

FOODS THAT WILL KEEP YOU COZY • ARTIST ALI RYBCZYK IS ON THE RISE • COMICS CULTURE THRIVES IN IRVINE

IRVINE WEEKLY

DECEMBER 25, 2019 • VOL. 2, NO. 5

A man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a light blue button-down shirt and a red neckerchief, stands in a kitchen. He is holding two large skewers of raw meat, likely pork or beef, which are being prepared for churrasco. The background shows a kitchen setting with shelves and various items. The man is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

A BRAZILIAN SMORGASBORD

Fogo de Chão opens its doors at Irvine Spectrum



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COVER: • Photo Courtesy of Alan Weiner

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EMPLOYMENT



BIOTECH IP ATTORNEY

sought by Fish IP Law, LLP in Irvine, CA to provide comprehensive IP counseling to biotech/pharmaceutical companies. Resume to: HR, Fish IP Law, LLP, 2603 Main Street, Ste. 1000, Irvine, CA 92614

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Jewelry Design: f/t; Develop jewelry designs complying with creative, functional, timeline & financial goals; Resume: Forever 21, Inc. Attn: Laura Holguin, 3880 N Mission Rd. # 3110, Los Angeles, CA 90031

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PHOTO BY: CAMERON SCOTT

A BRAZILIAN SMORGASBORD

FOGO DE CHÃO'S IRVINE SPECTRUM LOCATION UPHOLDS THE CHAIN'S STANDARDS OF QUALITY FOOD — AND LOTS OF IT.

BY: SCOTT FEINBLATT

Fogo de Chão has an excellent reputation. With locations spanning the United States as well as restaurants in Mexico, South America and the Middle East, it is easy to see that Fogo's Brazilian steakhouse dining experience is universally appealing to a large cross-section of diners. In October, the chain opened its sixth location in California, and its first in Orange County. As this writer had previously had a wonderful experience at the Las Vegas location, I was curious to check out the new Fogo de Chão at Irvine Spectrum Center.

Two days after Thanksgiving, my stomach was settled enough to endure another thorough gorging,

which is pretty much a guaranteed outcome of any visit to a churrascaria-style dining experience. For those who've yet to indulge in such an experience, churrascaria dining (aka Brazilian steakhouse dining) usually involves a few components: a salad bar-style spread of various foods, the opportunity to order specific ala carte items off the menu, and, principally, the option of tasting the various prepared meats that are offered by the roving gaucho chefs.

As I went for lunch the day after Black Friday, it is likely that many would-be diners were still recovering from having fought the crowds to get the best deals the day before. Still, I made a reservation via their website.

It turned out that I hadn't needed to reserve a table, but I would certainly recommend making a reservation, as it is easy to see from various Yelp reviews that Fogo de Chão gets a full house in the evenings.

For parking, I just used the Spectrum lot that is closest to Restaurant Way, which is called 100 Parking. Fogo is a short walk from there, and once I entered, I was impressed by the design. Their reputation for beautiful interiors is supported by this location's set-up. Since it was a wee bit cold outside, I opted for inside dining (they also offer an al fresco dining option). The hostess seated my party immediately, and our waitress showed up a moment later to take our drink orders



PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE: COURTESY OF ALAN WEINER

and give us the rundown of our dining options. We opted for the Full Churrasco Experience, which was \$42.95 (the weekend brunch rate) and included the Market Table, featuring seasonal salads, fresh veggies, soups, waffles, an omelette station, a nice selection of cheeses, etc.

First, I warmed up with a few nibbles from the table. These included a little salad, a few pieces of cheese, some roasted garlic cloves (which I mashed onto some bread), a piece of linguica sausage, and a very tasty batch of homestyle fries with bits of steak in it. Then I invited the gaucho chefs to approach me. For the uninitiated, each plate at a Brazilian steakhouse has an indicator next to it; usually these come in the form of a cardboard coaster with red on one side and green on the other. When the diner wishes to be approached and offered the various cuts of meats, said diner need only make sure their indicator has its green side up. When you're stuffed or when you want a little break, you flip it over so that the red side is facing upwards.

My first cut of meat was a small piece of pork tenderloin that was covered in Parmesan cheese. It was pretty tasty, but I didn't go for seconds because there was plenty more to try. Next up was a pork rib that was served with a slice of lime. This was also a satisfying morsel. After this, I cleansed my palate with a piece of the table bread, which was very soft and had a nice touch of cheese to it. While I was noshing away,

my dining partner was taking her time with the pear endive with bacon and cheese, from the Market Table. Her report was a solid thumbs up.

After flipping my indicator back over to green, the gaucho chefs returned to offer more cuts of meat. Next up was the garlic beef (house special sirloin with garlic), followed soon thereafter by a slice of bottom sirloin, a slice of top sirloin, and then some lamb chops. Generally speaking, all of the steaks were delicious but a bit salty; on the occasion that I got a piece that was not the first slice off of the slab, the level of saltiness was not so pronounced. As for the preparation, I prefer my meat on the rare side, and all of the slabs were cooked so that one half of each skewered slab was cooked on the well side and one half was cooked on the rare side. The lamb chops were delicious (especially with a bit of Fogo's chimichurri sauce). Next, a gaucho chef whose skewer was lined with chicken breasts that had been wrapped in bacon wandered over. Naturally, I had to have one of those! It was not bad.

By this point in time, my Diet Coke had been well-attended with refills, and I definitely had the feeling that all of the waitstaff were intent on ensuring that all the diners were being well taken care of. Then, just as I was starting to feel that my body was wondering why I was stuffing it so much, my waitress asked if I'd be interested in any of the made-to-order sides from the kitchen, and I broke down when she mentioned

garlic mashed potatoes and caramelized bananas. The potatoes went down pretty smoothly, but I had to keep an eye on the bananas, as I wondered whether or not to take the waitress's recommendation and order some ice cream (an extra cost) to complement the bananas.

I had a chance to think it over while I tried a decent piece of lamb steak from a passing gaucho chef. As it turned out, my dining partner and I decided to bring the whole meal to a conclusion with a piece of chocolate lava cake a la mode (served with whipped cream and chocolate floral designs). That cake was pretty darn good, but once I'd heaped some of the cake's ice cream onto the caramelized bananas, that became the winning desert combo.

The entire experience left me feeling good. Sure, some of the steaks were a bit salty, and the Market Table was not as impressive as that of the Las Vegas location (I haven't yet been to the other California locations), but the plentiful variety of fine meats was satisfying, and the Market Table did include enough gourmet side options to keep me happy. Plus, with an extraordinary waitstaff, the bottom line is that if you're looking for a fine dining experience, and you are as into juicy steaks as you are into a variety of meats, I would recommend giving this Fogo de Chão a try.

Fogo de Chão, 623 Spectrum Center Drive, Irvine; (949) 398-1500, fogodechao.com/location/irvine

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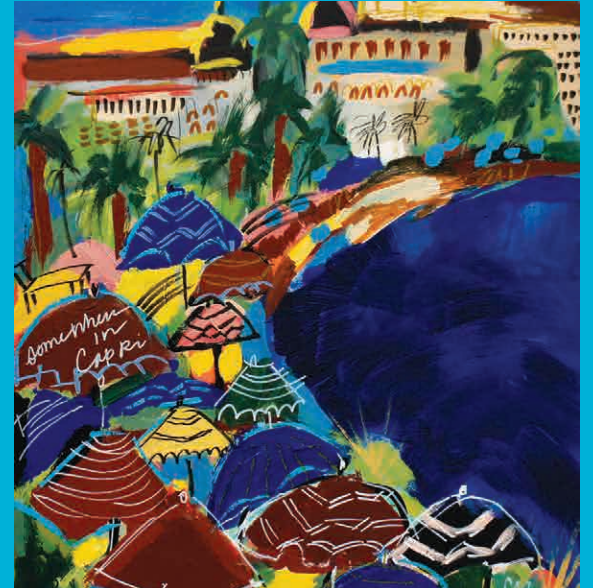
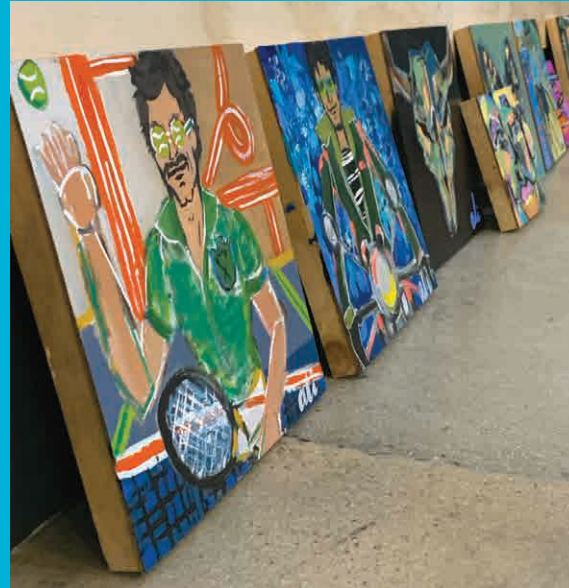
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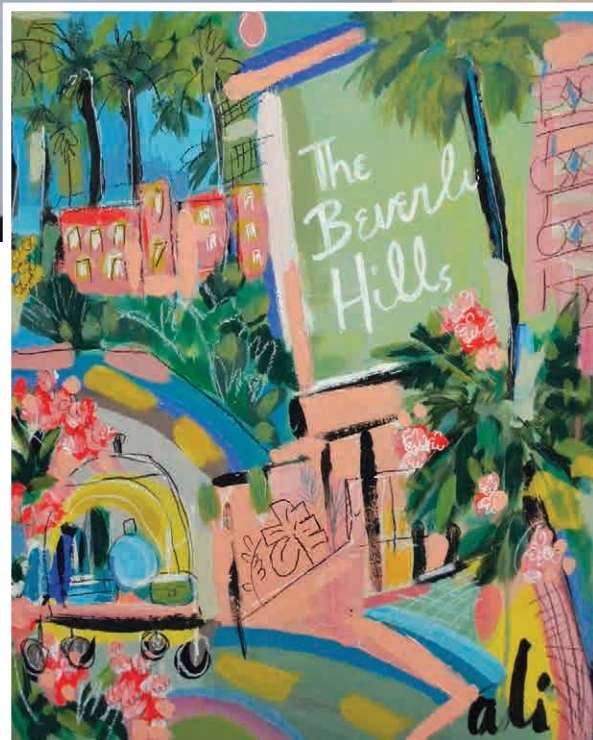
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magazines in these paintings – aspects that the artist is proud of – her deeper intention is to extol the health-giving and joyous aspects of athleticism. The colors in these works tend toward muted greens, olives, blues and grays, imparting subtle yet powerful qualities to them.

Among the most poignant and personally meaningful works in this artist's first solo exhibition are those expressing her favored mantras. One painting reads in large bright letters, "My favorite moments keep happening." Another

says, "I just wanted to remind you that it is so beautiful." A third painting remarks, "Your heart has always known." And a fourth one reads, "Let's smile at life for uniting us...". Her most conceptual art piece in this series is "Chakra Crayons," depicting seven crayons, displayed in a circle, with each crayon bearing an affirmation; these include "Power," "Intuition," "Golden Light" and "Romance."

While words are a major theme in contemporary art, Rybczyk's are more affirmative than many such pieces. In

one painting, titled "Fav Moments," she surrounds her block letters with flowers and abstract designs.

The "spirit animal" is another theme in her paintings. These include "The Skin You're In" of a brightly colored snake; another called "Metamorphosis," depicting a butterfly with psychedelic coloring; and "Primary Lovers," two swans, one blue and the other orange, in a near embrace. The artist's artwork "The Bear," of an expressively poised bear with a humanoid-like face required time, patience and deft illustration skills, according to the exhibition curator, Jasmin Pannier. Meanwhile the artist's work "Believe" of a camel, with the word "BELIEVE" against a blue background, combines her love of animals with a personal affirmation.

Rybczyk also includes still-lifes and nature scenes of wildly adorned gardens in this exhibition. Yet her most expressive paintings, which look toward the next phase of her burgeoning artistic career, are "C Ya in Palm Springs," "Beverly Hills Hotel" and "Capri."

The Palm Springs painting illustrates a 1950s-style coupe automobile with fins against a tropical setting, replete with palm trees and a mid-century,

pastel-colored building. The Beverly Hills piece is a more complex depiction of a hotel sign and exterior against lush tropical foliage, with an inset of boudoir accouterments including a perfume bottle and lotion. The abstract qualities of this painting impart a dreamlike and inaccessible quality to it. "Capri" alludes to Rybczyk's hopes and dreams, both personal and professional; large colorful umbrellas emblazon the left side of the painting, while overlooking a deep blue expanse of water, and elegant hotel exteriors, palm trees and a bright blue sky occupy the background. This fantasy painting, with its strong and powerful impressionistic features, may elicit future vacations in a tropical paradise. It also foretells the artist's aspirations to continue to explore her love of wildly colorful landscape painting.

As an ambitious artist who works with talent, passion and integrity, it will be interesting to see the future phases of Ali Rybczyk's painting career.

"Chromotherapy" can be seen at WorkWell, 17322 Murphy Ave., Irvine, through January 2. The space is open to the public Saturday and Sundays, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.



THE VILLAGE THAT HELPS RAISE IRVINE'S YOUTHS

WORKING WITH THE IRVINE POLICE DEPARTMENT, WAYMAKERS ENSURES YOUTHS DON'T SLIP THROUGH THE SYSTEM'S CRACKS.

BY: TARA FINLEY

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF WAYMAKERS

Growing up is never easy. Today's youth face especially challenging times, with increasing violence, financial instability and civil unrest. These unsettled times are seeing thousands of kids in trouble with the law, with over 65,000 juveniles in California being referred to probation departments in the last year alone. While the reasons for their arrests varied, more than half were brought in for misdemeanor offenses. This is where Waymakers steps in.

"In partnership with the Irvine Police Department, Waymakers' Juvenile Diversion Program offers practical, individualized and cost-effective early interven-

tion, restorative justice activity components such as individual and family counseling, case management, victim-offender mediation, Peer Court, community service and restitution, career and education support, legal awareness, practical parenting skills, drug and alcohol awareness, anger management, service learning projects, truancy reduction, social skills, decision making, and 24-hour help lines and specialized services linkage," explains Hether Benjamin, director of Youth Development for Waymakers.

"The program is an alternative to the juvenile justice system and gives youth the opportunity they need to get back on track and make things right."

By providing them with a remedy other than the court system, teens are being equipped with the tools they need to better themselves and their lives.

"These diversion programs are a fantastic opportunity for kids who've made mistakes. It allows us to not only reduce delinquency, but educate youth on better decision making skills and provide them with services they may need like counseling and therapy," said Sergeant Tom Goodbrand, Youth Services supervisor for Irvine Police Department. "This same opportunity is not available in probation – kids are gaining something out of it."

Graduates of Waymakers' program are turning their lives around, benefiting the community of Irvine as a

whole.

Waymakers also saves Irvine taxpayers thousands of dollars annually. The nonprofit estimates that if more juvenile diversion programs were implemented statewide, California could save close to \$200 million yearly.

Local parents are grateful for the program, as evidenced by Melba-Ruth Gonzales' experience. Irvine resident and working mother of three, she has seen two of her teens go through the program, both for first-time offenses.

"People move to Irvine for a better opportunity," said Gonzales. "Better schools and a better community, and now for the police department to offer this program – it is a huge gift."

Adds Benjamin, "Participating youth and parents report an overall 92 percent satisfaction rate with Waymakers' Juvenile Diversion Services. Based on dissertation research conducted in collaboration with U.C. Irvine and an independent study at Waymakers, 85 percent of youth who successfully completed services did not re-offend within a 12-month period, suggesting these youth can benefit from diversion rather than juvenile justice intervention."

While these services are not currently offered at all police departments in Orange County, several have found them to be helpful. In the last year, close to 400 youth were referred to Waymakers' Juvenile Diversion Program from five O.C. departments, including our own Irvine Police Department.

"Irvine Police Department sought to be part of a positive reform to address alternatives to law enforcement 'over-handling' low-risk offenders," explains Benjamin. "Waymakers has an opportunity to impact youth

and families at the diversion level to keep at-risk and low-risk youth from entering the formal juvenile justice system and causing further harm."

"Often families cannot afford to seek out professional services or there is a stigma for seeking out help for delinquency issues," she elaborates. "Unidentified school problems, emotional disturbance and trauma can impact not just the youth but the family, community and society. Left unmanaged these issues can lead to youth being over-punished in school and over-criminalized in the juvenile justice system. Through Juvenile Diversion, youth and their families have access to a number of components aimed at promoting accountability, competency development and safety."

Overall, the goal is to make this alternative justice available for even more cities and teens, helping to lessen the caseload of already overworked probation officers and free up limited resources.

"There is currently a gap in services as only 18 out of 34 Orange County cities fund a Juvenile Diversion program," discloses Benjamin. "Most either refer pre-arrested youth to a fee-for-service program or petition to court as the only alternative, instead of reinvesting in our youth to provide an opportunity to 'make things right.'"

"The identified barrier is due to budget cuts rather than [the lack of] desire of law enforcement to fund programs," adds Benjamin.

She is hoping to change that, saying that "Waymakers actively pursues funding through juvenile justice grants and foundations when police departments cannot support the diversion services with their existing budgets."

"Waymakers goal is to never turn a family in need

away for their inability to pay for services," Benjamin promises.

How did it all start? "In 1972, a University of California Irvine professor, a few of his students and a Costa Mesa Police Department captain were among a small, dedicated group who recognized the need to provide diversion counseling for delinquent youth and their families," shares Benjamin. "This Juvenile Diversion program was the catalyst to the inception of nonprofit Waymakers in the same year."

As the organization grew, so did their reach.

"Since [1972] the sheer size and scope of Waymakers' growth has eclipsed its humble beginnings of counseling youth and families and grown to include sheltering children, counseling families, supporting victims of various crimes, resolving conflicts and educating communities," furthers Benjamin. "Waymakers also serves as the administrator of the Orange County Human Trafficking Task Force."

"Police Departments had no other alternatives for corrective action other than to send youth to Juvenile Hall for minor infractions, such as curfew violations. Research indicates that prevention and intervention with services such as Waymakers' Juvenile Diversion promotes the prevention of future criminal or delinquent activity in the community. Low-risk youth served at the informal level have lower rates of recidivism than low-risk youth handled in the formal system."

By reducing the chances of reoffending and putting a stop to problem behaviors, Waymakers is providing Irvine youth with a brighter future.

Hether Benjamin hopes to see Waymakers' programming adopted in more jurisdictions.



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DUCK DONUTS

FOODS THAT WILL KEEP YOU COZY IN THE WINTER

FROM RAMEN AND UDON TO WARM YOUR SOUL TO FRESH, PIPING HOT DOUGHNUTS.

BY: SAM HINGCO

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF SAM HINGCO

The winter season is upon us – and this cold breezy weather brings the strong craving for a warm, hearty meal. Luckily, Irvine is filled with a variety of restaurants to satisfy this craving and keep you cozy in the winter weather. From creamy broths to crispy chicken to sweet heavenly donuts, Irvine hosts a multitude of restaurants perfect for warming you up in the cool winter days.

Shin-sen-gumi

Shin-sen-gumi in Woodbury Town Center is a popular Japanese franchise serving an amazing seafood

tomato cream udon with a milky broth that melts in your mouth. Although it may be a bit pricey, the servings are perfect for sharing and more customers will share a large bowl of udon or ramen along with a serving of meat to split the cost. Shin-sen-gumi also offers a menu which includes “Special Udon for Cold Weather” which is perfect to keep your stomach full and warm in the cold winter. 6404 Irvine Blvd, Irvine

HiroNori Craft Ramen

HiroNori is located next to Trade Food Hall and is infamous for their long lines, but attracts the public eye

due to their fresh original noodles, stock and sauce. Their shoyu and tonkotsu ramen are rich and crafted beautifully. They serve a variety of ramen and meat bowls which will fill you up fast. HiroNori’s gourmet ramen and amazing customer service are sure to keep you cozy in the cold weather. 2222 Michelson Drive, Ste 234, Irvine

Chan Chan

Chan Chan in Heritage Plaza is unseen to the public, yet the quality of their food is surprisingly high. The spicy squid rice cakes heat you up in the cold weather



and are drizzled with a warm and savory sauce for extra comfort. Chan Chan's sweet garlic chicken has an amazing sweet-and-sour sauce. The combination of the mouth-watering rice cakes and crispy chicken are the perfect match. 14250 Culver Dr, Irvine

House of Shabu Shabu

Many are unaware of this small Shabu Shabu spot, hidden within the crowded and bustling variety of restaurants on Jeffrey. House of Shabu Shabu is perfect for the cold weather and has \$21 all-you-can-eat meat, broth, noodles and sushi during dinner on weekdays and during weekends; \$14 during lunch on weekdays. The meat is tender and pairs perfectly with the piping broth. While most known for their shabu shabu, House of Shabu Shabu includes all-you-can-eat sushi on their menu and fills you up quickly. 5394 Walnut Ave, Irvine

Qin West Noodle

Qin West Noodle is a buried treasure among the apartments near UCI. Qin West offers authentic and traditional Chinese noodles that manage to remain uniquely their own. They also offer customizable spice levels accommodating to different customers. These

heavenly noodles pair perfectly with their sizzling broth. Qin West's fresh handcrafted noodles are perfect for a cold winter day. 6200 Scholarship, Irvine

Duck Donuts

Finding a dessert is difficult in the cold winter season as most establishments serve cold desserts. However, Duck Donuts is perfect. Duck Donuts is a gourmet donut shop which features toasty donuts that are made fresh, right in front of you! The s'mores and maple bacon flavored donuts are drizzled in a hot and silky sauce. These sweet, warm velvety donuts are the perfect winter dessert that are sure to satisfy your sweet tooth. 2222 Michelson Drive, Ste 200, Irvine

Boiling Point

Boiling Point is a popular hot pot franchise, located in Heritage Plaza, infamous for their sizzling bowls of broth – the perfect winter meal. Their mixture of the warm broth and the tender meat make the absolute combo. Although prices are fairly high, many will share one bowl since the broth is bottomless. Boiling Point's warm simmering broth and tender meat make the ultimate winter meal. 14140 Culver Dr, Irvine



CHAN CHAN

CRAFT RAMEN

QIN WEST NOODLE



COMICS CULTURE CONTINUES TO THRIVE IN IRVINE

IRVINE WEEKLY TALKS TO INDUSTRY EXPERTS TO GET THE SCOOP ON EVERYTHING COMIC BOOKS.

BY: SUSAN HORNİK

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF HERO WITHIN

Irvine is a great city for anyone involved in the comic book industry to live, as both San Diego Comic Con and Los Angeles Comic Con are only an hour away. Also, WonderCon, the annual comic book, sci-fi and film confab, and D23, the official Disney Fan Club, takes place in Anaheim at the Convention Center each year.

From nerd lifestyle brands to innovative collectibles, the comics business continues to thrive throughout Orange County as well. *Irvine Weekly* talked to industry experts in the area to hear how business is going and how they deal with the myriad of challenges.

Todd Nauck | Comic Book Artist

"Business is going great!" enthused Todd Nauck, a successful comics artist. "I've been working consistently with Marvel Comics since 2006 on various titles like Spider-Man, Deadpool and Thor. I also just recently drew the comic book adaptation of the Netflix series, *Mystery Science Theater 3000*, for Dark Horse Publishing.

Nauck has a busy schedule, with a myriad of design projects.

"I am currently working on a new Spider-Man spin-off series called Gwen Stacy – she was one of Peter Parker's first loves he meets at college. It's kind of like *Veronica Mars* set in the early Stan Lee/Steve Ditko-era of *Amazing Spider-Man*. Marvel just announced the series and issue number one debuts in February 2020."

In addition, the veteran artist is drawing three comic covers for deserving real-life young heroes in the new Disney Plus streaming television show, *Marvel's Hero Project*.

Nauck has also been making appearances at numerous Cons and other events. "I was a guest speaker on Disney Cruise Lines' Marvel Day at Sea, for a 'Meet the Marvel Masters' panel. That was an honor and a fun gig!" he quipped.

"The biggest challenge for me is comic book deadlines and comic convention travel. I'm either spending my days at the drafting table or traveling across the U.S. to appear at Comic Cons. It takes a lot of time management and discipline to make sure I hit deadlines and make it out to see the comic reading public."

Locally, you can often find Nauck at his favorite comic book shop, Alakazam Comics.

"I do comic book signings at their store from time to time. They have been big supporters of my career over the years."

Tony Kim | Founder/Owner, Hero Within

While business has gone well for Irvine's Hero Within, there are still many highs and lows, owner Tony Kim admits.

"It's been very challenging as a young company. Fortunately, interest in subtle geek fashion has never been higher as well as passion for pop culture. It was an amazing year with all of the success of Marvel and we are now turning our attention to DC and *Star Trek*.

Kim, who also is a blogger, designer and pop culture expert, continued: "Inventory and cash flow are always the biggest challenges with young companies. I have to stay focused on trying to stay ahead of the demand as well as help shape trends. It's a balancing act."

Kim loves being based in Irvine, finding the area a

"very inspirational" place to be. "Besides all the local resources, the diversity and creativity here fuels me. Plus, I do much of my business in Los Angeles and San Diego, which makes Irvine perfectly located for those commutes."

Patrick Wang | Vice President, Icon Heroes

As a community, Irvine is an incredible place to be – safe, lots of good places to eat, well maintained, etc. – noted Patrick Wang, vice president of Icon Heroes.

"We have been in business since 2009, manufacturing licensed collectibles, toys, action figures, trading pins, bobblehead dolls, gifts and novelties," he said. "Most of our products are sold online such as [on] Amazon.com and through major brick-and-mortar retailers like GameStop."

Since they do not have a store, the conventions provide a great opportunity for Wang to interact with their customers. "To gain more exposure, we also sell exclusive merchandise and showcase new products at conventions such as San Diego Comic Con."

Icon Heroes' licensed properties include *Archie Comics*, *Chilling Adventures of Sabrina*, *DC Comics*, *The Golden Girls*, *Harry Potter*, *The Karate Kid*, ABC's *Once Upon a Time*, *Robotech*, *Street Fighter*, *Terminator: Dark Fate*, *Top Gun*, *Top Gun: Maverick* and *Star Trek*.

We also have several new and exciting properties which we are announcing soon," Wang added. "There are some upcoming movies and video game properties."

With the holiday rush, Wang's biggest challenge was making sure their products are developed and shipped on time, especially for retailers. "There are many stages to development and production so we have to meet certain checkpoints along the way. We typically try to plan products about a year out."

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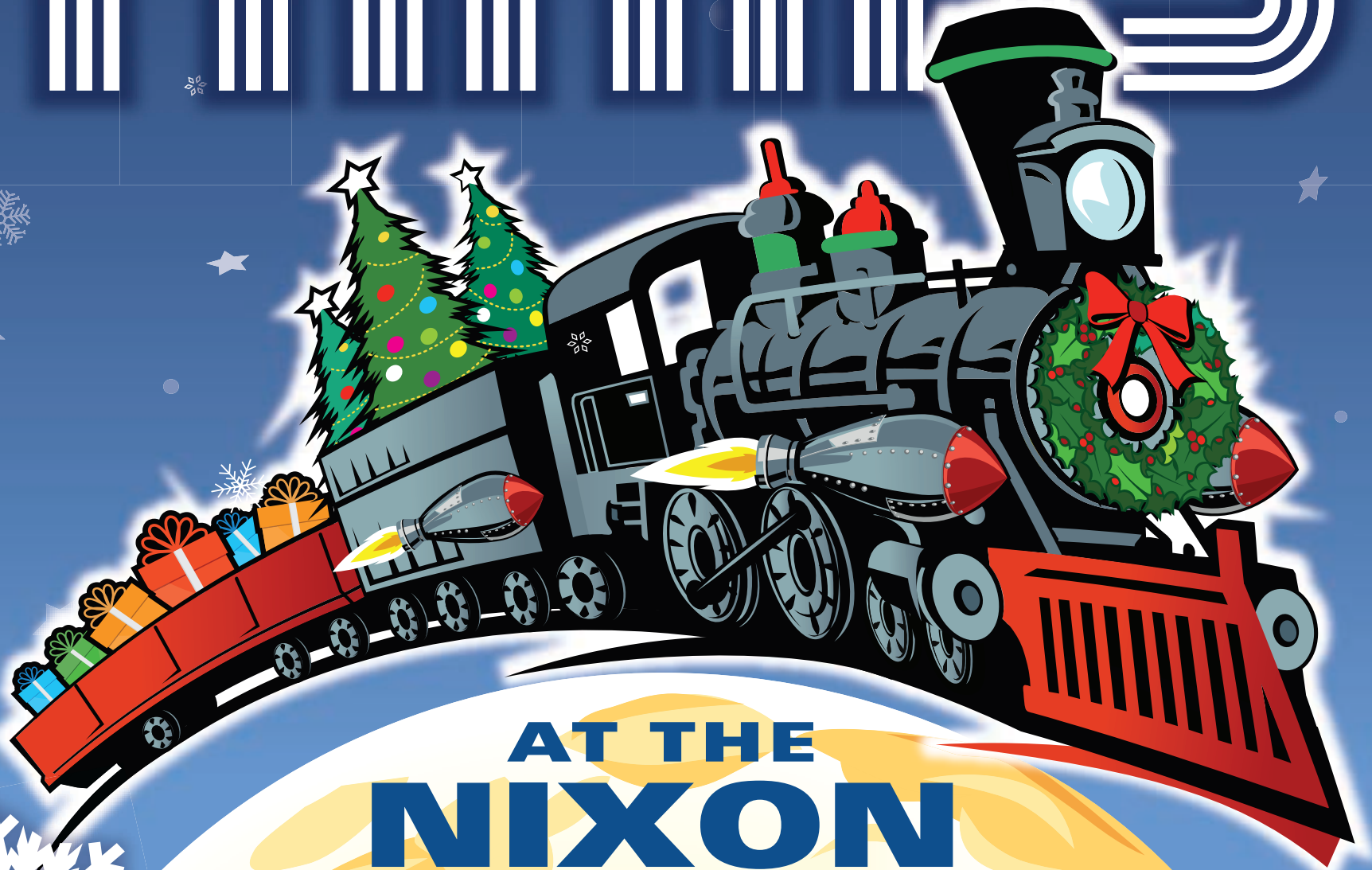


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