

IRVINE

WEEKLY

JULY 1, 2022 • VOL. 4 • NO. 8

THE FUTURE OF NFTS

IS FEMALE, TOO

BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT



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JULY 1, 2022 NO. 8

# CONTENTS

## NEWS: 3

Wild Rivers at the Great Park nears Grand Opening.  
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

## COMMUNITY: 4

David Meltzer's pursuit of happiness.  
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

## NEWS: 5

City Council agree to audit of OC Power Authority.  
BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

## MUSIC: 6

Your guide to local concerts in July.  
BY PAUL ROGERS

## CULTURE: 8

The dawn of Rollpocalypse at Etnies Skatepark.  
BY SCOTT FEINBLATT

## ARTS: 9

"Shared Light" Exhibition at the Great Park.  
BY LIZ GOLDNER

## ARTS: 10

The future of NFTs is female.  
BY SHANA NYS DAMBROT

## ENTERTAINMENT: 12

Reviews of Lightyear and Elvis.  
BY CHAD BYRNES AND ERIN MAXWELL

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# WILD RIVERS FLOATS MID-JULY GRAND OPENING

**THE IRVINE-BASED WILD RIVERS WATER PARK BROKE GROUND IN EARLY JULY LAST SUMMER AND WILL SOON BE LOOKING TO FILL THE \$60 MILLION PROJECT WITH 900,000 GALLONS OF WATER.**

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



**W**hile the Irvine community has been anticipating the return of Wild Rivers this summer, a previously reported opening date of June 20 has come and gone. However, Wild Rivers has confirmed a soft opening date of July 10.

In a phone conversation with Irvine Weekly, Wild Rivers owner Mike Riedel explained that regardless of when an opening date would occur, the idea has

always been to open gradually, with a soft opening first, followed by a Grand Opening event in the subsequent weeks.

"We're going to do a grand opening, but it's not going to be our first operating day. It'll probably be a couple of weeks after," Riedel said. "We'll be able to take the time to put together a nice opening day event for our everybody – give our investors, and the banks, and community leaders and press ample time to make the arrangements to come out."

With the grand opening of "Wild Rivers 2.0" a few weeks away, Riedel was enthusiastic to share more details about what guests can expect. In terms of food, crowds can expect the general hot dogs, hamburgers and cheeseburgers and a few other surprises. Riedel said all food will be served on a grab-and-go basis.

"They're going out with a rather large menu of the typical items you would expect – hamburgers, hot dogs, pizza,

chicken sandwiches," he said. "There are a few surprises – I think I saw a pulled pork sandwich. So, we'll see how all those go over, and make adjustments to the menu as people order, or don't order, certain things."

Additionally, of-age guests will be happy to know that Wild Rivers will also be hosting a full bar – not just beer and wine – which is called the Mustang Bar, located in between the Lazy River and the Wave Pool.

"Alcohol will also be served in the private cabana areas as well," Riedel said.

Riedel has previously emphasized that the Water Park would not open until it could provide a well-rounded experience, even if it was not fully completed.

"We're not going to open unless we have almost all of the rides available. We know that the little-kiddie slides are probably not going to be ready on the 20th. But we have an area for little kids," he said. "But it's definitely not going to be like we open and there are two rides open. Our goal is to deliver everything we can. We're not going to deliver a substandard project."

"It's a mad scramble, the whole thing has been extremely challenging," he continued. "When I walk through the park with my general manager – we just look at the park and go, 'This is so amazing.' We're so proud of the product that we're bringing out there, I can't even express it."

Last year, Riedel spoke with Irvine Weekly, admitting that acquiring the necessary funding was a "rocky road." While the project was supposed to break ground in April 2021, the official groundbreaking took place on July 7 and was expected to take 12 to 13 months to complete.

Now, as crews prepare for the approximate 900,000-gallon initial fill, Riedel reflected on aspects of the park he's most impressed with.

"What I find really unique about the new location is the homage that the park pays to the El Toro Marine Base that it once was. When you walk up to the main gate, you immediately realize that it looks like a hangar," he said. "The walkway itself is a runway, so little things like that, and the attractions are made to play off the El Toro base."

## COMMUNITY

## DAVID MELTZER'S PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

**AS CEO AND FOUNDER OF THE IRVINE-BASED DAVID MELTZER ENTERPRISES, DAVID MELTZER HAS SPENT HIS LIFE COACHING OTHERS ON HOW TO MANAGE SUCCESS.**

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

David Meltzer is an entrepreneurial mastermind and spends his time working to educate and empower others, with the ultimate goal of bringing happiness to one billion people. Meltzer's history is unique. Early on Meltzer worked for well-known sports agent Leigh Steinberg – the real-life inspiration for the movie *Jerry Maguire*. However, Meltzer infamously built – and lost – a \$120 million portfolio, which he has publicly credited losing because he surrounded himself with ego.

Now, in an effort to serve happiness to one billion, Meltzer operates by way of speaking engagements, social media personality and TV host, providing his perspective and helping other entrepreneurs find their vision.

During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, his podcast "The Playbook" helped anchor a few streaming opportunities, specifically BloombergTV's "2 Minute Drill" and Apple TV's "Office Hours", which just launched its second season.

On the business-style gameshow *2 Minute Drill*, now filming Season 4, more than \$50,000 in prizes are up for grabs to an entrepreneur who can sell the best idea to Meltzer and his accompanying judges.

Thanks to platforms like these, Meltzer's entrepreneurial tenacity is put on display for audiences nationwide. And, with 469,000 followers on Instagram alone, it's safe to say people are tuning in.

Ironically, within the hours of social media edits, Meltzer poignantly quotes, "Money doesn't buy happiness – it doesn't buy love – but it allows us to shop. And



if you shop for the right things, I promise you'll be happy."

Irvine Weekly caught up with Meltzer to get an inside look at how his routines and business acumen have led him to become one of the biggest names in business coaching, investing and sports agency expertise.

As CEO and founder of the Irvine-based David Meltzer Enterprises, Meltzer is in the constant pursuit of inspiration. Emphasizing the importance of routine, Meltzer wants his peers to understand the importance of being "adaptive" when it comes to maintaining those routine activities day in and day out.

"I teach that people need to have two routines in their life. One of these routines should be a set-in-stone schedule. It should be considered as your 'normal' daily routine. The tasks that are a part of this routine would be activities that would take place in an everyday schedule such as waking up, family time, work time, exercise," he said. "The second routine is

your 'adaptable' routine. This is the routine you use when you are traveling, you have family or friends visiting, or something else that disrupts your 'set in stone' routine."

From the outside looking in, Meltzer might give the impression that he has all the answers, but he admits it wasn't always the case.

"There was a time where I thought I knew all the answers," Meltzer jokes. "It wasn't until I learned that everything in the universe vibrates and the truth is what vibrates the fastest that I decide to pursue truth and the real answers."

Whether it's coaching billionaires or explaining how he can sell you an ink pen for \$1 million, Meltzer's delivery always looks effortless.

In order to prepare for these high intensity situations, Meltzer says he needs to get in the zone both mentally and physically. Crediting his ego-based consciousness, Meltzer often relies on meditative practices that block out fear and identify goals.

"I try to spend minutes and moments in ego-based consciousness, and I have a practice for the times when I feel off, called 'stop, drop, and roll.' When I identify fears, I stop feeding into them," he said. "Next, I use some basic breathing techniques to help me drop down to my 'center' or baseline. From there, I 'roll' and take some action that has me moving in a

positive direction, rather than remaining stuck in a place of fear."

From Meltzer's perspective, genuine happiness comes from the enjoyment from working toward maximum potential. While he admits this philosophy comes from an unfortunate experience, it helped him institute a glass-half-full mentality.

"The origins of my mission are rather unfortunate," he said. "After learning that my daughter's friend committed suicide. As someone who 'had everything' in life, I wanted to figure out why that could happen. I started researching suicide and realized there was an epidemic of people who are unhappy. From there, I started delving into the power of happiness, looking at it from both the spiritual and pragmatic side."

Meltzer is vocal about his past, admitting to massive financial gains and swallowing unprecedented loss. When asked what the David Meltzer of today would say to his 18-year-old self, Meltzer said he would opt for help.

"Ask for help," Meltzer said. "I lived in arrogant ignorance for so long, but reality is that you don't know what you don't know. The fastest way to get unstuck or to accelerate in your life or business is to find someone that already sits in the situation you want to be in and ask for help or directions."

For now, Meltzer will continue on with his mission of delivering happiness, adding that he will always adapt to focus on his family and friends while being a student of his calendar. Currently filming the second season of Apple TV's *Office Hours*, Meltzer plans on featuring the trials and tribulations of celebrities, actors and entertainers dishing on their experiences with success and failure, which he hopes can empower others.

"I wanted to know what it would take to create a collective consciousness of happiness. I knew that I could at least empower a thousand people with content from my books, coaching, podcasts, shows, and all the things that I've been blessed to do to make money and help people have fun," he said. "And if I can empower them to not only be happy themselves, but empower others to be happy, that is something we can scale. 1,000 people times 1,000 people times 1,000 is a billion."

# IRVINE CITY COUNCIL AGREES TO AUDIT OF OC POWER AUTHORITY

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

On Tuesday, June 14, the Irvine City Council, with the absence of council member Mike Carroll, voted unanimously to pursue an audit of the Orange County Power Authority. With the audit, council members say they hope to find answers to what members cite as mounting public concern that the agency is not being fully transparent with its finances.

The aspect of transparency within OCPA is not just public-facing, according to a May 31 memo. A whistleblower complaint alleges transparency issues are also occurring internally and could be in violation of the Brown Act.

The memo, included in the June 14 council agenda, states that OCPA CEO Brian Probolsky has acquired private counsel to represent him in a lawsuit in which he claims he is being unfairly ousted from his position by members of OCPA's Board of Directors.

Specifically, in a whistleblower complaint, Probolsky states that OCPA directors Mike Posey and Dan Kalmick, who also serve on the Huntington Beach City Council, "have allegedly conspired together to exert inappropriate influence over the Orange County Power Authority, to enrich themselves at the expense of the taxpayers."

A letter from Probolsky's counsel Leneck, Pourfallah & Associates details the specific Brown Act violations that the memo alleges occurred during the OCPA Board of Directors meeting on May 17.

During the May 17 meeting, Posey resigned his seat with the OCPA and appointed fellow Huntington Beach council member Kalmick. However, the complaint alleges that the move of replacing council members without



properly notifying the public of such a change is in violation of the Brown Act.

"By characterizing the agenda item as a re-appointment, rather than a new appointment, the City not only misled the public but also lacked the legal authority under the Brown Act to deviate from this action when roles were swapped by Posey and Kalmick, as no re-appointment of a former board member occurred. Ultimately, the public was deprived of ample time to anticipate Posey and Kalmick's plot to swap roles, which at a minimum, is a violation of the state's open meeting law," the letter states.

The complaint also alleges that OCPA directors conspired together through a means of "daisy chain" phone calls allegedly to "evade the public." Additionally, the complaint states that Kalmick "attempted to coordinate official government action outside of a properly noticed meeting," by attempting to gather support for the removal of Probolsky from his position within OCPA.

The June 14 special item, brought forth by Irvine Councilmember Larry Agran and seconded by Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan, included several different points of inquiry including naming the "other account types OCPA is serving (e.g. residential customers) and the number of those customers OCPA is serving." Agran also requested information on

the number of commercial customers that opted out of OCPA services.

Agran admitted he has been adamant about finding answers to the questions he has presented in the June 14 memo. In fact, Agran also points out in the memo that his public information requests from March 24 have still not been answered.

Prior to the discussion among council members, Khan, who also serves on the OCPA Board of Directors, gave some insight into several different aspects of questioning, also pointing out that OCPA has not provided power to residential customers at this time.

"As the only city that has loaned the start-up cost for the OCPA, I think it's very important that there be transparency, and agree with the financial audit of the organization," she said. "OCPA is not currently serving any residential customers, so there is no data. Information is not available."

Khan added that answers to these questions can be found on the OCPA website, and that OCPA reported that 4% of commercial customers opted out of OCPA's initial launch and that 70% of those commercial accounts opted into the 100% renewable energy tier.

"Again, details of this are available in the slides and presentation of OCPA's last meeting," she said. "Everyone is welcome to look that up."

In his opening statements, Agran explained that he was desperate for the answers surrounding several aspects of OCPA operations, including naming staff, board of directors, and identifying how many customers opted out or opted down in service "and OCPA's accompanying revenue losses."

Agran presented a motion that would direct the city manager to facilitate the commencement of an independent comprehensive forensic audit of the Orange County Power Authority, and directed the city to retain special legal counsel and other appropriate specialists in order to "advise and assist the city in determining the near term viability of the OCPA as a power purchasing entity."

Irvine City Councilmember Anthony Kuo said he has heard from both the public and the press regarding concerns that information requests about the OCPA are not being responded to. "I have heard both anecdotally, and through public testimony, that people's public request acts are not being responded to. I hear from others that are involved that they are being responded to," he said. "They're either being responded to in a legal way or they're not – I would like for us, with association for this review, to look at how these requests are being responded to."

Alternatively, Kuo said he received answers to various questions regarding OCPA in his email, 30 minutes after the special meeting started.

"I would say as a matter of criticism, when this council or members asks questions and get the answer 30 minutes after our meeting starts, it makes it a little bit challenging to receive those answers and process them in a thoughtful way."

Kim, who seconded Agran's motion, also shared Kuo's criticism of receiving information after the meeting began.

"I do support doing whatever we can to reduce our impact on the climate, to help build a more sustainable future for not only ourselves, but our children and our grandchildren," she said. "I'm hearing one group that wants to blow this all up, on the other hand, there are people striving for climate resiliency."

# MUSIC

## IRVINE WEEKLY'S JULY CONCERT GUIDE

While the concert business has not quite returned to pre-pandemic "normal," it is recently showing serious signs of coming off life support. Fewer tours are being cancelled or postponed and, in turn, the listening public is regaining confidence in purchasing advance tickets or heading out night-of-show.

The pandemic that has so divided us has also, somewhat ironically, heightened our rediscovered joy in togetherness. Because one small silver lining of live music's lockdown blues is a renewed sense of appreciation for concerts among even (or perhaps especially) the most seasoned fans which, in turn, has infused crowds with a revived sense of community and camaraderie. There's a palpable sense of how much we've missed not just the artists and their music, but also the whole concert ritual and the instinctively human reassurance of being in a room filled with strangers, but strangers with whom we have at least one shared passion.

Nowhere is this more evident than in the traditional music hotbed of Orange County, where venues of all sizes in and around Irvine are enjoying a much-delayed sigh of relief and outpouring of fervor for the visceral and very personal pleasures of live performances.

### **HALSEY** FivePoint Amphitheatre, Irvine

**Saturday, July 9**

New Jersey songwriter/chanteuse Halsey is following an arc that's become familiar amongst successful pop artists: reaching a point of utterly intentional commercial comfort where they can afford to start taking risks and putting more of themselves into their music. In Halsey's case this meant, after her first three pop-EDM albums were huge hits, teaming with Nine Inch Nails' Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross on the darker, edgier *If I Can't*



*Have Love, I Want Power* last year. A concept album exploring the joys and otherwise of pregnancy and motherhood, the almost recklessly ambitious *If I Can't Have Love* is not, despite the NiN collab, remotely industrial (unless you count Willy Wonka's factory). Instead, it's an eminently listenable collection from an artist who, cognizant of being at a career and creative crossroads, is making a very credible grab for longevity.

### **OC FAIR: KOOL & THE GANG, THE FAMILY STONE** Pacific Amphitheatre, Costa Mesa

**Friday, July 15**

Nearly 60 years into their career and with two original members still aboard, *Kool & The Gang's* taut, funk- and jazz-inflected R&B is archetypal county fair fare: sunny, household-name hits like "Celebration," "Get Down On It," and "Ladies Night" that most listeners of a certain age can sing along with and are 100% compatible with outdoor summer vibing. At least a dozen strong and still led by bassist Robert "Kool" Bell, *Kool & The Gang* lives up to its name and, while their heyday was a short-lived collab with Brazilian producer Eumir Deodato at the turn of the 1980s

that spawned all of the aforementioned hits, they still bring it, synchronized dance moves 'n all. The Family Stone is built around founding Sly & The Family Stone saxophonist Jerry Martini and Sly Stone's daughter Phunne Stone. Their renditions of original Family Stone hits like "Everyday People" and "I Want to Take You Higher" will likely find a receptive audience with OC's *Kool & The Gang* fans.

### **REO SPEEDWAGON, LOVERBOY, STYX** FivePoint Amphitheatre, Irvine

**Saturday, July 16**

A soft rock, soft-focus fantasy, this triple serving of ultra-anthem cheese will have phones in the air quicker than a schoolyard brawl. Almost synonymous with guilty-pleasure nostalgia for an entire American generation, the throughline of the night is serious songcraft and virtuoso delivery that formed the soundtrack to millions of fumbling romances, high school ragers, and carefree young lives. *REO Speedwagon's* Reagan-era ubiquity is hard to exaggerate, with their *Hi Infidelity* opus alone spawning cassette classics like "Keep On Loving You" and "Take It On the Run" on its way to becoming the best-selling album of '81. Also from Illinois, *Styx* flirt with more progressive adult-oriented rock, incorporating heftier guitars and the synths that were making themselves heard during the band's early '80s zenith, but always strictly in service to the song. It's telling that Canada's *Loverboy*, a band that has sold more than 20 million albums, is only the opener on this no-filler throwback mega-bill.

### **MAVERICK CITY MUSIC x KIRK FRANKLIN** FivePoint Amphitheatre, Irvine

**Saturday, July 23**

In March, award-winning worship collective *Maverick City Music* and multiple GRAMMY recipient *Kirk Franklin* teamed up for a collaborative live album called *Kingdom Book One*. What's unusual about this new release is its being recorded at a Level 5 security prison in Florida with some 1,300 inmates participating. The idea is to spotlight the injustices, including racial disparities, of mass incarceration in America. Despite only debuting in 2019, Atlanta's *Maverick City Music* has already released a string of big-selling albums and EPs, received a GRAMMY nomination, and won a Billboard Music Award for last year's *Maverick City Vol. 3 Part 1*. The multi-talented Franklin – a choir director, gospel singer, dancer, songwriter, and author – has won an incredible 16 GRAMMY Awards over the past quarter-century. The ongoing *Kingdom Tour* has already shattered attendance records for Christian music/Gospel tours, with more than 50,000 fans attending its first four dates.

### **OC FAIR: THE CURED (tribute to The Cure)** The Hangar, Costa Mesa

**Wednesday, July 27**

It speaks volumes for *The Cure's* popularity and longevity that not only are there acts paying tribute to them the world over, but some of these "clones" have themselves become minor institutions. Take San Diego's *The Cured*, who've performed hundreds of shows since their 2004 formation, and have even had *The Cure's* original drummer, *Lol Tolhurst*, sit in with them. *The Cured* stick to their almost-name-sake's 1980s heyday, from the early sparse melodicism of "Boys Don't Cry" and ultra-atmospheric "A Forest," to huge later hits like "Lovesong" and "Fascination Street." They're a Party City take on their idols, relying on Halloween wigs to achieve a squinting likeness and a little over-the-top on the tortured English accent, but present a musically solid homage. Sadly, this will be the farewell show for founding frontman *Zippy*, due to the lingering effects of a car accident three years ago. We wish him well.

# CULTURE:

## THE DAWN OF ROLLPOCALYPSE

BY SCOTT FEINBLATT



PHOTO BY SCOTT FEINBLATT

**H**istory was made in June when Community in Bowls (CIB) and Etnies Skatepark of Lake Forest partnered to host their first transition skating competition. While transition skating, which involves using ramps and other obstacles to achieve acrobatic (and frequently aerial) maneuvering, is often associated with skateboarding, this inaugural event summoned competitive roller skaters of varying levels from around the world.

Erica Vanstone (board member / part owner of CIB / event organizer) told Irvine Weekly how far and wide competitors had come from. “We had competitors come from as far away as Australia! Nationally, we had folks come in from Colorado, Oregon, Nevada. And the judging staff came from as far as NYC and Hawaii! Many skaters came with support from local skate shops like Pigeon’s Roller Skate Shop out of Long Beach, and some have national/inter-

national brands like Moxi Roller Skates, SI Helmets, and Triple 8.”

When asked the extent to which roller skate and roller skate accessory companies sponsored the competitors and the event, overall, Vanstone responded, “We couldn’t have had the event we did without our amazing sponsors! Not only did they contribute gear and swag to prizes, they also helped financially support the prizes for competitors.”

Three levels of skaters competed in two categories: Street and Bowl. For the Street category, each competitor took three turns on the street section of the skate park, which included sets of stairs, ramps, rails, boxes, etc. For each turn, the skater was given a couple of minutes to show their stuff while a panel of judges observed. For the Bowl category, the skaters were restricted to the confines of a concrete bowl, wherein they again had three turns to demonstrate their chops. Each turn in the bowl

lasted 45 seconds. In total, there were 62 competitors – 23 of which ran the street course and 44 of which skated the bowl category.

Most of the competitors and spectators were women, which is not surprising since CIB [which originally stood for “Chicks in Bowls”] was started as a means to give women the agency to show how badass they can be on wheels. However, since the organization is not gender exclusive, there was some variety in that regard within the competitions. In any event, the overall spirit of the competition was extremely positive and inclusive with the sentiments of support, encouragement, and fun dominating the park throughout the day.

Of course, in addition to the community aspect of Rollpocalypse, there were high levels of skill on display, and the showcase was quite spectacular. Vanstone explained, “One of our big goals for CIB was to create a judging and scoring system

for competitive events, and testing it was a big win for us at Rollpocalypse. Our Head of Judging, Nick Stewart, worked with judge Mary Smith, CIB founder Samara Pepperell, and me to build it. This weekend was our first live event use of our scoring rubric, which includes both objectively scored tricks and a subjective creative score for building lines.”

As to the success of the competitive / scoring logistics, she added, “We had a few lags in the beginning, but the system smoothed out over time and was incredibly successful. And [I’d like to give] a huge shout out to our first judging team, which included some amazing skaters: Irene Ching (NYC), Mary Smith/Kid Ace (Buffalo, NY), Hayley Havick (San Diego), Swampy (LA), Tarah Bishop (Oakland), and Duke Rennie (CA). Our support staff was Leonette Miksis and Nica Umeda – an incredible math team! Since we introduced the system to the community, we’ve had multiple requests from events to use it, and now that we know it works well, we’re going to build out our use of it over time... And, huge thanks to Scott Stewart, the incredible staff at Etnies, and the City of Lake Forest. We couldn’t have done it without their generosity!”

In closing, Vanstone expressed what was evident from the electricity in the atmosphere. “I thought the event was a smashing success, and it was really validating to have so much support and encouragement from Etnies and the City of Lake Forest. When we first came to them with the event idea, they were pretty stoked, but I knew they didn’t have a clear idea of what the community brought to the table. I just knew the roller skating community was going to leave a big, positive impression on the park and with the city, and I think we achieved that.”

She added, “The COVID-19 pandemic saw significant growth in roller skating and particularly park and street skating. A few competitions happened elsewhere earlier this year, and they’ve all shown that the need and excitement is there for competition! You can expect CIB and our partners to work on creating a competition circuit as we move into 2023, and we were so excited to have Etnies and Lake Forest share their space with us for the first!”

# MOMENTS OF UNIVERSAL BEAUTY IN "SHARED LIGHT" EXHIBITION AT THE GREAT PARK

BY LIZ GOLDNER

Phillip K. Smith III's light-based public sculptures draw on elements of the Light and Space art movement, and on aspects of reflection, color, light and shadow, environment and change. They are installed throughout this country and beyond in outdoor landscapes, site-specific conditions, and as part of urban architecture. These groundbreaking works are inspired in part by Smith's Light and Space predecessors, including Robert Irwin and James Turrell. Three of Smith's recent sculptures can be viewed as maquettes at the Great Park Gallery.

The Light and Space movement, which originated in the 1960s, is Southern California's response to the minimalist art movement, popular at that time on the East Coast. But it is much more, as it focuses on depicting sensory phenomena, especially light. Materials include glass, neon, fluorescent lights, resin and cast acrylic. Fabrication methods include technologies of the engineering and aerospace industries.

Adam Sabolick, co-curator of the "Phillip K. Smith III: Shared Light" exhibition and gallery assistant, adds that the nearby UC Irvine art department hosted Light and Space artists as faculty and students in the 1960s and 70s. In addition to Irwin and Turrell, Larry Bell, Ron Davis, Tony De Lap, Joe Goode, John McCracken and others taught there, while several UCI students and teachers crafted artworks from that genre while studying and working there.

Smith explains, "I think that the Light and Space artists were all in search of a deeper understanding of perception, a more real experience. There was a search for truth through light, perception, site, material, manufactured product, paint, and composition."

He adds, "My 'Shared Light' exhibition focuses on the notion of art sited in the pub-

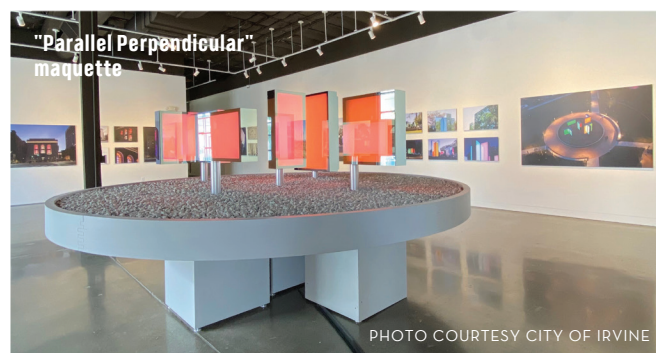


PHOTO COURTESY CITY OF IRVINE

lic realm. The greatest cities of the world have embraced the arts as emblems of their identity. Art in the public realm creates iconic visual experiences that positively bond people together around shared memories and shared spaces. The Great Park and Irvine is fertile ground for the siting of these kinds of influential, unifying art projects."

To create his many public art projects, Smith employs his artistic and architectural training, along with his understanding of technology, and his inquisitiveness about new processes and materials. Before building each installation, such as a large window display, he constructs a maquette – a smaller scale model of the piece. Three of his maquettes are displayed throughout the gallery.

Each maquette in the exhibition is accompanied by several photographs of the original installation by photographer Lance Gerber. These photos document the light-based works, along with their interplay with the surrounding environment. Two installations in the show are depicted only through the photos.

"I've been working with Lance since 2013," Smith explains. "He has photographed every single piece I've made. In my opinion, 99.99% of the world will view my work through photography and video. So the documentation of my work

has to be as good as the real thing. Working with Lance has been a fun, rewarding, ongoing conversation. He understands my intent as a light-based artist and knows precisely how I want to visually share my work

with the world."

The first maquette you will see at the Great Park is of the installation, Three Half Lozenges (2017-21) at the Newark (New Jersey) Museum of Art. The original piece with its multi-colored full-spectrum lighting is installed onto three historic double-height windows on the museum's façade. It is constructed with LED lighting, electronic components and unique color choreography. Exhibition didactics explain, "Shifting from linear to rectangular to lozenge within gradating and full fields of color, the three half lozenge-shaped windows operate as a monumental light-based triptych at the scale of architecture."

Across the country in West Hollywood, Parallel Perpendicular (2022), made of steel, glass, LED lighting, electronic components and unique color choreography, is composed of five freestanding parallel and perpendicular planes. They reflect the movement of the sun during the day; at night they become floating fields of color creating a constantly changing composition. The installation also reflects the surrounding trees, bushes, buildings and sky, often bathing them with colored lights. Walking around the magnificent maquette of this piece at the gallery enables viewers to become part of it, to see themselves and others in it through

various permutations and colors.

Also in the Southland, The Circle of Land and Sky as part of the 2017 exhibition, "Desert X," near Palm Desert, was composed of 300 mirror-polished upright reflectors. Emerging from the ground, angled at 10 degrees, the reflectors were placed in a large circle. They engaged and tracked the light, sky, mountains and atmosphere of the Sonoran surroundings as the light changed. This process was complemented by the viewers as they moved along and throughout the installation.

One of the more adventurous Smith installations is the Detroit Skybridge (2018), made of an existing skybridge, along with acrylic, aluminum, LED lighting, electronic components and unique color choreography. Connecting two important office buildings in downtown Detroit, Michigan, the 100-foot-long, 16th floor bridge is at night a scintillating multicolored work, composed of shifting gradients and moving planes of light, merging art with architecture, and available for all viewers to see.

In Milan, Italy, in the courtyard of the centuries-old Palazzo Isimbardi, Open Sky (2018) greets visitors. The multi-faceted semi-circular ring dominates the courtyard, mirroring the building's intricate floor, its 16th century architecture and the sky, while providing multiple reflections of visitors. Made of polished stainless steel, aluminum and concrete composite panels, it combines an abstract design with circular construction. It is in a constant state of flux, propelled by continual changes of light, day and evening, and by the viewers as they move along it. This installation's maquette reveals how majestic the original sculpture is.

Smith explains, "There are moments of universal beauty, of shared experience, of discovering experiences that bond all of us together as human beings. Light is most often at the root of these experiences. It is these moments of beauty, purity, and universality that I am seeking to create."

"Phillip K. Smith III: Shared Light" is on view through August 28. Great Park Gallery, Palm Court Art Complex, Great Park, Irvine; Thu. & Fri., noon-4 p.m.; Sat. & Sun., 10 a.m.-4 p.m.; free. [cityofirvine.org/orange-county-great-park/arts-exhibitions](http://cityofirvine.org/orange-county-great-park/arts-exhibitions).



## FEATURE

## THE FUTURE OF NFTS IS FEMALE, TOO

## TEN COMMUNITIES TO FOLLOW FOR GENDER BALANCE IN YOUR TIMELINE, COLLECTION &amp; CONSCIOUSNESS.

Like it or not, understand it or not, the NFT-backed world of crypto art and visual culture on the blockchain has been a breakout story of Covid-era society; and there's a lot of upside for artists, like enshrined authorship, economic stewardship, global audience reach. But as many who have attempted to dive into the roiling seas of this strange new world have realized – whether as investors, artists, curators, institutions and increasingly, physical galleries – the cryptoverse is plagued by the same issues of representation as the rest of culture. A lack of women and non-binary and non-white voices makes any sector of society fall flat – be that art, music, TV/film, science, tech, fashion, food, politics, architecture or, indeed, the entire internet.

From the beginning of this phenomenon, insightful, dedicated independent artists and curators have taken preemptive steps to prevent the dreaded tech-bro patriarchy represented by Bepple and Bored Apes from taking hold in Web3 – working instead to ensure that the cryptoverse future is female. Among this wave, there has also been an uptick in women-helmed NFT communities that also use the generative/derivative format of the Bored Apes and deploy it for their own purposes in both art-making and community-building. In this structure, artists create a sort of database of “traits” like background colors and patterns, animals, career or profession props, skin tones, lips, hair, eyes, badges, clothing and accessories, trees and flowers, and all kinds of stuff. They set up hundreds or even thousands of these elements, and when the buyer mints themselves a work from the series, the combinations are randomly generat-

ed into a unique (or at least rare) variation, which is then their own NFT.

Though by no means a comprehensive list, here are 10 women-helmed NFT communities that are a great place to start if you're interested in more gender balance in your timeline, collection and consciousness – or simply experiencing some energized, eccentric, optimistic works of art that honor the kaleidoscopic diversity and power of women from around the world. All of these series are intentional about community-building activism, too, with many offering onboarding training, collecting funds, amplification support, and storytelling platforms for the women involved – both creators and investors. It's beautiful to behold.

## WOMEN RISE

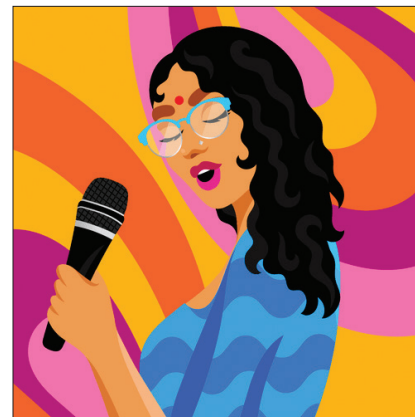
A collection of 10,000 randomly generated and unique NFT art pieces algorithmically assembled from about 450 hand-drawn traits by artist Maliha Abidi, the Women Rise collection represents global women with diversity that goes way beyond skin color. Celebrating the activ-



ists, artists, scientists, coders and many others working to make the world a better place has always been central to Abidi's art and activism, and to that end, the project earmarked 75% of the proceeds to international organizations that fight for women's rights, gender equity, and girls' education, and collectors can join live and virtual “clubs” that focus on science, activism and sustainability. [womenrisenft.art/](https://womenrisenft.art/); @womenrisenft

## BFF

BFF was created by Brit Morin and Jaime Schmidt, two self-described “serial entrepreneurs” who embrace a mission to help women reach their full potential. Over 100 female and non-binary figures from the worlds of crypto, tech, design, and business supported the project's launch, intrigued by creating a broad-



based community of tech-heads and neophytes alone that not only generates celebrity-coveted NFT avatars, but pursues a broader vision to build art, business and advocacy collaborations across the

new Web3 universe. Their open-access community helps women and non-binary people get educated, connected, onboarded and empowered within their decentralized but tight-knit community. [mybff.com](https://mybff.com/); @mybff.

## CRYPTO CHICKS

This generative art collection features women of diverse backgrounds with a focus on quirky, funny, and even subversive personalities while at the same time remaining urgently aware of the need to elevate more women to leadership in Web3, and from there across all the world's industries. Focused on building sustainable, scalable programs in digital art, design and beauty, Crypto Chicks is devoted to elevating stories and teach-



ing newly necessary skills. A unique core component of their model is the Women Artist Fund – a platform that supports emerging women-identifying artists with both exposure and actual money (well, Ethereum) by dedicating a large quarterly fund to buy unique pieces that are then showcased and distributed across the community. [cryptochicks.app](https://cryptochicks.app/); @cryptochicksnft.

## WORLD OF WOMEN

World of Women features 10,000 unique and diverse female avatars, conceived by artist Yam Karkai to bring change to the wider NFT community. WoW's vision is to build an inclusive Web3 through its collection, responding to the oft-cited and very damning statistic that shows how as recently as November 2021, female artists accounted for just 5% of all NFT art sales in the previous two years.



"Together, we can create opportunities for anyone around the world to be owners, creators and contributors in this new era of the web," Karkai writes. "We believe in giving back." WoW also maintains a thoughtful presence in the educating of the non-NFT and even non-art world, seeking to recruit more natural allies from across the world and its many cultures and economies. [worldofwomen.art](http://worldofwomen.art); @worldofwomen.nft

## BOSS BEAUTIES

With the rousing but dead simple motto that "A woman can be everything she wants," Boss Beauties offers a collection of 10,000 diverse female avatars depicted in different, empowering roles – doctors, astronauts, presidents, mothers, soldiers, artists, executives, athletes, and more. For 10 years, the Boss Beauties branding and marketing company's mission has been to educate and empower the new generations of women and girls; they see their



NFT collection as an exciting extension of the same passion and goals – made all the more exciting for the medium's potential to capture the voices and dreams of literally thousands of independent women. Boss Beauties holders receive utilities such as tickets to exclusive music

events, early access to new NFT drops, and access to the company's most intriguing partner collaborations. [bossbeauties.com](http://bossbeauties.com); @bossbeautiesnft

## 8SIAN



Even within the lack of representation for female figures in the NFT space, Asian representation more specifically also is extremely absent – which is exactly what the 8Sian NFT collection is trying to address. The project's 8,888 Asian women NFTs showcase the plurality and majestic diversity of global Asian cultural heritages, in highly-detailed, thoughtfully adorned avatars depicting a litany of ethnic traits along with traditional and modern costumes and fashion, jewelry, accessories, and personalities, as well as rich symbolism, historical and aspirational values in a lavish but elegant palette that makes the series theatrical, celebratory, fascinating, educational, and absolutely necessary. [8sian.nft.com](http://8sian.nft.com); @8sian.nft

## UNICORN DAO

Pussy Riot's activist platform, Unicorn DAO, is a feminist movement aiming to tackle patriarchy in Web3, in the form of an investment fund that highlights and collects NFT projects from women-identifying and LGBTQ+ artists with the same fearless zeal you'd expect from the incendiary performance art group. Standing for "gender fluidity, inclusivity, matriarchy, love, laughter, decentralization, anarchy, and anti-authoritarianism to build the infrastructure for a feminist and queer revolution on the blockchain," the DAO is not a single project but rather a platform and a fund, collecting and showcasing art created by a global community led by women, non-binary and LGBTQ+ people. Viscerally cognizant of the need to provide historically underrepresented groups tools to empower themselves and "subvert crypto bro culture," they also seek out and mentor new talent in the



name of a queer mutual-support utopia in the Metaverse. The result is a dynamic, eclectic, unpredictable array of enlightened post-gender visions that approaches the NFT situation as a true revolution – and they should know. [unicorndao.com](http://unicorndao.com); @unicorn.dao

## VALFRÉLANDIA

This collection of 10,000 unique NFTs features 15 of artist Ilse Valfré's signature character typologies, variable with over 500 hand-drawn traits including saturated colors, facial and animal features (especially cats), and bubble-gum dreams in thousands of instances of ferocity and extreme cuteness. Valfré's background in character design and fantasy world-building has always been community-focused, based on and inspired by herself and the amazing women in her life; some fans identify so strongly with her vision that they've had their generative avatars transformed into tattoos! The recent explosion in technology inspired Valfré with its perfect marriage of complexity, expansion and playtime. [valfrelandia.com](http://valfrelandia.com); @valfrelandia

## FLOWER GIRLS

Graphic designer and illustrator Varvara Alay's wildly popular Flower Girls NFT collection includes 10,000 unique NFTs generated from over 950 hand-drawn attributes (for you mathletes, that's a yield of 492,778 ways to generate just a face; there are over six sextillion possible combinations across the collection). In the series, Alay's surrealist sensibility and deep art-historical inflections center around the themes of natural beauty, purity and diversity. Alay's new collection Birds of Sölis – a collaborative project inspired by Audubon's Birds of America



– just dropped this week, in a suite of similarly structured gorgeous and romantic interpretations focusing on 20 bird species, producing a generative series of 2022 total pieces. [flowergirls.nft.com](http://flowergirls.nft.com); @flowergirls.nft

## MEDUSA COLLECTION

The Medusa Collection is a set of 2,500 randomly generated unique NFTs by artist Mieke Marple in a large-scale artwork and restorative history fundraiser that dedicates 25% of all sales to Steven Van Zandt's national education nonprofit TeachRock.org. The collection is made using a salient hybrid of analog and digital techniques, based on Marple's original, heartfelt paintings of canonical 16th-19th century Italian sculptures of Medusa and her enduring but fatefully misunderstood myth. Marple described embarking on the painting series in 2019, when she read an 8 AD account by the Ovid that related how Medusa had been raped by the god Poseidon and then turned into a monster by Poseidon's wife, Athena. Horrified that Medusa was punished for being a rape survivor, but even more so that this was erased from her story and her status as an evil Gorgon was amplified by society, poets, artists and historians. To Marple, this felt uncomfortably similar to the dynamics of today's misogynist transgressions in everything from popular culture to politics and horrifyingly, public policy. The Medusa Collection fights back against the oldest and newest violence in this historically restorative and futuristically utopian vision. [medusacollection.io](http://medusacollection.io); @miekemarple

# ENTERTAINMENT

## IRVINE WEEKLY MOVIE REVIEWS

### FROM BAZ LUHRMANN'S ELVIS TO DISNEY'S LIGHTYEAR, SUMMER BLOCKBUSTERS ARE HOT

#### ELVIS THRUSTS INTO THE KING'S LIFE STORY

By Chad Byrnes

Baz Luhrmann's *Elvis* has a feral energy you don't experience often in the movies; not even for a Luhrmann project (he's a director who notoriously specializes in ostentation and glitter). A massive spectacle painted with thick brush strokes and brilliant colors, it has the depth of a soap opera, but the zeal of a symphonic masterpiece.

If you're expecting an authentic, historically accurate portrait, you'll be grossly



disappointed. This movie needed to be big, so it could encapsulate its larger-than-life subject. We are talking about Elvis Presley after all, not John Denver. There's nothing subtle about the greasy-haired kid from Memphis who introduced Black music to the masses before disintegrating into a blur of sequined suits and pills in Las Vegas.

Narrated by Elvis' gluttonous manager, Colonel Tom Parker, played by Tom Hanks, the carnival barker's only talent seems to be usurping money from his acts. Hidden behind layers of latex, a gargantuan fat suit and a thick Dutch accent, Hanks' performance is as bizarre and

garrulous as the rockstar fairytale itself. He's constantly gesturing, trembling and bright-eyed, yearning for the almighty American dollar. However, at times, you can see a genuinely sordid and sad soul peek through The Colonel's pathetic need for capital gain. Hanks' portrayal offers moments of greatness.

As the titular icon, Austin Butler (*Once Upon A Time In Hollywood*) chews up the screen with an authority and effervescence that's rare for a relative newcomer. He also dances, scowls and sings with such ferocity, you'll feel the heat sizzle off the screen. It's an intense and bravura performance. When the movie actually gives Butler the space to discover his character, which isn't often enough, he brings a tragic sensitivity and ire to the legend.

You probably know the story. After Colonel Parker spots the Memphis-born ingenue at a barnyard concert while touring with his main attraction, country singer Hank Snow, the Svengali immediately twists his mustache and plans the country boy's career. From there, we're thrown on a rollercoaster ride of an artist's unprecedented rise to fame and devastating fall from grace.

Luhrmann rushes us through several stages of Elvis' career – recording at Sun Records, signing with RCA, his somewhat Freudian relationship with his mother, and the controversies regarding his pelvic thrusts on stage, to name a few. The film is more interested in the music that molded Elvis than his actual identity. By featuring artists such as B.B. King and Big Momma Thornton, the movie tries to show that Presley wasn't just influenced by these luminaries, but emotionally frayed by the rampant racism in the South. In actuality, the singer hardly addressed those social issues. Still, Luhrmann makes his point: Black rhythm and blues was the punk rock elixir Elvis harnessed to take over the

world.

After our hero finds himself in a slump, starring in a slew of bad films, being overshadowed by the British Invasion, and weary from the Colonel's relentless branding, Presley paves a path for himself that culminates in the '68 Comeback Special. The filmmakers shoehorn his marriage to Priscilla Presley into the narrative, although they never meaningfully explore this relationship (or the problematic age disparity). They also soft-pedal Elvis' drug use, his curious obsessions, his weight gain, and his ties to what was called the Memphis Mafia, all of which led to his death at 42 years old. Luhrmann is more interested in the ebullient essence of The King and his music than the dirty details of his descent.

Even with its flaws, *Elvis* is a compelling and distinctive portrait of fame and its deadly trappings. It's also Luhrmann's vision of America, which encapsulates a melting pot-like beauty under a dark capitalist shadow. At nearly two hours and forty minutes, the film moves with a swift, thrusting power which flies by, mostly thanks to Butler. The kid is a natural. Even as we watch our hero decline in health and spirit, Butler gives him a quiet and mournful dignity that's unforgettable. He's the best actor to portray The King yet. You really can't help falling in love with him.

#### THIS TOY'S LIFE: LIGHTYEAR LEAPS ONTO THE SCREEN

By Erin Maxwell

"In 1995, a boy named Andy got a toy from his favorite movie. This is that movie." This simple line of text appears as *Lightyear* begins, letting the audience know exactly what they're in for: a movie based on a toy from a movie about a toy.

Though it lacks the emotional depth of typical Pixar fare, the film lives up to the setup and it's a charming tribute to classic sci-fi stories, as well as one of Disney's most technologically ambitious films to date.

Space Ranger Captain Buzz Lightyear (voiced by Chris Evans) and his partner Captain Alicia Hawthorne (voiced by Uzo Aduba) are on a distant alien planet when they are attacked. Due to a miscalculation on Buzz's part, they are marooned on said planet with hundreds of crew. Racked with guilt, *Lightyear* makes every attempt to get back home, even though with each undertaking to reach hyperspace, he loses years. While Buzz tries again and again to escape, his friends and crew make the most of their time, settle down, have families, and create lives. After decades, Buzz finds himself among strangers and hostile robots led by Zurg, his archenemy (as seen in *Toy Story 2*).

This isn't a prequel or a continuation of the *Toy Story* universe, but rather an origin story for Buzz, laying out what inspired the toy itself. One can only hope that if this movie does well, a dark, gritty Western about an alcoholic lawman named Woody is next, with his love of catching bad guys surpassed only by his love of spirits, causing him to hallucinate "snakes in his boots."

So, this is Andy's favorite movie...but will it be yours?

Directed by Angus MacLane, it's safe to say that the animation is exceptional, even by picky Pixar standards. As the company's 26th animated outing, *Lightyear* sets itself apart from the studio's previous offerings via new ideas and technological achievement. It's absolutely groundbreaking, visually.

As for the story, it lacks the emotional insight and quippy language audiences have come to expect from the toon powerhouse. Not to say there aren't a few gut punches throughout the story, but it's nothing on the same level of *Up*, *Inside Out*, or the more recent *Turning Red*. Instead of a deep-digging story about intergenerational emotional trauma, this is a callback to science-fiction stories of yesteryear: uncomplicated, straight forward, and filled to the brim with action. Exactly the kind of film one would expect a mother to bring her son to in 1995.