

the

RAGE

monthly

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA
OCTOBER 2026

PATRICIA QUINN'S ROCKY HORROR RIDE

Magenta, Madness and
50 Years of Devoted Fans

INSIDE THE OUTSIDERS

Broadway's Best Musical
Comes to SoCal

KAL PENN

MAKES A HOUSE CALL

The Actor Takes on Anna Nicole's
Doctor in New Biopic

HALLOWEEN TAKES OVER

Our Picks for a Wickedly Good October

LIFESTYLE

EVENTS

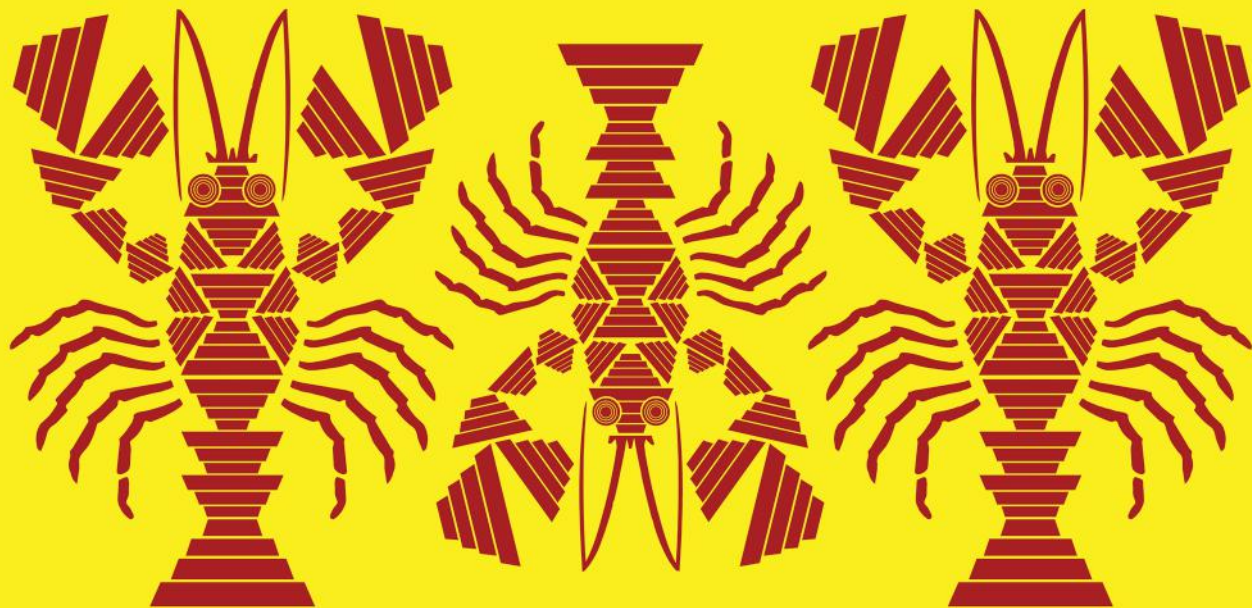
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The cast of *Begin Again*. Photo by Jeff Lorch.



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cover and contents photography by lucas andrede

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A force of nature on the Broadway stage, Kalukango has brought down the house in *The Color Purple*, *Slave Play*, and *Paradise Square*.

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QUEER HISTORY IS EVERYWHERE

Queer history usually lives behind archive glass. This October, **Circa: Queer Histories Festival** is putting it on movie screens, stages and dance floors all over Los Angeles.

Presented by **ONE Institute** for LGBTQ+ History Month, the fourth annual Circa runs through October 31 and bills itself as the first and only LGBTQ+ histories festival in the United States. This year's calendar is huge, with exhibitions, performances, screenings, conversations and workshops spread across Los Angeles and online.

On October 9, longtime Gay Liberation Front activist **Carolyn Weathers** looks back at the 1970 "**Biltmore Invasion**," when activists disrupted an American Psychiatric Association program promoting electroshock therapy as a "cure" for homosexuality. **Finding Transcestors** on October 13 digs into the surprisingly complicated detective work involved in uncovering trans lives that history overlooked, using everything from old newspapers and court records to medical documents.

Elsewhere, Circa explores **50+ Years of Gay Rodeo**, Black lesbian history through zines, the history of drag kings, queer cannabis culture and the legendary **Cooper Do-nuts**. Film fans can catch *The Wedding Banquet*, *Saving Face*, *Nowhere* and a documentary about lesbian feminist pioneer **Sally Gearhart**.

Music gets its turn October 28 with **The Queer History Mixtape**, tracing 150 years through artists including **Ma Rainey**, **Chavela Vargas** and **Sam Smith**.

And because it's October, Circa wraps on Halloween with **The Rocky Horror Picture Show** at The Ford. 2026.circafestival.org

A MODEL OF PRIDE

At just 19, **Zaya Wade** has already built quite a résumé: model, youth advocate and co-founder of a resource created specifically to help LGBTQ+ young people and their families. On Saturday, October 10, she adds another distinction when the **Los Angeles LGBT Center** presents her with its **Model of Pride Award**.

Wade will be the headlining speaker at the center's 34th annual **Models of Pride Youth Summit**, where the award recognizes her advocacy and philanthropy supporting LGBTQ+ youth. Previous honorees include **Dylan Mulvaney**, **Bretman Rock** and **Trixie Mattel**.

Much of Wade's recent work has centered on **Translatable**, the digital platform and resource hub she launched with her father, NBA Hall of Famer **Dwyane Wade**, through the Wade Family Foundation in 2024. Created as a space where LGBTQ+ youth can express themselves, it also gives parents, families and other support systems resources to better understand and support the young people in their lives.

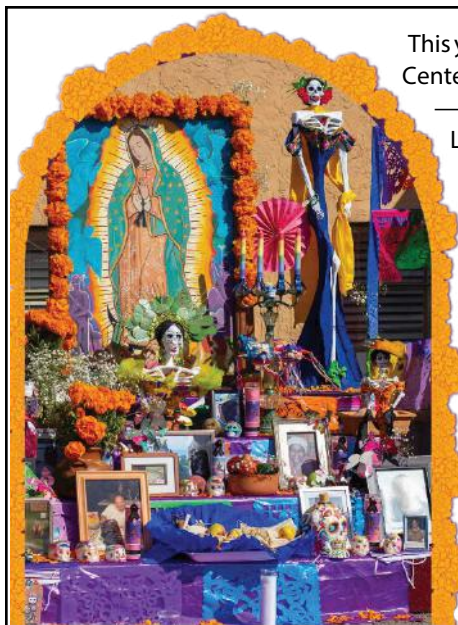
Wade also has history with the Los Angeles LGBT Center, including supporting its **Trans Wellness Center**.

"Accepting the Model of Pride Award is not just an honor for me; it's a call to keep fighting for the future we all deserve," Wade said. "Now more than ever, our community needs to stand united so every young person can grow up knowing their truth is their power."

Models of Pride is free and open to LGBTQ+ youth ages 24 and younger, along with allies and friends. It runs from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the center's Anita May Rosenstein Campus in Hollywood. modelsofpride.org



CELEBRATE WHO YOU ARE



This year, there's a lot packed into **Hispanic/Latin@x Heritage Month** at The San Diego LGBT Community Center. Its **Latin@x Services** team is calling the celebration *Celebrate* — Spanish for “celebrate who you are” — with events reflecting the many cultures, identities and experiences that make up San Diego's LGBTQ+ Latine community.

One we're especially interested in is **Día de las Rebeldías Lésbicas** on Tuesday, October 13. The Center calls it the first San Diego celebration of its kind, with roots in the Latin American feminist movement.

The evening includes “**Cruzando la línea: cultura y rebeldía lésbica en la frontera**,” a conversation about lesbian culture and resistance along the border. Transborder leaders **Liliana Hueso, Cristina Márquez, Sire Córdoba** and **Ana Hernández** will take part, with **Carolina Alcoser Ramos** moderating. A light dinner starts the evening before the discussion.

On Saturday, October 24, **Festival Mictlán** takes over Liberty Station for a Día de los Muertos celebration presented as part of **Latine Pride**. Featuring music, dance, spoken word, salsa lessons, games, a sober mocktail space, and Catrina and altar competitions.

One of the more intriguing pieces is **Ecos del Mictlán: A Choral Journey to the Afterlife**, an original musical arrangement featuring voices from both sides of the border, including **Tijuana Queer Coral** and **Coro Meraki**.

Two very different October events, and both sound well worth checking out. thecentersd.org

SAN DIEGO PRIDE TAKES ON OCTOBER

San Diego Pride's calendar stays busy well past the parade and festival, and October is no exception. Get ready for food, art, Latine Pride and even a little Halloween thrown in.

First up is the **Big Queer Foodie Fest**, October 3-4, a new collaboration with the **Del Mar Wine + Food Festival**. Pride is curating an LGBTQ+ experience within the festival's Grand Tasting, spotlighting queer-owned, queer-led and supportive restaurants and beverage brands alongside local artists, entertainers and businesses.

On Friday, October 16, Pride's **Art of Pride** program is trying something completely new. **Out at the Museum** takes over the **Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego** in La Jolla for an evening of queer art, live music and performances, plus a silent auction benefiting local LGBTQ+ artists. The inaugural theme is “**Be the Muse**,” with guests encouraged to dress as someone who inspires them or arrive ready to do a little inspiring themselves.

Saturday, October 24 gets especially busy. The sixth annual **Latine Pride** returns to **Liberty Station** from 2 to 7 p.m., with music, food, vendors, performances and community resources celebrating Queer Latinidad.

That same afternoon, **TransFamily Support Services** hosts its free fifth annual **Boo Bash** in Spring Valley, with trick-or-treating, a costume parade, games and family-friendly drag performances for LGBTQ+ youth and families. Looks like Pride season has become a 12-month affair. We're good with that. sdpride.org

BACK TO THE STREETS

After two years away, **OC Pride** is heading back to the streets of downtown Santa Ana on Saturday, October 10, and it's bringing **Charo** along for the ride. Yes, *that* Charo.

This year's **OC Pride Festival & Parade** carries the theme of **Our Voices All Combined**, with the parade stepping off at 11 a.m. along Third Street, followed by the festival opening at noon. The entire celebration is free and runs until 10 p.m.

Charo closes out the festival as one of three headliners, joined by comedian and entertainer **Mama Duke** and queer rapper **Chris Conde**. And there's a lot happening before anyone gets near the main stage. For the first time, OC Pride will feature five performance areas, including the **Orgullo Latin Stage**, along with spaces devoted to different parts of the community.

The **Sapphic Oasis** brings performances and a book swap, **Trans Central** offers resources and intimate performances, and **Teen Pride** gets its own activities and entertainment. There's also **Pride Family Camp**, an Artists Village, food vendors, a low-sensory **Quiet Quarter** and, for the grown-ups, an 18+ **Leather District** presented with ONYX Southwest.

After two years at the OC Fair & Event Center, bringing Pride back downtown feels like a pretty good reason to take over the streets again. prideoc.com



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA GETS HAUNTED

Ghost ships, queer cabaret, horror movies, creepy cocktails and enough goodies to make your dentist scream. October has arrived.

Congratulations, you live somewhere that takes Halloween seriously. October brings haunted hotel rooms, queer cabaret, horror movies, nighttime cruises and plenty of opportunities to willingly walk into dark places where people are waiting to scare you.

And because being scared works up an appetite, there's plenty to eat and drink along the way. Here are some of the things that caught our attention this spooky season.

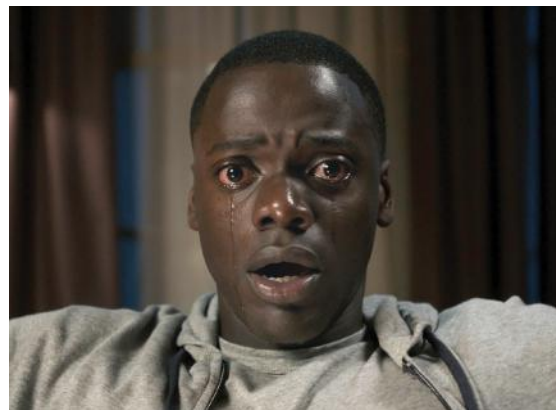
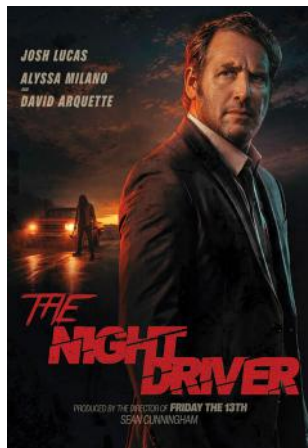
SCREAM ON THE BIG SCREEN

Screamfest Horror Film Festival | Hollywood
| October 6-15

For horror fans who would rather discover something new than watch the same slasher movie for the 47th time,

Screamfest Horror Film Festival returns to the TCL Chinese 6 Theatres for 10 days of independent horror. The 26th annual festival opens with the world premiere of *The Night Driver*, starring Josh Lucas, David Arquette and Alyssa Milano, followed by a cast conversation and opening-night party. The festival continues with features, shorts, premieres and filmmaker events throughout.

screamfest.com



HORROR GETS ITS CLOSE-UP

The Horror Show | Academy Museum of Motion Pictures | Los Angeles

Now open, **The Horror Show** looks at why scary movies have such a hold on us. And why we keep going back for more.

The immersive Academy Museum exhibition moves through six horror worlds — Gothic, Psychological, Science, Slasher, Religion and Ghosts — exploring the genre through original props, costumes and production materials. The exhibition also looks at identity and sexuality in horror and the genre's broader cultural impact.

October is an especially good time to visit, with screenings and special programming surrounding the exhibition throughout the month. And unlike most Halloween attractions, nobody should chase you through the parking lot afterward. academymuseum.org



TAKE A WALK IN THE DARK

The Haunted Trail of Balboa Park | San Diego | October 1 - November 1

The **Haunted Trail** returns with two attractions: the unpredictable 3,500-square-foot **eXperiment Maze** followed by a mile-long outdoor trail through the twisted trees of Marston Point.

Inside, prepare for a killer rabbit with a taste for magician's tricks gone wrong, a ride on the GhouL Bus and an unwelcome dinner invitation from the Killbilly family. Eventually you'll find yourself among chainsaw-wielding nuns, because apparently regular nuns weren't frightening enough.

The Haunted Trail is marking its 27th year this season and also includes the **Dark Carnival** scare zone with carnival games, food trucks and the BOOtique gift shop. hauntedtrail.net



SLEEP WITH THE GHOSTS

The Queen Mary | Long Beach

The **Queen Mary** has been telling ghost stories for years. This Halloween, guests can spend the night inside a few of them.

New **Paranormal Passage** turns three staterooms into immersive overnight experiences inspired by the ship's supernatural lore. **The Dressing Chamber** takes its cue from the *Lady in White*, **Jackie's Room** draws from stories surrounding the First-Class Swimming Pool and **The Officer's Study** taps into tales of uniformed figures spotted roaming the ship.

For those who prefer cocktails to overnight paranormal activity, **Spookeasy** starts with a drink and a haunted-history tour before heading to the hidden N°3 Speakeasy for tarot, crystal and palm readings. There's also the new **Grey Ghost Galley** Halloween buffet, **Murder on the High Seas**, spooky movie nights and the ship's regular paranormal tours. queenmary.com

LET'S DO THE TIME WARP

The Rocky Horror Picture Show: Hallo-Queen Spooktacular | Costa Mesa | October 16

The Rocky Horror Picture Show is never really a sit-quietly-and-watch kind of movie, and Segerstrom Center for the Arts isn't about to start now.

The free outdoor screening on the Argyros Plaza begins with the **Hallo-Queen Spooktacular**, a drag preshow starring **Miss Clair Voyance** and the Broadway Divas, followed by the cult classic at 8 p.m. Come dressed for the costume contest and ready to participate — the first 200 guests even get a free prop bag for the movie. scfta.org



CARRIE MEETS MISERY

FilmOut San Diego | October 14

FilmOut San Diego is pairing two Stephen King classics for its October double feature.

Brian De Palma's **Carrie** celebrates its 50th anniversary this year, bringing Sissy Spacek and that unforgettable prom night back to the big screen. It's followed by Rob Reiner's **Misery**, with Kathy Bates in her Academy Award-winning performance as Annie Wilkes, the "number one fan" nobody wants showing up at the front door.

The double feature begins at 7 p.m. at UltraStar Mission Valley Cinemas at Hazard Center.

filmoutsandiego.com



EAT, DRINK AND BE SCARY

Taste of Santa Ana Frights & Bites | October 17

Frights & Bites brings more than 30 restaurants, wineries and breweries to MainPlace for an all-you-can-taste Halloween evening.

Guests can wander from booth to booth sampling food along with craft beer, wine and spirits, with music and Halloween atmosphere mixed in. For anyone who likes the idea of Halloween but would rather encounter tacos than a guy with a chainsaw, this might be your night. tasteofsantaana.net



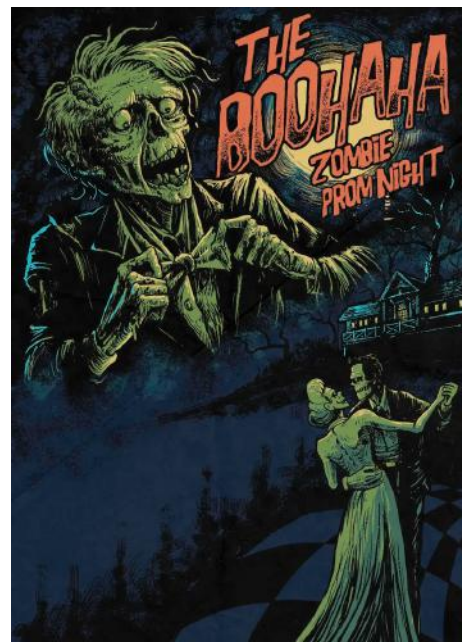


BEAUTIFULLY MACABRE

Cabaret Macabre | Los Angeles LGBT Center | October 23

Planet Queer and Los Angeles LGBT Center are teaming up for **Cabaret Macabre**, an evening of experimental LGBTQ+ performance at Davidson/Valentini Theatre.

Music, dance, drag, burlesque and All Hallows Eve-inspired creations from L.A.'s underground artists are all part of the night. The center promises plenty of queerness and "debauchery," which seems like a perfectly reasonable way to spend an October Friday night. Showtime is 7:30 p.m. lalgbtcenter.org



DRINK WITH THE MONSTERS

Boo Ha Ha: A Zombie Homecoming Costa Mesa | October 24

Boo Ha Ha: A Zombie Homecoming takes over the OC Fair & Event Center for a 21+ Halloween party built around beer, music and some decidedly strange entertainment.

More than 30 breweries will be pouring 100-plus craft beers, ciders and hard seltzers, alongside live music, costume contests, monster-versus-monster wrestling and an after-party. Unlimited tasting runs from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m., with the party continuing until 11:30 p.m. theboohaha.com

HALLOWEEN ON THE WATER

Bahia Belle Halloween Party Cruise | San Diego | October 31

If your Halloween plans could use a little salt air, the **Bahia Belle** heads onto Mission Bay for a 21+ **Día de los Muertos-themed Halloween Party Cruise**.

An onshore pre-party at the Bahia Resort Hotel's Beach and Boat Club starts the evening before the three-hour cruise. Once aboard, there are two DJs, a welcome Aqua Loca cocktail, photo booth, specialty drinks including Muertes Margaritas, Alebrijes Jell-O Shots and late-night bar snacks. Costumes are encouraged. The boat returns at midnight. Tickets are \$50. bahiahotel.com/event/halloween-party-cruise



THE DESERT AFTER DARK

Halloween Palm Springs | Arenas District | October 30-31

Arenas Road has never needed much encouragement to throw a party, and Halloween gives it two nights to work with.

Halloween Palm Springs takes over the LGBTQ+ Arenas District for a free outdoor celebration with DJs, dancing and some seriously committed costuming.

Saturday brings the big costume contest with more than \$2,000 in prizes. If you're going, this probably isn't the night to phone in the costume.

R&B Hit Makers KLYMAXX will headline the festivities. This band is known for chart-topping mega hits like "Meeting in the Ladies Room," "The Men All Pause," "I Miss You," "Love Bandit," "I Betcha," and many more.

halloweenpalmsprings.com

The Haunted Trail



Balboa park

SEPT 25

-

NOV 1

HAUNTEDTRAIL.NET

FIFTY YEARS LATER, PATRICIA QUINN IS STILL ASTONISHED BY ROCKY HORROR

Patricia Quinn thought she understood *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. After all, she was there from the beginning. She originated the role of Magenta in Richard O'Brien's tiny stage production in London before reprising the character in the 1975 film that would eventually become one of the most beloved cult classics in cinema history.

Then she started touring.

"I thought I understood *Rocky Horror* like the back of my hand," Quinn told *The RAGE Monthly*. "I thought I understood the fandom ... I knew nothing."

On **Sunday, October 11**, Quinn will bring that decades-long relationship with audiences to San Diego's historic **Balboa Theatre** for a special screening of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* complete with a live shadow cast, audience participation, a costume contest, and a post-film conversation with the actress who helped create one of the movie's most unforgettable characters.

For Quinn, the experience has become just as remarkable as the film itself.

"I thought I was doing little cinemas across the states," she said with a laugh. Instead, she found herself walking into ornate historical theaters packed with fans. "They're sold out every night. All of this has been amazing to me."

What continues to surprise her even more than the crowds is who makes up those audiences. "I have mothers, grandmothers, daughters and granddaughters all come and ask for autographs dressed as Magenta," she said. "Families, generations of them."

That generational devotion is something Quinn could never have imagined when *Rocky Horror* first began — not as a film, but as an experimental stage production in a tiny upstairs room at London's Royal Court Theatre in 1973.

"There was no stage, no curtain, nothing," she recalled. "Just 60 little wooden chairs." Yet within weeks, word of mouth had transformed the production into London's hottest ticket. "Mick Jagger was on the stairs queuing. It was the talk of London."

The film adaptation followed two years later, but its success was anything but immediate.

"They didn't know what to do with it," Quinn said, nodding at the initial box-office failure. It wasn't until a 20th Century Fox employee suggested midnight screenings on college campuses that everything changed. "But for that boy at 20th Century Fox, we wouldn't exist."

Soon came stories from New York's Eighth Street Playhouse about audiences talking back to the screen, dressing as the characters and performing alongside the movie.

"We thought, 'They're mad,'" Quinn said. "'What the hell are they talking about?'"

Today, those once-unthinkable traditions have become part of every stop on her tour. Before the film begins, audiences compete in costume contests. A host warms up the crowd. Quinn takes the stage for a live Q&A before a shadow cast performs the film on the screen.

"It's just a very joyous evening," she said. "It's beyond belief."

The phenomenon continues to surprise her in unexpected places.

"I've done very religious states where there's churches on every corner," she said. "I thought, 'I'll get stoned in this state. Who's going to come to this here?' It was sold out."

The travel, she notes, can be exhausting.

"It's grueling hard work," Quinn said. "But it's the adulation that keeps me going. The enthusiasm, the joy."

That joy has even become part of her family's story. Her son grew up accompanying her to conventions and appearances, while today it's her grandchildren who hear about Magenta from classmates.

Nearly 50 years after Magenta first stepped onto a tiny stage in London, Quinn still sounds a little bewildered by it all. Not by the film itself, but by the community that has grown around it that continues to sing, shout, dress up and celebrate together, generation after generation.

And if her reaction to every sold-out theater is any indication, Patricia Quinn is still enjoying the ride every bit as much as the audiences who come to see her.

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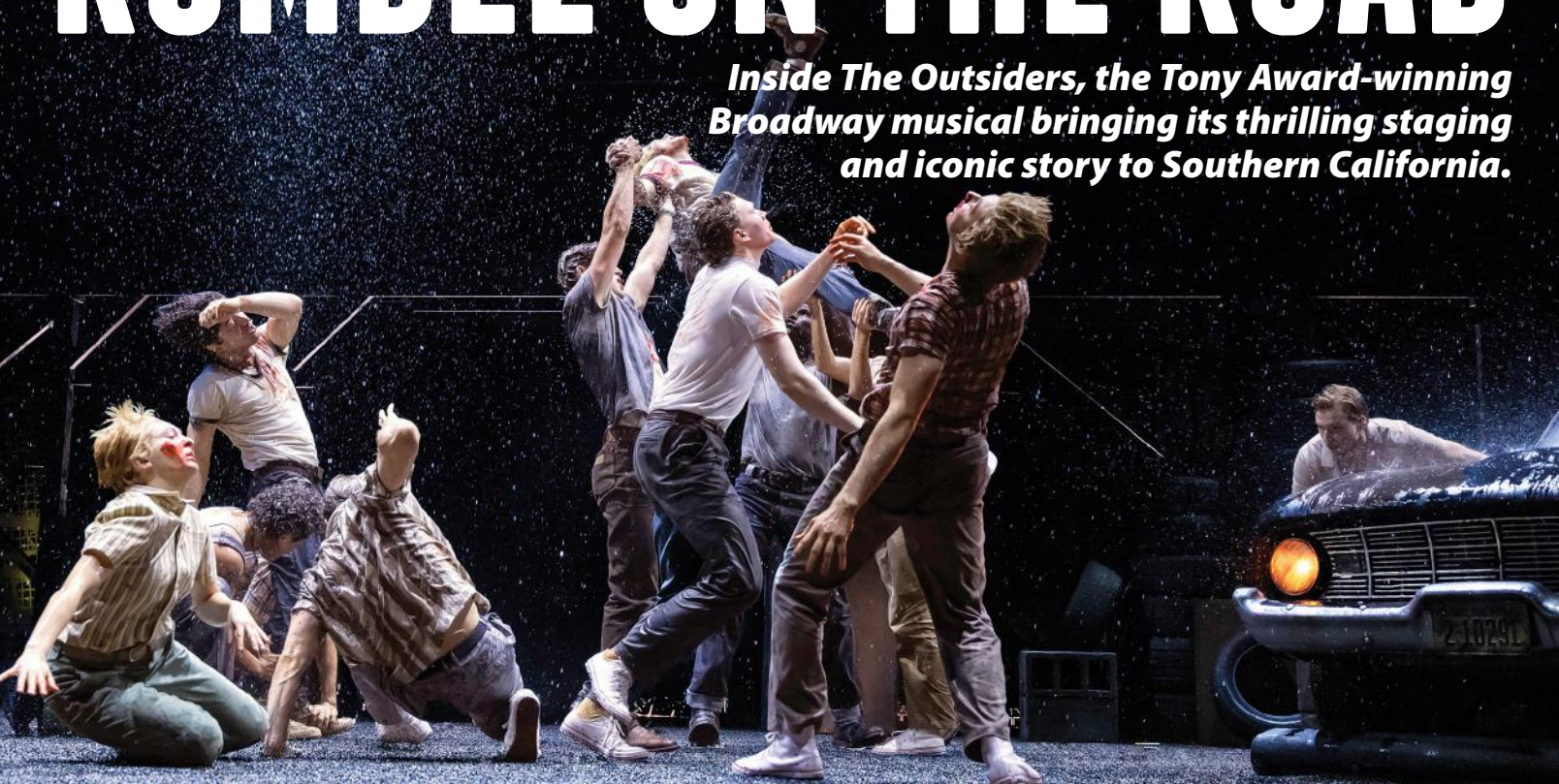
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RUMBLE ON THE ROAD

Inside The Outsiders, the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical bringing its thrilling staging and iconic story to Southern California.



Long before *The Outsiders* found its way to the Broadway stage, S.E. Hinton's groundbreaking 1967 novel captured the turbulence, loyalty and longing of teenagers growing up on opposite sides of the tracks in Tulsa, Oklahoma. The story made its indelible leap to the screen in 1983 under the direction of Francis Ford Coppola, with a remarkable young ensemble that included C. Thomas Howell, Ralph Macchio, Matt Dillon, Patrick Swayze, Rob Lowe, Emilio Estevez, Tom Cruise and Diane Lane as Cherry Valance.

At its heart is the escalating conflict between the working-class Greasers and the privileged Socs — seen largely through Ponyboy's eyes — as friendship, violence and tragedy force him to confront questions of identity, family and where he belongs. Hinton considered Coppola's film a faithful adaptation of her

novel, and its young cast would become one of the most celebrated collections of emerging talent of the 1980s.

Four decades later, that enduring story was reinvented for the stage as ***The Outsiders: A New Musical***. Adapted from both Hinton's novel and Coppola's film, the musical received its world premiere at La Jolla Playhouse in San Diego in 2023, where its run was extended by popular demand. Directed by Danya Taymor, the production pairs an Americana-infused score with highly physical staging while retaining the story's themes of brotherhood, class division, belonging and hope. It went on to Broadway, earning 12 Tony Award nominations and winning four, including Best Musical and Best Direction of a Musical for Taymor.

The musical is now touring across North America, with three Southern California engagements this fall. **Luke Sabracos** is making his National Tour debut in *The*

Outsiders, but the road to Tulsa began with a strong foundation in musical theater. A 2023 graduate of Boston Conservatory at Berklee with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in musical theater, Sabracos appeared in the Conservatory's *Head Over Heels* and was selected for its 2023 Musical Theater Showcase before continuing his professional career in A.C.T. of Connecticut's 2025 production of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

Now taking the stage as Trip in *The Outsiders*, Sabracos carries the added challenge of understudying Bob, Paul and Sodapop Curtis — characters who cross the very social divide at the heart of the story. His versatility gives him a particularly fascinating perspective on the Greasers and Socs.

The RAGE Monthly caught up with Luke nearly a year into the tour to talk about his journey, the demands of the production and life on the road.

When did you first discover your passion for performing, and what ultimately led you to Boston Conservatory?

I've been performing as long as I can remember. I have to credit my parents because they encouraged my sister and me to dive into our creativity at a young age. They even built a stage in the basement of our house so we would have a place to put on shows. She would always direct and produce, and I was, of course, the star of every production — which is fitting considering she's now a TV and media producer and I'm a performer. As I grew up, it became increasingly difficult to imagine any other kind of life for myself.

I spent a year at Ithaca College in its acting program before transferring to Boston Conservatory to earn my B.F.A. in musical theater. I chose BoCo largely for its amazing dance education. I didn't start dancing until college, and it was important to me to leave with a well-rounded mastery of all three disciplines of musical theater: singing, acting and dancing. I was also grateful that the Conservatory believed in me and trusted me as an artist.

Trip was created specifically for the musical and is part of the Soc world. How did you approach developing the character, and what has been the most challenging aspect of playing him?

What I love about the world of our show is the specificity and individuality of each character. In most musicals, ensemble members don't get names or individual identities, so having a character who feels so distinct makes it much more personal. I drew a lot from myself as a high schooler. I attended an all-boys private school in Maryland for 13 years, so that environment was similar to the energy we have onstage as Socs. My costume is almost exactly what I wore to school every day — a button-down shirt and khakis. Trip is very much a version of my past self, heightened with some of the hyper-masculine qualities and mannerisms I observed from my straight male peers growing up.

The most challenging part has been the dancing and athletic nature of the role. I didn't start dancing until college, and this is my first time as an ensemble member in a dance-heavy track. Being featured as a dancer has been equal parts gratifying and terrifying. It has taken me far outside my comfort zone, but it's incredibly rewarding to know my education has paid off.

You also understudy Bob, Paul and Sodapop Curtis. How do you prepare for three distinctly different characters?

Being an understudy is fun because it gives you the opportunity

to bring your perspective to different parts of the show. Covering characters within the Socs came naturally because we spend so much time onstage together. I love playing Bob because he's such a villain and has a distinct control over most of his scenes. It's fun to explore his cruelty and what happens when he loses that control.

I started covering Sodapop about eight months into the tour, and that has been the biggest challenge. Until then, I had spent my time as a Soc, and being a Greaser onstage is a completely different experience. I had to train my voice for a vocally intense role, retrain my body because the Greaser choreography is more grounded than the Socs', and really study the text to understand the character. Sodapop has been a dream role of mine, so it was important to build a version

that felt authentic to me. I've been lucky enough to perform all three of my understudy tracks.

The staging of *The Outsiders* is incredibly physical and emotionally intense. What does it take to maintain that energy eight performances a week?

We rely on each other heavily as a company. The creatives made a point from the beginning that we are not only a collective but a family, and I think that has carried us through the tour. When you're living on the road, the only constant is the people who are in it with you. With such emotionally heavy material, it helps to have coworkers who uplift and rally around you.

I'd also be remiss if I didn't thank our amazing swings and standbys. They are superheroes, always ready to step in at a moment's notice whenever someone is injured or can't perform. We have each other's backs, and I'm grateful to have an atmosphere on and offstage that feels like home when so

much of our environment is constantly changing.

The national tour launched in Tulsa in October 2025, so you've been on the road for nearly a year. How has the experience evolved for you personally and professionally?

I wouldn't trade this experience for the world. The music is distinctly imbued with an Americana folk feel, and at its core, I think *The Outsiders* is a uniquely American story. Taking it to stages across the country feels like we are bringing something home to people, and we get to experience how strongly audiences respond to seeing the story brought to life. Personally, I'm incredibly grateful for the opportunity to travel the country and experience so many places I otherwise might never have visited, and what better way to do it than with a show that I love.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA TOUR

Los Angeles; September 30–October 18 at Hollywood Pantages Theatre

Costa Mesa; October 20–November 1 at Segerstrom Center for the Arts

San Diego; November 3–8 at San Diego Civic Theatre

tour.outsidersmusical.com



DYING TO LIVE

GRIM | La Jolla Playhouse | October 27–December 6

After 300,000 years of collecting souls, even the Grim Reaper is apparently ready for retirement.

That's where *GRIM*, a world-premiere musical at La Jolla Playhouse, begins. His daughter Diana is next in line for the family business and has only a simple test standing between her and the job. Then she meets Josh, a decidedly human teenager, falls for him and starts discovering that life on Earth may be considerably more appealing than ending it.

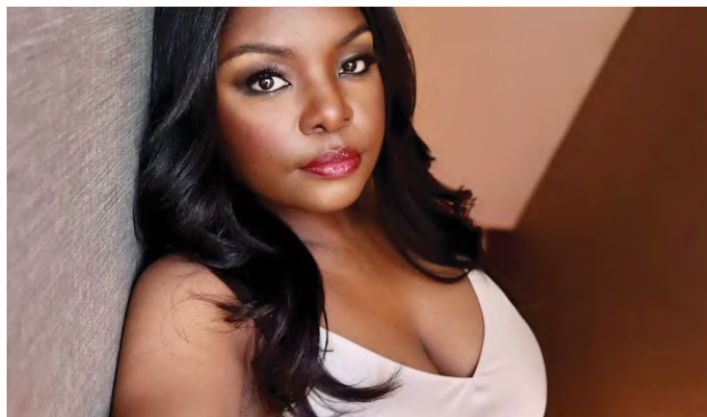
The new musical comes with an intriguing creative team. **Joey Orton** and **Brad Silnutter** wrote the book and join **Petro AP** and **Scott Hoying** of Pentatonix on music and lyrics. **Sammi Cannold** directs, with choreography by Tony Award winner **Andy Blankenbuehler**, whose credits include *Hamilton*, *In the Heights* and *Bandstand*. The Playhouse describes the result as irreverent, funny and heartbreaking, with Diana confronting a rather inconvenient question: If she falls in love with being alive, can she really become the next Grim Reaper? lajollaplayhouse.org



MUSICAL ACTS WORTH A DETOUR

Idina Menzel | Segerstrom Concert Hall | November 6–7

Idina Menzel joins **Pacific Symphony's** Pops series for a night spanning her Tony-winning career, with Enrico Lopez-Yañez conducting. Best known as the original Elphaba in *Wicked* and the voice of Elsa in *Frozen*, Menzel has been called "the Streisand of her generation" by the Denver Post. No pressure, orchestra. pacificsymphony.org



Joaquina Kalukango | Samueli Theater | November 5–7

Tony Award winner Joaquina Kalukango (Paradise Square) returns to **Segerstrom's Cabaret Series** for an evening that's part concert, part testimony, pulling from Broadway triumphs and personal history alike. She's back by popular demand after her 2024 Center debut — and in between, she played the Queen of Disco in Lifetime's *I Will Survive: The Gloria Gaynor Story*, so expect range. scfta.org





IF DOGS COULD TALK

WOOF | Odyssey Theatre | October 3–November 8

Dog people already know their pets have opinions. *WOOF* simply lets them share them with the rest of us.

Written and directed by **Barra Grant**, the newly reimagined comedy follows three very different dogs — Lucille, a pampered Yorkie; Zeus, a flamboyant show poodle; and Drac, a scrappy rescue — as they observe their human owners, initially strangers, crossing paths at a neighborhood dog park. While the humans wrestle with personal crises, unexpected friendships and their own search for connection, the dogs offer commentary from the sidelines.

Grant first introduced these characters in last winter's *GOPLAY* at the Odyssey. After watching the response from sold-out audiences, she returned to the material, finding more comedy and emotional depth, and giving the dogs a few new tricks in the process. odysseytheatre.com

FEEL GOOD? WE'LL SEE.

**The Feel Good Story America Needs Right Now
Theatre West | October 2–November 8**

Six Americans escape captivity by the world's most notorious terrorist organization and return home as national heroes. A year later, they reunite for a *60 Minutes*-style television interview so America can finally hear their story.

There's just one problem. The story everyone knows may not be what happened.

That's the setup for *The Feel Good Story America Needs Right Now*, a world-premiere comedy by television writer **Mark Wilding**, whose credits include *Grey's Anatomy*, *Scandal*, *Ellen* and *Good Girls*. As the cameras prepare to roll, the former hostages begin making demands of their own and the carefully packaged reunion starts coming apart.

Charlie Mount directs the new comedy at Theatre West in Los Angeles. With a title that practically comes with quotation marks around "feel good," we're curious to see exactly where Wilding takes it. theatrewest.org



WHEN WORK GOES VIRAL

JOB | Cygnet Theatre | October 7–November 1

Jane works for a tech giant until an on-the-job breakdown goes viral and lands her on leave. Before she can return, she needs the approval of crisis therapist Loyd. Put the two of them together in one room and *JOB* quickly becomes much more than a workplace evaluation.

Max Wolf Friedlich's taut two-person psychological thriller arrives at Cygnet Theatre following acclaimed off-Broadway and Broadway runs. As Jane and Loyd circle one another, questions about work, power, technology, generational divides and the morality of our online lives begin to surface.

At Cygnet, **Caroline Gottlieb** plays Jane opposite **Jacob Bruce** as Loyd, with **Hannah Meade** directing. And there's something particularly appealing about seeing a play this intimate in The Dottie, Cygnet's smaller studio space at The Joan in Liberty Station. cygnettheatre.org



PLAYING DOCTOR

Kal Penn takes on the complicated true story of Dr. Sandeep Kapoor, whose connection to Anna Nicole Smith turned his private life very public.



The sad saga of Anna Nicole Smith endures for many, nearly 20 years after her death. She died in 2007 at age 39. The Texas-born former exotic dancer's particularly American brand of stardom seemed designed for gossip shows and magazine covers. Among the memorable events surrounding Anna Nicole were her 1993 *Playboy* Playmate of the Year title; a legal battle over her late octogenarian billionaire husband's estate that went all the way to the US Supreme Court; appearances in fashion ads and movies; and affairs with a German "prince," celebrity photographer Larry Birkhead and attorney Howard K. Stern, her costar on E! Network's *The Anna Nicole Show*.

Her 20-year-old son Daniel died suddenly in 2006, a mere three days after Smith gave birth to his half-sister, Dannielynn. Smith would die soon after, a victim of longtime substance abuse. These highs and lows of her life are being recounted in a new movie, ***Trust Me, I'm a Doctor***, which will be released on **Friday, October 16**.

The film primarily focuses on **Dr. Sandeep Kapoor**, a Los Angeles physician and son

of Indian immigrants who started treating Anna Nicole after buying her previous doctor's practice in 2004. As their doctor-patient connection turned into a casual acquaintanceship, Anna Nicole invited Kapoor to the 2005 West Hollywood Gay Pride Parade as her guest. Afterward, he went clubbing with her, her beloved dogs and her entourage. Various bystanders at the club and newscasters at the parade filmed them.

That footage leaked to TMZ in 2009, two years after she was found dead, and Kapoor was subsequently charged with six felonies, including allegations that he improperly prescribed controlled substances to Smith. He was ultimately acquitted of all charges. Kapoor's 2017 memoir, *Trust Me, I'm a Doctor: My Life Before, During and After Anna Nicole Smith*, was a look at the court case from his point of view. He also shared personal stories including becoming a father to twin boys via a surrogate and coming out as gay to his parents while in his 40s.

Writer-director **Thane Economou** (*The Wedding Party*) has adapted Kapoor's memoir into an insightful, frequently funny and often

moving biopic about being burned by fame, and the way a craving for attention can be its own kind of drug.

"I saw Sandeep Kapoor as someone who stood at the intersection of entertainment, the justice system and politics," Economou explains in the film's press notes. "There's no question that Anna Nicole Smith was indicative of the late 20th century and early 21st century's obsession with fame. Kapoor is a person who, in a tangential way, got totally pulled into that world."

Kal Penn headlines the movie as Dr. Kapoor. Perhaps best known as Kumar in the *Harold & Kumar* series of stoner comedies, Penn gives an unexpectedly dramatic performance here. His casting is most appropriate given that Penn, like Kapoor, is a son of Indian immigrants. He came out as gay in 2021.

In addition to his acting career, the multi-talented Penn worked for the Obama Administration in several capacities from 2009 to 2016 and has taught Asian American studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

While preparing for his latest role, Penn noted that some of the ways Kapoor behaved



when around Smith were not only indicative of a man charmed by a celebrity, but also of someone whose sense of self-worth seemed to inordinately hinge on approval.

"There was something very interesting about him from an acting perspective," Penn said. "The thing that made Sandeep compelling to me were the levels of simultaneous insecurity *and* a self-importance that wasn't necessarily reflected in his world. People were obsessed with Anna Nicole Smith — not with her doctor — but because Sandeep was her doctor, he got sucked into an aspect of fame that is not there in reality."

Though the movie jumps back and forth in time as the onscreen Kapoor tells his story in a series of asides and callbacks, Penn adjusted his own copy of the script so that it was in chronological order. This gave the actor an emotional throughline to his character.

"More than anyone else, Kal knew the journey of the character," writer-director Economou says. "He was always thinking, what is the intention behind this or that thing Kapoor says or does? Because at any given moment (in the film), Kapoor is hiding something or lying about something — even when it's something totally unimportant. We kept asking, 'What is Kapoor's intention here, what's going through his head?' What I really respect about Kal is he had the memoir, and he had his conversations with Kapoor, but then at a certain point he said, 'Now we honor the character as written in the script, and



that's the person I'm going to stick to."

As Penn recalls, "If you go to Kapoor's practice in the San Fernando Valley today, it's in the same building as it was when he knew Anna, it's the same practice as when Anna was his patient. He's the only doctor there. He knows all of his patients, and they literally will text or call him with any issue. He cares about all of them, he writes down notes about them in a pad. Shadowing him was interesting to see all that; I mean, if I need to see *my* doctor, good luck getting an appointment for two months, and good luck getting a human on the phone! So seeing Kapoor work in a kind of old school way, and understanding that about him, shed a lot of light on his character."

Observing Kapoor also gave Penn more insights for his performance: "There's so much that Sandeep Kapoor does physically that I thought carried a lot of tension. For instance, the way he crosses his legs felt to me to be very tight from the waist down. From the waist up, as he was speaking with patients, he was very open — but from the waist down, he seemed really closed off. I thought there was an interesting tension there; something was happening behaviorally."

Penn concludes: "It's not every day you get to play a guy who you can meet with and who is so open and vulnerable about his insecurities. It was an interesting and welcome challenge to play him."

THE ONES TO WATCH

Four acclaimed queer films arrive at the 25th San Diego International Film Festival with awards, buzz and stories that stretch far beyond the usual festival fare.

Film festivals present a very specific problem. You open the schedule, see dozens of films you've never heard of and somehow convince yourself you're going to see all of them.

You're not.

The **San Diego International Film Festival** celebrates its 25th anniversary **October 13–18** with 90 films from 22 countries, including eight world premieres. Screenings, filmmaker Q&As, panels, red carpets and parties stretch across six days, with most independent films and studio premieres settling into **AMCUTC 14** for the long weekend.

That still leaves the question of what to see.

Four LGBTQ+ films immediately moved onto our list. They come from Spain, Germany, Nepal and the UK, and between them have collected prizes at Cannes, Berlin and Toronto. More interestingly, the four have very little in common beyond being queer stories. One spans generations, another unfolds on an isolated island, another takes us to Nepal and the fourth looks back at an actor facing the final months of his life.



LA BOLA NEGRA

If there's one title arriving in San Diego with serious momentum, it's ***La Bola Negra***.

Directed by **Javier Calvo and Javier Ambrossi**, collectively known as **Los Javis**, the Spanish epic connects three generations of gay men across pivotal periods in that country's history. Carlos longs to find his place in a fractured Spain. Sebastián finds an unexpected connection across enemy lines. Decades later, Alberto uncovers a family secret that gives voice to truths that were buried long before him.

The cast alone gets our attention, including **Guitarricadelafuente, Miguel Bernardeau, Carlos González, Milo Quifes, Lola Dueñas, Julio Torres, Penélope Cruz** and **Glenn Close**. But the scope is even more interesting: gay lives separated by decades, connected by things earlier generations were forced to hide.

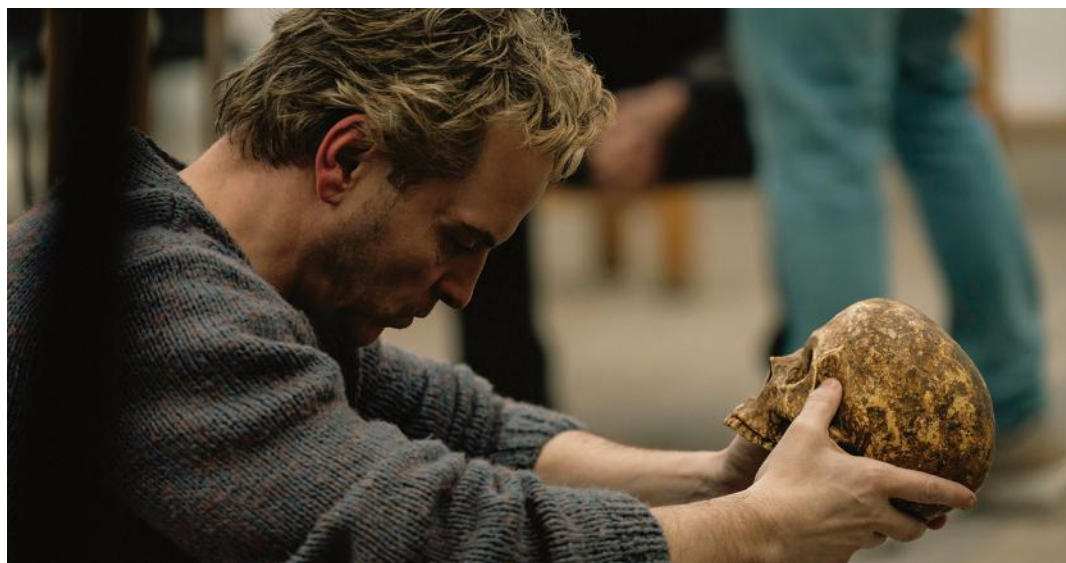
Audiences are responding. *La Bola Negra* won the People's Choice Award at Toronto International Film Festival in September after

premiering at Cannes, where Los Javis shared the Best Director prize. Netflix has acquired the film for U.S. distribution.

At 155 minutes, it's also the longest of our four picks. Maybe skip the giant soda.

La Bola Negra screens at **7:15 p.m. Thursday, October 15**, at AMC UTC 14.





EL SINORE

Our second pick comes with **Andrew Scott**, which admittedly made getting our attention somewhat easier.

In **Elsinore**, Scott plays gay Scottish actor **Ian Charleson**, remembered on film for *Chariots of Fire* but revered in British theater for a remarkable performance near the end of his life.

Charleson was living with AIDS when he stepped into the role of Hamlet at London's National Theatre. Seriously ill and facing his own mortality, he delivered what became one of the most celebrated performances of his career. He died in January 1990 at age 40.

Directed by **Simon Stone** and written by **Stephen Beresford**, who wrote *Pride, Elsinore*, centers on Charleson as he prepares for that final theatrical triumph. **Olivia Colman**, **Billie Piper** and **Johnny Flynn** join Scott in the cast. Focus Features will release the film theatrically beginning November 20, making San Diego an opportunity to catch it early.

It also arrives with an audience endorsement: *Elsinore* won TIFF's International People's Choice Award in September.

Andrew Scott, who plays Charleson, still isn't sure how he pulled it off — some mornings meant a treatment appointment and that same night meant taking the stage as Hamlet. "I don't know how he did it," Scott has said.

Elsinore screens at **6:15 p.m. Saturday, October 17**, at AMC UTC 14.

TRIAL OF HEIN

Trial of Hein begins with a homecoming that goes very wrong. Fourteen years after leaving the remote North Sea island where he grew up, Hein returns. His mother has dementia, his sister was too young to remember him and the rest of the close-knit village refuse to accept that he is who he says he is. Even Friedemann, his former best friend, has doubts.

The villagers' solution? Put Hein on trial and make him prove his identity.

Writer-director **Kai Stånicke** uses that mystery to dig into memory, conformity and belonging, along with Hein's complicated history with Friedemann and the parts of his past the island would apparently prefer to remember differently. The film's stripped-down sets leave buildings exposed, adding another layer of unease to a place where everyone seems to be watching everyone else.

Trial of Hein won the Teddy Jury Award at this year's Berlin International Film Festival, where the Teddy Awards recognize outstanding queer cinema.

The film screens at **10:30 a.m. Friday, October 16**, and at **11:15 a.m. Saturday, October 17**, at AMC UTC 14.

ELEPHANTS IN THE FOG

Kinship built through care rather than blood is a familiar idea to LGBTQ audiences. It's the beating heart of **Elephants in the Fog**, arriving from Nepal with a story rarely seen on American screens.

In a Nepalese village surrounded by forests inhabited by wild elephants, Pirati is the matriarch of a Kinnar community. She dreams of leaving and building a life with the man she loves. But when one of the young women in her care disappears, Pirati puts those plans aside and begins searching for her, forced to choose between her own freedom and responsibility to the family she has built.

The film made history at Cannes as the first Nepalese feature selected for Un Certain Regard, then left with the section's Jury Prize. It is also writer-director **Abinash Bikram Shah's** first feature.

This one could easily have slipped past us in a 90-film program. We're glad it didn't.

Elephants in the Fog screens at **7:30 p.m. Friday, October 16**, and at **2 p.m. Sunday, October 18**, at AMC UTC 14.



AND THEN KEEP LOOKING

Ninety films are showing this week. We've only pointed you toward four of them.

The anniversary edition opens with its **Night of the Stars Tribute** on October 13, followed by **Jesse Eisenberg's *The Debut*** starring **Julianne Moore** and **Paul Giamatti** as the **Opening Night** film on October 14. Screenings and filmmaker conversations take over UTC from Thursday through Sunday, while Saturday night heads to the Belly Up for **25 Years After Dark**.

Culinary Cinema closes things out Sunday with food, wine, cocktails and, yes, another movie. sdfilmfest.com

STREAM QUEEN GETS A HALLOWEEN MAKEOVER

It's October, so this month Stream Queen is becoming Scream Queen. We're trading rom-coms for things that go bump in the night, locking the doors and settling in for witches, killers, creepy camps and at least one homicidal baby. Lots of new horror is headed our way this month, so grab the remote and maybe leave a light on.



First, somebody dumped another bucket of blood on **Carrie**, and we're absolutely watching. Mike Flanagan, the man behind *The Haunting of Hill House* and *Midnight Mass*, takes on Stephen King's classic in a new eight-episode series arriving **October 7** on **Prime Video**. Summer H. Howell plays Carrie White, with Samantha Sloyan as her terrifyingly religious mother, Margaret. This time, Carrie's high-school hell includes social media and viral humiliation. Poor Carrie never catches a break.



A day later, things get wet and wild, but not in a good way. **Below** surfaces **October 8** on **Netflix**, with Josh Hartnett as a fisherman in a small Newfoundland community being terrorized by a mysterious sea creature. Mackenzie Davis and *Stranger Things* star Charlie Heaton also star in the six-episode series. And yes, Hartnett is still ridiculously handsome. If we have to spend six episodes waiting for something in the ocean to eat everyone, at least Netflix gave us something nice to look at.



Next, pack your bug spray and definitely do not go swimming. **Crystal Lake** premieres **October 15** on **Peacock**, taking us back to the summer camp where the *Friday the 13th* nightmare began. Linda Cardellini stars as Pamela Voorhees, mother of young Jason, in the eight-episode prequel from A24 and showrunner Brad Caleb Kane. Better yet for impatient horror fans, Peacock is dropping all eight episodes at once.

If witches are more your flavor of nightmare, **YAGA** arrives **October 23** on **AMC+**. Carrie-Anne Moss stars as a mysterious professor at the center of an investigation involving a missing student in a contemporary reimagining of the Baba Yaga legend. Noah Reid, Clark Backo and

hunky Hudson Williams also star. Ancient witchcraft, dark secrets and Carrie-Anne Moss? We're in.



Finally, there's **Big Baby**, premiering **October 30** on **Shudder**. And with a title like that, how could we not? A horror writer starts having nightmares about a homicidal maniac in a baby mask, uses those nightmares as inspiration for a screenplay and soon discovers his fictional killer might not be so fictional. Spider One directs. Oh, and **Cher** is an executive producer. We probably could have just started with that.



Bottom line: this month gives you a psychic teenager, a killer whale-thingy, a dead camp counselor's mom, and Cher producing a movie about a murderous baby. Halloween's here.

TGIF ART FAIR

FRIDAYS

October 2nd & 16th

6PM - 10PM

Cocktails - Mocktails

Dancers - DJs



WHERE MEN WHO
LIKE MEN GATHER

Nick DiBlasio
Leonard Travis
Icker De Poque
Robert Ramos
Jonathon Chaplin-Durie
Terry Hastings
Jack Burkland
Cesar Mourelo
Rich Thompson
Jeromy Novy
Michael Thompson
Chris Campbell
Mike Foxworthy
Austin Ross
Art of Douglas
Tony Alexander Design

600 E. Sunny Dunes Rd.

PSTOOLSHED.COM



SATURDAY

PALM SPRINGS LEATHER PRIDE CIGAR SOCIAL

HOSTED BY GARCZAR & THE TOOLSHED

SATURDAY OCTOBER 31ST
2:00PM - 5:00PM

\$10 SUGGESTED DONATION BENEFITS
THE PALM SPRINGS CULTURAL CENTER
& THE PALM SPRINGS AIDS MEMORIAL



Palm Springs AIDS Memorial

GARCZAR CIGARS WILL BE AVAILABLE
FOR A DONATION AT THE EVENT



**BROUGHT TO YOU BY
MR. TOOL SHED
WESLEY HILL**

PUMPKIN CARVING CONTEST

**MONDAY
OCTOBER 11TH
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM**

**\$20 ENTRY
TICKET**

**CARVE
SOME FUN
TOGETHER!**

**PRIZES FOR
BEST OVERALL,
MOST CREATIVE &
MOST QUEER**

Hocktoberfest

**OFFICIAL SPONSOR
OF THE BIGHORNS**

**MEET THE
TOOL SHED
BIGHORNS!**

**HOCKEY PLAYERS
- JOCK AUCTION**

**OCTOBER 24
8PM - 2AM**

**PUCK SHOT
+ PRIZES**

SILENT AUCTION

**\$5 CUP
DONATION
\$1 REFILLS!**

**COACHELLA VALLEY
PRIDE
HOCKEY**

**FUNDRAISER FOR
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**PLAY PROUD.
PLAY TOGETHER.**

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Paul O'Halloran courtesy
thepaulbarps.com

FEED THAT AZZ!

We could discuss the deliciousness of Palm Springs all day, but this is just a taste. Every month, we'll showcase a few of our fave foodie spots, so let's dig into Kinktober, shall we?

As the high season sizzles into full swing, we're thrilled to note that **Paul Bar** is reopening! From the street, this looks like a humble storefront, but once you step inside, you enter a next-level Narnia of speakeasy realness. Nosh on a perfect pork chop served with cherry chutney and pair it with the densely marinated cherry in their signature Black Manhattan cocktail. Bottoms *so* up!
thepaulbarps.com

Palm Springs offers several cuisine/speakeasy pairings, but you didn't hear it from us. Sshhh! On Arenas, enjoy elevated bar food at **Blackbook**. While you're there, ask about the owner's nearby saloon. We won't divulge its name or exact coordinates so as not to spoil its specialness. Elsewhere in town, carve out some decadence at **Mr. Lyons** steakhouse, then sneak around the curtain for speakeasy vibes at **Seymour's**. The Gay 20s are back, baby!

THE PULSE OF *Palm Springs* PUT YOUR FINGER ON IT!

OK, you caught us — we were thinking about your butt. Visions of that perfect patootie floated through our fertile minds as we pondered all the ways you could dance your butt off, laugh your butt off or party your butt off. Butt!

But(t) now it's time to focus. Where on gawd's gay Earth can you find all of the heiny hijinks described above? Answer: in Palm Springs, ASSuredly!

We're gonna keep you up with what's going down in the PSP, so get a dogsitter, get out to Coachella Valley, and get your proverbial groove on.

PUT SOME KINK IN YOUR CABOOSE

Happy Kinktober! That's right, we changed the name. Hey, if fascists can rename lakes and gulfs, then we can certainly jazz up the calendar. Kinktober it is!

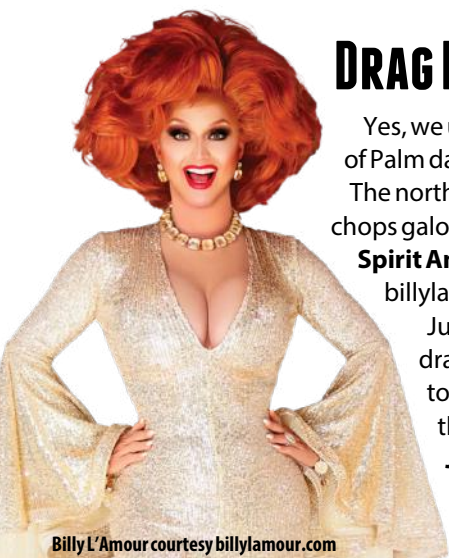
But it's more than just a name; it's a whole attitude. From leather to lace to stuffing your face, we all have a fetish, even if it's seductively subtle. So don't repress your urge — let it surge! Good news: Palm Springs caters to all consenting adults with excessive events aplenty. Great news: You can give yourself (and others) a thrill while also giving back to the LGBTQ+ community.

You may be asking yourself, *but how?* Please save all questions until the end. You're under our command now. Dom/sub play is titillating, i'nit? And the answer to your question, loyal subject, is **Revivals After Dark: Pride Edition**, a back alley gathering that puts the 'fun' in 'fundraising.' On October — oops — **Kinktober 23** at 6 p.m., shop for naughty gear and nifty garments at Revivals on South Palm Canyon Drive. Explore and indulge in the knowledge that all proceeds benefit **DAP Health**, the premier provider of queer care in California. You'll find top-notch items at bargain basement prices while rubbing elbows (ahem) with the hottest gays in town. **International Mr. Leather 2026 Honey Davenport** will be DJ'ing the extravaganza, so shop 'til you drop while hopping to some bops!

So, *what will I do with my snazzy newfound items?* Srsly, you need to hold the questions for later. In the meantime, strap in for **Leather Pride Weekend**, starting **Thursday, Kinktober 29**. **Hotel Zoso** hosts everything from a **BATE** party in their catacombs to a sober celebration to poolside yoga to a leather fellowship dinner. But the kink can't be contained to one locale — no, no, my pet. Venture out to **Hunters** for the official welcome party, **Chill Bar** for a puppy play event, and **Dick's** for a BDSM demo session. Conveniently enough, all three bars are on the same block, so hit Arenas Road (and hit it hard!)
pslod.org/leatherpride

A bit further south, the iconic **Tool Shed** opens their heart, their legs and their parking lot for **Dark Alley**, a cruisey concoction of leather goods, lusty gropes and luscious grub. That's right, food trucks are on hand to fuel your friskiness, so open wide and ogle winsomely. And speaking of putting stuff in your mouth... (see left)





DRAG DAT AZZ!

Yes, we used the same title twice. So sue us. But first, enjoy some of the best damn drag in the wurrrld, courtesy of Palm damn Springs. Yup, we also used 'damn' twice in a sentence. Double sue us.

The north star in our crossdressing constellation is **Billy L'Amour**. She sings (what a voice!), she zings (comedy chops galore!) and she brings that 'it' factor to every stage she graces. This Kinktober, you can catch Billy at **Spirit Animal Lounge** on October 9 and the **Palm Springs Cultural Center** on Halloween night. Scary good! billylamour.com

Just a skosh east and light years from the ordinary, **One Eleven Bar** rocks Cathedral City with dazzling drag diversity. Brunch, karaoke, headliners — you name it, they'll slay it. And it's thanks, in large part, to the tireless talents of **Vanity Halston**. As general manager and overall rockstar, Ms. Halston helps the Coachella Valley shine brighter, one sequin at a time. And we round out our roster with Ru royalty **Jasmine Masters**, a hostess, humorist, and a hoot and a half. You'll find her at **Boozehounds'** brunch, **Social Cafe's** *Illusions* show, and anywhere else amazingness occurs. Oops, indeed!

Billy L'Amour courtesy billylamour.com

DERRIERE DANCE PARTY

Now that you've stuffed yourself silly and styled your fine behind to the heights of drag awesomeness, it's time to boogie! **The Copa Nightclub** offers different themes every evening, including banda and hip-hop and drag (oh my!), so you'll step out smashingly no matter what your funky flavor may be. And **Reforma** blends industrial grit with glam grooves all month long, so make it a Kinktober to remember.

But the main event this month is **The Dinah**, the world's longest-running, largest lesbian music fest. Gurrll power ripples through the throngs of amped-up attendees at this empowering event, which rocks the first weekend of Kinktober at the host hotels, Zoso and the Hilton Palm Springs. Swoon to the seductive shimmer of Sasha Keable, enjoy pop bliss courtesy of The Aces, and crush out on the absolutely stunning songstress Hayley Kiyoko.

You won't want this event to end — in fact, you might throw a sexy tantrum. Ooh, what a segue: **Da Brat** headlines this year's Dinah festival, bringing her swagger, charisma and legacy to a new generation of fans while simultaneously satisfying scores of scenesters who have loved her since she ruled the 90s. The queen of pop culture is back and brattier than ever! thedinah.com



BUTT WAIT, THERE'S MORE

Some Kinktober happenings defy categorization, so we set aside this special section for a must-visit venue nestled cozily in the south side of Palm Springs. **PS Underground** is the premier place for gourmet chow themed to world-class entertainment and libation liberation. That's right, one ticket price covers a jaw-dropping show, an open bar and a playfully inventive menu designed around every unique event. **Michael Fietsam** is your emcee of OMG and his partner **Chef Dave Horgan** whips up whimsy and refinement with each dish he plates. Sway to Broadway-caliber talent as you savor and sip the night away. In Kinktober alone, PS Underground is staging events with varied va-va-va-voom like vampire chic, high tea intrigue and midcentury mod immersion. We can't overstate this: get your sweet buns there, tout de suite! psunderground.com

Tantalizing teaser: In next month's issue, we'll dive into Palm Springs Pride and run down every party and pit stop that you simply must experience. Until then, stay cool, PSP peeps.



Bite at PS Underground



DARK ALLEY #1

2026

FRIDAY OCTOBER 30

5PM - 1AM

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DESERT



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DARKER

7PM-1AM

SATURDAY OCTOBER 31

COSTUME CONTEST

\$1000 1ST PRIZE

\$500 2ND PRIZE

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HOT DJs SEXY DANCERS 20,000 SQFT

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THE HOUSE THAT CUPCAKES BUILT

After nearly 20 years, Babycakes owner Christopher Stavros is passing the Hillcrest favorite to a new owner and looking back on the parties, people and memories that made it matter.

Babycakes isn't going away.

That was welcome news around *The RAGE Monthly* office, because when we first heard that Christopher Stavros was selling the business he built with **Rafael Del Rio** almost 20 years ago, we weren't quite sure what that meant for one of Hillcrest's longtime favorites.

Now we know. Babycakes is getting a new owner and a new chapter.

Cyrus Sarraf, who recently relocated to San Diego from the Bay Area, is taking over the business. His family owns several successful bakeries there, including La Patisserie, Lavender Bakery and Sugar Butter Flour. And Stavros, who knows a thing or two about bakeries by now, said he is excited about where Babycakes goes from here.

"We have built a reputation over two decades and want to see it continue and evolve," Stavros said. "The employees are a big part of the continuation, and we feel confident that the new owner will take the business to the next level."

Babycakes isn't going anywhere. But one remarkable chapter is closing.

We spent a lot of hours at Babycakes over the years. Some working. Some celebrating. There were friends, cocktails, cupcakes, Sunday afternoons and more than a few nights that went on longer than originally planned.

When Christopher and Rafael opened the original Babycakes on Fifth Avenue, there wasn't some grand plan to create an LGBT+ institution. Rafael was a gifted, self-taught pastry chef and Christopher, after years in restaurant and hospitality management, was ready to own his own business. And then Hillcrest did what Hillcrest does: It found the place.

Housed in an 1889 Craftsman home, Babycakes had desserts, coffee, cocktails, food and event spaces. Before long there were birthdays, weddings, fundraisers, dates, Pride weekends and CityFest — sometimes all at once.

"There were times we would have an 80th birthday party, a baby shower, a community meeting, Baby Brunch, and Sunday Funday-CHURCH all going on at the same time under one roof," Stavros recalled.

There were even occasions when the staff had to maneuver a three-tier wedding cake through the middle of the CHURCH crowd to get it to a wedding.

And then there was CHURCH itself.

Stavros remembers inviting friends to a Sunday afternoon party and thinking maybe 20 or 30 people would show up. Hundreds did. It took off immediately and became a Hillcrest Sunday ritual for years.

"People to this day will pull me aside, light up and mention CHURCH," he said.

We get it. Mention Babycakes to people who were around Hillcrest during those years and everybody seems to have a story. We certainly have ours.

Babycakes eventually moved from Fifth Avenue to Fourth Avenue, and the business evolved along the way. Cakes and cupcakes remain part of weddings, birthdays, graduations, holidays and celebrations throughout San Diego.

Stavros says the timing of the sale simply felt organic. He plans to pursue new interests, while Rafael will continue putting his considerable pastry talents to work. The hardest part, he says, is giving up creative control of something they spent nearly two decades building. But what they built remains.

Stavros said that if someone has one fond memory or one positive experience from the past 20 years, then all the blood, sweat and tears were worth it.

We have considerably more than one.

So, no, this isn't goodbye to Babycakes.

Thanks, Christopher and Rafael, for all the memories. And Cyrus — welcome to Hillcrest. We can't wait to see what you do with the place.



Rafael Del Rio and Christopher Stavros



GLBTQ VOTE 2026

SAN DIEGO

NOVEMBER 3

PRIORITY ENDORSEMENTS



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Governor



Marni von Wilpert
Congress 48th District



Richard Barrera
State Superintendent



Nicole Crosby
City Council District 2



Jordan Marks
County Assessor



Mara Elliot
State Senate District 40



Patricia Dillard
La Mesa Mayor



Marcus Bush
National City Mayor

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Lieutenant Governor: **Fiona Ma**

Secretary of State: **Dr. Shirley Weber**

Attorney General: **Rob Bonta**

State Treasurer: **Eleni Kounalakis**

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District 38: **Catherine Blakespear**

STATE ASSEMBLY

District 74: **Sergio Farias**

District 76: **Dr. Darshana Patel**

District 77: **Tasha Boerner**

District 78: **Chris Ward**

District 79: **Dr. LaShae Sharp-Collins**

District 80: **David Alvarez**

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Dist. 4: **Monica Montgomery Steppe**

Dist. 5: **Kyle Krahel**

County Treasurer: **Larry Cohen**

CONGRESS

District 49: **Mike Levin**

District 50: **Scott Peters**

District 51: **Sara Jacobs**

District 52: **Juan Vargas**



STATE PROPOSITIONS

YES ON PROPS 1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 37 - 38 - 40

NO ON PROPS 39 - 41 - 42 - 43 - 44 - 45

EARLY ENDORSEMENTS

State Assembly: **Stephen Whitburn**

San Diego City Council (Dist. 3): **Nick Serrano**

San Diego City Council (Dist. 7): **Mat Kostrinsky**

SDUSD School Board (Dist. D): **Manuel Reyes**

A PIONEERING GAY COUPLE CHANGED THE COURSE OF GAY KIDS IN OUR SCHOOLS



Norman Jesse speaking on the floor of the Iowa House of Representatives

Today our nation's schools often have Gay-Straight Alliances, students wearing Pride shirts, and theater departments performing *The Laramie Project*. What few people know is who made this possible. A lesbian, **Mary Beth Tinker**, and a gay man, **Christopher Eckhardt**. In 1969, the U.S. Supreme Court held that students have First Amendment rights to speech, subject only to a very high standard of causing "substantial and material disruption."

The lawyer who helped make it happen was a gay man who, at the time, could not safely tell the world who he was. **Dan Johnston** was a young Iowa lawyer when he took on *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent Community School District*. The case began with something almost startlingly simple: Students wore black armbands to school to protest the Vietnam War. School officials ordered them removed and suspended students who refused.

Among those students were Mary Beth Tinker, 13, her brother John, and Christopher Eckhardt. Mary Beth would later say that, even then, she knew she was gay.

The students needed a lawyer. They found Dan Johnston. He had graduated from Drake University Law School and was barely beginning his legal career. Yet he pursued the case through the federal courts and, at age 30, stood before the U.S. Supreme Court.

On February 24, 1969, the high court ruled 7-2 for the students. The words that emerged from Tinker became part of American constitutional culture: Students

do not "shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate."

But there is another story behind *Tinker*. One that deserves a place in LGBTQ+ history.

While attending Drake Law School, Johnston met **Norman Jesse**, a fellow student. The two became professional partners and life partners. Their relationship lasted more than 35 years, until Jesse's death in 2000. They could build a life together. They could practice law together. They could enter politics. Both eventually served in the Iowa House of Representatives. What they could not safely do was live openly as a gay couple.

Johnston and Jesse maintained separate homes across the street from one another. Their discretion was not simply personal shyness. This was an era when homosexuality could destroy a professional reputation and when "moral character" required heterosexuality. Both men risked their law licenses.

So they lived a paradox familiar to generations of gay Americans: public achievement and private concealment. And yet the constitutional principle Johnston helped establish would give generations of LGBTQ students a weapon that Johnston and Jesse themselves never possessed as young men.

Tinker did not involve gay rights. It involved black armbands and the Vietnam War. But constitutional principles have lives beyond the people and controversies that create them. Tinker established that young

people possess constitutional rights inside the schoolhouse. Schools could no longer assume that students surrendered their voices simply by walking through the door.

That principle became enormously important as gay and lesbian students — and later bisexual, transgender and queer students — began demanding the right to speak, organize, wear messages of Pride, publish articles, protest discrimination, and challenge school officials who wanted LGBTQ people to remain invisible.

The story becomes even more poignant because Tinker later spoke publicly about being gay. The 13-year-old girl whose armband helped transform American constitutional law was carrying an identity that she was not yet announcing to the world.

Her lawyer was doing much the same. None of them could have known exactly where Tinker would lead.

Johnston went on to an extraordinary public career. He served in the Iowa Legislature and as Polk County Attorney, worked on criminal-justice reform, served on the national ACLU board, and later served on the board of Gay Men's Health Crisis in New York during the AIDS crisis. Jesse likewise served for years in the Iowa Legislature.

For most of their public careers, however, their relationship remained largely hidden. That is why Johnston and Jesse belong in our LGBTQ+ history.

Not merely as two successful gay lawyers and politicians, but as a couple whose lives illustrate the distance America has traveled.



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NIGHTMARE ON FIFTH AVENUE: WHEN HALLOWEEN FUN TURNS INTO CRIMINAL CHARGES

Halloween is the one night a year that rowdy behavior is accepted, and sometimes even encouraged. But it isn't *The Purge*. It's one of the highest-saturation law enforcement nights of the year. While nobody plans to end their night in police handcuffs, being legally prepared before heading out in your costume is essential.

Property Destruction

It might seem like a simple prank or getting back at someone, but smashing someone else's pumpkin or destroying lawn decorations isn't just a neighborhood prank: It's vandalism (Penal Code § 594) under California law. Maybe it's not necessarily a prank, and you genuinely feel offended by someone's decorations, car stickers or political yard signs, destroying or defacing that individual's property is still a crime. Furthermore, property damage is aggregated: If total destruction costs exceed \$400, a simple misdemeanor charge can be elevated to a felony, a charge that follows you for life.

Trespassing

The intent might feel completely innocent: Running a DIY ghost tour in an old building, taking a shortcut to the party through a neighbor's yard, or needing the perfect backdrop for your costume's social media post. Even if a property looks completely abandoned, it still belongs to an owner or the city, and stepping onto or running through someone's private yard, patio or driveway is unpermitted entry and may result in a criminal trespass charge. Regardless of the intent, unpermitted entry violates California's Penal Code § 602.

DUI

Even if you're dressed up to mimic the infamous DUI mugshots of Tiger Woods or Britney Spears, driving intoxicated between parties is a fast track to creating your own real one. High-saturation DUI

checkpoints and extra patrols make Halloween one of the heaviest traffic enforcement nights of the year. Remember that intoxication isn't limited to alcohol. Marijuana, prescription drugs and controlled substances fall squarely under officer scrutiny. Taking a chance on your "buzzed" driving skills isn't worth risking your life, others' safety or your criminal record.

Disturbing the Peace

Large block parties, street gatherings and costume crawls may lead to disorderly conduct charges. What starts as loud music or a rowdy crowd can quickly escalate into arrests. When these groups or parties spill onto public sidewalks, a simple noise complaint can escalate into a criminal record in seconds. Between alcohol and the rowdiness of getting into character, ignoring a police dispersal order or acting belligerently toward officers turns a civil nuisance into immediate arrests under Penal Code § 415 (Disturbing the Peace) and Penal Code § 409 (Failure to Disperse).

Halloween Fun Without Any Legal Fright

Halloween is a night for costumes, parties and getting into the spirit of spooky season. However, it's also a prime environment for situations to arise that produce high emotions, regret and sometimes arrests. Remember: Dressing up as Spider-Man doesn't grant superhero immunity. California's laws apply 24/7, full costume or not.

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THE *Spirituality* OF A SAN DIEGO FALL

Here in San Diego, fall can sometimes feel to me like a made-up season, and I wonder if it feels that way for you too?

Growing up in South Baltimore, fall had a distinct rhythm. Labor Day weekend meant that nearly everyone I knew was cooking out in Latrobe Park and the following Tuesday, every child I knew went back to school.

The weather turned colder, winter clothes were unpacked, and the trees changed color and eventually shed their leaves. You knew fall had arrived because everything in the world around you told you so.

Halloween was also different as a kid. "What are you going to be for Halloween?" felt like a life-defining question. We mostly made rather than bought our costumes, and we roamed the neighborhood in Gen X packs, trick-or-treating on dozens of city blocks where everyone knew who we were and likely knew our parents and grandparents as well. The neighborhood's support of our childhood was as obvious as the change in the seasons.

Now, as an adult living in San Diego, the patterns of fall are more subtle. It's been over a decade since I've been to a Labor Day cookout. Year-round school schedules mean that "back to school" is a season rather than a single day. I still enjoy seeing Halloween decorations and costumes, but the holiday feels more commercial and less communal.

And without the dramatic change of seasons, even the idea of "fall" can feel like we're just pretending. Sure, the days get shorter and I eventually realize I haven't needed the AC, but the patterns aren't obvious. Fall still happens, but only if I'm paying closer attention.

I've realized that something similar has happened with both my spirituality and with my sense of myself as a gay man.

There was a time when both my sexual orientation and my faith seemed to require declarations. I grew up Catholic, so spirituality came with obvious rituals, symbols, music and particular ways of understanding the world. My spirituality was something you could see.

Coming out also had visible markers. First, I realized it myself, but then I told people, discovered a community, and started living openly. I wanted people to know that I was gay. It felt important and revolutionary and more than a little dramatic.

As I've gotten older, both my spirituality and my sexual orientation have become more integrated. I don't need to announce either one quite as often because neither feels like something separate from the rest of me. Being gay and a Unitarian Universalist shapes how I understand love, family, community, justice and belonging, but like a San Diego fall, both show up in less dramatic and more ordinary ways. And there is something profoundly sacred about that ordinariness.

For generations, LGBTQ+ people were told that our lives were wrong, shameful or something to hide, so there is something both beautiful and radical about living a wonderfully unremarkable gay life. And in an increasingly politicized climate when religion can sometimes feel like a tool we use to judge and hate others, living a quietly spiritual life centered in love is one way we can bring peace to ourselves and our world.

So, while I still miss the dramatic patterns of the falls that I experienced in my childhood, I've also come to appreciate fall in San Diego. It reminds me that transformation doesn't need to be dramatic to be real. Subtlety, normalcy and constancy can be beautiful too, and the mundane can also be sacred.

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