

# IRVINE WEEKLY

MAY 20, 2020 • VOL. 02, No. 15

An aerial architectural rendering of the Wild Rivers Water Park. The image shows a large, vibrant water park with numerous colorful slides in shades of green, blue, and purple. A winding river or lazy river cuts through the park, surrounded by palm trees and landscaped areas. People are depicted walking on paths and swimming in the water, giving a sense of scale and activity. The overall scene is bright and sunny, suggesting a tropical or warm climate.

**GREAT PARK PROGRESS REPORT:  
WHAT'S NEW? WHAT'S PLANNED?**

# IRVINE WEEKLY CLASSIFIEDS

## EMPLOYMENT

**ACS Engineering Inc**  
seeks an Electrical/Project Engineer in Irvine. Req.: Bach in Electrical Engineering + 2yrs exp. \$71,240.00/yr. Email resume to karen@ACSEngineering.net

**Administrative Manager:**  
Direct & coordinate admin. services; 40hrs/wk; worksite: Irvine, CA. Send resume to Mei Mi Suo Inc., Attn: Jing Xue, 2983 Chino Ave. #A8, Chino Hills, CA 91709

**The Act-1 Group Inc. DBA ATIMS in Chatsworth, CA**  
seeks Software Development Manager to oversee, impl & provide prod'n supp/ syst S/W syst mgmt. No Trvl; no tel'comm. Mail resumes to: The Act-1 Group Inc. DBA ATIMS, Attn: HR, 21622 Plummer Street, Suite 210, Chatsworth, CA 91311.

**ALC, Inc.,**  
headquartered in Princeton, NJ seeks Senior Software Engineer for a position at company's location in Irvine, CA. S/he will work on complex tech. projects, including full stack (front end and back end) software dev. and big data analytics. S/he must have, at min, a Bach. degree in Computer Science or IT and 2 yrs of exp. in a software dev/eng role, including familiarity with SDLC; ability to create server-side API; knowledge of Golang, Node.js, TypeScript, C#, and JavaScript; knowledge of Databases including SQL, MongoDB, Aerospike, and Redis; Experience with front end technologies Angular and React; and experience with bigdata solutions BigTable, BigQuery, and DataFlow. Email resumes to rob.bennington@alc.com.

**Database Administrator:**  
Develop IT solutions for bus. sys.; MS in CIS or equiv., or BS or equiv. + 5 yrs exp. in CIS req'd; Send resume to: Solomon America, Inc. 10540 Talbert Ave., #200, Fountain Valley, CA 92708

**Electrical Engineer:**  
Research & Develop RF sys.; BS in EE or equiv. & 2 yrs exp. req'd; Send resume to GigaTera Communications: 1818 E. Orangethorpe Ave., Fullerton, CA 92831

**Medical and Health Manager:**  
Coordinate operational activities & ensure service quality; 40hrs/wk; Apply to Good IVF Medical Service Ctr. Attn: HR, 780 Roosevelt, Irvine, CA 92620

**NortonLifeLock Inc.**  
has an opening for Software Engineer in Culver City, California. Job description includes responsible for analyzing, designing, debugging and/or modifying software. Depending on level/type of position, degree, and/or experience may be required. To apply, submit resume to jobads@nortonlifelock.com. Must reference job title and job ID: 1648.6286.

**NortonLifeLock Inc**  
has an opening for Software Engineer in Culver City, California. Job description includes responsible for analyzing, designing, debugging and/or modifying software; or evaluating, developing, modifying and coding software programs to support programming needs. To apply, submit resume to jobads@nortonlifelock.com. Must reference job title and job ID: 1648.6545.

**NortonLifeLock Inc.**  
has an opening for Software Engineer in Culver City, California. Job description includes responsible for analyzing, designing, debugging and/or modifying software. To apply, submit resume to jobads@nortonlifelock.com. Must reference job title and job ID: 1648.6207.

**NortonLifeLock Inc.**  
has an opening for Product Manager in Culver City, CA. Job description includes participate in all software product development life cycle activities. Move software products through the product development cycle from design and development to implementation and testing. To apply, submit resume to jobads@nortonlifelock.com. Must reference job title and job ID: 1648.6586.

**NortonLifeLock Inc**  
has an opening for UI Designer in Culver City, CA. Job description includes design or create graphics design to meet company needs. Work with product team leaders including Product Management, Visual Design, User Research, Info Dev and Engineering to define and implement product experience strategies within NetBackup. To apply, submit resume to jobads@nortonlifelock.com. Must reference job title and job ID: 1648.6638.

**Pastor: f/t;**  
perform religious worship & spiritual function; M Div, Th M, or equiv; Resume: Bethel Korean Church @18700 Harvard Ave., Irvine, CA 92612

**Pharmacist**  
(Buena Park, CA) Perform pharmacist duties. Doctor of Pharmacy and CA Pharmacist license. Resume to: Meds Envy, Inc. 5450 Beach Blvd. #110, Buena Park, CA 90621

**Post-Doctoral Research Scientist (Irvine, CA).**  
Conduct chemical epigenetics research. PhD in Chemistry (program must include study of epigenetics). Mail resume to SeongEun Kim, HR Mgr, Zymo Research Corporation 17062 Murphy Ave., Irvine, CA 92614.

**Strategy and PR Manager**  
(Los Angeles, CA) Focus on managing the company's image & raising awareness of the company & its projects in the US, & abroad, especially in China. Bach deg in communications or a closely rtd major; 18 mos of work exp in film & television; proficient in MS Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) & Adobe Systems. Apply to The H Collective, Inc., c/o Jianhui Huang, 12959 Coral Tree Place, Los Angeles, CA 90066

**Senior Electronics Engineer**  
Apply by mail only to Newracom, Inc. 25361 Commercentre Dr. Suite 200 Lake Forest, CA 92630 Attn: President

**SENIOR FOREIGN LEGAL ANALYST**  
White & Case LLP in Los Angeles, CA seeks a Senior Foreign Legal Analyst w/ Master's deg or frgn equiv deg in Law w/admission to Brazilian Bar & 6 yrs of exp at an int'l law firm managing high volume of Brazilian & Latin American litigations. Fluency in Portuguese language for legal purposes. Send resumes to lateralrecruiting@whitecase.com w/ref MH:CB.

**Taekwondo Instructor**  
(Irvine, CA) Conduct and teach taekwondo techniques. Minimum 4th degree Dan certificate req'd. Resume to: Talium Group Inc. 3580 Barranca Pkwy #C, Irvine, CA 92606

MAY 20, 2020 · No. 15

# CONTENTS



## NEWS...3

Irvine Virtual Town Hall discusses reopening and COVID-19 readiness.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

## NEWS...4

Wild Rivers Water Park considers Great Park relocation.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

## NEWS...5

Great Park plans: Museums, aquatic center and public safety training.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

## ART...6

Reflections of an art journalist: Our new cultural paradigm.

BY LIZ GOLDNER

## OPINION...8

Legislation to assist medical professionals in the fight against COVID-19.

BY JOHN M.W. MOORLACH

## ENTERTAINMENT...10

Review: HBO *WestWorld* Season 3.

BY ERIN MAXWELL

## ENTERTAINMENT...11

Streaming Movie Guide: *Extraction*, *Trolls* and more.

BY CHUCK WILSON AND LINA LECARO

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HCA STAFF PERFORM COVID TESTING IN THE PUBLIC HEALTH LAB. COURTESY OF: OC HEALTH CARE AGENCY

## VIRTUAL TOWN HALL HELD FOR REOPENING AND READINESS DISCUSSION

### ORANGE COUNTY HEALTH EXPERTS PROVIDED UPDATES ON RECENT SPIKE IN CASES AND FUTURE OF TESTING.

BY: EVAN J. LANCASTER

Irvine city leaders were joined by Orange County health experts during a virtual town hall meeting Thursday, May 14 to discuss more details of the city's Reopening and Readiness Plan.

As Irvine navigates its way into Stage 2 of its recently approved four-stage plan to reopen businesses, the virtual town hall focused on hosting questions from the public. Irvine residents were encouraged to submit questions prior to the meeting, which was led by Irvine Mayor Christina Shea and Councilmember Farrah N. Khan.

The two council members were joined by Dr. Bernadette Boden-Albala, UCI Health director and founding dean, Dr. Todd Newton, medical director at Kaiser Permanente, Dr. James Leo, chief medical officer.

As the OC Health Agency continues to track COVID-19, data shows the county experienced its highest back-to-back spike of COVID-19 cases, with 156 cases reported May 13, with an additional 226 cases on May 14.

Panel experts acknowledged the increase of cases occurring in Orange County, and pointed to a variety of factors for spikes.

Dr. Todd Newton explained that, with increased testing, more positive results can be expected. However, Newton cautioned against using the number of

positive tests as a method of determining the severity outbreaks. As of May 17, Irvine had a total of 153 COVID-19 cases, with zero reported deaths.

"Absolutely the number of cases are going up in Orange County. We are testing more, across-the-board," Newton said. "We use hospitalization, which I think is a better proxy, given that the number of tests will be variable, and also the timeframe of getting the test back will be variable."

Orange County has completed at least 2,000 tests per-day since April 28, reaching a countywide high of 3,109 tests on May 6.

Still, Newton did not want to discredit the amount of testing occurring, instead pointing to relaxed social distancing as a contributing factor in Orange County's uptick in COVID-19 cases.

"There's no doubt in my mind that, one, increased testing does play a role but two, the relaxation of some of the social distancing is probably playing a role as well, and we are seeing the numbers go up," he said.

Dr. Bernadette Boden-Albala agreed that the increase in cases could be attributed to individuals who have relaxed social distancing. However, she said it is possible the numbers could be attributed to nursing homes or skilled nursing facilities in the county.

"Individuals are taking some liberties in relaxing

policies. People have been visiting the beaches and I think people are feeling a little bit better. Spring is here, and we want to go out," she explained. "We're also seeing cases in nursing homes; transmission is really fast in these nursing homes so I think some of those numbers may be attributable to that, as well."

As experts reiterate the need for testing as a critical tool in battling COVID-19, the availability of testing in Irvine became a frequently discussed topic during the virtual town hall.

For Irvine residents, testing comes in the form of a \$95,000 testing program that was unanimously approved by the City Council on May 12. However, there will be changes to the original testing program that was presented to residents.

The original plan includes a drive-through testing site at the Orange County Great Park with free antigen and antibody tests for all Irvine residents. The program is set to begin on May 26.

While the city is still planning to deliver free antigen testing, Irvine Mayor Christina Shea clarified that since the antibody tests are not fully FDA approved, the city would not be offering them at this time.

The difference between the two tests is stark. The antigen test, or PCR test, is used to detect the presence of a virus while it is active. The other, an antibody test, will determine a past exposure. Dr. James D. Leo, Chief Medical Officer at MemorialCare, who was a special guest on the virtual town hall panel, spoke to the differences in testing availability and why.

"At MemorialCare we are focusing on the antigen – or PCR – testing, not the antibody testing, because at the present time the antibody tests are all approved by the FDA only under the Emergency Use Act," Leo explained. "[Antibody] tests are really valid for looking at the whole population, but are not helpful in making individual patient decisions about whether a person is protected from disease. We don't yet know if antibodies actually provide immunity for people."

Dr. Newton added to the antibody test discussion, citing numerous unknowns with the current antibody tests available. Newton's main concern is the reliability and accuracy of tests, along with the ability to produce accurate tests on a massive scale.

"First, the test has to be accurate," he said. "The first [antibody] tests that were released, many of them were grossly inaccurate, some of them were worse than a coin flip – so they were terrible."

Newton admitted this was uncharted territory, but said he remains optimistic about the county's readiness and ability to slowly move toward normalcy. In the coming days, the county will begin restarting more elective procedures, while still leaving social distancing protocols in place. But he reminded the public that it had no plan of slowing down medical care for those who need it.

"We can't be passive and we certainly can't let our guard down. But right now, we're very prepared," he said. "From my perspective the entire county has done well, hospitals have capacity, people are in pretty good shape, but we're not seeing New York-type numbers now."



ARTIST RENDERING OF WILD RIVERS · PHOTO: COURTESY OF CITY OF IRVINE

## IRVINE CITY COUNCIL RECEIVES REQUEST FOR WILD RIVERS WATER PARK RELOCATION

**CITY WOULD BE ALLOWED TO USE PARKING LOT DURING OFF SEASON AT PROPOSED NEW LOCATION.**

BY: EVAN J. LANCASTER

Before construction begins on a new water park development inside the Orange County Great Park, the city will need to agree on a new location. During its April 28 meeting, the Great Park Board cited an “unforeseen delay” in the land transfer of the planned construction site and recommended the City Council approve a new 20-acre site for Wild Rivers.

The unforeseen delay can be linked to the land lease in which the city of Irvine and Wild Rivers obtained the property chosen for the development. In 2017, when plans to bring Wild Rivers to the Great Park materialized the city leased land from the Department of Navy, through a Lease in Furtherance of Convey-

ance (LIFOC).

Originally, the portion of Navy-owned land was slated for transfer to Irvine in October 2019. However, the LIFOC land “required further studies prior to transfer,” according to the Request for Board Action – a process the Navy estimates could take a minimum of 18-24 months.

In the meantime, The Great Park Board and Wild Rivers have selected a 20-acre parcel of city-owned land located “southeast of Skyhawk and Great Park Boulevard,” according to the request. In approving this request, the City Council must also agree to new lease terms. The board’s request also states that the newly selected plot would “require additional studies and

review under the city’s zoning code and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)” in order for the \$50 million project to move forward.

The request also places responsibility on the city for a portion of Wild River’s construction, specifically the parking lot. Due to the seasonal functionality of the water park, the city will be allowed to use the parking lot during Wild Rivers’ off season, but will be responsible in the form of rent credit, if the parking lot is not completed by Wild River’s opening date.

Prior to the Great Park Board’s request for relocation consideration, Wild Rivers was scheduled to open in Summer 2021. But, those plans could dry up if the City Council fails to meet the Board’s recommendation.



GREAT PARK • PHOTO: COURTESY OF CITY OF IRVINE

## WHAT'S NEW WITH IRVINE'S GREAT PARK DEVELOPMENT

### **NEXT PHASE COULD ADD MUSEUMS, AQUATIC CENTER AND PUBLIC SAFETY JOINT TRAINING FACILITY.**

BY: EVAN J. LANCASTER

On April 28, the Orange County Great Park Board released an updated progress report of the Orange County Great Park project in Irvine, as part of its recurring updates agreement with the Irvine City Council.

The project's next phase focuses on more structures, including a \$25 million Fire Museum and Safety Learning Center, a Natural History Museum and USA Water Polo Aquatic Center.

The largest project in the Northern Sector is the pre-development of a \$20.5 million Public Safety Joint Training Facility.

Once completed, the Orange County Fire Authority and the Orange County Sheriff will use it as the county's first-ever joint training hub, providing a "scenario village" for the county's tactical

law enforcement training, according to Irvine City Manager John Russo.

The next steps for the project, which includes a gun range and emergency operations center, will be to proceed with design plans and drawings concepts.

The Orange County Fire Authority has agreed to contribute more than \$20 million to build the facility, while Irvine will provide the land and use it for its police training facility.

The Park's Fire Museum and Safety Learning Center will be dedicated to the history of firefighting and provide fire prevention education through interactive exhibits and displays.

Currently in the pre-development stages, the CFM and Safety Learning Center received approval on site selection March 24 and is currently under-

way with a capital campaign.

The Western Sector, home to the sports complex, Palm Court Arts Project and the Great Park Ice & FivePoint Arena, could become home to an Aquatic Complex with USA Water Polo.

Conceptual designs are currently under collaborative review.

While the Great Park also has plans to open Wild Rivers Water Park, it can no longer rely on the LIFOC portion of the land that was previously selected. The Great Park Board cited an "unforeseen delay" in the land lease requirements needed prior to transfer and is seeking approval for another 20-acre site for the \$50 million water park project.

Wild Rivers is scheduled to open in Summer 2021.

Some future Orange County Great Park components could include bo-

tanical gardens in the northern sector. And plans for a veterans cemetery in the same sector are "pending partner action," according to the April 28 Great Park Development Report.

However, plans could abruptly change due to the COVID-19 related economic slowdown. Irvine Mayor Christina Shea said her city would act responsibly, and adjust budgets as necessary.

"I want to move everything forward, and of course we will, but the city is in an unprecedented situation," Shea said. "We can't be planning and thinking about spending large amounts of money when we don't understand the dynamic."

"We have to pull back; we have to be responsible."



## DISPATCHES FROM LOCKDOWN: REFLECTIONS OF AN ART JOURNALIST

### WHAT WILL OUR NEW CULTURAL PARADIGM AFTER COVID-19 LOOK LIKE?

BY: LIZ GOLDNER

While visiting a museum in Bern, Switzerland several years ago, I saw an exhibition of work created during the Bubonic Plague, a pandemic occurring in Europe in the 14th century. The show consisted of several dozen caricature-style drawings, illustrated by an unknown artist.

While viewing this unusual display, I was struck by the range of characters who lived and died from the rampant virus. Along with paupers, court jesters and courtesans, there were knights, royalty and esteemed church leaders.

Similarly, as our COVID-19 pandemic has proven, there are no social barriers to this devastating and sometimes lethal scourge. Among those infected are royals, politicians, movie stars, musicians, TV anchors, athletes, doctors and nurses, along with factory and

food service workers and prisoners.

Yet these coronavirus victims are not the only people confined to their homes or hospitals. The majority of us are stuck at home, missing the camaraderie and the hyper-connectedness of group activities, including sporting and musical events, and in my case, museum and gallery openings and art fairs.

As Jason Farago wrote in the *New York Times* on March 25, "No museums, no galleries, no fairs, no art schools; no openings, no studio visits, no arguing over beers, no gauche private-jet partnerships ... the world of contemporary art went from a reverberant global network to a ghost town, sheltering in place as the coronavirus endangers our cities and our livelihoods."

I look out my windows at the flourishing spring, at the proliferating wildflowers, seeing the world through the newly crystalline air, now relatively unbesmirched

by pollution. Yet not far from my windows, there lurk germs that could make me very sick, or perhaps kill me.

Sitting in my idyllic environment, taking walks around my neighborhood, seeing people walking, running, riding bikes, walking dogs, enjoying themselves, I think about the 1959 film, *On the Beach*, starring Gregory Peck, Tony Perkins and Ava Gardner. The movie, set in Australia during a global nuclear war, depicts local residents who acknowledge that their bucolic island is the only remaining place on Earth not yet affected by the nuclear fallout. Yet as these citizens try to behave normally, they know that the fallout will reach their island within a few months, and will ultimately destroy them all.

I follow the news with great intensity, often feeling astonished about the growing numbers of cases and



OPPOSITE PAGE: ART BY NATASHA SHORO

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: "SPRING BREEZE", "ILLUMINATE" AND "SUPERBLOOM" COURTESY OF NATASHA SHORO

ABOVE: ART BY KATHERINA OLSCHBAUR

FROM THE SERIES "DIRTY ELEMENTS" COURTESY OF UNIVERSITY ART GALLERIES, UC IRVINE

deaths from the coronavirus pandemic. I wonder if the virus will eventually reach me, my friends or acquaintances, just as nuclear fallout was heading toward the players in *On the Beach*. Videos from that film's final scene depict a city street devoid of people, while a single piece of paper is blown about. Likewise, news anchor Brian Williams broadcasts pictures of Times Square, now mostly devoid of people.

When I leave my neighborhood, I am struck by the relative absence of cars on the road and people on the sidewalks. I drive on Pacific Coast Highway and see stores, art galleries, car dealerships all lit up. Yet their doors are shut as their businesses have come to a standstill. These scenes remind me of the eerie mid-century art by surrealists Max Ernst, Salvador Dalí, René Magritte and others who depicted a strange, elusive and discomforting world.

As an art journalist, I relished attending art exhibition openings, meeting with artists, curators and art administrators. So much so that today I feel bereft by the stay-at-home orders (although I understand their purpose). I sit in my home at the top of a canyon in Laguna Beach with fond memories of my recent dialogues and interactions with artists and curators. I also think about the many exhibitions I have toured in the last year in venues throughout this country and beyond, and I reflect on the joy of viewing those art

shows and the many exquisite pieces within them.

While there are numerous opportunities to look at art online, seeing the work digitally does not replace the sensation of seeing the tangible art pieces, of vicariously feeling the energy, drive and intent of the artists.

Looking back over just the last year, I have published nearly four dozen art-related articles, many of them for the Irvine Weekly. Among the art that I've written about for this paper, there is the magnificent abstract expressionist work by Natasha Shoro, the oil and watercolor landscape style paintings of Paul Gavin, created during the last years of the El Toro Air Show, the sensual and erotic paintings of Austrian artist Katherina Olschbaur, and the classic and contemporary photography of octogenarian John Upton.

As an art writer, I look forward to picking up where I left off a few months ago. I also realize that the world I have known will be dramatically different when we recover from this plague and resulting economic downturn. I wonder how the many museums and galleries I have visited will fare – or if they will even exist – once we return to a so-called normal state.

As an editor I work with remarked recently, we are in a new cultural paradigm. While he didn't say what that new paradigm is, he alluded to the fact that during these shut-in times, art writers might expand their horizons and write about topics that ignite their

passions.

While my passions are many, I often find myself looking beyond the immediacy of the art I am writing about and the specific situations that I am in, to a larger world view. I recall seeing an exhibition last year at the Baltimore Museum of Art, titled "Monsters and Myths: Surrealism and War in the 1930s and 1940s." This show of work by artists including Dalí, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst and Andre Masson, was based on the idea that monstrosities in the real world bred monsters in a variety of art forms, producing work of exceptional creativity.

This pandemic – and the resulting bodily disengagement and political situation – is the worst nationwide and worldwide crisis I have experienced. Dialoguing with a group of artists recently on Zoom, I expressed this opinion, while alluding to the current relevance of the Monsters and Myths Surrealism exhibition I saw last year. As most of the artists agreed with my assessment, I expect that when this pandemic is over, we will discover that people in the art world have been producing work that not only expresses the era we are living in, but – as with the surrealist movement – have produced outstanding art pieces. I look forward to seeing this work and writing about it.



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## THREE BILLS TO ASSIST MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN COMBATING THE CORONAVIRUS

**WE MUST ENSURE RED TAPE DOESN'T RESTRICT THOSE WHO HELP CALIFORNIANS DURING THE CRISIS.**

BY: JOHN M.W. MOORLACH

**M**edical devices stand in the front ranks of the fight against the coronavirus. For example, the FDA just approved a new process to sterilize and reuse surgical masks developed by Advanced Sterilization Products of Irvine.

I'm proud to say what is widely considered the medical devices capital of the world is in my 37th District of the California Senate, especially Irvine. Such are the benefits of attracting a University of California campus to the area.

In recent years, I've had the opportunity to tour some impressive facilities. Edwards Lifesciences' heart valves, made from animal tissue, simply are amazing.

Allergan also makes some remarkable medical devices, as well as such pharmaceuticals as Botox, which aside from its cosmetic uses also can treat migraines, severe neck spasms and abnormal heartbeats.

I also toured UCI MIND's Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. It was espe-

cially poignant, because at the time, my late father was suffering from that ailment.

I bring this up because three bills I've authored would help these and other medical companies and research centers.

Senate Bill 990 is the AB 5 Emergency Suspension Act. AB 5 is the controversial bill that put severe restrictions on the independent contractor and gig economy. SB 990 would suspend it until 2022, by which time the coronavirus epidemic

should be over with. AB 5's full effects then could be analyzed and debated in a more neutral environment.

SB 990 would help Irvine medical device companies because, like most parts of the general economy, they depend on independent contractors. For example, such companies might need temporary translators for the exports of their devices to foreign markets. AB 5 could force the companies to hire translators full time, raising costs and restricting the translators' own freedoms to work as they please.

Continuing higher costs imposed by Sacramento could make these great local medical companies consider moving to a more business-friendly state.

Senate Bill 1053 would enter California into the Nurse Licensure Compact (NLC), an interstate agreement that provides licensing reciprocity for registered nurses.

Currently, nurses who move here from other states have to wait 10 to 12 weeks for a permanent license to practice.

RNs obviously are needed to help install and maintain medical devices. SB 1053 would make it easier for fully licensed RNs from other states to come here and work right away. Moreover, many nurses are married to military personnel stationed here temporarily, because the military commonly shifts troops to new assignments every few years. Such nurses also would be able to work right away in California.

Senate Bill 1054 is the Physical Therapist Licensure Compact (PT Compact). Those recovering from the coronavirus will be needing physical therapists, including help with adapting to the use of new medical devices. SB 1054 would allow physical therapists who are fully licensed in other states to come here and start practicing right away.

The Assembly already has reconvened and the state Senate soon will do so as well for a shortened session. These three bills deserve to gain bipartisan support and become law. They are directly related to fighting the coronavirus – and California's recovery from it.

Science is the key to our fightback against the coronavirus. Which is why the politics must be correct to help the scientists – and keep them right here in Orange County.

*John M.W. Moorlach, R-Costa Mesa, represents the 37th District in the California Senate.*



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WESTWORLD - HBO

## REVIEW: HBO'S *WESTWORLD* JUMPED THE HORSE WITH SEASON 3

**POOR TIMING AND A DEPARTURE FROM WHAT MADE THE SHOW GREAT HAMPER LATEST SEASON.**

BY: ERIN MAXWELL

When HBO's fire-breathing juggernaut *Game of Thrones* came to an end, the cable giant went looking for a big-budget fantasy to lure in new audiences. Thanks to creators Lisa Joy and Jonathan Nolan, the malicious machines of Michael Crichton's novel *Westworld* found a new lease on life as a series hoping to fill the void. For two years the mini-series provided a theme park of violent delights and mysteries to solve, even as the story evolved past the pages of Crichton's source material. The saga of robotic playthings used for man's darkest desires and their android uprising offered a new take on traditional ideas of good versus evil, and these themes have remained in its third season. But fans have been mixed as it's been unfolding the past few months and moved away from its original setting.

The latest chapter began with one-time rancher's daughter-turned-militant robot's rights advocate Dolores Abernathy (Evan Rachel Wood) escaping the park with a handful of pearls – a collection of robotic souls that contains the personality and heart of me-

chanical beings. From those pearls, she set off to build an army that would wage war to remove the true plague: mankind. Aiming to stop her is Bernard (Jeffrey Wright), a mechanical copy of her former creator Arnold who fights for the side of man, and Maeve (Thandi Newton), a Wild West madam searching for her daughter. And while Bernard and Maeve stand as her foils, Dolores finds allies in the forms of Charlotte Hale (Tessa Thompson), the executive director of the board of Delos Destinations, and former soldier Caleb (Aaron Paul), along with a few other handcrafted comrades.

For the first two seasons and a handful of episodes in the third season, the end of humanity had never been so fun. Right out of the gate, *Westworld* was a compelling show filled with misdirections and mind fucks galore. Time jumps, unreliable narrators and hidden Easter eggs were all part of the game it played on the viewer. It remained a wild ride throughout the second season as the androids began their systematic slaughter of mankind.

But as season 3 took the West out of *Westworld* and shifted away from the Wild West into the real

world – or a version of the world that the show wants us to believe is real – it lost its wonder. The spurs and horses of the first two seasons have been traded in for righteousness and Big Brother allegories, and it's just not as good.

The season 3 finale recently aired – a few episodes shorter than prior seasons – yet it had already overstayed its welcome. The series is still stunning and the performances are still first rate, but the storyline has been a mess. By eliminating a majority of the robots and moving the story outside of the park, the show has ignored previous dynamics that enriched the whole premise.

Instead of saloons, gun fights and unconventional storylines, this season focuses on the mythos and technology aspects, and the former are missed. This turn might be unwelcome at any time for a show like this, but they are especially so given the new normal. During pandemic, the last thing audiences need is be reminded how everyone and everything in this world sucks. What we need is hope and a little fun. What *Westworld* gave us was an ill-timed morality lesson.

# IRVINE WEEKLY'S (STREAMING) MOVIE GUIDE

## EXTRACTION, TROLLS, WE SUMMON THE DARKNESS AND MORE.

BY: CHUCK WILSON AND LINA LECARO

**I**rvine Weekly's (Streaming) Movie Guide is your look at the hottest films available on your TV sets and electronic devices – from indie art house gems to popcorn-perfect blockbusters to new movies garnering buzz that moved from theaters to digital Video on Demand (VOD) and streaming subscription services. Check this guide regularly as you shelter at home during the pandemic.

### Extraction (Netflix)

Stop the presses ... Netflix has finally produced an action movie worth watching. **Extraction** stars Chris Hemsworth as a sad-eyed mercenary hired to rescue the kidnapped teenage son (Rudhraksh Jaiswal) of a Bangladesh drug lord. Things don't go according to plan, prompting a spectacular 12-minute one-shot action sequence reportedly filmed with a handheld camera strapped to the chest of stunt coordinator-turned-director Sam Hargrave. Written by **Avengers** director Joe Russo, **Extraction** proves itself memorable not for its crazy action but for the poignant chemistry between Hemsworth and Jaiswal. On set, Hemsworth is said to have referred to Jaiswal as "the little legend." It's easy to see why. **—Chuck Wilson**

### Abe (VOD)

It's summer in Brooklyn and 12-year-old Abe (**Noah Schnapp**) is secretly working as an apprentice for a Brazilian chef (Seu Jorge) whose lessons in fusion Abe hopes to apply to his religiously diverse, emotionally fractured family. A low-key charmer rich in complex themes and delectable-looking food, **Abe** is the perfect movie to watch alongside your favorite young foodie. **—CW**

### Circus of Books (Netflix)

For decades, the Circus of Books

stores in West Hollywood and Silverlake weren't just a place to buy porn and poppers, they were a safe harbor for gay men still nervous about being themselves. Filmmaker Rachel Mason's parents, Karen and Barry, owned the shops, and in a Netflix documentary of particular interest to Angelenos, tracks her folk's battles against censorship and homophobia, even as they struggled to reconcile their son's emerging sexuality. Narratively, **Circus of Books** moves in fits and starts, but the story of how the Masons stumbled into the porn biz is fascinating – it's easy to imagine executive producer Ryan Murphy making the Masons the heroes of a future miniseries. **—CW**

### Sea Fever (VOD)

There's a monster under the boat! Well, isn't there always? The squid-like creature that attaches itself to an Irish fishing trawler in Neasa Hardiman's impressive debut feature soon has the crew wondering which of them have been infected with its body-exploding parasites. While the setup is familiar, a gifted cast, led by Dougray Scott, Connie Neilsen and newcomer Hermione Cornfield, and a script more interested in character than gross-out scares – there's one really good one – make this a monster movie with unexpected (wait for it) depth. **—CW**

### Selah and the Spades (Amazon Prime Video)

Five social factions rule the illicit goings-on at the Haldwell Prep School, including the Spades, the school's drug and booze running posse, led by Selah (Lovie Simone), a brilliant, beautiful senior looking for her successor. Enter Paloma (Celeste O'Connor), a socially ambitious photographer flattered by Selah's attentions but soon overwhelmed by the labyrinthine turns of prep school villainy. For her virtuoso debut feature,

writer-director Tayarisha Poe has made a film that's funny and sexy, angry and complicated, and most wonderfully, proudly ferocious. **—CW**

### Stray Dolls (VOD)

In upstate New York, Riz (Geetanjali Thapa), an undocumented Indian immigrant, is ensnared by Una (Cynthia Nixon), a motel owner who promises her papers in exchange for work. A beat later, Riz is in deep with fellow maid, Dallas (Olivia DeJonge), who becomes both her best friend and biggest danger point, in ways that feel true to the complexities of a friendship built in duress. First-time writer-director Sonejuhi Sinha is frustratingly skimpy on plot specifics but her resourceful young leads, buoyed by the ever-amazing Nixon, are captivating. It's been a week since I saw **Stray Dolls**, and I'm still worried about Riz. **—CW**

### Straight Up (Outfest On Demand)

**Straight Up** is the pitch perfect debut of writer-director James Sweeney, who also stars as Todd, a young Asian-American coder who's cool with being gay except for the sex part – he's not keen on bodily functions. Feeling experimental, he begins a friendship/relationship with Rory (Katie Findlay), an actress as whip-smart as Todd and just as lonely (but not quite willing to admit it). These two talk at warp speed, a trait that might be annoying if their banter weren't so funny and revealing. Romantically subversive in ways that feel true to the current moment, **Straight Up** may well become an era-defining classic. **—CW**

### And Then We Danced (Outfest On Demand)

Backdropped by Tbilisi, Georgia, and taking place in the dance world, this evocative film explores the nature of dedication and desire, and how one can influence the other. Merab, a competitive dancer who has been training for years with his partner for a spot in the National Georgian Ensemble, finds himself grappling with conflicted emotions when Irakli, a new male dancer enters his world. Delving into the hyper-conservative confines of Georgian society, the film aims to explore LGBTQ+ struggles in a personal way while providing insight into the history and modern culture in a part of the world that is not well known beyond its surrounding regions. **—Lina Lecaro**

### We Summon The Darkness (VOD)

After rocking out at a heavy metal concert, three stud & leather-clad gal pals invite some dudes to party at the estate where one of them lives – owned by her preacher dad (Johnny Knoxville). When the soiree turns deadly, all signs point to Satan, but the true villains are not who you'd expect. This fun little horror film will satisfy fans of menacing movie fare and metal music alike. Director Marc Meyers' (**My Friend Dahmer**) takes on old school slasher movies shamelessly referencing the creepster cliches we'd expect from a film of this kind, but it manages to feel somewhat fresh thanks to the performances and in-on-the-joke dialog. **—LL**

### Trolls World Tour (VOD)

There's a lot to absorb in the new **Trolls** flick starring Anna Kendrick and Justin Timberlake, but the takeaway seems to be something about how music divides us and rock n' rollers would take over the world if they could. Of course, pop music, as sung by Kendrick's lead character Princess Poppy, rules the airwaves, and in the end, it does here as well, but the technicolored "tour" that ensues aims to provide a taste of different Troll music types – funk, classical, county, techno and even yodeling – along the way. There's some fun cameos – Ozzy Osbourne as the evil rock princess troll Barb's dad, and George Clinton and Mary J. Blige as the funk king and queen – but the star here is the eye candy animation. Even more than the original, **Trolls World Tour**, is a rainbow-swathed, glitter-drenched escape from reality, and it provides the full-on fantastical at-home experience that many families are probably craving right now. Universal Pictures was forced to cancel the theatrical release and premiered it on demand instead, making it one of the first major films to bypass theaters due to the coronavirus. **—LL**

**Also recommended (VOD & subscription):** The Beastie Boys Movie (Apple TV+); The Wiloughbys (Netflix); Love Wedding Repeat (Netflix); The Roads Not Taken; The Main Event; Les Misérables; Endings Beginnings; Bad Therapy; Y Còmo Es Él; Never Rarely Sometimes Always; The Quarry; Martin Eden; Riding High; Party Hard Die Young; The Lost Husband; Ray & Liz.



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