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STYLE

BYRON ALLEN
MEDIA MOGUL



SUMMER 2025

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CONTENTS

FEATURE INTERVIEW

BYRON ALLEN
How His
Extraordinary
Journey Created a
Media Empire

BY LISA FRIEDMAN BLOCH
PAGE 24

**Lab-Grown
Diamonds are
Upending the
Market, but Natural
Gems Still Reign in
Beverly Hills**

BY CLARA HARTER
PAGE 14

**Summer in the City
with Lots of Thrills,
Chills and Laughs**

BY NEELY SWANSON
PAGE 18

**Embrace AI This
Summer: New
Tools to Enhance
Your Life and
Well-Being**

BY EVA RITVO, M.D.
PAGE 20

**California Coastal
Getaways**

BY CAROLE DIXON
PAGE 22

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PHOTO OF LISA FRIEDMAN BLOCH BY SARAH ORBANIC
PHOTO OF JOHN BENDHEIM BY KAREN RAY PHOTOGRAPHY

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PUBLISHERS IN STYLE



LISA FRIEDMAN BLOCH



JOHN BENDHEIM

For 60 glorious years, the “Newspaper of Record for Beverly Hills,” the Beverly Hills Courier, has been serving you, the Beverly Hills community. Having grown exponentially since those early years, today we proudly provide you with our colorful, in-depth, multiple award-winning journalistic stories every week, and our global, trending, lifestyle feature stories every quarter in our glossy magazines. But we know we couldn’t do it without you. We are grateful for your engagement, your overwhelming support, and your advertising partnerships, thanks to the Beverly Hills business community, as well as our global brands that enhance our world-famous city.

This Summer STYLE 2025 issue again reflects the trendsetting style of Beverly Hills. Inside, you’ll find trends in an array of fields. Courier Health and Wellness columnist Eva Ritvo, M.D., delves into the fascinating arena of AI in her piece, “Embrace AI This Summer: New Tools to Enhance Your Life and Well-Being.” Arts and Entertainment writer Neely Swanson predicts all the movies that will provide chills, thrills and laughs this summer in her film preview, “Summer in the City.” Contributing writer Carole Dixon takes us on the ultimate California journey, from the tip of Baja to the wineries of Mendocino in her “California Coastal Getaways” piece. Clara Harter looks into the surprising facts behind another growing trend—that of considering lab-grown diamonds in place of natural diamonds. And finally, the cover profile of the extraordinary Byron Allen takes you on his incredible journey, filled with tenacity and creativity, from blue-collar Detroit to Beverly Hills media titan. His foresight in knowing what audiences want—and in predicting trends—is legendary.

My partner John and all of us at the Courier invite you to join us in celebrating the strong community bond that has lasted for the past 60 years, and will most definitely continue. Thank you to the city of Beverly Hills for entrusting us as your premier community partner year after year. To the residents and business community of this amazing city, we are equally grateful. Just know the Courier will always be there in support as you stroll down our sun-kissed streets, dance to the music in our various parks, open an exciting new business, or luxuriate in the beauty of what makes Beverly Hills uniquely “one of one.”

Happy Summer!

LISA FRIEDMAN BLOCH, PUBLISHER AND WRITER

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Lab-Grown Diamonds are Upending the Market, but Natural Gems Still Reign in Beverly Hills

BY CLARA HARTER



Lab-grown diamonds, once dismissed as subpar yellowish stones, are now practically impossible to distinguish from their natural counterparts by look alone. And as more buyers are drawn to their affordability and eco-conscious appeal, synthetic stones are upending a market long defined by tradition and exclusivity.

Last year, 52% of American newlyweds used an engagement ring with a lab-grown stone compared to just 12% in 2019, according to an annual survey by The Knot.

This boom in popularity has hit the natural diamond market hard.

The price of mined stones has dropped around 26% since 2022, according to jewelry data analytics firm Tenoris. In 2024, De Beers, the biggest name in the natural diamond business, reported a 23% year-over-year decrease in revenue driven by a loss in demand for mined stones.

This disruption is even being felt in the luxury shopping destination of Beverly Hills, where many retailers are now opting to sell both natural and lab-grown stones.

But while the future for the overall industry is uncertain, high-end local jewelers remain confident that Beverly Hills will continue to flourish as a mecca for natural stones.

“Just look at all the global brand jewelry houses building new salons in Beverly Hills,” said Beverly Hills jewelry designer Martin Katz. “That certainly confirms in my mind that there is an international confidence in the Beverly Hills market for genuine diamond jewelry.”

This confidence is founded in the fact that there will always be a customer base that appreciates the value of natural stones and will therefore be drawn to the concentration of top-tier jewelers in the city that specialize in rare and antique stones.

“Although they [lab-grown diamonds] may look the same to the naked eye, they are not the same,” said Katz. “Natural diamonds are formed over billions of years deep within the Earth under extreme heat and pressure, making them rare and unique treasures from Mother Earth that appreciate over time.”

Or, as renowned local jeweler Jack Weir puts it simply, “Natural diamonds have charisma; lab-grown diamonds do not.”



GROWN BRILLIANCE MELROSE PLACE STOREFRONT IN LOS ANGELES
PHOTO COURTESY OF GROWN BRILLIANCE

Manufactured diamonds are chemically, physically and optically identical to natural diamonds, but instead of being created inside the Earth over the course of 1 to 3 billion years, they’re created inside labs in a matter of weeks.

Akshie Jhaveri, founder of lab-grown diamond seller Grown Brilliance, vividly recalls the moment she understood the possibilities of lab stones. In 2021, her husband presented her with a group of natural diamonds and a group of mined diamonds and asked her to determine which was which.

“He had two parcels of diamonds, and I really couldn’t tell the difference,” she said. “I thought, this is amazing, this is crazy, and this is an opportunity we need to launch on before it gets too common.”

She founded Grown Brilliance later that year, at a time when there were only two other major players in the market. Fast-forward four years and lab-grown diamond businesses are “a dime a dozen,” she said.



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Anicka Yi

The Sliding World, 2024

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Overall: 110 x 50 inches

Left Panel: 50.25 x 43.74 inches


Right Panel: 55 x 49.5 inches

Collection of East West Bank.

Photo by Anthony Flores.

Image courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery.



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One of the first three storefronts she opened was just across the border from Beverly Hills on Melrose Place. In addition to engagement rings, the store does a fantastic business in statement jewelry pieces perfect for flaunting at a red-carpet event, she said.

“The high jewelry collections that we carry are all made in the exact same way that you would make a natural diamond piece. It’s all handset, hand-polished with very high-quality solid gold, and our customers love it,” she said. “No one can tell the difference, so why would you go and invest in something that you will only wear maybe two or three times a year?”

In addition to spotting a key market opportunity, Jhaveri also said she became passionate about selling exclusively lab-grown diamonds because of the ethical and environmental benefits.

Unlike traditional diamond mining, which can involve destructive land excavation and high carbon emissions, lab-grown diamonds are created in controlled environments with a smaller ecological footprint. Additionally, purchasing lab-grown diamonds helps avoid the concerns associated with “blood diamonds”—gemstones mined in war zones and sold to finance armed conflict.

Grown Brilliance’s rate of growth has exceeded Jhaveri’s expectations. She now has 14 stores in eight states, with more locations on the way.

Improved lab technology and increased production have pushed down the cost of lab-grown stones, which has only served to further increase demand for synthetic jewelry.

In 2018, lab-grown diamonds were sold at an approximate 20% discount to their natural counterparts. Now they are sold at an 80% to 90% cheaper price compared to mined stones, and some experts predict their price will continue to drop even further.

Among them is William Logian, co-founder of RobinHood Diamonds, who sells some of the cheapest manufactured stones on the market by electing to decrease the markup passed on to customers. The prices of diamonds on his website start at just \$119 for a 0.5-carat pear shaped stone.

After working in the jewelry industry for three decades, including at top-tier companies like Tiffany & Co., Logian said the idea for RobinHood Diamonds was born from a desire to give back after surviving a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis.

“I kind of was in a moral distress of having three kids and being faced with such harsh life realities,” he said. “Then I came up with this wonderful idea of RobinHood Diamonds, where we are going to concentrate on making luxury accessible for all, and we are going to work diligently and very hard to encourage everyone in the industry to stop overcharging for the lab-grown diamonds.”

Logian predicts that lab-grown diamonds are only going to continue to drop in price and take over more of the jewelry market.

But what happens to the meaning of a diamond—a traditional symbol of luxury and elite social status—when it becomes accessible to everyone? High-end consumer demand shifts toward types of stones that hold on to their exclusive and irreplaceable nature.

“Obviously, the lab-grown diamond market is growing right now,” said Sasha Tarasova, head of sales for Jack Weir & Sons. “We have experienced impacts, primarily in shifting consumer demand towards colored gemstone rings as well as antique pieces and designer jewelry.”

Jack Weir started his first diamond business in 1981 after he was inspired by the gorgeous diamonds he saw on a trip to Brazil. His son Wyler joined the firm in 2011, and the following year they renamed the brand Jack Weir & Sons.

The Weirs consider themselves treasure hunters, traveling the world to secure the most beautiful and interesting stones to bring back to their Beverly Hills store. Because of the rare nature of their vintage jewels, the company does not suffer from increased demand for lab-grown diamonds.



TOP: ROBINHOOD DIAMONDS LAB-GROWN DIAMOND RING
PHOTO COURTESY OF ROBINHOOD DIAMONDS
BOTTOM: JACK WEIR & SONS MID-CENTURY 1960S PLATINUM
COCKTAIL NECKLACE FEATURING 35 CARATS OF F-G COLOR VS
CLARITY DIAMONDS
PHOTO BY GARRET LAVER

LAB-GROWN DIAMONDS CONTINUES ON PAGE 42

A woman in a white dress and hat crouching on a beach at sunset.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S ULTIMATE SHOPPING DESTINATION

ALAÏA	HUBLOT
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BOTTEGA VENETA	JIMMY CHOO
BREITLING	KHAITE
BRUNELLO CUCINELLI	LOEWE
BUCCELLATI	LORO PIANA
BURBERRY	LOUIS VUITTON
BVLGARI	MAISON MARGIELA
CARTIER	McQUEEN
CELINE	MISSONI
CHANEL	MONTBLANC
CHOPARD	OSCAR DE LA RENTA
CHRISTIAN LOUBOUTIN	PRADA
DAVID YURMAN	ROGER DUBUIS
DELVAUX	ROGER VIVIER
DIOR	SAINT LAURENT
DOLCE&GABBANA	STELLA McCARTNEY
FENDI	THE WEBSTER
FERRAGAMO	THOM BROWNE
GIANVITO ROSSI	TIFFANY & CO.
GIORGIO ARMANI	VACHERON CONSTANTIN
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Summer in the City with Lots of Thrills, Chills and Laughs

BY NEELY SWANSON



ANA DE ARMAS IN "BALLERINA"
PHOTO COURTESY OF LIONSGATE



DAKOTA JOHNSON IN "MATERIALISTS"
PHOTO COURTESY OF A24

That season is upon us. The kids are out of school, the thermometer is heating up and the evenings will be free. What to do? Let's go to the movies.

CinemaCon has promised sequels and tentpoles, but the releases are heavy on horror as well. It's been a long haul since the pandemic shut down the movies, followed by the strikes of 2023, but the wheels have been turning and many of the anticipated movies that were delayed are getting their release. There's something for everyone from kids to teens, young adults to old and everything in between. So relax, grab a cocktail (or soda) and ponder what there is to see after you've piled into the IMAX to see "Mission: Impossible—The Final Reckoning," part two of the 2023 blockbuster "Mission: Impossible—Dead Reckoning Part One." This summer will prove that movies are no longer an impossible mission. Lots of familiar faces from the small screen grace the Cineplex this summer, so ...

Let's all go to the movies (dates may change).

EARLY JUNE

"Ballerina" is a spinoff of the John Wick Universe starring a beautiful girl assassin taken under the wing of the Ruska Roma criminal group. This violent tale of revenge will have special effects that pop and a cast that shines. Starring Ana de Armas, Ian McShane, Anjelica Huston—and what would a John Wick movie be without John Wick—Keanu Reeves.

"The Life of Chuck" is a lovely, inventive movie of many moods, telling its story in reverse. Chuck is a man who lived his best life despite setbacks. Deliberately confusing, Chuck may not actually be the lead of the three chapters, featuring an end, a middle and a beginning, but he's on everyone's mind. Based on a Stephen King short story brought to the screen by Mike Flanagan, it's more a question of what you make of this seemingly end-of-days scenario that begins at the end and gradually

unspools to the beginning. Starring Tom Hiddleston and Chiwetel Ejiofor, look for Mark Hamill as the grandfather.

"Dangerous Animals" is about a serial killer who feeds his victims to sharks. His chumming turns to yumming when he abducts beautiful surfer Zephyr, who must find a way to escape. From Shudder Studios, whose very name lets you know what to expect.

"I Don't Understand You" is the vacation of their dreams that becomes a nightmare they couldn't have anticipated. Dom and Cole, a wealthy gay couple, are anticipating the birth of a child by surrogacy. It's their 10th anniversary, and they've decided to celebrate and reconnect by going to Italy. Not speaking the language should never have been the problem it becomes as they dodge polite little old ladies and vengeful sons. Starring the always charming Andrew Rannells and Nick Kroll, their timing is pitch-perfect, and you'll often find yourself laughing where you shouldn't.

"The Ritual" in this case is an exorcism; but not your everyday exorcism. This one will be performed by two priests, long in conflict with one another. The hook is that the priests are played by Al Pacino and Dan Stevens, and it's based on a true story. For fans of horror, rotating heads, and those who believe in such things.

"How to Train Your Dragon," the live-action interpretation of the beloved animation hits, will star an awesome CGI dragon and charming youngsters who will protect the dragon from the Vikings at all costs, even if it means betraying hundreds of years of tradition.

"Materialists" boasts a star-studded cast of today's hotties: Dakota Johnson, Pedro Pascal and Chris Evans. Johnson's character, a successful matchmaker of very high-end couplings, is drawn to an ultra-wealthy dreamboat (Pascal) who only has eyes for her. The snag? Her very handsome and sincere ex, who still pines for her, and possibly she for him. The hook? It's written and directed by Celine Song, whose very heartfelt feature, "Past Lives," was Oscar-nominated, as was she.

LATE JUNE

“Elio” is the latest Pixar animation tale from Disney. Eleven-year-old Elio is accidentally shot into space, landing on another planet. Upon arrival, he is forced to pretend to be the leader of Earth or risk annihilation. Really, what choice does he have? Sweet, fast-thinking Elio must find a way out of this mess. I bet his mom is sorry she didn’t listen when he called and said he had an emergency.

“Bride Hard,” starring Rebel Wilson, is a hostage film—it seems to be a popular platform this summer. Wilson, a spy, reluctantly agrees to be the maid of honor at her best friend’s wedding to a billionaire. When bad guys arrive to take the wedding party hostage, they have no idea what they’re in for. Director Simon West hopes it’s for the laughs.

“28 Years Later” returns for the sequel to “28 Weeks Later” (which was the sequel to “28 Days Later”). Danny Boyle is back to save us from zombies with a heavy-hitting cast that includes Ralph Fiennes, Jodie Comer and Aaron Taylor-Johnson. They mean business.

“M3GAN 2.0” finds that AI assassin, M3GAN, is up to her old tricks and we have to hope that Gemma, her creator, and her niece Cady can convert M3GAN to good and save the world from the evil defense contractor who stole her technology.

“F1,” the highly anticipated new Brad Pitt Formula One-plotted film, has Pitt as a retired champion lured back by his old boss (Javier Bardem) to mentor the latest hotshot to a championship. Tobias Menzies and Kim Bodnia add firepower. The draw, besides the stars, will be the footage from real Grand Prix races. Think “Top Gun” in a car.

JULY 1

“Jurassic World Rebirth” and it’s back to the future, so to speak. A new crew has been hired to breach the confines of a dinosaur island full of raptors to try stealing an egg that might save humanity. It will be up to the intrepid scientists, Scarlett Johansson and Jonathan Bailey, to make it out alive if their boss, Mahershala Ali, has anything to do with it. There will be scary creatures.

JULY 3

“Shiver” is attacking sharks gone wild, terrorizing a town already confronting storms, utter darkness and their own fright. There will be special effects but maybe not an original plot. Will they survive? Should they survive? You be the judge.

THRILLS, CHILLS AND LAUGHS CONTINUES ON PAGE 32

2.



3.



1. AARON TAYLOR-JOHNSON, ALFIE WILLIAMS AND RALPH FIENNES IN “28 YEARS LATER”

PHOTOS BY MIYA MIZUNO, COURTESY OF SONY PICTURES ENTERTAINMENT

2. “ELIO”

PHOTO COURTESY OF DISNEY/PIXAR

3. DAMSON IDRIS AND BRAD PITT IN “F1”

PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES

1.



Embrace AI This Summer: New Tools to Enhance Your Life and Well-Being

BY EVA RITVO, M.D.



It's hard to know what to make of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Will it cure cancer, find solutions for climate change, take our jobs or bring about the end of humanity? Such rapid advancements in technology are difficult to wrap our heads around. We have seen the light and dark sides of the internet and social media, so we are wise to proceed with caution. With changes this rapid, profound and unprecedented, it is impossible to predict what lies ahead. We must hope that the great minds at the technology companies, academic institutions and government agencies are thinking deeply about the long-term implications and consequences of AI.

What we can be certain of is that AI is offering us incredible tools to improve the quality of our lives right now. It is exciting to almost instantaneously summarize a book I am interested in, plan a vacation down to nuanced details, or create a meal plan and shopping list for the whole week. I have stopped saying "I don't know" and now say, "Great question, let me look it up." I realize this is just the tip of the iceberg, and I hope to find time this summer to take a deeper dive.

If you are new to AI, begin by addressing your privacy concerns. Take precautions: check data usage policies, limit private data, use pseudonyms or generalities, disable chat history, delete conversations, create a separate email address for AI, or run offline AI models. When you are ready, use your browser to access ChatGPT, Anthropic (Claude.

ai), Grok, Google Gemini or Perplexity AI. All have a free version. The AI landscape is changing quickly; today's worst AI platform/app may be tomorrow's best. In general, you can visit just about any major AI platform, ask almost anything you can think of, and prepare to be amazed.

Here's a list of ideas to get you started or on the next step of your personal AI journey to make the most of your summer.

1. AI FOR OUTINGS

ChatGPT can create a personalized itinerary, recommend activities, suggest restaurants and even help with day-to-day plans. Microsoft 365 Copilot integrates with your email and calendar to help plan social events, meetings and travel, organizing everything from the smallest detail to larger projects. AI-enhanced platforms like Wander let you preview museums, spas and even hiking trails in Virtual Reality before visiting. AI-powered apps like Eventbrite, Fever and TimeOut suggest concerts, rooftop events, gallery openings and pop-ups happening in real time. Apps like Yelp, ReciMe or TheFork use AI to learn your tastes and suggest new, trending restaurants or exclusive chef's tastings.

EMBRACE AI THIS SUMMER CONTINUES ON PAGE 43

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MR-G

FROGMAN

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California Coastal Getaways

BY CAROLE DIXON



LAS VENTANAS AL PARAÍSO AND ÁRBOL RESTAURANT
PHOTO COURTESY OF LAS VENTANAS AL PARAÍSO

With more travelers sticking closer to home this summer, it's a great time to visit some of the West Coast treasures from Baja up the California coast to Mendocino, with key stops along the way to explore new finds and old favorites with an ocean breeze not far away.

BAJA CALIFORNIA

While Todos Santos and La Paz have gained popularity in recent years, Cabo San Lucas and Los Cabos are still perennial favorites and the development boom with top brand hotels continues.

With over \$900 million in new hotel investments and more than 900 upscale rooms set to open by 2027, including brands like Soho House, St. Regis and Park Hyatt, the Cabo area boom is not slowing down anytime soon. Rosewood Residences Old Lighthouse at the tip of the peninsula is under construction and another high-end luxury hotel and residences will debut in Mexico with the opening of Raffles Estera East Cape Resort & Residences, slated for 2029, marking the brand's first resort in North America with seven restaurant offerings.

Finally getting its due, the culinary scene is also gaining acclaim following its recent Michelin Guide debut, featuring one Michelin Star to Cocina de Autor at Grand Velas, multiple Green Stars, including Acre by master chef Arturo Rivero and Flora's Field Kitchen by Rebecca Weitzman, along with dozens of Bib Gourmand nods for other eateries.

Old favorites like Las Ventanas al Paraíso, a Rosewood Resort are still top of the game with 12 Signature Beach Villas and the 28,000-square-foot Ty Warner Mansion, plus the Michelin Guide-recommended Árbol. La Botica is a new speakeasy-style, Cuban-inspired craft cocktail destination voted one of the "50 Best" in the world with the ambiance of a vintage apothecary accompanied by live entertainment. Recent collaborations include Mi Golondrina, with beautiful Mexican



LOS CABOS COAST
PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT LOS CABOS

hand-embroidered clothing made by Mexican artisans, and the summer-long "Best of Baja" initiative featuring talent from destinations such as Todos Santos, La Paz and Valle de Guadalupe, highlighting chefs, artists, winemakers and emerging fashion labels from the region.

San José del Cabo has a new market, Sabores San José, which is similar to the Art Walk on Thursdays. Every Tuesday evening, from 5 to 9 p.m., the historic center transforms into a pedestrian-only zone featuring a walking food experience from local producers and restaurants. The event also includes live traditional music and folkloric dance. While you are in the Arts District area, check out Michelin Guide-recommended NAO and its signature fusion of Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines.

COASTAL GETAWAYS CONTINUES ON PAGE 36



Alinea, Chicago

*Join Laurent-Perrier
as we toast Chef Achatz
and the Alinea team at their
residency at The Maybourne Beverly Hills
in celebration of their 20th anniversary
from July 23rd-August 20th*



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BYRON ALLEN

How His Extraordinary Journey Created a Media Empire

BY LISA FRIEDMAN BLOCH

Awakened by the slam of his parents' car door, he rubs his weary 5-year-old eyes in the shadow-filled backseat as his mother, behind the wheel, restarts the motor. The year is 1966. Through the car's back window, young Byron Allen focuses on his uniformed father, silhouetted in the dark by the pathway lights, falling in step with his union comrades. It's 11:45 p.m., moments before the night shift begins at the behemoth structure ahead, the Ford Motor Co. factory in Detroit, Michigan.

Byron's maternal grandfather was a union man as well, working for Great Lakes Steel for over 30 years. It's no wonder that Byron assumed that he, too, would one day become a blue-collar man. And why not? It was the '60s. Detroit was a factory town that made "cars for the world ... and music for the world. Motown ... It was magical," he recalls.

Growing up in an industrial town instilled in Byron the values that would propel his life's path.

"I saw this incredible work ethic," he says. "It's a part of my DNA."

He would know. A self-made media mogul of legendary success, Byron's story is not only astonishing, it's awe-inspiring and indisputably unique. Beginning as a stand-up comedian and evolving into a modern-day television "industrialist," his rags-to-riches journey is one of extraordinary ambition, ingenuity, courage, strength and creative talent, and it reflects his keen understanding of "the business of show."

The global media conglomerate, Allen Media Group (AMG), of which Byron is the founder, chairman and chief executive officer, owns/operates 27 ABC-NBC-CBS-FOX network affiliate broadcast television stations in 21 U.S. markets and ten 24-hour HD television networks, including The Weather Channel, serving nearly 300 million subscribers. Headquartered in Los Angeles, with offices in New York and Atlanta, Byron not only produces and distributes Emmy Award-winning and nominated shows, but he also distributes and sells advertising for 74 television programs from one of the largest libraries and advertiser-friendly lifestyle content collections in the world. Focused on free, ad-supported streaming that leverages his existing media assets with hyper-local news, weather, sports and traffic information, Byron is heavily invested in digital streaming platforms with HBCU GO, Local Now, TheGrio and Sports.TV. Moreover, AMG is the first African American-owned multiplatform media company producing and distributing wide-release motion pictures and content for all platforms.

Three-time Mayor of Beverly Hills Lili Bosse, herself a legendary figure in the city, has this to say about her friend and fellow resident.

"Byron is one of the most extraordinary people I know. He is a true trailblazer, visionary and a force of nature. We are kindred spirits, as we share the same life philosophy to start with 'yes' and then figure

out how. He is a loving family man and has a wickedly funny sense of humor. Byron is someone who can make anything happen, envisioning possibilities that most can't even dream of. He is bold, innovative, fearless, and mark my words, light-years ahead of our time," says Bosse.

Described in the press as a self-made billionaire, Byron catapulted from comic to media titan as a Black businessman in the white-dominated media mogul world. An honorable man filled with courage and conviction, Byron uses his earned platform to advocate for civil rights and philanthropic causes in an effort to effect positive change.

So how did this purposeful and passionate man from Detroit accomplish such a feat, and how is he leading going forward in the evolving media landscape? I set out to find the answers.

We met at the swanky Polo Lounge at the Beverly Hills Hotel. Byron swooped in, sprinted through the field of hostess greetings and quickly directed them to lead us to a luxurious booth. Once there, he quickly and charismatically took control of the conversation, curiously diving in about the Courier's circulation and digital capabilities. His intensity was penetrating; his expertise was invigorating. Within minutes, he left the table, requesting we move outside to improve the audible experience.

Situated in the back booth of the garden, the who's who of the L.A. business community found their way to greet him, each one with a friendly "inside" comment or story. After a moment, he signaled me to turn on my recorder.

"Is it true you learned how to roller-skate before you could walk?" I asked.

"Back in Detroit, my grandfather and my grandmother on my father's side built and owned the RollerCade Roller Rink on Schafer, and they controlled the cash register," he answered.

From a young age, Byron understood the power of ownership and job creation. Beginning at age 6, he had the job of "floor guard" while his slightly older cousins managed the record player. Byron would stand in the center, surveying the rink, waiting for a slip and fall. The second someone did, he would blow his big whistle, signaling his cousins to stop the music to prevent a dangerous "stack up." On special nights at the RollerCade, live music acts would appear, sent over from Motown, to familiarize the singers with performing and the community with the singers. Smokey Robinson, Diana Ross, Stevie Wonder, The Temptations and Marvin Gaye were some of the regulars.

"I've known Stevie Wonder and Smokey Robinson since I was a kid back in Detroit," he says.

One day, Byron's mother, Carolyn, and his grandmother, Eddie Mae, took Byron and his four years older uncle, who today is AMG's Chief Operating Officer, on a ride to "see where the rich people live."



LEFT AND MIDDLE: BYRON IN HIS YOUTH AND WITH HIS MOTHER, RIGHT: BYRON ALLEN IN 2025
LEFT AND MIDDLE PHOTOS COURTESY OF BYRON ALLEN, RIGHT PHOTO BY SARAH ORBANIC

Impressionable young Byron was captivated by the magnificent mansions set on pristine grounds, homes of the Ford family, the Goodyear family and the Chrysler family. His grandmother proudly shared that she and many of her friends from their neighborhood had been “domestics” in the big estates they drove by. It piqued his curiosity, wondering how they became rich. The last sighting was Berry Gordy’s estate. Byron stared in disbelief.

He said to his mother, “He [Gordy] lives over here with all of these super rich white people, and I’m walking 30 minutes to the community pool?” His grandmother chimed in, “He’s got one in his house, and a bowling alley, too!”

The next eye-opener came a few months later in April 1968. The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Riots broke out all over America, and the military immediately took over Byron’s neighborhood.

“I was looking down the barrel of a tank in my neighborhood as a 7-year-old. That was the moment I lost my innocence; I lost my childhood. I became a child of war. I realized that America looked at me differently. America didn’t love us. America tolerated us.”

By the summer of that year, Byron’s mother and father separated. He and his mother then decided to visit family in Los Angeles.

Carolyn had given birth to Byron 17 days after her 17th birthday.

“No one was betting on a Black teenage girl and a Black baby boy born in 1961, without any civil rights, accomplishing much of anything,” he recalls.

But Carolyn had big dreams for herself as well as her son. Two weeks in Los Angeles turned into a lifetime. For the first several years they

slept on sofas and floors, switching houses and schools, thanks to family and friends. Byron was happy; he didn’t mind the instability as he was always with his mother. He accompanied her to every job.

“She was working at the Salvation Army, passing out goods to folks who were less fortunate than us,” he says.

Believing education is the key to success, Carolyn wanted to go to college. She was admitted to UCLA, something Byron describes as “probably the most dramatic thing that changed our lives.”

After graduating, Carolyn went on to receive her master’s degree in cinema and television production from UCLA, despite the numerous financial and discriminatory challenges she faced. The first was supporting herself and her son while attending school full time.

Byron vividly recalls overhearing a conversation between his extended family and his mother. “You can’t financially afford Byron. You should give him up for adoption.”

Afraid of being taken from his mother, Byron, at the age of 11, walked to the nearby Ralphs supermarket and pleaded with the manager for a job as a “bag boy.” It didn’t work. Walking away, dejected, Byron noticed a lady bringing her shopping cart back from the parking lot to a machine and receiving a stamp worth a penny. He surveyed the entire parking lot. If he rounded up 100 carts, he’d get \$1 worth of food to bring home to his mother.

“That was it. I created my first business ... I’ll keep collecting the carts and putting them in the machine, \$3 worth of food, then \$5, every day after school. I had to keep hustling and grinding if I wanted to keep my mother,” he says.

One day, Carolyn discovered Byron needed critical medical care due to an infection in his leg. Rushing to Children's Hospital Los Angeles (CHLA), she worried for his well-being and the costs of his medical treatment. The hospital saved his leg from amputation and never charged Carolyn for the service, a gesture imprinted in Byron's heart.

Byron's dreams for a better life continued. Always with an eye back to Detroit thanks to communications with his father, he fervently read all he could about the Industrial Revolution.

"I studied the great entrepreneurs ... I noticed it was all these industrialists who were so wealthy, and they built these amazing businesses. Remember when my mom and grandmother showed me those homes? I wanted to have a beautiful home like that," he recalls.

Eventually, Carolyn, with Byron in tow, went apartment hunting through UCLA's housing department. But the sight of a Black woman and her Black son in the doorway resulted in a rejection. UCLA housing then sent over a white couple who were successful in renting that apartment. It was the first time Byron remembers experiencing discrimination.

Today, when asked about racism, Byron shares he knows it will always be present. But the way to handle it is to "make it work for you." The resistance racism creates can break a person or make a person stronger. It's what has made him what he is today. If he loses it all tomorrow, he feels he could build it back even better.

Discrimination didn't discourage Carolyn, either. While in graduate school, when she was declined for employment at NBC, she pushed harder, despite her financial circumstances, and asked if they had an internship program where she could work for free.

Byron adds, "When they said no, she asked the most important question that changed our lives forever. 'Will you please start one with me?'"

The "yes" she received taught Byron the power of believing, of being persistent and to "always go that next step."

Decades later, when Byron was honored with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame next to Johnny Carson's star, he shared the credit with his mom. "This is not my star; this is our star," he said.

As Carolyn progressed from NBC page to NBC publicist, responsible for getting magazine covers for their television shows, Byron was given entry into the world of unimaginable possibilities.

"While visiting my mom at NBC, I'm watching the network multi-purpose sets, and the cameramen gear up and focus. I'm watching the grips, and all the cable guys [put on the television shows]. I'm watching the executives negotiate with the producers, and the producers interact with the talent. It was a symphony," he says.

Everyone came to know Byron as Carolyn's son, a self-sufficient, friendly, respectful young teenager, enthralled by the workings of the television industry.

"I'm watching Johnny Carson tape 'The Tonight Show.' Then I would walk across the hall and watch Redd Foxx tape 'Sanford and Son' ... Flip Wilson tape his show with Richard Pryor, Bob Hope do his specials. Dean Martin do his. I'm watching the local news, an unknown weatherman, Pat Sajak, and an unknown sportscaster, Bryant Gumbel."

Byron knew he was in a special place: not a car factory, a television factory. He was most intrigued by the comedy division within the factory, for himself.

"I knocked on the door of this comedian on the 'Gladys Knight Show' in the summer of '75 and asked, 'Sir, how do I become a comedian like you?' It was Gabe Kaplan, and he told me, 'Go to the Comedy Store, and don't forget to watch 'Welcome Back, Kotter,' my new sitcom.'"

Byron called the "store" and asked the price of the jokes. The voice on the phone, Comedy Store owner Mitzi Shore, laughed and said, "This is a comedy club. We don't sell jokes here." Persistent, Byron showed up at 9 a.m. the next day and convinced the owner, despite his young age of 14, that he deserved five minutes on the stage. Drawing on his experience, Byron used a "Sanford and Son" character doing stand-up. He was a hit.

Soon afterward, Byron received a call from Jimmie "JJ" Walker, considered the greatest stand-up comedian in America at the time, and the star of the sitcom "Good Times." He asked if Byron wanted to join his

writers meeting. Byron said he had to ask his mom.

"I heard this guy in the background say, 'Hey, tell his mom not to worry, we'll have cookies and milk for him.' And then I heard another writer, Jay, say, 'Oh, Dave, be nice. Just be nice.'"

Carolyn allowed Byron to attend the meeting at Jimmie's apartment on Sunset Boulevard. When he arrived, sitting in the living room were several up-and-coming comedy writers/producers, including the writers he heard on the phone, Dave Letterman and Jay Leno. The group met regularly; Byron's payment was \$25 per joke.

"It was great. I was a paperboy for the Herald Examiner at the time. I had to throw two newspapers to make a penny. Two! I had to throw 5,000 newspapers to make 25 bucks. I told Jimmie, 'A joke for 25 bucks? I'm good!'"



TOP: BYRON AND CAROLYN AT NBC IN BURBANK
MIDDLE: BYRON AND CAROLYN AT THE OSCAR GALA
BOTTOM: BYRON WITH HIS STAR ON THE WALK OF FAME, UNVEILED IN OCTOBER 2021
PHOTOS COURTESY OF BYRON ALLEN

Back at NBC, Byron was laser-focused on learning from the master, Johnny Carson.

"I lived in that studio. They used it for 'The Tonight Show' from 5:30 to 6:30. Hundreds of people were in that studio [audience] then. By 7 o'clock, that studio was empty. No one, just me and the janitor."

Byron would sit at Johnny's desk, imagining. He would sit in the guest seat and stand on the star, Johnny's mark on the floor for the monologue, and practice the monologue from the evening left up on the board. While the crew members welcomed his self-training at NBC, Byron continued fine-tuning his craft at various comedy clubs around Los Angeles. At age 18, four years after his first stand-up routine, he received the official call from Johnny's producer inviting the Fairfax High School student to be a guest on "The Tonight Show."

He was the youngest comedian to ever appear on the show.

"When I was standing behind the curtain ready to go on, I was joking with the stagehands. I had my back to the curtain. They were laughing with me, and all of a sudden, they got really serious. Johnny Carson had come to the curtain and said to me, 'Don't worry, son. You're going to knock 'em dead.'"

A powerhouse in comedy, Johnny Carson had opened the door for Byron and many other comedians like him. As a result, Byron created the half-hour comedy talk show, "Comics Unleashed." The show, hosted by Byron himself, is still on the air after 19 seasons and has featured more than 550 comedians, including Cedric the Entertainer, Margaret Cho, Tiffany Haddish, Chelsea Handler, Kevin Hart, Gabriel Iglesias, Leslie Jones, Natasha Leggero, Jon Lovitz, Whitney Cummings, Howie Mandel, Nate Bargatze, Billy Gardell, Sebastian Maniscalco and Sinbad.



NATASHA LEGGERO, JON KELLEY, JEFF ROSS, TIFFANY HADDISH, JON LOVITZ, HOWIE MANDEL AND BYRON ALLEN ON THE SET OF "FUNNY YOU SHOULD ASK"

PHOTO COURTESY OF BYRON ALLEN

Moments before our press time, CBS announced that beginning on Sept. 22 of this year, "Comics Unleashed With Byron Allen" will take over the network's 12:30 a.m. time slot. Episodes will then air Monday through Friday, with the series also available to stream live on Paramount+. "'Comics Unleashed' is a true passion for me, simply because this world can never have enough laughter," Allen said. Executive produced by himself, Carolyn Folks and Jennifer Lucas, he added, "I created this show so that the best comedians can all come together and help bring non-stop laughter."

Johnny was delighted with Byron's premiere performance. Ironically, he incorporated Beverly Hills and Beverly Hills High School in his monologue. Jolene Schlatter, too, was impressed and raved about Byron to her TV producer husband, George Schlatter. It immediately landed Byron the position as co-host of the Schlatter's new NBC hit show "Real People," a forerunner to today's reality TV.

Byron attacked his new position with a vengeance, interviewing people, learning how to tell compelling human-interest stories, and earning national visibility and credibility. He also studied how the weekly shows were created, marketed and monetized from the industry experts. But it was after a humbling experience in renegotiating his contract that Byron realized being a performer wasn't going to be his ticket to success.

"Only I can determine my worth, and no one else. I just want to work for myself. And I haven't worked for anybody else since 'Real People' ended in 1984," he says.

Believing ownership was the only path to true influence and generational wealth, he began to understand how creation, distribution, syndication and advertising were the engines powering television. While he loved performing comedy, he had an insatiable desire to succeed in the business side of "show." At the age of 19, he attended his first of 44 consecutive National Association of Television Program Executives (NATPE) annual conferences.

There, he met the kingpins of syndicated television, Roger and Michael King, as well as Al Masini, the pioneering producer of "Entertainment Tonight," "Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous," "Solid Gold" and "Star Search." At NATPE every year, Byron sat in on sales meetings and watched the professionals sell their shows in syndication. Masini recognized Byron's aspirational spirit and took him under his wing, mentoring him like the son he never had.

In the summer of 1993, with fire in his belly, Byron started his own business. From his dining room, he used his telephone to communicate all over America and ignite energy around producing low-cost, advertiser-friendly shows for television stations that needed content. Producing his first show, "Entertainers with Byron Allen," a forerunner to podcasts, he created a barter model with himself and friends as talent. He offered the show for free to the stations and kept the ad revenue, maximizing his resources and profits. Grabbing the concept from the industrialists, he vertically integrated.



TOP LEFT: BYRON'S FIRST APPEARANCE ON "THE TONIGHT SHOW"

MIDDLE RIGHT: BYRON'S RETURN TO "THE TONIGHT SHOW"

MIDDLE LEFT AND BOTTOM RIGHT: BYRON CO-HOSTED "REAL PEOPLE"

PHOTOS COURTESY OF BYRON ALLEN



THE ALLEN FAMILY: CHLOE, JENNIFER LUCAS, LUCAS, BYRON AND OLIVIA
PHOTO COURTESY OF BYRON ALLEN

"I controlled everything from A to Z. I would create the show. Then I would produce the show. Let's talk about Rockefeller. He would pull the oil out of the ground. He would send it to his refineries to refine it. Then he would put it on trucks and send it to the gas station. Then he would put it in the gas tank, put the cash in the cash register and hit repeat. He was vertically integrating. He never passed it off. He did everything from A to Z."

Similarly, Byron would create and produce the television show. He would give it directly to the television stations for free. He did not go to the networks but instead went to each individual station in America and sold the advertising himself. But he needed more content. Turning to one of Masini's trailblazing formulas, Byron copied the content of one medium and converted it into another. Masini had created his revolutionary television programs from radio shows.

"So, I took the magazine stands and converted them into television shows. People are always going to be interested in beautiful homes ... That's Architectural Digest. They're always going to be interested in cars, travel, food."

Today, AMG owns ten 24-hour HD television networks, including THE WEATHER CHANNEL, COMEDY.TV, RECIPE.TV, CARS.TV, ES.TV, MYDESTINATION.TV AND JUSTICECENTRAL.TV. Producing television shows in an assembly-line way, each network is supplied with content that would have been found in magazines.

One of his biggest lessons was when a distributor stole Byron's money, the final step to having complete control.

"That's when I realized I had to go directly to the consumer, directly to the stations myself ... and now I can do all the shows I want. That's where the desire comes from, to creatively express myself, to make people laugh, to entertain audiences, to put a smile on their faces. It's always coming from a good place."

Byron believes his best training for the media business originates from understanding what the audience wants.

He stated in the press, "When you stand on a stage, and you perform in front of a live audience, and you get a reaction every five seconds—or you don't—that is the best training that you could possibly have in the media business."

In the process of building his empire, in April 2001, he met a beautiful television producer, Jennifer Lucas, at a restaurant club. After a five-year courtship and producing many television shows under Byron's company umbrella, Byron proposed to Jennifer on Christmas Day. They were married on Sept. 1, 2007, at the Hotel Bel-Air. Soon, the family blossomed with the arrival of daughters Chloe and Olivia and son Lucas.

"I don't try and push anything on my kids. I want to see what they discover and let them find their passion naturally. As a father, I just want them to be happy, healthy and not worry. I did enough worrying for all of them ... Jennifer's an amazing person. She's my best friend. She's absolutely fantastic. I got really lucky. Great mom, great wife, great family. I am truly blessed."

In 2018, Byron's media company bought The Weather Channel, an American television network with the OTT streaming service, Local Now, which provides localized weather, news and traffic updates. After the acquisition, AMG transitioned Local Now to a free-to-access model, expanding its content with news, lifestyle and entertainment programming.

"Weather is a big business, a huge business. When you buy a company, you also get the intellectual capital. We gained a great deal of intellectual capital, platforms, software, technology. It put us in the news business in a big way, an important news business."

Because of climate change, The Weather Channel is the number one most trusted news brand in America.

"Climate change has killed more people than all the wars combined throughout history. Climate change and global warming are very real. Everything is extreme: extreme heat, extreme cold, extreme wind, extreme wet, extreme dry. Weather is usually the number one or number two story in the newscast every day."

Byron stated that the acquisition was the most important moment in his media company.

"As an African American, I think I broke a barrier ... As an entrepreneur, it was the Jackie Robinson moment. As a Black man, I didn't have to just do businesses that were focused on Black people, play in just the Negro leagues of baseball. I was able to now do something that was general market, and it was the major leagues ... I'm one of one, a global entrepreneur, not an entrepreneur who only focuses on Black content."

Yet his highly rated, video-centric community news platform devoted to providing African Americans with compelling stories and perspectives currently underrepresented in existing national news outlets, The Grio, is one of AMG's most successful platforms, with more than 100 million annual visitors.

Byron is not shy in using his earned media mogul status to help influence by means of the truth, a concept he learned from Martin Luther King Jr.'s wife.

"Coretta Scott King was a friend of mine. I always wanted to look at Martin Luther King Jr. through her eyes. And I learned a lot talking to her. She was the one who said, 'Our greatest weapon is the truth. Always bring the truth.'"

Byron has also made a point of giving back in meaningful ways. He has never forgotten the free medical care he received as a child from CHLA. Today, he is not only a member of the CHLA's Board of Trustees, but he has also raised millions for the institution through the Allen Media Group's Oscar Gala. The event, first launched in 2017, has featured performances by the likes of Toni Braxton, Babyface, Jamie Foxx, John Legend, Maroon 5, Katy Perry and Diana Ross.

He has prominently supported the Race to Erase MS Foundation, which is dedicated to the treatment and ultimate cure of multiple sclerosis (MS). He hosted the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's annual "Dinner of Champions" for over 20 years, raising more than \$50 million for MS research and awareness. And in the fall of 2023, Byron received the Visionary Award from Jeffrey Katzenberg at the Visionary Ball in support of the UCLA Department of Neurosurgery. The event was hosted by good friends Jay Leno and Howie Mandel, with a special performance by Smokey Robinson.

In recent years, he has also recognized the importance of investing in education.

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BYRON'S INAUGURAL LEGENDARY HONOR ACCEPTANCE SPEECH AT HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL
PHOTO COURTESY OF BYRON ALLEN

“Education is what makes the country its very best. If everybody's educated, everybody's engaged, and everybody is a part of the economic fiber of America, then America can't be any better ... It's an investment in the future. It's an investment in all of us ... Spelman, [one of] 107 historically Black colleges and universities ... is named after Rockefeller's wife's maiden name, Spelman. It's an all-female school ... funded by the wealthiest family in the world at the time.”

Recognizing the current HBCUs' financial challenges, Byron stepped in to help with an ingenious sports media business opportunity. In 2021, his company founded the HBCU Go streaming network.

“I saw that these schools were not able to really produce and distribute their sports content and monetize it the way it should be. I wanted to help so I stepped in. There's approximately 4,000 sporting events, and we control 95% of them. The business has grown by triple digits. We've only had it for three years, and the revenue keeps going straight up like a rocket. The athletes are extraordinary. These historically Black colleges and universities have created numerous Hall of Famers.”

Byron also used his influential media platform to help educate in February 2023. Six months before Oct. 7 and the horrific killings and kidnappings in Israel, Byron was honored with the inaugural “Legendary Honor” award from the African American Student Union at Harvard Business School. Selected for his transformative impact on the media industry and his advocacy for economic inclusion, Byron took this opportunity to speak to the students about the African American community owing the Jewish community a huge debt of gratitude, especially during the Civil Rights Movement. In his speech Byron said, “They've marched with us, stood with us, and they had a similar plight in how they've been treated.”

“I knew I had all these bright kids from Harvard ... I was sensing and feeling the antisemitism back then ... I was feeling it was increasing. I said, ‘I just want to give you [the students] the facts. I want to give you what really happened, and I need you to understand what's happening now. I want to share a story about Madison Grant, the young man who went to Columbia Law School, who wrote a book in 1916 called “The Passing of the Great Race, Keep America White and Pure.” He's upset about immigration, the Jews coming in from Europe. A young man reads this book and says, ‘This is the greatest book I've ever read.’ That young man was Adolf Hitler. So, not only did we create this racism and this antisemitism, we exported it all the way to Europe, and it came back as the Holocaust. You [the students] need to understand how it ties together.”

When asked about the business challenges of today, as a trailblazing leader, Byron reflects on his lessons learned.

“Business is a contact sport. We're having major contact right now. We're getting hit hard. It is what it is. Get up and get back in the huddle.”

The football analogy sheds light on two attempted transactions Byron made in 2022. He announced his intention to bid for the Denver Broncos. Then again, in November of that same year, there were reports he was assembling an investor group to pursue the purchase of the Washington Commanders. While neither bid resulted in ownership, Allen has expressed ongoing interest in acquiring an NFL team and continues to be a prominent figure in discussions about diversifying NFL ownership.

In addition, the media widely reported that Byron made a significant bid to acquire Paramount Global in early 2024. His company, Allen Media Group, submitted a \$14.3 billion offer to purchase all outstanding shares of Paramount Global. Including debt, the total value of the proposal was approximately \$30 billion.

“We want to grow organically. We would like to acquire companies that work seamlessly with the assets we already have. Our preference is digital. That's the fastest-growing section in media,” he says.

He believes that streaming is everything. Local Now, the technology to bring local news, weather, sports and traffic via the web, is the biggest platform they have going forward. Being free and laden with content downloaded in seconds makes it “unstoppable.”

“Linear [cable and over-the-air broadcast] has its headwinds,” he says.

Byron claims that people are cutting the cord, but it will never go away.

“Nothing ever goes away. It's always additive. Everything gets bigger, and it's more textured and layered. I haven't seen anything replace a platform for the most part. Here are your movies, here's radio, here's television, here's streaming ... At the end of the day, I've always been impressed with Walt Disney. The technology has morphed in many different ways, but the mouse has stayed consistent.”

Mickey Mouse is the very valuable content.

“You can have a beautiful car, but it doesn't mean anything unless you can put gas in it. The content is the gas or electricity ... No one cares about the technology until there's content that they can connect with.”

In examining his leadership STYLE, I ended the interview by asking him to complete the sentence, “I lead with ____?” Upon hearing the Dalai Lama said he leads with “listening,” and Nelson Mandela said he leads “by following,” Byron Allen said, “I lead with commitment. It's the word before success.” ●



LISA FRIEDMAN BLOCH AND BYRON ALLEN
PHOTO BY SARAH ORBANIC



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DAVID CORENSWET IN "SUPERMAN"

PHOTO COURTESY OF WARNER BROS. PICTURES

THRILLS, CHILLS AND LAUGHS CONTINUED FROM PAGE 19

JULY 11

"Superman" is still battling a very dangerous world and continues to romance Lois Lane in the guise of Clark Kent. This time around, Superman/Clark Kent is played by David Corenswet, leading a cast that includes Wendell Pierce as Perry White and Rachel Brosnahan as Lois Lane. Nicholas Hoult is the evil Lex Luthor, who is joined by new visitors from the DC Universe like Nathan Fillion as the Green Lantern and Rex Mason/Metamorpho, played by the marvelous Anthony Carrigan (Noho Hank from "Barry").

JULY 18

"Smurfs" features Rihanna in all her singing glory as Smurfette in the latest incarnation of these beloved animated creatures. As always, the Smurfs will help save, well, whatever needs saving. The fantastic voice cast features Kurt Russell, Nick Offerman, Octavia Spencer and the aforementioned Rihanna, who has written new songs for the feature.

"I Know What You Did Last Summer" is the same story with a new cast. The teens are still being stalked by a killer who knows what they did and is determined to punish them. With cameo appearances by original cast members like Freddie Prinze Jr. and Jennifer Love Hewitt, they are joined by new leads Madelyn Cline and Lola Tung.

"Eddington" takes place during the pandemic. Tempers are hot and rivalries are elevated, leading the sheriff of this small New Mexico town into conflict with the mayor. Everyone takes a side and previous, controlled conflicts threaten to explode. The all-star cast of this modern-day Western is led by Joaquin Phoenix as the sheriff, and the seemingly ever-present and always-welcome Pedro Pascal is the mayor. In support are Emma Stone and Austin Butler.



THE CAST OF "I KNOW WHAT YOU DID LAST SUMMER"

PHOTO BY BROOK RUSHTON, COURTESY OF SONY ENTERTAINMENT



JOAQUIN PHOENIX AND PEDRO PASCAL IN "EDDINGTON"

PHOTO COURTESY OF A24

JULY 25

"The Fantastic Four: First Steps" is betting that the third time is still a charm as this intrepid family of superheroes who fly in and out of their human and animated presence is ready to save the world once again. Voiced and acted by Pedro Pascal, Vanessa Kirby, Johnny Storm and Ebon Moss-Bachrach.

AUG. 1

"The Naked Gun" stars Liam Neeson as that bumbling detective, Frank Drebin, in the remake of the beloved 1988 movie that starred Leslie Nielsen. A true send-up of the original, the new detectives play the sons of the original detectives from the 1988 film. It will all hinge on whether Neeson can be funny. But, then again, Nielsen was a shot in the dark when he starred in "Airplane!" in 1980, having been a leading man in drama and romances with no known comic ability. He never looked back.

"Together" is yet another horror film with supernatural elements that strive to tear a loving couple apart. The loving couple is played by James Franco and Alison Brie, which may be tempting enough to dip your toe in this one.

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1.



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1. JOSH BROLIN IN “WEAPONS”
PHOTO BY QUANTRELL COLBERT, COURTESY OF NEW LINE CINEMA,
A WARNER BROS. PICTURES RELEASE
2. RIZ AHMED IN “RELAY”
PHOTO COURTESY OF BLEECKER STREET MEDIA
3. OLIVIA COLMAN AND BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH
IN “THE ROSES”
PHOTO COURTESY OF SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

AUG. 8

“Freakier Friday,” much like its origin story, has Tess Coleman (Jamie Lee Curtis) and her daughter Anna (Lindsay Lohan) in for another role swap and shapeshift. But now, Tess and Anna are a grandmother and mother, respectively, when lightning strikes a second time. How will they negotiate their new roles until they figure out how to return to their old selves? Lessons will be learned.

“Weapons” is an all-star follow-up to “Barbarians,” writer/director Zach Cregger’s cult film from 2022. This time it’s not about a scary Airbnb, but about high school students who have mysteriously disappeared in a town rife with corruption and religious hocus-pocus. Stars Josh Brolin, Julia Garner, Benedict Wong and Amy Madigan lead the action and sophisticated horror of this tale.

AUG. 15

“Nobody 2” is the sequel to “Nobody” and stars the surprisingly multifaceted Bob Odenkirk as Hutch, a retired government assassin who would like nothing better than to live in peace. Unfortunately, the bad guys didn’t get that memo. Odenkirk and Connie Nielsen reprise their roles as estranged husband and wife, alongside Christopher Lloyd as Hutch’s father. Sharon Stone adds to the star power.

AUG. 22

“Americana” ostensibly centers around an archaeological find where greed and need intersect. When a rare Native American artifact is discovered in a small town in South Dakota, the race to claim it brings out the worst in the previously upstanding citizens. There will be crime, violence and occasionally dark humor, or at least we can hope.

“Relay” shows real promise, if only because of its stellar cast led by Riz Ahmed. His character Tom is a broker between rich, corrupt big shots and their victims. Discretion is his specialty and all negotiations are kept strictly secret. That is, until he agrees to help Sarah (Lily James) in desperate fear for her life. In the hands of crack director David Mackenzie (“Hell or High Water”), tension and thrills are guaranteed.

AUG. 29

“The Roses” may be something of a remake (“The War of the Roses”), but at least it’s a comedy for adults starring the great Olivia Colman and Benedict Cumberbatch, a couple who have less in common than they thought. Director Jay Roach fills out his cast with a team of accomplished comedic actors like Allison Janney, Kate McKinnon, Andy Samberg and the new “it” boy, Ncuti Gatwa (“Doctor Who”).

“Caught Stealing” stars Austin Butler as Thompson, a former baseball player who lands in a deep pit of trouble. Based on the Charlie Huston book series featuring Thompson, he’s an antihero who trouble seems to follow. Also starring Vince D’Onofrio and Zoë Kravitz.

“The Toxic Avenger” is another reboot. This time it’s Peter Dinklage who falls into the toxic waste vat and is transformed into a hideous creature with superpowers. Normally such an event would call for revenge, but this creature chooses to use his newfound powers for good and not evil.

SEPT. 5

“The Conjuring: Last Rite” is the ninth installment in the “Conjuring” series and the second one starring Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson as husband-and-wife paranormal investigators. Ben Hardy also stars. If you haven’t yet had enough of demons and the paranormal, then this one is for you.

I predict barrels of popcorn and gallons of soda in store for everyone this summer. Bon appétit. ●

A woman with blonde hair, wearing a white ruffled dress and a gold cuff bracelet, is posing on a beach. The background features a rocky cliff and the ocean under a blue sky with clouds.

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SCAN FOR TICKETS

CORONADO

Once you arrive in San Diego, all eyes are on Coronado Island this summer with the iconic Hotel del Coronado in the final stages of a six-year, \$550 million revamp, which came to fruition with the Veranda beachfront Victorian building and Nobu del Coronado, which opened in May. Other reasons for a revisit include private beach bonfires and the leash-free Coronado Dog Beach, personalized surf lessons, and a culinary and historical walking tour of the island.

CARLSBAD

If you missed the flower fields this spring and the new butterfly encounter, not to worry. The summer programming has just begun with strawberry picking to “secret garden spa parties” at the newly revamped Omni La Costa that includes yoga and sound healing. Several new Michelin Guide-recognized restaurants by Eric Bost (formerly of Auburn in Hollywood) include Jeune et Jolie, Campfire, and his two latest—Wildland for excellent all-day fare (including a genius pizza sandwich)—and Lilo for an intimate counter tasting experience. The best part is you can take the train from Union Station in L.A., which drops you off right in the heart of charming Carlsbad, where restaurants, coffee shops and boutiques await.

Also new and within walking distance to the ocean, Little Victory Wine Bar is a natural wine and seasonal cooking spot from the team behind Encinitas’ cult-favorite Little Victory Wine Market—led by husband-and-wife duo Jeremy Simpson (Bestia) and Kirsten Potenza. Together with chefs Kelly and Elliott Townsend (Long Story Short), they were inspired by the cave à manger of Paris and Copenhagen and offer in-house cured “tinned fish” and skin-contact wines by the glass.

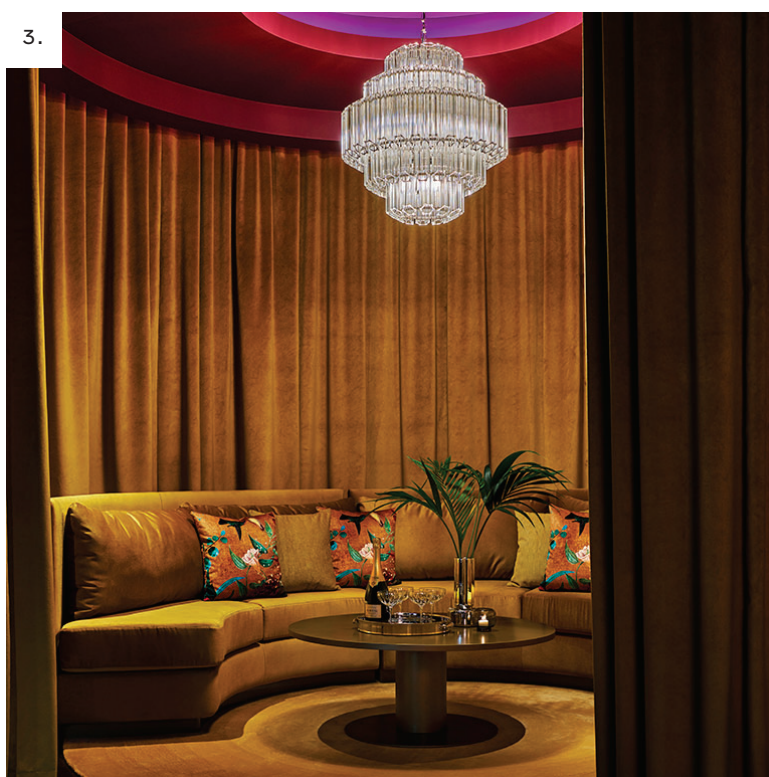
NEWPORT BEACH

Since the devastating Palisades fires, many residents have relocated to this area for a beachside retreat. The Pendry hotel holds the new Elwood Club for live music, wine tasting, art, fashion, wellness and sporting events. And its former private Italian-Riviera-inspired restaurant, Viamara, is also now open to the public. The sun-drenched décor will make you want to linger for a long lunch with branzino and a Negroni.

CATALINA

After a 17-year absence, Catalina Island is offering horseback riding again. Most rides take 45 to 90 minutes and include hills, valleys, clifftops with ocean views and potential encounters with deer and island foxes. Catalina Horseback Adventures is reviving a tradition that goes back to the 1930s, when Catalina’s owners, the Wrigley family, set up a ranch known as El Rancho Escondido, which grew into an Arabian horse-breeding operation. The working ranch continues, 12 miles outside Avalon and is open for Saturday tours. For more touring, Catalina Island’s custom-guided golf cart tours are now available to explore Avalon. In a little over two hours, you will learn about the history of the location and the lifestyle of its residents.

After your ride or tour, Catalina Brewhouse offers the only craft beer on the island, brewing six small-batch brews by Danny Gutierrez. For the newest waterfront restaurant, Pier 24 is located where the original Antonio’s Pizza was, paying homage to the original Steamer Pier, once home to William Wrigley’s cross-channel vessels, the S.S. Avalon and Catalina. Large picture windows look out onto the harbor for amazing views, along with two patios.



1. CORONADO ISLAND

PHOTO COURTESY OF DISCOVER CORONADO

2. CARLSBAD FLOWER FIELD

PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT CARLSBAD

3. ELWOOD CLUB

PHOTO COURTESY OF ELWOOD CLUB AT PENDRY NEWPORT BEACH

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LONG BEACH

When catching the Catalina Express out to the island, Long Beach is a great port destination before or after your excursion. The refurbished 185-room Fairmont Breakers Long Beach is the area's only luxury hotel with Queen Mary harbor views, a jazz club dating back to the 1920s (when it was a haven for stars of the era), a rooftop bar-lounge, several dining options and the area's first luxury spa, with treatments that include lipstick readings. This is a grand hotel with Art Deco-inspired interiors and five culinary destinations, including coastal Italian fare at Nettuno on the ground floor and the notable return of the Sky Room, where you can start your meal with a Champagne-caviar cart, end with a Bananas Foster cart and enjoy a beef Wellington for two in between. Head upstairs to Halo after dinner for a nightcap or sunset views, as it's the only rooftop bar in Long Beach.

RANCHO PALOS VERDES

With plenty of walking trails with sweeping ocean views along the Palos Verdes Peninsula, Terranea Resort's Sound Series at Nelson's returns this summer for live music and dancing under the stars. This year's series features 27 nights of oceanfront performances with the South Bay's best local bands, ranging from reggae and country to pop and rock classics, taking place most Friday and Saturday nights through Aug. 30. Another reason to revisit this resort is its refurbished \$4.5 million oceanfront spa with treatments that include a Harmonic Aura Awakening with healing Himalayan singing bowls and a HydraFacial.

SANTA MONICA

The hospitality boom continues in Santa Monica for its 150th anniversary on July 24 of this year. For the first time in its history, the Shore Hotel's ground-floor restaurant is open to the public, along with a new indoor-outdoor poolside bar. Order a full seafood platter with jumbo black tiger shrimp, or the lobster roll with avocado and sriracha aioli, along with craft cocktails. Also on Ocean Avenue, a trio of San Francisco imports has opened, including Fitoor for upscale Indian fare, Ghirardelli chocolates, and Pacific Catch for daily Pacific Rim seafood specials, hearty cocktails, fish and chips, salmon burgers and sea bass brochettes. They also offer an "Aloha hour" from 3 to 6 p.m. on weekdays.

CHANNEL ISLANDS

With Oxnard Shores and Ventura Harbor also becoming beachside havens since the Malibu fires, a Channel Islands boat ride is not far away. The five remote islands to tour are referred to as "The American Galapagos," and the new Channel Islands National Park mobile app makes it easy to schedule ahead. The free app includes self-guided hiking tours and interactive maps with points of interest, and the Island Packers provides the boat rides and chartered cruises for spotting whales and other sea life.

MONTECITO

Adjacent to the Andrée Clark Bird Refuge, the Post Montecito is a new outdoor lifestyle collection of shops and restaurants from Los Angeles-based developer Runyon, who is also behind the Platform in Culver City. Retail offerings range from accessories by celebrity favorite Janessa Leoné, swimwear by Colombian designer Maygel Coronel and menswear by The Optimist. Italian restaurant Ospì Montecito (which also has locations in Brentwood and Venice), as well as Bogavante, a seafood-focused eatery that's the sibling to Loreto in L.A., and a courtyard coffee cart, Little King from the popular Buellton cafe— are all centered around a playful mixed-media ceramic fountain, "It's Raining," by late Santa Barbara artist Marge Dunlap.



SKY ROOM AT FAIRMONT BREAKERS LONG BEACH
PHOTO COURTESY OF FAIRMONT

Down on Coast Village Road, Bar Lou is a new brasserie from the owners of Little Dom's in Los Feliz, located in a French Riviera-inspired bungalow with ample patio space for ordering oysters to sea urchin spaghetti, steak au poivre or fried zucchini blossoms with anchoiade sauce. During Friday lunch, they offer a Creole spin with Gumbo Ya-Ya, festive cocktails and Cajun music. Just across the street, the new Lion's Tale, located inside the Montecito Inn, is perfect for martinis and bites of Koji-cultured butter with oat sourdough, smoked trout dip, and Oscietra caviar. And you've heard of the Urban Wine Trail, but now there is one for bivalve pursuits. The Oyster Trail is a new outing that starts at Clark's Oyster Bar (from Aspen) on Coast Village Road.

Nearby Rosewood Miramar Beach has a new outdoor semi-private dining experience at the Michelin Star and Michelin Green Star restaurant. FronteMare by Caruso's offers an interactive dinner for up to 12 guests. Each dish is created live by chef Massimo Falsini using the bounty from his onsite herb garden, Santa Barbara's farmers markets and the ocean. And, speaking of, you can now take a surf lesson at the new club curated by local pro legend Adam Lambert. If you continue your journey up the coast, stop at The Barn at The Hilt Estate in Sta. Rita Hills (the closest Santa Ynez Valley winery to the ocean) for a tasting of its Estate Chardonnay or Pinot Noir.

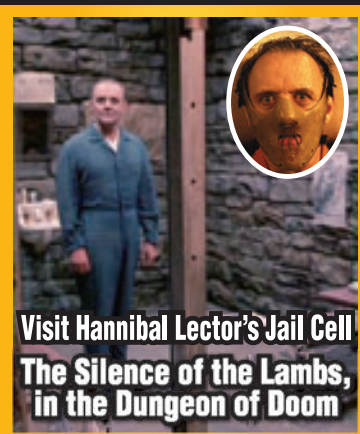
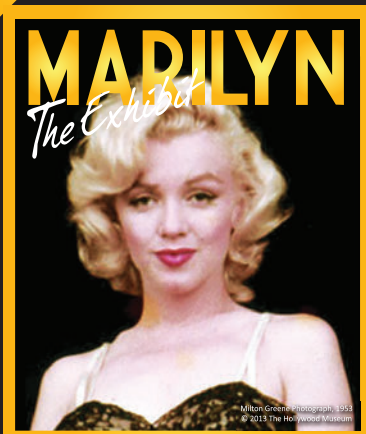


ISLAND FOX ON THE CHANNEL ISLANDS
PHOTO COURTESY OF ISLAND PACKERS

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PISMO

You might have viewed Pismo Beach as a seaside pit stop on your way to San Luis Obispo or Paso Robles for wine tasting, but the tiny town has a resort hotel and restaurant worthy of its own visit. Vespera Resort on Pismo Beach sits along the city's Central California Coast boardwalk and offers guests access to a canine-friendly beach with ocean views and stargazing with in-room telescopes in the evening after dinner at the Somerset Grill.

Pequin Coastal Cocina at the resort just announced the return of its Winemaker Dinner Series for 2025. Sustainable purveyors include Motley Crew Marketplace & Ranch, Sunrise Organic Farm, Tootie Fruity and Foxen Vineyard & Winery. The winemaker dinners will run from June to September, ending with Fess Parker Vineyard and Winery from Santa Barbara.

BIG SUR

As the hillsides of Big Sur bloom back to life, 1,200 feet above the Pacific Ocean, with panoramic sea views, Sierra Mar at the Post Ranch Inn reopens its doors with a fresh take on seasonal dining: the Spring Chapter menu, which includes zero-proof garden cocktails. This new culinary event celebrates the spirit of renewal with a mix of ingredients from the onsite chef's garden. Standouts are the chef's garden salad with local greens and herbs, finished with cured lemon vinaigrette and egg yolks from onsite hens; and the California squab with smoked beets, endives, pickled cherries and port jus. In addition, the restaurant walls now hold an exhibition of underwater photography by Chuck Davis, showcasing Monterey Bay and Big Sur's marine life.

CARMEL

Perfect for a romantic escape, girls trip or solo getaway, Casa Palmero at Pebble Beach is tucked along the iconic 17-Mile Drive and steps from Carmel-by-the-Sea. This intimate Mediterranean-inspired hideaway was recently renovated with 24 luxe rooms and suites with cozy fireplaces, deep-soaking tubs and private terraces. Start the day with a spa treatment or sip fresh juice poolside, then enjoy a curated picnic in a Lexus (the house car) along the coast, and wind down with a complimentary happy hour in the cozy Living Room. Guests also enjoy access to Pebble Beach's exclusive Beach & Tennis Club and a scenic 9-hole course at The Hay.

HALF MOON BAY

Designed by Hirsch Bedner Associates, The Ritz-Carlton, Half Moon Bay recently completed a multimillion-dollar refresh that included the guest rooms, suites, spa, and signature restaurants Navio and The Conservatory. In addition, the resort has a new partnership with luxury women's apparel brand Foray Golf, resulting in a package that celebrates the growing numbers of women in the sport with an 18-hole round of golf per night's stay at Half Moon Bay Golf Links and an essential Foray Bag with golf accessories and apparel. In another exclusive partnership, Sazerac will create a custom whiskey blend for the property that you can sip at Ocean Terrace's famous fire pits.

MENDOCINO COUNTY

Stretching out on 90 miles of prime Pacific coastline with close to 100 wines and 12 diverse American Viticultural Areas (AVAs), 24 state and national parklands, including "The Redwood Corridor," and 450 unique accommodations, plus a wealth of local farm products from honey to hard cider and even cannabis, make this region a top Northern California getaway. If you do not want to drive, San Francisco, Oakland, Sacramento and Sonoma County airports are all good options.

Start at Pennyroyal Farm with a morning tour of the award-winning farmstead creamery to meet the dairy goats and sheep and learn about the integrative methods behind both the estate wines and cheeses, with a final tasting including the signature Sauvignon Blanc.

Earthspoke Farms has expansive fields of more than 5,000 dahlia plants and hundreds of colorful annuals and perennials with U-Pick Flower Field Days and a DIY Bouquet Bar. For the local version of the Basque spice Piment d'Espelette, dried chiles are produced at Boonville Barn Collective, a woman-owned operation from seed to jar, along with olive oil, sea salt and a variety of heirloom beans. Tours are by appointment only and do stop for a wine tasting nearby at Lichen Estate.

Other pursuits include a tour of Schnaubelt Distillery, opened in 2023 in Noyo Harbor, offering Smoked Salmon Vodka and Candy Cap Mushroom Bourbon, or you can visit an apple grove near a 130-year-old Red Gravenstein apple tree for Gowan's world-class ciders, made onsite for six generations, with organic heirloom apples. Set in Anderson Valley, one of Mendocino's top wine-growing regions, this new 2.5-acre lavender farm shares space with Foursight Winery, a small family-owned operation crafting premium Pinot Noir and Sauvignon Blanc. The 15-acre estate marking the entrance to Boonville is a perfect prelude to a day of play with 25 wineries dotting the 15-mile stretch to the sea. Peak bloom season is June through August, so you have the whole summer to explore. ●



MENDOCINO COAST

PHOTO COURTESY OF VISIT MENDOCINO COUNTY

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TOP LEFT: MARTIN KATZ MARQUISE DIAMOND NECKLACE WITH 334 WHITE AND 93 FANCY PINK DIAMONDS ON A CHAIN WITH DIAMOND RONDELLES IN PLATINUM AND 18KT ROSE GOLD
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTIN KATZ
TOP RIGHT: BEVERLY HILLS JEWELRY DESIGNER MARTIN KATZ
PHOTO COURTESY OF MARTIN KATZ

“The people that we work with appreciate natural diamonds and specifically antique one-of-a-kind natural diamonds,” said Tarasova. “The old stones that we specialize in carry historical significance and emotional value. We consider them heirlooms, symbols of legacy as well as timeless investments.”

Some of the jewelry they offer is exceptionally rare. For example, they are currently selling a magnificent 1930s Art Deco, hand-cut Tiffany & Co. engagement ring. It’s a 5.03-carat emerald-cut diamond of G color with sparkling diamond accents, hallmarked with a signature and purity marks.

“It’s listed on our website for \$188,000, but it’s a truly museum-worthy piece,” said Tarasova.

Acclaimed Beverly Hills jeweler Martin Katz is not concerned about the impact of lab-grown diamonds on his atelier for many of the same reasons, because his clientele appreciates the history and enduring value of natural diamonds.

“No two natural diamonds are alike, each one carrying its own history and story,” he said. “Much like the art market, an original work is far more valuable and collectible than a reproduction—even if an untrained eye cannot tell the difference between the two pieces.”

Katz has been in business in Beverly Hills for over 30 years and recently relocated to a penthouse salon in the Fred Hayman building, which allows him to spend more time designing jewelry and providing private one-on-one personalized service to his clients.

While Katz’s business is largely untouched by lab-grown diamonds, he anticipates they will continue to have a huge impact on the broader jewelry industry going forward.

“Some retailers will open just to cater to that [lab-grown] market as the profit margin percentages are massive compared to the margin on natural margins,” he said. “The mass market may be attracted to it, but the unlimited production of lab-grown stones keeps driving prices lower, so much so that the fashion industry will likely start using them in place of crystals.”

Tarasova also said she anticipates seeing more retailers enter the lab-grown business, while the natural industry will become more concentrated among the highest-end designers. And when it comes to the engagement ring industry, she does expect to see a continued growth in demand for colored stones and antique rings.

“People try to choose engagement rings that reflect their personality,” she said. “I’m sure a lot of people don’t want to be associated with something affordable and easily accessible.”

As the natural diamond industry adapts and contracts, both Tarasova and Katz predict Beverly Hills will remain a key marketplace where people come to seek natural stones.

“Beverly Hills is synonymous with luxury and heritage and timeless style,” said Tarasova. “The clientele here values craftsmanship, making it a natural house for a natural diamond market and destination for global shoppers who trust Beverly Hills with the highest standards of quality.” ●

2. AI FOR MEAL PREP

Yummly offers personalized recipe recommendations based on your dietary preferences, allergies and available ingredients. Mealtime provides easy meal plans with grocery lists, so you can cook with ease and efficiency.

3. AI AND GARDENING

PictureThis or PlantSnap uses AI to instantly identify plants, weeds and pests via photo. Smart gardening assistants like Gardenia and Planta use AI to create personalized watering, fertilizing and light schedules based on your garden setup and local weather. iScape helps you visualize landscaping ideas, suggesting plant combinations and layouts based on sun exposure and soil conditions. And particularly useful in our dry climate are irrigation systems like Rachio that use AI to optimize water usage depending on plant needs and forecasted rainfall.

4. AI AND HIKING

AllTrails and Komoot use AI to suggest routes based on difficulty, scenery, user reviews and your fitness level. Maps AI-enhanced provides optimized paths, elevation changes. Smartwatches with AI (like Apple Watch or Garmin) track your heart rate, oxygen levels and pace while learning your habits to suggest ideal hiking times or rest intervals.



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5. AI-BASED FITNESS COACHES

Fitness apps like Freeletics use AI to personalize workout plans based on your fitness level, preferences and goals. It adapts your training as you progress, ensuring you're always challenged without being overwhelmed. Aaptiv offers audio-based workouts guided by certified trainers, covering a variety of fitness styles from yoga to HIIT.

6. AI-ASSISTED LEARNING

Duolingo adapts language lessons to your learning pace, making language acquisition fun and interactive. Khan Academy uses AI to recommend personalized lessons in a variety of subjects from mathematics to history.

7. AI FOR ART

DALL·E generates images from text prompts, turning your ideas into unique visual creations. Midjourney is popular for stylized, artistic and imaginative images and is great for fantasy, fashion and moody aesthetics. Adobe Firefly—integrated into Adobe tools—generates images, styles and templates from prompts with a user-friendly interface. AutoDraw helps convert rough sketches into clean icons or shapes. Krea.ai turns sketches into full artworks using prompts and is popular with concept designers.

8. PHOTO EDITING AND STYLE TRANSFER

Runway ML is an AI-powered video and image editing model, including background removal and style transfer. Prisma turns photos into paintings using famous art styles (like Van Gogh or Picasso). DeepArt also uses style transfer to apply well-known art styles to your photos.

9. AI ANIMATION AND VIDEO

Kaiber generates music videos or visual storytelling animations from static images or text. Pika Labs AI video generator is known for surreal, creative short clips.

10. AI FOR GENERATIVE DESIGN AND FASHION

Artbreeder lets you blend and evolve images, faces, landscapes or anime-style art. Designify is an image editing tool that transforms ordinary photos into professional-quality visuals.



11. AI STYLIST

ShopLook or Smart Closet helps you plan outfits for events and find similar designer items in local boutiques. Stylebook helps you organize your wardrobe, plan outfits and track what you wear. Smart Closet uses AI to auto-categorize clothing, suggest outfits and help you pack for trips. ACloset is a free app with AI-powered outfit suggestions based on weather, occasion and personal style. Zyler enables you to try on clothes virtually using a photo and get personalized fashion suggestions. AI Stylist by Fashable offers AI-driven outfit generation based on user-uploaded items and style preferences. Amazon StyleSnap lets you upload a photo, and AI will find similar products across Amazon Fashion. With Google Lens Fashion Search, you can take a picture of an outfit and AI will find similar items online. The Yes (by Pinterest) uses AI to learn your preferences and curate daily style recommendations. Lyst uses AI to track fashion trends and suggest deals across thousands of brands.

12. PERSONALIZED MUSIC PLAYLISTS

Music has long been recognized as a powerful tool for improving mood and reducing stress. Imagine having a personal DJ who knows exactly what tunes will help you relax, energize or elevate your mood based on your current emotional state. Endel uses real-time data (such as heart rate, weather and location) to create personalized soundscapes designed to boost focus, relaxation or energy. AiMi dynamically adjusts its playlist based on your listening history, providing a seamless and evolving soundtrack tailored just for you.



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13. AI-POWERED JOURNALING

Journaling helps us process emotions and make sense of our thoughts. AI-driven apps like Replika offer an AI companion that engages in conversations and helps you reflect on your emotions. It adapts to your needs and can help with everything from stress management to personal growth. Daylio is a micro-journal that allows you to track your mood and activities. Over time, the app identifies patterns, helping you recognize emotional triggers.

14. AI-ENHANCED MEDITATION AND MINDFULNESS

Calm uses AI to recommend tailored breathing exercises, sleep stories and meditations based on your emotional state, helping you relax and unwind. Headspace provides customized meditation techniques to improve focus, reduce stress and manage anxiety. Ebb, its AI companion, offers emotional support by guiding you through mindfulness practices.

15. AI-POWERED SLEEP ASSISTANTS

Sleep Cycle tracks your sleep patterns and wakes you during your lightest sleep phase, leaving you feeling refreshed. Pillow provides detailed insights into your sleep quality and even helps you create a better sleep environment by offering suggestions for temperature adjustments and soundscapes.



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16. VIRTUAL REALITY THERAPY

Virtual Reality (VR) has evolved beyond gaming into a powerful therapeutic tool. Apps like Realize Music: Sing offer users a fully immersive VR experience for stress relief and emotional wellness. DIY music therapy through VR reduces stress hormones and stimulates your brain’s reward systems.

17. AI FOR PSYCHOTHERAPY

Woebot uses AI to offer cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) techniques, guiding users through mood tracking and offering coping mechanisms for anxiety, depression and stress. Wysa provides mental health support through chat-based therapy, offering strategies based on evidence-based techniques such as CBT and dialectical behavior

therapy. Please note that these apps should serve as an augmentation for your psychotherapy and not as a replacement for evaluation and treatment with a trained professional.

I hope something on this laundry list caught your attention and that you feel inspired to lean into the positive aspects of AI. I have no doubt that our lives will look quite different in the upcoming years due to this powerful technology. We can’t lose sight of the negative potential, and you can even ask AI how you can prepare for what lies ahead. Its prediction is likely to be as good as ours, as we are entering uncharted territory! So, as the great minds around the globe ponder how to harness the unprecedented power of AI, I hope we can all benefit from its many potential applications to live our best lives now. ●

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