



Special Effects in “Final Destination: Bloodlines”

Kalyn Corrigan’s deep dive from the SFX team on how they created the film’s most dastardly gags. p. 4



“Materialists” Review

Chad Byrnes reviews the new rom-com from A24. p. 7

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The iconic image of impact printed on over 100K postcards by Ant Farm since 1975. CREDIT: JOHN F. TURNER

‘Collaborating With the Muses’ and ‘Still Burning’ at 500 Capp Street

BY SHARON ANDERSON

THIS SUMMER 500 CAPP STREET will celebrate two seminal voices of the Bay Area’s conceptual art scene with the next installation of 2025 Guggenheim

Fellow Mildred Howard’s *Collaborating With the Muses* and a 50th Anniversary tribute to radical art and architecture collective Ant Farm’s 1975 performance and subsequent video work, *Media Burn*, curated by Steve Seid.

COLLABORATING WITH THE MUSES: PART TWO

Mildred Howard returns to Capp Street presenting a never-before-seen installation from a new body of work titled *Untold Histories/* ANDERSON, continued on 3

REYNOLDS RAP :: Opinion

Marina chef Gary Rulli wants to set the record straight about his Union Square cafés

Emails detail complaints of subway boondoggle, crime, homelessness, and financial losses ignored by city officials.

BY SUSAN DYER REYNOLDS

ANYONE FROM THE BAY AREA WHO LOVES Italian pastries has heard of Chef Gary Rulli, proprietor of RistoBar, located on Chestnut Street in San Francisco’s Marina District, and the flagship pasticceria, Emporio Rulli, in Larkspur. Rulli is a fourth-generation San Franciscan whose grandparents emigrated from Abruzzi, Italy, but it was a trip back to the motherland that gave him an appreciation for authentic Italian baking and, in particular, Panettone. When Rulli arrived in Italy in 1982, he discovered that Panettone was a dying art. Rulli made it his mission to learn from the masters, REYNOLDS RAP, continued on 2

SPORTS CORNER :: A Baseball Life

Dusty Baker reflects, part 2

BY RICHARD KELLER

IN RETROSPECT, DUSTY BAKER SURE IS glad he took that getaway trip to Lake Arrowhead back in 1987. Otherwise, he wouldn’t have heard the familiar voice of Giants owner Bob Lurie in the hotel lobby, who would utter six words that would profoundly change the course of Baker’s life — “You need to come join us.”

A few months earlier, Dodgers General Manager Al Campanis appeared on ABC’s “Nightline” and informed Ted Koppel and the rest of America that minority men made great ballplayers, no question about that. But when it came to field managing or front office positions, well, they lacked something.

Overnight, America’s eyes were reopened to how accurately baseball reflected a shameful national sentiment that somehow could not be erased. However long it took Jackie Robinson to break the color barrier, however much the game congratulated itself for giving every man the chance to play, the doors to careers afterward were thick mahogany and they closed with barely a sound.

Shortly after, Baker’s baseball godfather Hank Aaron invited him to attend a special gathering of former players during the winter meetings in Dallas. “I walked in and, besides Hank, there was Curt Flood, Joe Morgan, Willie Stargell, Frank Robinson, Ralph Garr, Bobby Tolan and other heavyweights,” recalls Baker. “They were starting what they called The Network Group. Its purpose was to find guys jobs.”

At the time, Baker was already gainfully employed and had zero desire to re-enter baseball. “I was trying to be a stockbroker, but I didn’t really like being responsible for other people’s money,” he said. “I was at a crossroads in my life. My playing career was over, my marriage was on the rocks, my brother had a nervous breakdown, the economy was bad, all happening at once. That’s why I decided to go to Lake Arrowhead and sort out what I wanted to do. It was pure luck that I ran into Bob Lurie while I was there.”

Thinking things through while he fished, Baker decided to meet with Giants general manager Al Rosen and signed onto manager Roger Craig’s coaching staff with



Dusty Baker as manager of the Houston Astros at Game 1 of the ALCS between the Texas Rangers and the Houston Astros at Minute Maid Park, October 15, 2023. PHOTO: DANIEL SHIREY/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

the aim of managing one day. “It proves yet again that positives can come from a negative,” Baker noted. “Baseball was trying to disprove what Campanis said and it made managers out of guys like Don Baylor, Hal McRae, Cito Gaston ... and me.”

Craig’s “Humm Baby” philosophy had

lifted the Giants from perennial also-rans to constant contenders for the National League title. In his seven-plus seasons at the helm, Craig amassed 586 wins, the most by any San Francisco Giants manager from Bill Rigney forward.

KELLER, continued on 8

Reynolds Rap,
continued from cover

and reinvent what Americans knew as a dry, prepackaged cupola-shaped Christmas cake made with baker’s yeast and filled with candied fruits and raisins. His mentor, renowned Bergamo pastry chef Achille Brena, showed him the secret of using natural yeast to make authentic Panettone, “un pasticcere a 360 gradi.”

Rulli brought the natural yeast starter back to America as a gift from Brena, and that 100-year-old starter allowed him to produce the regional varieties of Panettone that made him the cake’s ambassador, from Milanese to Genovese, and the New Year’s Panettone known as the Veneziana.

Dubbed “the ambassador of authentic Italian pastry in America” by La Pasticceria Internazionale, Rulli is considered one of the greatest master pastry chefs in America, but it is his Panettone that put him on the map. Italian-American chef and TV personality Giada de Laurentiis once called Rulli’s Milanese Panettone “the best thing she had ever eaten.” He was the only Italian-American to be included in the Accademia Maestri Pasticceria Italiana, in Brescia. Rulli’s client roster includes President Jimmy Carter, Sophia Loren, Martha Stewart, George Lucas, and Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead.

Besides his skills as a chef, Rulli’s deep roots in San Francisco have led to community involvement, from welcoming San Francisco police officers like his own grandfather during the “defund the police” unrest when other restaurants were shutting them out, to hosting a morning meet-and-greet for a Marina District runners group with then mayoral candidate Daniel Lurie. Over the years, Rulli has put over \$12 million into the City of San Francisco with his various businesses, but it hasn’t always been smooth sailing, especially the 12 years he spent in Union Square, where he has seen a one-million-dollar aggregate loss since 2012 due to drawn out construction on the Central Subway, rampant crime, drug use, homelessness, and the 2020 pandemic. As he watched the City bend over backward to welcome celebrity chef Tyler Florence while referring to him as “the previous tenant who defaulted,” Rulli decided it was time to set the record straight.

FREE RENT FOR YEE BUT
NOT FOR THEE

Union Square features two permanent kiosks on opposite corners across the street from the iconic department store Macy’s (which is set to close in the next two years). In 2023, then-mayor London Breed announced celebrity chef Tyler Florence’s company would open two of his Miller & Lux Provisions cafés, one next to Stockton Street offering lunch and all-day brunch options, and the other adjacent to Powell Street offering pastries.

Florence, a familiar face from his nearly 30 years on the Food Network, operates the critically acclaimed Wayfare Tavern in the Financial District and another Miller & Lux inside Chase Center. To speed things up ahead of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation summit and the annual J.P. Morgan Healthcare Conference at the Westin St. Francis Hotel, the mayor’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development gave Florence \$440,000 to overhaul the kiosks, help pay for equipment, and cover some of his initial operating and program expenses. Despite Florence’s initial enthusiasm, he soon found significant challenges in running the restaurants, including the fact that neither had a kitchen for preparing fresh food.

When Gov. Gavin Newsom signed a bill in September 2023 awarding a \$2 million grant to refurbish Union Square, San Francisco officials said the money would be used to install kitchens in the kiosks, as well as upgrade their serving areas and public spaces. In fact, Phil Ginsburg, General Manager of the San Francisco Recreation and Park Department, credited Florence’s lobbying for helping secure the grant.

During the NBA All-Star festivities, TV news stations played video of new mayor Daniel Lurie cozing up to a clearly uncomfortable Florence. While it may have seemed sudden to the public, Florence had been warning the City for most of 2024 about various challenges and had already let Rec and Park know that he would be leaving the Union Square kiosks after losing nearly \$300,000 in one year.

According to public records, in February 2024, just over three months into operation, Miller & Lux asked the City for a pause at the rotisserie due to an issue with the dumbwaiter (more on that later) and to release the company from its obligation to operate the rotisserie until the renovations funded by the state grant were completed, to which the City agreed. Instead, the kiosk closed and never reopened. On September 30, 2024, Donna Perreault, Chief of Staff at Tyler Florence Entertainment Inc., wrote to city officials, “Police presence is down, skateboarders are back, and we are getting complaints about the cleanliness of the Park.” She also said that Dreamforce, Salesforce’s large annual conference at Moscone Center, “was a huge disappointment ... one of our slowest weeks on record.”

In December 2024, the day after Florence’s team said it would close at the end of that month, Rec and Park’s Director of Property Management Dana Ketcham emailed colleagues about “playing hardball” by holding Florence to his three-year lease and potentially seeking damages if he still closed, but lamented that could result in “bad publicity” for both Florence and the City. Alternatively, Ketcham said, the City could be “nice” and try to convince Florence to stay, at least for another two months. Meanwhile, Florence’s effort to secure additional funds were unsuccessful: in a Jan. 27, 2025, email, Ginsburg confirmed to Florence that Breed’s administration “had not been able to allocate the money” from the grant and stated that Miller & Lux would be allowed to break its lease obligations “as soon as a replacement tenant was found.”

The awkward video clips of a jubilant Mayor Lurie and a stiff Florence occurred just before the celebrity chef left the building. City officials brought in Belinda Leong, proprietor of one of Lurie’s favorite morning stops, b. Patisserie in Pacific Heights, to open a pop-up with just two days to prepare to serve pastries over the three-day NBA All-Star weekend that ran from Feb. 14 through 18, 2025. For stepping up at the last minute, the City rewarded b. Patisserie with a deal sweeter than its famous kouign-amann — a one-year deal where the tenant pays expenses but has the opportunity to seek credits to offset them after the first six months of free rent. During the second six months, the tenant pays a percentage of rent only after achieving \$80,000 in sales per month.

Rulli is understandably angry at the way he was treated by the very same players as he dealt with the Central Subway construction boondoggle and a worldwide pandemic in addition to the crime, blight, and homelessness that Florence complained about. Over the course of several interviews, Rulli shared some of the correspondence he received

from the City as he begged for their help and said that he had no choice but to walk away. “My lease was over 16 years, \$22,000 a month base plus percentage rent,” he explained. “We closed down at the start of the pandemic. We were on a month-to-month the last year waiting for the subway to open after 12 years of construction. We had been losing substantial amounts of money the last three years due to the continuous degradation of the Square and the constant construction which had already kept business away since it started 12 years ago. We were offered no rent relief during the entire time of the construction period even though the general contractor, through negligence, had laid down the wrong tracks and had to remove and reinstall them, which only further delayed the reopening of the Central Subway.”

Rulli spent \$3.5 million to build out the two cafés, including display cases and a glass patio, with no help from the City, and paid \$4 million in rent over the course of his lease. “With half the workforce leaving downtown during Covid and the continued downward spiral of the whole environment around Union Square, we decided not to reopen and left the built-out cafés and infrastructure to the City,” Rulli says. “We owed around \$100,000 in rent accumulated in the final year. Fighting the City in a legal battle would have been too expensive, and due to being impacted already by the Covid economy, we decided to just let it go. After reading the PR campaign put out by the City and how the new cafés had been reopened after being ‘abandoned by the previous tenant,’ we decided it was time to set the record straight.”

COMPLACENT AND COMPLICIT CITY
OFFICIALS

While Ginsberg and Mayor Breed kept in constant contact with Florence, offered him cash and grants to renovate the kiosks, and eventually let him break his lease, Rulli never received a return message from either. “I sent text messages [to Breed] and contacted Ginsberg numerous times, including meetings with my team. He never responded.” Rulli also reached out to then-District 2 Supervisor Catherine Stefani, with whom he had a relationship from his many years in business on Chestnut Street, to no avail. Supervisor Aaron Peskin, whose District 3 included the Union Square kiosks, was also unresponsive. “After we closed, and I saw the article about the cafés reopening, I contacted his office. He told me after hearing about our situation how embarrassed he was that the City treated us in that way,” Rulli says. Peskin contacted him

one other time to seek a contribution for his mayoral run.

As for Dana Ketcham, the Rec and Park property management director who worried about “bad publicity” if the City played hardball with Florence, emails show no such benevolence toward long-time tenant Rulli and his two kiosk cafés, Emporio Rulli and Bancarella.

“The City is writing to officially notify you of the termination of your lease,” Ketcham said to Rulli in a December 29, 2021, email. “We recognize that you may be entitled to one month’s notice before the termination can go into effect. However, in light of your failure to operate the cafe or to pay rent, we would like the termination to take effect as soon as possible ... If you are not willing to discuss an expeditious termination with us, this letter will also serve as formal notice of default. You have not kept up the cafes and they are creating an attractive nuisance.”

On Dec. 31, Rulli responded to Ketcham, “Our ‘failure to operate the café has largely been dictated by both the mayor of San Francisco and governor of California. To expect any business to continue to pay employees and other operating expenses only to be told to shut down time and again is unreasonable at best. Since the beginning of the subway construction the only time either of the locations on Union Square had any chance of not losing thousands is during the summer months when tourists are in town ... Here are photos from June 2020. As you can clearly see there is no one to sell our wares to. Then of course there is the homeless problem and lack of support from San Francisco Supervisors, the Mayor, SFPD, and the Director of Parks and Recreation, Phil Ginsburg.”

Rulli attached a message sent to Ginsburg in 2018: “Hi Phil, I wanted to let you know Saturday our female manager at Union Square was spit on by a female transient in our Stockton street cafe. She was treated at the scene and the homeless woman was arrested. Every day there is some incident from theft or human excrement smeared on windows or in front of our doors. This has been an unsafe work environment for our staff and our customers. We need to have a meeting with the Mayor and the supervisors as well as the police about the square. It is a civic embarrassment as well as now a safety concern. Why do transients have more rights than the taxpaying residents of San Francisco? I know there is only so much Park And Rec can do and that’s why I feel it’s long past due to have a meeting with everyone concerned about this problem.

REYNOLDS RAP, continued on 7

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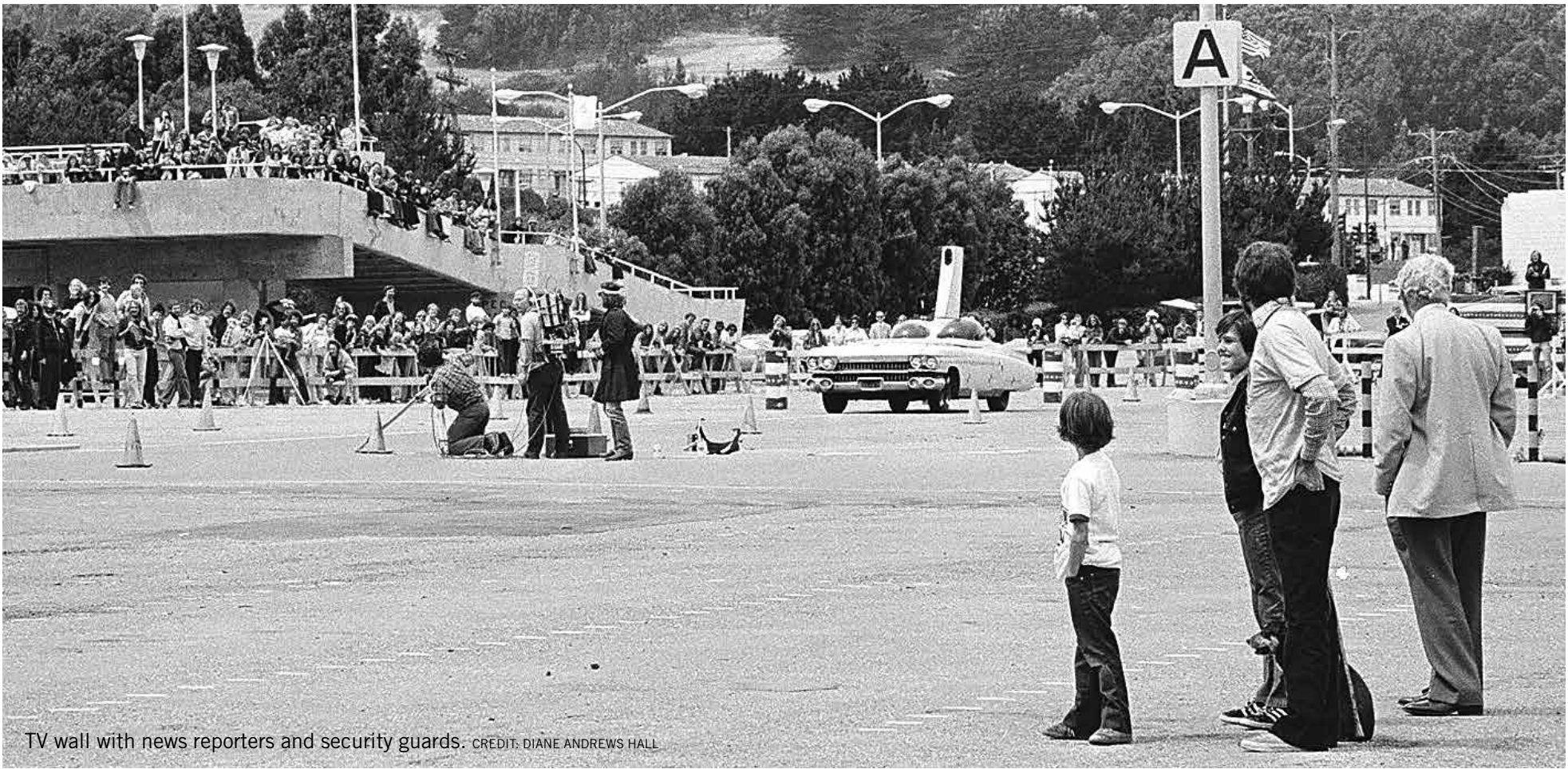
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TV wall with news reporters and security guards. CREDIT: DIANE ANDREWS HALL

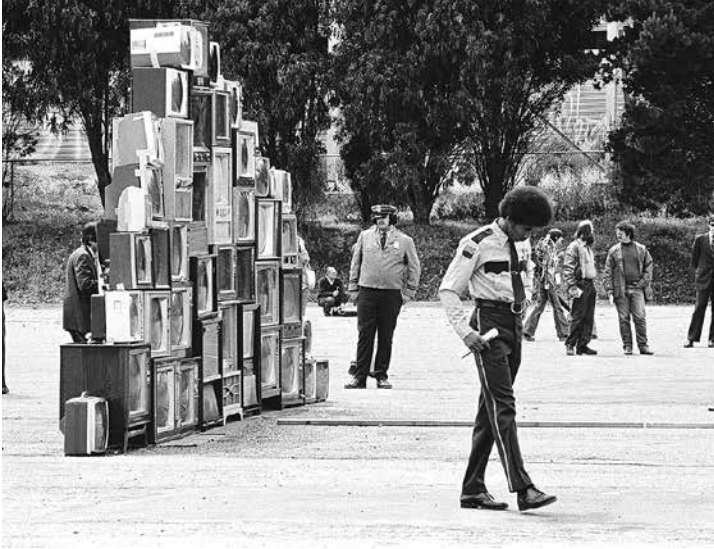
Anderson,
continued from cover

Hidden Truths. Known for her assemblage work and installations, Howard was born in San Francisco in 1945, and has received many awards and recognitions for her approach to art and storytelling. On 500 Capp Street's outdoor patio, visitors will encounter a reincarnation of a Junípero Serra monument draped in red textile. This is in reference to the Serra statue in Golden Gate Park that was toppled in 2020 — as well as many other monuments removed amid nationwide protests following the police murder of George Floyd. Statues of the Catholic saint and missionary were removed, driven in part by the protest movement and the recognition of the impact of Spanish Missions on Native American populations. Howard reimagines this figure to engage public space and collective memory, contributing to the city's ongoing reckoning with its civic monuments. Mildred Howard's art is a catalyst for dialogue and healing as part of her lifelong commitment to political engagement, site-specificity, and community-centered practice into urgent contemporary discourse.

STILL BURNING

July 4th, 2025 marks the 50th anniversary of a performance art event at Cow Palace titled *Media Burn*, conducted by Ant Farm. Ant Farm was a Bay Area-based radical art and architecture collective established in 1968 by Chip Lord and Doug Michels. Both architecture graduates, they were joined by architects Curtis Schreier and Lawrence Halprin. Ant Farm's earliest projects often involved inflatables as architecture. In 1974, a commission from a rich Texan created Cadillac Ranch, a tribute to the automotive tailfin as seen through ten partially-buried Cadillacs (Lord, Michels, and Hudson Marquez).

Media Burn took place on July 4, 1975, the day that they drove a customized 1959 Cadillac El Dorado across the parking lot of the Cow Palace and into a pyramid of burning TV sets as a commentary on the grip media has over mesmerized audiences. American symbols — the automobile and the TV set — fueled the performance which took more than a year of planning. *Media Burn* included multiple volunteers and coverage by four local TV crews, and drew hundreds of onlookers. The resonant image from the event — the



TV wall with news reporters and security guards. CREDIT: DIANE ANDREWS HALL



Souvenir seller. CREDIT: DIANE ANDREWS HALL



Drivers Curtis Schreier (L) and Doug Michels (R) prepare with the National Anthem. CREDIT: DIANE ANDREWS HALL

moment the El Dorado collided with the stacked televisions — was widely distributed via postcards and videos. By 1978, a catastrophic fire in Ant Farm's studio at Pier 40 on San Francisco's



Victory Lap with secret service agents. CREDIT: PHIL MAKANNA



The original Cadillac in front of Ant Farm studio (left to right: Doug Michels, Chip Lord, Curtis Schreier). COURTESY ANT FARM

Embarcadero resulted in the disbandment of the art collective.

This celebratory exhibition includes a variety of documentation surrounding the outrageous performance, including Ant Farm souvenirs, press releases, architectural drawings of the site, and extensive documentation of the customized Cadillac, known as the Phantom Dream Car. Photo documentation taken by local photographers will adorn the walls, and video work will be offered continuously in a specially prepared screening area.

For 25 years, guest curator Steve Seid was an experimental media curator at the Pacific Film Archive in Berkeley where he curated hundreds of public programs, taught media literacy for high school teachers, engaged in preservation projects, and co-edited *Radical Light: Alternative Film & Video in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1945-2000*. Seid also published *Media Burn: Ant Farm and the Making of an Image* (Inventory Press, 2020).

ABOUT 500 CAPP STREET

500 Capp Street in San Francisco is the historic home turned environmental artwork of the late, pioneering artist David Ireland. It is a 360-degree portrait of one of the West Coast's most important practitioners of conceptual and installation art. 500 Capp Street is not a museum or historic home in the traditional sense. It is a living sculpture. As an organization, 500 Capp Street is committed to artistic experimentation while holding up Bay Area conceptualism via driven spaces and process-oriented provocative arts programming.

"Collaborating With the Muses: Part Two" runs from June 19 (Juneteenth) – Aug. 23.

"Still Burning, Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Ant Farm's Media Burn" runs July 4 – Aug. 23. Both exhibits are at 500 Capp Street.

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The SFX team behind 'Final Destination: Bloodlines' on how they executed the movie's best gags

BY KALYN CORRIGAN

WHEN DEATH COMES KNOCKING in a *Final Destination* movie, it's a Rube Goldberg amalgamation of random items in any given room — a live wire, a loose screw, a faulty garbage disposal that clicks on and off — that all inevitably coincide in a brutal, jolting display of Death's omnipresent power. As the franchise that began 25 years ago has set out to instill, anyone who's ever dodged Death's design has quickly found themselves ensnared in one of his many intricate traps shortly thereafter, thereby proving that nobody, no matter how clever, can ever truly escape their fate. The sixth and latest entry in the series, *Bloodlines*, takes that notion one step further by snuffing out the traces of all familial ties to the deceased, using their lineage as leverage to decimate its characters in some of the most imaginative onscreen mousetraps yet.

It all begins with a premonition. In the original 2000 film, it was Alex Browning's (Devon Sawa) dream about the plane he and his classmates were boarding to Paris exploding after takeoff — Flight 180 burning like a shooting star across the New York skyline. Warning his passengers via a full-blown panic attack, Alex manages to save a handful of souls who deboard the plane with him moments before the wheels leave the ground, but their short-lived salvation quickly crumbles under the weight of Death's wrath. Every single person who got off the plane that day dies shortly thereafter, all in strange ways, all in the order in which they first met their demise in Alex's vision. In the early aughts era of knife-wielding maniacs, *Final Destination* stood out as something special by making the killer the mischievous personification of Death itself.

In *Bloodlines*, the long-awaited return to the franchise, it's Stefani (Kaitlyn Santa Juana), a college student experiencing recurring nightmares, who is plagued with the sight. Burdened by dreams told from the POV of a 1960s blonde bombshell named Iris (Brec Bassinger), every night Stefani witnesses the implosion of a sky-high restaurant and its many attendees, and every morning she wakes up screaming in terror. When her academia is threatened, Stefani heads back home in search of rest and respite, and instead finds answers to questions she didn't even know she was looking for. It turns out that Iris is her grandmother, and Stefani's nightly visions have been offered up as a warning sign: Iris was supposed to die in that tower, her vision



Brec Bassinger as "Iris" in New Line Cinema's "Final Destination Bloodlines," a Warner Bros. Pictures release. PHOTO: ERIC MILNER

saved her life and dozens of others, and as a result, her bloodline was never supposed to exist. Now, years later, Death is finally circling back around to collect what he's owed, and Stefani's family is up next on the slab.

Directed by Zach Lipovsky and Adam B. Stein, from a script by Guy Busick and Lori Evans Taylor (who developed the story with Jon Watts), *Bloodlines* is not only blowing up box offices around the world, it also boasts some of the best gags in the entire series. The co-directors knew that they wanted to go big for their installment, and that meant putting together a top-notch crew with both imagination and grit. *LA Weekly* had the privilege of speaking with some of the bold and brilliant masterminds responsible for bringing such intensity to the screen, including Special Effects Coordinator Tony Lazarowich, VFX Supervisor Nordin Rahhali, and Stunt Coordinator Simon Burnett. Together, these elite few told us all about how they accomplished some of the very best effects sequences in *Final Destination: Bloodlines*.

(Warning: spoilers abound below!)

THE SKYVIEW MASSACRE

If there's one thing that a *Final Destination* movie is gonna do, it's absolutely crush a highly intrinsic opening scene centered around an epic set piece. "The franchise is known for their deaths, but they're probably more known just for that opening act — that whole premonition," says VFX Supervisor Nordin Rahhali. "No one drives behind log trucks anymore just because of the movie, right?"

In *Bloodlines*, that set piece is the Skyview, a fine dining establishment that doubles as an observation tower (think the Seattle Space Needle), complete with an all-glass outdoor elevator that allows its patrons to watch the city grow small under their feet as they rise. Standing on the outer deck overlooking the city, Iris watches as an unattended schoolboy tosses pennies off of the edge of the building, setting in motion the typical domino effect that has come to make these movies so famous. One of the pennies gets sucked into an air vent and becomes jammed, a glass shard falls off of one of the many chandeliers and pierces the transparent glass dance floor below, and before you know it, the entire restaurant is engulfed in flames.

"It took a lot of effort on everybody's part, because if you think about it, there's a million different things that happen within that first sequence," recalls Special Effects Coordinator Tony Lazarowich. "You've got people going up in a shaky elevator, and then you go into the whole sequence of the fire, and the floor breaking, and the elevator cutting the guy in half, and on and on it goes."

Bloodlines began conceptualization shortly after lockdown and right before the film industry strikes, and was eventually brought to fruition after a long uphill battle. In order to better communicate ideas to each other from afar, co-directors Lipovsky and Stein used an innovative approach to their vision: they acted out the gags and sent the crew members videos of their efforts. "You'd actually get in your email a video of the two of them being like, 'Hey I'm Adam!,' 'Hey I'm Zach!,' 'And this is what we're thinking today, we run along this thing here, and do this!'" remembers Stunt Coordinator Simon Burnett. "When you're head of a department, you have your storyboards and your script, which helps you, but you're always trying to pester the director and ask, 'What do you really want?' But to have them physically go through it with all this enthusiasm, I think that kept a lot of this alive."

Once the restaurant scene was drawn out in storyboards and displayed through the directors' many videos, Rahhali invoked the power of visual effects to map out the parameters of the entire sequence ahead of time using previsualization. "Basically, we take the previs, get it to a point where the directors feel that the action is good, and that they're getting the camera angles that they want,

and then we show the whole team and the studio, and they give the thumbs up," explains the VFX wizard. "And then we try to figure out how we're going to execute it. Like, 'We need to be able to lift up this part of the ceiling over the dance floor so we can get the crane in there,' or 'We need access to this,' — it's a good collaborative effort. It's also a really helpful tool to figure out the vision that the directors want to have for the sequence."

Rahhali also employed a "Volume Wall," a relatively new technology that is essentially a giant TV screen, one which hugs the set and serves as a backdrop to sell the illusion that the restaurant these guests populate is actually several stories off of the ground. Stacked modular LED panels create a 240-degree, 30-foot high, 8-foot off-the-ground wall that plays video, providing a believable backdrop that's so startlingly accurate, it even reacts to lights correctly. At one point, Iris's beau picks up a few glasses of free champagne and hands one over. "Those champagne glasses are reflecting that whole background environment and doing it properly," says Rahhali. "They're refracting. It's upside down, and you're getting all these beautiful reflections, and that's because the background is real."

As the beats of Death's design unfold step by step, the base of the dance floor gives out, and the entire restaurant slants to one side, sending people tumbling out of the building and into the sky. "We did a *Star Trek* gag," Lazarowich says with a grin. "That classic, the building is starting to break away, and we see the wine bottle start to roll, and we see the mints rolling? We did that with a set that was absolutely dead flat, horizontal. We had about 22 different wires on tables and chairs and on people, and so I had to have a whole bunch of special effects people pulling on wires, as well as actors giving the impression that they're sliding sideways."

What starts out as an endearing romantic proposal quickly devolves into a night of terror as Iris and her fellow Skyview attendees watch as myriad explosions set the room ablaze. Fireballs soar and tables burn while everyone desperately searches for a way out of the building. "We'd have up to five or six people burning," says Stunt Coordinator Burnett, "As well as other people running through fire."

While the production team built what was essentially a fireproof set, Lazarowich installed a type of fiery sprinkler system that he could use to turn the flames on and off at will. Todd Masters's Masters FX covered the dummies being set ablaze, as well as providing the bloody makeup needed for the injured patrons. The makeup department worked closely with the special effects department to supply the appropriate number of fake bodies, and the stunt department provided the daredevils quite literally willing to walk through fire. One elderly woman stands out amongst the rest, as she rushes past the leading lady during the height of all of the chaos, to the forefront of the screen, petite and sizzling, her entire body covered from head to toe in red hot flames. Apparently, the crew on *Bloodlines* actually set the record for the oldest person ever set on fire in a film — an honor that everyone involved takes to heart.

CORRIGAN, continued on 5



PHOTO: COURTESY WARNER BROS. PICTURES

Corrigan,
continued from page 4

“We had a 70-year-old woman named Yvette Ferguson that did our biggest fire burn,” says Burnett, “And we had her covered from head to toe in burn gel.” Ferguson, a seasoned actor, has been performing stunts for movies and television her entire life, but this occasion marked her very first time dealing with fire. The burn gel covering her entire body made it possible for her to be lit up for as many rehearsals and minutes onscreen as deemed necessary (“We set her on fire probably eight or nine times before we ever came to set,” reports Lazarowich), and Rahhali’s visual effects removed the glossy look on her skin in post-production to make her burning appear more believable.

Film sets are known for long, grueling hours, but when a veteran stunt performer is willing to set herself on fire multiple times in the name of cinema, it undeniably sets the standard for the entire cast and crew filming that day. “No one can complain about anything at all,” Rahhali laughs. “It’s like, this lady is going hard.”

TATTOO PARLOR TRICK

Shortly after the untimely death of his father, tattoo artist Erik (Richard Harmon) takes a reprieve from his cousin Stefani’s rantings about death stalking their family by covering a closing shift for his boss at the tattoo parlor. Alone after hours, Erik decides to give himself a small tattoo on his arm to remember his old man. But in the eyes of the grim reaper, all this poor lost soul has done is provide the perfect setting for one of his most gnarly sequences yet: death by septum piercing.

A ceiling fan in the center of the tattoo shop is decorated with chains that hang down like a canopy to set the scene. When one chain swings loose, it inadvertently latches on to Erik’s septum piercing, and as the fan spins, the chain wraps around the fan, growing tighter and tighter, pulling Erik up toward the blades. Seeing what’s happening and feeling powerless to stop it, he tries to wrangle himself free, but Death has other plans.

“The most important discovery of that sequence was actually made by our producer slash creator, Craig Perry,” says Burnett. “We had a stunt guy ready to go, and we tried a million different versions of hanging somebody by their nose, everything from magnetic chains that release, to all sorts of things. But the tricky part was just keeping it on his nose.”

“There were a few things designed by our makeup team,” states Rahhali, “But it all had blue, or something where we would have to paint out his face. We all kept looking at it going, ‘That’s too hard. There’s gotta be a better way of doing it.’”

“Craig Perry, our executive producer, came in one day, kind of in the fifth hour, and said, ‘There’s this sleep apnea mask I wear,’” recalls Burnett. “They’re basically like a cone with mesh that you shove into your nose that allows you to breathe at night time. And by having these things, which I’ve never seen before, we were then able to glue an appliance to the nostril sleeves, for lack of a better word. We also did a magnetic chain loop, so that if he were to fall, the chain would come undone.”

“Overnight, he basically saved the visual effects on that one, because he suggested this device,” points out Rahhali. “They just attached it to the inside, and all of the tugging that you see is real. We really only had minor cleanup to do.”

While in the midst of his battle against fate, Erik accidentally knocks over a bottle of flammable liquid, and before long,



COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES

a trail of fire scorches the floor under his feet, turning his already desperate situation into a fully blown inferno.

“Richard was so game,” says Lazarowich with a smile. “All of it’s real fire. For the whole sequence, the whole thing is real fire. I’m going to say that other than probably one shot for sure was a stunt double, but Richard was the guy climbing it all. Richard was the one fighting with the flames in between his legs. The only one that wasn’t him was when he comes flying off and swings and lands in the fire. That just couldn’t be Richard.”

Even Burnet, an accomplished coordinator who has been involved with the series since the very first film (“I was a young stunt guy in the very first one, and then by the time we got to the fifth one, I was the assistant stunt coordinator, and now, I’m the stunt coordinator”) was impressed with Harmon’s willingness to perform so many dangerous moments himself. “My job becomes so much easier when you have a straightforward guy that isn’t precious, and Richard’s not precious. So, it was good. It was fun.”

MRI MACHINE MUTATION

Running out of time and short on ideas on how to defeat Death’s plan, Erik tells his brother Bobby (Owen Patrick Joyner) that the only way to get rid of their family curse is to temporarily unalive Bobby so they can alter Death’s pattern, thus hopefully putting an end to its design. Erik’s plan is to wheel his brother Bobby into the first empty room that he can find at a nearby hospital, trigger his brother Bobby’s peanut allergy with a peanut-themed snack, allow him to pass on, and then immediately call a doctor to revive him. While waiting, however, Death shows these boys that tinkering with his plans isn’t going to do anything except piss him off — and as a result, set in motion an even more complicated death trap than originally intended.

In a manner not unlike a certain gymnast’s demise in *Final Destination 5*, Erik winds up being sucked into the MRI machine via his many magnetic body piercings, along with the wheelchair he had haphazardly set up in front of the device. His entire body becomes crunched in half so that he is bent backward like a pretzel, with only his arms and legs sticking out of the machine.

“When we were talking about the sequence, and they had the storyboards, and they showed the chair going through the skull inside the MRI machine, everybody in the room was like, ‘Ew, yikes,’” Lazarowich remembers. “My philosophy with all of this, on a movie like this, is if you can make the crew groan, then I think you got the right thing. That’s the right gag to do. That’s the right stunt to do. Because we’re the hardest judges of it all. It’s like a comedy. If we laugh, then it’s going to be funny. Because we’re so jaded by it all.”

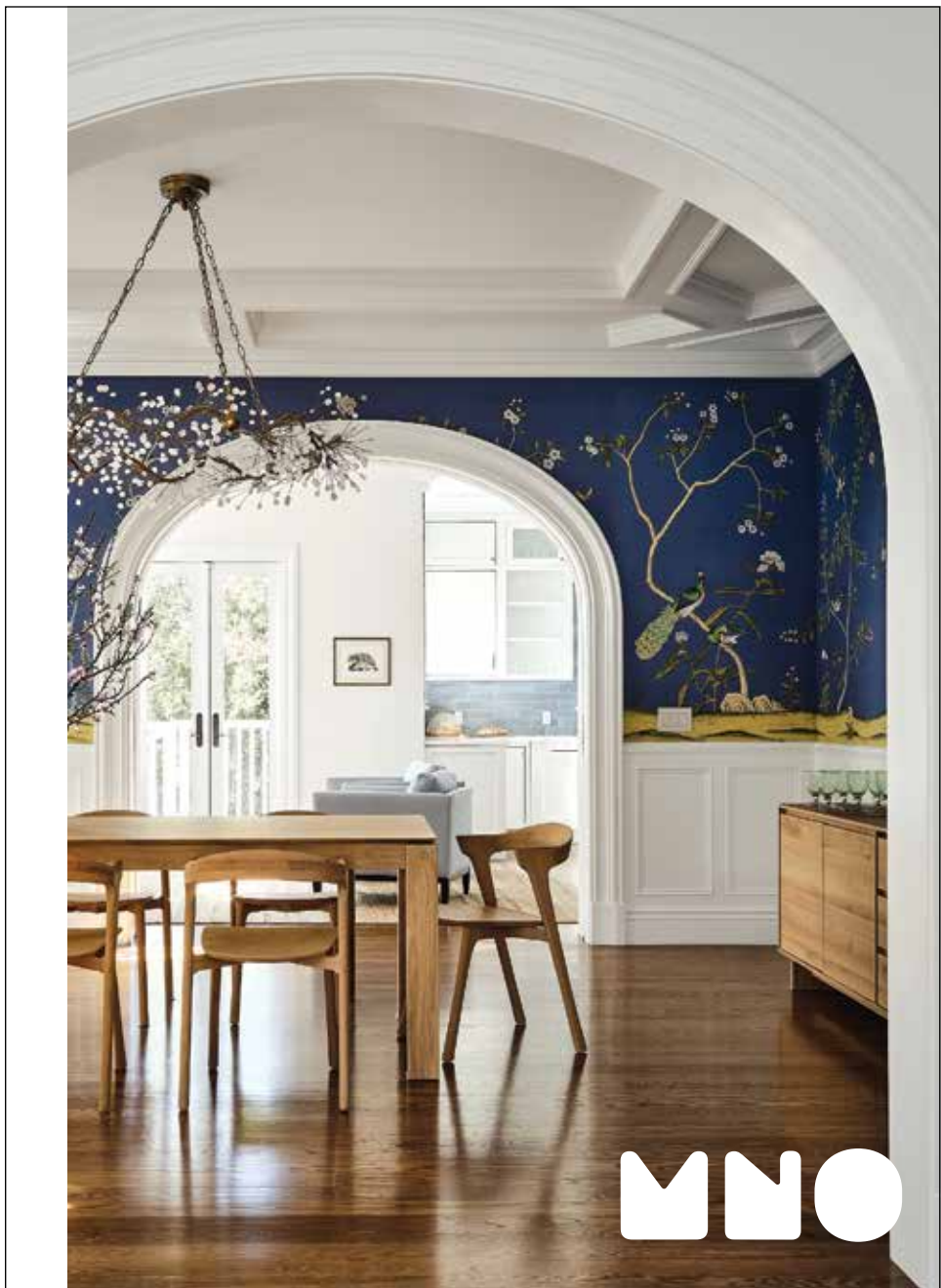
“That was one of the first deaths we

shot,” says Rahhali, “And that one was really fun to put together. You obviously had the wheelchair. So all of the practical gags of the piercings being pulled and all that, that was stunts in SFX. They had monofilament wire that was pulling little blood bags, and we added more blood [with VFX] and all that, but they did the lines off of his nipples and his ears. We were able to just paint that stuff out. His nose ring, we bent in visual effects. Obviously, the one down below, the Prince Albert, was practical to him.”

Rahhali continues, “Stunts then took over for the wide shot where he gets thrown into the MRI. We added the wheelchair that was behind him, so that was all CG as it was being pressed up against him, and his body starts to bend and go inside. We had the same stunt guy that hit the machine, and then we obviously took him out of the rig, and he became Richard. But Richard was laying on the upper half of the MRI, so his

body was on the inside, and he was being held from the top, and then the other stunt guy was laying on his stomach just underneath. It was a really thin board that Richard was on top of, and the stunt guy was on the bottom. So that when you line them up, they look like the same person, except they were able to be puppeteered from the inside. You had them being pulled on equally, top and bottom. And then the body’s looking like the back is starting to break, because we’re covering it with the wheelchair and animating all the breaks, which worked really well. So that one was a cool combination of all the different disciplines.”

With a giant skull tattoo covering Erik’s backside, and his gruesome death ending with metal poles shoved through his abdomen, the end result looks strikingly similar to the movie poster for *Final Destination 5*. “It was art directed to look like the poster,” Rahhali admits. “It got very bloody.”



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THE BEST OF BOOKS : Flying off the Shelves

The Marina Books Inc. best sellers

COMPILED BY CHRIS HSIANG

Here is a list of the most popular books sold last month at Books Inc. in the Marina.

HARDCOVER FICTION

- 1. **The Emperor of Gladness**, by Ocean Vuong
- 2. **Hotter in the Hamptons**, by Tinx
- 3. **Great Big Beautiful Life**, by Emily Henry

HARDCOVER NON-FICTION

- 1. **Original Sin**, by Jake Tapper
- 2. **Mark Twain**, by Ron Chernow
- 3. **Let Them Theory**, by Mel Robbins

PAPERBACK FICTION

- 1. **The Ministry of Time**, by Kalliane Bradley
- 2. **Remarkably Bright Creatures**, by Shelby Van Pelt
- 3. **Blue Sisters**, by Coco Mellors

PAPERBACK NON-FICTION

- 1. **The Art Thief**, by Michael Finkel
- 2. **Greenlights**, by Matthew McConaughey
- 3. **The Wager**, by David Grann

YOUNG READERS

Young Adult: **Sunrise On the Reaping**, by Suzanne Collins

Middle Readers: **Chef's Secret**, by Kelly Yang

Picture Book: **Golden Gate Twins**, by Tomoko Maruyama

Kid Graphic Novel: **Narwhal's Sweet Tooth**, by Ben Clanton

NEW AND NOTABLE RELEASES

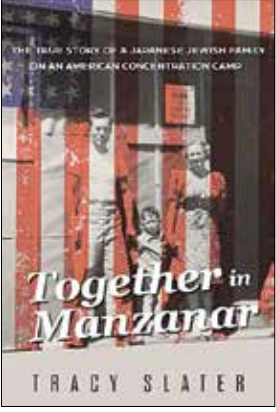
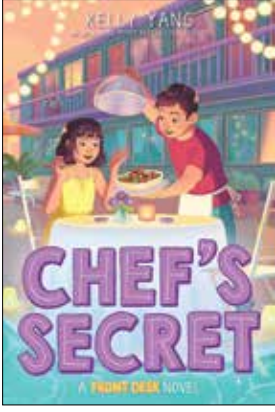
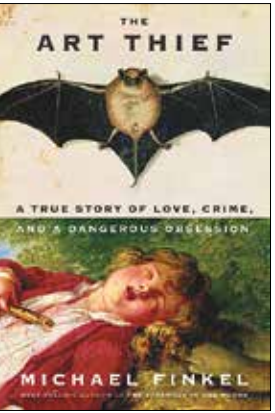
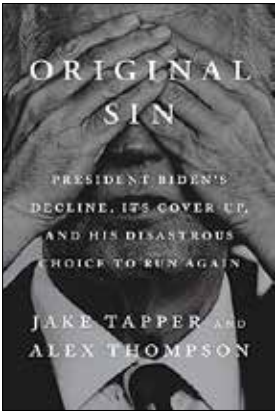
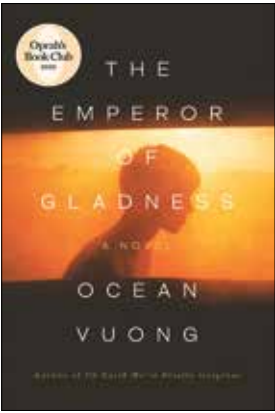
A **Marriage at Sea: A True Story of Love, Obsession, and Shipwreck**, by Sophie Elmhirst

The electrifying true story of a young couple shipwrecked at sea: a mind-blowing tale of obsession, survival, and partnership stretched to its limits. Maurice and Maralyn make

an odd couple. He's a loner, awkward and obsessive; she's charismatic and ambitious. But they share a horror of wasting their lives. And they dream — as we all dream — of running away from it all. What if they quit their jobs, sold their house, bought a boat, and sailed away? Most of us begin and end with the daydream. But Maurice began to study nautical navigation. Maralyn made detailed lists of provisions. And in June 1972, they set sail. For nearly a year all went well, until deep in the Pacific, a breaching whale knocked a hole in their boat and it sank beneath the waves. What ensues is a jaw-dropping fight to survive on the wild ocean, with little hope of rescue. Alone together for months in a tiny rubber raft, starving and exhausted, Maurice and Maralyn have to find not only ways to stay alive but ways to get along, as their inner demons emerge and their marriage is put to the greatest of tests. Although they could run away from the world, they can't run away from themselves. Taut, propulsive, and dazzling, An adrenaline-fueled high seas adventure with a gutting love story that asks why we love difficult people, and who we become under the most extreme conditions imaginable

Together in Manzanar: The True Story of a Japanese Jewish Family in an American Concentration Camp, by Tracy Slater

On a late March morning in the spring of 1942, Elaine Yoneda awoke to a series of terrible choices: between her family and freedom, her country and conscience, and her son and daughter. She was the child of Russian-Jewish immigrants and the wife of a Japanese-American man. On this war-torn morning, she was also a mother desperate to keep her young mixed-race



son from being sent to a US concentration camp. Manzanar, near Death Valley, was one of ten detention centers where our government would eventually imprison every person of Japanese descent along the West Coast — alien and citizen, old and young, healthy and sick — or, in the words of one official, anyone with even “one drop” of Japanese blood. Elaine's husband Karl was already in Manzanar, but he planned to enlist as soon as the US Army would take him. The Yonedas were prominent labor and antifascist activists, and Karl was committed to fighting for what they had long cherished: equality, freedom, and democracy.

Yet when Karl went to war, their son Tommy, three years old and chronically ill, would be left alone in Manzanar — unless Elaine convinced the US government to imprison her as well.

The consequences of Elaine's choice did not end there: if she somehow found a way to force

herself behind barbed wire with her husband and son, she would leave behind her white daughter from a previous marriage. *Together in Manzanar* tells the story of these painful choices and conflicting loyalties, the upheaval and violence that followed, and the Yonedas' quest to survive with their children's lives intact and their family safe and whole.

The World's Greatest Detective and Her Just Okay Assistant, by Liza Tully

A great detective's young assistant yearns for glory, but first they must learn how to get along, in this delightful feel-good mystery. Olivia Blunt doesn't want to be an assistant detective for the rest of her life. She's determined to learn everything she can from her mentor, renowned investigator Aubrey Merritt — but the latter is no easy grader. After weeks of fielding phone calls from parties pining for the celebrated detective's help, a case

comes across Olivia's desk that just might be worthy of Merritt's skills. On the evening of her 65th birthday party, Victoria Summersworth somehow fell to her death over her balcony railing on the rocky shore of Lake Champlain. She was a happy woman — rich, beloved, in love, and matriarch of the pre-eminent Summersworth family. The police have ruled it a suicide, but her daughter, Haley, thinks it was murder. Merritt is ever the skeptic, but Olivia believes Haley. Plus, she's desperate to prove her investigative skills to her aloof boss. But the Summersworth family drama is complicated. Olivia realizes she might be in over her head with this whole detective thing ... or she might be unravelling a mystery even bigger than the one she started with.

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FILM : Between Commerce and Love

Review: 'Materialists' looks to bend the rom-com into a new shape

BY CHAD BYRNES

KOREAN CANADIAN FILMMAKER Celine Song brings her pensive touch to the classic rom-com in *Materialists*, her follow-up to 2023's *Past Lives*, attempting to subvert the genre and deconstruct it to its finest thread. Unlike in the romps from the '90s with Sandra Bullock or Hugh Grant, Song contextualizes the pitfalls of dating as a more serious enterprise than you'd expect — nobody face-plants or acts like a clown to engender laughs. If anything, Song tests the genre's durability and authenticity to see if it still fits with our current climate of ambition and commerce. Starring a trifecta of major stars, it's an engrossing portrait of a young woman, Lucy (Dakota Johnson), and her attempts to choose between a wealthy bachelor, Harry (Pedro Pascal), "a unicorn," as she refers to him, and a financially struggling ex, John (Chris Evans), who understands her implicitly. From Sturgess to Ephron, it's a tale as old as the rom-com itself, but it's never been portrayed like this. And although it misses being great by a sliver, it's still an honest and refreshing depiction of loneliness, and how finding "the one" only leads back to you.

Although Song's sophomore effort looks like a significant departure from *Past Lives*, a diasporic drama about two childhood friends from Korea, it has a similar composition: a simple premise, fully realized characters, and intricate dialogue that pulls us into a philosophical interplay. This isn't necessarily a comedy, although it's been



Dakota Johnson and Pedro Pascal try out some new steps in "Materialists." PHOTO: A24

marketed as such. And unlike most love stories, which cull their tropes from the same fairytale, Song is more interested in posing questions than providing answers. Avoiding cliché as if it were the plague, this is a cynical, character-driven take (or takedown) of our search for meaning in a society that values coupledness and commodities over "love." Although Song's interrogation methods aren't consistent or completely successful, her intelligence and curiosity are always exciting.

The movie opens, curiously, with two cavepeople in love. As the male brings back supplies, his paramour kisses him tenderly. The caveman then creates a ring out of a flower, placing it on her finger. It's an image we'll see later in the film with two different characters. For Song, the flower is an organic symbol of love, free of monetary value or societal judgment. It's a meditative, innocent image that sets the tone for a story that's both breezy and dense at the same time.

Fast forward to our digitally conditioned era, where we meet Lucy, a professional matchmaker in New York City who works for a prominent company. Each day, she helps affluent clients sift through a litany of criteria to find ideal partners. It's not a job for the weak. Somehow, she retains a calm demeanor as 50-year-old male tycoons say that they refuse to date women over 30 (or, as one potential client says, "Nothing over 20 BMI"), and middle-aged women who insist they won't meet someone who makes under six figures. Lucy's goal is to expand their unrealistic conditions while making it seem as if they're meeting them. She might be the toast of her office (nine of her clients got married), but it's a highwire act that's slowly eating away at her.

As she thrives in her job, Lucy seems to be drinking the same lifeless, metrical Kool-Aid she peddles. She moves through the world like a lightning rod, repeating data and statistics on what it takes to find

the perfect match. Everyone she meets is just a portfolio, from their height and income to their education. Johnson fits into her role effortlessly, exuding supreme confidence while suppressing fears of being alone. That is, until she attends a wedding and meets Harry (Pascal), an impossibly rich magnate who takes a shine to her. As they talk, her ex-boyfriend, John (Evans), who's working the event as a waiter, brings her favorite drink to the table, and Lucy finds herself torn between two prospects.

Lucy and John share a chemistry that hasn't died with the passage of time. In a flashback, they're a couple, driving in Times Square as John complains about the price of parking and other monetary snares. After going a few rounds, Lucy jumps out of the car and wails, "I don't want to hate you because you're poor!" An aspiring actor (hence, the waiter gig), John hasn't made any financial headway since that fateful day, but that doesn't mean he's stopped loving her. That's inconvenient. Especially when a suave millionaire is sweeping her off her feet.

Channeling Richard Linklater's ear for witty banter and Hong Kong director Wong Kar-Wai's attention to nuance, the best parts of the film are conversational. Initially a playwright, Song's dialogue unearths emotional barriers that exist under the surface. Her characters are highly intelligent, aware of their stations, and quick on their feet, even when they struggle. Lucy doesn't buy anything on looks alone; she's a businesswoman. "The math doesn't add up," she says to Harry.

BYRNES, continued on 8

POLITICS

Reynolds Rap,
continued from page 2

It's not only the seven-year construction that has negatively impacted the square but probably more so the homeless situation. There is a percentage of the population that is a danger to anyone trying to enjoy the surrounding area. The city has had enough bad publicity lately on the national news. We don't need an incident at Union Square to become a public news story but I'm afraid something is going to happen if we don't have a police presence on the square throughout the day."

Rulli points out to Ketcham that Ginsburg didn't respond to that message or numerous other communication attempts. "Over the last seven or eight years we have reached out ... and attempted to work with Park and Recreation and the City of San Francisco looking for some relief for the losses we sustained as a result of the ongoing subway construction and the never-ending homeless problem, the result has been nothing. Our cafes have had to deal with flooding caused by the construction, damage to our equipment, the lack of use of the elevator (adding to the hazardous work environment) because of said flooding, raw sewage odors coming from underground. We believe we have been irreparably harmed by these ongoing issues and fully expect some remuneration ... In March of 2019 we took out a \$425,000 loan to keep our heads above water, however the homeless problem became national news, and the construction never ended. Our losses for the period of 10/1/18—3/20/20 are a whopping \$705,000. We are including a recap of our P & L for your review. Our employees were spit on, bashed in the head, stolen from, threatened and

harassed on a daily basis, were required to clean up hazardous waste left by the homeless and the drug addicts, working conditions in Union Square were difficult at best and most unpleasant for our customers and visitors to San Francisco."

In a series of interviews, former Rulli employees corroborated the horrific conditions, as well as the City's refusal to help. "It was a literal shit show," says former Director of Operations Adolfo Veronese. "They didn't do anything for Gary. We had to call multiple times a week for homeless, due to drugs and behavior issues. People were shooting up in the morning out front. A guy dropped his pants, laid down, and passed out inside the café; we called the cops. It took 40 minutes for them to arrive. Cops on Union Square didn't want to deal with it ... I sat in on city meetings and they wouldn't help him out, just brush him off."

The situation deteriorated further when the City closed Geary Street for subway construction. "Gary would spend all this money on signs to get some business and the City would take the signs down."

Another former worker, who asked to remain anonymous as he still does work with the City, says his car was broken into three times near the office. "The homeless problem was really bad — there were needles and people shooting up. During construction of the subway, raw sewage was coming down the walls of the office. One day I walked into my home and my wife almost puked because she said I smelled like shit — I was just used to it. I grew up on a construction zone and the engineer was agreeing that I was right that they weren't doing things correctly. The elevator and the dumbwaiter were locked for a year because there was sewage coming off the shaft and affecting the downstairs." Yes, the same dumbwaiter that caused Florence to close his Miller & Lux rotisserie and

request a release from his obligation to operate, which Rec and Park granted.

"At one point I stopped calling the City because nothing was getting done," the former employee continued. "I told them they were doing a very poor job of protecting their tenants. They just come out with their big suits and nothing gets resolved. We were not a priority. But I had an employee who wouldn't come into the storage without a mask."

Thomas Bunker was Vice President of Operations for Rulli's company, but he says Union Square needed all of his time "like the Dutch parable about putting your finger in the dam." The City and the subway construction crew proved a powerful combination of incompetence. "It was cause and effect. The subway work displaced vermin, then when the ice rink was up for the holidays, the City used rice to absorb the water and that just set up a buffet for the vermin," Bunker says. The dumbwaiter — a consistent theme in all of the interviews — also had water in it along with the elevator. "The left hand never knew what the right hand was doing, it seemed," Bunker says of the City. Because the cafés had "young people, 18 to 20 years old" working there who were nervous about the conditions in Union Square, Bunker would arrive early to open up. "You would have to step over people who had OD'ed. There were three types of homeless: catastrophic event — they weren't around long — mental incapacitation, and the ones with drug, alcohol and mental issues. They would grab the food off customers' tables. They'd steal the sugar packets. They'd pass bad money. De-escalation is something I learned. We had a security guard who was ex-Army — he asked a guy to get off the property and the guy came back later with a steel pipe and clobbered him over the

head. He was out for six months."

And how did the City respond? "We would go to all of these meetings, and they would talk about roses or the tulip festival but not about facilities or the problems. I marvel at some of the things that should have been done but didn't get done. Gary is a reputable businessman — he really cares about what he does. It was hard on him."

Rulli agrees that homelessness, crime, the pandemic, and the Central Subway created a potent cocktail of negativity not only for him and his employees, but also for customers. "Homeless predators spit in the faces of two different managers; one manager had his car broken into and his grandfather's briefcase with really personal stuff was stolen; we had human feces smeared across our doors for our staff to clean up; syringes and condoms being left in the bushes outside of the store; the stairwell and hallway to the garage where our office was located were constantly occupied at all hours with sleeping vagrants on drugs which my female staff had to walk by with cash deposits — we used to send deposits down in the dumbwaiter, but since it wasn't operational they had to go through the garage, and the garage refused to have security cameras due to privacy issues for its staff. We had to call the police constantly — they were compassionate but said their hands were tied by the Board of Supervisors and District Attorney [Chesa Boudin]. We had many meetings with the City with my attorney Joe Veronese. Rec and Park was completely nonresponsive and in denial about the unsafe work environment city politics had created for San Francisco citizens, my employees, and our customers."

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Keller,
continued from cover page

When the new ownership group led by Peter Magowan purchased the team from Lurie in 1993, a managerial change was inevitable, and Baker was elevated to the role, replacing his former boss. Instinctively, he put his own personal touch to running the Giants on the field. Several team members said it was like playing for a fellow player.

Over the course of the next 10 seasons, Baker would shatter Craig's record, posting 840 victories. "On a personal level, it was like the '84 season when I played here. Being so close to home, my mom and dad were able to come to San Francisco on a regu-

lar basis to enjoy the games," he said. "Plus, I think back on all the great players we had, like Barry Bonds, Jeff Kent, JT Snow, Kurt Manwaring, Ellis Burks, the list goes on and on. It was a pleasure just to watch them play, much less manage them."

Still, Baker admitted, "My only regret is that we never won the World Series during my time as manager, especially since we came so close so often." A case in point was Baker's first year when they won 103 games while the Atlanta Braves won 104 to take the NL West title. That winter, the owners approved the Wild Card system whereby the non-division winner with the best record made the playoffs. It came one year too late for the fabulous Baker Boys.

Another prime example was 2002, when they led the Anaheim Angels three wins to two in the World Series, but lost the final two games, and instead of a victory parade down Market Street, it took place down Main Street at Disneyland.

Said Baker, "However, I do think our performance on the field helped greatly in getting the voter approval for the new ballpark, after years of dealing with the conditions at Candlestick, which in turn helped us get more quality players and keep them."

When his time in San Francisco was over, Baker went on to manage the Chicago Cubs (2003-06), Cincinnati Reds (2008-13), Washington Nationals (2016-17) and Houston Astros (2020-

23), where he would finally win the elusive World Series ring in 2023.

At that point, Baker stepped away from dugout duties and rejoined the Giants as a Senior Advisor to Baseball Operations. Does this mean that Baker never plans to manage again?

"At age 75, I don't know if I have the energy for a whole season, because I know what it takes to do that," he said. "A partial season or some sort of short-term thing like the World Baseball Classic or the Olympics isn't beyond the realm of possibility."

Phrased another way, when it comes to Dusty Baker it's wise to never say never.

Revisit Part 1 of this story in the June issue. Comments: letters@marinatimes.com



Dusty Baker as manager of the Giants at Candlestick Park in San Francisco, Sept. 1993.
PHOTO: DAVID MADISON/GETTY IMAGES



Dusty Baker as manager of the Giants looks on from the dugout against the Atlanta Braves in 1995.
PHOTO: FOCUS ON SPORT/GETTY IMAGES



Dusty Baker as manager of the Washington Nationals in the dugout with his son Darren prior to the game against the Giants at AT&T Park on July 29, 2016 in San Francisco.
PHOTO: MICHAEL ZAGARIS/GETTY IMAGES



Dusty Baker as manager of the Houston Astros in the World Series Parade on November 7, 2022 in Houston, Texas. PHOTO: CARMEN MANDATO/GETTY IMAGES



Dusty Baker speaks to the media as he announces his retirement from manager of the Houston Astros on October 26, 2023. PHOTO: BOB LEVEY/GETTY IMAGES

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Byrnes,
continued from page 7

Why would he want a college dropout who's making 80 grand a year when he can have a 20-something starlet? Harry simply responds that he wants her for her "intangible assets." When he brings her to his 12-million-dollar penthouse, she's more taken with the amber walls and interior decorating than with his ravenous kiss. That doesn't seem to bother him, though — he thinks they're perfect for each other, at least on paper. Pascal is fantastic as a lothario who buries his secrets, as is Evans, who brings a quiet sadness and grit to his role. Anyone who's been broke, especially when facing someone from their past, knows that hangdog look.

Materialists exists in a ponderous space between commerce and love,

which isn't unusual for a romance but has never been portrayed with such a meditative style and nuance. The first three quarters are brilliant. There aren't any villains or big reveals that tip the scales and appease an audience; it's more of a game of poker, where each player is guessing what kind of cards the other has before laying down their bets. The third act contains an unexpected twist, which forces Lucy to question the worth of her expertise as a matchmaker. This change in focus darkens the tone, and takes us right out of the playfulness of their game.

Unfortunately, Song is much better at creating the groundwork between her characters than at portraying an individual's internal struggle. Lucy's fall from grace and swift redemption is not only slight, but rushed to the finish line. I simply had a tough time accepting her

trajectory. One of the problems is that Song tries so hard to upend the rom-com that the narrative suffers when the movie stumbles into convention. Perhaps if she had embraced some of the cliches and classic tropes in the first half of the movie, it wouldn't feel so unconvincing when they finally appear. But you can't really blame her; she underestimated the monster that is every movie genre. Even if your version is a languid and studious reevaluation, you still can't overcome the rules of the game. That said, Song's willingness to test the limits of a traditional genre is entertaining and smart, even when it splinters. Her characters shine. Her dialogue is silken and alive. But sometimes you can't completely deconstruct a good thing.

"Materialists" is playing at AMC Metreon 16, 135 Fourth Street.

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