since their *Rock Band* beginnings, drummer Paulina in particular has stepped up as a natural performer, her stick-smashing virtuosity embellished by rare showmanship and potent lead vocal stints. *Constellation Room @ The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana.*



MNOZIL BRASS - COURTESY BARCLAY THEATRE



ARTURO SANDOVAL - COURTESY BARCLAY THEATRE



YVES TUMOR - COURTESY JORDAN HEMINGWAY



CURRY UP NOW - PHOTO BY: SCOTT FEINBLATT

CURRY UP NOW ADDS SPICE TO THE SPECTRUM

THE INDIAN FUSION RESTAURANT SERVES UP TRADITIONAL INDIAN FLAVORS IN APPROACHABLE DISHES.

BY: SCOTT FEINBLATT

When the smell of curry is in the air, some noses just can't help but to drag their owners to investigate the source. On January 29, plenty of noses were drawn to Irvine Spectrum for the grand opening of Curry Up Now, an 11-year-old Indian fast food company which now has eight brick-and-mortar restaurants, three food trucks and two craft cocktail bar concepts spanning the U.S. While *Irvine Weekly* didn't happen to make it to the grand opening, at which

time the restaurant was dishing out free food to the first 100 guests, we did make it there soon thereafter to check out the establishment, talk to their manager about the Irvine franchise and try a couple of their tasty items.

The background of this Indian restaurant is unique. According to the company's pre-opening press release, their story started on wheels. "Curry Up Now began as a food truck in 2009, founded by husband and wife duo, Akash and Rana Kapoor, and ably supported by

co-founder and Senior VP of Operations, Amir Hosseini. Since day one, Curry Up Now has been on a mission to serve Indian flavors and ingredients in a way that is approachable for the everyday American consumer by utilizing formats that are more recognizable to the mainstream." Having enjoyed eating Indian food for many years, I'd have not been shy about trying any new, traditionally styled Indian restaurant [you know, the kind that has Bollywood films or cricket matches displayed on large

screen TVs throughout the establishment]; however, given that the average American has been conditioned to respond universally to homogenized, gentrified or similarly serialized branding, the idea of having an "approachable" Indian food chain was intriguing.

The exterior of the restaurant is designed conservatively enough. Their signage is cute and classy, and there is nothing about their storefront design that resonates with any foreign stylistic influence in a way that would

suggest it would not have fit right in if it had wound up next to the Spectrum's Hello Kitty Cafe. After walking through Curry Up Now's doors, I realized that my fascination for the restaurant's hybrid concept had only touched upon the proverbial tip of the iceberg. I had been all set to walk in there and ask for the most obvious choice: a tikka masala burrito, an item that appears to be as catchy in concept as it sounds in terms of its menu description, which labels the dish "iconic." However, their rather expansive menu added extensive complications to my decision-making process. The sizable menu includes many classic sounding dishes such as tikka masala, lamb keema, dahi puri and samosas, with many customizable options (e.g. vegetarian, gluten-free, flour or wheat tortilla, choice of sides, etc.), as well as conceptual dishes with flirty names like Sexy Fries, Naughty Naan and Holy Moly Fried Ravioli.

It was easy enough for me to read the menu item descriptions for myself, but the best lessons in life come from empirical information, so I stepped up and asked the young lady at the counter what she recommended. I took her suggestion and placed my order. After taking the number holder for my order, I sat at one of the tables and briefly studied the restaurant's modern design before returning my eyes to their menu, where I could further peruse the colorful items. Before long, my order arrived. The presentation for my Ghee Makhni Butter Bowl was straight forward enough: a plate half-filled with yellow rice (with a little ball of pico de gallo surfing on top), one quadrant of mildly spicy butter masala (with chicken) and one quadrant of my chosen side of chana garbanzo masala. The spicy butter masala was terrific! I thoroughly enjoyed the chana garbanzo masala as well. The rice was fine, and I enjoyed the pico. To wash it down, I'd ordered their mango lassi, which is served in a glass jar that guests can keep as a souvenir. The lassi was less sweet than I was anticipating, but it was enjoyable nonetheless.

As I finished up my dish, I observed the store's manager, Ali Momenirad, brushing up the recently vacated tables and pushing in chairs. I asked him about the store's opening, and he replied that they had been very busy and had gotten wonderful feedback from the guests. Momenirad also pointed out that the store's extensive menu is smaller than that of the corporate

stores. Finally, while I was thoroughly stuffed, I wanted more insider info on recommendations. "My favorite is a deconstructed samosa. These three things: the deconstructed samosa, Kathie Roll and Sexy Fries, they're really good," he said. "The



PHOTO BY : SCOTT FEINBLATT

two things that are really famous on the drinks menu [are the] mango lassi, that you got already, and the ginger-mint lemonade." I thanked him and ordered a deconstructed samosa to go.

I didn't regain my appetite until the next day because the Ghee Makhni Butter bowl had been so filling, but when I finally got to the deconstructed samosa, which I heated up in my oven, it too was delicious. Sorry folks, but by the time I'd gotten home, the dish, in the box, was no longer photo-worthy [motorcycles tend to vibrate beautiful culinary displays right outta whack], but the very large portion had included what looked like a samosa gone supernova – exploded and left with a few mini samosas in orbit around the fallen star. Also, as with the previous dish, this was so filling that I didn't need to eat again that day. On my next visit, I'm going to have to try that tikka masala burrito with some ginger-mint lemonade.

Curry Up Now at Irvine Spectrum is open Sun.-Thu., 11 a.m.-9 p.m., and until 11 p.m. Fri.-Sat. For details on their takeout and catering options, curryupnow.com or give them a call (949) 932-0513.



TIKKA MASALA BURRITO - PHOTO: COURTESY OF CURRY UP NOW

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CHECKING CANCER FOR CASEY

ANNUAL CASEY'S CUP MEMORIAL HOCKEY TOURNAMENT RAISES FUNDS TO FIGHT ADRENAL CORTICAL CARCINOMA.

BY: TARA FINLEY

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF THE CASEY STRALE FOUNDATION

Casey's Cup Memorial Hockey Tournament is an annual fund-raising event that was born out of a mother's love. In 2009, Traci Strale got news no mother should ever have to hear: her son, vivacious 12-year-old Casey Strale, was diagnosed with an advanced stage of Adrenal Cortical Carcinoma (ACC), a form of cancer.

ACC is caused by a cancerous growth in the adrenal cortex, on the outer layer of the adrenal glands. This kind of cancer is unthinkable rare for a child of 12, affecting only one or two in a million people, with a median diagnosis age of 44. As a dedicated student and an avid hockey player, it was unbelievable to

friends and family that Casey, so young and active, could develop such an aggressive and uncommon form of cancer.

"Cancer doesn't discriminate, it doesn't care where you live, your religion, your net worth, how big your house is or who you know," reminds Traci.

With his family, friends and teammates rallying around him, Casey fought hard to get better. All he wanted was to be a normal kid. Whenever he could, he got back into the rink and continued to skate for both The Rinks Irvine Inline and Anaheim Ice as a Jr. Duck. Through years of treatments, clinical trials and multiple surgeries, Casey's love for hockey never wavered.

Despite his incredible and heroic will, Casey lost his battle with ACC on June 24, 2013 at the age of 16; however, his story is not one of tragedy, but rather one of determination and love. With the spirit of Casey in their hearts, his community has banded together to bring much needed awareness and financial support to ACC research. Because of its scarcity, little attention has been paid to the development of an effective treatment and cure.

"There has not been any change in the protocol for treating this disease since the 1960s," explains Traci. "We need exposure, awareness ... we just need some help. It's just not acceptable that a child, any child, cannot be properly treated or saved. If we find a way to treat and extend these precious lives, then it also helps all other cancers down the line."

Steadfast in her desire to save families from heartbreak, Traci set about to make an impact that would bridge the gap between ACC research and funding, honoring the memory of her brave son. This is how Casey's Cup Memorial Hockey Tournament came to be.

"Casey's Memorial Cup started with a conversation in my backyard with friend and tournament director Julie Ruff. We discussed how we could honor Casey's memory and help others as



well," shares Traci.

"[We decided that] the funds would go toward research and clinical trials for his disease. We already had a foundation with the Translational Genomics Research Institute (TGen), an affiliate of City of Hope, that we started in 2009 when Casey was first diagnosed," she explains. "We contacted TGen and [the] founder of the ACC Foundation, Troy Richards, and offered to raise additional funds for ACC. Everyone was on board and the planning began."

TGen is regarded as a world-leader in translational genomic and proteomic cancer research – the study of genetic and protein drivers of disease.

"Without TGen's specialized team of scientists and clinical partners discovering new treatments through translational science and clinical trials, there would be no hope for kids and adults taken victim like Casey," discloses Traci.



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Traci founded Casey's Cup Memorial Hockey Tournament to not just bring awareness to the rare cancer that affected her family, but to support other nonprofits as well. This year, the tournament is supporting San Diego Ducks Sled Hockey, a sled hockey club for physically disabled youth and adults interested in pursuing local, national, international and Paralympic competition that's recognized by USA Hockey, the NHL and U.S. Paralympics.

Casey's Cup also partners with Team Niko, a nonprofit organization created after its namesake was diagnosed with leukemia in 2014. The team raises money to provide backpacks full of essentials for families and patients (Niko's buddies) at Children's Hospital of Orange County.

With hockey players joining the event from San Diego, Riverside and Los Angeles, the Irvine community can help by volunteering or pledging support.

Casey was known as "The Game Changer, Life Changer" by his friends, family and coaches. Today, those same people work to change the lives of those affected by rare cancers, changing the game of cancer research by providing essential funding.

Casey Strale's family tells *Irvine Weekly* that he was all about passion and inspiration.

"He did not want to be the kid with cancer, he just wanted to be a normal kid and not dwell on the monster growing in his body," shares his mom. "Therefore he would skate, as often and anywhere he could. Hockey was his first love, followed by food and music. The point here is to find your passion and live life large. That is what Casey would want for his friends and family, because that was who he was and he was happy, despite what was happening to him. When he was on the rink there was no cancer, no pain and no worries. Just a boy, a stick, a puck and a net."

Casey taught his community the importance of taking care of those closest to you, and his community is now hoping that others will follow them in this mission of care.

Join them in skating into action for cancer research, treatment and patient quality of life at Casey's Cup Memorial Hockey Tournament on Saturday, April 11 at the Great Park Ice & Fivepoint Arena in Irvine. Sign up or make a donation at: tgen.org/caseystrale.

All of the funds raised from this event go directly to TGen Research, an affiliate of City of Hope. There, research is conducted to find a cure for ACC or Adrenocortical Cancer, the rare cancer Casey Strale fought so hard against.



A LEGEND RECEIVES HIS DUE

“RIGHT PLACE, RIGHT TIME” HIGHLIGHTS THE PHOTOGRAPHIC OEUVRE OF JOHN UPTON.

BY: LIZ GOLDNER

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF ORANGE COAST COLLEGE

Orange Coast College has been known for decades as a major center for the study of photography. This reputation has been forged to a significant degree by the presence of educator/photographer John Upton, who first chaired the college's photography department in the 1960s. While he departed from OCC in 1999, his legacy there continues to this day.

This first ever solo retrospective of Upton's work is long overdue, considering his contributions to photography over the years. After studying with Ansel Adams, Minor White, Dorothea Lange and Edward Weston, he created

several important photographic series, received a number of awards and will be recognized this March by the Society for Photographic Education as "Honored Educator." He is also in major collections worldwide, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Upton's "Right Place, Right Time" exhibition is comprised of 29 of his photos taken over more than 60 years. It also contains extensive wall didactics, photos of Upton throughout his career – some with other photographers, including SoCal-based Robert Heinecken – and several copies of the textbook, *Photography*, which he co-authored and is now in its 12th edition.

While attending the opening of this seminal exhibition, the 87-year-old Upton was alert, lucid, spry and delighted to discuss his work and multi-faceted life. In an address to dozens of local photographers and other admirers at the show, he talked about his first series, "Early Work." These black-and-white gelatin silver prints reveal his affinity for mid-20th-century formalism, composition, abstraction and social themes in photography. The pictures also display his skilled use of light and dark, with some of that contrast likely created in the darkroom.

Upton's two images from this series, both titled "Point Lobos Near Carmel, CA," are close-ups of large rocks and other natural debris. By focusing on the natural yet abstract arrangement of these elements, the artist created stunning tableaux.

His "Death Valley," a portrait of moving sand that also displays deep afternoon shadows, mimics erotic photos of the nude female figure. Conversely, his "Nude," an out-of-focus close-up of a nude female, is

more a study of female attributes than a sensual composition.

"Portrait of Robert Macaron," of a working man from the 1950s, is redolent of 1930s-era photos by his mentors. Macaron, the subject in Upton's picture, is dressed in a laborer's clothing and displays an intense look; the total effect of this picture evokes the plight of people who worked long hours to support their families.

Years later, Upton traveled extensively throughout Japan, photographing landscapes, urban scenes, storefronts, children and teenagers. His eight "Japanalia" color images from 2000 to 2004 are so contemporary in subject matter, they might





JUNGLE ROAD - JUNGLE - JOHN UPTON



JUNGLE ROAD - LAVA - JOHN UPTON



JOHN UPTON'S JUNGLE SERIES

have been shot today.

His "Tokyo Teens" portrays a throng of female teenagers, several sporting bleached blonde hair and wearing "Forever 21" style quirky clothing. These smiling young people contrast with the formal and distraught looking Japanese citizens who were photographed during World War II. Upton says that these photos describe Japan "undergoing extraordinary social and cultural change."

"Politician and Constituents" depicts full-size cutouts of a traditionally dressed Japanese woman, alongside a fashionably dressed man, both facing a poster of a smiling man running for office. This contrast of the established Japan with contemporary society depicts the country during a period of social and cultural transition.

More bucolic is "Pagoda Nara," illustrating an old-fashioned Japanese temple, nestled among rich green foliage. With this image, Upton appears to be calling up the country's heritage of painting its pastoral landscapes. His sparer "Swimming Shaman in Lake Biwa" is a pastel impressionist style photo of a lone swimmer in a pale yellow and green lake.

These photos presage Upton's subsequent "Jungle Road" series, with many images comprised of dense jungles and others of lava flows, all shot in Hawaii from 2005 to 2014. Jack Fulton describes this series in the show's catalog: "This sequence, made on the island of Hawaii, begins in a jungle that we see as a sparkling dance of floral exuberance, ending in a black and white swell of billowy and

undulating lava flow arrested in time."

Indeed, these photos, with several capturing the dense, overbearing and richly colored green, brown and red foliage, are so intricate, the viewer might perceive them as detailed oil paintings. Conversely, the more meditative lava flow pictures capture scenarios reminiscent of ancient, barren landscapes.

Upton's most recent "Petaluma" series, with four photos taken since 2018 near his current northern California home, reveals his unceasing desire to continue creating while exploring the world around him. These images, ranging from black and white landscapes to pictures of street signs and murals, include "Hokusai Found in the Alley," a poster of a painting by the eponymous 18th-century Japanese artist. "Petaluma" then reveals the vision of a photographic artist who continually reinvents himself, while adhering to his lifelong ideals of harmonious composition and meaningful content.

In fact, the panoply and variety of the photographic art pieces by John Upton in this extraordinary exhibition are a testament to the regenerating power of the creative spirit.

"Right Place, Right Time" is on view through April 4, 2020 at Orange Coast College's Frank M. Doyle Arts Pavilion; Mon.-Thu., 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and first Saturdays, noon-4 p.m.; free. orangecoastcollege.edu/academics/divisions/visual_arts/Arts_Pavilion/Pages/current-exhibits.aspx



COURTESY OF WARNER BROS

MARGOT ROBBIE MAKES A FANTABULOUS VILLAIN IN BIRDS OF PREY

A KILLER SOUNDTRACK AND VIBRANT VISUALS MAKE BIRDS OF PREY AN ENJOYABLE AND EMPOWERING ROMP.

BY: LINA LECARO

As Disney, Marvel and DC-character-driven films proved a long time ago, supervillains are always more interesting than superheroes. It's not too far a leap to further declare that female villains are more auspicious on screen, more complex and simply more fun to watch too. In the *Batman* films alone Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman and Uma Thurman's Poison Ivy both nearly stole the show from the caped crusader. Likewise, Margot Robbie's Harley Quinn was like

a ray of lethal Technicolor sunshine in the otherwise abysmal baddie mess *Suicide Squad*. Well, the wacky pun-kette is back and she's set on proving she don't need no Joker to cause havoc. She's OK with a squad though, and she ultimately gets a girl-powered one in *Birds of Prey (and the Fantabulous Emancipation of One Harley Quinn)*.

Director Cathy Yan and producer Robbie have brought something fresh, and uniquely feminist to DC's cinematic universe, creating a chaotic yet zesty

comics-style spectacle that's exactly the killer escape at the movies it intends to be. Yes, it's like a fight-filled, extended music video in some ways, but it works. Yan knows exactly when and where to linger, light and frame the action, and she has a beguiling focal point to play with in Robbie, whose always been able to transcend her physical beauty in her role choices (her turn as Sharon Tate in Tarantino's *One Upon A Time in Hollywood* notwithstanding). She does so here with an effervescent take on Quinn that's as lovable as it is unstable, and its complemented by makeup (she even makes face tats seem cute), hair (the famed ponytails are snipped short) and Hot Topic merchandise-ready clothes styling.

Brandishing an accent that's not unlike her unforgettable trophy wife from Queens in Scorsese's *Wolf of Wall Street*, Robbie (who some might forget is Australian) plays Harley as a wise-cracking cartoon. A vibrant animated intro sequence provides the origin story for those who don't already know it: She's a former psychiatrist who fell for her psychopath patient, the Joker, and gleefully joined him in illicit hi-jinx throughout Gotham City. *Prey* begins with Harley post-breakup and sees her blowing up

a giant chemical refinery as she seeks both a combustible kind of closure for herself and emancipation from her ex in the eyes of the public. Hasn't every gal wanted that at some point in her romantic life?

Danger and violence ensues soon afterward, though. Without the Joker's protection, Harley has a host of unseemly types who want to kill her. There's the guy whose legs she broke for one (We get to see that happen, and ouch!), another whose face she had tattooed as a clown (he ties into the storyline later), and many, many others. Harley shares what she did to each throughout the film and comic book graphics on screen help her out, providing some of the biggest laughs.

In many ways this movie is a comedy first, and there's some hilarious moments courtesy of a couple characters, including Rosie Perez as a cop, Mary Elizabeth Winstead as the crossbow killer, aka Huntress, and especially from Ewan McGregor as Roman Sionis, a.k.a. Black Mask, a flamboyant club owner/art fart who likes to slice off his enemy's faces, and is bent on becoming Gotham's most powerful scoundrel. Jurnee Smollett-Bell as Roman's nightclub singer/driver Black Canary and Ella Jay Basco as juvenile pick-pocket Cassandra Cain play it straight, rounding out the charismatic cast.

Screenwriter Christina Hodson's script is smart and sassy with a fourth wall-breaking, storyteller narrative structure that's like *Deadpool* but simpler and less satiric. It earns its R rating for violence and language. The soundtrack is pretty killer, with badass babe anthems such as Joan Jett's "I Hate Myself for Loving You" and Heart's "Barracuda" providing on-the-nose but perfect nonetheless pounce to the brutal yet bodacious proceedings.

When Cain steals a diamond belonging to Sionis, Harley agrees to get it for him to save her own skin, but she soon develops a kinship with the kid, and later, the rest of the women in the movie. Ultimately, they all join forces and become friends (sort of). A quick hair tie exchange between Quinn and Canary during a fight scene has been getting media attention for its sweetness and realism, but don't worry, things don't go too soft here. Robbie never lets us forget that Harley's a bad girl, a batshit bad girl and by the film's end we love her for it. She may not be as dark or layered as her ex, "Mr. J," but she's a lot easier to root for.



UNBINGED: SAYING GOODBYE TO *BOJACK HORSEMAN*, HELLO TO *THE OUTSIDER*, AND WELCOME BACK TO *PICARD*

THE EMOTIONAL CONCLUSION TO AN ANIMATED JOURNEY, STEPHEN KING DONE RIGHT, AND A TRIUMPHANT RETURN.

BY: ERIN MAXWELL

Every day, more and more streaming services debut, each begging for your attention and subscription dollars. As new services from primetime channels pop up to compete with Netflix and Hulu, audiences can be left in a lurch, not knowing what to watch. This is where we come in.

BoJack Horseman | Netflix

It is unexpected that one of the most heartfelt, gut-wrenching dramas on television happens to be a cartoon, but Netflix's *BoJack Horseman* is a show

that has been defying expectations for the better part of six years.

It has been a long journey for the equestrian nincompoop, but over the last seven seasons, *BoJack* (Will Arnett) has developed a character arc that rivals Walter White or Jamie Lannister.

The events of the final season hold the newly-reformed BoJack accountable for previous misdeeds, including inadvertently causing the death of his former co-star Sarah Lynn. Though the former sitcom star has gotten his life together, as well as a new teaching gig, the damage he caused to friends and family catches up with BoJack, forcing him to finally face his demons. In the end, his

punishment is more than just the loss of personal possessions and freedom, but having to stand witness as the world moves on without him.

BoJack is deeply flawed. He's an alcoholic and addict with anger issues that once caused him to choke out his co-star. He is a bad influence – and sometimes just a bad person. And while he attempts to make good, the sins of his past send him straight to the glue factory.

He tries. He fails. He tries again and he fails again. His constant fuck-ups drag us down with him, both to judge and to laugh and to contemplate the fuck-ups of our own life.

And that is the greatness of *BoJack Horseman*. It is a dark, winding road of a show filled with critter caricatures and puns to help cushion its brutality. The adorable animal names, funny booze-fueled antics, and hundreds of super famous voice actors do little to distract the viewers from the pessimism that drives the show. It is a fatalistic ideology filled with remorse and wrapped in a cartoon candy shell. And it will be missed.

Goodbye, Hollywoo. And thanks for the memories.

The Outsider | HBO

Terry Maitland (Jason Batman) is a small-town baseball coach and teacher who was seen by witnesses abducting a local boy and later emerging from the woods covered in blood. He is seen on video in the area, he was witnessed by local townsfolk with the lad, and he left behind a trail of DNA evidence a mile wide.

He was also 70 miles away attending a teacher's conference at the same exact time. He is on video at the conference, witnessed by local townsfolk, and left evidence that places the father and husband nowhere near the scene of the crime. It is a conundrum for local officials, especially detective Ralph Anderson (Ben Mendelsohn), who is given the daunting task to solve the case.

Based on Stephen King's 2018 novel, *The Outsider* is a creature feature of the highest order, a monster movie that is anything but boilerplate. The miniseries is a slow burn, taking its time to build on the approaching dread, a luxury sorely lacking in several previous King adaptations. And because it is a series, it has time to construct a specific class of terror: One that takes its time.

The show is given its depth thanks to the stellar cast. Particular stand-out is Cynthia Erivo, who plays investigator Holly Gibney, a genius who brandishes Occam's razor as her weapon of choice. She is brought into the case by Anderson to help hunt the boogeyman.

The Outsider is another win for HBO. It is an example of the network's ability to elevate entertainment by surpassing any preconceived notions of what television is, and creating a new standard for what it can be.

Picard | CBS All Access

As the starship Enterprise is to Starfleet, *Star Trek: Picard* is to CBS All Access: A flagship show meant to show off the service's best assets. But is it worth the subscription?

Short answer: Yes. But only you are already a fan.

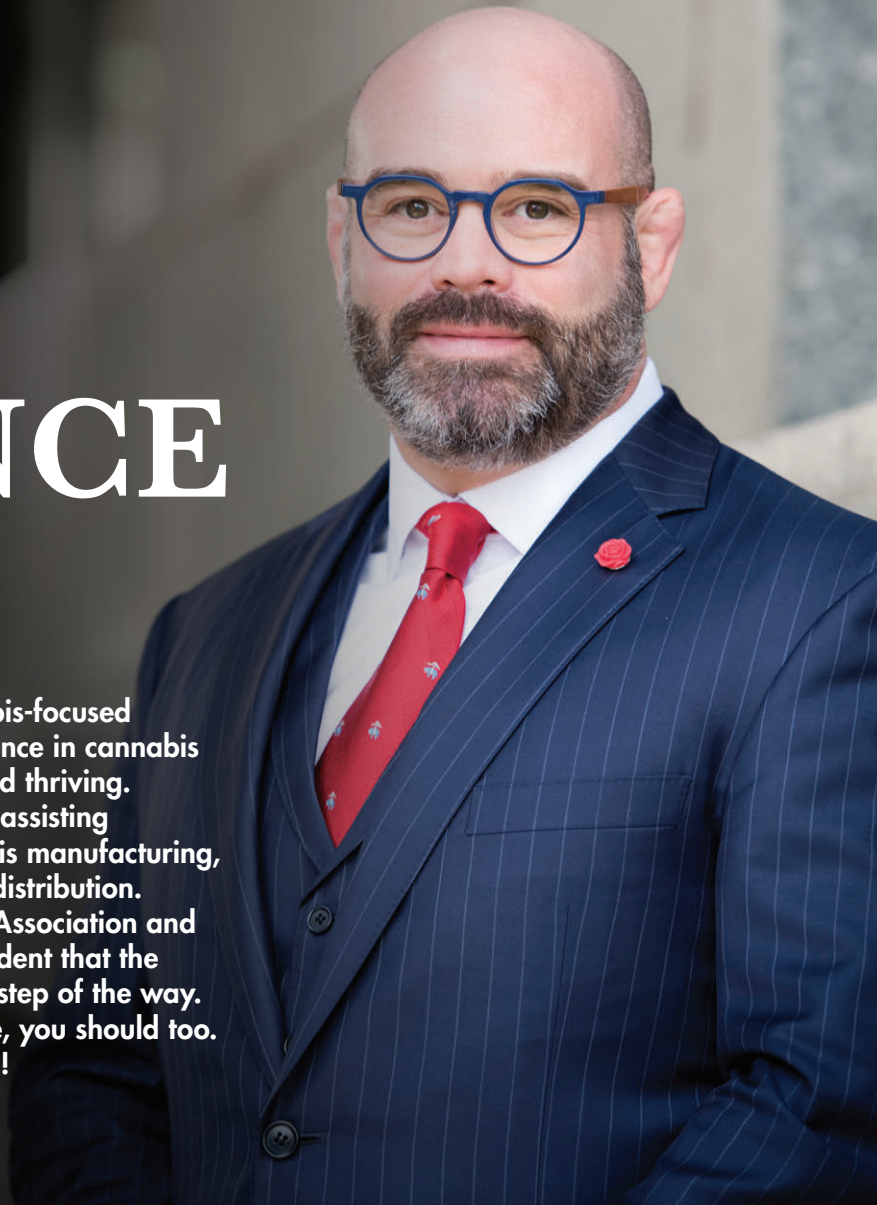
The show follows Jean-Luc Picard (Patrick Stewart) in his twilight years. Surrounded by Romulans and living on his family's ancestral vineyard, Picard's star treks are far behind him. His association with Starfleet is all but severed, with the exception of a loyal hound named Number One. Nursing his bruised ego, Picard is hiding, just waiting to die, at least until he meets Dahj (Isa Briones). Somehow tied to the late, great Data (Brent Spiner, in a guest appearance), the young woman offers an intriguing mystery that awakens Picard's inner adventurer.

With an great supporting cast made up of new cronies (Alison Pill, Michelle Hurd, Santiago Cabrera) and the occasional old friends (Jonathan Frakes, Jeri Ryan), Picard sets on a mission of his own making.

Picard is a fun continuation of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, the final chapter of a great character and fan service to those who stayed loyal to the franchise. But because of this, it is not much of an endeavor for new fans. Unlike previous *Star Trek* shows, which offered a *Doctor Who*-esque solution by starting any new series with a fresh slate, *Picard* requires a bit of homework. Movies need to be watched, series needs to be binged...it is a massive undertaking for the indoctrinated. But for folks already onboard with Trek, Picard is the bold captain fans grew up with, but in the twilight of his life, battling illness and all the issues that come with aging. But the years can't break his spirit, or the spirit of the show.

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