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IRVINE

WEEKLY

MARCH 6, 2019 • No. 10

**STATE OF
THE CITY**

**MAYOR WAGNER
ADDRESSES HOMELESSNESS,
TRAFFIC AND THE GREAT PARK**



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STATE OF THE CITY

MAYOR WAGNER ADDRESSES HOMELESSNESS, TRAFFIC AND THE GREAT PARK.

BY: NICK WALKER

PHOTOS COURTESY: CITY OF IRVINE

From the newly remodeled Council Chambers at the Irvine Civic Center on Feb. 26, Mayor Donald Wagner delivered his first State of the City address since being re-elected last November. His speech hit a similar tone to his prior annual city updates. We've broken down most notable elements of his speech below:

Community Response:

The mayor opened his speech by reminding the audience of some darker moments the city faced within the past year: The hate crimes committed at Irvine Valley College and the Beth Jacob Congregation of Irvine. With this reminder, the mayor praised the response of the community to these incidents, calling the response of city residents "a strong showing of community resolve and mutual support," and stating the

attack "was not an attack on one small group, but was an attack on every one of us," ending with a promise that these types of attacks "cannot and will not be tolerated in Irvine."

A Question of Representation:

Mayor Wagner touched on the critique that he or any of the council members are unable to represent or understand the extremely diverse community found in Irvine. Calling this critique nonsensical, the mayor cited the number one thing he feels connects every member of Irvine: the desire to live in a city with the high quality of life and many amenities that Irvine provides. The mayor stated he and the council were very capable of representing the diverse community "with great joy, and with many, many common interests."

Public Safety:

Mayor Wagner stated that according to

the latest FBI statistics on violent crime, Irvine remains the safest city of its size in America, and the 10th safest city in the entire world.

Education:

Mayor Wagner noted that with the opening of Loma Ridge Elementary School this August, Irvine will be home to 45 public schools. He also took the time to praise many of the advanced STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) programs found in Irvine schools at all levels, including the launch of the Irvine CubeSat satellite by high school students from schools across Irvine this past November.

Parks:

The mayor provided updates on the advancements of the Orange County Great Park, with 194 acres of sports complexes opening in the park this past September, consisting of 12 baseball and

softball fields. With the city's partnership with FivePoint Communities, the mayor stated they are currently in the process of developing an additional 688 acres within the Great Park. Pretend City Children's Museum will also be getting a larger, permanent home on the Great Park grounds.

The mayor shared some of the future uses of the 248 acre Cultural Terrace, which will include a number of artistic, cultural and entertainment components, including a library, botanical gardens, community meeting centers and a concert venue. He also announced that the City Council has met with the American Museum of Natural History to explore a potential presence for them on the Cultural Terrace.

Business Environment:

The mayor stated the city is expanding its job market through collaboration with the Greater Irvine Chamber of Commerce and continued efforts to attract businesses. As an example, he mentioned that City Manager John Russo and a select group of council members recently returned from a third trip to the United Kingdom, in another effort to attract life science companies from the U.K. and bring them to Irvine. Ten companies currently plan to come to the city to explore potential opportunities.

Mayor Wagner also took a moment to praise some of the corporations that already exist in Irvine, including Taco Bell (who catered the reception before the State of the City address, and just renewed the lease on their Irvine headquarters through at least 2030), Edwards Lifesciences (who this past year began construction on 7.6 acres of additional facilities in Irvine), and the Irvine Company (who recently completed their \$200 million renovation of the old Macy's space at the Irvine Spectrum).

Homelessness:

The mayor recognized that while significant progress has been made on the issue of homelessness, more still needs to be done, noting that homelessness has many causes and therefore cannot have just one overall solution. According to Wagner, the homeless point-in-time count before he entered office was 199 individuals. Now, pending the announcement of official numbers of the count done a few weeks ago, that point-in-time count is supposedly set to be under 50, meaning there has been a 75 percent decrease in the homeless population over the last few years.



17TH STREET GRILL • PANCETTA WRAPPED PRAWNS

A TASTE OF IRVINE

PLETHORA OF LOCAL RESTAURANTS PARTICIPATE IN THIS YEAR'S O.C. RESTAURANT WEEK.

BY: SAM MACHADO

PHOTOS COURTESY OF: FEATURED RESTAURANT

One of the biggest and most delicious events in Southern California has arrived. O.C. Restaurant Week will be held on March 3-9 with more than 100 popular restaurants serving a number of tasty treats. Participants have the opportunity to experience as many restaurants as they desire – enjoying discounted three-course meals with a beverage. Last year the event celebrated its 10-year anniversary, and it's still expanding. Some notable restaurants that will be participating in O.C. Restaurant Week include Andrei's Conscious Cuisine & Cocktails, Bluewater Grill, Catal Restaurant, Dory Deli and Juliette Kitchen and Bar.

Bluewater Grill will have a first course choice of clam chowder or a garden salad. Their second course options are the grilled salmon sandwich, beer battered fish and chips, seared ahi sandwich, angus burger or shrimp louie salad.

Catal Restaurant, which some Disney fans might be familiar with for its location on Disneyland Drive, will also have a wide variety of selections. Their offerings include a manchego salad, hanger steak and a choice between two gorgeous desserts – cheesecake and chocolate mousse cake.

If the food isn't enough, members of the community may be intrigued to try out the drinks. Five Crowns has featured



17TH STREET GRILL • SALMON

cocktails, including the Cowardly Lion. This consists of Maker's Mark bourbon, allspice, walnut liqueur, fresh lemon and angostura bitters. Prime Cut Cafe will serve the Chocolate Cherry made up of Chambord and chocolate vodka.

Jennifer Simmons, the events, sales and marketing director of Andrei's in Irvine, said they've crafted a special "Restaurant Week" menu that will be offered to the community. Some of Andrei's

choices include portobello steak fries, flank steak chilaquiles, Italian chicken panini and wild-caught lingcod with a delicious serving of black forest cheesecake or cinnamon apple turnovers for dessert.

Simmons explained how O.C. Restaurant Week is expanding every year and is becoming a bigger part of the community:

"I think now, as a county, everybody's

FOOD



supporting this large restaurant week," she said. "I think it's an opportunity for people to come out and try restaurants they've never tried before. Our price-point is very approachable for people who want to come and try restaurants that they haven't experienced."

Simmons is looking forward to the event since it's another chance for members of the community to experience the positive atmosphere of Andrei's.

"It's a great opportunity to meet new guests and share what we do here," she said. "I'm very proud of our culinary team and what we provide to our guests. The ambiance in our restaurant is amazing and beautiful. Most people who come for the first time are really surprised by the fact that we are celebrating our 10th year because it's so fresh and modern and has a wonderful look for a restaurant."

Marketing coordinator Larissa Lenikoff said that the restaurant was made in homage to a cousin she lost who was all about healthy food.

"A lot of our menu items have the best ingredients you can find," Lenikoff said. "We make sure we always cater to vegans and vegetarians. We always make sure the lingcod, our seafood, is the most sustainable we can find."

Lenikoff also said that she's looking forward to visits from new guests who are bound to have a great time and get a taste of what Andrei's has to offer.

"We're offering some of our main staples, to give a taste of our most popular items to people that have never been before," she said. "For seafood, we have chosen the wild lingcod, which is a big hit for people who are particularly conscious about the seafood that they're eating."

Andrei's is a non-profit restaurant. Simmons said the net profit goes to The Andrei Foundation, which was created to provide for organizations that the late Andrei Olenicoff supported. Some of these organizations are Foundation Fighting Blindness, Hoag Hospital Foundation and Blind Children's Learning Center.

As Andrei's prepares to celebrate its 10-year anniversary in July, there will be some other things to look forward to.

"So we're going to be giving out some little freebies and discounts for future visits that are going to be rolled out over the following four months," Lenikoff told us.

The price for lunch at Andrei's during O.C. Restaurant Week is \$20. The price for dinner is \$40.

HERE'S A FULL LIST OF THE IRVINE RESTAURANTS PARTICIPATING IN O.C. RESTAURANT WEEK



Agora Churrascaria
1830 Main Street, Irvine

Andrei's Conscious Cuisine
2607 Main St, Irvine

Angelina's Pizzeria Napoletana
8573 Irvine Center Drive, Irvine

Bistango
19100 Von Karman Avenue, Irvine

Cha Cha's Latin Kitchen
13126 Jamboree Rd, Irvine

Cucina Enoteca
532 Spectrum Center Dr., Irvine

Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse
18420 Von Karman Ave., Irvine

Del Frisco's Grille
772 Spectrum Center Dr, Irvine

EATS Kitchen & Bar
17900 Jamboree Rd, Irvine

EMC Seafood & Raw Bar
14346 Culver Dr, Irvine

Eureka!
4143 Campus Drive, Irvine

Heirloom Farmhouse Kitchen
7905 Irvine Center Dr, Irvine

Il Fornaio
18051 Von Karman Ave, Irvine

Kabuki Japanese Restaurant
529 Spectrum Center Dr, Irvine

Paul Martin's American Grill
534 Spectrum Center Dr, Irvine

Puesto Los Olivos
8577 Irvine Center Dr, Irvine

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19530 Jamboree Road, Irvine

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620 Spectrum Center Dr, Irvine



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SPRING MUSIC GUIDE: SECOND EDITION

SHOWS NOT TO BE MISSED THIS MARCH AND APRIL!

Fri - Sat, 3/15 and 3/16 **LESLIE ODOM, JR. / PACIFIC SYMPHONY**

Best known for his Tony and Grammy Award-winning performance in the original cast of Broadway's "Hamilton" and his part in the musical TV series, "Smash," Leslie Odom, Jr. joins the Pacific Symphony with a selection of Broadway and jazz hits conducted by Matt Catingub.

At Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall

Fri. 3/15 **YUNG GRAVY**

The laid-back, food- and sex-obsessed Yung Gravy is carving a perhaps unlikely career – nearly 27 million YouTube views for his 2017 ditty "Mr. Clean" – by becoming the funny 'n' filthy Frank Sinatra of trap. Amidst fluttering hi-hats and imaginative oldies samples by collaborators like Jason Rich, White Shinobi and Dollie, this 22-year-old Minnesotan enunciates his innuendo-laden lyrics ("Gravy, he be clean like Windex / Just hit your mom with my index") with an ambling clarity vivid against today's mainstream mumble-rap. Parody or otherwise, Gravy's adolescent frankness and deliberately wincey wordplay forgive the oft crassness (and sheer ridiculousness) of his dopamine-driven flow.

At Constellation Room at the Observatory, Santa Ana

Thu. 3/21 **ULI JON ROTH**

It's been 40 years since Uli Jon Roth left Scorpions, yet he remains forever associated with that Germanic melo-metal juggernaut. In between his own epic and increasingly neoclassical releases and tours, he's guested with the Scorpions on stage and even released an album of re-recorded songs from his 1973-1978 tenure with the anthemic quintet. Nonetheless, walking out on what was already becoming a global phenomenon only lends artistic credibility to Roth's work since. While palpably informed by European classical music, his supple, bluesy sense of groove and respect for melody put his playing comfortably at the accessible edge of the self-indulgent shredder spectrum.

At The Coach House, San Juan Capistrano

BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE • PHOTO BY: SARAH KELLEREN



Fri. 3/22 WILLIAM RYAN KEY

A New Millennium pop-punk fixture, William Ryan Key fronted longtime genre mainstays Yellowcard and lately has been a touring member of fellow Floridians New Found Glory. Now Tennessee based, Key's brace of acoustic solo EPs last year, "Thirteen" and "Virtue," find him in contemplative mood, yet with all the melodic instincts of his prior work happily intact. It's a far fall from Yellowcard's hits and headlining tours to crowd-funding recordings and plying the road with an acoustic guitar, and Key doesn't shy away from articulating this life change, notably on wistful "Thirteen" opener "Old Friends" – the tale of a timeless talent who'll always make music, be it back in arenas or over backyard beers.

At Constellation Room at the Observatory, Santa Ana

Sat. 3/23 THE BLASTERS

One of L.A. punk's perennial "should've-been-bigger" stories, The Blasters in fact far transcend that genre, embracing rockabilly, rhythm and blues, and just full-bore rock 'n' roll. Founded upon the storytelling

songwriting of brothers Dave and Phil Alvin, the band is famed for super-tight, impassioned live performances, which have dimmed little over 40-plus years. While Dave Alvin has been only intermittently involved with the band since the mid-1980s, the remainder of the original lineup, remarkably, remains intact. For all of their live prowess, The Blasters are ultimately all about tunes, covers of which have produced minor hits for everyone from Dwight Yoakam to Shakin' Stevens.

At The Coach House, San Juan Capistrano

Sat. 3/23 CATHERINE RUSSELL

While Catherine Russell's 2002-2004 stint in David Bowie's band brought her much attention, it marked a stylistic departure from her deep roots as a jazz and blues vocalist. Both sassy and slinky, Russell has consistently displayed a rare talent for simultaneous power, dexterity, clarity and nuanced warmth as she revisits standards with award-winning old-school

class, notably on 2012's "Strictly Romancin'" and 2016's Grammy-nominated "Harlem on My Mind." Yet her versatility is evidenced by providing background vocals for everyone from Roseanne Cash and Diana Ross to Madonna and Cyndi Lauper. At Segerstrom, Russell will enjoy A-team backing from guitarist/musical director Matt Munisteri, pianist Mark Shane and bassist Tal Ronen.

At Segerstrom Center for the Arts, Costa Mesa



CATHERINE RUSSELL • PHOTO BY: SANDRINE LEE

Sat. 3/23 THE MOTELS

Essentially vocalist Martha Davis and a revolving cast of backing musicians, The Motels offer one of those you'll-be-surprised-how-many-songs-you-recognize '80s nostalgia trips that've become the sporadic impetus for middle-aged music fans to actually attend live concerts. Formed in the early 1970s, their biggest hits ("Only the Lonely," "Suddenly Last Summer" and "Shame") came a decade later, recorded by Davis and session players. Following years of relative obscurity as "The Motels featuring Martha Davis," the band started making higher-profile appearances alongside new wave peers like The Go-Gos and Berlin early this decade, earning fond reviews for their synth- and sax-inflected pop-rock topped with Davis' potent, enunciated timbre.

At House of Blues, Anaheim

Sun. 3/24 STATE CHAMPS

Albany's State Champs craft the sort of ultra-melodic, harmony-heavy rock-lite that's propelled the likes of Fall Out Boy and Panic! At The Disco into arenas and gossip columns. But, formed in 2010, the quintet was – despite being masters of their genre and scoring a Top 30 album with last year's "Living Proof" – a throwback even upon formation. Thankfully, these Warped Tour veterans offer a relatively organic, stoppy-starty take on contemporary guitar pop that shuns the ultra-slick, hip-hop-influenced production of many of their peers in favor of a more traditional approach that – at least slightly – sets them apart.

At House of Blues, Anaheim

Wed. 3/27 ZAKIR HUSSAIN

Zakir Hussain's nearly 60-year career has had a global impact both musically and culturally. He's elevated the tabla – a pair of small drums intrinsic to Hindustani classical music – from an accompanying instrument to a sonic star, while helping to bring Indian music to a mainstream international audience (and perhaps doing more for East-West relations than most politicians). His percussive brilliance enhanced by exaggerated body language and effusive facial expressions, Hussain made the once-humble tabla trendy far beyond his native India. Boasting



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a biography bejeweled with awards (musical and otherwise), Hussain has collaborated with Ravi Shankar, George Harrison, Van Morrison and The Grateful Dead's Mickey Hart.

At Renée and Henry Segerstrom Concert Hall, Costa Mesa

Thu. 3/28

MORGAN JAMES

Broadway veteran Morgan James has released two original solo albums (2014's "Hunter" and 2017's "Reckless Abandon"), but enjoys wider exposure through her hugely popular YouTube cover-tune collaborations with musical collective Postmodern Jukebox. Indeed, James is a real cover-version queen; releasing albums of Nina Simone and Joni Mitchell songs and performing "stripped-down" arrangements of hits with the barely-dressed Skivvies. As all this implies, she's a singer of both commanding prowess and rare versatility – from an Aretha-worthy belt to tremulous, soulful smoldering – yet always respects

the essence of the great melodies she revisits rather than over-delving into a doubtless bursting bag of vocal tricks.

At Saint Rocke, Hermosa Beach. Also 3/31 at The Coach House, San Juan Capistrano

Fri. 3/29

JOHN PIZZARELLI

Almost literally born with a guitar in his hand – the son of (and frequent musical collaborator with) swing-scene fixture Bucky Pizzarelli – John Pizzarelli has built his reputation on suave interpretations of American standards characterized by technically-deft chops accompanying his optimistic, almost conversational voice. Proudly old-school yet seldom musty, the younger Pizzarelli brings an enthusiasm and sense of fun to some already interpreted-to-death songs with a charm that trumps any confines of genre. Even non jazz fans may well have inadvertently heard his nibble-fingered work on recordings by the likes of Paul McCartney, James Taylor

and Kristin Chenoweth.

At Irvine Barclay Theatre, Irvine

Mon. 4/1

A BOOGIE WIT DA HOODIE

Defying his deep sheen of Auto-Tune, Bronx trap rapper A Boogie wit da Hoodie pours remarkable, if petty, sentiment into testosterone venting about girls, rivals and his own rep. Sophomore full-length "Hoodie SZN" (which in January set the record for the lowest-selling U.S. No. 1 album) is the stuff of windows-down, late-night wannabe gangsta cruising: tales of a mildly dangerous, more-lovers-than-I-know-what-do-with lifestyle crooned with 'tudes from genre-requisite chest-beating to the paranoia of a 23-year-old navigating rapid-onset fame. ABwtH documents a dominant subculture with little sense of musical or lyrical challenge, yet his stark, mood-shiftn' tunes are oddly beguiling in their PC-free frankness.

At House of Blues, Anaheim

Tue. 4/2

THE MOVIELIFE

Reunited in 2014, The Movielife epitomizes that optimistic, turn-of-the-Millennium mall punk that you can listen to in the workplace without complaints. Initially active from 1997-2003, the Long Island outfit – or at least the songwriting partnership of vocalist Vinnie Caruana and guitarist Brandon Reilly – returned in 2017 with "Cities in Search of a Heart," an album that shamelessly harks back to the heyday of Drive-Thru Records-y, emo-adjacent punk, albeit with a little more studio luster. While still occasionally flirting with post-hardcore's spirit of adventure, The Movielife is essentially a perpetually adolescent exercise in soul-searching, with Caruana's heavily-processed vocals framed by twinkling guitars and earnest beats.

At Constellation Room at the Observatory, Santa Ana



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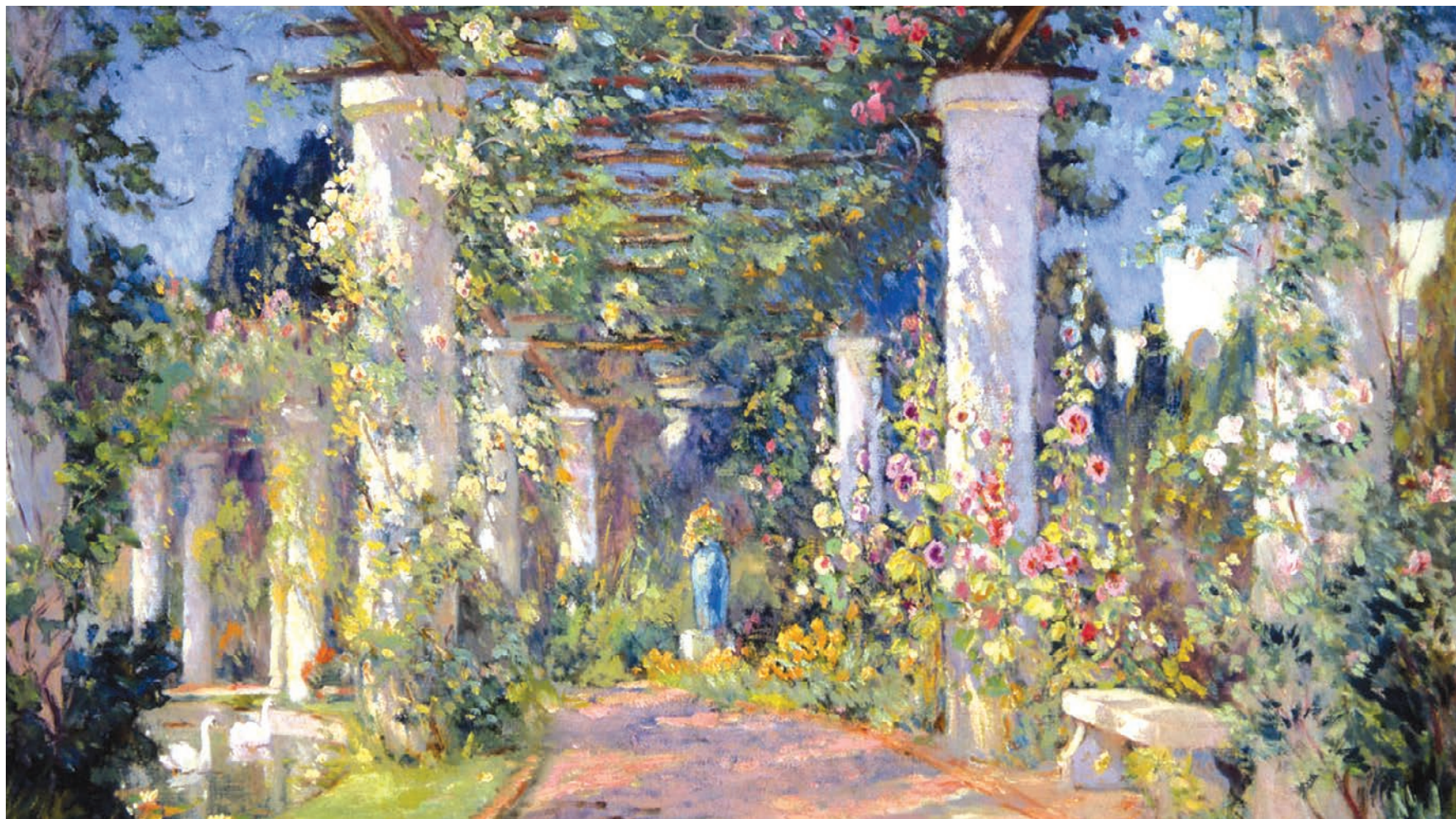
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THE ILLUSTRIOUS CAREER OF JEAN STERN

IRVINE MUSEUM DIRECTOR DRIVING FORCE BEHIND CALIFORNIA IMPRESSIONISM.

BY: LIZ GOLDNER

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF IRVINE MUSEUM

As Jean Stern, Irvine Museum Executive Director, tours his current exhibition, "Upon a Painted Ocean," he looks forward to the museum's move in the next decade to the UCI Institute and Museum of California Art; a multi-faceted venue to display and research all genres of art from the Golden State.

Yet few people realize that Stern, a quiet self-effacing art historian, is one of the first people to promote late 19th to early 20th century California paintings, particularly those in Impressionism. He exhibited and sold works in this style in the late 1970s, while working as Executive Director of the Petersen Galleries in

Beverly Hills. He is credited with coining the term "California Impressionism," as he explained in a recent interview. And painters Franz Bischoff, Alson Clark, Elsie Palmer Payne and William Wendt were relatively unknown artists when he first exhibited their work.

With his impressive expertise, heiress and art collector Joan Irvine Smith (who has a life-long love of California Impressionism) eventually hired him to develop and direct her Irvine Museum in order to exhibit and educate the public about California Impressionism.

The museum, which opened in 1993, installs three exhibitions a year, each displaying about 50 art pieces. Its most

popular show, "Masters of Light," was created for European viewers, most of whom had never seen California Impressionism. The show was exhibited in 2002-03 at the Mona Bismarck Foundation Museum, Paris, at the International Cultural Centre, Kraków, Poland, and at the Centro Cultural del Conde Duque, Madrid, before returning to Irvine, where it was enthusiastically received by the art-going public.

Many French viewers remarked that the paintings were a lot brighter than they expected, Stern explains, particularly when compared with the impressionist works from their own country. He adds that French people were inter-

ested in the paintings' subject matter, in the California lifestyle during the early 20th century, in the huge beaches and the proliferation of wild flowers. The exhibition, more than four years in the making, was curated by Stern, assisted by the Irvine Museum staff. "It was assembled from 14 of the most important private collections of California paintings, and from the museum's own collection," he explains.

Subsequent Irvine Museum exhibitions included: "Romance of the Bells" (2010), featuring close-ups, landscapes and etchings of California's missions, from 1769 to 1823; "Inner Visions: Women Artists of California" (2012) with oils and

ARTS



watercolors illustrating the harmonious Southern California settings; and “The Nature of Water: Our Most Precious Resource” (2016), depicting the variety of forms in which water appears in artworks, through streams, rivers, lakes, oceans, rain and snow. The museum has published nearly two dozen art catalogs, and its exhibitions have traveled to more than 70 art venues around the country.

Stern spent his early childhood in Casablanca, Morocco. His father, Frederic Stern, an art and antique dealer, was a Hungarian native who immigrated to France, where he served in the French Foreign Legion, and later moved to Casablanca. Jean’s mother, Sultana Ifergan, was a southern Morocco native. The peripatetic Frederic then moved the family to Los Angeles in 1955, where he founded the Frederic Stern Gallery, exhibiting French landscape paintings. While growing up, Jean Stern and his two brothers worked in their father’s business, learning about art and art dealing. With that auspicious beginning, the Stern family evolved to become a Southern California art dynasty. Jean’s older brother, Louis Stern, founded the well-known Louis Stern Fine Arts in Los Angeles, specializing in impressionism, post-impressionism and modern art. His younger brother, George Stern, is an L.A. art dealer, emphasizing historic and contemporary plein air art. Steven Stern, Jean’s nephew, is carrying on the family tradition as a Santa Monica art dealer.

In 2017, Jean Stern received the Chevalier of the Order of Arts and Letters by



the French Ministry of Culture. He has received lifetime achievement awards from the Laguna Plein Air Painters Association, the Plein Air Painters of America and Plein Air Magazine.

Today, overseeing the Irvine Museum, he looks back at his many decades promoting, curating and writing about California Impressionism. And as he contemplates his eventual retirement, he is reinvigorated by the museum's impending move to the University of California at Irvine. The genesis of that move occurred in 2014 when James Swinden, Irvine Museum president, called Dr. Stephen Barker, Dean, Claire Trevor School of the Arts, and currently Executive Director of the UCI Institute and Museum of California Art (IMCA). Swinden proposed to Barker that the Irvine Museum donate its 1,200 19th and 20th century paintings, sculptures and works on paper to UCI.

"I decided it was time to find a permanent home for the collection," Swinden explains. "It seemed important that it reside on the Irvine Ranch, and where better than UC Irvine?" That donation occurred the same week that Barker and UCI were offered a gift of the Gerald Buck Collection of 3,500 treasured works of modern California art.

With the approval of UCI Chancellor Howard Gillman, the combined collections became the foundation of IMCA, a university-based museum that will specialize in all periods of California art. Scheduled to open early in the next decade, IMCA will be built on the UCI site that William Pereira, the university's original architect, designated for a mu-

seum in 1962. "This will be the greatest museum for California art anywhere in the world," says Barker. Stern is excited about this development, adding that being part of UCI will enable the Irvine Museum collection to be part of a world-class institution.

As IMCA plans for its opening (with an unknown date at this time), the Irvine Museum with Stern at the helm will continue to mount exhibitions, while attracting 16,000 visitors a year, plus numerous school children.

The museum's upcoming exhibition "Poems Without Words" will feature landscape paintings by "the usual suspects," as Stern explains, or by masters of California Impressionism, including Edgar Payne, Hanson Puthuff and William Wendt. Surrounded by the majesty and energy of these seminal artworks, it is questionable that Jean Stern, now in his early 70s, will want to retire in the near future.

UCI Irvine Museum Collection
18881 Von Karman Avenue, Ste. 100
Irvine, CA 92612
949-476-0294
www.irvinemuseumcollection.uci.edu/
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Current exhibition: "Upon a Painted Ocean: An Ode to the California Coast" through March 30, 2019

Upcoming exhibition: "Poems Without Words" - April 6, 2019 to August 10, 2019

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PROFESSIONAL SPORTS IN THE HEART OF IRVINE

GREAT PARK IS HOME TO ORANGE COUNTY SOCCER CLUB'S STATE-OF-THE-ART FACILITY.

BY: ARIELLE ROUDE

PHOTOS COURTESY: OC SOCCER CLUB

Growing up in Irvine, I never viewed it as the home of a professional sports team. Frankly, many of us locals aren't aware that there is a venue large enough to host a professional sports franchise. Orange County Soccer Club is setting out to change this perception and bring professional sports to a city that thrives on fandom and athleticism.

In 2011, Orange County became part of a new national sports phenomenon.

It became one of the 12 founding teams of the new United Soccer League (USL). For those who are not caught up on your soccer terminology, USL is one of the most well-known Division 2 professional soccer leagues in the world. Positioned directly below Major League Soccer, USL is helping fuel the growth of professional soccer across North America and the world.

After playing as the Orange County Blues for six years, in 2017 the team was bought and rebranded by James Keston,

the Chief Investment Officer of LARO Properties. Keston's goal was to develop a professional sports team that focused on its fans, players and youth soccer clubs in Orange County. With the arrival of Keston also came a new team name, the Orange County Blues turned into the Orange County Soccer Club (OCSC). Along with a new team name came a new state-of-the-art sports facility and stadium at the Great Park in Irvine for home games and practices. The Sports Complex Soccer

Stadium is now the official home base for OCSC and their fans.

The Sports Complex Soccer Stadium is the ultimate spot for you to become an OCSC fan. With seating for 5,000, it gives the community the ultimate professional sports team experience. During OCSC games, spectators can expect to have a full fan zone, including food trucks, a beer garden and family-friendly games and inflatable fun. OCSC makes every game a fun experience, including themed game

nights, family nights, military nights and nights that support local community organizations. The stadium even blows out orange smoke every time a goal is scored. Truth be told, an OCSC game might be one of the best kept secrets in Orange County.

Now that you know where to catch a game, let's introduce you to some key players.

OCSC is composed of about 25 players with an average age of 24 years old. Their captain for the 2019 season is mid-fielder Aodhan Quinn. Quinn is a Southern California native who is a pivotal member of OCSC and in 2018 was a league MVP finalist. Another player to cheer on this season is goalkeeper Aaron Cervantes. Cervantes is a local kid who has been tearing up the soccer field from an early age. At age 15, he became one of the youngest players in USL league history to sign a professional contract.

There is also forward Michael Seaton, who previously played for the Jamaican national team and is a force to be reckoned with on the field. He is not only fast, but he is a vital goal-scorer, having scored over 15 goals in his professional career. Lastly, I want to introduce you to a new member of the OCSC, English professional player Harry Forrester. Forrester previously played for one of the biggest clubs in the Scottish Premier League. As a mid-fielder, Forrester will bring a great deal of strength and skill to the 2019 season.

OCSC's 2018 season was a success on and off the field, as the team placed first out of 17 teams in the Western Conference. They then went on to the playoffs where they fell just short of winning a USL championship. Despite the loss, this is just the beginning for the team. The team's motto of "Pathway to Professional" is allowing for the best of the best to come and play for the team. Whether they are a rising 16-year-old player or a 29-year-old veteran getting his second chance, OCSC is finding a way to dominate the USL.

Orange County is a hotbed for young professional athletes and is considered one of the top recruiting spots for both men's and women's soccer, which is why it is so important to have a local professional team. OCSC represents a pathway for young athletes to not only root for a local professional team but gives top young players and club teams the opportunity to train with the professionals. Being the only professional soccer team between Orange County and Tijuana, OCSC is providing an avenue for young soccer players to have their chance at stardom.

As the 2019 season begins, OCSC is con-



centrating on bringing the community together. With their growing fan base and fan zone, home games are becoming the new hot-spot for family-friendly nights out and even a place to grab a beer during their annual brew festival. As OCSC continues to grow, their goal is not only to be one of the best USL teams in the league but to provide a space for the ultimate community night out. The team is also giving back to our Orange County community by partnering with Hoag Hospital and the Alzheimer's Association.

OCSC will kick off their season on Saturday, March 16 at 7:00 p.m. at the Great Park. Watch them dominate their season from March through October with 17 home games usually held on Saturday nights. You can see them take on their Phoenix rivals on May 4, or catch the game on June 9 when they will be playing the USL L.A. Galaxy team. With so many games, there is no excuse not to go and cheer them on! OCSC even offers group stadium tours, meet the player sessions and opportunities to be a part of the game and play on the field.

Become a fan and be a part of the best-kept secret in Orange County. You can visit orangecountysoccer.com to buy your tickets for your first home game and keep up with the team through their social media pages. Follow OCSC on Instagram at @orangecountysoccer or on Twitter at Orange County Soccer Club. See you at the first home game!



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