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POSTINO POURS INTO IRVINE

“WINECAFE” BRINGS A SPLASH OF FLAVOR TO PARK PLACE

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SEGA BRINGS DECADES OF GAMING EXPERIENCE TO IRVINE

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



SEGA OF AMERICA

Longtime video game developer and entertainment juggernaut Sega of America recently opened a new office for its North American headquarters in Irvine.

The new space, a 31,700 square foot office located in Innovation Office Park, will be home to approximately 230 employees. Additionally employees of Atlus, a subsidiary of Sega, will also be working at the Innovation Office Park space.

Officially opened on Dec. 7, Shuji Utsumi, Co-COO of Sega Corporation and CEO of Sega of America, said the move into Irvine defines a new chapter for the video game pioneer.

"The opening of the new Sega of America headquarters in Irvine represents a new era for one of the gaming world's most esteemed brands," Utsumi said. "We're so proud to introduce this amazing new space for collaboration and creativity for the Sega of America family. Since the company's founding in 1960, Sega has harbored the spirit of quality, fun and ingenuity in all our works. This new space helps to foster a genial and team-oriented culture to rein-

force that purpose and create new stories and worlds that will entertain gamers for generations."

The Irvine space will function as a creative space for ideation and collaboration between Sega and Atlus's publishing departments, according to a statement provided by Sega. Atlus is the publisher of the well-known role playing "Persona" series, also known as "Shin Megami" outside of Japan.

Looking ahead to 2023, Sega insiders are looking forward to publishing "Persona 4 Golden," which will include German, French and Spanish subtitles for the first time. Persona series fans will also be able to access "Persona 3 Portable" which will be available on Steam, PlayStation P2P and Nintendo Switch.

Founded in Honolulu, Hawaii in 1960, Sega has grown into an internationally acclaimed video game publisher with dozens of iconic titles including "Sonic the Hedgehog," "Crazy Taxi" and "NBA Jam." The company also helped pioneer console gaming with the Sega Game Gear and SEGA Nomad consoles.

MAYOR, COUNCIL MEMBERS TAKE OATH OF OFFICE IN IRVINE

IRVINE VOTERS WELCOMED THE RE-ELECTION OF MAYOR FARRAH KHAN, COUNCIL MEMBER LARRY AGRAN AND ROOKIE COUNCIL MEMBER DR. KATHLEEN TRESEDER.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

UC Irvine professor Dr. Kathleen Treseder – who is the newest member of the Irvine City Council – along with Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan, and long-time Irvine politician Larry Agran were sworn into their respective offices on Tuesday, Dec. 13.

Treseder and Agran will begin four-year terms on the City Council.

After a formal swearing-in ceremony, Khan, who was elected to a second, two-year term as Mayor, thanked her family and voters for their support and encouragement. Khan said that in addition to Treseder, she is looking forward to working with Council Members Tammy Kim, Mike Carroll and Agran in order to continue bringing innovation to Irvine.

“The City Council has the opportunity to advance key city priorities and innovate in new and exciting ways and it’s an honor to preside over this city council,” Khan said. “As we begin this term, we do so with the opportunity to refocus our priorities, and engage collaboratively to maximize all that we can do here.”

In his address to the public, Agran, whose tenure in Irvine politics began in the 1970s, said that he remains humbled and honored to be able to serve the public. In terms of issues, Agran said he remains focused on the removal of the All American Asphalt facility from Irvine, and ensuring that



L-R: Carroll, Kim, Khan, Agran and Treseder



a veterans park and memorial finds a place within the Great Park.

“It has been my privilege, a true honor to be such a part of the years of Irvine’s growth, development and what it has become,” he said. “I feel real love for this city and its people – and what we can do going forward.”

Agran admitted there were challenges with the previous Council. While he did not mention specifics, one aspect of the challenges that Agran faced was his ability to place items on the Council agenda, based on a controversial agenda setting policy, which was reinstated by Khan.

Better known as the Rule of Two, the agenda setting policy required two

members of the Council to sign off on items that would appear on the agenda. During the vote to reinstate the Rule of Two in 2020, Agran was the only member of the Council to vote against reinstatement.

While the Council ultimately voted to rescind the rule in July, many of Agran’s attempts to bring items forward for discussion within were not seconded by other members of the Council.

Yet, Agran added that with every new Council there is an opportunity for a clean slate.

“Anytime there’s a new Council, it presents an opportunity for a new beginning – a fresh start,” he said. “In this case, we have a new Council, a little bit changed, no doubt the chemistry will be different and I hope better.”

Treseder, who is a newcomer in Irvine politics, said she was grateful for this opportunity. In her address to the public, Treseder thanked city staff, along with her predecessor, former Council Member Anthony Kuo.

Focusing on climate action and environmental issues, Treseder’s campaign was endorsed by U.S. Representative Katie Porter, the Democratic Party of Orange County and dozens of councilmembers across Orange County.

As she begins her four-year term, said she is hoping to make the voters proud and vowed to help the city’s most vulnerable community members.

“The act of you being here and bearing witness to this process is an act of faith, the same way that voting is an act of faith in our democracy and our government. To vote, you have to have faith that your vote will be counted and your voice will be heard,” she said. “If done well, I feel like government is about taking care of people – making sure people have homes they can afford, jobs that pay them well, that their children have playgrounds that are clean and safe.”

In terms of election results, Agran received the most votes for council at 31,023, capturing 23.86% of the City Council votes. Treseder finished with 29,440, just over 22% of voters.

Khan received 29,628 votes, which is equal to 37.82% of voters.

FOOD

POSTINO: NEW "WINECAFE" POURS INTO PARK PLACE IRVINE

EXPANDING OUT OF ARCADIA, ARIZONA, POSTINO WINECAFE, THE WINE-FORWARD CHAIN, OFFERS A ONE-OF-A-KIND WINE SELECTION WITH DOZENS OF VARIETALS AVAILABLE BY THE GLASS, WITH ROBUST TAKEAWAY AND UNIQUE SUBSCRIPTION OPTIONS.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER

Welcoming guests with a boastful umbrella-lined outdoor patio, the recently opened Postino, a new 5,200 square foot "WineCafe" at Park Place in Irvine looks as desirable from the outside as it does from inside.

With the opening of her first location in California, Postino Co-Founder Lauren Bailey explained to Irvine Weekly the "WineCafe" has expanded out of Arizona, and is designed to accommodate casual meetings with friends, dinner dates, or simply a quiet place to work and enjoy a glass of wine.

"Postino prides itself on providing a space for all people to connect over wine, with selections designed for a range of gatherings, from special to casual everyday dining, plus an all-day menu that satisfies any craving," she said. "Today, we introduce to Irvine a wine bar that doesn't have to be stuffy – because at Postino, we're always playful, curious, and open-minded. I think the reason we didn't call it a 'wine bar' was because we wanted people to know we had a really great food menu."

In terms of offerings, Bailey explained that Postino's wine collections are inspired by local varietals specific to each region. If you go, Bailey recommends not



overlooking the bruschetta, a longtime bestseller which offers mozzarella, tomato, basil, burrata, bacon, arugula, salmon and pesto.

In Irvine, Postino guests can take advantage of daily offerings that include a "\$6 'til 5pm" by-the-glass wine and beer list and "\$25 Bottle & Board."

Postino also offers a weekend brunch, with unique dishes like the Umbria Egg Toast, which is made with scrambled

egg with crème and white truffle, featuring crispy oyster mushrooms and Parmigiano Reggiano atop a toasted ciabatta.

With more than 20 locations outside of California, Postino has enthralled wine-lovers with a robust selection of local-first varietals, made possible with the help of an in-house advanced sommelier, Brent Karlicek.

Speaking with *Irvine Weekly* by phone,

Bailey explained that variety is a very important aspect of the offerings at Postino. Bailey explained that in order to deliver quality wine at an affordable price, Karlicek remains extremely selective in choosing wine for Postino.

"We are very lucky to work with a very special wine person in our company – Brent, our in-house sommelier, he selects all of these wines," she explained. "He works with wine makers all over the world to bring wines to Postino – that you only get there."

The inspiration behind the design for each location is carefully selected, and Bailey points out that Postino locations do not share the same design. However, one aspect of design shared across all locations is a curated art wall. Bailey added that the art wall at Postino's Park Place location was inspired by the boombox craze of the 1980s and 1990s.

"We do a unique art wall in each restaurant – you'll know you're in a Postino, but each one is different and that's very intentional. You'll see a lot of vintage furniture, antiques – we don't have any of the same art in any of the restaurants," she said. "We have a lot of vintage light fixtures that we collect, and actually have an employee whose job it is to procure vintage items and manage the mural artists, and all the art wall installations."

Unique to Postino is a subscription-based wine club, affectionately known as the Postino Wine Cult. In presenting the WineCult to the Postino fan base, Bailey explained that the format for the subscription-based service was a silver lining that came out of the pandemic.

"It's a relatively new offering that we have, it's only about a year old – it's called the WineCult. It really was galvanized for us primarily over COVID how much people wanted to take our wine home. Before COVID we would sell a little bit of wine but not a ton," she said. "We had the right licenses to sell wine to-go, but we never put a lot of intention behind it, and that's just one of the great things that came out of COVID was being about to develop this program for people to get really great, high quality wine at a great price that you can drink at home."

Postino at Park Place is located at 2981 Michelson Dr, Ste. E, Irvine.

IRVINE VOTES TO FIX OCPA, WILL ASK COUNTY TO RESCIND EXIT

THE CITY OF IRVINE WILL URGE THE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS TO RETHINK ITS DEPARTURE FROM THE ORANGE COUNTY POWER AUTHORITY, AS THE CITY WILL WORK TO IMPROVE THE AGENCY'S INTERNAL STRUGGLES.

BY EVAN J. LANCASTER



In a 3-2 vote, the Irvine City Council voted on Thursday, Dec. 29 to remain enrolled with the Orange County Power Authority, in an effort to help fix the agency's struggles with providing transparency and experienced leadership.

The City's decision goes against the Orange County Board of Supervisors vote to exit the green power provider on Dec. 20. The Supervisors voted 3-2 to leave the OCPA, citing worries about the agency's leadership experience, financial status and transparency.

In the county's vote, Fifth District Supervisor Lisa Barlett, Second District Supervisor Katrina Foley, and Fourth District Supervisor and Chairman Doug Chaffee approved the withdrawal. Third District Supervisor Don Wagner and First District

Supervisor Andrew Do voted no.

In a special City Council meeting called by Irvine Council Members Larry Agran and Dr. Kathleen Treseder, Agran suggested the Council exit the authority immediately. In his comments, Agran sided with many criticisms referenced by the County Supervisors including transparency and lack of leadership.

"OCPA has operated in such an exceedingly opaque fashion that public confidence has been dramatically cut over the recent months and the last couple of years," Agran said.

In terms of cost, a staff report included with the special meeting agenda indicated that Irvine would be responsible for approximately \$145 million in withdrawal costs. Irvine ratepayers count for the majority of OCPA accounts – about

40%, with the other 60% of accounts spread across Huntington Beach, Fullerton and Buena Park.

Irvine Council Member Mike Carroll, who serves as chairman of the OCPA Board of Directors, said the spotlight was on Irvine's decision to exit, in the sense that the Council would be "tanking" the authority by departing. While Carroll agreed with the decision to exit, Carroll said the Supervisors hold the majority of responsibility for OCPA's success.

"There's some talk about us potentially tanking the Orange County Power Authority, and some other thoughts around whether we should make our notice to withdraw or not to withdraw," he said. "What happened is the County of Orange tanked it with its recent withdrawal from the Orange County Power Authority – and what hasn't been talked about is approximately \$65 million of power purchases made for the unincorporated areas of Orange County and those have to be unwound."

Carroll added that the Supervisors' decision to depart created "a great and serious financial risk" to the authority.

"The Orange County Power Authority is incredibly solvent and incredibly financially strong and if it continues it's going to be financially strong," he said. "I don't really see a way out having Irvine been pushed into a wall by Orange County

and the three Supervisors that decided to withdraw."

Prior to Thursday's vote, Irvine Mayor Farrah Khan suggested that Irvine commit to OCPA and urge the Supervisors to rescind their vote to withdraw from the Orange County Power Authority.

Addressing Carroll's comments, Khan said that energy purchased for the unincorporated areas of Orange County by OCPA can be resold.

"We have options – OCPA can try to sell the energy [it] bought, and [the second option], the remainder will be paid for by the county," she said. "We as a city still remain to have a \$7.65 million loan that is scheduled to be repaid by January 1, 2027 – that's if we stay. However, if we are going to withdraw then we are possibly liable for potentially \$145 million."

Both Treseder and Irvine Vice Mayor Tammy Kim supported Khan's motion. In an amendment to Khan's motion, Treseder suggested the council make an amendment, adding for the mandatory replacement of the agency's CEO.

Treseder also asked for the Council to delay a vote on exiting the authority for at least six months.

"I think we would be better situated to know what the consequences will be of leaving, we'll have a better dollar figure that Irvine will owe. Also, it will give us better breathing room if we're trying to fix OCPA because if we fought to leave the OCPA today, the staff will be undertaking a major endeavor to try to unravel all of our assets from OCPA's," she said. "They'll be working on this in concert with the board trying to fix it. It could make it very difficult – that gives us time to try to remove the CEO or replace him with somebody who is competent to do the job."

Both Carroll and Agran voted against Khan's motion. In his final comments, Agran criticized Khan's motion as "weak and ineffective."

"We have been doing precisely what is included in your motion for months and months. We've been trying to assess things from afar and what do we get in return – we get stonewalling [from OCPA]," Agran said. "Bringing it back in six months, after six more months of craziness is just unconscionable in my view."

ENTERTAINMENT

LIVING DOLL: M3GAN
PLAYS WITH HORROR IN
HILARIOUS WAYSWHAT IF HAL 9000 WAS AN
AMERICAN GIRL DOLL WHO
DID TIKTOK DANCES?

BY ERIN MAXWELL

More charming than Chucky, cuter than Annabelle and just enough crazy to give Tiffany Valentine and Talky Tina a run for their money, *M3GAN* is something special. Directed by Gerard Johnstone (*Housebound*) and penned by Akela Cooper based on a story by producer James Wan of *The Conjuring* films, *M3GAN* looks to revitalize the box office during a sleepy January by asking the all-important question: What if HAL 9000 was an American Girl doll who did TikTok dances?

The PG-13 story of *M3GAN* is simple enough. After her parents are smooshed by a snow truck, young Cady (Violet McGraw) goes to live with her career-minded auntie Gemma (Allison Williams), a robotics engineer at a toy company. To win cool points with her grieving niece, she perfects a prototype she's been tinkering with named M3GAN (Model 3 Generative Android), the perfect petrifying playmate for a young girl. Soon the duo become inseparable and M3GAN (played by Amie Donald and voiced by Jenna Davis) becomes attached. Very attached. And really, that's where the fun begins.

Even before Skynet Skipper comes online, the audience is introduced to a bevy of caricatures we want M3GAN to harm later. A nosy neighbor with an annoying dog, a shitty boss with a quick temper, a sneaky coworker whose only personality appears to be backstabbing – they're

all exasperating obstacles for M3GAN, who tears into them like tissue paper for the audience's amusement.

A nightmare-inducing AI-conjured antagonist with large, dead eyes that only Margaret Keane could love, the titular figure is captivating, thanks to her unnerving delivery of lines and sunny disposition, which she keeps even as she rips the ears off of pre-teens and runs on all fours through a forest floor in her cute Macy's ready-to-wear daytime look. She is fun to watch and as an audience, you want to see what she will do next.

There is no doubt that *M3GAN* will be a hit. She's already a viral sensation thanks to her slick dance moves and a brilliant marketing campaign that started early and strong on social media. There is a message about the dangers of technology and the need for human connection, especially during times of need, and it becomes surprisingly emotional. Williams and McGraw deliver strong performances, even as they compete with four-feet of silicon nightmare fuel.

The joy of horror is that it can be campy and fun, and still be celebrated. Not every movie needs to be *The Shining* or *The Silence of the Lambs* to be acclaimed and revered by the film community and fans. It can be *Puppetmaster* or *Gremlins* or even *Ghoulies* and you can still have a damn good time. This is where *M3GAN* lives – somewhere between riveting and ridiculous.

NOAH BAUMBACH'S
WHITE NOISE GETS
LOST IN NOSTALGIC
STATICTHE DIRECTOR ADAPTS DON
DELILLO'S NOW CLASSIC 1985
NOVEL OF THE SAME NAME.

BY MICHAEL ATKINSON

Ambitious and earnest but fitful and awkward, Noah Baumbach's adaptation of Don DeLillo's now classic 1985 novel, *White Noise* (now on Netflix) has a conflict at its weird heart, and that conflict is between DeLillo and film. Arguably, but not really, no other living major American novelist has such a distinctive stylized voice in terms of dialogue and character – call it High Meta Ironic Alienation In-Joke Idiom. DeLillo's people are always too smart for their own good, and talk to each other around craters of pain and emptiness in metaphor-rich rants – a kind of shared dialect of referential banter, in conversations we can feel they've had many times already, and now all that's left is to hypercharge what's said, spice it up with strained insights, reach for symbolic gestures, glibly punch for the obscure rather than submit to the mundane.

It's not realism, despite DeLillo's intense devotion to addressing whatever zeitgeist is pounding us in the moment, and to film it poses a Difficulty Score of Through the Roof. It's easy to understand the urge – DeLillo is one of the last of the red-hot visionary modernists, an epochal writer for whom the forever-mutating contemporary world is an unmappable empire of metamorphosing absurdity, and for whom the diamond-cut mysteries of perfectly, and disarm-

ingly, crafted sentences are a method into the madness. Reading a book like *White Noise* – easily DeLillo's funniest and most charming novel, though funny and charming are otherwise rare items on the DD menu – is like waking up on a cross-country bus trip to somewhere, and seeing the American madscape clearly for the first time.

Only David Cronenberg, that master of adapting the unadaptable, has heretofore attempted a DeLillo movie, with 2011's *Cosmopolis*, and he largely succeeded by leaning into DeLillo's archness and letting the deadeye dialogue freeze in the air. ("All industries have to be harshly eliminated," Samantha Morton says at one point, playing the part of an asset manager's Chief of Theory. "New markets have to be forcibly claimed, and old markets have to be re-exploited. Destroy the past, remake the future.") Of course, being unfilmable is nothing for a novelist to be ashamed of; it's the filmmaker's gamble to lose. Baumbach had his work cut out for him. For one thing, *White Noise* is oddly structured, divided neatly into three sections, the second of which famously involves the suburban onslaught of the "Airborne Toxic Event," a man made disaster that upends the story's suburban paradise and is largely an extended metaphor for deeper lurking dilemmas, like marital trust and the fragility of privilege and security.



WILSON WEBB/NETFLIX

Baumbach faithfully holds to the novel's roving idea of itself, although it makes for a curious movie. First, we meet Jack Gladney (Adam Driver), a somewhat self-satisfied academic (the primary scholar at work in Hitler Studies), who basks complacently in his Midwestern-college life and large bustling family (composed of his newest wife, played by Greta Gerwig, and five children from multiple marriages). He and his wife, Babette, both fear death and privately fear surviving each other; otherwise, their life is a pleasant charade of campus ritual, supermarket trips, and family meals scored to the children's precocious debates about disaster, death, and the news.

Then the Toxic Event strikes, a train crash that unleashes a chemical cloud and forces the town, and the Gladneys, to evacuate, at night, in the rain. In the book, the Event itself is a barely discernible off-screen entity; in the film, it has a lavish CGI primacy. Amid this protracted sequence of middle-class chaos – possibly poison air, emergency shelters, panic, Covid-y masking – Gladney's determined calm-Dad savoir-faire is plagued and tested, most of all by the clues he's getting that Babette is covertly taking a mysterious pharmaceutical. For those unfamiliar with the novel, it may provoke some head-scratching that the Event, once the emergency is

over, disappears from the narrative, and Gladney's sudden uncertainty of his wife's true self becomes what *White Noise* is really about.

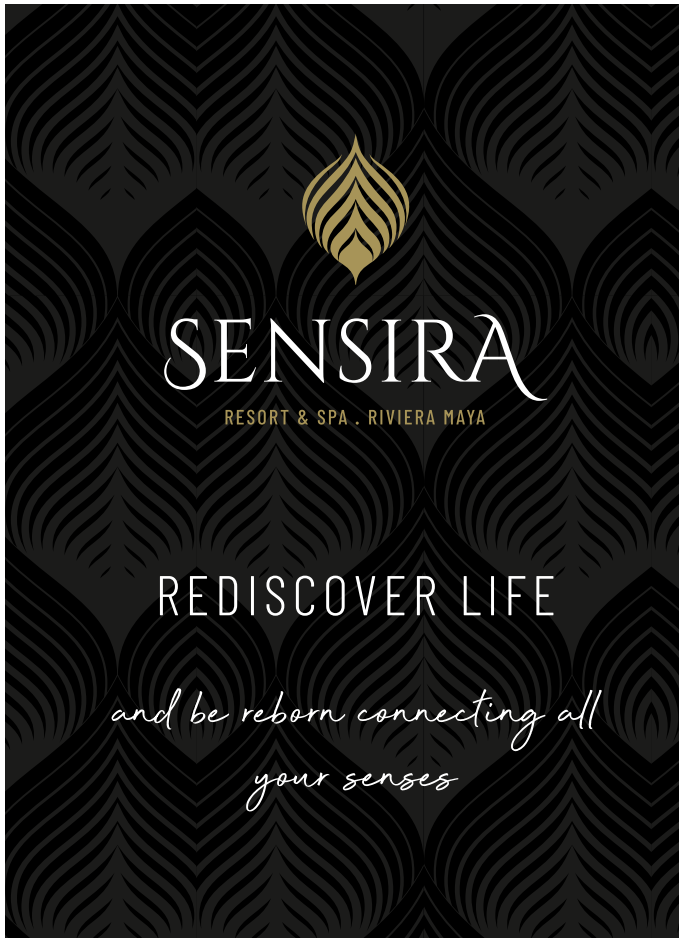
Baumbach's approach to the DeLillo Dialogue Problem is what, ultimately, makes the film flounder – he treats the rhythmic tides of satirically lofty dialogue, between the Gladney family members and between Gladney and his equally pretentious academic colleagues (including Don Cheadle as an Elvis expert looking for departmental traction), as though it were slapstick farce, overlapping the often freestanding pronouncements in a comedic spray that's neither funny nor thematically eloquent. Actors

don't talk like this; DeLillo characters do. Only a late-game face-off between Gladney and Babette – because it's a straight, heated conflict – makes dramatic sense of DeLillo's language. There may not be actors alive who can make art out of DeLillo's locutions, and Driver and Gerwig struggle with the stranger lines ("Let the seasons drift. Do not advance the action according to plan."), just as they do with communicating debilitating thanatophobia, which in the novel was felt between the lines.

Ultimately, DeLillo's satire, so potent and echoing on the page, feels forced and even outdated on film, at least partially because it is that: What was freshly bizarre in 1985 is old news to us today, and the film comes off feeling oddly nostalgic for the days when TV commercials seemed to be commenting on our lives all day long, and the Balladesque spectacle of televised vehicle crashes was a fresh and disturbing presence in our lives. Even the title is a 20th-century audiovisual artifact, to which there is no equivalent today.

The dazzling fecundity of supermarkets? The cozy sense of Midwestern academia, with entire departments filled with silly conjectural deconstructionist ideas about pop culture? A book from and about the '80s, or, more accurately, the post-'70s, can be understood as being rooted in the cultural shitstorm of its day, just like a movie from the time. But converting those obsessions into a film 37 years later introduces an unavoidable layer of irrelevance and quaintness. If only we had mere broadcast television to worry about today, and occasional toxic leaks, and marriage secrets.

But say we pretend there is no source novel, and Baumbach's film claims its own thematic farmstead – then what is it? A gentle parable, at best, bristling with an ambiguous interest in the failure of the Reagan Era, and a dread of masculine impugnement. It certainly has what many other Baumbach movies have starved for lack of: a rich cataract of stuff, random resonating cultural details, a sense of painting a portrait of an idea about America. However you take it, don't let it steer you away from visiting DeLillo where he really lives, in the book.



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