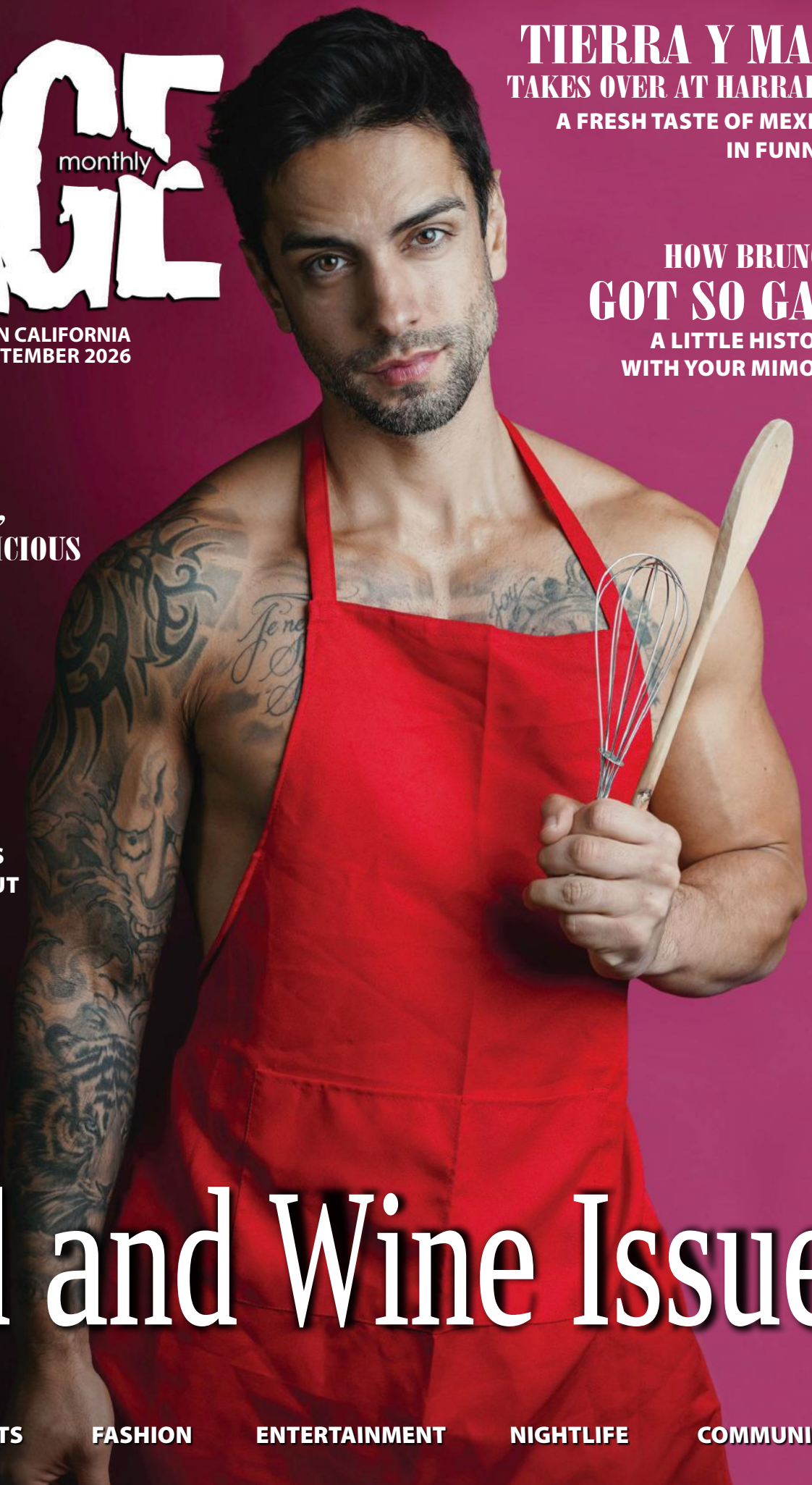
the RAGE monthly
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
SEPTEMBER 2026

TIERRA Y MAR
TAKES OVER AT HARRAH'S
A FRESH TASTE OF MEXICO IN FUNNER

HOW BRUNCH GOT SO GAY
A LITTLE HISTORY WITH YOUR MIMOSA

ROAD TRIP,
BUT MAKE IT DELICIOUS
10 TEMPTING STOPS WORTH THE DRIVE

DINNER AND A SHOW
THE PERFECT PAIRINGS FOR A GREAT NIGHT OUT



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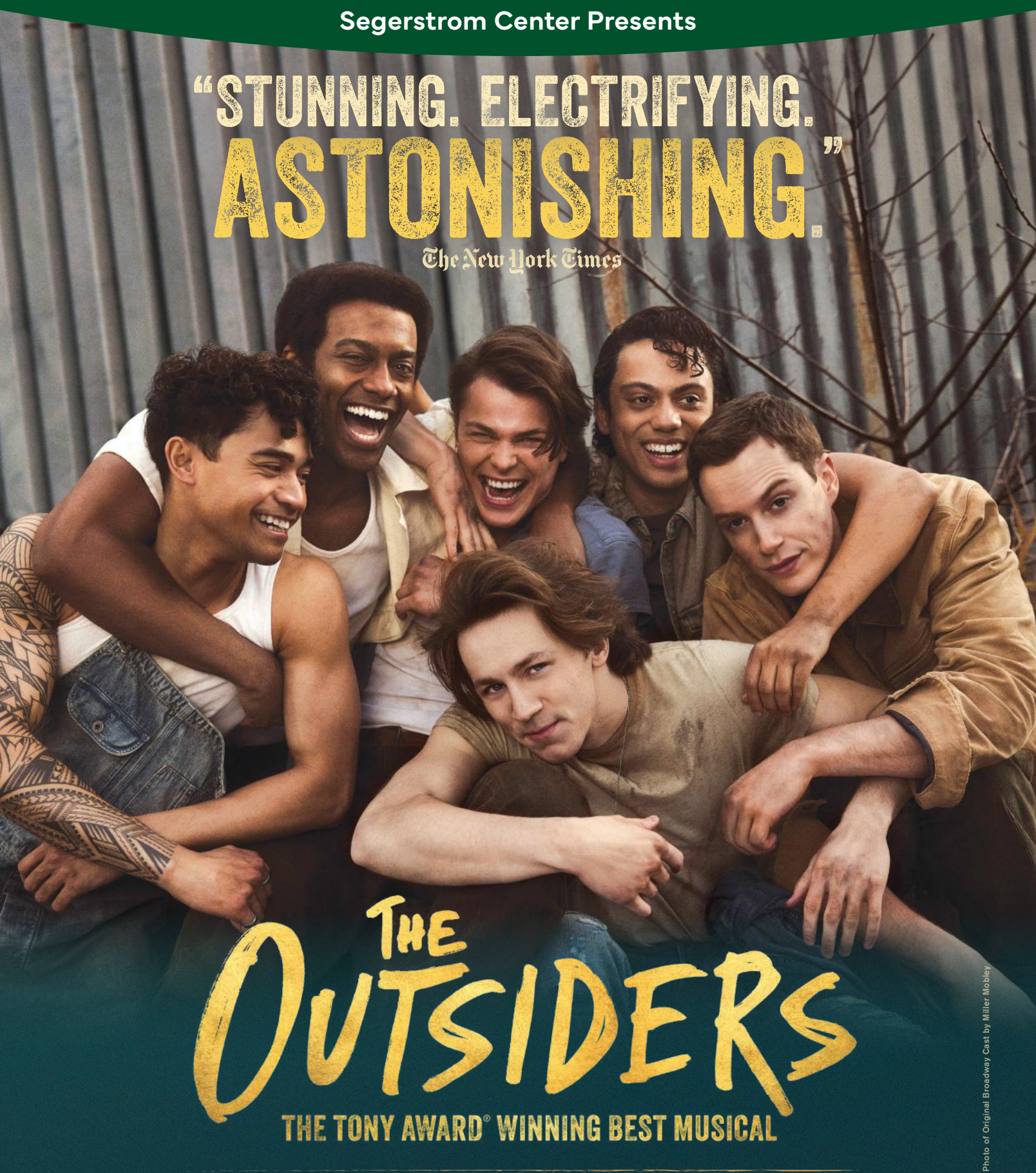

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Artists of Houston Ballet in Stanton Welch's *Sons de L'âme*.
Photo by Sébastien Mathé.

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NO ONE STORY COULD HOLD US ALL

Long Beach QFilm Festival returns with Billie Jean King, Alan Cumming, international discoveries, queer horror and a dark chapter of film history.

Long Beach QFilm Festival will return for its 33rd year. If you were expecting a safe, predictable lineup, this isn't the festival for you.

Running **September 17-20**, the festival will open with one of Long Beach's greatest sports legends. By the end, you'll have visited Southeast Asia's ballroom houses, the Hebrides, a French-Algerian home in Paris, trucking routes in northern Mexico, and 1970s New York leather bars. Queer cinema doesn't stick to one path, and that's exactly how it should be.

QFilms is one of the longest-running LGBTQ+ film festivals in the country. This year, it will start at the **Aquarium of the Pacific's Honda Pacific Visions Theater**, then move to its usual spot at the historic **Art Theatre** for the weekend. Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for the opening reception, and the film will start at 8 p.m. Drinks will be for sale, but popcorn will be free.

Opening night will feature ***Give Me the Ball!*** — a documentary that brings Billie Jean King's story back to the city where much of it began. King tells her journey from tennis champion to someone who spoke up for equality, even when it came at a personal cost. There will also be a recorded message from King for the Long Beach audience. She's a local hero and a global icon, still making an impact after all these years. It's a great way to start the festival.

Paired with it will be ***Kiloran Bay***, a 13-minute musical short starring Alan Cumming and Jack Wolfe, executive produced by Jesse Tyler Ferguson, and set in the Scottish Hebrides. A gay man returns home for a traditional wedding after years away and faces everything and everyone he tried to avoid. It's an unusual but fitting double feature: legend and myth, sport and song, all in one evening. That unlikely pairing tells you exactly what QFilms has planned: no single version of queer life and no interest in staying in one genre.

On the international side, be sure to catch ***The Little Sister***, Hafsia Herzi's French drama that made waves at Cannes. It follows a 17-year-old French-Algerian woman starting university in Paris as she discovers her attraction to women, all while trying not to damage her relationship with her family.

Then there's Mexico's ***On the Road***, which is a whole different animal. A drifter named Veneno hitches a ride with a guarded trucker named Muñeco. Things heat up fast inside all that macho trucking-world scenery, while Veneno's past rides along in the cab with them. It picked up Best Film in Venice Horizons and the Queer Lion at last year's festival. It's been called hot, violent and intimate, so, you know, maybe don't bring your aunt. Unless she's the fun kind.

If the trucking drama doesn't leave you breathless, the ballroom scene probably will.

10s Across the Borders explores the underground ballroom scenes in Thailand, the Philippines, Malaysia and more. It follows three people creating lives and categories worthy of a perfect 10, even as they face homophobia, transphobia and racism. Ballroom culture exists because people built their own stage when no one else would. The language may be competition, but behind every perfect score is a story of survival.

Also on the slate: the Spanish drama ***Maspalomas***, queer horror flick ***CAMP***, ***Free Beer Tomorrow*** and ***Test***, which just won Best Picture at Frameline.

Then there are the shorts, which are one of the best reasons to attend any queer film festival. Watching a feature film is a big commitment, but a shorts block is more like speed dating: You meet a dozen new stories in one sitting, and if one doesn't work for you, another is coming soon. This year, six programs — **Student Shorts**, **Queer and Trans Shorts**, **LatinX Shorts**, **Men in Briefs**, **Women in Shorts** and **SoCal Local Shorts** — give new filmmakers a chance to reach an audience without waiting for a studio executive to notice them.

The festival will close with director Jeffrey Schwarz's ***Mineshaft: The Cruising Murders***. Schwarz, who also made *Vito, I Am Divine* and *Tab Hunter Confidential*, explores the controversy around William Friedkin's 1980 thriller *Cruising*. The Al Pacino film sparked protests over its depiction of a killer targeting gay men in New York's leather bars. Schwarz looks beyond the film to the real murder that partly inspired it and the backlash that followed, reminding viewers real queer people were at the center of it all.

"This year has been challenging for our entire queer community, but when we show up for one another and lift up our fellow community members in solidarity, we can make lasting progress," said **Robert Cano**, QFilms Founder and programmer. "Our ability to combine powerful storytelling with love and celebration is, quite simply, Queer Joy Magic."

Proceeds go to **The LGBTQ Center Long Beach**, which helps over 12,000 people each year with HIV/STI testing, youth and senior programs, counseling, legal assistance, domestic violence support and weekly groups. There are also receptions, performances, Q&As, an ice cream social and a Sunday brunch. Four days of movies clearly aren't enough socializing. The all-access VIP pass gives you entry to more than 60 screenings and priority seating.

Thirty-three years is a long time for any festival, and it's even more impressive for one focused on stories the industry has often ignored, softened, or labeled as "niche." QFilms keeps bringing these stories to the big screen, where they belong. Bring a tennis racket, a scorecard, a trucker cap and something fit for a Scottish wedding. You'll need them all.

No one will ever suggest that this festival is predictable. **qfilmslongbeach.com**

Give Me the Ball

Kiloran Bay

The Little Sister

Mineshaft: The Cruising Murders

On the Road

10s Across the Borders

Test

QUEERCE IS READY FOR ITS CLOSE-UP

Think quinceañera, but queer. Very queer.

Los Angeles LGBT Center's Queerceañera will be back **Saturday, September 26**, taking over The Village at Ed Gould Plaza in Hollywood for its fourth year of queer and trans Latine culture, entertainment and community.

This year's theme is ***Siempre Contigo*** (Always with You), celebrating the people, heritage and traditions that keep queer Latine communities connected. And Queerce is growing up a little, too. The celebration is now a signature fundraising event benefiting the center's programs and services throughout LA.

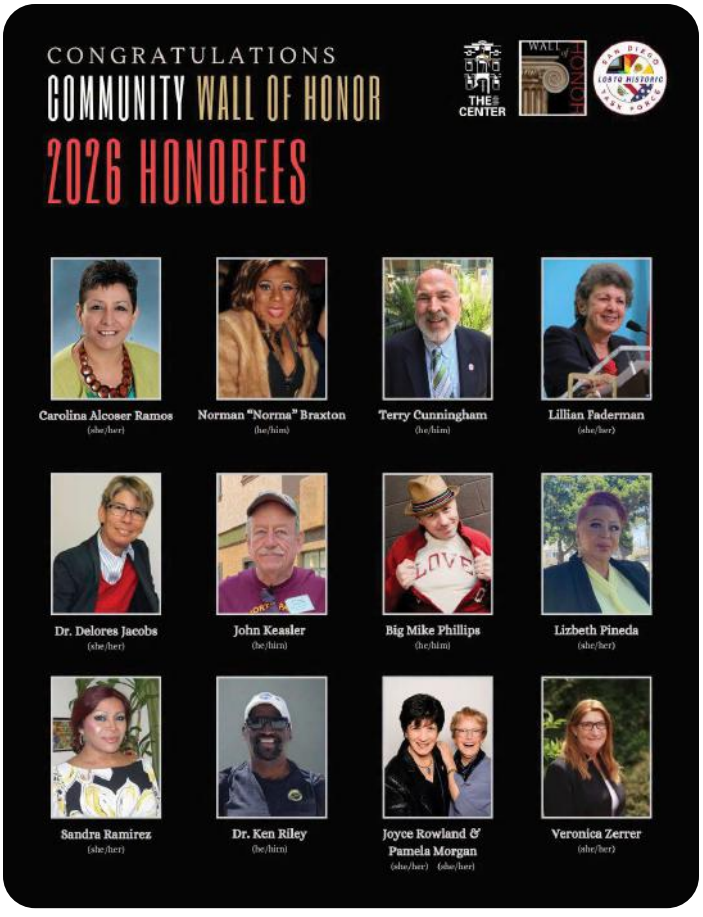
Among those being celebrated will be award-winning journalist **Suzy Exposito**, this year's first announced honoree. Known for her work with *Los Angeles Times'* De Los section, Exposito has built a career telling Latine stories, including LGBTQ+ stories that haven't always gotten the attention they deserve.

Her reaction to the honor may tell you everything you need to know about the evening. Exposito said it has been her life's work to tell LGBTQ+ Latine stories. She then added that it has also been her life's work to be a "bisexual menace."

Okay, we already like her.

Inspired by the traditional quinceañera, Queerce reimagines the coming-of-age celebration as a big queer cotillion, complete with artists, performers, community leaders and lots of reasons to celebrate. More honorees and entertainment are still to be announced. **lalgbtcenter.org/queerce**

Suzy Exposito



HONORING THOSE WHO PAVED THE WAY

Thirteen names. One wall. A whole lot of history.

The **2026 San Diego LGBTQ Wall of Honor Inductee Ceremony** will take place at 6 p.m. **Wednesday, September 23,** at the San Diego LGBT Community Center, adding another group of community leaders, advocates and changemakers to a pretty remarkable list.

This year's honorees will be **Norman "Norma" Braxton, Terry Cunningham, Lillian Faberman, Dr. Delores Jacobs, John Keasler, Pamela Morgan, Lizbeth Pineda, "Big Mike" Phillips, Carolina Ramos, Sandra Ramirez, Dr. Ken Riley, Joyce Rowland** and **Veronica Zerrer**.

These are people whose work helped move our community forward, and making sure that their names and contributions are remembered is exactly why the Wall of Honor exists.

Behind it is longtime Latino and LGBTQ+ activist and City Commissioner **Nicole Murray Ramirez**, who also founded the national LGBTQ Wall of Honor at New York City's historic Stonewall Inn and the Ben Dillingham and Bridget Wilson LGBTQ Veterans Wall at The Center.

Ramirez may have said it best: "We stand on the shoulders of all the honorees who are on this wall, with many being our community's pioneers, trailblazers and heroes. And we are indeed forever grateful to our LGBTQ community center for providing a prestigious space for the Wall and giving it a home."

The Center and the **San Diego LGBTQ Historic Task Force** serve as trustees of the Wall. Honorees are nominated by the community and selected by a board of governors.

We talk a lot about knowing our history. This is a chance to celebrate some of the people who made it. **thecentersd.org**

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SOUTH:
TELEVISION'S FIRST GAY LOVE STORY

In 1959, British television broadcast an 80-minute drama written by Gerald Savory that would become a significant milestone in television history. It would then be buried and forgotten for over 50 years. ***South***, shown as part of ITV's *Play of the Week* series, is a powerful love story teeming with secrecy and emotional conflict. Originally shut down before its debut as a stage play in 1955, *South* found new life when it was adapted for television four years later.

The story takes place in the American Deep South on the brink of the Civil War. The handsome Jan Wicziewsky, a Polish army officer, escapes the Prussians in Europe and finds refuge on a wealthy southern plantation. His arrival creates tension, particularly with Regina, the plantation owner's niece from the North.

At first, it appears the story is set to mimic the classic "enemies to lovers" pipeline. However, the play takes an unprecedented turn when officer Eric MacClure arrives at the plantation. Eric's presence stirs something in Jan — something not seen before on television. Jan is ultimately confronted with feelings that he is unable to acknowledge out loud.

The central conflict of *South* is therefore not simply a romantic triangle, but something much more layered. Jan's will-they/won't-they relationship with Regina represents the kind of love that society expects him to pursue, while his feelings for Eric represent the kind of love he deeply desires but cannot admit.

The audience is then launched into an exploration of the psychological pressure created by secrecy, yearning and social expectations. What is especially profound in the writing and direction of the play is that, rather than presenting Jan's feelings as scandalous perversion, his emotional struggle is treated with earnest dignity as a truly complex human experience.

This was particularly significant in 1959. Britain was still years away from decriminalizing homosexuality. The original stage play's production was halted because of its homosexual themes, but by the time *South* was adapted for television, public opinion was beginning to change.

The portrayal of main character Jan Wicziewsky by actor **Peter Wyngarde** was especially compelling. As art often imitates life, Wyngarde's personal story reflected that of his character's as he too was hiding his attraction towards men. As Jan, Wyngarde had to communicate feelings that the character could not openly express. The drama depends heavily on suggestion and emotional tension rather than explicit assertions — the words "gay" and "homosexual" are not murmured once.

One of the most remarkable aspects of *South* is that it was performed and broadcast live. Most of the dramas in ITV's *Play of the Week* series were not originally recorded and therefore were never intended to survive past their initial broadcast.

Though *South* was an exception to that rule, the production was buried and considered lost. In 2013, however, its archival recording was discovered and disseminated by the British Film Institute. This transformed *South* from an obscure television production into an invaluable artifact of television and cultural history.

The ending of the play is particularly tragic, in the way that many early gay stories were. Jan's love for Eric becomes so overwhelmingly unbearable that he makes a grim, irreversible decision. "At odd times, freedom of will is a crushing weight, and it's not always possible to choose," Jan says in his 11th hour. "I'm in love, as no human being was ever in love before … but I cannot go on living any longer — because the person I love cannot love me."

In a moment of desperation, Jan challenges Eric to a midnight duel by sword, allowing himself to be pierced through the heart by the very person he loves. His actions demonstrate the destructive consequences of repressed feelings and the emotional isolation that comes with them.

The tragedy also reflects the larger atmosphere of the play: As the Civil War approaches, the conflicted characters are surrounded by a greater society also divided by unbending beliefs about identity and social norms.

More than 60 years after its airing, *South* remains a truly groundbreaking representation of gay experience. Its importance comes from the willingness of its creative team to present a difficult subject at a time when doing so would certainly provoke controversy and outcry. The survival of the broadcast makes it even more astounding, allowing modern audiences to see an example of television history that would have otherwise evaporated into thin air given the ephemeral nature of live performance.

What was once a forgotten television play has become a rare surviving record of two societies grappling with changing social norms — one in the 1800s American South coming to terms with its beliefs about slavery and one 100 years later coming to terms with its beliefs about homosexuality.

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HOW BRUNCH GOT SO GAY

From late-night recovery meals to bottomless mimosas and drag queens dancing between the tables, brunch found its natural home with the LGBTQ+ community.

It's Sunday morning. Well, technically it's almost noon, but nobody at the table is interested in judging. The coffee is strong, the mimosas are flowing and at least one person is wearing sunglasses indoors. Someone is telling a story that begins with, "I probably shouldn't tell you this," which guarantees everyone will lean in closer.

A drag queen in a rhinestone bodysuit suddenly appears, does a split next to someone's eggs Benedict and collects a handful of dollar bills — all without spilling a Bloody Mary.

Welcome to brunch! Gay people didn't invent brunch. We just looked at breakfast, decided it started much too early and added cocktails. Frankly, it was only a matter of time.

The word "brunch" first appeared in print in 1895 in an essay by British writer Guy Beringer. He proposed a late Sunday morning meal for people who had enjoyed themselves a little too much on Saturday night. Instead of waking up early for a heavy meal after church, Beringer suggested that people sleep in, meet their friends, and eat a combination of breakfast and lunch.

In other words, more than 130 years ago, this man understood that nobody wants scrambled eggs at 8 a.m. after getting home at 2.

Brunch slowly caught on in the United States during the early 20th century. Hotels and restaurants liked it because it let them attract customers during the long stretch between breakfast and dinner. Diners liked it because brunch came without many rules. You could order pancakes at noon, a hamburger before breakfast officially ended or champagne while respectable people were still drinking coffee.

That freedom might be why LGBTQ+ people embraced brunch so eagerly. Brunch doesn't make you choose — breakfast or lunch, sweet or savory, coffee or cocktails. You can have it all.

Sounds pretty queer to me.

SUNDAY WITH THE FAMILY

For generations, Sunday revolved around church followed by a meal with the family. That tradition wasn't always welcoming to LGBTQ+ people, especially those rejected by relatives or religious communities.

I remember my first "chosen family" brunch after coming out: A mismatched group crowded around a tiny table in a noisy diner, sharing plates, inside jokes and the kind of laughter you only have when you truly belong. Nobody cared who brought what or who was related to whom — what mattered was that you showed up.

So, like we have done in countless other ways, we created our own version.

Brunch became a chance to gather with chosen family. Friends could recover from Saturday night, trade gossip, and spend time together outside the darkness and noise of a nightclub. Nobody needed an invitation, a special occasion or an excuse. You simply called your friends and asked, "Where are we brunching?"

The timing was perfect for gay nightlife, too. Anyone who stayed out until last call was not getting up for breakfast. By noon, however, we could shower, locate our dignity and rejoin society.

Brunch also allowed the party to continue without pretending it was still Saturday night. A mimosa looks cheerful and respectable. It is orange juice, after all — practically a vitamin.

The meal became especially popular in gay neighborhoods where bars, restaurants and cafés were close together. People who saw each other on the dance floor the night before could meet again in daylight. Sometimes it was a happy reunion. Other times, you just pretended not to remember.

Either way, there were pancakes.

ENTER THE QUEENS

Brunch was already pretty gay before drag performers arrived, but drag brunch sealed the deal.

Drag and dining had been sharing space for decades. New York's Club 82 presented drag entertainment beginning in the 1950s. Hamburger Mary's opened in San Francisco in 1972, and eventually became famous for mixing burgers, cocktails and drag at locations around the country.

Lucky Cheng's opened in New York City's East Village in 1993 with drag performers and transgender women working as entertainers and servers. Lips followed in New York and expanded the idea with elaborate themed shows, including gospel brunch.

There is no universally agreed-upon birthplace of drag brunch. It developed gradually as clubs and restaurants discovered that drag could draw a crowd during the daytime. For performers, brunch offered another paying gig. For restaurants, it filled tables. For audiences, it provided entertainment with bacon.

Everybody won.

Then *RuPaul's Drag Race* arrived in 2009 and introduced drag to millions of people who had never set foot inside a gay bar. Drag brunch spread well beyond LGBTQ+ neighborhoods and became a mainstream attraction. Today, you'll find birthday groups, tourists, bachelorette parties and the occasional bewildered grandmother waving dollar bills as a queen performs a Beyoncé number six inches from her waffle.

Drag brunch lets people experience drag in a way that feels less intimidating than going to a nightclub late at night. It happens in daylight, the music isn't as loud and there's usually a side of potatoes.

Drag brunch becoming mainstream has brought a few complications. It's easy to enjoy the costumes, jokes and Beyoncé numbers without giving much thought to the performers or the LGBTQ+ culture that created the whole thing. Have fun, absolutely. But support the performers, tip generously and remember whose party you've been invited to.

And yes, tipping matters. So does behaving like you've been outside your home before. Drag performers are working. They are not decorations for your social media account and they do not need anyone grabbing them without permission.

Admire, applaud and tip. It's not complicated.

THE MEAL THAT REFUSES TO BEHAVE

Brunch works because it is flexible. It can be a quiet meal with two friends or a three-hour spectacle involving six mimosas and a queen named Anita Cocktail. It welcomes night owls, late risers and people who consider noon an ungodly hour.

For LGBTQ+ people, it also offers something we have always known how to create: community around a table.

Brunch is where Saturday night gets explained, exaggerated or carefully edited. It's where new friends meet old friends and where nobody questions why you ordered French toast, oysters and tequila before 1 p.m.

So no, brunch wasn't born gay. It just had all the right ingredients: flexible rules, daytime cocktails, chosen family, a flair for drama and no interest in early mornings.

We knew what to do with it.

DON'T BE A DISASTER AT DRAG BRUNCH

Bring cash. Your enthusiastic clapping is lovely, but performers cannot pay rent with applause.

Tip the servers, too. They're carrying trays through a room full of flying wigs, waving arms and people who've had bottomless mimosas.

Keep your hands to yourself. A performer might interact with you, but that doesn't mean you can grab, grope or touch.

Don't block the show. Take a quick photo, then sit down. No one behind you paid to watch the whole performance through your phone.

Read the room. Laugh, cheer and have fun. Just remember you're a guest in a tradition created by LGBTQ+ performers and venues.

Pace yourself. "Bottomless" describes the mimosas. It should not describe your behavior.

A LITTLE BOOZE WITH YOUR BREAKFAST

THE MIMOSA

The mimosa is believed to have been created by bartender Frank Meier at the Ritz Hotel in Paris during the 1920s. The combination of Champagne and orange juice resembled the yellow flowers of the mimosa plant, which gave the drink its name.

A similar drink called the Buck's Fizz had already appeared at Buck's Club in London around 1921. The basic ingredients were the same, although the Buck's Fizz generally contained more sparkling wine.

More alcohol and less orange juice? Apparently London understood brunch before the rest of us.

THE BLOODY MARY

The Bloody Mary's history is a little muddled, which seems appropriate for a drink that can arrive topped with celery, bacon, shrimp and half the produce aisle.

Bartender Fernand Petiot is generally credited with helping create the modern version. He reportedly began serving a simple mixture of vodka and tomato juice at Harry's New York Bar in Paris during the 1920s. After moving to the King Cole Bar at New York's St. Regis Hotel, he added seasonings including lemon, Worcestershire sauce, pepper and cayenne.

The exact origin of the name remains disputed. What isn't disputed is the Bloody Mary's ability to make drinking vodka before noon appear almost medicinal.

THE BELLINI

The Bellini was created in 1948 by Giuseppe Cipriani, founder of Harry's Bar in Venice. Cipriani blended white peach purée with Prosecco and named the pale pink drink after 15th-century Venetian painter Giovanni Bellini.

Unlike a mimosa, which can survive inexpensive sparkling wine and orange juice from a carton, a proper Bellini depends on ripe white peaches. It is elegant, Italian and just demanding enough to require some effort.

Naturally, we love her.

TIERRA Y MAR TAKES OVER AT HARRAH'S

The resort's newest signature restaurant redefines its Mexican dining scene — and gives you one more reason to stay the weekend.

Southern California is filled with weekend-getaway destinations, but few offer the combination of upscale accommodations, distinctive dining, exciting gaming, live entertainment and resort-style amenities found at **Harrah's Resort Southern California** in Funner. Whether you're looking to unwind beside the sparkling pools and lazy river, indulge in a rejuvenating spa treatment or enjoy headline entertainment, Harrah's offers plenty of ways to escape.

The highlight of this visit was **Tierra y Mar**, Harrah's newest signature restaurant, which officially opened on July 22, 2026. Replacing longtime favorite Salt & Fin, Tierra y Mar translates to "Earth and Sea" and represents an evolution of the resort's Mexican dining experience. Several beloved favorites have made the transition, joined by an expanded collection of dishes that gives the restaurant a distinctive identity of its own. Its stylish contemporary design completes the transformation, creating a welcoming setting that feels decidedly different from its predecessor.

Leading the culinary vision is **Executive Chef Bryan Texis**, whose personal journey provides the inspiration behind the menu. Born in Mexico City and raised in Baja California, he brings the influences of both regions to his kitchen. Guests can begin with antojitos including the signature guacamole with charred poblano purée and pomegranate, shrimp aguachile or house-made crab cakes.

Fresh salads provide lighter fare before moving into entrées such as mole poblano, Bistec ranchero and carne con papas, while seafood selections include siete mares, salmon zarandeado and corvina with poblano butter sauce. Taco enthusiasts can choose from al pastor, carne asada and Baja fish, while enchiladas range from classic Suizas to seafood, ranchera and mole variations. A tequila-focused bar — featuring premium selections, handcrafted margaritas and specialty cocktails — rounds out the experience.

Our dining adventure began with a gracious greeting from our server, Iris, who remained attentive throughout the meal. We started with an eye-catching **Mangonada** featuring Casa Dragones Blanco tequila, passion fruit liqueur, blue curaçao, mango purée, chamoy and fresh lime, finished with a chamoy-Tajín rim and tamarind candy stick.

My guest selected a glass of crisp **Justin Chardonnay** to complement the evening ahead. Warm corn tortilla chips arrived alongside the restaurant's salsa martajada, but we couldn't resist upgrading to the colorful salsa sampler, featuring the bright fresca, smoky morita and bold cruda salsas, each bringing its own distinctive character to the table.

Our appetizer, the **crab cakes**, set the tone for the meal. Crisp on the outside and tender within, they were served alongside a petite frisée salad with citrus segments, crunchy pepitas and radish, all lightly dressed in a honey-citrus vinaigrette. A silky charred poblano aioli added just the right amount of richness and smoky depth, creating a balanced opening course.

As we were finishing the crab cakes, **Mauro Gallegos**, assistant director of food & beverage, and **Ryan Poley**, manager of Tierra y Mar, arrived at our table to say hello. I consider that excellent hospitality, and we enjoyed a nice conversation about the transformation of the former Fiore and Salt & Fin space. I asked about what might be happening with the former 'Ritas Cantina location. They shared that the space will likely become a restaurant designed specifically to serve the resort's pool area. Stay tuned!

Our entrées arrived shortly after their departure, beginning with one of my longtime favorites, **Camarones a la Diabla**. This rendition showcased whole, deveined shell-on shrimp tossed with sweet peppers and cipollini onions in a morita chile sauce that delivered just enough heat to awaken the palate without overwhelming it. Served with aromatic arroz verde, the dish reflected the chef's ability to balance bold flavors with finesse. All three entrées we ordered featured head-on shrimp, so plan on getting in there with your fingers to reach the succulent shrimp inside.

My guest selected the **Siete Mares**, a generous seafood presentation featuring seared seabass, mussels, little neck clams, scallops, shrimp and a crisp crab cake nestled in a savory lobster-tomato consommé. Rich and aromatic, it was a fitting celebration of the sea and the restaurant's namesake.

Rounding out our selections was the **Bistec Ranchero**, a 12-ounce grilled ribeye served with salsa ranchera, cipollini onions, crispy fingerling potatoes, sweet peppers and two grilled head-on shrimp. The ribeye was tender and satisfying, while the accompaniments provided contrasting textures and flavors across the plate.

Although we couldn't make room for dessert, tempting offerings including **Pan de Elote**, **Choco Flan** and **Warm Cinnamon-Sugar Churros** have already given us the perfect excuse for a return visit. Please note that Tierra y Mar offers brunch on Saturdays and Sundays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Regular hours are noon to 9 p.m. on weekdays, with Friday hours extended until 10 p.m.

We stay at Harrah's Southern California every other month and always enjoy our time there. Whether you're planning a romantic getaway, celebrating a special occasion or simply looking for a relaxing escape, Harrah's offers a memorable staycation where genuine hospitality, varied dining and first-class amenities come together in one Funner destination.

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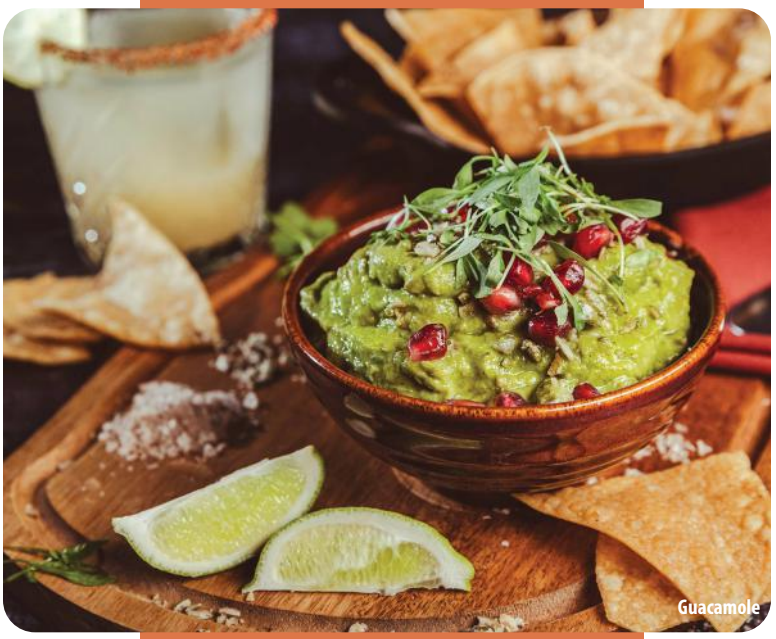

Guacamole

Birria

Camarones a la Diabla

DINNER *and a* SHOW

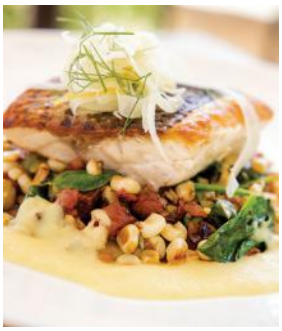
San Diego Restaurant Week gives us another reason to make a night of it.

Dinner and a show. It's still one of my favorite ways to spend an evening. Make a reservation, meet for dinner, have a cocktail or glass of wine, and then head to the theater. And in San Diego, we certainly have plenty of choices when it comes to both good food and great entertainment.

This September, San Diego Restaurant Week will run September 13 – 20, right in the middle of a very busy month for theater and live entertainment. So, we thought, why not put the two together?

We picked six shows around the county and paired each with two Restaurant Week restaurants nearby. Some are within walking distance; others are just a short drive away. We narrowed it down to two choices for each show, because sometimes more choices just make deciding harder.

Pick your show, choose your restaurant and make the reservation. Now you have a fun night out.



BEGIN AGAIN | THE OLD GLOBE

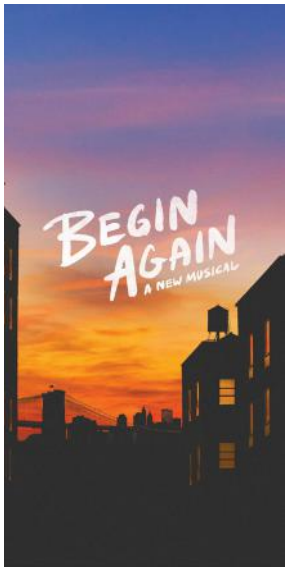
If you liked the 2013 film *Begin Again* with Keira Knightley and Mark Ruffalo, this is one to watch. The Old Globe is presenting the world-premiere, pre-Broadway musical adaptation, running **September 6 through October 11**.

The story follows Gretta, a heartbroken songwriter, and Dan, a record producer whose career has seen better days. A chance meeting in New York brings them together and music gives both of them another shot at figuring out where they belong. The musical features an original score by Grammy Award winner Pat Monahan and the band Train, with Lorin Latarro directing.

And since we're already heading to Balboa Park, dinner is pretty easy.

The Prado at Balboa Park keeps everything in one place. Have dinner surrounded by one of San Diego's prettiest settings and then walk over to The Old Globe. No moving the car, no second parking adventure and plenty of time to enjoy dinner before the curtain goes up.

Or start the evening at **The Smoking Goat** in North Park. The neighborhood French bistro is a nice fit for a theater night, particularly if a good glass of wine is part of your plan. From there, it's just a short drive over to Balboa Park.



DEAR EVAN HANSEN | CYGNET THEATRE

Dear Evan Hansen became a Broadway phenomenon for good reason. The Tony Award-winning musical by Steven Levenson, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul takes on loneliness, grief, social media and our very human need to feel like we belong somewhere.

Evan is a teenager who has always felt invisible. Following a tragedy, a misunderstanding gives him the chance to become someone people finally notice. The problem is that the story he allows everyone to believe isn't true, and eventually all those good intentions and bad decisions have to catch up with him.

Cygnet will stage the musical in its new home at The Joan in Liberty Station from **September 9 through October 4**.

Before all that emotion, I'd suggest dinner by the water.

Bali Hai Restaurant is a San Diego classic for a reason. The Shelter Island location has one of those views of downtown that can make you remember why we pay what we do to live here. Dinner, the bay and maybe one of their famous Mai Tais make a pretty good start to the evening. Just remember you still have a show to get to.

Coasterra gives you another waterfront option, this time with modern Mexican cuisine, cocktails and a terrific view across the bay. It's polished enough to make dinner feel like part of the occasion without making the evening overly formal.

From either one, Cygnet is just a short trip away.

THE SIXTIES SHOW | THE RADY SHELL AT JACOBS PARK

For one night only, we're going back to the 1960s.

The Sixties Show will come to The Rady Shell on **Friday, September 18**, and this isn't a group of guys throwing on some tie-dye and playing a few old songs. The award-winning off-Broadway production recreates the music of the decade live, note for note, as part of a multimedia concert experience.

The musicians have performed or recorded with an impressive list that includes The Who, Paul McCartney, The Beach Boys, Brian Wilson, Mick Jagger, John Fogerty and Bruce Springsteen. Put all of that outdoors on San Diego Bay on a September night and I'm already sold.

Before we head to the Shell, **Il Sogno Italiano** gives us a downtown Italian dinner and an easy transition toward the waterfront. Take your time over dinner and then make your way down toward the bay.

For something completely different, **Zama San Diego** brings Asian and Latin influences, a lively dining room and a little more energy to the start of the night.

Dinner downtown, a walk toward the water and live music under the stars. Sometimes we really do have it pretty good in San Diego.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA | SAN DIEGO CIVIC THEATRE

You probably don't need us to explain *The Phantom of the Opera*. But this isn't simply another return engagement.

Cameron Mackintosh's revitalized production of Andrew Lloyd Webber's musical is launching its new multi-year North American tour, bringing back Maria Björnson's original design and the staging that made *Phantom* one of the biggest theatrical productions in the world.

The story is still the one that generations of audiences know: A mysterious musical genius living beneath the Paris Opera House becomes obsessed with young soprano Christine Daaé. Add "The Music of the Night," "All I Ask of You," "Masquerade," that chandelier and more romantic obsession than anyone really needs.

There is one catch for our Restaurant Week plan. *Phantom* will play at the Civic Theatre **September 2-13**, which means Restaurant Week and *Phantom* overlap for only one day: Sunday, September 13. Consider this our opening-day challenge.

Bronze Bird at The Westin San Diego Gaslamp Quarter makes it especially easy. Have dinner (or lunch) and walk over to the Civic Theatre. Downtown parking is enough of an adventure on its own, so being able to leave the car alone is a definite plus.

For Italian, **Osteria Panevino** gives you another walkable option. Pasta, wine and *Phantom* afterward feels appropriately theatrical.

If you're going to do this pairing, September 13 is the day. Make the reservations early.

A BLACK-BILLED CUCKOO | LA JOLLA PLAYHOUSE

Here's one you probably haven't seen before. Nobody has.

A Black-billed Cuckoo is a world-premiere play by Mat Smart, directed by Shelley Butler and it will be at La Jolla Playhouse from **September 15 through October 11**.

Over the course of 24 hours in Brooklyn's Prospect Park, a close-knit group of birders is thrown into turmoil when some of them spot the elusive Black-billed Cuckoo and others don't. That may sound like a very specific problem to build a play around, but underneath the binoculars and bird watching is a quiet comedy about friendship, healing, wonder and what happens when you're the one who missed out.

For dinner, you can take this night in two different directions.

Duke's La Jolla makes the Village part of the evening. Have dinner overlooking the Pacific, enjoy the view and then head up to UC San Diego for the show. Give yourself some extra time between the two and it becomes a very nice La Jolla night out.

The Amalfi Llama keeps you closer to the Playhouse. The modern Italian steakhouse combines Italian flavors with live-fire cooking, with steaks, seafood and Italian-inspired dishes on the menu. Its La Jolla Village Drive location also means you can have a nice Restaurant Week dinner without heading all the way down into La Jolla Village before the show.

One gives you the ocean. The other keeps the evening a little more convenient. I can live with either.

TICK, TICK... BOOM! | DIVERSIONARY THEATRE

Before Jonathan Larson gave the world *Rent*, there was *Tick, Tick… Boom!*

Set in 1990, Larson's autobiographical musical follows Jon, a struggling composer approaching his 30th birthday and wondering how long he can keep chasing his dream. Friends are moving on; relationships are changing and the clock in his head keeps getting louder. Anyone who has ever reached one of those birthdays that makes you question what exactly you're doing with your life will understand.

The rock musical is performed by three actors taking on 10 characters, and this production will be at Diversionary Theatre from **September 10 through 27** from New York-based Niche Media Productions. There's a nice connection here: Diversionary presented Larson's *Rent* earlier this year.

Luckily, questioning every decision you've ever made is a little easier after dinner.

Origen is right down Park Boulevard and brings Mexican coastal cuisine to the evening. Dinner and drinks here followed by *Tick, Tick… Boom!* make for a night that stays right in the neighborhood.

Rusticucina is another nearby option, with Italian food and a lively atmosphere before the show.

From either restaurant, it's a short trip up Park Boulevard to Diversionary.

Maybe that's the best part of putting this list together. Going out doesn't have to be complicated.

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MILES DAVIS, SONNY ROLLINS, AND DIZZY GILLESPIE AT THE SHELL: "A NIGHT IN TUNISIA" AND MORE*
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SEPTEMBER 16

THE SIXTIES SHOW*
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BONNIE RAITT: LIVE 2026*
OCTOBER 17

*The San Diego Symphony Orchestra does not appear in this program

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KRYSTA RODRIGUEZ COMES HOME

There's something we love about seeing a hometown talent return, especially when she has spent the years in between making quite a name for herself on Broadway.

Orange County native Krysta Rodriguez will return to Costa Mesa **September 10-12** to open **Segerstrom Center for the Arts' 2026-27 Cabaret Series**, making her series debut with three intimate evenings at Samueli Theater.

If you're a Broadway fan, Rodriguez probably needs little introduction. Her credits include *Spring Awakening*, *In the Heights*, *The Addams Family* and *First Date*. Television audiences may remember her as Ana Vargas on NBC's *SMASH*, and she took on the rather intimidating assignment of playing Liza Minnelli in Ryan Murphy's *Halston*. You've got to have some confidence, personality and serious talent to step into those shoes.

That personality should be especially fun to experience in Samueli Theater. We've always thought that there's something special about seeing a performer in a room where you can see the expressions on their face and hear the stories between the songs. It's an entirely different experience from watching someone across a huge theater. Rodriguez promises a mix of signature songs, fresh interpretations, humor and stories about the roles and artists that have shaped her career.

For the Orange County School of the Arts graduate, it's both a Segerstrom Center Cabaret debut and something of a homecoming. We have a feeling the hometown crowd will make sure that she knows it. **scfta.org**

WHEN BEING GAY WAS STILL A CRIME

Sometimes we must remind ourselves just how recently being gay could get you arrested in America.

In 1998, John Lawrence and Tyron Garner were arrested in Houston under Texas' "Homosexual Conduct" law. What happened that night eventually made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court, resulting in the landmark *Lawrence v. Texas* decision that struck down sodomy laws across the country.

That history will come to the stage in the world premiere of ***Texas Sodomy: The Incredible True Story of Lawrence v. Texas***, running **September 10 through October 24** at **Whitefire Theatre** in Los Angeles.

Written and directed by **Howard Skora**, the new play follows Lawrence and Garner from an unexpected arrest into a constitutional battle neither man could have imagined. Along the way, they are joined by Houston activist and bartender Lane Lewis and a coalition of attorneys and activists determined to fight back. Despite the subject matter, don't expect a dry history lesson. Skora, whose previous plays include *Freud on Cocaine*, *Gaslight House* and *Damaged Furniture*, mixes comedy with the drama and the very human story behind the case.

The cast includes **Drew Droege** (pictured right) as John Lawrence, **Jabari** as Tyron Garner and **Matt McConkey** as Lane Lewis.

As recently as 2003, consenting gay adults could still be treated as criminals simply for what happened in the privacy of their own homes. For us, that's what makes *Texas Sodomy* more than a look back at gay history. It's a reminder of just how recently some of our rights were won — and why we can't afford to forget how we got them. **howardskora.com/texas-sodomy**

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SAN DIEGO THEATRES

PIZZA, PINTS & 'FRAMILY'

Hillcrest Brewing Company's Joey Arruda talks weekly deals, wild pizza creations and why making everyone feel welcome is still at the heart of HBC.

Hillcrest Brewing Company has been pouring beer, tossing pizzas and bringing people together in Hillcrest since 2012. And while plenty has changed over the years, HBC's "Friendships Poured Here" motto still pretty much says it all.

These days, the self-proclaimed first "Out & Proud Gay Brewery in the World" is putting extra attention on value, with weekly food specials designed to make going out a little easier on the wallet. But there's still plenty of room for fun. Just ask anyone who has tried the Loaded Baked Potato pizza.

The RAGE Monthly sat down with managing partner **Joey Arruda** to talk about what's new, what keeps HBC going, and how a guy who was once terrified of a restaurant grill ended up owning the place.

You have been rolling out a lot of weekly specials lately. What's behind that?

As an industry, we definitely feel the effects of inflation, so we wanted to make sure our guests are seeing the value when they come in. Plus, we wanted to go back to our roots.

And those roots definitely include pizza. You've been doing a Pizza of the Month almost since the beginning. Where do you come up with some of these creations?

I feel like if you can put it on a sandwich, you can make a pizza with it. I think our biggest surprise was our Loaded Baked Potato pizza. People love that one! I think the jalapeño bacon makes it.

If somebody hasn't stopped by HBC in a while, what should get them back through the door?

Right now, we're featuring our Buy One, Get One Spaghetti Dinner. It's a great value for keeping on a budget or just a great night-out option. We also have a great craft beer selection. We try to keep our beer choices local so we're supporting San Diego's vast and eclectic beer community.

You've been in the restaurant business for more than 30 years, but I love that you basically learned it by jumping in and doing everything. How did that happen?

A friend asked me to work with him at a new steakhouse opening in Orange County. I didn't know anything about running a restaurant, but I jumped in anyway and learned it all: bussing tables, hosting, serving, bartending, dishwashing, prep and cooking.

I was most scared of cooking. I got thrown on the grill and had to cook eight to 10 steaks at a time. I freaked out, but the chef made me stay there and eventually I perfected it.

When the HBC opportunity came along and I was offered a partnership, I was scared at first. But it's been 14-plus years and we're still doing our best to adapt with the changing landscape.

After all those years, what do you think keeps people coming back?

We make sure everyone feels welcome. Our motto is "Friendships Poured Here," and we mean that. It doesn't matter who you are or whether you come in with a group or by yourself. We want everyone to feel like part of the "framily."

I love when guests leave HBC knowing they're part of a huge community that supports them, makes them feel welcome and gives them the genuine feeling that they're a piece of the fabulous HBC "framily."

photo by jay jones

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ROAD TRIP, BUT MAKE IT Delicious

From wine by the water in Huntington Beach to avocado everything in Carpinteria and a final feast in Palm Springs, we're eating our way through Southern California this fall.

Southern California doesn't give us much of a traditional autumn. Leaves aren't exactly changing color outside our windows, nobody's digging the heavy sweaters out of storage, and there's a decent chance we'll still be going to the beach in October.

So maybe it's time to create our own fall tradition. Fill up the tank, grab someone who's willing to share dessert and hit the road.

Over the next three months, food and wine festivals will pop up from San Diego to Orange County, up the coast to Carpinteria and out to the desert. Some are easy day trips. Others practically beg you to book a room and stay for the weekend. A few might even introduce you to a part of Southern California you haven't visited in years. Here are 10 delicious excuses to get out of town.

SAN DIEGO COUNTY

San Diego Restaurant Week | September 13–20

We're starting close to home — at least for some of us.

San Diego Restaurant Week gives us eight days to eat our way around the county, with more than 120 restaurants spread across 30+ neighborhoods.

The fun is in venturing beyond the places you already know. Pick a neighborhood you've been meaning to explore, head toward the coast or finally make that reservation you've been talking about forever. For San Diego locals, it's a chance to rediscover what's nearby. Coming from farther away? Pick a few restaurants, make a day of it and let someone else worry about what's for dinner.

Not every good road trip has to start with a full tank. Sometimes an empty stomach will do.

FULLERTON

SipTember | September 27

Head north to Fullerton, where there's wine, a little Pride and a very good reason to linger awhile. LGBTQ Center OC's SipTember is at Fullerton Museum, bringing the 21+ crowd together for an afternoon of wine, conversation and community while supporting the center's work.

But don't make the festival your only stop. Downtown Fullerton has restaurants, bars and shops within an easy stroll, which makes this one particularly easy to stretch from an afternoon of wine into dinner and drinks.

Really, that's how the best day trips happen. You leave home for one thing and come back having discovered three more.

DEL MAR

Del Mar Wine + Food Festival | September 30–October 4

This is where the day trip starts turning into a weekend.

The Del Mar Wine + Food Festival stretches across five days with chef dinners, wine experiences, special events and a huge Grand Tasting weekend at Surf Sports Park.

You could pick one event and head home afterward. But with the Pacific coast right there and five days of food and wine happening around you, restraint suddenly seems a little overrated.

Book a room, stay near the water and give yourself permission to turn dinner into a mini vacation.

You're already there. You might as well enjoy it.

LAGUNA BEACH

Taste of Laguna | October 1

There are worse ways to spend an October evening than eating your way through Laguna Beach.

Taste of Laguna brings more than 30 restaurants and chefs together at the Festival of Arts grounds, along with live music, dancing and drinks.

Come up early and give yourself time to enjoy Laguna. Walk the beach, browse the galleries, have a cocktail and then head to the festival hungry. By that point, you've managed to fit a beach day, an art walk and a food festival into one afternoon.

Just don't schedule anything ambitious for early the next morning.

CARPINTERIA

California Avocado Festival | October 2–4

Now we're putting some actual miles on the car.

Carpinteria is roughly halfway between Ventura and Santa Barbara, making its 40th annual California Avocado Festival a perfect excuse for a coastal weekend away.

Downtown fills with food, music, arts and crafts, and more avocado creations than anyone reasonably needs. Admission is free, the beach is nearby and Santa Barbara is just up the road.

Get a hotel. Eat guacamole. Walk on the beach. Call it cultural enrichment.

LA JOLLA

La Jolla Art & Wine Festival | October 10–11

Eventually, the road brings us back down the coast.

More than 170 juried artists show their wares at La Jolla Art & Wine Festival, while the Wine & Beer Garden provides wine, craft beer and spirits for the 21+ crowd.

This is an easy one to build a whole day around. Start with brunch, browse the festival, stop for wine, wander down toward the water and stay for dinner.

La Jolla is one of those places we can take for granted when it's practically in our backyard, so consider this permission to behave like a visitor for the day.

No hotel required, although nobody's stopping you.

PALM DESERT

Yum Food Fest & Night Market | October 10–11

By October, heading east starts sounding like a good idea again.

Yum Food Fest & Night Market takes over The Shops at Palm Desert with food vendors, entertainment, drinks and shopping in a casual night-market atmosphere.

The timing makes this especially tempting because October is when the desert starts calling us back. The brutal summer heat is finally easing up, dinner outside sounds appealing again and staying overnight means there's a pool waiting the next morning.

Somewhere between dinner and that first poolside coffee, a food festival has quietly become a weekend getaway.

HUNTINGTON BEACH

California Wine Festival | October 16–17

By mid-October, we're apparently not finished with the coast. Or the wine.

The California Wine Festival lands at Paséa Hotel & Spa for two days, beginning Friday evening with the Sunset Rare & Reserve Tasting, where harder-to-find wines are paired with bites from regional chefs and live music.

Saturday loosens things up with the Beachside Wine Festival, bringing hundreds of California wines, food, craft brews and music together within sight of the ocean.

This is another one where going home immediately afterward feels like poor planning. Stay the night, walk along the beach the next morning, find somewhere good for brunch and give yourself a few extra hours before heading home.

After all, if you're going to spend an afternoon drinking California wine by the Pacific, you might as well commit to the assignment.

SAN DIEGO

San Diego Food + Wine Festival | November 1–8

After zigzagging around Southern California, we're returning to San Diego hungry and thirsty.

The San Diego Food + Wine Festival fills eight days with chefs, winemakers, spirits, special dinners and events celebrating the flavors on both sides of the border.

The week builds toward its Grand Tasting and Grand Fiesta, but don't overlook the smaller experiences along the way. Part of the fun is choosing something you might not ordinarily try and remembering just how ridiculously good we have it when it comes to eating in San Diego.

If you live in the area and you've got friends coming from LA, OC or Palm Springs, now it's your turn to play tour guide.

PALM SPRINGS

Palm Springs Food & Wine Festival | November 13–15

We're ending this road trip exactly where you'd expect us to: Palm Springs.

The Palm Springs Food & Wine Festival takes over Downtown Park for three days of tastings, wineries, restaurants and chef demonstrations.

By mid-November, the weather is cooperating, the pools are waiting and nobody needs much convincing to spend a weekend in Palm Springs.

Check in Friday. Eat and drink your way through the festival. Sit by the pool. Wander downtown. Stay one more night because you can.

Then head home, loosen the belt a notch and congratulate yourself.

You didn't overindulge.

You were traveling.

One last road-trip rule: If you're drinking, don't drive. Hand over the keys, call a rideshare or stay the night. Besides, we've already given you plenty of excuses to book the hotel.

HEATED RIVALRY STEAMS UP 2026 DORIAN TV AWARDS

GALECA: The Society of LGBTQ Entertainment Critics, one of the largest entertainment journalist groups in the world, announced the winners of its 18th annual Dorian TV Awards on August 15, again recognizing the best in television and streaming from mainstream to queer-themed programming.

GALECA's members named ***Heated Rivalry***, the man-on-man hockey romance that became a cultural sensation out of the gate this year, Best TV Drama and Best LGBTQ TV Show. **François Arnaud**, enjoying a breakout turn as a closeted veteran hockey player who comes out on the ice, won Best Supporting TV Performance Drama. Additionally, the show's creator, **Jacob Tierney**, was named this year's GALECA LGBTQIA+ Trailblazer for "creating art that inspires empathy, truth and equity."

The showbiz satire ***Hacks***, a longtime favorite with GALECA voters, was named Best TV Comedy and Best Written TV Show, while star **Jean Smart** won Best TV Performance Comedy (her third consecutive win here) for *Hacks'* fifth and final season.

"What excites me most about this year's Dorian winners is the range — the swooning devotion of *Heated Rivalry*, the tender complexity of *The Boyfriend,* the bravery that cuts through *Half Man*, and the community memory being kept alive in *Lilith Fair: Building a Mystery*. To think, queer stories once needed to squeeze into a narrow lens to get made," said **GALECA Vice President Gerrick Kennedy**, who served as this year's TV awards chair.

Apple TV had a breakout year at the Dorians with two bold new series. The post-apocalyptic dark comedy *Pluribus* earned star **Rhea Seehorn** the Dorian for Best TV Performance Drama. ***Pluribus*** also took home the award for the Most Visually Striking TV Show in a tie win with FX's ***Alien: Earth***. The spooky horror-comedy ***Widow's Bay*** was named Best Genre TV Show, with the show's **Kate O'Flynn** also winning for Best Supporting TV Performance Comedy.

Puerto Rican superstar rapper **Bad Bunny** and his backup dancers' historic Super Bowl LX Halftime Show were awarded Best TV Musical Performance, besting a field that included Sabrina Carpenter's two memorable duets with the Muppets and Audra McDonald belting it out viral style on the Tony Awards.

For a third consecutive year, Alan Cumming's cheeky competition series ***The Traitors*** took home Best Reality Show. Netflix's frothy soap ***The Hunting Wives*** was named Campiest TV Show.

A year of mocking Donald Trump earned ***South Park*** Best Animated Show honors, while ***The Late Show with Stephen Colbert*** — which was booted off the air after a political showdown with Trump — garnered Best Current Affairs Program. ***Lilith Fair: Building a Mystery*** took Best LGBTQ TV Documentary or Documentary Series.

In special career honors, *Hacks* star **Hannah Einbinder** earned the Wilde Wit Award and, after three seasons and 21 years, **Lisa Kudrow** was named a GALECA TV Icon for her performance in the final season of *The Comeback* in addition to her past work on *Friends* and other series.

GALECA: The Society of LGBTQ Entertainment Critics and its Dorian Awards honor the best in film, television and theater each year. With over 580 members, GALECA brings an informed LGBTQ perspective to all things entertainment. The nonprofit also advocates for better pay, access and respect for entertainment journalists (especially those most underrepresented) and provides scholarships for LGBTQ college students and recent grads through its Crimson Honors journalism program.

For the full list and more information, follow @DorianAwards on social media or visit GALECA.org or ragemonthly.com

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"HOWL" IS BACK ON THE TURNTABLE

Allen Ginsberg at 100, back on vinyl, and still not particularly interested in behaving

I know. A poetry record in the music column. Stay with me.

Allen Ginsberg would've turned 100 this year, and Craft Recordings is marking it by putting his 1959 spoken-word album *Howl and Other Poems* back on vinyl. Limited edition, green blend wax, out **Friday, September 4**, wrapped in the original Fantasy Records artwork.

Nobody's confusing Ginsberg for Chappell Roan in the new releases bin. But I'd still make room for him next to the musicians.

Put on his reading of "Howl" and you'll get it. There's a rhythm to the way he says it. Repetition, breath, that thing where he speeds up like he's trying to outrun his own sentence and just ... doesn't stop. It's not singing. It's not just someone reading a poem out loud, either. Something else is happening in there.

This reissue pulls from the Big Table Reading in Chicago and later sessions at Fantasy Studios in San Francisco. Besides "Howl," you get "America," "Sunflower Sutra," "A Supermarket in California" and "Footnote to Howl."

Quick history for anyone who skipped that unit: When City Lights first published *Howl and Other Poems* in 1956, Ginsberg was writing straight-up about sex, drugs, mental illness, religion, politics and being gay at a time when saying any of that out loud could ruin your life. The book ended up in an obscenity trial in 1957. The judge ruled that it had real literary merit, and that became a genuine win for free speech.

If you're queer, go back and read "A Supermarket in California" again. Ginsberg's wandering a grocery store at night imagining Walt Whitman walking next to him, like an older gay guy who'd actually get it. The wanting, the loneliness, the not-quite-fitting-anywhere of it.

The Beats were a small group of writers in the 1950s, including Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs, who got sick of buttoned-up, polite American writing and started saying what wasn't supposed to be said. Their influence reached way beyond books. Ginsberg became close with Bob Dylan, Philip Glass, Patti Smith and Paul McCartney. These were real friendships and collaborations, not just crossover-appeal stuff.

The Beats basically gave American culture permission to be a mess, and musicians have been cashing that check ever since. Art doesn't have to be polite to matter.

And honestly, it feels right putting this on vinyl instead of just streaming it. Streaming is easy. Spoken word wants more from you than easy. Putting on a record means you actually decided to listen.

It's been over 70 years since Ginsberg first read "Howl" out loud at the Six Gallery in San Francisco. Some of the shock value has worn off, sure. But the whole point of it hasn't.

Say the thing you're not supposed to say. Write about the people you're not supposed to write about. Don't shrink yourself down so everyone else feels more comfortable. For a 100-year-old poet, the guy still sounds pretty punk.

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