

VETERANS CEMETERY AT GYPSUM CANYON • SEGERSTROM PRESENTS JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR • REDISCOVERING ARTIST HENRIETTA BERK

IRVINE WEEKLY

NOVEMBER 5, 2021 VOL. 3 • NO. 24



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COVER: PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF POKE ME

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PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY

Live theater is making its way back to Orange County. The iconic rock musical *Jesus Christ Superstar* is playing at Segerstrom Center for the Arts in Costa Mesa from November 9-14 for the show's 50th anniversary tour.

Seen through the eyes of Judas, this musical takes on events in the life of Jesus Christ during his final weeks of life. Classic hits from the show include "I Don't Know How to Love Him," "Gethsemane" and "Superstar."

The show stars Aaron LaVigne as Jesus, James T. Justis as Judas and Jenna Rubaii as Mary.

In an exclusive interview, Brittany Hammond – ensemble cast member and dance teacher at South Coast Performing Arts in Tustin – said that it feels "surreal" returning to performing arts in the eye of the post-pandemic. "It feels like you're reliving a memory but in the present. Or you're in a dream but it's real life! Because it was something we did every day for six months, it kind of popped back into place, but at the same time we took a year-and-a-half off and a lot has happened in that space. Though theatre looks different

SEGERSTROM PRESENTS ROCK MUSICAL JESUS CHRIST SUPERSTAR

BY SAM MACHADO

now – a masked audience and crew, testing multiple times a week plus new protocols – it's thrilling to be back."

Now that live theater is gradually returning, Hammond is hoping that the arts will change for the better. "I hope theatre moves forward and we find a new normal because during 2020 there were a lot of important discussions being had as to what we wanted Broadway to look like moving forward and we are still having those conversations today. There is a lot of work to do, but also a lot of great work has been done in recent months."

According to Hammond, this version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* will be similar

to listening to the album, but audiences will see it on the stage without a literal narrative. "It's what you may see in your mind as you listen to the original record which was never intended to be a stage play when it was composed." There also won't be an intermission in this version so fans will get a true album experience from watching this production. "The design of our show is very avante garde and incredibly beautiful, and I can't wait for superfans to experience it!"

This tour also features Alvin Crawford as Caiphas, Tommy Sherlock as Pilate, and Tyce Green as Annas. Christian A. Guerrero joins as standby for Jesus and Judas. The rest of the ensemble includes

David Andre, Sara Andreas, Courtney Arango, Wesley J. Barnes, Milena J. Comeau, Lydia Ruth Dawson, Derek Ferguson, Brian Golub, Garfield Hammonds, Quiana Holmes, Darrell T. Joe, Sheila Jones, Jacob Lacopo, Paul Louis Lessard, Eric A. Lewis, Tommy McDowell, Danny McHugh, Jenny Mollet, Sarah Parker, Erick Patrick, SandyRedd, Cooper Stanton and Chelsea Williams.

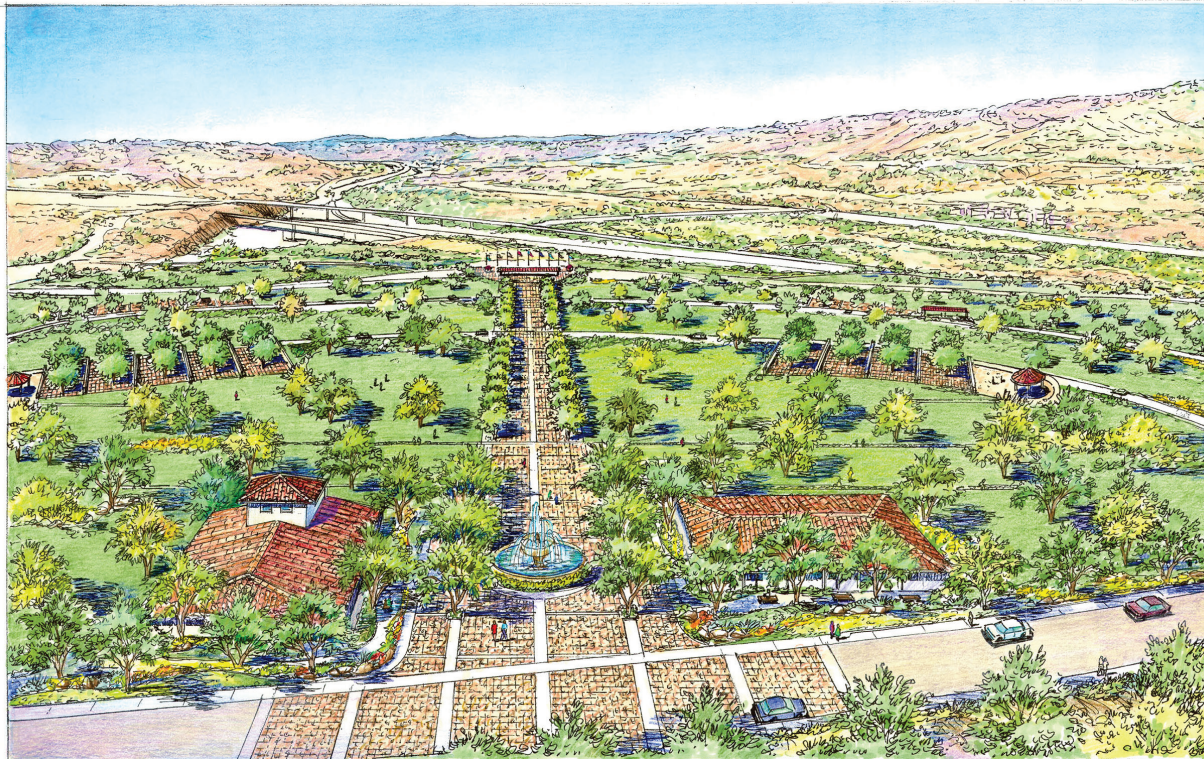
The creative team includes Timothy Sheader as director, Drew McOnie as choreographer, Tom Deering and David Holcenberg as music supervisors, Keith Caggiano and Nick Lidster for sound design, Lee Curran for lighting design and Tony Award nominee Tom Scutt for costume design.

Single tickets for *Jesus Christ Superstar* start at \$28 and are now available online at SCFTA.org, at the Box office at 600 Town Center Drive in Costa Mesa, or by calling (714) 556-27872, for inquiries about group ticket discounts for 10 or more, call the Group Services offices at (714)755-0236.

Masks are required at all times for all patrons and visitors regardless of vaccination status in all indoor spaces at Segerstrom Center.

IRVINE WILL SUPPORT VETERANS CEMETERY AT GYPSUM CANYON SITE

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



VIEW B - ARTIST RENDERING GYPSUM CANYON CEMETERY DEVELOPMENT ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA



06/28/2021

VIEW B - ARTIST RENDERING GYPSUM CANYON CEMETERY DEVELOPMENT ORANGE COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

After hours of discussion on Tuesday, Oct. 26, the Irvine City Council voted 4-1 on a resolution that supports the idea of building a veterans cemetery at the Gypsum Canyon site in Anaheim Hills.

Dozens of veterans attended Tuesday night's meeting, asking the council to support the resolution. For many veterans groups in Orange County, the 4-1 vote brings an end to a yearslong battle between political interests and solidifies Irvine's commitment to ensuring local veterans have a final resting place.

Irvine Councilmember Larry Agran was the only council member to not support the Anaheim Hills site. In fact, Agran accounts for the only dissenting vote among

more than 30 different city councils in Orange County.

In a phone call with *Irvine Weekly*, Agran, who has been the county's most outspoken leader to voice support for the ARDA site, explained that he was aware that his lone vote was the county's only vote that was not in support of the Gypsum Canyon site.

"Yes, I am the only no vote because I am dedicated to following the law and putting veterans memorial park and cemetery where the voter of the city of Irvine – which is the ARDA site," Agran said.

Yet, after the Oct. 26 vote, Agran said "it remains to be seen" how realistic of an opportunity the goal of building the project on the ARDA site will be.

"[This] was simply an introduction

of a resolution that has no binding effect whatsoever, and if in the end there's a determined effort to get the veterans cemetery state-funded, studied, approved and built at Gypsum Canyon, then that will be the case," he said. "Meanwhile the people of the city of Irvine, by initiative, directed the City Council to get busy building the veterans memorial at the ARDA site in the Great Park – I'm still committed to that course."

The discussion over where to place the veterans cemetery in Orange County has been ongoing for nearly a decade. In June, the Irvine City Council failed to reach a decision on where to place the project, despite a pair of state-funded studies from the California Department of Veterans Affairs.

In her opening statements Tuesday, Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan said she was pleased to be able to support the Gypsum Canyon site, "given the current dynamic."

"Tonight's resolution to join the other 33 cities in Orange County, who have all passed unanimous resolutions, and our assembly members and congressional representatives, who are in support of the construction of a veterans cemetery at the proposed Gypsum Canyon site is the right move," she said. "Irvine has been a leader in this effort, thanks in large part to my colleague, Councilmember Larry Agran. And while in the end, it did not pencil out for ARDA to be the location, I am happy to see our advocacy on this important issue."

Nick Berardino, a Vietnam veteran and president of the Veterans Alliance of Orange County (VALOR), said Tuesday night's vote was a pivotal moment for veterans groups.

For Berardino, this is a victory that was made possible through the commitment of the leadership on the Irvine City Council. Alternatively, Berardino said Agran's dissenting vote on the resolution also sends a political message to local veterans.

"You can see that you have four council members who have very strong leadership, and are following what they believe to be the best interests of the community. It's clear we have some strong leaders in those four spots," Berardino said in an interview with *Irvine Weekly*.

As for the next steps, Berardino, who has spent decades advocating for veteran groups in Orange County, said he is majorly optimistic, adding that work on the Gypsum Canyon veterans cemetery project is already underway.

"As we move forward – as we speak – the county and [Orange] County Cemetery District are preparing all the documents, along with the city of Irvine, to begin the entitlement process. So, work on the project is already underway," he said. "The next step is to get the legislation that's necessary to move forward with from the state and we are extremely confident that the Legislature will listen to the entire county."

DEVELOPMENT REQUEST POSTPONED

CONCERNS OVER ASPHALT FUMES DELAY IRVINE PLANNING COMMISSION VOTE.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



The Irvine Planning Commission voted to postpone a decision on the Irvine Company's request for more than 200 acres of land for new development in Orchard Hills, citing the continual complaints of odor from North Irvine residents, who have steadily brought forth concerns over the potentially harmful levels of toxic fumes emanating from the All American Asphalt facility.

In a 3-2 vote on Thursday, Oct. 21, the Irvine Planning Commission opted to delay a decision to approve a resolution for the Vesting Tentative Tract Map 19020. The tract, in Orchard Hill's Neighborhood 4, would allocate 250 acres of land for 500 new homes and include child care sites. Neighborhood 4 is located 0.66 miles from the All American Asphalt facility, according to the resolution.

Commissioner Chair Jeff Pierson and Commissioner Stephen Huang voted against postponing the decision for further discussion. Pierson added that he would like to see the Master Plan come back in six months and take a

vote then.

During Thursday night's meeting, city planning commissioners listened to more than two hours of public testimony from dozens of Irvine residents that continued to emphasize that the city of Irvine has not done enough to protect its citizens from what they say are toxic levels of emissions being emitted from the plant.

However, studies performed by the city of Irvine and the South Coast Air Quality Management District indicate that levels do not exceed thresholds that pose a threat to public health.

Residents say they want the facility shut down completely. Yet Pete Carmichael, director of community development for the city of Irvine, advised the commission that the city of Irvine did not have jurisdiction in terms of controlling the land the facility operations on.

"From a regulatory land-use standpoint, so long as they're operating consistently with those permits, we don't have the opportunity to shut down the plant," Carmichael said.

Prior to the vote, commissioners cited the concerns from Irvine residents regarding the All American Asphalt plant, adding that they could not approve a resolution due to the degree of conflicting data between what residents say are continual noxious odors, and reports from AQMD that state the opposite.

Commissioner Stephen Huang, who was appointed by Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan, said he hoped Senator Dave Min could assist with the residents' concerns over the studies performed by AQMD. "We're dealing with a difficult issue. Certainly, we want to take residents' concerns into the calculation and formulation yet it seems we are contractually obligated now through state regulation that we are obliged to follow," Huang said. "The residents' dissatisfaction with AQMD should really be taken up with the state - I hope [Dave Min] can help us out in relaying the concern of the resident here in regard to American Asphalt."

Commissioner Jong Limb, who was appointed by Irvine Vice Mayor Tammy Kim, proposed the motion that

would carry the discussion to November 4, adding that he could not get behind approving the resolution knowing that so many residents were concerned about the potential toxicity of fumes being produced by the All American Asphalt plant.

"My leanings frankly are to get more data, more information, to feel more comfortable with what it is we're looking at because I don't feel 100 percent comfortable that I'm on one side or the other at this point - I understand both sides, I'm trying to be fair about it," Limb said. "For now, I think the best solution is to move the asphalt plant to somewhere else further away."

Orchard Hills resident Kim Konte is co-founder of Non-Toxic Neighborhoods. Konte said noxious fumes from the asphalt facility constantly impacts her children's life.

After the meeting Thursday, Konte said she was optimistic to see the testimony of Irvine residents make an impact on the majority of the Planning Commission.

"This is one small step in the right direction. Three commissioners understood the importance of hitting pause. This is about protecting kids from the largest single source polluter of known carcinogens in the city. We want the Irvine Company to be part of the solution," she said. "Honestly, given the huge amount of influence that developers have across the Irvine City Council, we were holding onto the hope that common sense and compassion for human life would win over the desire for corporate profits."



PHOTOS BY KIM KONTE, NON-TOXIC NEIGHBORHOODS

ART

IN LIVING COLOR

REDISCOVERING THE IRREPRESSIBLE BAY AREA ARTIST HENRIETTA BERK.

BY LIZ GOLDNER

Henrietta Berk rejoiced in combining figurative, abstract, expressionist and fauve influences in her paintings. Working from her Oakland, California studio in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, she began composing her artworks by squeezing large swaths of brightly colored oils onto the canvasses. She then picked up brushes and palette knives, swirling the paint into portraits, everyday scenes, landscapes and still lifes – while dancing to popular music of the day, an activity maintaining her elegant socialite figure.

As an intuitive painter whose focus was the freedom, joy and creative delight experienced through artmaking, Berk elicited ongoing praise. Critic Miriam Dungan Cross wrote about her in 1962: "Energy released in interacting color and paint action express her concept of the inner dynamics of all things. This enormous vitality, skillfully contained within the composition, results not only from exuberant contemporary execution, with its lush pigments and happy accidents, but from her vision..."

If you haven't heard of Berk (1919-1990), who was well-known in the Bay

Area art world during her lifetime, but later faded into oblivion, Mark Hilbert (founder with his wife Jan of the Hilbert Museum of California Art, and Chapman University trustee) is determined to change this situation. After consulting with Santa Monica art dealer Steven Stern, Hilbert recognized the brilliance of Berk's work.

Stern explained, "One day while searching online auction sites, I glanced at a Berk painting and was awestruck by its exceptional quality. I had stumbled across the most meaningful discovery of my career. After I purchased four Berk paintings, I was amazed at her mastery of color, control of design and confident brushwork, the hallmarks of a highly skilled, well-taught artist. I also discovered her tutelage by artist Richard Diebenkorn, extensive exhibition history, fiery personality and her Hollywood fame, as many prominent actors, musicians and industry icons collected her work."

Stern also learned that before actively embracing painting, Berk was a traditional 1950s-era housewife and vivacious socialite whose husband was ambivalent about her artistic yearnings.



"Beach Sunset"
On loan to the Hilbert Museum
from the Neville and Cindy
Johnson Collection.

But spurred by her love of art, she began taking evening classes, studying under several Bay Area painters, and soon began achieving prominence in the Northern California art world.

After purchasing her painting, "Wading," Stern showed it to Mark Hilbert, explaining his vision to mount a retrospective and to publish a catalogue of her work. "Mark immediately recognized her talent," Stern said, "stating that he loved the painting, would like to acquire it and hang it prominently in his museum."

Hilbert added, "When I first saw her work, I was absolutely floored by her

brilliant use of color, and her thickly laid-on brushstrokes that add so much texture to her paintings. I bought my first Berk painting shortly thereafter."

In August 2021, the Hilbert Museum opened "Henrietta Berk: In Living Color," curated by Gordon McClelland, the first major exhibition of her work since 1981. It is the museum's largest one-person show with 43 paintings from 18 collectors and from Mark and Jan Hilbert's collection. Museum Director Mary Platt said, "The Hilbert Museum is proud to bring the work of this brilliant artist, who first flourished in an era and in a milieu that challenged woman artists,



"Picnic"
The Hilbert Collection.



"Wading"
On loan to the Hilbert Museum
from the Stephen Foster Collection.

ART



"Oakland Hills"
On loan to the Hilbert Museum
from the Witt Family Collection.

back to the fore where she belongs."

"In Living Color," which is filled with richly textured, colorful oils, depicts Bay Area scenes and portraits while bridging abstraction with representation. Yet Berk's paintings diverge from the California Scene Paintings that have characterized Hilbert Museum shows since its 2016 opening. The California Scene Painting genre includes oils, watercolors and gouaches featuring landscapes, cityscapes and rural scenes as backdrops for people at work and at play. The paintings focus on culturally relevant settings in California, primarily from the 1930s through the 1970s.

The jaw-dropping "In Living Color," indicating a broadening of horizons for the Hilbert, is prescient for its future. What new art genres will the museum explore in the coming years, especially after its 2023 expansion with twice as much gallery space?

The Berk exhibition is accompanied by the beautifully illustrated catalog, "In Living Color: The Art and Life of Henrietta Berk." This literary expression of Stern's vision elucidates how Berk unearthed her artistic talents and sensibilities, becoming a major figure in the Bay Area art scene and later in Southern California, winning many prizes along the way.

One of Berk's earliest paintings, "Me or Façade" (c 1960), a self-portrait of a woman with a red beehive hairdo, illustrates her courageous approach to paint application and bold use of color. She is quoted as saying, "Color has a profound impact on one's mood." Her "Model in Red" (1962), displayed at the exhibition entrance, and possibly another self-portrait, demonstrates Berk's range of styles and technical proficiency.

"Wading" (1961) features a mother and three children frolicking in the blue and green water with a Northern California landscape forming the background.

"Summer Romance" (1962), a poignant scene of a couple relaxing on a beach, comprises broad expressionistic brushstrokes. "Lunch Gossips" (1962) includes brightly clad, fashionably dressed woman enjoying each other's company during a sun-drenched afternoon. With white impasto paint filling the background, the scene could be from the artist's own life.

Later paintings – expressionist landscapes in deep reds, oranges, greens and blues – include "View From Clarewood" (1963-65), "Oakland Hills" (1967), "The Valley, Vacaville" (1967) and "Tomales Bay" (1967-69). Her Still Lifes, composed of wild bursts of flowers, some inspired by Russian artist Chaim Soutine, express her bold exploration of painting styles and subject matter.

Berk's son, observing her artistic process as a small child, is quoted in the catalog: "I was amazed how filled with intent and focused she became in the moment while maintaining a sense of fluidity, grace and power." Indeed, Henrietta Berk's prolific artistic output grew from her passion for creativity, from her active social life filled with scintillating events and intense dialogues, and from the many people she appreciated and loved, including her children and friends, and then used as models for her paintings.

"Henrietta Berk: In Living Color" is on view through January 15, 2022. Hilbert Museum of California Art, 167 N. Atchison Street, Orange, CA. Tue. - Sat., 11 am - 5 pm. 714-516-5880. Free. www.hilbertmuseum.org

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- Jim and Carol Hoffman

SPOTLIGHT ON POKE

BEST PLACES TO FIND FRESH POKE IN IRVINE.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

Thanks to the fact Irvine hosts an amazing selection of eateries ranging from Michelin Star-rated ramen bowls to small coffee shops serving some of the freshest brews in Orange County, it may be easy to overlook Irvine's restaurants serving fresh poke on the daily.

So, to help give Irvine's local purveyors of poke some of the spotlight, here are a few Irvine-based poke spots that should be added to your must-try list as soon as possible.

MAKA POKE & TERIYAKI

Some die-hard poke fans in Irvine might call Maka Poke & Teriyaki a hidden gem, due to its slightly concealed location toward the back of a business complex on Red Hill Ave in Irvine. Maka Poke offers customizable three to five scoop poke bowls with a variety of different proteins including seared albacore, spicy tuna and tofu.

With standard toppings like fried garlic, wasabi and ginger, Maka Poke's true claim to fame might be in its long list of sauces, which ranges from mild house sauce to "Armageddon."

With an early closing time of 4:00 p.m., Maka Poke & Teriyaki might be a perfect stop those looking for a late weekday lunch.

Hours

Monday - Friday 10:00 am - 4:00 pm

Saturday-Sunday: Closed

Maka Poke & Teriyaki is located at 17300 Red Hill Ave #190, Irvine, CA 92614

POKE DOT

With two bowl-size options, Poke Dot in Irvine likes to keep things simple. Featuring a variety of proteins including octopus, scallops, along with the traditional salmon and spicy tuna. While Poke Dot does not seem to have a website, online orders can be made through GrubHub and DoorDash, by phone or in person.

Hours:

Monday - Saturday: 10:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Sunday: 10:30 - 7:00 p.m.

Poke Dot Irvine is located at 17921 MacArthur Blvd, Irvine, CA 92614

BAY POKE

With nearly a half-dozen locations spread out between Irvine and Pasadena, Bay Poke is all business when it comes to their poke preparation. With a variety of proteins including calamari, scallops and shrimp, poke lovers can load up bowls any way they please in two to four scoop poke bowls.

In addition to customizable poke bowls, Bay Poke also specializes in boba tea. Known as "Bay Tea" Bay

Poke's tear bar features a long list of boba beverages, including milk tea, Thai tea, strawberry and winter melon.

Hours

Monday - Sunday: 11:00 a.m. - 8:00 p.m.

Bay Poke in Irvine is located at 6632 Irvine Center Dr, Irvine, CA 92618

FISH DISTRICT

In terms of poke, Fish District offers salmon and ahi tuna in a variety of different flavor renditions, including Yuzu and Wasabi for those that like it spicy. Poke bowls come with chilled sushi rice, seaweed salad, nori, cucumber, pickled ginger. If you're in the mood for red meat, Fish District also offers a Marinated Skirt Steak Bowl. With several locations across Southern California, Irvine's Fish District is located in the Woodbridge Town Center. While poke is a solid fixture on Fish District's menu, the seafood chain also offers other fare, including clam chowder, along with fish tacos and wraps.

Hours

Monday - Thursday: 11:00 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Friday - Saturday: 11:45 - 9:00 p.m.

Sunday: 11:45 - 8:30 p.m.

Fish District is located at 6278 Irvine Blvd, Irvine, CA 92620

POKE ME

With a pair of locations in Los Angeles, along with a Palos Verdes store, Poke Me's Irvine location was a no-brainer to include. Poke Me uses a sleek Instagram feed, with hard light and minimal vibes to showcase

its picturesque love affair with poke bowls and wraps.

With the usual suspects - salmon, tuna, and spicy tuna on the list of protein to fill bowls and poke burritos - Poke Me also offers Albacore, Spicy Albacore, Octopus and Yellowtail (premium) as options, with nearly a dozen different sauces to choose from.

Hours

Monday - Sunday: 11:30 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Poke Me is located at 18066 Culver Dr, Irvine, CA 92612

H2O POKE & GRILL

Perhaps the only Irvine-based poke spot on TikTok, H2o Poke prides itself on sushi burritos and poke tacos, which are served in a seaweed shell. With a modestly-sized dining room inside the Irvine Market Place, H2o Poke is designed with the customer's preferences in mind.

Hours

Monday - Sunday: 11:00 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

H2o Poke is located at 13262 Jamboree Rd, Irvine, CA 92602

POKENOYA IRVINE

With bowl sizes ranging from three to five scoops, Pokenoya in Irvine allows customers to fill their bowls with sushi or brown rice, spring mix, or tortilla chips. In addition to serving traditional poke fare like regular and spicy tuna, along with salmon, Pokenoya also lists ginger and popcorn shrimp, tako and spicy bay scallops.

In addition to customizable bowls, Pokenoya also makes eight signature house-made bowls like the Dynamite, which is served with a choice of white or brown rice, seared salmon & scallop, spicy tuna and crab meat. Topped with cucumber, white onion, green onion, jalapeño, teriyaki sauce and Jane on Fire spicy house sauce.

Hours

Monday - Friday: 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Saturday - Sunday: Closed

Pokenoya is located at 216 Technology Dr, Suite J



PHOTOS COURTESY OF POKE ME





PHOTO BY VICKI BERNDT

GOD BLESS THE GO-GO'S

HALL OF FAME JOY FOR GLASS CEILING SMASHERS.

BY BRETT CALLWOOD

Each of the members of the Go-Go's had pretty much given up on getting into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. Having released their *Beauty & the Beat* debut album in 1981, they became eligible 25 years later, so 2006. But the years kept passing without so much as a nomination and, after a few of those cold shoulders, the ladies said "fuck it then."

To be fair to the HOF, the precedent definitely isn't to induct artists in chronological order. This is for the best; honestly, we'd still barely be out of the '60s if artists were inducted in order of forma-

tion and/or debut release. It would start to feel stale, and young people en masse would struggle to give a shit. They need to mix it up to keep it fresh, to stop it from feeling like a club for people outside of the youth's plane of existence. But still, even holding onto that for balance, the Go-Go's should have been in years ago. The glass ceilings that they smashed, the walls that they plowed through – their inclusion is certainly not before time.

While the Runaways came before them, the commercial success that the debut album achieved was unprec-



PHOTO BY GINA SCHOCK

edented for an all-female rock band at that time. Their legacy is one of hammering the patriarchy in its own backyard (the misogynistic music scene). No gimmicks – they wouldn't know how. This was simply a group of talented

musicians writing and releasing incredible music, and blasting it until people listened. They were unignorable.

So here we are in 2021, 15 years after they were first eligible for inclusion, and the Go-Go's were finally inducted

MUSIC

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into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame on Oct. 30. Some artists on the punk end of the spectrum, notably John Lydon and the Sex Pistols, do all they can to play the HOF and its significance down.

Lydon famously wrote of the Pistols' induction: "Your museum. Urine in wine. We're not coming. We're not your monkey and so what?" The Go-Go's don't feel that way. Any frustration about not getting in dissipated when they did.

"The truth is, we felt for so many years that we were going to be inducted next year, no next year, etc," says drummer Gina Schock. "That went on and on until finally, we were like 'ok fuck it.' We're not going to be inducted. We can live with that. Fuck 'em. That's how we all were. Then we get nominated and we were like, 'Oh my god, maybe it's going to happen.' All of a sudden, we were like 'YES! It's gonna be great.' We were like a bunch of kids, pissed off that we weren't being recognized in the way we thought we should be. And then we were all happy. It's so cool."

The Go-Go's back story has been told many times, expertly through last year's *The Go-Go's* documentary movie. But to recap, the band formed in 1978, Belinda Carlisle and Jane Wiedlin joined by original bassist Margot Olavarria and original drummer Elissa Bello. Charlotte Caffey soon joined to complete the early lineup, then Bello was replaced by Gina Schock. A year later, Olavarria was out and Kathy Valentine was in, and the classic lineup was in place. The movie does a great job of recalling the Go-Go's place in the early Los Angeles punk scene. Indeed, prior to the band's formation, Carlisle played drums with

the Germs. More on that later.

"We were living in the moment," Carlisle says. "It was all about being cool on the scene. It was a girl's club. Of course we'd joke around, wondering if we'd be rich and famous. But I think it was just about being cool on the scene, and being in a band because everybody else was. We never had a problem filling a club from the very beginning. Then, maybe the goals changed a bit. We wanted to do this for a living and have a career with this. So we may have taken it more seriously down the line. I think after we went to the UK and came back, and Gina joined the band, that was when we got really serious about having the Go-Go's as a career."

"I went to L.A. wanting to make it in the music business, and my template for bands were all career-long sustained careers," adds Valentine. "Once we were successful, I couldn't imagine giving it up or walking away. There wasn't a Rock Hall to aspire to, but I certainly wanted to be in a band that would grow and evolve, album after album after album. That's what I wanted. I didn't want to break up in three years."

Sadly things didn't quite go to plan, at least at first. *Beauty & the Beat* was followed by *Vacation* in '82 and then *Talk Show* in '84. Both were great albums, but they failed to reach the commercial heights of the debut. That's not an uncommon story, but the Go-Go's began to disintegrate. Wiedlin was the first to depart in 1984; Valentine shifted to guitar and Paula Jean Brown came in on bass for a year. When Carlisle (with Caffey) decided to split and embark on a solo career, the game was up. Read her book *All I Ever Wanted*, and it's clear that Valentine was devastated. Carlisle, as we all know, enjoyed an immensely successful solo career. Wiedlin did well too ("Rush Hour" anyone?).

It wasn't until the start of the new millennium that they got back together, the *God Bless the Go-Go's* album coming out in 2001. It seems incredible that 20 years have passed since *that* record. They worked from their separate corners of the world to record the "Club Zero" single last year and that was great, but there's no sign of a new full-length album.

"I've learned to never say never in the Go-Go's," says Carlisle. "Something comes up and then it makes sense. I don't know about recording a full album because that takes a lot of work and it's a big commitment. All of us have very full personal lives and careers out-

side of the Go-Go's. But I'm not opposed to it. I think *God Bless the Go-Go's* is such an amazing album. *Beauty and the Beat* and *God Bless the Go-Go's* – I don't like one more than the other. I think they're both equally my favorite. 'Club Zero' came out and that felt really good. If something came along that made sense, I've learned not to say never."

"The problem with us recording is we are so spread out over the whole world basically," adds Wiedlin. "Belinda's now living in Mexico City, and I left Mexico last year to move to Hawaii. Kathy is in Austin, Charlotte in Los Angeles and Gina in San Francisco. The logistics of it are so crazy, and personally, I've embraced the retired life. I'm not sure I could make that kind of commitment. To make a really good album, it takes a really long time. The songwriting process alone would take forever."

Besides everything else, their importance to female musicians can't be overstated.

"None of us thought about it at the time, we were too busy doing it," says Schock. "We're musicians, we're friends, we love what we're doing and now we're selling records. People love what we do. How fucking awesome is that? Guess what? We just got to be girls. It's great how it all works out in the end. I can't tell you how many young girls and women tell me, 'You know what, you guys are the reason I started playing.' To me, that's our greatest contribution. Other folks, getting them interested in doing something they wanted to do but might have been a bit afraid because they were a girl in a man's world. It's all different now, and we were unknowingly, unwittingly, a part of that change."

"We broke down barriers because we continued," adds Caffey. "That's how

we continue to break down barriers. But honestly, there's still a tremendous amount of sexism and all sorts of isms all over the place and we all know that. I guess you just chip away at it, is the best you can do."

So here we are in 2021, and the Go-Go's were finally inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. It seems entirely fitting that former Germ Pat Smear went in the same night, with the Foo Fighters.

Finally, we have to ask the five artists about the future for the Go-Go's. The documentary was a huge success, and the *Head Over Heels* musical (featuring the music of the Go-Go's) opens on November 9. There are shows scheduled too.

"I have my book coming out [*Made in Hollywood: All Access with the Go-Go's*] – I'm very excited about that," says Schock. "And I'm having a gallery opening. I'll be showing my photographs – first time ever. That's at a gallery on Sunset Blvd called Mr Music Head on November 6. So much to organize. I'm on the phone every day. The musical is coming back again. We're doing Go-Go's shows in December, and then next year we're playing stadiums with Billy Idol in the UK."

"I'm working on a new pop album, so fans can't complain too much," says Carlisle in conclusion. "I'm really busy with my solo career, kind of under the radar. I'm really lucky I have a great back catalog to work from. I just do things that are fun. I have a tour in Australia coming up. I just had to postpone my UK tour because of COVID. For me, playing live, there's nothing like it and I really miss going out on the road."

We miss you all too. *God Bless the Go-Go's!*



PHOTO BY CHRIS CUFFARO



PHOTO BY CHIABELLA JAMES (WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC.)

FRANK HERBERT'S SCI-FI NOVEL DUNE FINALLY, FULLY REALIZED

BY VINCENT VELOTTA

A tyrannical galactic emperor ruthlessly rules the universe. On a desert planet, the father of a teenage boy is brutally murdered. A member of an ancient order utilizes mind control abilities to protect and mentor the boy in the hopes that he's the "chosen one." Sound familiar?

For decades, the *Star Wars* film franchise, created by George Lucas, has been a dominant player in pop culture everywhere. Spanning three trilogies produced between 1977 (*A New Hope*) and 2019 (*The Rise of Skywalker*), a collection of film and television stand-alones, and the prospect for perpetual cash-cow spin-offs under the direction of Disney, the cinematic universe has grossed more than \$10 billion over the past 44 years. But this isn't the story of Luke Skywalker, Emperor Palpatine, and the Jedi that has so thoroughly captured a worldwide audience. This is the story that came before it.

Frank Herbert's 1965 novel, *Dune*, is

the empire-centered space opera that was *Star Wars* before *Star Wars* was even conceived. Despite its considerable influence on Lucas and others, *Dune's* popularity – it's one of the world's best-selling science fiction novels – has not translated well to the big screen, even in our era of endless adaptations of pre-existing stories.

And that's a damned shame. *Dune* not only popularized many of the core elements that turned *Star Wars* into a colossal hit but has inspired other prominent sci-fi and fantasy works, such as *Game of Thrones*, one of television's greatest cinematic and financial achievements. Shouldn't the material that set the template for these billion-dollar franchises join the party with its own big-budget franchise that reinvigorates its beloved story? Well, *Dune* is getting that chance, but it could very well be its last. Director Denis Villeneuve has one try to prove that perhaps the most pivotal sci-fi book ever belongs on the big screen.

Just how pivotal is Herbert's novel? Its

influence on monumental pieces of pop culture ranges from strong similarities to ... well, whatever you want to call what *Star Wars* did. When the original film debuted, in 1977, the author had heard of its rather striking resemblance to his book. "The editor of *The Village Voice* has been calling me and asking me if I have seen *Star Wars* and if I'm going to sue," Herbert told his local newspaper in Port Townsend, Washington. "I will try hard not to sue." Once he saw the movie, though, he'd have to try *really* hard. (Note: Spoilers follow for the many iterations of *Dune*, *Star Wars*, and *Game of Thrones*.)

Dune, for the unfamiliar, is a sprawling tale whose galactic setting is so splendidly rich with history and detail that its sizable appendix is almost required reading in order to comprehend everything Herbert created. Most of the book details the plight of young Paul Atreides, whose ducal father is relocated to the hazardous planet of Arrakis by the reigning Padishah Emperor.

With its daunting heat, endless desert, and severe water deficiency, Arrakis, nicknamed Dune, is a character in itself. As the only known source of the uber-valuable natural resource "spice" – a narcotic that not only prolongs life and transforms cognitive abilities but makes space travel possible – the planet is rife with the kind of corruption endemic to any feudal society. Paul and his mother, Jessica, have everything taken from them when the family's patriarch, Duke Leto, is murdered at the hands of the Emperor and his vile accomplice, Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, sending the displaced mother and son into the depths of the unfamiliar desert. But Paul is trained by his mother in the ways of the Bene Gesserit – a women-led order that utilizes advanced combat and mind control skills. Using these powers and acquiring god-like omniscience through his sensitivity to spice, Paul allies with the indigenous Fremen and eventually convinces them that he's the prophetic savior their religion promises. With millions of natives (and some gigantic sandworms) at his back, the young Atreides crushes House Harkonnen and bends the Emperor to his will, avenging his father and installing himself as galactic ruler.

But *Dune* isn't your clichéd revenge tale, with a "chosen one" trope and hap-

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py ending. Woven into the plot are deep ecological commentary, political and religious cynicism, and morally gray characters that prove more compelling than even the inspiringly altruistic hobbits and heinous big-bad Sauron of J.R.R. Tolkien's world. In layman's terms, it takes the narrative complexity of *Game of Thrones* dropped into the *Star Wars* universe to equal what *Dune* had already accomplished half a century ago.

The parallels to *Star Wars: A New Hope* and its ensuing sequels in the original trilogy (*The Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi*) are considerable and aplenty. Skywalker, the franchise's protagonist, lives on a desert planet called Tatooine, where the climate calls for "moisture farms" to produce water via air moisture, similar to the struggles and conditions on *Dune*'s Arrakis. Like Paul's House Atreides, Skywalker's family is brutally killed by an empire – at the head of which is an evil ruler who bends the rest of the galaxy to his will. Instead of the Bene Gesserit, the Jedi are *Star Wars*' ancient guild of supernatural warriors, who use "the Force" (in lieu of "the Voice") as a means of mind control and heightened awareness. Additionally, Luke and Paul both share psychic connections with their sisters. And while everyone knows Carrie Fisher's Princess Leia, fewer are familiar with Paul's sister, *Alia*.

Remember one of the greatest plot twists in cinematic history, when, in 1980, *Empire* revealed that the villainous Darth Vader was Luke's father? Well, Herbert did that first too. Amid the cognitive transformation of Paul's consciousness, he discovers that the culprit responsible for his father's murder, Baron Harkonnen, is actually his maternal grandfather.

And the similarities keep rolling on. In 1983's *Return of the Jedi*, Lucas debuted the infamous gangster Jabba the Hutt, whose giant slug-like body matches the description of one of Herbert's main characters from his 1981 *Dune* sequel, *God Emperor of Dune*. In that same film, Lucas also introduces the Sarlacc – an enormous man-eating creature burrowed in the Tatooine desert, which echoes the gargantuan sandworms that help make *Dune*'s Arrakis so treacherous. Spice is also referenced in the *Star Wars* universe, though instead of being a thematic driving force of corruption and power (oil, anyone?), it's basically just space cocaine. Perhaps that was the true genius of Lucas's work: He made *Star Wars* a marketable *Dune* by simpli-



PHOTO BY CHIABELLA JAMES (WARNER BROS. ENTERTAINMENT INC.)

fying Herbert's concepts of psychological evolution, ecological metaphors, and political intrigue, all of which made the 1965 novel such a dense piece of literature. Unlike Herbert's fat tome, *Star Wars* has proven to be an easily digestible cinematic feast that will continue generating billion-dollar releases and more lightsaber merchandise than Uncle Walt could have imagined in his wildest dreams.

And no, *Star Wars* is not a complete rip-off of *Dune*; the plots have some major differences. But the sheer popularity of Lucas's empire – you know you've tried to use the Force at least once in your life – can leave a bad taste in your mouth when you know where most of it originated. So many of the most memorable aspects of *Star Wars* (the Jedi and the Force, Vader delivering the immortal line "No ... I am your father," the romanticism of desert wastelands) were foreshadowed by *Dune*. Herbert himself recognized this; in a biography of the late author, *Dreamer of Dune*, his son Brian asserts that his father was "livid" after finally seeing *Star Wars*, in 1977. Herbert identified 16 points of "absolute identity" he believed the film had borrowed from his novel, and he formed a tongue-in-cheek organization, the "We're Too Big to Sue George Lucas Society," with other sci-fi writers who felt they'd been ripped off. But his

biggest concern, his son writes, was that getting *Dune* to the big screen would now be even more of a challenge, since so many of its important concepts had been preempted cinematically by *Star Wars*. It seems Paul Atreides wasn't the only prophet in town.

Dune's influence doesn't end with *Star Wars*, though in most cases it's less obvious. Take George R. R. Martin's *A Song of Ice and Fire* series, which was developed into the wildly successful *Game of Thrones*. Martin's Eddard Stark is a clear echo of Herbert's Leto Atreides: Both are the patriarchs of noble families, both are eventually doomed by the betrayals of political systems they are too honorable to survive, and both of their deaths serve as jumping-off points for the series' respective plots. Paul's relationship to Arrakis's Fremen is also paralleled by Martin – twice. Jon Snow and Daenerys Targaryen are somewhat messianic figures in *ASOIAF*, and both consequently gather a large following of indigenous tribesmen who become their main source of power: Snow earns the trust and loyalty of the oppressed Wildlings while Targaryen, after being forced into exile, eventually wins the devotion of the desert-dwelling Dothraki warriors. Like Paul's sister, Alia, one of the Stark sisters, Arya (seriously, how hard is it to name sisters in this genre?) becomes a hardened killer as a preteen, joining a

cult called the Faceless Men whose followers can take the shape of any human in the world – a parallel to Herbert's Face Dancers, who share the same power. And where *Dune* has the female-only Bene Gesserit, Martin employs the maeesters – a male-exclusive guild of historians and healers who are similarly suspected of political interference from the shadows. *GOT* is not as heavily indebted as *Star Wars*, but the influence is undeniable. Additionally, the torch of *Dune* and its offspring is constantly being passed to other acclaimed sci-fi and fantasy series, such as Robert Jordan's *The Wheel of Time*, which gets its own Amazon Prime Video adaptation later this year.

So why hasn't the grandmaster of modern science fiction been granted his cinematic due, even 35 years after his death? Well, several filmmakers have tried. The first attempt was a failed venture by Alejandro Jodorowsky, which was shuttered after budgeting and runtime concerns – Jodorowsky believed he needed 10 to 14 hours to tell *Dune*'s story. In 1984, director David Lynch, after such successes as *Eraserhead* and *The Elephant Man*, turned in a film that barely handled the basic tenets of filmmaking, let alone the thematic complexities that Herbert's novel boasts. Lynch's vision was so sloppily put together that even fans of the source material got lost amid the incoherence. The director has since claimed that a

lack of creative control was at the root of the movie's failure (both aesthetically and at the box office), and he has attempted to have his name removed from it entirely. Fans of the book, especially, see the Lynch film at their own peril: Onscreen, Paul's lengthy integration into the stubborn Fremen culture takes about two minutes, Herbert's core theme of messianic cynicism is erased when Paul ends the perpetual drought of Arrakis by summoning a rainstorm, and other fundamental aspects of the novel are either misrepresented or thrown out entirely. Ironically, Lynch turned down an offer to direct *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi* in order to launch his assault on Herbert's book.

In 2000, *Dune* was once again adapted, but this time as a three-part miniseries written and directed by John Harrison. Debuting on the Sci Fi channel and dubbed *Frank Herbert's Dune*, the series was something of a critical success, going on to collect Emmys for cinematography and special effects and spawning a sequel in 2003 based on Herbert's later novels. No masterpiece, *Frank Herbert's Dune* did at least take enough time in retelling the elaborate novel. However, it still couldn't do justice to the author's majestic vision of futuristic technology and such fantastical elements as the Empire State Building-size sandworms. Instead, Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* film trilogy was the adaptation of the moment, expertly implementing the special effects necessary to seamlessly adapt a visually uncompromised version of Tolkien's revered universe. And that is exactly what *Dune* requires: the modern-day blockbuster treatment. Once thought unfilmable because of the entangled plotlines and special effects needed, cinematic technology has finally caught up to the vision of Herbert's magnum opus. The precedent has been set by *Game of Thrones'* adaptation of Martin's phone-book-size novels, where political plotting spanning dozens of point-of-view characters was made intelligible to a worldwide audience—at least for the first few seasons. Recent developments in technology enabled *GOT* to convincingly portray dragons, ice zombies, and Bran Stark's journey to omniscience as he fulfilled the role of the mystical Three-Eyed Raven — another parallel to *Dune's* Paul. And hey — if Jackson had the technology in the early 2000s to flawlessly adapt Tolkien's Middle-Earth, then director Villeneuve can certainly do it now for Herbert's Arrakis.

He needs to. A fan of the original novel

and the mind behind visionary sci-fi epics *Arrival* and *Blade Runner 2049*, Villeneuve must leapfrog both Lynch's thematically bankrupt film and Harrison's accomplished miniseries to craft the kind of immersive blockbuster that had fans flocking to *Game of Thrones*, *Lord of the Rings*, and the most recent *Star Wars* trilogy. Should this new iteration of *Dune* fail despite its world-class director and a hefty \$165 million budget, studios may never look at the novel again.

In deciding up-front to split the story into two films, Villeneuve has wisely bought himself time to re-create Herbert's canon. But has he succeeded where his predecessors failed, crafting a product that can excite fans old and new alike?

The answer is an unequivocal yes.

Villeneuve's new *Dune* is a masterpiece of sensory overload — the powerful soundtrack acts almost as a parallel narrative — that combines the immersivity of *Blade Runner 2049* and the otherworldly tone of *Arrival*, but surpasses both. The director impressively merges the art house with the blockbuster as he properly sets the mood of an inherently dark setting while conveying the majesty and wonder of a civilization set some 20,000 years in the future.

Unlike its predecessors, this *Dune* handles its universe's much-needed exposition with ease. The droning monologues that turned actors into robotic iterations of Herbert's appendices are gone, and in their place are seamless pieces of context that show the necessary information. Free to serve as conveyors of emotion rather than facts, the sparkling ensemble cast (Timothée Chalamet, Rebecca Ferguson, Oscar Isaac, Josh Brolin, Javier Bardem, Zendaya, and more) turn in performances that strengthen the epic's slow-burn flow. But the heart and soul of this film is undoubtedly the sublime pairing of Villeneuve's breathtaking visuals and Hans Zimmer's domineering score (better even than his work on such blockbusters as *Gladiator* and *The Dark Knight*), an extraordinary merger that shapes the movie into an unforgettable cinematic experience.

It's that exemplary pairing of sight and sound that makes *Dune* simultaneously so grand and yet so dire; in a different setting, the universe that Villeneuve has so meticulously crafted could've been misconstrued as hopeful. However, Zimmer's mesmerizing, bass-heavy compositions — at times hanging like a backdrop, other moments brought booming to the fore — keep the imagery grounded

in the story's central themes of deceit and destruction. (In one scene, Villeneuve poetically frames the blistering Arrakis sun setting over the desert, mirroring the famous imagery of *Star Wars'* Tatooine in a way that not so subtly says, *I should've been here first.*) The impact of this cinematic marriage is what turns the consumption of the film into an experience, not a viewing — while the visuals and music are both tremendous accomplishments individually, their union puts the viewer into a trance-like state that makes the 155-minute runtime fly by. In well under three hours, the flow of visual and audible awe created by Villeneuve and Zimmer evokes a level of intensity that the likes of *Star Wars* and *Marvel* wish they could achieve.

While the film takes its time to unravel, the grandeur of Villeneuve's production design is as compelling as the action sequences. From the seemingly infinite barren desert to the pitch-perfect detail of the sets, such as the heavily industrialized Harkonnen homeworld of Giedi Prime and the hopeful, oceanic planet of Caladan, the passion this director has for the source material is apparent, as the intricate descriptions on Herbert's pages come alive onscreen. Unlike Lynch's *Dune* (and many other sci-fi works), the elaborate costuming of the various cultures in the film is exotic enough to induce fascination but not so embellished that it creates caricatures of its subjects. In the same vein, Stellan Skarsgård's Baron Harkonnen is monstrously intimidating, leaving behind the quirky, over-the-top portrayals by Kenneth McMillan (1984) and Ian McNeice (2000). Although limited in screen time, Skarsgård's menacing performance is the film's most memorable. And at long last, an adaptation of *Dune* has found actors that convincingly portray the complexity of its most important characters, Paul (Chalamet) and Jessica (Ferguson); both serve as essential emotional guidelines throughout.

And holy smokes, those worms!

Yes, Herbert's famous sandworms have finally gotten their due, after 56 long years, and their faceless, sharp-toothed enormity is glorious. Some of the film's most suspenseful and visually compelling moments come from the seconds before their arrival, as pulsating sand and exploding dunes warn Atreides's soldiers and Fremen alike of their impending doom. Every appearance by the creatures is as exciting as the last, and perhaps that is Villeneuve's greatest accomplishment: He manages

to elevate the story's tension even when you know what's coming. He keeps the tale of House Atreides fresh with both his worldbuilding and the intimacy of his characters, along with carefully choreographed fight sequences, exhilarating rides on ornithopters (sleek, flying transport vessels that resemble dragonflies), and the surreal sandworm attacks — deserved payoffs that work with the emotional cohesion of the plot.

No adaptation can include everything from the source material, and 2021's *Dune* is no exception. But Villeneuve and co-writers Eric Roth and Jon Spaihts utilized their 2.5 hours well in covering roughly half of Herbert's novel. Is there a missing scene or two that would've filled book fans with gratitude if put to the screen? Surely. But where Harrison's miniseries was bogged down by its faithfulness to the book, Villeneuve's film smartly crops Herbert's story, deploying a fine balance between creative detail and spectacular action in order to pull in both the well-initiated and the newcomer. The only issue here is the somewhat anticlimactic ending, which has been a handicap to film franchises that have attempted to split their source material into multiple parts. But even with that constraint, Zimmer's blasting score manages to get your heart racing for something that doesn't feel entirely possible: a second act that promises even greater scale and splendor.

"So this is the new *Star Wars* movie, right?" one viewer japed before an early screening of the film. The unfortunate reality is that comparisons of Herbert's story to Lucas's historic franchise will be made as *Dune* debuts around the world. But the main goal of this film was never to give Herbert his "credit" for inspiring the sci-fi and fantasy that came after him, it was to bring his incredibly layered story to life in an age when his warnings about fanaticism, technology, and extreme climate are more relevant than ever. Villeneuve, now firmly cemented as a sci-fi master, has done a splendid job getting the ball rolling in that regard, creating a must-see cinematic monument that demands a second part. HBO Max is set to release the film on their streaming service simultaneously with theaters, but please, do Villeneuve's magnum opus justice and see it on the big screen.

Indeed, Villeneuve's film is actually Frank Herbert's *Dune* ... or at least half of it. As Zendaya's character, Chani, promises in the closing moments of the movie: "This is only the beginning."

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