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## Indigenous Quilts Honoring Southern California Tribes Through Art And Tradition

By Ella Fitz

Quilting, an art form rooted in storytelling and community, has long been a means of expression for Indigenous peoples. While many associate quilting with European-American traditions, Native American quiltmaking has evolved into a unique and powerful medium that blends cultural heritage with contemporary artistry. Indigenous quilts serve as a tribute to the rich histories, resilience, and artistic legacies of the region's tribes, including the Chumash, Tongva, Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Kumeyaay.



### The History of Indigenous Quilting

Quilting was introduced to Native American communities through interactions with Spanish missionaries and Euro-American settlers. While pre-colonial Native textile traditions centered around weaving and basketry, the introduction of fabric and sewing techniques led to the incorporation of quilting into Indigenous artistic practices. Tribes adopted and adapted quilting into a deeply personal and symbolic craft, often incorporating traditional designs, tribal symbols, and natural motifs.

### Symbolism

Quilts created by or in honor of Southern California tribes often carry deep cultural significance.

**Nature and Landscape:** Many quilts feature elements of the local environment, such as ocean waves for coastal tribes like the Chumash, desert flora for the Cahuilla, or mountain and canyon motifs representing sacred lands.

**Sacred Symbols:** Designs frequently incorporate tribal motifs, such as the four directions, sunbursts, and geometric patterns.

**Stories of Survival and Resilience:** Quilts serve as historical records, depicting struggles and triumphs, including forced relocations, environmental challenges, and cultural perseverance.

**Honoring Ancestors:** Some quilts are dedicated to ancestors or tribal leaders, incorporating

family names, beadwork, and even traditional dyes. Contemporary Quilters and Their Contributions Many Indigenous quilters are creating breathtaking works that honor local tribes.

Some prominent figures include: Cheryl L. Kline, a Tongva artist, has collaborated on quilting projects that incorporate traditional Tongva symbolism into modern quilt designs.

Cahuilla Quilters Collective, a group of artisans who create pieces reflecting their tribe's basket patterns and ancestral stories.

The Autry Museum of the American West and Malki Museum, which have showcased Indigenous quilts, bringing greater visibility to this art form.

Community Quilting Projects, such as workshops in tribal cultural centers.

### Quilting As Cultural Revitalization

Quilting has played a crucial role in cultural revitalization efforts among Southern California tribes. Many young Indigenous artists are taking up quilting as a way to reclaim and celebrate

their heritage. Elders pass down knowledge of tribal history, traditional dyeing, and the meanings behind patterns and symbols.

Additionally, exhibitions and festivals have brought increased attention to Indigenous quilting, allowing wider audiences to appreciate its significance. Events such as the California Indian Market & Peace Pow Wow and the Los Angeles Indigenous Peoples Day celebrations frequently highlight Indigenous textiles and crafts.

### See and Support Indigenous Quilts

For those interested in viewing or purchasing Indigenous quilts consider visiting:

**Malki Museum:** Features Cahuilla cultural exhibits, including textiles and quilts.

**Autry Museum of the American West:** Showcases Indigenous textile arts.

**Tribal Cultural Centers and Gift Shops:** Tribal community centers, sell locally made quilts and textiles.

**Online Marketplaces:** Websites like Eighth Generation and Beyond Buckskin feature Indigenous-made quilts and textiles.

### Preserving the Legacy

Indigenous quilting in Southern California is more than just a craft—it is a testament to resilience, creativity, and cultural continuity. These quilts provide warmth and beauty but also tell the stories of the land and its people.

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By Jennifer Tillman

# ACADEMY AWARDS 2025



THE CULTURAL DIVIDE, COMMON THEMES, THE GENDER BATTLE, HOT MUSIC INCLUSION, OBIT'S, TOP DOCUMENTARIES, HISTORICAL MOVIES & THE HOST: CONAN O'BRIEN



The Academy Awards are often seen as the pinnacle of recognition in the film industry. Every year, the event garners global attention as Hollywood celebrates its finest achievements. The 2025 Academy Awards will take place against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world. From political movements to evolving social norms, the Oscars have been increasingly influenced by these factors, with controversies and conversations around inclusivity, representation, and diversity continuing to define the cultural conversation. This year's event promises to reflect and potentially intensify these ongoing discussions, and Conan O'Brien's role as the host adds a layer of humor and sharp commentary to the proceedings.

## The Cultural Divide: Reflection of Society

One of the most notable trends in recent years is the cultural divide that influences not only the content of films but also the very way the Academy views and rewards them. The 2025 Academy Awards are expected to showcase the increasing gap between global perspectives in cinema and the more insular, traditional view held by Hollywood.

Global film markets—especially in Asia, Europe, and Latin America—have become crucial players in the international film industry. Films like *Parasite* (2019) and *Drive My Car* (2021) highlighted the increasing relevance of non-English-language films in global cinema. By 2025, this trend is likely to continue, with more international filmmakers gaining recognition in categories traditionally dominated by American cinema. The rise of streaming platforms such as Netflix and Amazon Prime has accelerated this shift, offering viewers the opportunity to watch films from all over the world, breaking down geographic and cultural barriers.

On the flip side, Hollywood's historical dominance is being challenged by a rise in independent film production. The independent film industry has long been a space for countercultural movements and voices often marginalized by the mainstream. At the 2025 Oscars, we are likely to see more films from emerging directors and writers challenging traditional narratives, reflecting a growing cultural divide in the stories being told.

The controversy surrounding The Academy's Diversity Push, which began in earnest in 2015 after the #Oscars-SoWhite movement, is also likely to influence the nominations. The 2025 ceremony will undoubtedly feature more

films from diverse creators, representing a broad spectrum of voices and perspectives. However, whether the Academy can truly shift from being perceived as a reflection of Hollywood's historical norms to a more inclusive institution is still a key point of contention.

## Common Themes in 2025 Oscar Nominations

Every year, certain themes emerge that resonate throughout the films that earn Academy Award nominations. These themes are often reflective of the global and societal issues of the moment, serving as a snapshot of cultural consciousness. In 2025, we can expect to see certain recurring themes that reflect ongoing societal struggles and reflections of the current moment.

One prominent theme is likely to be the exploration of technology and artificial intelligence. With the increasing role of AI in various sectors—from filmmaking to the workforce—it's no surprise that films exploring the ethical implications and emotional impacts of advanced technology are gaining popularity. Directors like Christopher Nolan and Ridley Scott have already explored these themes in films like *Interstellar* and *Blade Runner 2049*, and 2025 may see more visionary filmmakers taking on the subject. These films could range from dystopian narratives to stories about the integration of AI into everyday life.

Another common theme likely to dominate 2025 is climate change. Environmental films have been a major talking point over the last decade, from *An Inconvenient Truth* (2006) to *Don't Look Up* (2021), and with the rising urgency surrounding global warming, we can expect more films focused on ecological disaster, sustainability, and human responsibility. Documentaries like *The Elephant Queen* (2019) or *My Octopus Teacher* (2020) demonstrated the impact of nature on human understanding, and more such nature-driven stories are expected to make an appearance in the nominations.

Finally, expect to see an increase in films exploring identity and belonging, especially in terms of race, gender, and sexual orientation. With social justice movements like #MeToo and Black Lives Matter continuing to influence the cultural landscape, movies that explore these important issues are likely to earn critical attention. Films that challenge societal norms or explore untold stories about marginalized communities will be crucial in shaping the nominations for 2025.



**The Gender Battle: Inclusivity or Tokenism?**

In recent years, there has been significant scrutiny around gender inequality within the film industry, both in front of and behind the camera. The 2025 Oscars will reflect the ongoing battle for gender equality, particularly for women in film. The Academy has faced backlash

for its historical exclusion of women directors, writers, and producers, but strides have been made in recent years. Notably, films like *Lady Bird* (2017) and *Nomadland* (2020) garnered recognition for their female creators, including Greta Gerwig and Chloé Zhao, respectively.

However, despite these victories, the gender divide in Hollywood is still glaring. Women are still underrepresented in key creative roles, particularly in directing and producing. While the Academy has taken steps toward inclusivity, such as increasing the number of female voters and nominees, it's unclear whether these changes are truly representative of an industry-wide shift. With #MeToo still a potent cultural force, the 2025 Oscars are likely to feature more films that tackle issues such as gender violence, workplace harassment, and power dynamics in the film industry.

There will also be a close examination of the gender representation in nominations and awards, especially with the rise of non-binary and transgender representation in film. The 2025 Academy Awards may see more diverse nominations for both actors and filmmakers who identify outside the traditional gender binary. Whether this leads to real, systemic change in how the Academy views and awards talent remains a key question.

**Hot Music Inclusion: The Soundtrack of 2025**

Music in film has always played a significant role in shaping the emotional landscape of a movie, and in 2025, we can expect music to be at the forefront of the Oscars. With streaming platforms giving more accessibility to diverse artists, both mainstream and independent, the musical landscape is more eclectic

than ever. The 2025 ceremony will likely reflect this diversity, with more inclusion of artists from genres like hip-hop, electronic, and world music.

There is also the question of how the Academy will recognize music from films that are not traditional soundtracks. The increasing popularity of original songs performed by popular artists

in mainstream films, such as Billie Eilish's *No Time to Die* theme, indicates a shift in how music is integrated into the cinematic experience. This trend could continue, with songs from major artists like Beyoncé,

Taylor Swift, and Kendrick Lamar being considered for nomination in the Best Original Song category.

Music-driven films, such as biopics or documentary features about legendary artists, are also likely to make waves at the

2025 Oscars. Movies like *Rocketman* (2019) and *Bohemian Rhapsody* (2018) have demonstrated the commercial and critical appeal of musical biopics, and the Academy will likely continue to honor these films in categories like Best Picture, Best Actor, and Best Director.

**Obits: In Memoriam**

The "In Memoriam" segment of the Academy Awards is always an emotional part of the ceremony, paying tribute to those who have passed away in the previous year. For 2025, the segment will no doubt recognize some of the major stars lost in the entertainment industry, including actors, directors, and musicians.

One name likely to be included is the late Martin Scorsese, the iconic director who passed away in late 2024. Scorsese's influence on modern cinema is immeasurable, and the 2025 Oscars will honor his contribution to the industry. Similarly, other notable figures who may be included are actors like Angela Lansbury and James Lovell, both of whom had long and distinguished careers in film and television.



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### Historical Movies in 2025

Historical films continue to be a staple of the Oscar nominations. From *12 Years a Slave* (2013) to *The Favourite* (2018), these films often highlight pivotal moments in history and showcase performances that can range from heart-wrenching to inspiring. The 2025 Oscars will likely feature films based on historical events, particularly those of identity, resilience, and struggle, and

Given the political climate, recent history, by the Civil Movement, America, and of global lism, are also feature heavily in nominations. Expect films that explore events with a focus personal stories that the impact on individuals and

### Conan O'Brien: The Host

Conan O'Brien, known for his sharp wit and irreverence, will be taking on the role of host for the 2025 Academy Awards. His comedic timing and ability to navigate delicate situations will be a welcome addition to an event that has become known for its sometimes awkward and stilted nature. O'Brien, who has decades of experience hosting late-night television, will bring a fresh energy to the ceremony. His ability to blend humor with sharp commentary will likely resonate with a younger audience, potentially drawing in viewers who feel disconnected from the traditional, more formal aspects of the Academy Awards.



social and films about particular-Rights post-9/11 the rise popu-likely to the 2025 to see these on highlight communities.

O'Brien's irreverence will also be a key asset in addressing some of the more sensitive cultural issues that continue to surround the Oscars. His comedic take on Hollywood's ongoing gender and racial struggles could offer much-needed levity while also prompting important conversations. Given the increasing importance of comedy in addressing societal issues, Conan will likely provide the perfect balance of humor and insight to the evening.

The 2025 Academy Awards will undoubtedly be a night to remember. As the cultural and political landscape continues to evolve, the Oscars are being forced to reckon with issues of diversity, gender equality, and global perspectives. At the same time, the show will celebrate the art of filmmaking and the outstanding contributions of creators from all corners of the world. With Conan O'Brien at the helm, the ceremony promises to offer a unique blend of humor, insight, and cultural reflection, ensuring that the 2025 Oscars will remain a pivotal moment in Hollywood history.



# 97TH ACADEMY AWARDS

## WHAT MOVIES HAVE BEEN NOMINATED, FROM FEATURE FILMS TO DOCUMENTARIES

By Andrea Pillsbo

The 97th Academy Awards, commonly known as the Oscars, are scheduled for Sunday, March 2, 2025, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles. The ceremony will be broadcast live on ABC and streamed on Hulu, marking the first time the Oscars will be available on a streaming platform.

**Host and Presenters:** Comedian and podcaster Conan O'Brien will host the event for the first time. Notable presenters include last year's acting award winners, such as Emma Stone and Cillian Murphy.

**Nominations:** The film "Emilia Pérez" leads the nominations with 13, followed by "The Brutalist" and "Wicked," each with 10.

**Best Picture Nominees:** The nominees are:

- "Emilia Pérez"
- "The Brutalist"
- "Wicked"
- "A Complete Unknown"
- "Conclave"
- "Anora"

- "Indecent Proposal 2023"
- "Dune: Part Two"
- "Nickel Boys"
- "The Apprentice"

**Best Documentary Feature Nominees:** The nominees are:

- "Black Box Diaries"
- "No Other Land"
- "Porcelain War"
- "Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat"
- "Sugarcane"

**Where to Watch the Nominated Films**

- "Emilia Pérez" is available on Netflix.
- "The Brutalist" is showing in cinemas.
- "Wicked" is available for purchase or rental.
- "A Complete Unknown" and "Conclave" are both showing in cinemas.
- "Anora" and "Indecent Proposal 2023" can be rented or purchased.



- "Dune: Part Two" is available on Sky/Now.
  - "Nickel Boys" is in cinemas.
  - "The Apprentice" is showing in cinemas.
  - "Black Box Diaries" is available on MTV.
  - "No Other Land" is available on No Other Land.
  - "Porcelain War" is available on Porcelain War.
  - "Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat" is available on Soundtrack to a Coup d'Etat.
  - "Sugarcane" is available on Sugarcane.
- For more detailed information on the nominees and where to watch them, you can refer to the official Oscars website at [www.oscars.org](http://www.oscars.org)



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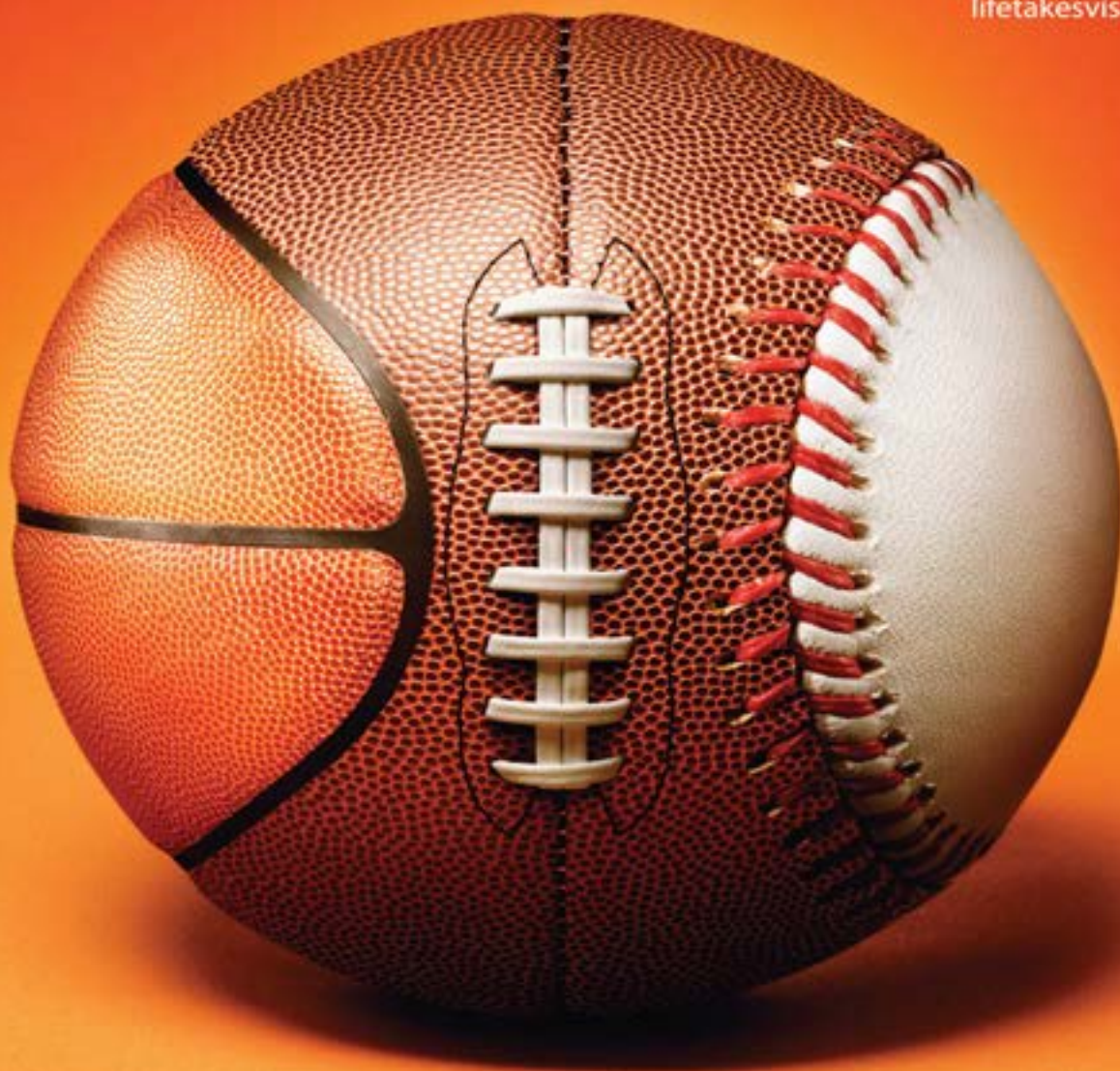


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# America's "First Car-Free Neighborhood" A Vision For Sustainable Urban Living

on cars as the primary mode of transportation, thus offering an entirely new way of thinking about urban planning and transportation.



## The Birth of the Idea

The notion of a car-free neighborhood may sound radical, given that cars have long been a part of American daily life. However, the idea gained traction, especially in response to concerns about environmental sustainability, air pollution, traffic congestion, and health implications of sedentary lifestyles. In 2019, a project was launched in Boston, Massachusetts. This initiative, known as "The Seaport District's Car-Free Concept", is touted as America's first car-free neighborhood.

Unlike other areas that have attempted to reduce car usage or promote alternative transportation, this neighborhood is designed with the idea of eliminating personal car ownership. The development focuses on creating an environment where walking, biking, and public transit are encouraged. This approach to city planning is inspired by similar car-free zones in cities such as Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Tokyo, where reduced car dependence



has been linked to lower pollution, increased pedestrian traffic, and a sense of community. **Design and Features of the Car-Free Neighborhood**

The core idea is to prioritize pedestrians and cyclists over automobiles, which creates a radically different design. Streets are narrower, with more green spaces, parks, and public squares where people can interact and engage in leisure activities. High-density mixed-use buildings dominate, housing apartments, offices, and retail spaces. This allows residents to access essential services, such as grocery stores, restaurants, and schools, within walking or cycling distance.

Instead of traditional parking garages and wide roads, this car-free neighborhood incorporates pedestrian walkways, bike lanes, and shared spaces where people can safely walk, cycle, or socialize. The design emphasizes connectivity, accessibility, and sustainability. The neighborhood also features smart city technologies, including sensors for waste management, energy-efficient buildings, and state-of-the-art public transportation.

Another key feature is public transportation options, including electric buses, trams, and shared electric bikes or scooters. These alternatives are integrated into the infrastructure, making it convenient for residents to rely on sustainable transportation options instead of personal vehicles. The design also features seamless access to mass transit systems.

## Benefits and Challenges

The implementation of a car-free neighborhood offers benefits that have been well-documented. A reduction in cars leads to a decrease in air pollution, which has health benefits.

Studies have shown that lower levels of pollution contribute to a decrease in respiratory illnesses, heart disease, and other chronic health conditions. In this sense, the Seaport District and other similar developments are positioned as a solution.

In addition to environmental and health benefits, the car-free neighborhood fosters a sense of community. With cars removed, residents are more likely to engage in face-to-face interactions, creating a safer and more vibrant atmosphere. Public spaces become more accessible to children and the elderly. Moreover, reduced reliance on cars can lead to a more equitable neighborhood.

However, the transition to a car-free lifestyle presents challenges. One of the most notable barriers is the resistance from individuals who are accustomed to car-centric living. Many Americans view cars as essential for personal freedom and convenience.

Convincing people to relinquish their cars and embrace alternative transportation requires a major cultural shift and extensive education. Additionally, infrastructure improvements in other parts of the city—such as public transportation systems—are often necessary to make car-free neighborhoods a viable option.

The financial aspect of developing such a neighborhood also poses challenges. The initial cost can be high. However, proponents argue that in the long run, these investments will pay off in terms of reduced healthcare costs, environmental benefits, and improved quality of life.

## The Future of Car-Free Neighborhoods in the U.S.

While Boston's car-free neighborhood is still a new concept, it represents the beginning of a larger shift in how American cities approach urban development. As climate change and sustainability become more pressing issues, other cities across the United States are beginning to explore similar concepts. New York City, Portland, and Los Angeles have already taken steps toward reducing car dependence, such as expanding bike lanes and improving public transportation networks. These smaller initiatives could ultimately lead to the development of more car-free zones in urban centers across the nation.

America's first car-free neighborhood signals a future where urban living is less about car ownership and more about walking, cycling, and using sustainable transportation. By embracing this vision, cities can not only reduce their environmental impact but also create more livable, people-centered spaces that foster a sense of community and a higher quality of life for all. While challenges remain, the movement toward car-free urban environments is an important step in the right direction.

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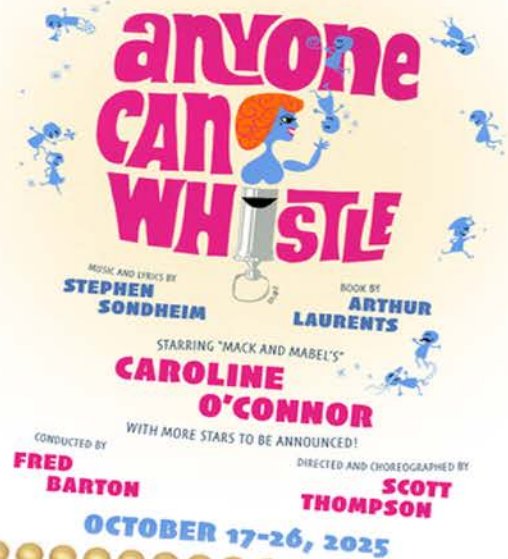
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# Captain America Brave New World

Captain America: Brave New World” is a highly processed, empty calorie, regret-later candy of a movie.

We’re nearing the end of Phase Five of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, with predictable and underwhelming returns. “Captain America: Brave New World” feels like it’s just treading water, wasting Anthony Mackie.

The story by Rob Edwards, Malcolm Spellman and Dalan Musson gathers familiar Marvel characters and blends them into a White House conspiracy-meets-international violent face-off in the Indian Ocean.

It lifts from “The Manchurian Candidate” and “Top Gun” and even steals its title from Aldous Huxley. It cannibalizes from other Marvel movies, like the addition of a substance

There is a trio of bad guys, each more powerful and overacting as the last — a delicious Giancarlo Esposito as the villain Sidewinder, Tim Blake Nelson as Samuel Sterns (a hyper-intelligent megalomaniac with his brain literally bursting out of his skull) and Red Hulk, a massive slab of angry man-meat who makes the regular Hulk look like Timothée Chalamet.

There are also some tangential characters, like Isaiah Bradley, a Korean War veteran who was a Super Soldier but spent years in prison, and the weirdly cast Shira Haas as Ruth Bat-Seraph, a slippery national security agent with a murky agenda.

Director Julius Onah does well with the action but fumbles the quieter moments and supervises editing that’s the opposite of crisp, not helped by script writers who ape military language — “Negative, the package is the priority” — and grandiose sentiment — “The country is lost.”

For extra credit, spot all the product placements in the movie: Cap drives a GMC truck and uses Dell computers. The president of the United States uses a Peloton. What a wasted opportunity for Cap’n Crunch.

There does emerge a theme that unites Cap and Ross, which is that both feel the need to prove themselves. Mackie’s Captain America throughout the previous 2021 TV series “The Falcon and the Winter Soldier” was ambivalent about taking on the mantle of Steve Rogers, the original Sentinel of Liberty. “You wonder if you’ll ever be enough,” he says.

Ross says he wants to secure peace across the world but really wants to reconnect with his estranged daughter — Liv Tyler — and prove he’s changed. He wants to take a walk with her to see the cherry blossoms. We would like him to ask serious questions of his agent.

Mackie, who joined the MCU more than a decade ago in 2014’s “Captain America: The Winter Soldier,” has been a good servant to Marvel and deserves better. One of our great actors, he can be steely and vulnerable. But he can’t outrace stilted lines like “If we can’t see the good in each other, we’ve already lost the fight.” Marvel has lost more than the fight; they’ve lost the thread.



called Adamantium, much like Vibranium from Wakanda. There is a Kendrick Lamar song heard at the climactic end, but it’s not new.

We start with Harrison Ford as Thaddeus “Thunderbolt” Ross — taking the role over from the late William Hurt — in his first days as U.S. president. He insists he’s changed from the days when he hunted down Hulk.

He approaches Sam Wilson, the new Captain America, and proposes a strategic union between the government and Captain America. “Work with me, Sam. We’ll show the world a better way forward.”

This is a dangerous idea — superheroes working for the government — and Cap is warned but still agrees. “Trust me. My eyes are wide open,” he reassures Danny Ramirez as his sidekick and fledgling new Falcon. (Cap’s eyes may be open but yours may be slowly closing).

# Bridget Jones Mad About the Boy

It is a truth universally acknowledged that at the end of any Bridget Jones movie, our heroine has triumphed.

This is not a spoiler for “Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy.” In fact, if you’ve seen the trailer, you’ll know that Bridget (Renée Zellweger), who finally married Mark at the end of the third film, is now a widow.

We’re not supposed to divulge what happens next. But remember, folks, this is a classic romantic comedy franchise. Rom-coms can be sad and deep, but they still need to be romantic.

What makes “Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy” especially enjoyable is not that Bridget finds a way yet again to triumph over doubts and obstacles. It’s that she still makes us car.

How does she do it? All I know is, I was rooting harder for her at the end of this film than I was with the others, even the original where she’s kissing Mark in the snowy street in underwear and sneakers.

There are various possible explanations. One is Zellweger herself, who has brought her character gracefully into her 50s, retaining Bridget’s goofiness and deep-set optimism while reflecting life experience.

And there are subtle changes. The relationships in this latest film are more interesting.

Bridget’s relationship with herself is more interesting, too — and healthier. Sure, she can swig a full bottle of Chardonnay. But the smoking is gone, and so, thank heavens, is the ridiculous weight obsession — a phenomenon that hit its nadir in the icky final line of the second film, with Bridget saying yes, you can find happiness, even if you “have a bottom the size of two bowling balls.”

Nothing like that in this latest installment, directed by Michael Morris based on Helen Fielding’s novel (Fielding co-wrote the script), which begins four years into Bridget’s widowhood. She’s living in a lovingly cluttered home in Hampstead with her kids, Billy and Mabel.

Bridget is getting dressed for a rare night at a dinner party, awaiting the sitter. That sitter is ... Daniel Cleaver himself, back for the fourth film after missing the third, which contained his funeral. (He wasn’t dead!) Hugh Grant is less adorable than in the beginning, more grizzled, still slightly creepy but more vulnerable.

At the party, all the couples want to know how Bridget is moving on. She escapes, and at a

bar later with her stalwart friend group (the gang from the previous movies), says she’s done with romance.

Of course, that will prove untrue. Bridget will meet her new love interest in the most Bridget Jones of ways: stuck awkwardly on a tree in the park.

To the rescue comes a dreamy park ranger (Leo Woodall), who also happens to see on Bridget’s phone that her friends have set up a Tinder account: “Tragic Widow Seeks Sexual Awakening.”

And thus, Bridget’s new love interest is 29-year-old Roxster McDuff — a ridiculous name, rivaling how ridiculously sexy he is.



At the same time, Bridget has returned to work as a TV producer. Her colleagues salivate at the sight of Roxster, especially when he shows up to a party, rips off his shirt and dives into a pool to rescue a dog.

“Now THAT’S a rebrand,” Bridget’s friend says approvingly. But can their relationship triumph over the considerable age gap? It’s a subject — older woman, younger man — that’s a hot topic.

Also raised here is the question of how one moves on from deep grief to live fully again.

And there are new issues too, such as how hard it is to keep up with other parents. For example: When Bridget is asked, by her son’s handsome science teacher Mr. Wallaker (Chiwetel Ejiofor), to speak to the class, he tells her the previous parent was a Nobel winner.

No worries. The lessons of this last Bridget Jones chapter speak to how one adjusts expectations and finds the right way to live in the world.

And on that note, as old photos from Bridget’s life fly by during closing credits, it’s hard not to feel like she’s family — and to be more than a little proud of how she found her way.





# Backstreet Boys At The Sphere In Las Vegas

By Jeff Young

As the calendar rolls into 2025, Las Vegas continues to solidify its reputation as the epicenter of entertainment. One of the most exciting events in the city this year is the Backstreet Boys' residency at The Sphere, a revolutionary concert venue that has been turning heads with its technological marvels. Known for their decades-long success, the Backstreet Boys are set to light up The Sphere in Las Vegas with their unique blend of nostalgia, energy, and immersive experiences. **The Sphere: A New Era of Concerts**

Before diving into the Backstreet Boys' upcoming performances, it's important to understand the venue that will host. The Sphere is no ordinary concert hall. This state-of-the-art, spherical-shaped venue redefines the live music experience with its cutting-edge audio and visual technology. The venue boasts a massive 360-degree LED screen that wraps around the entire

arena, enveloping the audience in breathtaking visuals that complement the music. Additionally, The Sphere is known for its incredible acoustics, ensuring that every note sung and every beat of the music is heard.

The Sphere also has a distinctive exterior, which is covered in an enormous LED screen that can display massive visuals, creating an immersive



experience before attendees even enter. The Sphere isn't just a place to hear music—it's a place to live it, a fully immersive environment.

### Backstreet Boys: A Legacy of Hits

The Backstreet Boys have been part of the pop culture fabric since the mid-90s, and their music continues to resonate. From their first hits like I Want It That Way and As Long As You Love Me, to more recent hits, the band has solidified its place as one of the greatest boy bands of all time. Now, with a legacy spanning over two decades, the group is returning to Las Vegas for a



new residency that promises to be a spectacular blend of their classic hits, new songs, and stage production.

Their residency is set to be unlike any other show they've performed. The venue offers the perfect platform for the group to showcase their music in new and exciting ways. Fans will see the Backstreet Boys perform

live in one of the most innovative concert venues in the world. **What Fans Can Expect**

The upcoming performances promise an experience that will be remembered for years. The experience will include:

**360-Degree Visuals:** The venue's massive LED screens will display captivating visuals that sync with the music. Expect to see dynamic, ever-changing backdrops.

**Nostalgic Moments:** Of course, no Backstreet Boys concert would be complete without their classic

hits. Fans will have the chance to sing along to fan favorites like Everybody (Backstreet's Back), Larger Than Life, and Quit Playing Games (With My Heart).

**Immersive Sound and Lighting:** The Sphere's sound system ensures that each note and beat will reach every corner of the venue. The entire performance will feel like a multi-sensory experience.

**Interactive Fan Experience:** The Sphere's interactive capabilities will allow the Backstreet Boys to engage directly with the audience.

### Dates and Ticket Information

The Backstreet Boys' residency at The Sphere is scheduled for July 11, 2025 - August 3, 2025, with tickets available for fans. The band has stated that they plan to create a setlist that will appeal to both long-time fans and newcomers. VIP packages will be available, offering perks such as meet-and-greets, premium seating, and merchandise.

### A Perfect Match

The collaboration between The Sphere and the Backstreet Boys is a blend of nostalgia and innovation. The Backstreet Boys are known for high-energy performances, and The Sphere offers the ideal environment to amplify that energy. [www.thesphere.com/shows/backstreet-boys](http://www.thesphere.com/shows/backstreet-boys)



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## FREEBIE ALERT! APPS THAT PAY YOU TO PLAY IN 2025!

By Mary Clarence

In 2025, the world of mobile apps is transforming, offering opportunities for users to make money while playing games. With the increasing popularity of mobile gaming, a new wave of apps is rewarding players with real cash, gift cards, or other incentives.

### Mistplay

Mistplay has been a favorite. The app allows users to earn points for playing. Choose from a catalog of games, from strategy to puzzles, all of which reward you with points that can be redeemed for gift cards. The more you play, the more points you accumulate, and the higher you rank, unlocking more rewards.

### Lucktastic

Lucktastic combines mobile gaming with the thrill of prizes. The app continues to offer free scratch-off cards that give users the chance to win cash prizes, gift cards, or sweepstakes

entries. It's easy to use. The more you play, the better your chances of winning big prizes.

### Swagbucks Live

Swagbucks is one of the most well-known reward apps, and its mobile gaming allows players to earn money by answering trivia. Each correct answer earns you points, which can be redeemed for cash through PayPal or gift cards.

### MyPoints

MyPoints is another popular app. The app has expanded its offerings, including more game categories and better rewards. MyPoints lets users earn points for completing tasks, including games. Once you accumulate enough points, you can cash them in for gift cards or PayPal cash.

The app offers a wide range of games, from casual titles to in-depth strategy games.

### Play-to-Earn (P2E)

### Blockchain Games

The rise of blockchain technology has introduced a new genre of mobile gaming known as Play-to-Earn (P2E). These apps allow

players to earn cryptocurrency or NFTs as they play, opening up a whole new world of earning. Games like Axie Infinity and The Sandbox are pushing the boundaries of what it means to "play to earn." P2E apps are more accessible than ever, with users able to download mobile games that reward them with digital assets. These assets can then be sold or traded, giving players a direct financial incentive to play.

### Play and Win

Play and Win is an app that rewards users with points for playing casual games. The app has improved its reward system, allowing users to earn more points with less time. Redeem your points for cash, gift cards, or other valuable prizes. One of the app's most appealing features is its variety of game types, including slots, puzzle games, and word games, so players can choose what interests

them the most. As you play, you can climb the leaderboard to unlock exclusive rewards, making it a fun way to challenge yourself.

### Big Time

Big Time is a mobile app designed specifically for gamers who love competition. It gives players the chance to participate in cash tournaments and skill-based games.

Players can enter competitions with entry fees, and the winners take home a portion of the prize pool.

### Coin Pop

Coin Pop rewards you with gift cards for playing games and completing tasks. Players can choose from a wide range of games on the platform and earn coins. The coins can be converted into gift cards for popular retailers, such as Amazon, Google Play, and others. The app also has a referral program that allows users to earn extra rewards for bringing in friends.

### InboxDollars

InboxDollars includes a wide variety of games, such as cards, puzzles, and trivia. As you play, you earn cash, making it easy to track your earnings. InboxDollars also rewards users for other activities, such as taking surveys and watching videos.

### Givling

Givling is a unique app that combines gaming with crowdfunding and charity. Players answer trivia questions to earn points, and when they accumulate enough, they get a chance to contribute to paying off student loan debt or mortgage debt for others.

As mobile gaming continues to grow, the options for making money while playing have never been better. Whether you enjoy casual games, trivia, or blockchain gaming, there are apps that allow you to earn rewards, cash, or gift cards while having fun. So, why not start earning while you play? The rewards await!





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# DEBUNKING THE BIGGEST MYTHS ABOUT SCOTCH WHISKY

By Dolores Martin

Scotch whisky, often referred to as "Scotch," is one of the world's most iconic and beloved spirits. Its rich history, diverse flavors, and complex production have made it a symbol of craftsmanship and tradition. However there are many myths and misconceptions surrounding Scotch whisky. These myths can confuse newcomers and even mislead seasoned drinkers. **All Scotch Whisky is Made in Scotland**

Some people believe that "Scotch" is only whisky made in Scotland, regardless of where it's produced. In fact, the name "Scotch" is protected by

law, and only whisky produced in Scotland can be labeled as Scotch whisky. However, whisky made outside of Scotland, even if it follows traditional Scotch methods, cannot be called "Scotch." **Whisky Should Always Be Served Neat**

A myth is that Scotch whisky should always be served neat, without any mixers or dilution. While this is often true for connoisseurs, it is not a hard and fast rule. Many Scotch whiskies, especially those with a lower alcohol content or lighter flavors, can be enjoyed on the rocks or with a splash of water. **Older Scotch Whisky Is Always Better**

Many people believe that the older a Scotch whisky is, the better it will taste. While it's true that age can bring complexity and depth, it doesn't automatically make the whisky better. The aging process is influenced by many factors, such as the type of cask, the climate, and the distillation. A 25-year-old whisky that was poorly stored or made from subpar ingredients may not be as enjoyable as a younger whisky made with care and expertise. **Single Malt Scotch is Always Better Than Blended Scotch**

Single malt Scotch whisky, made from 100% malted barley at a single distillery, often carries the reputation of being the superior option compared to



blended Scotch, which is a mix of different single malts and grain whiskies. However, this is a matter of preference. Some people prefer consistency and smoothness of blended Scotch, while others appreciate complexity and character of single malt whisky. Furthermore, many of the finest Scotch whisky brands offer exceptional blended options that rival the quality of single malts. **Scotch Whisky Must Be Made from Barley**

Another myth is that Scotch whisky must only be made from barley. While barley is the most common grain, the regulations for Scotch whisky allow for other grains to be used, including wheat and rye. "Grain whisky" is typically made from a mixture of grains, while "malt whisky" is made exclusively from malted barley. **Scotch Whisky Is Always Peaty**

The association between Scotch whisky and peaty, smoky flavors often leads to the belief that all Scotch whiskies are characterized by these elements. While peat is a key component, particularly those from Islay, not all Scotch whiskies are peated. Many distilleries in regions like Speyside and the Highlands produce whiskies with more delicate, fruity, or floral profiles. Peat is just one of many flavor profiles that can be found in Scotch. **Scotch Whisky is Only for Sipping**

There's a misconception that Scotch whisky is a drink only for sipping slowly. While Scotch is indeed often enjoyed in a leisurely manner, it is also versatile and can be used in cocktails. Classic Scotch whisky cocktails, such as the Rob Roy, Scotch Sour, or Blood and Sand, offer a different way to experience the spirit. **Expensive Scotch Whisky is the Best**

Just because a Scotch whisky carries a hefty price doesn't automatically mean it will be the best whisky. Price is often influenced by factors like rarity, age, and brand, rather than taste. Many affordable whiskies deliver outstanding flavor and quality, and personal taste plays a huge role in determining which

whisky is best for you. It's always a good idea to sample different whiskies across various price ranges to discover your preferences. **You Can't Mix Scotch Whisky with Food**

Some believe that Scotch whisky should never be paired with food. This myth is far from the truth. In fact, Scotch whisky can be an excellent accompaniment to a variety of dishes. The richness of a sherried whisky can complement dark chocolate or rich meats, while lighter whiskies can pair well with seafood or soft cheeses. Whisky pairing has gained popularity among foodies. **The Quality of Scotch is All About the Distillery**

While the distillery's reputation can influence the perception of a Scotch whisky, the quality is also influenced by factors like raw ingredients, skill of the distillers, and maturation. A lesser-known distillery might produce an exceptional whisky, while a renowned distillery might release products that don't live up to expectations.

Scotch whisky is a rich and varied spirit. From misconceptions about aging to misbeliefs about flavor profiles, understanding the truth can help consumers appreciate the diversity and craftsmanship of Scotch. Whether you're a newcomer or an experienced whisky drinker, the world of Scotch whisky offers something for everyone to explore, free from the constraints of outdated beliefs.



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## Savoring Local Wine Bars With Exceptional Cuisine In The West San Fernando Valley

By Alfred Wix

The West San Fernando Valley is home to a variety of charming wine bars that offer not only curated wine selections but also mouthwatering cuisine. Whether you're in the mood for a robust Cabernet Sauvignon paired with a gourmet meal or a refreshing glass of Sauvignon Blanc with light bites, the Valley has a spot for every palate.

### Vintage Wine + Eats (Studio City)

A cozy yet sophisticated wine bar, Vintage Wine + Eats boasts an impressive selection of wines. Their food menu is equally enticing, featuring small plates like truffle mac & cheese, charcuterie boards, and their popular fig and prosciutto flatbread. This spot delivers a well-balanced atmosphere with

knowledgeable staff eager to help with pairings. [www.vintagestudiocity.com](http://www.vintagestudiocity.com)

### The Local Peasant (Woodland Hills)

Though primarily known as a gastropub, The Local Peasant has an



incredible selection of wines. With a focus on farm-to-table cuisine, dishes like braised short ribs, truffle fries, and their signature burger pair wonderfully with a bold Zinfandel or Malbec. The relaxed yet vibrant ambiance makes it an excellent spot for a laid-back evening. [www.thelocalpeasant.com](http://www.thelocalpeasant.com)

### Buvette Wine Bar & Bistro (Sherman Oaks)

Buvette brings a slice of Europe with its extensive selection of French

and Italian wines. Their menu includes delectable dishes such as mussels in white wine sauce, duck confit, and a beautifully curated cheese board. The intimate setting makes it a great place for date nights or catching up with friends. [www.buvettela.com](http://www.buvettela.com)



### Firefly (Studio City)

Firefly is not just a wine bar but an elegant restaurant with a secluded, romantic atmosphere. Featuring a diverse wine list with global selections, Firefly also offers a robust

menu that includes dishes like lobster risotto, lamb chops, and heirloom tomato salad. The ambiance—dimly lit with a library-style lounge—adds to the charm. [www.fireflystudiocity.com](http://www.fireflystudiocity.com)

### Barrel & Ashes (Studio City)

If you're craving BBQ with a sophisticated twist, Barrel & Ashes offers a fantastic selection of wines alongside their hearty menu. Their smoked meats, including brisket, pulled pork, and ribs, pair



beautifully with bold reds like Syrah and Cabernet Sauvignon. [www.barrelandashes.com](http://www.barrelandashes.com)

### Cork Dork (Woodland Hills)

As the name suggests, Cork Dork is a paradise for wine lovers who enjoy exploring unique and rare finds. The food menu complements the wine selection, featuring dishes like beef tartare, wild mushroom pasta, and artisanal flatbreads. The knowledgeable sommeliers on-site make this a fantastic destination. [www.corkdorkwinebar.com](http://www.corkdorkwinebar.com)

### Pedalers Fork (Calabasas)

A mix of coffeehouse, restaurant, and wine bar, Pedalers Fork offers an experience for any foodie. Their wine selection is chosen to complement the organic, locally sourced menu, featuring roasted beet salad, grass-fed steak, and house-made pastas. [www.pedalersfork.com](http://www.pedalersfork.com)

Whether you're a casual wine enthusiast or a seasoned connoisseur, the West San Fernando Valley offers an array of wine bars. These spots provide the perfect pairing of wine and food. So, grab a glass, savor the flavors, and discover the hidden wine gems of the Valley!

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## UP AND COMING HAIRSTYLES THAT MAKE YOU LOOK YOUNGER

By Nicolas Darton

As we age, it's natural that our style and beauty routines evolve. One of the most noticeable ways to shed years off your appearance is by choosing the right hairstyle. Hairstyling trends emphasize flattering cuts, fresh looks, and textures that give a youthful, vibrant appearance.

### Blunt Bob

The blunt bob continues to be a popular choice. This timeless cut, which sits around the chin or just above the shoulders, is a fantastic way to add a fresh and youthful vibe. The key is ensuring it's cut to flatter your face shape. Soft, straight lines sharpen the jawline and define the face, creating a sleek, youthful appearance. A blunt bob works well for fine to medium hair. It adds fullness and volume, and it creates a clean, polished look.

### Shag Cut

The shag haircut is making a comeback in 2025. This retro cut is full of layers, texture, and volume, which can give you a youthful, playful look. Shag cuts work on a variety of hair lengths, making them versatile and flattering. The key is the texture and volume. Avoid overly thick layers and go for softer, more face-framing layers.

A shag cut is great for those with natural waves or curly hair. The layers enhance natural texture, giving the style an effortlessly chic, just-out-of-bed vibe.

### Long, Soft Waves

Long, flowing waves have always been associated with a youthful, carefree appearance. Loose waves give hair

movement and body while maintaining a natural, effortless vibe. The key to making it work for a younger appearance is to keep the waves soft and not too tight. Opt for gentle, beachy waves.

Pair long waves with highlights or balayage. Soft, sun-kissed highlights around the face can illuminate your complexion, enhancing your features and giving you a youthful glow.

Long waves are versatile, too—they can be worn with a center or side part, and can be easily styled.

### Pixie Cut

The pixie cut is no longer just for daring trendsetters. This edgy, yet elegant hairstyle can be youthful when styled correctly. A pixie cut draws attention to your eyes and cheekbones,



creating a fresh, youthful vibe. The key to making the pixie cut youthful is to keep the layers soft and feathery. Opt for a slightly tousled or textured pixie.

For a more modern spin, try adding length in the front to frame your face. A slightly longer fringe or bangs can soften the cut, making it appear less harsh while also accentuating your facial features.

### Soft Curtain Bangs

Soft curtain bangs are taking center stage. Curtain bangs are light and airy, parting in the middle to softly frame the face.

This style opens up the eyes and creates a lift around the

face, instantly reducing the appearance of wrinkles and sagging. Curtain bangs are versatile and can be paired with almost any hairstyle. This fringe works well with a variety of hair textures, from straight to wavy to curly. Curtain bangs are flattering for almost every face shape, and they can be customized to suit your personal style.



### Textured Lob

A textured lob (long bob) is another hairstyle that makes you look younger. This cut falls just above the shoulders, and the key is in the layers and texture. A textured lob is styled with beachy waves or a tousled, windswept look, which adds body and gives a carefree, lived-in vibe.

This style works well for women who want a youthful look without sacrificing length. The lob is versatile enough to be worn straight for a sleek, polished

appearance or with soft waves for a more laid-back, beachy look.

### Shoulder-Length Layers

Shoulder-length layered hair is another flattering cut for looking younger.

Layers add volume, dimension, and movement without overwhelming the face. By keeping the layers long and soft, you can achieve a modern,

youthful appearance that highlights your features while keeping things natural and low-maintenance. This style works for most face shapes and hair textures, offering versatility in styling.

Hairstyles that make you look younger focus on volume, texture, and flattering lines. By choosing a cut that suits your face shape, hair texture, and personal style, you can achieve a look that enhances your natural beauty.

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# OPEN FIST THEATRE COMPANY PRESENTS BAT BOY THE MUSICAL

By Rosa Pocker

**H**orrifying musical brought back to horrifying life by horrifying theater company: Open Fist revives *Bat Boy: The Musical* with veteran director Pat Towne at the helm!

More terrifying than *Cats*! Open Fist Theatre Company presents *Bat Boy: The Musical*, the award-winning rock horror musical with a book by Keythe Farley and Brian Flemming and music and lyrics by Laurence O'Keefe. Pat Towne directs alongside music director Sean Paxton and choreographer Jennifer

Maples for a six-week run, March 1 through April 6, at Atwater Village Theatre. Three pay-what-you-will (starting at \$10) previews take place on February 22, February 23 and February 28.

Part dark humor and part horror, *Bat Boy: The Musical* was inspired by a 1992 story in a supermarket tabloid, the *Weekly World News*, about a half boy/half bat found in a cave in West Virginia. Now, according to new headlines, *Bat Boy* (Ben Raanan) has been newly rediscovered living in a cave-like theater in Atwater Village.

"It's rock 'n roll and dark in theme, which always appeals to me," says Towne, who previously directed productions of *Joe's Garage* and *A Froggy Becomes for Open Fist*. "It's about embracing, accepting and loving the 'freak,' those who are seen as other and outside the norm. If we can come to terms with the animal inside us,

maybe people would stop doing terrible things in the name of being human."

*Bat Boy: The Musical* premiered in 1997 at L.A.'s The Actors' Gang. In 2001, it opened off-Broadway at the Union Square Theatre, where it ran for eight



months, garnering Lucille Lortel, Richard Rodgers and Outer Critics Circle awards, as well as acclaim from *The New York Times*, which praised its "intelligent wit." It has since been produced on London's West End, at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and at venues across the U.S. and around the world.

In addition to Ranaan, the Open Fist ensemble cast includes Sandra Kate Burck, Isaac Council, Hutchins Foster, Carmella Jenkins, Bethany Koulias, Michael Lanahan, Rebecca Larsen, Amir Levi, Scott Mosensen, Ethan Remez-Cott, Ziare Rene, Beth Robbins, Chima Rok, Robyn Roth and Grace Soens.

The creative team features scenic designer Brad Bentz; lighting designer Brandon Baruch; sound designer Christopher Moscatiello and mixer Alex Hix; costume designer Michael Mullen; and graphic designer D. Morris.

Amanda Weier and Christian Lebano co-produce for Open Fist Theatre Company. The production stage manager is John Dimitri.

Open Fist Theatre Company is a collective, self-producing artistic enterprise with all facets of its operation run by its artist members

under the leadership of artistic director Martha Demson. The company's name combines the notion that an open spirit, embracing all people and all ideas, is essential, with the idea that determination, signified by a fist, is necessary if the theater is to

remain a vital voice for social change and awareness.

*Bat Boy: The Musical* runs March 1 through April 6, with previews beginning February 22. Tickets to performances range from \$26 to \$45; admission to previews is pay-what-you-will starting at \$10. Click here to view the performance schedule, which varies throughout the run.

The performance schedule varies throughout the run; please scroll down for a detailed schedule or check online at [openfist.org](http://openfist.org).

Atwater Village Theatre is located at 3269 Casitas Ave in Los Angeles, CA 90039. Parking is free in the ATX (Atwater Crossing) parking lot one block south of the theater.

To purchase tickets and for more information call (323) 882-6912 or go to [openfist.org](http://openfist.org).

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## THE MOJAVE RESORT – A MID-CENTURY OASIS IN PALM DESERT

By Barbara Beckley

**M**id-Mod luxe in Palm Desert? You bet! Built in 1957 during the celebrity heyday (rumor has it the Rat Pack stayed and played here) and thoughtfully renovated in 2024, The Mojave Resort ([www.mojave-resort.com](http://www.mojave-resort.com))

invites you to relax in retro chic paired with the finest of modern amenities.

Located in tony El Paseo – this hideaway is adjacent to the desert’s finest shops, galleries and restaurants.

Think Louis Vuitton, Trina Turk, Heather James Fine Art. Happy hour/dining favorites Tommy Bahama restaurant/bar, Mastro’s, Eddie V’s Prime Seafood.

### One and Only

The Mojave Resort is Palm Desert’s only mid-century modern hotel, Anthony Brice, who’s been Front Desk Supervisor for 22 years, is pleased to say. “We’re the best of Palm Springs mid-century. Only in Palm Desert,” he winked, as I checked in.

“The Mojave not only has style,” Brice continued. “It has a residential panache that matches the mid-century homes around it.” Furnishings you’d find in a real home. High-end mid-mod glassware and mugs. Upscale backyard with lawns, palm trees, a Cocktail Shaker-shaped pool! Hot tub, seating and fire tables ideal for bubbly under the stars. Also, residential architecture. I nearly missed it. as it looks so similar to surrounding homes. While The Mojave has 25 guestrooms, the friendly, intimate ambiance makes you think it’s much smaller. “Too small to be big; too big to be small,” Brice described.

### Neighbors to the Rescue

Neighboring homeowners feel the same way. Especially two seasonal residents from Oregon, who admired The Mojave on their morning walk. As time passed, they saw it needed TLC. The Mojave was not for sale. But the neighbors made an offer. “The next thing I knew, the Oregon guys had bought it!” Brice said. The new owners closed The Mojave in May 2023 and undertook a year and a half of loving, thoughtful renovation. Updating

yet “respecting The Mojave’s past,” Brice said. “For example, the color scheme has always been orange.”

**Original – But Better**  
Re-opened in August 1, 2024, The Mojave is now an adults-only resort (21 or older) filled with amenities. “The Mojave has always been a charmer,” Brice noted. “In ambiance, service and camaraderie. It’s the reason he’s been here so long. And The Mojave has so many repeat guests. One Canadian couple has been coming for 45 years. And plenty of adult guests stayed at The Mojave as children with parents. Also, groups. A vintage Porsche Club has met here for 10 years.

What do these loyalists think? “Everyone loves it. ‘You guys are doing it right,’” Brice quoted two brothers who have been coming since they were kids.

What’s not to love! “Cocktail? Wine? Beer?



Which do you prefer for your welcome drink?” Brice asked me, like he asks every guest. The Lobby Bar is the first of numerous amenities. There’s also a

complimentary glass of bubbly during the nightly “Sundown Salute” as the Fire Tables are lit. Poolside drinks via barcode and/or “Adult Beverage” cart. Priority Bicycles to wheel around. A first for me at any resort – scented bed sheets. Breakfast Boxes brimming with goodies delivered to your door.

Arguably the best service in the desert! Relaxing with my welcome Sauvignon Blanc, I noticed Brice escort a young couple to one room, then close its door and walk them to another room. Later Brice explained the woman had stayed here before, and was back with her husband to celebrate their first wedding anniversary. Immediately he upgraded them.

Bright and cheery guestrooms pair retro with luxe relaxation. Opening the door to my Premium King Room, No.120, (the new owners put a “1” in front of the room number for style) orange and yellow vintage-inspired décor, a window wall (with nighttime coverings) overlooking lawns and pool, and separate seating area with couch and coffee table were perfect. The fully stocked premium bar and morning Breakfast Box with two flavors of yogurt, a huge muffin, banana, apple, chocolate brownie, and two drinks: Martinelli’s Sparking Cider and gourmet orange juice made me feel like a VIP.

Or maybe Frank Sinatra. “Rumors are that ‘yes,’ the Rat Pack stayed and partied here,” Brice told me. “But without confirmation, we can’t say they did.”

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# Outrageous Celebrity Parties That Shook The Entertainment World

By Eloise Joss

From extravagant themes to jaw-dropping guest lists, celebrities continue to set the standard for over-the-top parties. In 2024, the rich and famous have outdone themselves with celebrations featuring wild stunts, luxurious locations, and million-dollar budgets. Here's a look at some of the most outrageous celebrity parties of the year that had everyone talking.



## Drake's All-White Yachting Extravaganza

Drake is known for throwing unforgettable parties, but his 2024 birthday bash took things to another level. The rapper rented a \$50 million mega-yacht off the coast of Miami and invited A-list guests, including Rihanna, LeBron James, and Adele. The party featured an all-white dress code, a performance by The Weeknd, and a caviar-and-champagne buffet. Guests were also treated to personalized Rolex watches as party favors.

## Kim Kardashian's Met Gala After-Party at a Private Island

Kim Kardashian never does anything small, and her 2024 Met Gala after-party was no exception. Following the prestigious event, Kim whisked a select group of celebrities—including Kendall Jenner, Bad Bunny, and Dua Lipa—to a private island in the Bahamas. The island was transformed into a glowing futuristic

paradise with holograms, drone shows, and floating bars. The cost? An estimated \$10 million.

## Elon Musk's Space-Themed Bash at Starbase

Elon Musk is known for his futuristic vision, so it was no surprise when he threw a space-themed party at SpaceX's Starbase in Texas. Attendees, including Grimes, Jeff Bezos, and Travis Scott, were transported via Tesla Cybertrucks to a custom-built "lunar nightclub" featuring zero-gravity dance floors and holographic bartenders. The night ended with an exclusive look at SpaceX's next rocket launch and a DJ set by Daft Punk.

## Beyoncé and Jay-Z's Parisian Masquerade Ball

Beyoncé and Jay-Z hosted an opulent masquerade ball at the Palace of Versailles, making it one of the most exclusive events of 2024. The guest list included names like Leonardo DiCaprio, Zendaya, and Lenny Kravitz. Attendees were required to wear custom-designed 18th-century-style outfits, and the night included performances by a live orchestra and surprise sets from Beyoncé and Jay-Z themselves. A five-course meal prepared by Michelin-starred chefs rounded out the night.



## Travis Scott's Carnival-Themed Birthday Bash

Travis Scott celebrated his birthday in the most outrageous way possible—by renting out an entire amusement park for his friends and family. The park was decked out with custom Astroworld branding, VIP roller coaster rides, and unlimited gourmet carnival food. Guests like Kylie Jenner, The Chainsmokers, and Post Malone enjoyed a private concert by Scott himself, and everyone went home with exclusive Travis Scott x Nike sneakers.

## Justin and Hailey Bieber's Psychedelic 70s Rager

Justin and Hailey Bieber turned back the clock with a psychedelic 70s-themed house party at their Beverly Hills mansion. The couple transformed their home into a disco wonderland with vintage decor, roller-skating waiters, and a psychedelic light show. Guests like Billie Eilish, Jaden Smith, and Ariana Grande dressed in retro outfits, and Snoop Dogg performed a surprise set to keep the crowd hyped.

## Kylie Jenner's Barbie Dreamhouse Party

Capitalizing on the Barbiecore trend, Kylie Jenner hosted a Barbie Dreamhouse-themed party at her \$36 million mansion. The event featured pink everything—from the floors to the food—and included life-sized Barbie doll boxes for guests to pose in. Margot Robbie, who played Barbie in the hit movie, made a surprise appearance, and the night ended with a giant fireworks display over the Los Angeles skyline.

## Leonardo DiCaprio's Eco-Luxury

### Retreat in the Maldives

Leonardo DiCaprio is known for his environmental activism, so it made perfect sense for him to throw an eco-friendly yet luxurious party in the Maldives. Guests, including

Chris Hemsworth, Cate Blanchett, and Jared Leto, were flown in on private jets offset by carbon credits. The retreat featured sustainable gourmet dining, underwater yoga sessions, and a beachside screening of classic DiCaprio films. Instead of traditional gifts, attendees donated to environmental causes.

## Taylor Swift's Surprise Album Release Bash

Taylor Swift celebrated the release of her latest surprise album with an intimate yet over-the-top party in Nashville. The event was held at a secret location, with fans and celebrities like Selena Gomez, Ed Sheeran, and Harry Styles in attendance. The party included themed rooms inspired by Swift's discography, a confession-al booth for fans to record messages, and a live performance by Swift herself. Guests left with personalized vinyl records of the new album.

Celebrity parties have been nothing short of spectacular, with mind-blowing themes, luxurious settings, and surprise performances. Whether it's a space-themed bash or a masquerade at Versailles, the stars continue to redefine what it means to throw an unforgettable party. As we move forward, one thing's for sure: Hollywood's elite will always find new ways to push the boundaries of extravagance.

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## The Best New Sports Watches For Apple And Android Users In 2025

By Samuel Danis

If you're in the market for a cutting-edge sports watch, 2025 has brought some exciting new options for Apple and Android users. With improved battery life, enhanced fitness tracking, and new health monitoring features, these smartwatches are more powerful than ever. Whether you're a runner, cyclist, swimmer, or general fitness enthusiast, there's a perfect watch for your needs.

### Apple's Latest Sports Watch: Apple Watch Ultra 3

Apple has taken its fitness-focused Ultra series to the next level. Designed for serious athletes and outdoor adventurers, this model boasts impressive upgrades.

**Key Features:** New Dual-Frequency GPS: Enhanced accuracy for outdoor tracking, even in challenging environments.

**Longer Battery Life:** Up to 42 hours in normal use and 80 hours in low-power.

**Advanced Health Metrics:** Features continuous glucose monitoring, blood oxygen tracking, and heart rate analytics.

**Water Resistance Up to 100m:** Ideal for divers, swimmers, and water sports enthusiasts.

**Upgraded Action Button:** Customizable to launch workouts, mark laps, or trigger emergency SOS functions.

**Who It's For:** Perfect for elite athletes, triathletes, and outdoor adventurers who need a robust and feature-packed smartwatch.

### Android's Best Sports Watches

For Android users, the competition is fierce, with Samsung, Garmin, and Google leading the charge.

#### Samsung Galaxy Watch 6 Pro

Samsung has improved its smartwatch lineup with the Galaxy Watch 6 Pro, a sports-focused model with enhanced fitness tracking and a sleek new design.



**Key Features:** Measures body composition, muscle mass, and hydration levels.

**Extended Battery Life:** Up to 72 hours in regular use.

**Sleep Tracking & Recovery Insights:** Provides in-depth sleep coaching and personalized recovery suggestions.

### Improved ECG & Blood Pressure Monitoring:

Advanced health tracking features designed for proactive care.

#### Durable Sapphire Crystal Display:

Scratch-resistant and built for rugged conditions.

**Who It's For:** Perfect for Samsung users who want a balance between smartwatch features and fitness tracking, especially for everyday training.

#### Garmin Fenix 8

Garmin continues to dominate the hardcore sports watch category with the Fenix 8, a powerhouse designed for extreme sports enthusiasts.

**Key Features:** Solar Charging Extends battery life up to 45 days in GPS mode.

**Multi-Band GNSS Support:** Ensures pinpoint accuracy for runners, hikers, and mountaineers.

**VO2 Max & Training Readiness Scores:** Helps serious athletes optimize their training sessions.

### Offline Maps & Navigation:

Essential for adventure seekers who explore off the beaten path.

#### Supports Over 50 Sport Modes:

From skiing to surfing and trail running.

**Who It's For:** For athletes, hikers, and outdoor adventurers who require a rugged, ultra-reliable sports watch.

#### Google Pixel Watch 2 Sport Edition

Google has stepped up its game with the Pixel Watch 2 Sport Edition.

**Key Features:** Personalized fitness coaching and health tracking.

**Stress Management Sensors:** Monitors stress levels and offers guided breathing exercises.

**Automatic Workout Detection:** Detects running, walking, cycling, and more.

**Quick Charging:** Gains 50% battery in just 30 minutes.

**Wear OS 4:** Optimized for faster performance and smoother experiences.

**Who It's For:** Ideal for Google and Fitbit users looking for a stylish and capable fitness-focused smartwatch.

### Choose the Best Sports Watch for You

When selecting a sports watch, consider the following:

**Compatibility:** Apple Watches only work with iPhones, while Android watches are generally more flexible.

**Battery Life:** If you're into long-distance activities like marathons or hiking, opt for watches with extended battery life (e.g., Garmin Fenix 8).

**Health Features:** If health tracking is a priority, look for models with ECG, SpO2, and advanced recovery insights.

**Durability:** For extreme sports, choose a watch with rugged build quality, sapphire crystal screens, and high water resistance.

**Price:** High-end models like the Apple Watch Ultra 3 and Garmin Fenix 8 come with a premium price tag, while the Pixel Watch 2 and Galaxy Watch 6 Pro offer budget-friendly alternatives.

The sports watch market in 2025 offers something for everyone, from the high-performance Apple Watch Ultra 3 to the rugged Garmin Fenix 8. Whether you're an elite athlete or just getting started with fitness tracking, these latest models ensure you stay on top of your goals with cutting-edge technology. Choose the one that best fits your lifestyle and start tracking your progress like never before!

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# KEEP KITTY SMILING! HOW TO BRUSH YOUR CAT'S TEETH

By Sam Parris

As pet owners, we're used to the basics of keeping our cats healthy—feeding them, ensuring they get enough playtime, and providing them with proper veterinary care. However, one aspect of their health that often gets overlooked is dental hygiene. Just like humans, cats are susceptible to dental problems, including plaque buildup, gingivitis, and periodontal disease, all of which can lead to severe health issues if left untreated. Fortunately, brushing your cat's teeth regularly can help prevent these issues.

Although cats might not enjoy the idea of having their teeth brushed, with patience, proper technique, and the right tools, it can become a routine part of their health care. Here's a step-by-step guide. **Why Brushing Your Cat's Teeth is Important**

Cats can develop plaque and tartar. If not removed, plaque can turn into tartar, which harbors bacteria that can cause gum disease, bad breath, tooth loss, and even infections that affect organs like the heart and kidneys. By brushing your cat's teeth, you help reduce the buildup of plaque and tartar, keeping teeth clean and gums healthy.

The American Veterinary Dental College recommends brushing your cat's teeth at least 2-3 times a week, though daily brushing is ideal. Starting early is best, but older cats can also benefit.

### Step-by-Step Guide

Here's how to get started.

**Get the Right Tools:** Before you start brushing, gather the necessary supplies. Using the right tools is essential.

### Cat-Specific Toothbrush:

Never use human toothbrushes. Opt for a toothbrush designed specifically for cats. These have softer bristles and smaller heads, which make them easier to maneuver in your cat's mouth.

**Cat-Friendly Toothpaste:** Use a toothpaste for cats. Human toothpaste contains fluoride, which is toxic to cats. Cat toothpaste comes in flavors that appeal to cats, like poultry or fish.

**Acclimate Your Cats:** The key to brushing your cat's teeth is patience and gradual acclimation. Start by getting your cat used to having their mouth touched before introducing the toothbrush.

**Start Slowly:** Begin by gently rubbing your cat's gums and teeth with your finger or a soft cloth. You can even apply a small amount of cat-friendly toothpaste to your finger and allow them to lick it off. This will help them associate the toothpaste with something positive.



**Handle Their Mouth Gently:** Once your cat seems comfortable, gently lift their lip and touch their teeth and gums. Do this for short periods, gradually increasing the time.

**Start Brushing:** Once your cat is comfortable with you touching their mouth, it's time to introduce the toothbrush.

**Apply Toothpaste:** Put a small amount of cat toothpaste on the brush. A pea-sized amount is enough.

**Position Your Cat Properly:** Hold your cat securely, but gently. Do this on your lap or have them sit on a flat surface. Some cats may feel more comfortable if you have them in a standing position, while others prefer lying down.

**Brush the Teeth:** Gently lift your cat's lip to expose the teeth. Start with the upper teeth and move in circular motions. Focus on the outer surfaces, as this is where plaque tends to build up. Use gentle strokes—rushing or applying too much pressure can make the experience unpleasant.

**Be Thorough:** Brush the teeth for about 30 seconds to a minute, but don't try to brush all their teeth at once. Start with just a few teeth and gradually increase the area as your cat gets used to the process.

**Give Praise and Reward:** After each brushing session, give your cat praise, petting, or a treat. Positive reinforcement helps them associate teeth brushing with a pleasant experience.

### Tips for Success

**Start Early:** The earlier you begin brushing your cat's teeth, the more likely they will tolerate the process. If you adopt a kitten, begin brushing their teeth around 12 weeks old. For adult or older cats, gradual acclimation is key.

**Consistency is Key:** Brushing once or twice a week will make a noticeable difference, but daily brushing is optimal.

**Make it Part of the Routine:** Try to brush your cat's teeth at the same time every day. This reduces stress.



**Use Alternatives:** If your cat is resistant to brushing, consider alternatives like dental wipes or sprays. While these won't be as effective, they can still help maintain some level of oral hygiene.

**Visit the Veterinarian:** Regular veterinary checkups are essential for catching dental disease early. Your vet can also professionally clean your cat's teeth.

Brushing your cat's teeth may seem daunting, but with patience and a gradual approach, it can become an effective part of your cat's health. You'll be helping your kitty live a healthier, happier life.

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# The Bahia Emerald Is A Rare And Mesmerizing Gemstone

By Victor Passage

The largest and rarest emerald in the world is undoubtedly the "Bahia Emerald". This incredible gem has not only made headlines for its size and beauty but also for its complicated and mysterious history.

## The Bahia Emerald: A Colossal Gem

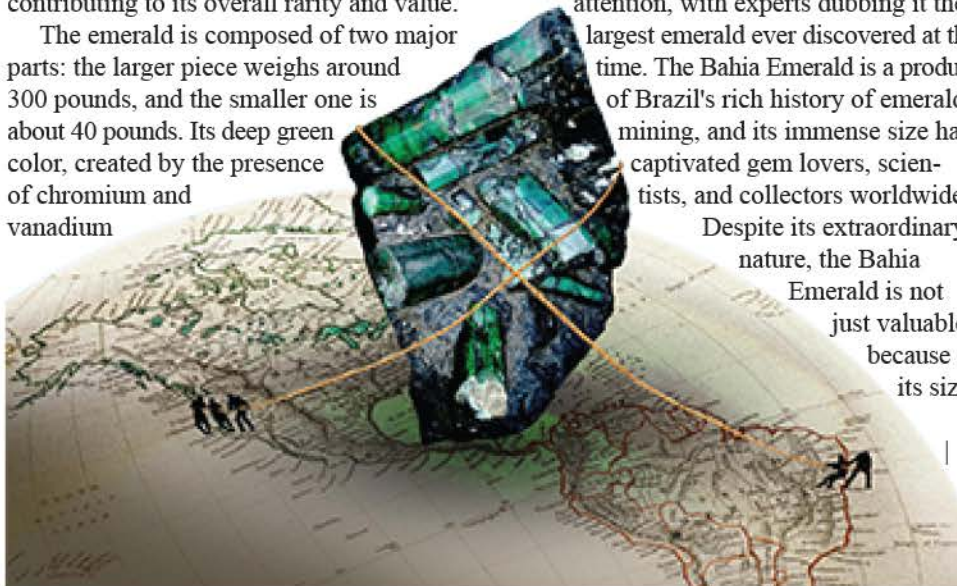
The Bahia Emerald was discovered in 2001 in Bahia, Brazil, one of the world's leading sources of high-quality emeralds. It is a staggering 840 pounds (approximately 380 kilograms) in weight and is estimated to contain around 180,000 carats of emerald crystals. Its extraordinary size makes it the largest emerald ever found. However, what sets it apart from other precious stones is not only its size but also its vivid green color and the

clarity of its crystals. These features have given it a special place in the history of gemology.

## Characteristics of the Bahia Emerald

The Bahia Emerald is not a single cut gemstone like many other emeralds, but rather a massive, rough stone containing several individual crystals. This unique structure gives it a rough, yet beautiful, appearance, with the crystals shining through in various shades of green. Some of the crystals are nearly flawless, contributing to its overall rarity and value.

The emerald is composed of two major parts: the larger piece weighs around 300 pounds, and the smaller one is about 40 pounds. Its deep green color, created by the presence of chromium and vanadium



in the stone, makes it a symbol of wealth and rarity in the world of gemstones.

## Historical Significance and Discovery

The discovery of the Bahia Emerald was a monumental event in the world of gemology. When it was unearthed in Bahia, the emerald's size immediately attracted attention, with experts dubbing it the largest emerald ever discovered at the time. The Bahia Emerald is a product of Brazil's rich history of emerald mining, and its immense size has captivated gem lovers, scientists, and collectors worldwide.

Despite its extraordinary nature, the Bahia Emerald is not just valuable because of its size.

and often secretive world of rare gemstones, which are often as valuable as they are elusive.

## Emeralds in General

Emeralds are one of the "big three" precious gemstones, alongside diamonds and sapphires. Their rarity and vibrant green color have made them highly prized for centuries. Most emeralds are found in countries such as Colombia, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. However, none of these gems come close to the sheer size of the Bahia Emerald.

The stone's distinctive green hue is a result of chromium and vanadium impurities in the beryl mineral from which emeralds are formed. These impurities make emeralds one of the rarest and most expensive gemstones in the world.

## Rarity of Large Emeralds

While emeralds are relatively common in comparison to diamonds, finding one of this size and quality is incredibly rare. Most emeralds on the market are much smaller, and it is uncommon to find high-quality emeralds above 10 carats. The largest emerald ever cut was the "The Mogul Emerald," which weighs around 217.80 carats, but this stone is still far smaller than the Bahia Emerald.

In addition to the Bahia Emerald, other significant emeralds include the "Gachala Emerald" (from Colombia), which weighs around 858 carats but has a very different appearance compared to the Bahia Emerald due to its clearer color and smoother cuts.

The Bahia Emerald is a gem of unprecedented size and rarity, and its status as the largest emerald in the world ensures its place in the annals of gemstone history. Though it has faced a tumultuous history involving theft and legal battles, it remains one of the most fascinating examples of nature's incredible creations. Whether or not the Bahia Emerald will eventually find its rightful owner, its place as a symbol of wealth, mystery, and the pursuit of the rarest treasures in the world is firmly established.

It also holds cultural significance, as emeralds have been prized for centuries in various ancient civilizations. The stone has a connection to the Incas, who believed emeralds were gifts from the gods, and the Mayan civilization, who used emeralds for ceremonial purposes.

## The Controversy and Legal Battle

What has made the Bahia Emerald even more famous is the controversy surrounding its ownership and legal battles. In 2008, the emerald was stolen in a highly organized heist, and the stone was found months later in a storage facility in the United States. Since then, it has been at the center of a tangled legal dispute.

A series of individuals and organizations have claimed ownership of the stone, including gem dealers, treasure hunters, and even the Brazilian government. The case is still ongoing, and the Bahia Emerald's fate remains uncertain. Despite this, the emerald has become a symbol of the strange



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# Calming Scents For A More Relaxing Home And How To Create Them Yourself

By Isabella Martin

during moments of mindfulness or relaxation. Sandalwood also has earthy, calming qualities that make it a great choice for an overall tranquil environment.



## Citrus (Lemon, Orange, Bergamot):

Citrus scents, like lemon, orange, or bergamot, can be refreshing and calming. While these scents are often associated with energy and alertness, they also have mood-boosting properties that ease stress and lift your spirits.

**Eucalyptus:** Eucalyptus has a fresh, clean scent that's associated with respiratory health and clarity. Inhaling eucalyptus can relieve tension headaches and clear the mind. It's also a natural stress reliever, providing a fresh burst of energy.

**Jasmine:** Jasmine is a delicate, sweet floral scent that has a rich history in relaxation and mood-enhancement. This fragrance is known to reduce anxiety and increase feelings of well-being. Jasmine is an ideal choice for evenings when you want to unwind.

## Create Your Own Calming Scents

While there are many ways to bring calming scents into your home, making your own allows you to control the ingredients and tailor the experience to your specific needs. Here are a few methods:

**Essential Oil Diffuser:** An essential oil diffuser is an excellent way to disperse calming scents. Fill the diffuser with water and add a few drops of your chosen essential oil for a continuous, subtle fragrance. Some of the best oils include lavender, chamomile, sandalwood, eucalyptus, and bergamot. Mix oils according to your preferences—lavender and chamomile create a relaxing atmosphere, while lemon and bergamot can energize you.

**Homemade Scented Candles:** Making scented candles is a fun and creative way to enjoy calming fragrances. Buy candle-making supplies or repurpose old candle containers. Melt wax, add your preferred essential oils, and pour into jars.

**Simmer Pots:** If you prefer a natural, low-maintenance method, simmer pots are a great option. In a pot of water, add ingredients like lemon slices, cinnamon sticks, fresh herbs (such as rosemary or thyme), and a few drops of essential oils. Allow the mixture to simmer on low heat, and let the aromas fill your home. Simmer pots are especially useful for holiday or seasonal scents.

**DIY Room Sprays:** Another way to introduce calming scents is by creating your own room spray. In a spray bottle, mix distilled water with a few drops of essential oil, and shake it before each use. Experiment with your favorite oils, such as lavender, chamomile, or eucalyptus.



tus. This method is great for freshening up the air or spritzing your bed linens before sleep.

**Herbal Sachets:** Create herbal sachets filled with dried flowers, herbs, and essential oils. Common ingredients include lavender, chamomile, and rose petals. Place the sachets in areas like drawers, closets, or under pillows for a subtle and continuous fragrance. These are also great gifts or additions to a meditation space.

**Natural Reed Diffusers:** If you're looking for a more low-maintenance method, try creating your own reed diffuser. Fill a small bottle with a carrier oil like almond or fractionated coconut oil, and add several drops of your favorite essential oils. Insert the reeds into the bottle, and the oil will slowly diffuse into the air, creating a lasting calming scent.

Incorporating calming scents into your home can provide relaxation and peace. Whether you choose to diffuse essential oils, make homemade candles, or simply simmer aromatic herbs on the



stove, you have a variety of methods to create a soothing atmosphere. By using natural ingredients and experimenting with different fragrance, you can transform your home into a tranquil sanctuary.

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## Top Stories

By Andrews McMeel Syndication

A United Airlines flight from San Francisco to Chicago was forced to divert to Denver on Feb. 9 after a passenger became unruly, LiveandLetsFly.com reported. The man was up out of his seat repeatedly and argued with flight attendants before demanding to know "Where are the Mormons?" One passenger said the incident "escalated into a big physical altercation and several passengers had to rush out of their seats to help the crew pin down this person." Although the troublemaker was removed from the flight in Denver, the plane sat on the ground for about five hours before continuing to Chicago.

Domino's Pizza UK has launched its first-ever eau de toilette, Eau de Passion, which is inspired by its Pepperoni Passion pizza and features notes of spice, pepper and a woody, warm base, the New York Post reported. The scent's bottle is shaped like a slice of pizza, and the cologne is free from Domino's website if you're lucky enough to be chosen to receive one. British star Luke Debono, who's promoting the scent, said it is "the perfect gift for passionate pizza-loving couples looking to spice things up this Valentine's Day."

A high school teacher in Queensland, Australia, has taken to identifying as a cat, 7News-TV reported on Feb. 10. "Miss Purr," as she prefers to be known, teaches at Marsden State High School, where she "screches and growls when (her students) don't listen," one person posted on Facebook. She also hisses and licks the backs of her hands during class and wears a headband with cat ears. One concerned mother said Miss Purr had made her daughter "purr for a lolly." The Department of Education said the school was aware of the complaints and the principal is speaking with the teacher.

On Feb. 10 in Inazawa, Japan, more than 7,000 men wearing only loincloths participated in the Konomiya Naked Festival at a Shinto shrine, The Mainichi reported. The event, which has been held for more than 1,200 years on the 13th day of the first lunar month, features a "god-man" who is thought to carry away misfortune if you touch him. This year's "god-man" was 26-year-old Ryota Kato, who threw himself into the crowd as the men chanted and fought to

touch him. About an hour later, he emerged from the crowd and entered the shrine.

Law enforcement officers in South Holland, England, are stumped by a rash of pet cats returning to their homes with patches of missing fur, The Spalding and South Holland Voice reported on Feb. 12. The cats have apparently been shaved. "This behavior is completely unacceptable," said inspector Matt Dickinson. "The cats in question are someone's pet, part of their family." Evidently, it's not the first time the mysterious cat shaver has struck; two Facebook commenters said their cats had been shaved in past years.

A manufacturer of fortune cookies contacted the owner of a Vietnamese restaurant in Sydney, Australia, to announce they would no longer fill her orders for custom messages that are offensive or contain expletives. 9News reported that Nahji Chu, owner of Lady Chu, ordered profanity-laced cookies for Valentine's Day. But after the manufacturer mistakenly sent some of Chu's cookies to fulfill another order, causing distress with that customer, they changed their policy. Chu wasn't happy: "If you're getting it mixed up with other restaurants, that's not my fault," she said. Some of Chu's more PG-rated cookie messages include, "You are capable of great things. But all you do is look at your phone all day. You won't be that great sorry! #ladychu" and "The year of the snake bears good fortune! Your divorce is coming soon." She said she'll "take out the profanities and be creative" with her next order.

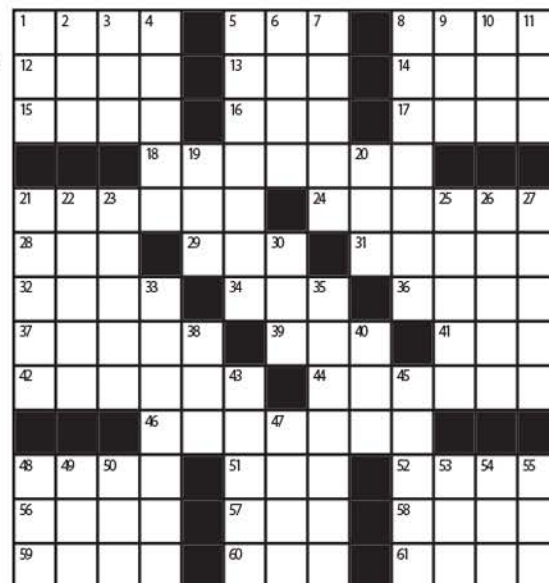
The Lee County (Florida, where else?) Sheriff's Office is investigating after a Feb. 7 incident involving an allegedly intoxicated man riding on a lawnmower, WESH-TV reported. A video camera caught the mower plowing into a mailbox along the street; the man went heels over head and stumbled away from the mower, then returned and drove off, apparently hitting multiple other mailboxes along the way. Matt Clardy, whose mailbox was among the victims, called it "absolutely disgusting" but admitted, "It's so funny. I can watch it 100 times." The man left behind a Pittsburgh Steelers hat and sunglasses at one of the scenes; police are still trying to identify him.

## Crossword by Myles Mellor

Print this Page! Ctrl + P

### Across

- 2012 US Open winner, Simpson
- Last word of "America, the Beautiful"
- Way off
- Seaweed gelatin
- Prone
- Drift
- Needled
- Bag thickness
- Urged a right turn
- Popular salad ingredient
- Distress call
- Safe places
- Sight reported
- Hot drink
- Experiences
- Offensive
- Pigment
- Looks at
- Lowest moldings
- Relative of an ostrich
- Prior prefix
- Thing referred to
- Burst in
- Absolute rule
- Not for
- Top race car driver
- Pull
- Tinted
- Lodging
- French currency
- Cutting the mustard
- Give leave
- Raise a stink



### Down

- "\_\_\_ and Peace", Tolstoy
- Vanity
- No longer edible
- Moolah
- Siberian breed
- Kind of proportions
- Book with legends
- Region of France
- Enemy
- Penn. is one
- Singers, Simply \_\_\_
- Wine barrel
- E. Indies transportation relay
- Muslim scholar
- Happening
- Complimentary close

- SA aquatic rodent
- Dweeb
- Positive attribute
- Affirmative vote
- It moves in the direction of the wind
- Famous
- "Rocky" actor
- Large vase
- Slight

- Golf's \_\_\_ Cup
- Clearasil target
- Exclamation of mockery
- Center
- Rolodex no.
- Repent
- "Chances \_\_\_"
- Used by Chinese cooks

## Bad Dad Jokes

A skeleton walks into a bar and says, 'Hey, bartender. I'll have one beer and a mop'



### Previous Puzzle







# Before and After School & Winter Programs



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**SVCAC's Young Artists Playground (YAP) Youth Arts Education Program** features interactive arts workshops and camps for youth ages 5-14 years old. YAP is dedicated to enriching the lives of local youth through quality arts education and performance based programs. YAP builds visual and performing arts skills through programs that foster confidence, compassion and resilience in students of all abilities. We offer opportunities for youth to develop and share their creative voices. For more information contact: Stephanie Lesh at 818-601-0582

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**The Leonis Adobe Museum** is announcing its annual summer program, Lil Ranchers, Tuesdays from 7/11 - 8/8 between 9:30 am - 11:30 am. Enjoy a different theme and activities each week! Leonis Adobe Museum 23537 Calabasas Road Calabasas, California 91302 Phone: (818) 222-6511 Members are free or \$8 for non-members.

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Established in Canoga Park in 1985 for the purpose of building self-esteem in young people through the performing arts. Each workshop is designed to build confidence, skills, and lasting friendships in an environment of mutual respect, acceptance, and encouragement. Workshops are presented in the spring, summer, and fall. <https://www.goldenpac.org/> Now in a brand new location!

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# How Horseback Riding Can Help Autistic Children Thrive

By Dakota Fleming

Horseback riding, referred to as equine therapy or hippotherapy, has been recognized as a beneficial activity for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The unique bond formed between a child and a horse, along with the physical, emotional, and social benefits of riding, can significantly improve an autistic child's life. Through structured riding lessons and therapeutic interventions, children with autism can enhance their communication, motor skills, and confidence, helping them thrive in ways traditional therapies may not always achieve.

## Physical Benefits of Horseback Riding

One of the most immediate benefits of horseback riding is a child's physical development. Horseback riding engages core muscles, improves balance, and enhances coordination, all of which can be challenging areas for children with autism. The movement of the horse provides a rhythmic and repetitive motion that stimulates the child's sensory system, promoting body awareness and helping regulate motor responses.

Many autistic children struggle with low muscle tone, poor posture, and difficulty with fine and gross motor skills. Riding a horse requires the child to sit upright, hold the reins, and use their legs to guide the animal, all of which strengthen muscles and improve dexterity. Over time, these physical improvements can translate to better control over daily activities.

## Sensory Integration and Regulation

Children with autism often experience sensory processing challenges, making it difficult to manage their responses to external stimuli. The rhythmic gait of a horse provides consistent, gentle movement that can have a calming effect, helping regulate

the nervous system and reducing sensory overload. This sensory experience can be particularly beneficial for children who struggle with vestibular (balance) and proprioceptive (body awareness) processing.

Furthermore, horseback riding exposes children to new textures, sounds, and smells, encouraging them to become more comfortable with sensory experiences. The feel of the horse's mane, the scent of hay, and the sound of hoofbeats create a multi-sensory environment that gently challenges sensory sensitivities, helping them build tolerance and adaptability.

## Emotional and Psychological Benefits

The emotional connection formed between a child and a horse is one of the most powerful aspects of equine therapy. Horses are known for their sensitivity to human emotions, responding to nonverbal cues and energy levels. This responsiveness can help autistic children develop emotional regulation skills, as they learn to adjust their behavior and emotions to create a positive interaction with the horse.

Additionally, horseback riding provides a sense of confidence. Successfully guiding a large and powerful animal fosters independence and self-esteem. For many autistic children excelling in a riding session can be a tremendous confidence booster, showing them that they are capable of mastering new skills.

## Improvement in Communication and Social Skills

Many autistic children struggle with verbal and nonverbal communication. Interacting with a horse offers a nonjudgmental space where they can practice expressing themselves through gestures, body language, and vocal cues. Horses respond to subtle commands and movements, encouraging children to develop clear communication skills.

Equine therapy often involves working with instructors, therapists, and peers, promoting social interaction and teamwork. Riding lessons provide opportunities to follow directions, take turns, and engage in cooperative activities, all of which enhance social skills and encourage meaningful connections.

## Behavioral Benefits and Emotional Regulation

Horseback riding can also reduce anxiety and improve behavioral challenges commonly

associated with autism. The structured and repetitive nature of riding sessions provides a predictable routine, which can be comforting for children who struggle with transitions and unpredictability. The calming effect of being around

horses can help decrease instances of aggression, meltdowns, and self-stimulatory behaviors, leading to improved emotional stability. For some children, simply spending time around horses—grooming,

feeding, and caring for them—provides a therapeutic escape from overwhelming environments. This hands-on interaction fosters patience, responsibility, and empathy, which can translate into improved behaviors in daily life. **Success Stories and Growing Support for Equine Therapy**

The success of equine therapy has led to its growing popularity among parents,

therapists, and educators as a complementary intervention for autism. Many parents report seeing significant improvements in their child's ability to focus, communicate, and self-regulate after engaging in horseback riding programs. Some children who were previously nonverbal have been observed making their first spoken requests or gestures while interacting with horses.

Organizations and therapy centers across the world now offer specialized riding programs designed for children with autism. These programs are led by trained professionals who understand both the therapeutic aspects of riding and the specific needs of children on the spectrum.

Horseback riding provides a holistic approach to supporting autistic children, addressing physical, sensory, emotional, and social challenges in a natural and engaging way. The unique connection between a child and a horse fosters confidence, enhances communication, and promotes emotional regulation, allowing children with autism to thrive. As more research and success stories emerge, equine therapy continues to gain recognition as a valuable tool in helping autistic children reach their full potential.





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# DIY PURIM COSTUMES!

## CREATIVE AND BUDGET-FRIENDLY IDEAS

By Andrew Moe

**P**urim is one of the most joyous and festive holidays in the Jewish calendar, marked by celebrations, feasting, and of course, costumes! While store-bought costumes are always an option, DIY Purim costumes add a personal touch and allow for creative expression. Whether you're dressing up as a classic Purim character, a pop culture icon, or

Use a rope or belt to tie around the waist for an ancient Persian look.

### Haman

**What You'll Need:** A dark robe or tunic, a triangular hat (which can be made from cardboard and covered in felt), and a scowling expression. **DIY Tip:** Add a fake scroll or decree to emphasize Haman's villainous role in the story.



something completely unique, here are some fun and budget-friendly DIY costume ideas to inspire you.

### Classic Purim Characters

Dressing as characters from the Purim story is a beloved tradition. Here's how you can create these iconic looks at home:

#### Queen Esther

**What You'll Need:** A flowing dress (a prom or bridesmaid dress works great), a tiara or homemade crown, jewelry, and a sash. **DIY Tip:** Use a gold paper plate or felt to cut out a crown and add decorative gems for a regal look.

#### King Ahasuerus

**What You'll Need:** A robe (a long bathrobe or an oversized jacket), a crown, and a scepter (a painted stick or toy wand).

**DIY Tip:** Wrap a belt or scarf around your waist for an added royal touch.

#### Mordechai

**What You'll Need:** A long tunic or robe, a headscarf, and a fake beard (which can be made from cotton balls or felt). **DIY Tip:**

### Creative and Fun Costume Ideas

If you're looking for something beyond Purim story characters, here are some other fun DIY costume ideas:

#### Hamantaschen Cookie

**What You'll Need:** A large piece of brown felt or cardboard, cut into a triangular shape with a circle cutout in the center for your face. Decorate the middle with "jam" made from red or orange fabric. **DIY Tip:** Attach straps to wear it over your shoulders like a sandwich board.

#### Megillah Scroll

**What You'll Need:** Large sheets of poster board or fabric, rolled at the ends to look like a scroll. **DIY Tip:** Write the word "Megillah" or draw Hebrew letters on it for authenticity.

#### Grogger (Noise Maker)

**What You'll Need:** A small cardboard box covered in colorful paper, attached to a handle. **DIY Tip:** Use real groggers attached to a headband for a fun, interactive costume.

### Shushan Palace Guard

**What You'll Need:** A simple tunic, a toy sword, and a homemade shield (made from cardboard and painted with gold or silver paint). **DIY Tip:** Make a helmet using a large plastic bowl or create one out of foil.

### Pop Culture and Modern Takes

Mixing Purim's themes with modern elements can be a fun twist.

#### "Queen Esther, Pop Star Edition"

**What You'll Need:** A sparkly dress, a toy microphone, and bold makeup. **DIY Tip:** Add a sash that says "Queen of Pop" for a humorous effect.

#### "Mordechai the Secret Agent"

**What You'll Need:** A dark trench coat, sunglasses, and a toy walkie-talkie. **DIY Tip:** Print out a fake "Top Secret" mission folder to carry around.

### Emoji Purim Costumes

**What You'll Need:** A large circular piece of yellow cardboard with a painted emoji face. **DIY Tip:** Make a "laughing with tears" emoji to reflect the fun of Purim!

### Family and Group Costumes

Purim is a great time for group costumes. Here are a few creative ideas:

### The Purim Story Cast

Each family member can take a different role—Esther, Mordechai, Haman, King Ahasuerus, and even Vashti!

#### "Bag of Hamantaschen"

Each person can dress as a different hamantaschen flavor, with different "jam" colors.

#### "Shushan Street"

A fun mashup of Purim and Sesame Street, with costumes representing characters like Mordechai as "Mordy the Grouch."

### Final DIY Costume Tips

Use what you have: Look through your closet before buying anything. Scarves, old dresses, and costume jewelry can be repurposed.

Get creative with accessories: Hats, crowns, sashes, and masks add extra flair.

**DIY face paint:** Use safe, non-toxic face paint to complete the look.

Have fun! The spirit of Purim is all about joy, creativity, and celebration.

With these DIY Purim costume ideas, you can celebrate in style while saving money and having fun making your own unique ensemble. Happy Purim!

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# Loose Look Pants And Shirts In 2025

## The Rise Of Comfort and Style

By Jennifer Heron

As we enter 2025, fashion is embracing a new era marked by a focus on comfort, fluidity, and freedom. One of the most significant shifts is the prominence of loose-fitting pants and shirts, which are becoming key elements. These styles represent a departure from the body-hugging trends, ushering in a more relaxed and versatile approach.

### The Return of Loose-Fitting Pants

Loose-fitting pants have established themselves as a wardrobe staple. The focus is on fluid silhouettes

that provide ease and movement without sacrificing style. Pants such as wide-leg trousers, cargo pants, and relaxed-fit jeans are now seen everywhere.

Key features include relaxed waistlines, longer lengths, and soft pleating. The wide-leg trend is a standout, making a statement with its ability to elongate the body and create effortless elegance. Cargo pants, often associated with utilitarian looks, are undergoing a stylish revival, with designers incorporating fashion-forward details like cropped hems, oversized pockets, and premium materials.

What's particularly exciting is versatility. These pants can be dressed up or down. A pair of wide-leg trousers can be paired with a structured blazer or with a casual t-shirt. Adjustable waistbands, drawstrings, and elastic cuffs makes these pants comfortable yet stylish.

### Oversized Shirts: The Relaxed Revolution

Oversized shirts are enjoying their moment. The trend is an extension of the laid-back, relaxed aesthetic that has been embraced by individuals seeking comfort without sacrificing style. These

shirts come in a variety of cuts, and they are designed to drape loosely over the body. Characterized by their extended sleeves, dropped shoulders, and tunic-length cuts, oversized shirts offer a fresh and modern take.

The key is balance. While the shirt is oversized, pairing it with form-fitting pieces like slim trousers or leggings. Alternatively, these shirts can be tucked into loose pants to create a flowy outfit.

The relaxed fit also lends itself to layering, making them ideal for year-round styling.

Material choice plays a crucial role.

Soft fabrics such as cotton, linen, and silk are popular. The oversized shirt also works well with different textures.

### Designers Leading the Loose Trend

High-profile designers have been quick to embrace the loose-fitting look, drawing on demand for relaxed, fluid garments that don't sacrifice style or structure.

Stella McCartney has been a proponent of sustainability and relaxed elegance, and her collection is no exception. Offerings showcase oversized blouses, wide-leg trousers, and airy jumpsuits. Known for eco-friendly materials, McCartney's loose pieces also emphasize natural fibers like organic cotton and hemp.

Loewe, under the direction of Jonathan Anderson, has also embraced the loose

trend. The Spanish luxury brand is known for its playful yet refined approach and Loewe's collection offers oversized shirts with bold prints, fluid pants in neutral and vibrant tones, and relaxed tailoring.

Isabel Marant, known for bohemian-chic, has also embraced the loose look. Her designs feature billowy tops, breezy dresses, and slouchy pants that combine the ease of boho style with the sophistication of Parisian fashion.

Balenciaga, under the direction of Demna, has pioneered interpretations of oversized and loose garments. Known for transforming everyday clothing, Balenciaga's collection includes oversized shirts, slouchy trousers, and deconstructed jackets that nod to streetwear while maintaining the polish of couture.

Tory Burch embraces loose, relaxed silhouettes. The brand's collection includes flowy shirts, wide-leg pants, and casual yet chic outerwear that reflect a refined version of casual dressing. Burch's pieces incorporate vibrant colors and patterns.

### The Future of Fashion: Comfort Meets Style

The loose-fitting pants and shirts trend represents a cultural shift toward comfort and versatility. As more designers embrace this movement, the boundaries between casual and formal wear blur, offering endless self-expression. These trends are about redefining how we relate to our clothes, encouraging us to dress in a way that feels natural and empowering.



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Find us on 

Old New York Deli & Bakery  
Fresh Bagels, Breakfast, Lunch  
Specialty Items  
6209 Topanga Canyon  
Woodland Hls (818) 887-DELI  
Order: Pickup, Delivery

Monty's Steak House -  
5371 Topanga Canyon Blvd.  
Phone: (818) 716-9736  
Order: Pickup, Delivery  
Outdoor Dining

Brewz Sports Cafe & Grill  
7921 Canoga Ave  
Canoga Park (818) 887-3721  
Patio Dining - Take out  
11:30am-6pm & Delivery

Basil's Deli and cafe  
Hot/Cold Sandwiches  
(747) 888-3114  
8380 Topanga Canyon Blvd,  
Canoga Park, CA 91304  
Delivery - Pickup - Dine in  
Phone: (818) 789-0679

HQ Gastropub  
20969 Ventura Boulevard  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364  
Order: Pickup - Dine in  
Ph: (818) 887.BEER (2337)

Street Cafe By Aroma  
18047 Ventura Blvd, Encino,  
CA 91316 (818) 757-0477  
Order: Pick Up, grubhub.com  
Free Delivery on 1st Grubhub

Panini Kabob Grill  
21600 Victory Blvd,  
Woodland Hills, CA 91367  
Order: Phone: (818) 992-3330

Lemongrass Thai-Halal  
curries, noodles & rice  
22205 Sherman Way,  
Canoga Park, CA 91303  
(818) 703-6608  
Indoor/Take-Out

Fire Wings  
9171 De Soto Ave A  
Chatsworth, CA 91311  
Variety of Hot Wings, Salads-  
Sandwiches, Sides  
Dine in, Take-Out, Delivery  
Party Catering  
Phone: (818) 626-9525

And Waffles  
21028 Ventura Blvd,  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364  
(818) 805-3201  
Eat In or Take Out

Dog Haus Biergarten  
8931 Reseda Blvd  
Northridge, CA 91324  
Phone: (747) 202-3349  
6501 Topanga Canyon Blvd,  
Canoga Park, CA 91303  
Phone: (818) 340-4287  
4929 Lankershim Blvd, North  
Hollywood, CA 91601  
Phone: (818) 505-1033  
Free Delivery on 1st Order  
grubhub.com Order: Curbside,  
seamless.com, postates.com,  
doordash.com

The Munch Box  
Landmark some of the best  
burgers and fries, walk up or  
phone ahead  
21532 Devonshire St,  
Chatsworth, CA 91311  
Open til' 5pm  
Phone: (818) 998-9240

Cricca's Italian Deli  
4876 Topanga Canyon Blvd,  
Woodland Hills, CA 91364  
(818) 340-0515  
Counter-service Sandwich  
shop offering subs & panini

## WHAT'S YOUR NFL GAMEDAY order?



**FREE DELIVERY**



**FREE DELIVERY**



**FREE DELIVERY**



**FREE DELIVERY**



Les Sisters' Southern Kitchen  
Cajun eats from po' boys to  
BBQ Dine-in· Curbside pickup-  
No-contact delivery, Catering  
also available.  
21818 Devonshire St,  
Chatsworth, CA 91311  
Phone: (818) 998-0755

Fratelli's NY Pizza  
7301 Canoga Ave  
Canoga Park, CA  
Authentic New York Pizza,  
Salads and Pasta  
Dine-in · Takeout · No-contact  
delivery -Across fr. Starbucks  
(818) 346-2992

New York Chicken&Gyro  
7553 Topanga Canyon Blvd,  
Canoga Park, CA 91303  
Phone: (818) 805-9027  
Menu: newyorkchickenandgy-  
ro.com Curbside/Postmates

Hood baby soul food  
21418 Nordhoff St,  
Chatsworth - (818) 626-8549  
No-contact delivery  
Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner  
Recently opened

Paris Baguette  
17136 Ventura Blvd.  
(818) 817-0048  
8 am to 8 pm Daily  
Order: Pickup  
postmates.com, door-  
dash.com, trycaviar.com  
Call ahead for hot beverages

Pineapple Hill Saloon & Grill  
This old-fashioned, dimly lit  
lively restaurant & bar  
Sports Events, Happy Hour  
4454 Van Nuys Blvd N,  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91403  
Phone: (818) 789-0679  
Inside Sherman Oaks Square





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