

September 2016 | Vol. 26 Issue 6 | Always Free

Campus Circle

Film | Music | Culture

EXPLORING

**ECHO PARK
LAKE**

DISCOVERING

VAKA BURGER

**KIMCHI ALERT
MAKIN' YOUR OWN**

KOREAN & GAY, DIRECTOR:

ANDREW AHN

L.A. RAMS' TOP DOG

KEVIN DEMOFF

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Editor-in-Chief

Sean Bello

editor.chief@campuscircle.net

Art Director

Sean Michael Beyer

Film Editor

film.editor@campuscircle.net

Music Editor

music.editor@campuscircle.net

Contributing Writers

Cooper Copeland

ADVERTISING

Sean Bello

sean.bello@campuscircle.net

Joy Calisoff

joy.calisoff@campuscircle.net

PUBLISHED BY

CAMPUS CIRCLE, INC.

5042 Wilshire Blvd., PMB 600

Los Angeles, CA 90036

(323) 939-8477

campusci@campuscircle.net

campuscircle.com

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EXPLORING ECHO



IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS NOW since Echo Park Lake went through a makeover and the place continues to be a joy for residents and visitors. For those who are not familiar with the Echo Park Lake, it is located in what was once considered the city's "West End." It was a reservoir (called Reservoir No. 4) that was formed in 1868 by the Los Angeles Canal and Reservoir Co. that received its water from the L.A. River through a man made tributary stemming from Los Feliz. When the city created the reservoir, it mistakenly did not purchase the land around it.

Building prospectors including a carriage maker named Thomas Kelley, capitalized on that mistake and bought up the land thinking people would love to purchase homes that had waterfront property. The only problem was the city had an easement that it could overflow the reservoir 40 feet above its current level at that time if it needed to do so. This would have inadvertently flooded properties and destroyed homes. Thus, the reservoir continued to exist but the property remained undeveloped. To control the reservoir's water level, a dam was created around Bellevue Avenue,

however in 1891 it was determined to be a danger to residents who lived beyond the reservoir. As a result, the city and the original land prospectors cut a deal that the city would abandon the reservoir and remove the dam if the prospectors would give up some of their property to create a park around the water. After years of tweaking, expansion and contrition, Echo Park Lake is what we see today.

It became a haven for residents over the years serving as a weekend park destination for families to picnic while kids battled



PARK LAKE

BY SEAN BELLO

each other in miniature boat racing competitions or fished. A Victorian style bridge connected visitors to a small island on the lake and Lotus flower beds rested in the water on the west side of the lake. Water flowers were quite popular towards the end of the 19th Century so when the flowers were planted, they added a unique element to Echo Park Lake that still stands today. The Lotus flowers growing in the lake are the largest colony in the Western United States. Lotus flowers are unique and revered around the world taking on significant religious connotations amongst Buddhists and Hindus. For us, they are some of the most beautiful flowers that one will ever see.

Through the years, the lake continued to be a great destination for families and individuals, however, with the passage of time, even the most beautiful of places can suffer. When the trolley, which took residents from Echo Park to jobs in downtown Los Angeles was lifted and destroyed, a popular mode of transportation cut off access to visitors who didn't drive. Some years later in the 1950's the new 101 Freeway would cut through portions of the East side of the park which would further contribute to its decline. As the years went by, criminal activity in the park made it dangerous while the pollution around and in the lake made the water toxic.

In 2004, L.A. voters passed Proposition O which authorized the City of Los Angeles to fund projects (up to \$500 million dollars) that prevent and remove pollutants from our regional waterways. This proposition along with Proposition K (A park restoration measure) were used in conjunction to rehabilitate Echo Park Lake. In 2006, the lake was deemed to be an impaired/polluted waterway. It was closed in 2011 and began a two year, 45 million dollar restoration that included having the lake drained and cleaned out of garbage, bicycles, skateboards and other

dumped bulky items. In addition, a wetlands feature was added to beautify the lake and provide a natural water improvement solution. This included aquatic plants, which contribute to the control of algae growth, provide habitat for wildlife and develop a healthy lake ecology. Finally, the park's signature Lotus flowers were replanted.

So, what is there to do at Echo Park Lake? First and foremost, the Lake provides visitors with beautiful walkways around the lake that allow one to enjoy the foliage, views of downtown L.A. and wildlife. The cement trail is frequently used by runners and weaves around different destinations that include the Lotus flower beds, a small island, boathouse, a visit to the "Lady of the Lake" Deco statute and tree covered areas, which are for picnicking and gatherings such drum circles. In addition, the lake is a great place for bird watching. As of the end of 2013, 28 species and 735 birds were counted according to EPIAN Ways, a quarterly publication published by the Echo Park Improvement Association. Species spotted at the lake include Mallards, Ruddy Ducks, European Starlings, Great Egrets, Snowy Egrets, Green Herons, Great Blue Herons, American Coot and Ring-necked Ducks.

Visitors can also rent pedal boats on the lake through the Echo Park Pedal Boats Concession. Pedal boat rentals (up to one hour) are \$5.00 per child and \$10.00 per adult. They also offer canoe rides and gondola rides. All boats give visitors the opportunity to get close to wildlife and to the wetlands on the lake. For the more adventurous boaters, you can take your pedal boat close to the lake's water fountain as it shoots water up to 100 feet in the air. On a breezy day, individuals can pedal directly into the spray and cool off. Pedal boats rentals are offered 7 days a week from 9AM to ½ hour before Sunset. Gondola and canoe

rentals are Saturday and Sunday, 12Pm to 6PM. The concession is closed on Christmas, Thanksgiving Day and due to bad weather.

The boathouse also has a coffeehouse called, Square One, which is located lakeside. Square One offers housemade pastries, Intelligentsia coffee and a selection of breakfast and lunch items. It's a great little place to kick back at and enjoy the views and people watch. The café also offers free Wi-fi.

For local anglers, Echo Park Lake is stocked by the LA Park system with rainbow trout every two weeks in the winter, spring and fall. In addition, the lake has Catfish, Bluegill and Crayfish. Anglers DO NOT need to get a fishing permit here as the City has deemed the lake as an open water facility. Anglers are welcome to fish here on weekends, all year long.

The Pokemon phenom has reached Echo Park Lake. On a recent visit, we saw numerous people of all ages on their iPhones playing Pokemon GO. The lake is loaded with Pokemon creatures and trainers and makes an excellent destination for mobile gamers in the area.

In addition, to visiting "The Lady of the Lake," an Art Deco statute located at the northwest end of the lake, - a new art installation was recently completed by Mexican artist Teresa Margolles. The piece, titled "La Sombra "The Shade"), is a part of the public art biennial, "Current: LA Water." The concrete monument pays tribute to the Angelenos killed in violent crimes over the course of 18 months. Teresa and her team visited almost 100 locations and poured water over the spots where these Angelenos were killed. The water was collected in bottles and mixed into the concrete used to build the monument.

If you are looking for an escape from urban life, Echo Park Lake is for you. It is located at 751 Echo Park Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90026. The main phone number is (213) 847-0929.

A 'SPA' TALK ON BEING KOREAN AND GAY:

DIRECTOR ANDREW AHN PUSHES BACK ON ASIAN AMERICAN STEREOTYPES IN HIS NEW FILM



BY TRE'VELL ANDERSON - LOS ANGELES TIMES (TNS)

WHEN ANDREW AHN CAME OUT AS GAY, he was told by his Korean father that gay Koreans didn't exist, that being gay was an American concept and he was gay only because he was Korean American. That statement left Ahn feeling "fractured, like your Korean identity and your gay identity can't live in the same place," he said.

But with his first feature film, "Spa Night," he's rejecting that notion head-on.

"In many ways, what I was trying to do with 'Spa Night' is to create something that felt both queer and Korean at the same time," he said. "To create a culture that was really about this intersection."

"Spa Night" follows the coming of age of David, a first-generation Korean American attempting to live out his parents' dreams of him attending USC — if he can get those SAT scores up. When his parents are forced to close their restaurant because of low business, he picks up a part-time job at a spa in Koreatown. While working there, he discovers the not-so-secret world of hookups happening in the saunas of the men's-only establishment, and he eventually has one of his own.

Ahn, 30, who wrote and directed the film, came to the idea for the script a few years ago when a friend told him about a "hot hookup with a guy at a spa." His first thought: "sacrilegious," he said, because spas are a traditional, almost sacred place in Korean culture. Ahn remembers going to the spa with his dad near the end of every year to cleanse their minds, bodies and spirits before the new year, a ritualistic family bonding event.

"It was so tied into my sense of my Korean identity; to find out it was being used for gay cruising, it came as a complete surprise," he said. "And in some way maybe it shouldn't have because I know anywhere you have naked men there's going to be some sort of homoerotic tension."

The spa, Ahn said, always forced him to confront his Korean-ness, "because I'm naked, and it's me and my Korean body." In that space, he never felt American, rather "super

Korean." But as he was developing the character of David, played by Joe Seo, he realized that the spa was "forcing this character to be both (Korean and gay) in a way he's uncomfortable being," he said.

"That process is trying to find an authentic life: How do you live as a whole human as opposed to (having) those two parts sectioned off?"

But considering the taboo nature of LGBT identity in some Asian communities, Ahn ran into issues casting his movie, which features an entirely Asian cast and is mostly in Korean with English subtitles. (A number of Koreatown spas also refused to be used as shooting locations after hearing the film's plot.)

He admits he was "scared" that Seo wouldn't take the part. Another actor who had auditioned was told by his mother that if he took the part, she would send him back to Korea to live and "hide out there because the Korean American community would be so (angry) with him." Additionally, a woman who auditioned for the role of the mother said that she couldn't do the movie because her husband, a pastor, wouldn't approve.

Seo however did take the part, with little hesitation — but he did ask his parents and pastor.

"They said, 'If you think you can do it, go for it,'" Seo said. (He was recognized with the coveted breakthrough and outstanding performance awards at Sundance and Outfest, respectively, this year.)

Seo was also interested in the role in hopes that "Spa Night" will start and continue a positive conversation in Asian communities about embracing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender folk.

"It's time to discuss this, and I think it's important for (LGBT Asians) to watch a movie like this because they might feel alone, or might not have that courage to come out," he said. "All we want to do is give people that push, that encouragement, and tell them you are human, you are loved. (The Asian community

needs to express love to all kinds of people, not just those you think are 'normal' or righteous."

Ahn plans to continue creating work with queer Koreans at the center, not only because the LGBT film genre is largely void of people of color. To put a spin on the title of a popular book addressing the invisibility of black women, "All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men ...," in film, all the gays are white, all the men are straight.

"The next step is to talk about intersectionality because it's not just enough anymore to talk about being gay," he said. "It's about talking about how that intersects with our race, class, religion. There's so many of these additional identities that color how we're queer. The queer genre has to grow, and it is."

As for other places of growth in the industry, Ahn and Seo look forward to conversations about whitewashing Asian roles and stories — like Scarlett Johansson playing Motoko Kusanagi in 2017's "Ghost in the Shell" — and the lack of diversity in Hollywood ending, as focus shifts to highlighting the diverse work that is being done.

"I really hope that we can stop talking about Matt Damon and 'The Great Wall' and talk about Joe Seo and 'Spa Night,'" Ahn said. "I hope this movie is part of a wave that shows we can make films that have an entirely person-of-color cast and it can do well in theaters and people can connect to it, even if they're not Korean or queer."

And while most mainstream Asian American film and television is comedy, like "Fresh Off the Boat," "Dr. Ken" or last year's "Ktown Cowboys," "Spa Night" is "pushing back on this model minority myth," Ahn said.

"I wanted to show that Asian American content can be dramatic too," he said. "There just has to be more."

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DIPLO LIKES TO BITE THE EDM HAND THAT FEEDS HIM

BY STEVE KNOPPER - CHICAGO TRIBUNE (TNS)

IT WASN'T LONG AGO that rapper M.I.A. and producer Diplo made electrifying hip-hop together — influential singles like “Bucky Done Gun,” “Paper Planes” and “Tell Me Why” came out of their collaboration. Then they split up, creatively and romantically, leaving an ugly aftermath of insults, apologies and denied apologies. And they hadn't worked together since — until one night in June, when M.I.A. dropped by Diplo's set with his popular dance band, Major Lazer, at the Parklife music festival in Manchester, England.

“You know, we always talk, since 15 years ago. We're always in communication. Never really that dramatic of a situation,” says Diplo, born Thomas Wesley Pentz, who has produced and worked with megastars such as Beyonce, Justin Bieber, Usher and Madonna. “We're pretty much both adults. We have the same attitude since we first started.”

“Bird Song,” the first M.I.A.-Diplo track since 2010, came together after another artist at the Parklife festival made off with a car earmarked for Major Lazer. “We just sat in the parking lot of the festival until about 2 in the morning,” Diplo says. “We only had enough power for two hours. We did as much work as we could do until our computer died.”

“It was very much M.I.A.-style — record in the parking lot, and I have to mix it for two weeks,” continues the 37-year-old producer, by phone from Burbank, Calif. “And there's not enough vocals for the song, and the day before masters, she records four lines and sends it to me. It was done very much in her style: complete chaos.”

Born in Tupelo, Miss., raised in South Florida, Diplo was once most famous for his groundbreaking work with M.I.A. — dance music that had the blunt political force of the Clash, sometimes with gunshots built into the chorus. But over the past 10 years, the producer has expanded to a diverse roster of high-profile projects, all built on his aesthetic of mixing Jamaican dance-hall reggae, Brazilian baile funk and other funky worldwide influences into booming party beats.

Jack U, his band with dance-music star Skrillex, scored a 2015 smash with Bieber, “Where Are U Now”; Diplo worked closely with Beyonce on her “Lemonade” album this year; his long-running label Mad Decent Records put out Baauer's ubiquitous “Harlem Shake”; and Major Lazer, in addition to headlining top festivals, gave Diplo yet another 2015 hit, “Lean On,” with DJ Snake.

After Major Lazer's latest hit, “Cold Water,” co-starring Bieber and Danish singer-songwriter MØ, he told an interviewer he's working on 40 records simultaneously. “Well, some of them are old. Some of them are maybe 1 ½ years old — I want to update them,” he clarifies. “There's probably 100 ideas I'm working — there's 40 I can remember, and if they're that strong, they're easy to remember in my brain: I've got to do a bridge for that, I've got to do a drum part for that.”

“Like any painter or sculptor, I have ideas all over the house,” he continues. “Time passes, and it doesn't measure up to what (artists) want it to be, so they don't finish it. Somebody told me 99 percent of all the music in the world you never hear. It sits alone and doesn't see the light of day. That's about right for what I have on my computer.”

Diplo didn't exactly come from music. His mother was a supermarket employee, and his father ran a bait shop. “Wes” Pentz's plan, at first, was to go to college and learn to be a paleontologist. But the music he heard in Florida — reggae, metal and Miami bass music — drew him down a different career path. He wound up graduating from Philadelphia's Temple University, then living briefly in Japan, where he recorded beats for other artists.

“I didn't really grow up in a creative household. I had to find out (music) on my own and figure out how to do it,” he says. “As a kid, your parents are like, ‘What are you doing? Go to work.’”

After returning to Philadelphia from Japan, Pentz had been a DJ and social worker and worked at a movie theater. Hooking up with a fellow DJ, Low Budget, he created a club night called Hollertronix, and that became the foundation for Diplo's empire — it led to an influential mixtape called “Never Scared,” then a debut 2004 album, then a compilation that same year called “Piracy Funds Terrorism,” Vol. 1,” which begat M.I.A.

Over time, both as a solo star and a behind-the-scenes producer, Diplo has expanded electronic dance music and helped turn the genre into a commercial force. But he also delights in ripping the genre. “I don't think EDM ever existed to begin with. ... All these DJs were already big — they were already part of conglomerate management companies and festival circuits. A lot of cool things were happening in dance and electronic music — you're in Chicago, so you know. You don't need EDM to come in and save you.”

“It's always been like, ‘Oh, how can we sell Sprite?’” he says, then pauses with a wry laugh and a “Game of Thrones” reference. “Yeah, the EDM winter is here, and the White Walkers are coming to eat you.”

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KEVIN DEMOFF GREW UP IN LA, HELPED RAMS FIND THEIR WAY BACK

BY SAM FARMER - LOS ANGELES TIMES (TNS)

LOS ANGELES — All Kevin Demoff wanted to do was get on with the basketball game. But everyone else on the court was frozen in place, transfixed by the familiar, hulking man in the stands. It was Miami Dolphins quarterback Dan Marino, who had slipped into the gymnasium of the small school in Los Angeles to watch Kevin, the fourth-grade son of his agent, try his hand at point guard.

“The other nine kids on the court were just staring at Dan,” Demoff recalled. “And I’m like, ‘Hey, we’ve got a game to win here.’ I didn’t even think about it.”

As the football world would learn decades later, Demoff is unruffled by the big stage. The Los Angeles Rams’ top executive, whose childhood was steeped in pro football, was an integral figure in untangling the most confounding knot in professional sports. Demoff, 39, was key in bringing the NFL back to Los Angeles for the first time in 22 years.

It was Rams owner Stan Kroenke who had resources and vision for a transformational stadium project at Hollywood Park, but Demoff was the point guard when it came to selling that Inglewood concept to the rest of the league.

“I’m fortunate to have the tutelage of Stan, who has really pioneered how you combine resources and sports in a way that has never been done before,” said Demoff, the Rams’ executive vice president of football operations and chief operating officer. “I’m grateful for his mentorship. He pushes our team for greatness and challenges us to envision the impossible.”

In January, what once was impossible became a reality. By a 30-2 vote, NFL owners chose the Inglewood project over a competing plan in Carson jointly backed by the San Diego Chargers and Oakland Raiders.

“In my 45 years in the movie business, I’ve heard some very exciting pitches for movies,” said Steve Tisch, co-owner

of the New York Giants and an Oscar-winning film producer. “Kevin’s pitch for the Rams’ new stadium at Hollywood Park was just as powerful. He was passionate, informative, prepared and dynamic. ... It was like watching a great trailer for a movie.”

The rail-thin Demoff, who seemed to grow grayer by the day, was under intense pressure in recent years as he fought the stadium battles in St. Louis and navigated a new path in Los Angeles, where so many others had tried and failed to get football venues built.

Many Rams fans in St. Louis revile Demoff, accusing him of being an architect of a deception. They argue Kroenke was determined to relocate the team to Los Angeles, and only paid lip service, by way of Demoff, to staying in St. Louis.

Demoff said suspicions surfaced even before arbitrators

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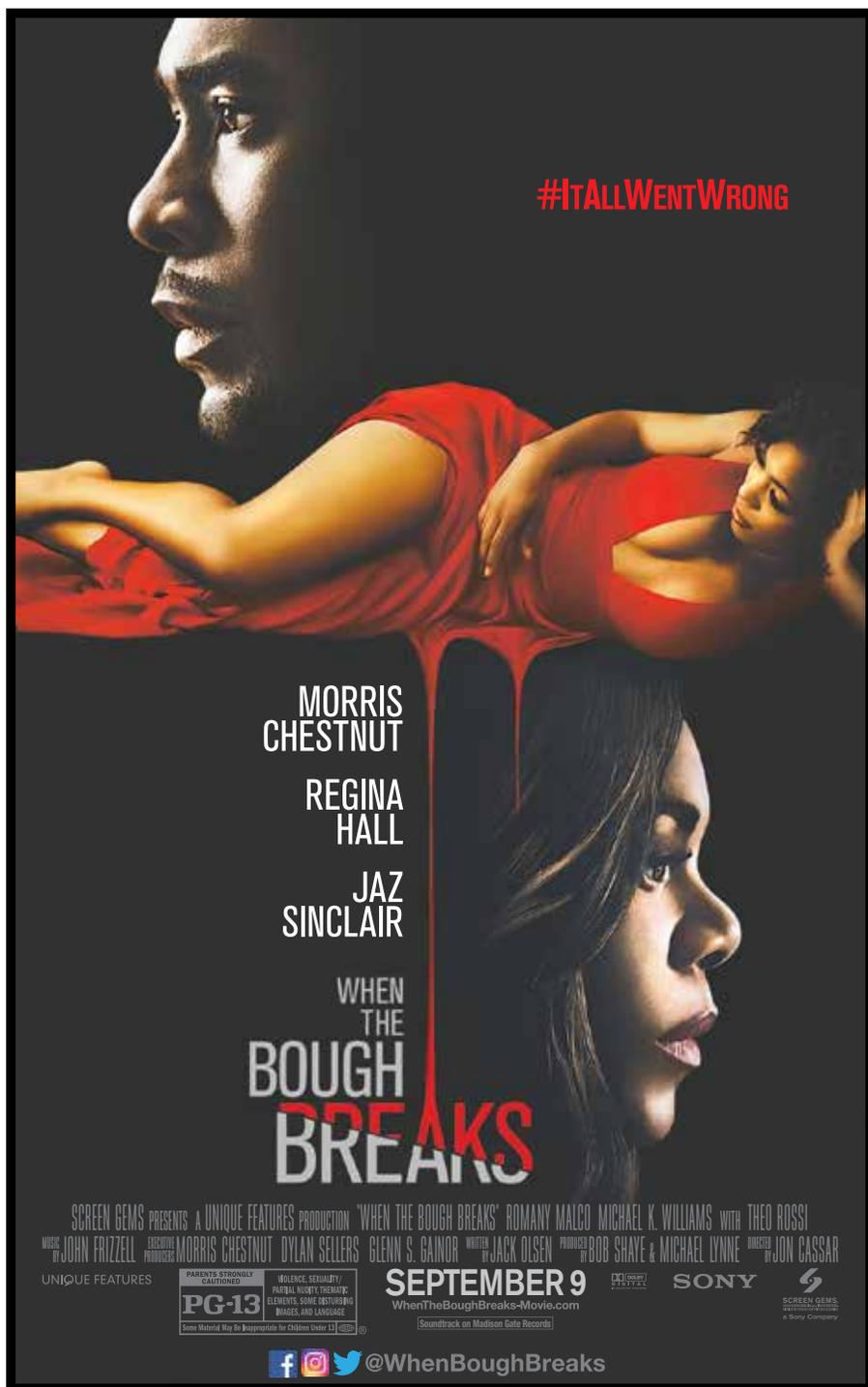


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GAMING



FOUR INDIE GAMES WORTH CHECKING OUT

BY GIESON CACHO - EAST BAY TIMES (TNS)

A DECADE AGO, summer was a dead zone for video games. Publishers ignored the season while preparing to launch of their big-budget fall releases.

But that's changed. Now indie developers are capitalizing on the quiet period to spotlight their work.

Earlier, Microsoft nurtured this idea with Summer of Arcade, which helped popularize indie titles such as "Braid," "Limbo" and "Bastion." More recently, Psyonix released "Rocket League" during the lull, and it became an eSports phenomenon.

This season, "No Man's Sky" drew the most attention, but other indie titles are worth of a look. Here are four:

"Abzu": Developed by Giant Squid, this seafaring exploration game draws comparisons to "Journey." And that's no surprise, since some of the team members behind that legendary title ventured out to create "Abzu."

Players take on the role of the Diver, who awakes in the ocean and delves beneath the surface. Though grounded in reality, this world will seem alien to most players, as the Diver comes across goblin sharks, orcas, giant squids plus sea life from millions of years ago.

"Abzu" is mostly about exploring. As players find drones that open up closed areas, they can unlock more of the story by paying attention to subtle hints in the environment. The Giant Squid creators have packed a lot into the short but sweet "Abzu."

"Headlander": San Francisco-based Double Fine Productions eschews video game conventions, as this sci-fi Metroidvania-style title clearly demonstrates.

In it, players take on the role of a disembodied head encased in a high-tech helmet. Weird, I know, but in the game's bizarre version of the future, humans have uploaded their awareness and intellect to the cloud, and downloaded robot bodies.

Everything is hunky-dory until Methuselah, the artificial intelligence that powers the system's space station, goes berserk.

Players step into the role of the last flesh-and-blood human, who must bring Methuselah under control.

Thankfully, being a disembodied head enables a player to access ventilation ducts and take over headless robots. He or she will do a lot of body switching while exploring the expansive station and fending off Methuselah's guards.

As they open up new areas and venture deeper into the station, "Headlander" players feel a sense of accomplishment. Pervading the single-player adventure are a 1970s sci-fi vibe and quirky humor.

"Road to Ballhalla": Imagine "Marble Madness" but with a snarky, sadistic twist, and you get a feel for this puzzle title by Torched Hill.

The premise is simple: Players control a ball that they must roll it from point A to point B. Predictably, that's way easier said than done as they encounter laser traps, obstacles and invisible paths.

Through each game stage, Torched Hill mercilessly offers bad advice and tempts players with paths on which the ball will be destroyed.

Once in a while, a hint on how to negotiate a puzzle proves useful, but most of the time players will feel as if the creative team is taunting them.

Though challenging, "Road to Ballhalla" is more enjoyable than some comparable games.

"Strike Vector EX": For fans of "Gundam" and other Japanese mech anime, Ragequit Corporation's latest release is a dream-come-true.

"Strike Vector EX" is part "Air Combat" and part "Virtua On." Players pilot agile ships that can switch from high-speed flight to hovering attack mode with the press of a button, though adjusting to the unique control system may take a while.

The pace is fast as players switch from dogfights to mech combat and anything in between. They can get their feet wet with a campaign that teaches the basics of piloting ships, but the meat of "Strike Vector EX" is found in multiplayer mode.

Though "Strike Vector Ex" could use more mech-to-mech combat refinement, the game pretty much nails what it's like to pilot a flying robot.

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NOT ALL GREAT TV ATTRACTS BUZZ:

HERE ARE 5 SHOWS THAT DESERVE MORE ATTENTION

BY MARY MCNAMARA - LOS ANGELES TIMES (TNS)



WINTER MAY BE HERE, but fall is still coming, and you might need to catch up with spring.

No, I'm not talking about climate change, or at least not the meteorological sort, I'm talking about television.

For a while, it was the new novel, then the new restaurant. Now TV is the new weather — we talk about it constantly, and with increasing emphasis on the unusual and the extreme.

Lamentations over the extra-long wait for the next season of HBO's "Game of Thrones" bump up against memes from Netflix's "Stranger Things"; consternation over the second season of Lifetime's "Un-Real" briefly interrupts speculation about who Negan killed in the season finale of AMC's "The Walking Dead."

Meanwhile, a whole new slate of brand-new shows looms in the distance, already crackling with terms like "hotly anticipated," "if you only watch one" and "biggest of the fall."

In other words, the bottled lightning known as buzz.

When television lived and died by ratings, buzz mattered, but only as a way to increase viewership. Now, with increasingly small and splintered audiences and platforms that don't even use ratings, buzz doesn't just drive viewership numbers, it almost replaces it.

And this has become a problem. In one of TV's great twists of irony, the more buzz seems to matter, fewer shows appear to get it.

Just as most weather isn't a newsworthy event, much of television has, for years, existed and even thrived without buzz.

Most series do not regularly land on magazine covers or nomination lists; most shows don't get big reviews of their season premieres and season finales or enjoy a vast and influential social media following.

This does not mean they aren't enjoyable, important or good; it just means they aren't considered remarkable. As in worthy of being remarked upon repeatedly by critics and

commentators and/or publicly obsessed over by fans.

Whodunits like "Bones," "Elementary" and, until this season, "Castle" are the workhorses of television, consistently providing endless hours of entertainment that are smart, sad, funny and surprising. Franchises like "NCIS," "Criminal Minds," "CSI" and the "Chicago" empire of Dick Wolf are franchises because people really like them.

Do they have buzz? Not really.

It isn't just old-standards being passed over. Ten years ago, the buzz around a smart, stylish con drama like ABC's "The Catch" would have been deafening; instead it made a lackluster debut this spring and seemed to sink beneath the waters. Many critics, including this one, were surprised when it was renewed for a second season.

Some of the dwindling buzz-to-show ratio is simply a function of mathematics: There is literally too much good television to keep track of. A few years ago, answering the question "What should I watch?" was easy; now it requires a full patient history including a psychological work-up. Old or new? Fiction or doc? Modern or period? Violent or light? How do you feel about fantasy/sci-fi/musical theater/shows in which animals talk?

By its definition, "buzz" is a select and finite event, but the increasing predictability of its flight path is also a reflection of TV's quality problem of, well, too much quality.

It's no longer enough to be just good, a series has to stand out in some very clear and genre-changing way. As the immortal Miss Mazepa would have said, you gotta get a gimmick. (Which can then backfire — "Ironside" reboot we hardly knew ye — but at least for a few glorious moments, you had buzz.)

But just because a series doesn't regularly make critics' lists or the Emmy nominations, doesn't regularly set Twitter on fire or parade its cast through Hall H at Comic-Con doesn't mean it isn't good — fans of "Blue Bloods" take heart! — and so, having

just spent several paragraphs deriding the notion of lists, I now offer you one. Arbitrary, personal and in no particular order, some shows that deserve way more buzz than they get:

1. "The Catch" (ABC). Mireille Enos and Peter Krause star as an FBI agent duped, for a while, by her con man fiance with whom she eventually reconciles. Each side of the law has an excellent team, and any absurdities of plot are more than made up for by the quality, and chemistry, of the cast.

2. "Madam Secretary" (CBS). Without grimness, cynicism or preachiness, "Madam Secretary" puts a super-smart everywoman played by Tea Leoni in the middle of international politics, raising questions about government and political morality but never getting too sticky or hopeless about it. Like "The West Wing," with less talking and more women.

3. "Rectify" (Sundance). Ray McKinnon's tale of a man returning to his life after being set free from death row premiered to universal amazement and praise. While subsequent seasons followed a more traditional plot line, it remained as haunting and heartbreaking a series as television has. In October it begins its fourth and final season.

4. "The Fosters" (Free-form). Noted at the time of its premiere for its groundbreaking depiction of a lesbian couple raising a multiracial blended family, "The Fosters" has won Teen Choice and GLAAD awards but never enough mainstream buzz. It's a really good show.

5. "Bones" (Fox). After struggling to find its tone and footing way back in the way back, "Bones" has given us 11 seasons of great ensemble-procedural television. In April, it will begin a 12-episode final season. No doubt it will then generate the buzz it deserves.

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JEFFREY TOOBIN TAKES READERS ON THE RUN WITH PATTY HEARST

BY DAVID MARTINDALE

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM (TNS)

IF THERE'S ANY SHORTCOMING to "American Heiress," Jeffrey Toobin's remarkable book about "the kidnapping, crimes and trial of Patty Hearst," it's that the central figure in the story said no to an interview.

Toobin tried many times to arrange a sit-down with Hearst, granddaughter of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst, the woman who became news in the 1970s as a hostage-turned-"urban guerrilla"-turned-fugitive-turned-convicted bank robber.

"I regret that she chose not to participate," says Toobin. "I certainly would have liked to have spoken to her."

But what, really, would he have gained by doing so?

Toobin, CNN's senior legal analyst and author of "The Run of His Life: The People v. O.J. Simpson," did an extraordinary amount of research to get inside Hearst's head during her years with the Symbionese Liberation Army, the inept group of domestic terrorists that kidnapped/recruited her.

He pored through the testimony from Hearst's 1976 trial and from various grand jury investigations.

He reviewed thousands of pages of transcripts from her interviews with FBI agents, attorneys and members of the press.

He not only read her revisionist 1981 memoir, "Every Secret Thing," but he also went through rough drafts and outlines in search of telling outtakes.

He even got his hands on never-before-published letters ("in her looping private girls' school handwriting"), which she wrote while in jail when she still answered to her SLA name of Tania. These letters, he writes, "represent unmediated and undisputed insight into ... the real Patricia."

Once Hearst was released from prison in 1979, she set out to rewrite her story — insisting that she never willingly became a member of the SLA, that she merely went along with the bank robberies, bombings and hiding out because she feared for her life (a claim that surviving SLA members dispute).

In January 1979, President Jimmy Carter signed a commutation of the rest of Hearst's prison sentence. In January 2001, on his last day in office, President Bill Clinton gave her a full pardon.

Hearst, who turns 62 on Aug. 20, leads a very different life in her "dowager years," doting on her granddaughters and on her Westminster Kennel Club prize-winning Shih Tzu.

It could therefore be argued that this is not the woman Toobin wanted to interview.

The person he wanted to question was the frightened hostage, the possible Stockholm Syndrome sufferer who had romances with fellow gang members, the gun-toting radical who, once arrested, gave her occupation to police as "urban guerrilla." Those versions of Patty Hearst no longer exist.

"I take your point that she is a very different person today, but all those facts notwithstanding, there's no doubt that I would have preferred to speak to her," Toobin says. "It's always better, in my experience, to get the interview than not. If it's helpful, it's helpful. If it's not, it's not."

"But you can't know until you talk to someone."

Toobin — whose 1996 book about the O.J. Simpson trial inspired the acclaimed FX series "The People v. O.J. Simpson" — turned his attention to the Hearst-SLA story after an editor suggested it.

"I said, 'There must be a million books about Patty Hearst,' and he said, 'Well, go look.' And I found that nothing really has been written about the case in more than 30 years."

It is a strange story from beginning to end and it contains a little of everything. It's a riveting crime and courtroom drama. It's a fascinating look back at a very different chapter in our history. And it has interesting things to say about wealth, privilege, fame, celebrity and media in America.

"It combines my interest in a lot of different subjects, whether it's the courtroom or politics or the media," Toobin says. "It had elements of all of that."

It also has an eclectic catch-all cast of characters. They include the Rev. Jim Jones (a few years prior to the People's Temple mass murder-suicide in Guyana), failed presidential assassin

AMERICAN HEIRESS



THE WILD SAGA OF THE
KIDNAPPING, CRIMES AND
TRIAL OF **PATTY HEARST**

JEFFREY TOOBIN

Sara Jane Moore (who kept the books for a feed-the-poor program that Patty's father, Randy Hearst, started in response to an SLA hostage demand) and John Wayne (an unlikely supporter for clemency for Hearst).

"I got a great kick out of the strange cameos that you find in this story," Toobin says.

What he didn't get a kick out of, however, was the fact that Patricia Hearst used her connections to get a lighter sentence, an early release and a presidential pardon — special treatment that the poor could never hope to receive. Toobin makes it quite clear in the book that he found this galling.

"I went into this story with no preconceived notions about Patricia Hearst or about the SLA," he says. "But once I started doing my reporting, I certainly did reach some conclusions about her and the story and that's what I put in the book."

It's a story that would make a great follow-up to FX's O.J. Simpson series, although that's not likely to happen. "There is already a screenplay in the works, but it's for a feature film, not a TV series," he says. "We'll see whether it gets made."

In the meantime, Toobin is hunting for the next epic crime and courtroom story idea. He knows it's out there. It might even be hiding in plain sight.

"For years, nobody wanted to make a movie or a TV series about O.J.," Toobin notes. "The thinking was that everyone knew everything there was to know and that people were sick of the story."

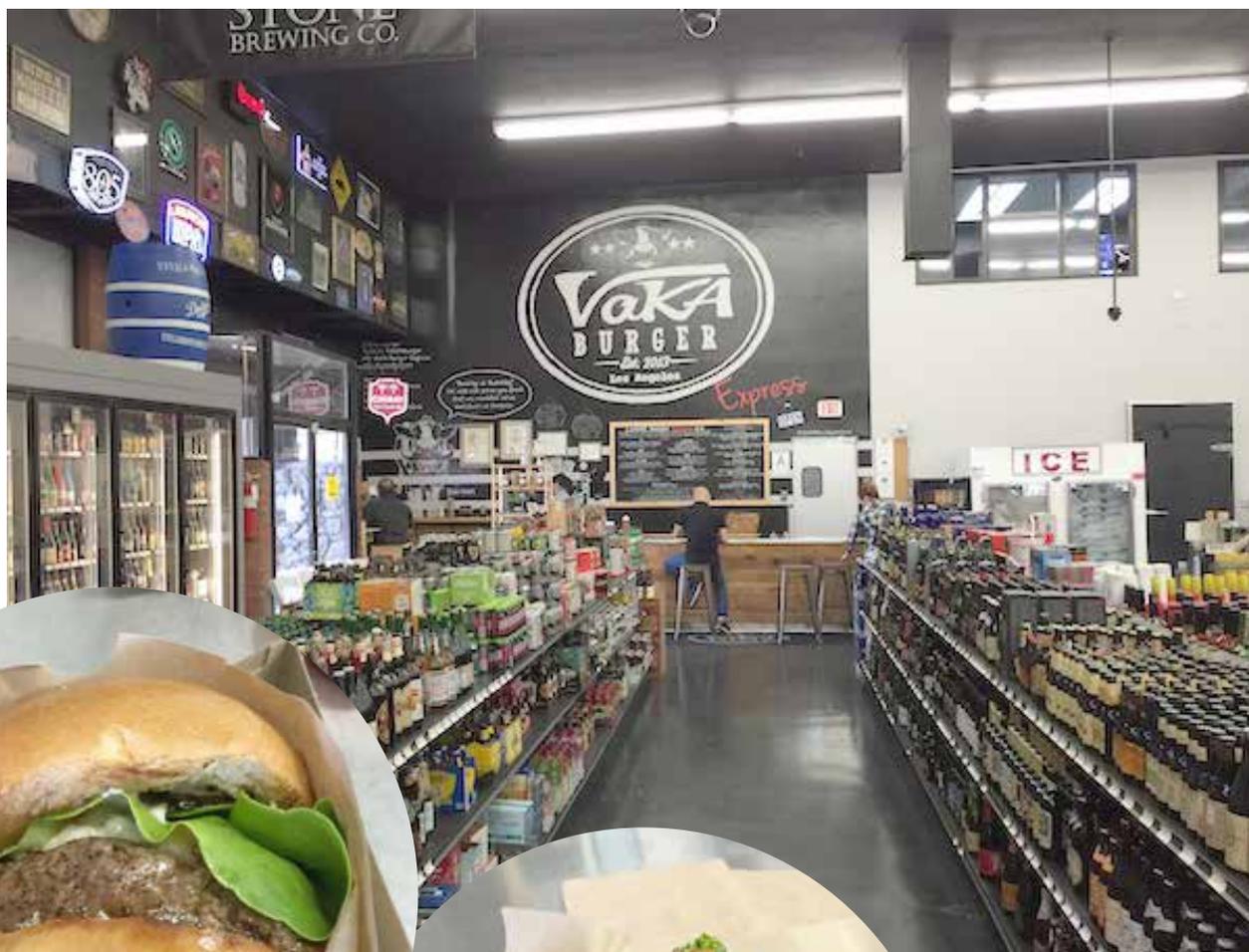
"But we discovered that this is absolutely not true. When it is a genuinely great story, people always will be interested."

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AN URBAN EXPLORER DISCOVERS VAKA BURGER EXPRESS IN BOYLE HEIGHTS



BY SEAN BELLO

I'VE HEARD SOME NEWS LATELY about the resistance to the gentrification of Boyle Heights and decided to take a look at what is going on over there. For those of you not familiar with the community, Boyle Heights is mainly a Mexican American neighborhood east of Downtown Los Angeles. Back in the first half of the 20th Century, it was an ethnic melting pot of Jews, Japanese, Latinos, Yugoslavians, Portuguese and Russians.

While waiting in my car for my wife, who was checking out a neighborhood thrift shop, my curiosity caught the best of me as I stared at the Ramirez Beverage Center located directly across the street from where I was parked. The Center is a successful business in the community selling a vast selection of beers, alcohol and sodas. Tucked in the Southwest corner of the store is Vaka Burger, an express burger joint that grabs your attention as you browse the aisles for the spirits of your choice.

Vaka, which means beef in Spanish, is the brainchild of chef Aaron Perez and Esmeralda Sanchez, his fiancée and business partner. Perez who was born and raised in Boyle Heights, is a graduate of the Le Cordon Bleu School of the Culinary Arts. He worked for the Food Network, Wolfgang Puck Catering and earned his stripes in the kitchen in renowned restaurants such as La Cachette, Rivera and Providence. You may have seen Aaron on "Cutthroat Kitchen," a cooking competition show also on the Food Network, where a player, in addition to being a good chef, must be able to outwit opponents to win. And, Perez did just that. With his Boyle Heights streets smarts and culinary background, Perez won "Cutthroat Kitchen" and pocketed a nice financial windfall.

Debuting a gourmet burger concept at the now closed Tested L.A. in the residential neighborhood of Glassell Park, Perez's creations gained traction with foodies and lead to him and Sanchez taking the "Cutthroat" winnings and parlaying them into the Vaka Burger food truck. The grass-fed burgers and truffle fries further caught on in Los Angeles as their food truck canvassed various areas of the city, dolling out burgers fitted

with house-made everything.

Eventually though, the next step in the progression of Vaka Burger would be to park the truck and settle the business down. When it came time to lay roots, Perez and Sanchez returned to Boyle Heights and anchored themselves to the Ramirez Beverage Center, which has been in business for over 35 years.

The Ramirez-Vaka relationship compliments each other in multiple ways, one of which is how a successful business in a community, where the median income is \$33,000.00 ends up making space for a pair of young local entrepreneurs to sprout up and shoot for the American Dream. The other is to make money. When you walk into Ramirez, you'll discover an amazing selection of beers from around the world, local breweries and American brands. On the other side of the store is a vast selection of cold sodas. Every liquor store on the planet sells snacks but how many have a gourmet burger joint on the premises? Most likely, none. The downside, you can't buy alcohol and drink onsite at Vaka Burger Express. However, with craft soda flavors such as Butterscotch Root Beer, you will surely find a tasty beverage to wash down your burger. Also, you can always pick up a 6 pack with your to go order.

Vaka Burger Express stands out in the store with its big black and white signage. The restaurant seats 6 people at the counter and another 6 to 8 in a corner area. The staff is extremely friendly and knowledgeable. On my Saturday visit, a young Latina greeted us with a big welcoming smile and proceeded to walk us through the restaurant's menu. Based on the pictures on Yelp, I ordered the house made beer batter tempura Maui onion rings. The rings are a huge flavorful serving (enough to share) with a crispy but not crunchy texture that is served with a Sriracha ketchup on the side. As for fries, I'll have to save the

popular Dirty Fries, thin Yukon gold potatoes, Russian dressing, caramelized onions, feta and garlic aioli for my next visit.

There are up to 9 burger choices on the menu including a vegetarian option that substitutes a beef patty with an organic Portobello mushroom. All burgers are

served on a Brioche bun and the patty is a 100% grass-fed, homemade blend of three signature cuts of beef. The burger names are eye catching and the descriptions are mouth watering. With names, such as the OG, Vaka, El Porky, Los Altos and Pato Loco yo, you get a Chicano chef's culinary training merged with his proud Hispanic heritage.

My wife and I settled on a Truff Burger which is layered with baby rock arugula, New York sharp cheddar cheese, white Truffle oil, caramelized Firestone onions and roasted garlic aioli. We also had a Blu Burger, which includes blue cheese, Balsamic glaze Crimini mushrooms, garlic aioli and living organic butter lettuce. We split both burgers in half and shared them. They were amazing. The burgers are cooked to perfection, flavorful and juicy. Even more importantly though, the burger and fixins are equally balanced and don't overwhelm each other. This results in an even-handed explosion of tastes in your mouth that represents the best of what Aaron Perez brings out in his food.

What's next for Vaka Burger? Look for a new location in Downtown L.A. coming soon and in the Loge section of Dodger stadium in 2017.

In the meantime, visit *Vaka Burger Express* at 2765 E. Olympic Blvd. in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. (323) 265-1111. Check them out online at VakaBurgers.com (Please note – new website coming soon but the menu is up there.) or via Facebook - @VakaBurgers, Instagram – @VakaBurgers, and Twitter - @VaKABurger

easy kimchi

(Mak Kimchi)

This is an easy, modified kimchi recipe for beginners. You can use more or less of the Korean red chile flakes, depending on your taste.

Prep time: 1 hour fermentation time: 1 day
Makes 12 cups



INGREDIENTS

4 pounds napa cabbage
1/2 cup kosher salt
2 cups water
4 green onions, green and white parts
1 (1-inch) piece fresh ginger, peeled
10 large cloves garlic, peeled
1 1/2 pounds daikon radish
1 large carrot, peeled
3/4 cup Korean red chile flakes
5 tablespoons fish sauce
3 tablespoons saeujeot (tiny salted fermented shrimp)
2 tablespoons sugar

FIRST:



Second:

Rinse the cabbage in cold running water, then drain. Sprinkle salt all over the cabbage, and pour the water over and massage.



Meanwhile

Let's make the seasoning. Cut the green onions on the diagonal.



Back to the salted napa cabbage.

You will notice the volume of the cabbage has been reduced by half. Remove the excess salt by rinsing it 5 times with cold running water.

Gently squeeze the water out of the napa cabbage and put it in a big mixing bowl.

Finally



Pack the mixture into a clean glass jar to within an inch of the top. Close the lid and put the jar in a plastic bag in case the juice overflows during fermentation. Leave the jar at room temperature for a day, after which it will be ready to eat. It can keep for up to a month in the refrigerator.



KIMCHI ALERT! THIS CHARMING 'COMIC BOOK WITH RECIPES' MAKES KOREAN COOKING A SNAP

BY LESLIE BRENNER — THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS (TNS)

IF YOU WANT TO LEARN TO COOK KOREAN FOOD and you're starting from scratch, the first thing to do is find a very large jar. The second is to procure a copy of "Cook Korean! A Comic Book with Recipes." But no need to commit just yet; you can try a few of our adapted recipes first.

The jar, which needs to be glass and very large — like 96 ounces large — is for making kimchi, which is not only delicious (and super-healthy) on its own and an ingredient in many Korean dishes; it's also a hugely important part of Korean culture.

The book, engagingly written and illustrated by Robin Ha, a graduate of Rhode Island School of Design with a bachelor of fine arts in illustration, makes learning this cuisine — which might otherwise be daunting if you're a first-timer — approachable and fun. That's because she uses her talents as a comic book artist to explain and illustrate techniques and walk you through the recipes.

But don't worry: Even if you don't want to make your own kimchi (which you can always buy), you can still jump in and turn out some terrific Korean dishes with Ha, who was born in South Korea, as your guide. If you're anything like me, you'll

be hooked after making just a couple of recipes. After you cook three or four, you'll even start to feel like an honest-to-goodness Korean cook.

Are you game? You'll also need access to a few key Korean ingredients and (if you want to make kimchi) disposable food-prep gloves. If you live in North Texas, you're in luck: You can find everything (including the gloves) at Asian supermarkets.

Ha's "Easy Kimchi" — a basic one starring napa cabbage — is way simpler to make than you might think, and super-delicious. Make it once, and you understand basic kimchi technique, which is pretty cool, as there are a jillion types of kimchi. It starts with a quick (45-minute) saltwater brine of the cabbage. Squeeze out the water, put the cabbage in a big bowl with carrots, daikon, ginger, garlic, scallions, gochugaru (Korean chile flakes), saeujeot (tiny fermented salted shrimp, which you'll find in the refrigerated section), sugar and fish sauce, then put on those gloves, use your hands to mix it all together really well, pack it in the jar and close the lid. Put the jar in a plastic bag ("in case the juice overflows during fermentation"; mine didn't) and leave it at room temperature for 24 hours. After that, it's ready to

eat — but it gets better and better as it sits in the fridge, where you can leave it, says Ha, up to a month. The recipe is below.

I also loved a quick and easy recipe for bean sprout salad (also below), a classic banchan (side dish) you can make using stuff you can find at a reasonably well-stocked regular supermarket. For this, you just boil bean sprouts, drain and squeeze out the water, then toss them with chopped scallions, minced garlic, toasted sesame oil, soy sauce and toasted sesame seeds.

The book also has a number of cold and spicy one-bowl main-course recipes that sounded so fabulously refreshing on a hot summer day. Ha calls Hoedupbap — a salad and rice bowl topped with raw fish — "one of the healthiest, tastiest and easiest dishes in Korean cuisine." Sold! "Its tangy, spicy dressing," she adds, "is the key to tying all of the ingredients together."

Right she is, on all counts. The spicy dressing — made with Asian pear, garlic, lemon juice, gochujang (Korean chile paste), soy sauce, rice vinegar and sugar — is similar to others in the book, whirred quickly together in a blender. Ha says the cooking time is 10 minutes, but that doesn't take into account that one of the ingredients is freshly cooked rice, which takes about

35 minutes, including letting it sit for 15. I incorporated her rice recipe into my adaptation of her hoedupbap recipe.

Once you have the dressing ready, the rice cooked, the sashimi-grade raw fish sliced and the salad ingredients prepped (Romaine lettuce, Kirby cucumber, carrot and scallions), you assemble the ingredients in each of two bowls (the recipe serves two). Rice goes on the bottom, then salad, then fish on top, garnished with tobiko (flying fish roe), crushed toasted nori (seaweed) and toasted sesame seeds. Add sauce to taste, mix it up and enjoy. We certainly did! For raw fish, I used sashimi-grade tuna.

A recipe for mulnaengmyun, cold buckwheat noodles topped with cold sliced brisket and quick-pickled daikon and cucumber, didn't work so well — and it took much longer to prepare (you have to start the day before). The instructions said to combine broth from cooking the beef with pickle juice, but the recipe didn't yield as much broth as Ha calls for. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't appealing enough to make it worth tweaking the recipe to make it work better.

For a final test, I thought I'd try something served hot — just in case summer eventually decides to end — and this recipe for braised daikon and saury (mackerel pike) yielded a delicious result.

I love daikon (Japanese radish), whether raw or cooked, and I love shiny fish (like sardines and mackerel), so I couldn't resist an easy, home-style recipe that marries saury and braised daikon, plus garlic, onions, ginger and chile. "It's easy and inexpensive and the leftovers taste good," writes Ha.

Well, this one tasted so good there were no leftovers. That was a tiny issue in the recipe, actually: While the portion sizes in the book tended to be generous, this one, whose headnote says it serves four to six, was just enough for three, as far as the fish went. (There was enough daikon for four.)

Before I made it, I was most curious about the canned saury the recipe calls for. I'd eaten fresh grilled or smoked saury many times in Japanese restaurants, but I'd never eaten (or seen!) it canned.

The recipe — another extremely simple one — worked great. You put chunks of daikon and onion in the bottom of a pot, pour the can of saury over it (including its liquid), along with a spicy sauce you've just thrown together (gochugaru, soy sauce, sugar, garlic and ginger). Cook it 25 minutes, add scallions and cook another three minutes.

So, four out of five recipes tested worked great — that's a pretty impressive result. I'll certainly make the kimchi and the bean sprouts salad again, and there are a bunch more recipes I want to try. Kimchi fried rice, for instance. And rice cake soup (teokguk), traditional for New Year's Day. I'll probably skip the Korean barbecue (I think that's probably best cooked over charcoal at a restaurant such as Seoul Garden), but there's a spicy pork over rice (jeyuk dupbap) that looks good. And I'll definitely try the haemul pajean — seafood and green onion pancake, one of my favorite Korean dishes.

If I have one small caution, it would be this: While "Cook Korean!"'s comic-book style is a big draw, and the illustrations are terrific, the way the recipes wind around the pages can be a little disorienting. Because of that, I occasionally missed directions. For instance, the kimchi recipe calls for cutting the ginormous napa cabbage lengthwise into quarters, then cutting those quarters into bite-size pieces. I somehow missed the part that said to make them bite-size. The recipe worked fine anyway (I used kitchen scissors to cut it up before I ate it). My fault, for sure: At the Super H-Mart in Carrollton, I watched a lady massage kimchi sauce into quartered heads of napa cabbage to make kimchi. But it is easy to miss such details in the comic book.

If you want to try one or two of our adapted versions of Ha's recipes before you spring for the book, you won't run into that problem. Sound good? I thought so!

EASY KIMCHI

Adapted from "Cook Korean!: A Comic Book with Recipes" by Robin Ha

Makes 12 cups.

1 4-pound napa cabbage

1/2 cup kosher salt

4 scallions, green and white parts, sliced on the diagonal

1 1/2 pounds daikon radish, peeled and cut into medium ju-

lienne

1 large carrot, peeled and cut into medium julienne

1 1-inch piece ginger, peeled

10 large cloves garlic, peeled

3/4 cup gochugaru (Korean red chile flakes; may be labeled "red pepper powder"; see note above)

5 tablespoons fish sauce

3 tablespoons saeujeot (tiny salted fermented shrimp; see note above)

2 tablespoons sugar

1. Trim the bottom of the cabbage and cut it lengthwise into quarters; cut each quarters into bite-sized pieces. Rinse the cabbage in cold running water, then drain. Place the cabbage in a large bowl, sprinkle the salt all over it, then pour 2 cups water over it, and mix well. Let the cabbage brine in the salt water for 45 minutes, tossing it now and then for even salting.

2. While the cabbage brines, place the scallions, daikon and carrots in a medium bowl. Crush the ginger and garlic together, using the butt of a knife or a mallet, and add them to the scallions, daikon and carrots, along with the chile flakes, fish sauce, saeujeot and sugar. Mix well.

3. After 45 minutes, the volume of the cabbage has been reduced by half. Remove the excess salt by rinsing it for a long time in cold running water. Gently squeeze the water out of the cabbage and put it in a large mixing bowl.

4. Add the scallion, daikon and carrot mixture to the cabbage, and, using food-prep gloves mix it all together really well. Pack the mixture into a clean 96-ounce glass jar to within an inch of the top. Close the lid and put the jar in a large plastic bag in case the juice overflows during fermentation. Leave the jar at room temperature for 24 hours, after which the kimchi will be ready to eat. It can be kept for up to a month in the refrigerator.

KOREAN BEAN SPROUT SALAD (KONGNAMUL MUCHIM)

Adapted from "Cook Korean!: a Cookbook with Recipes" by Robin Ha

Makes 2 cups.

12 ounces soybean sprouts

1 teaspoon salt

1 scallion, green and white parts, finely chopped

1 clove garlic, minced

1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil

2 teaspoons soy sauce

1 teaspoon toasted sesame seeds, plus additional for garnish if desired

Gochugaru (Korean red chile flakes), optional, for serving

1. Discard any brown bean sprouts, then rinse the sprouts with cold running water and drain. Put them into a medium saucepan, add 1 cup water and the salt. Cover, bring to a boil over high heat, reduce heat to medium and cook for 7 minutes. Drain the sprouts in a colander or strainer, cool them with cold running water, then drain again. Gently squeeze as much water as you can from the sprouts and put them in a medium mixing bowl.

2. Add the scallion, garlic, sesame oil, soy sauce and sesame seeds. This may be served room temperature or chilled. Garnish with sesame seeds, if desired. If you like it spicy, add chile flakes to taste at the table.

KOREAN RAW FISH SALAD BOWL (HOEDUPBAP)

Adapted from "Cook Korean!: a Comic Book with Recipes" by Robin Ha

Author Robin Ha calls this raw-fish, salad and rice bowl "one of the healthiest, tastiest and easiest dishes in Korean cuisine." Its tangy, spicy dressing, she writes, "is the key to tying all the ingredients together." Tobiko (flying fish roe) and toasted seaweed (nori) are available in Asian groceries. Gochujang (red chile paste), toasted seaweed (nori) and tobiko (flying fish roe) are available in Asian supermarkets, as well as select well-stocked groceries. I often find gochujang and nori in the imported foods section of my local Whole Foods Market. For the rice, you'll need a medium-sized deep pot with a clear lid. To crush the nori, you can use scissors to cut a sheet of the seaweed into strips and then crumble them with your fingers. Serves 2.

1 cup short to medium-grain white rice

1/4 small Asian pear, peeled and roughly chopped

1 clove garlic, peeled

Juice of 1/2 lemon

1/4 cup gochujang (red chile paste)

1 Kirby (pickling) cucumber

1/2 cup gochujang (red chile paste)

3 tablespoons soy sauce

2 tablespoons rice vinegar

1 tablespoon sugar

2 teaspoons toasted sesame seeds, plus more for garnish

4 large Romaine lettuce leaves

1 Kirby (pickling) cucumber

2 scallions, white and green parts, sliced into thin rings

1/2 small carrot, peeled and cut into thin matchsticks

8 ounces sushi-grade fish, such as tuna, yellowtail or snapper

1 ounce tobiko (flying fish roe)

Toasted seaweed (nori), crushed, for garnish

1. Make the rice: Put the rice in a medium pot with a clear lid. Fill the pot with cold water, and massage the rice to get all the cloudy dust out. Drain the rice and wash it in the pot 3 to 5 more times, until the water is clear. Leave enough water in the pot so it covers the rice by one inch. Place the pot on the stove over high heat without the lid and bring to a boil, then turn the heat to medium-low and put the lid on. Leave it alone and do not open the lid for 15 to 20 minutes, until the water is absorbed and the rice looks fluffy. Turn off the heat and keep the lid closed for another 15 minutes.

2. While the rice is cooking, make the dressing: Put the Asian pear in the jar of a blender, along with the garlic, lemon juice, chile paste, soy sauce, rice vinegar and sugar, and blend into a smooth paste. Transfer to a small bowl, add 2 teaspoons of the sesame seeds and stir to combine. Set aside.

3. Cut the thick, white bottoms from the Romaine leaves. Roll the leaves into a cigar shape and slice into thin ribbons. Set aside. Slice the cucumber on the diagonal into 1/4-inch slices, then stack a few slices and cut them into matchsticks. Repeat for the rest of the cucumber and set aside. Find the grain of the fish and slice it against the grain into 1/4-inch strips. Cut the strips into bite-sized pieces and set aside.

4. Assemble the bowls: Put half the rice into each of two bowls, and cover each with half the lettuce. Arrange the fish, cucumber and tobiko on top. Sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds and the crushed nori. Serve with the dressing on the side, mixing it in to your taste.

BRAISED DAIKON WITH SAURY (MU KKONGCHI JORIM)

Adapted from "Cook Korean!: A Comic Book with Recipes" by Robin Ha

Saury is a small, mackerel-like fish, also known as mackerel pike. This recipe, which author Robin Ha calls "a good example of how Koreans use seafood in everyday meals," calls for canned saury, which is available in Korean supermarkets. Gochugaru, or Korean red chile flakes — often labeled "red pepper powder" — can also be found in Korean supermarkets. Serves 3-4.

1 1/2 pounds daikon radish, peeled

1 large yellow onion, cut into chunky bite-sized pieces

3 scallions, white and green parts, cut into 3-inch pieces

6 cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2-inch piece of ginger, peeled and minced

1 14-ounce can saury (mackerel pike, see note above)

1/3 cup soy sauce

2 tablespoons gochugaru (Korean red chile flakes, see note above)

2 teaspoons sugar

1. Lay the daikon chunks evenly in the bottom of a large pot with a cover and distribute the yellow onion on top of them. Pour in the can of saury with its liquid.

2. Make the sauce: In a small bowl, mix the soy sauce, chile flakes, sugar, garlic and ginger and pour it on top of the ingredients in the pot, along with 2/3 cup water.

3. Bring to a boil over high heat, turn heat to medium-high and let it boil about 10 minutes, then cover the pan and lower the heat to medium. Let it simmer about 15 minutes, gently stirring occasionally so the flavors meld. Add the scallions and simmer for another 3 minutes. Serve hot, with rice if desired.

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ruled in favor of the Rams in early 2013, paving the way for the team to get out of its lease two years later.

“When you work at a team, your job is to build an emotional connection with the fan base,” Demoff said. “The (St. Louis) stadium situation always gave reason for fans to not completely commit to you. Because in the back, deep part of their minds, there were stadium issues that were unresolved. And even worse, it was a city that had lost a team before.”

In the summer of 2014, when Kroenke took control of the 300 acres at Hollywood Park, the prospect of a move back to Southern California became more real.

“Now you had a site that the NFL had long coveted, an owner with the expertise and resources to do it the way the NFL had always wanted to do it, and a team that had the right to relocate,” Demoff said.

“Even then, the best project and opportunity in Los Angeles never guaranteed success. No one had figured out this Rubik’s Cube for so long.”

Problem-solving is in Demoff’s DNA. His father, a former public defender, soared to the top of the sports-representation business by finding creative ways to structure contracts when other agents might fall back on boilerplate solutions.

“He’s creative, he’s patient, he’s fair,” Kevin said of his father. “Ultimately, he just listens, reasons, comes up with solutions. He was always trying to look for a win-win.”

Marvin and Patti Demoff still live in the same Benedict Canyon home in Los Angeles where they raised their two children, Kevin and Allison. Before the age of cellphones, the family had four land lines and a fax line, as Marvin liked to be home for dinner and would work there into the night.

Sometimes, Kevin would quietly pick up a phone and eavesdrop on his dad’s negotiations. Other times, he’d sit near his dad and try to imagine what was being said on the other end of the line.

“You’re a kid; you’re always thinking about how you can get one over on your parents,” he said. “That’s your job in life. So I spent a lot of time thinking about how I could negotiate against my father. What would I say? That’s what I basically spent a lot of my childhood doing.”

Marvin, 73, had an all-world stable of clients that included Marino, John Elway, Shannon Sharpe, Junior Seau, Jonathan Ogden and Tim Brown, and Rams such as Jack Youngblood and Jim Everett.

Years ago, the NFL draft started on a Thursday at 5 a.m. on the West Coast and lasted into the night. That was like a holiday in the Demoff household.

“What I loved about the draft was I got to skip that morning of school,” Kevin said. “I had to go to school when the first round was over. So I would always hope for the really long first round with lots of trades. We used to bring in bagels and donuts at 4:30 in the morning, sit in the den in our pajamas and watch.”

Kevin was 6 in 1983, when his dad represented both No. 1 pick Elway and No. 27 Marino. That was the best draft ever for quarterbacks. But what Kevin remembers is another of his father’s clients, running back Curt Warner, watching on TV from their house. After being selected third overall by the Seahawks, he and Kevin spent the rest of the morning shooting baskets.

Although Kevin religiously followed lots of sports, he was

partial to football. At 10, he’d spend hours reading football magazines and devising mock drafts. He and his dad were in an early fantasy football league, too, with teams printed on big spreadsheets and scored by hand. They played against lawyers at his dad’s firm, and ran circles around them. One season, he was a ball boy for the Chargers, a club he would later go head-to-head against in the acrimonious stadium derby.

“I became fascinated with the elements of managing a team and how it worked,” he said.

When he went to college at Dartmouth, however, he did not envision working for a team or being an agent. He wanted to be a sportswriter. He was sports editor at the school’s paper, and called games on the college radio station.

Upon graduating, he went to work for a start-up Internet company that eventually got into the business of designing websites for teams. One of his pitches was to the Oakland Raiders, where he met team executive Bruce Allen.

Around that time, Casey Wasserman was starting the Arena

Hall of Fame coach George Allen. “It was from a slightly different perspective, but he had the same understanding of the game, the league, the players and the coaches, because of not only Marvin’s presence in the league but his domination of the league.”

The day after Demoff graduated, he was with the Buccaneers as a full-time employee, and he and his wife, Jenn, set up shop in Tampa. While living there, they would have their daughter, Claire.

A few years later, they would move to St. Louis, where Kevin took a job with the Rams, and Jenn had their son, Owen. Demoff was in his early 30s and running an NFL franchise.

“I’m not naive,” he said. “I got a lot of opportunities in my life and football because of my last name, and I’m grateful for that. I didn’t deserve the Avengers job when I got it. I didn’t deserve the Rams job when I got it. Both were taking leaps of faith on me based on my father and what he’d done, and somewhat based on my career. You hope from there you can go earn it.”

In January, at a Houston hotel, Demoff delivered his final presentation of Kroenke’s vision to the rest of the NFL owners.

After a series of votes, Inglewood beat Carson in a landslide, and the Rams were given the green light to return to Los Angeles. Since the Rams moved, traded up for the No. 1 pick and helped secure a Super Bowl for Inglewood at the end of the 2020 season.

“It’s surreal,” said Patti Demoff, a college counselor. “They’re here, but it almost feels like an out-of-body experience. I have to keep reminding myself the Rams aren’t just here visiting.”

Both of his parents point to the fact that Demoff was a history major at Dartmouth, with an emphasis in art history. They said his creative side allows him to look at problems from many different angles, and to see solutions others might miss.

“What it allowed him to do is really get Stan’s vision and be able to explain it to others,” Marvin said. “When he showed you a picture of what Inglewood is going to look like, he could see the art form, the vision, and be passionate about that vision the way people would be passionate about a piece of art.”

Of course, with the Demoffs, it all comes down to the art of the deal. Father and son will be on the opposite sides of the table in the coming days as they hammer out details of an expected contract extension for Rams coach Jeff Fisher, represented by Marvin.

“It’s like playing chess or checkers against yourself,” Kevin said. “Our styles are so similar, you focus on the same things. So you always wind up in a draw or stalemate. I can always tell when we’ve reached the logical conclusion of a negotiation, because I’ll say, ‘Do you have any other solutions?’ and he says, ‘No ... but I raised you better than this.’”

Marvin has a picture on his desk from Patti’s 40th birthday party in 1987. It’s of the family, grouped together at the Hollywood Park finish line. A great memory. Kevin has already planned an updated shot to go with it: the family, much larger now, standing at midfield of the new stadium when it opens in 2019 — a different kind of finish line.

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Football League’s Los Angeles Avengers, and needed someone to run the personnel side. He called Allen for staffing advice, and Allen suggested he reach out to Demoff, who was 23 at the time. Wasserman, then 24, wound up hiring him.

“What Kevin and I realized is that, if you go and work for an NFL team, you don’t really have a massive impact as a young kid,” Wasserman said. “You only learn what they want you to learn. In the Arena League, we were all in, all responsible for all of it. That was our Ph.D. in sports.”

Demoff said that was his opportunity to learn the team side of the business “and make a ton of mistakes without anybody ever seeing them.”

After four years, he was ready to take the next step.

“Ultimately, I decided I didn’t want my life decided on whether a ball bounced off a net or a post, or went into the stands, and that it was time to grow a skill set,” he said.

Demoff decided to return to business school at Dartmouth, but not before Allen offered him a front-office job with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, where he had rejoined former Raiders coach Jon Gruden.

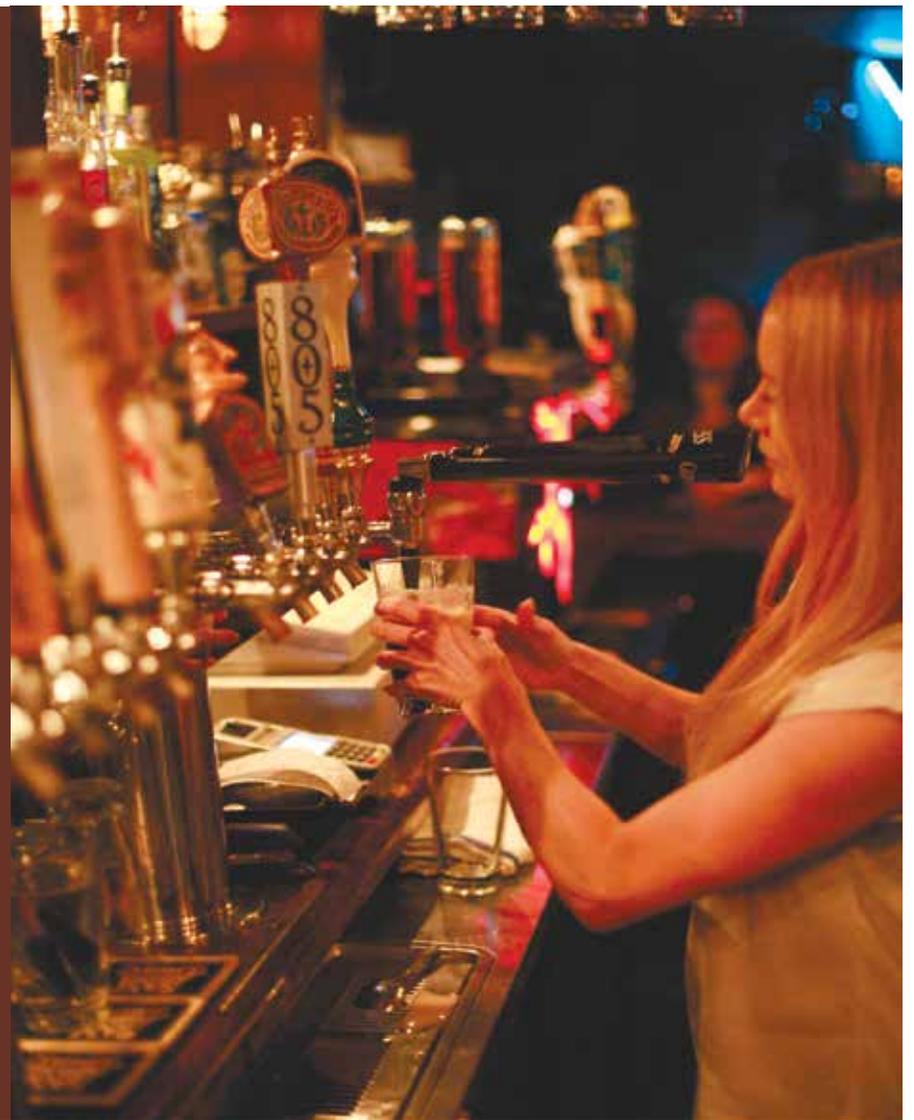
Demoff considered going to the NFL, but eventually opted for graduate school. “Why don’t you do both?” Allen said, and brought him on as an unpaid intern. He would send projects to Demoff at Dartmouth, then bring him down for the Senior Bowl, scouting combine and training camp.

“Kevin grew up the same way as I did,” said Allen, son of

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