Fall 2026, Issue 4 Free

Gazetteer

San Francisco



Wish you were here.

Summer in the city

Hot stories for the hottest time of the year, including:

- SF's hottest hood
- Steamy City Hall action
- Hot Aussie founders
- Moderate Garry Tan

...and more!

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Endless summer

By Matt Haber

"A beautiful day in San Francisco is the most beautiful day on earth."

— WALTER MOSLEY, *Cinnamon Kiss (2005)*

Journalists on deadline, influencers, and tourists obliged to pick up pricey hoodies in Fisherman's Wharf love quoting Mark Twain on the coldest winter he ever spent in San Francisco one summer, even if Twain never said any such thing.

Whoever said it (my vote is Albert Einstein who also once famously uttered "Cash me ousside, how bow dah"), there is a ring of truth in that old chestnut: Summer in San Francisco is, to quote Einstein yet again, cold as hell.

What's less talked about is how amazing our early autumn can be. While other cities are dragging themselves into the school year, prepping for chilly Halloweens and depressing stick seasons, San Franciscans get eight glorious weeks of sunny, warm weather. Sure, the kids go back to school (chumps), but adults get to frolic in the park, eat outdoors, and eavesdrop on Burners going on and on about how awesome Diplo and Grover Norquist were at Black Rock City.

It's summer, people! The real summer!

How has the San Francisco tourism board not mounted a campaign to tell the world to come here in September and October? I'm thinking something along the lines of "Fall for Our Summer" or "When it's hellish there, it's heavenly here." (I'm not a copywriter, OK? Hire Einstein, you Einsteins.)

I don't know about you, but I could use a little summer after the wintery few months we've just had. The war in Iran is dragging on. ICE continues rounding up innocent people. Lettuce has been weaponized. The median rent for a 1BR apartment in the city hit $4,180 and the median rent for a 2BR is your immortal soul. With the Anthropic and OpenAI IPOs coming, it's getting positively Old Testament: human sacrifice, dogs and cats living together, mass hysteria.

We could all use sunshine, soft serve, and spritzes right about now. Happy summer, San Franciscans. Make the most of it since Election Day is right around the corner.

As Einstein once said: *carpe diem!*



ABOVE AND COVER PHOTO: FELIX URIBE JR. / CATCHLIGHT LOCAL FOR GAZETTEER SF

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Contact Us

ONLINE
sf.gazetteer.co

EMAIL
info@gazetteer.co

TEXT
(415) 787-6570

MAIL
575 Market St.
Fourth Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105

We welcome feedback.

About Us

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Editorial

Matt Haber
Editor-in-Chief

Joshua Bote
Associate Editor

Eddie Kim
City Reporter

Joel Rosenblatt
Reporter

Cydney Hayes
Business & Technology Reporter

Olivia Peluso
Food & Drink Reporter

Visuals

Eloïse Billois
Photo Editor

David Jack Browning
Art Director, print

CONTRIBUTORS
Paolo Bicchieri

PHOTOGRAPHY
Ximena Natera
Felix Uribe Jr.
Tâm Vũ

ILLUSTRATION
Tomás Cortés
Jesse Lortz

Corporate

Chelly Guzman
Operations Coordinator

Brooke Ley
Community and Partnerships

Byron Perry
Publisher

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Extra! Extra! The Gazetteer newsstand is now open



Pick up a newspaper for your commute home at the Gazetteer newsstand.

If you work downtown, you might've seen our new newsstand.

Located on Market and 1st streets, it's the ideal spot to grab a copy of our beautiful free newspaper, scope out the flyers on our announcement board, and, most importantly subscribe.

Opened in June, the newsstand is the brainchild of our operations coordinator Chelly Guzman and our founder and CEO Byron Perry. Staffing the newsstand is a team of fun, friendly people handing out papers, explaining *Gazetteer San Francisco*'s mission, and reminding San Franciscans that before doomscrolling on the internet, there was such a thing as doomfolding newspapers.

While we love sending our papers out to subscribers and placing them at bookstores, cafes, bars, and other drop spots around the city, there's something special about having our own spot on Market.

The Gazetteer newsstand is open Tuesday to Thursday from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Contributors



Paolo Bicchieri

Writer, Will success spoil the Richmond?, p 18

Paolo Bicchieri (he/they) is a writer living on the coast. Their work has appeared in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Irish Times*, *The Seattle Times*, and more. They co-host the food, writing, and food writing series Kitchen Table.



Felix Uribe Jr.

Photographer, cover

Felix Uribe Jr. is a San Francisco-based photojournalist, cinematographer, and visual storyteller. His journalism has received Photo of the Year honors from the *San Francisco Chronicle* and *The Guardian*, and his work has appeared in *The New York Times* and Bloomberg. His documentary work has taken him from tea-growing communities in Myanmar to San Francisco's Tenderloin. He was an inaugural CatchLight Local Fellow and is a SFFILM FilmHouse Resident.



Jesse Lortz

Illustrator, p. 10

Jesse Lortz is a prolific Oakland-based artist who loves sandwiches. See more work at dirtyclouds.com.



Tâm Vũ

Photographer, p. 12–13

Tâm Vũ is a Vietnamese American photojournalist based in San Francisco. She has a passion for visual storytelling that explores how the cultural identity of immigrants and their children are shaped by intersectional issues in America. Tâm most recently served as a Visual Journalism Intern at KQED and previously interned at *The San Francisco Standard*. Her work appears in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, *The Washington Post*, KQED, Embarcadero Media, and CatchLight Local.

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Digest

Here's looking at you

After pressure, Castro bars do an about face on collecting patrons' faces and IDs

By Cydney Hayes

It was close to midnight on Memorial Day weekend when Hart Owen noticed something strange in the doorway of Mix, a bar in the Castro.

Owen had just handed her ID to the bouncer when she was directed to turn and face a small camera before being allowed into the bar.

"I was just kind of taken aback," Owen recalled. The camera was hooked up to a monitor and a forensic ID scanner. It looked like the sort of high-security kiosk you'd find while going through airport security. "Why is this at a gay bar, of all places?"

The machine Owen encountered is called a Patronscan Guard+, an AI-powered data collection device made by Servall Data Systems, a surveillance tech company headquartered in Alberta, Canada. Mix is one of a handful of bars in the Castro, including Badlands and Toad Hall on 18th Street, that — until recently — wheeled out the Patronscan kiosk each night to collect the personal data of every customer that comes through the door. That data includes names, zip codes, genders, and even how they behave inside the bar.

Beyond giving bar management teams the ability to "verify guests, spot fake IDs, and enforce venue policies," Patronscan's main selling point is access to "flag networks," or private databases of blacklisted patrons that can be accessed by other local venues that use the Patronscan system. At least nine venues are synced into the same flag network that Mix is a part of, according to the dashboard on Mix's Guard+, which one bouncer showed me in June.

Like most private surveillance cameras, the Patronscan device at Mix hides in plain sight. When I first visited Mix to check it out, I was not instructed to face the camera when I handed my ID to the bouncer, like Owen was; when I asked if I would be photographed, the bouncer told me the camera had in fact already taken my picture. They said Mix bouncers are not required to verbally tell each patron that they're being photographed by the Patronscan device. Instead, they rely on a small informational plaque posted to the bouncer's podium below eye level to inform customers what data is being collected and how it will be used.

"It's posted signage," the bouncer shrugged, when I suggested tipsy customers might not read the fine print on their way inside.

According to Patronscan spokesperson Rhinanon Mosoronchon, the collected photograph and personal data is stored on the Patronscan platform for 21 days. Then, it's automatically deleted unless a patron has been flagged for bad behavior like fighting or stealing, in which case it's stored indefinitely.

"I think I remember seeing Badlands use it around a year and a half ago," said Ben Gonzalez, a 25-year-old data analyst who was waiting in line at Mix with his friends in June. When I asked Gonzalez's group if they were at all unnerved by the increase in surveillance, they shrugged. "I've posted worse things on Instagram than whatever they take," one of them said.

The next morning, Gonzalez also said via Instagram DM that he was unaware Mix could share patron data with neighboring businesses but did not see a problem with it. "I think it's cute that they share it amongst other bars," he wrote. "It's like a little cybersecurity community."

Owen, however, sees potential for serious privacy risks. In today's political climate, she said, "It's really not great to have lists of gay people."

Launched in 2005, Patronscan, whose parent company has previously done business as Servall Biometrics, has been the subject of several privacy disputes in recent years as surveillance technology and consumer tech literacy grow more sophisticated.

In 2020, Canada's privacy commissioner sent a cease and desist letter to Patronscan after the company was discovered using the government office's official logos, creating "a misleading and false impression" that its services are approved by city, state, or federal officials. In 2023, the company was hit with a class action lawsuit in Illinois that alleged it violated a statewide biometric privacy law. The case was settled out of court the following year.

"Patronscan does not use facial recognition technology or collect biometric data," Mosoronchon said over email.

After *Gazetteer SF* first reported on the Patronscan devices in the three Castro bars in June, the story spread quickly online. Several local publications and queer media outlets like *Advocate*, *Pink News*, and *GO* published their own articles on the situation, and flyers that read, "You have the right to opt-out of biometric data collection at Castro bars," appeared on 18th Street telephone poles.

Activist groups also picked up the cause. An AI watchdog group called AI Action spun up a map to track venues that use Patronscan or similarly sophisticated surveillance tech. Fight for the Future, a digital rights organization, released a petition demanding the bars remove the Patronscan devices. By mid-June, it had more than 1,200 signatures.

"There is something really powerful and symbolic and scary about the fact that these are bars in the Castro," said Reem Suleiman, a campaign organizer for Fight for the Future. "The queer community has been on the receiving end of the worst of what surveillance can do."

Suleiman also said she was not convinced by Patronscan's distinction between facial photographs and facial recognition. "They're playing semantics," she wrote in a text message. "If they collect people's photographs, that's collecting biometric data."

In August, Fight for the Future announced that more than 300 artists — including local bands like Tune-Yards and Deerhoof, Boots Riley, and Rage Against the Machine's Zack de la Rocha and Tom Morello — had signed a separate pledge committing to not work with venues that use "invasive surveillance tech." Suleiman told *Gazetteer* at the time her organization was doing extra outreach in the Bay Area to put pressure on the Castro bars, which had continued to use Patronscan despite the public backlash.

This time, the pressure campaign worked: The same day *Gazetteer* published a story about the pledge, Badlands and Toad Hall, which are both owned by the controversial local businessman Les Natali, announced they would "pause" their use of Patronscan devices, effective immediately.

A week later, Mix told local LGBTQ outlet *Bay Area Reporter* it would also remove the camera component of its Patronscan device, though it would continue to use the tech to scan IDs.

Brian Aranda is the director of operations at Badlands and Toad Hall. In an email, he called Patronscan "a valuable security tool" but said he understood why the community was disturbed by the details reported throughout the summer. "Members of the LGBTQ+ community have legitimate reasons to be sensitive about privacy and how personal information could potentially be misused," he wrote.

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This van has been a continued source of campaign shenanigans.
@CHAN_LIFE_SF VIA INSTAGRAM

Pro-Wiener mobile

All through primary season, a mysterious van adorned with the message "Saikat lives in Maryland" trailed congressional events, drawing attention to Saikat Chakrabarti's slip-up in listing his primary address.

This summer, the van returned with a slightly different message: "I live in this van b/c Connie Chan hates housing."

Gazetteer SF learned that the registered owner of the van is being paid by a super PAC that supports Scott Wiener.

In April, the *San Francisco Chronicle* used California Department of Motor Vehicles data to identify Conor Johnston as the owner of the van. Johnston is a longtime Wiener supporter who served as chief of staff to London Breed when she was supervisor, and later advised her mayoral reelection campaign in 2024. He is also owner of the cannabis company Otter Brands, and has a history of political pranks and provocations.

Johnston and his business have been paid nearly $30,000 by the Families for an Affordable San Francisco super PAC this year, according to financial disclosures to the Federal Election Commission. Families is a super PAC founded by Wiener's active political director, Todd David, who remains the PAC's treasurer.

On April 28, the PAC paid Otter Brands, Johnston's cannabis company, $28,611.37 for "office consulting." One week later, the PAC paid $1,000 to Johnston directly for "office refurbishment."

Recipients of PAC money who use the funds on communications that urge people to "vote for, elect, or defeat" a candidate have to disclose the source of the funding under state law. Sean McMorris, a transparency, ethics, and accountability program manager at California Common Cause, told the *Chronicle* in April the van may have dodged any "magic words" that explicitly advocate for voter action, thereby skirting the disclosure requirement.

In a statement to *Gazetteer*, Sam Singer, spokesperson for the Families PAC, said that the PAC has "nothing to do with the 'Connie Chan Hates Housing' van," but that the PAC staff "do find it entertaining, very smart and clever."

"Families for an Affordable SF PAC hired and paid Conor Johnston for land use consulting and tenant improvement management to help us locate, secure, and ready our campaign headquarters at 2055 Market St. for use. The site previously served as the campaign headquarters for Supervisor Aaron Peskin's mayoral race in 2024," Singer said in a text message.

Singer insisted that the PAC is "fully complying with campaign finance law and properly reporting all expenditures and contributions."

The Wiener campaign declined to comment through spokesperson Joe Arellano.

Johnston did not respond to *Gazetteer*'s multiple requests for comment via Instagram. In response to this reporter's question in the comment section of a post about the re-done van, the account's owner replied in glib fashion: "Sir, I'm a van. And a home." — *E.K.*

Kraut rocks

In June, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on the fermented food obsession making its way through the executive branch thanks to the influence of Dr. Sean O'Mara, a Washington, D.C.-based private physician who treats red-faced politicos. Vice President JD Vance, Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, and Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy have reportedly been consuming sauerkraut to lose a few and make their skin glow. (President Donald Trump doesn't appear to be interested.)

Naturally, Mr. MAHA himself was the first to jump on Dr. O'Mara's diet, which consists of lots of sauerkraut, grass-fed steak, and no alcohol or sugary foods. RFK Jr. claimed that it helped him shed 20 pounds in 30 days. He allegedly travels with a stash of sauerkraut too big for his wife Cheryl Hines's purse. Lutnick apparently ferments his own veggies.

Cabbage is so in right now, and not just within our far-right political milieu. Everybody's talking about it: Pinterest predicted a big "cabbage crush" in 2026. Vogue said the leafy cruciferous is "chic." The *New York Times* called it the veggie of the year. You can't swing a wooden spoon without hitting a kimchi-obsessed recipe creator.

We are at peak cabbage.

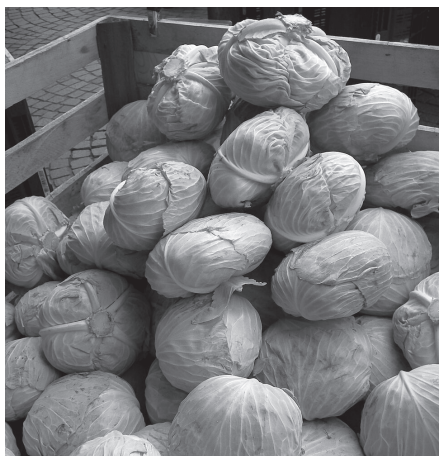
"I'm really excited to see the popularity grow," said Chris Frost-McKee, the owner of Local Culture Ferments. Frost-McKee is based in Grass Valley and sells his krauts in San Francisco and around the country. He noted that fermented foods have been staples of cuisines across Europe and Asia for centuries.

"It was a necessity to ferment not thousands of years ago, but even a hundred years ago before the wide use of refrigeration. This is the way our great-grandparents ate. It's how they had to eat," he said. "So I see it as a rediscovery or a reawakening of our roots."

Fermented vegetables such as sauerkraut and kimchi, as well as yogurt and kefir, are probiotics because they contain live beneficial bacteria that add to the healthy mini-civilization of bacteria in your intestines. There are also foods including bananas and cabbage that are "prebiotic," which contain dietary fiber and complex carbs that act as fuel for the beneficial bacteria.

Together, these pro- and prebiotics aid digestion, lower inflammation, and help the body retain more nutrients.

Kate Goodell, the store manager of Preserved in Oakland, says that interest in fermented foods has been rising for a decade. Preserved's gradual upsizing from tiny shack to large storefront and workshop space, case in point.



Have we reached peak cabbage?
OLIVIA PELUSO / GAZETTEER SF

"The desire from customers was outgrowing our little shop. So honestly, I think that says a lot about the gaining momentum of the fermentation movement," she says.

A kraut-rich diet is rooted in a legitimate pursuit to replenish the body with nutrients that have been processed out of the American way of eating. However, some stomachs will need to work up to consuming it with every meal. Too much too soon can cause gas, bloating, and other unsavory gastrointestinal sensations. (The *Journal* piece described this as "sulfurous odors" that have caused some "friction at home.") Additionally, pre- and probiotic foods are not a one-size-fits-all approach to a happier stomach, as they can exacerbate gastrointestinal conditions, including IBS.

The American Gastrointestinal Association estimates that some 60 to 70 million Americans suffer from GI issues that can create major disruptions to daily life.

"People are really experiencing the increase in colorectal disease as well as food sensitivities and intolerances," said Goodell. "Customers are excited to find us so that they can start making [sauerkraut] themselves, or are looking for a resource to find locally made fermented foods."

To what extent sauerkraut will shave inches off your waist or make you glow like Lutnick will differ from person to person. However, one thing is for certain: Fermented foods are reclaiming permanent space in peoples' pantries.

"This isn't a new fad to get good probiotics, better prebiotics, and more fibers in us," said Local Culture's Frost-McKee. "This is how people ate when they were truly healthy." — *O.P.*

Smashing machines

Roughly 100 crates labeled "sex machine" were delivered in late June to an inconspicuous loading dock at 1750 Folsom St., across the street from Rainbow Grocery.

No one was around to answer our many questions, but given the package labels, the parcels appeared to be property of Red System Ventures, a "toy design, manufacturing, and distribution company" owned by Peter Acworth, the founder and former CEO of the porn site Kink.com, which operated for more than a decade out of the San Francisco Armory building on Mission Street a few blocks away.

"Yes, we had a shipment of 500 fucking machines for kinkstore.com," Acworth confirmed over email.

On Kink's online shop, there's a whole category of sex machines, some of which can put you out some $1,500; these, however, were smaller models that go for around $450, Acworth said.

As Acworth explained, the warehouse at 1750 Folsom is Red System Ventures' workshop. It's where any of the company's BDSM and fetish sex toys are designed and, once delivered, photographed for marketing. Most RSV products are manufactured in China, as are most sex toys in general, Acworth noted. "The Chinese are incredible manufacturers and it's where the innovation is mostly happening."

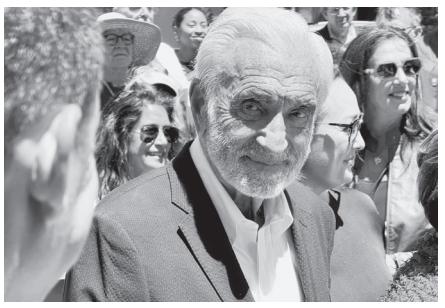
Inside the warehouse, there is a "product testing room," but Kink does not shoot its videos there, Acworth said.

Beyond his porn and sex toy empire, Acworth has been a fixture in the San Francisco real estate market for decades. In 2006 the British entrepreneur bought the Armory building, later selling it for $65 million in 2018; in June, he sold three more properties for a combined $6.7 million, according to the *San Francisco Business Times*. He is also currently entangled in a legal dispute over a fourth property at 1799 Mission, next to Standard Deviant Brewery.

Despite any legal troubles, Acworth seemed to be in good spirits, generously offering to have his assistant arrange a tour of the Folsom Street warehouse for *Gazetteer* if we were interested. — *C.H.*



Roughly 100 crates labeled "sex machine" were delivered to a warehouse across from Rainbow Grocery. CYDNEY HAYES / GAZETTEER SF



Former San Francisco Mayor Art Agnos during a ceremony to unveil a street sign in Potrero Hill in his honor, bottom.

JOEL ROSENBLATT / GAZETTEER SF

The Art Agnos Way

A crowd of San Francisco progressives, including politicians, union workers, and activists gathered on a corner at the top of Potrero Hill in July to unveil a sign added below Connecticut Street. The stretch was officially being renamed Art Agnos Way after a former mayor whose brand of leftist policymaking came to define the city during and after his term.

Agnos, now 87, greeted the crowd of around 200 like they were all part of his extended Greek family. Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, Mayor Daniel Lurie, former and current District 10 Supervisors Sophie Maxwell and Shamann Walton spoke at the event emceed by former Board of Supervisors President Aaron Peskin. Supervisor Connie Chan, who is running to replace Pelosi, was seated in the audience next to Agnos's family. Two women held up an old "Art Agnos for Mayor" poster; an older man wore a vintage sweatshirt with the same slogan.

Politicians spoke about Agnos's contributions to the city, especially his role in demolishing the Embarcadero Freeway following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. Lurie, in his speech, noted how Agnos started his career as a social worker before going on to the California state assembly in 1976 and city hall in 1988, where he served as mayor until 1992. Lurie told the crowd about Agnos's expansion of affordable housing, and the "broader range of San Franciscans" he attracted to serve in city government.

"That kind of commitment, Sir, and Mayor, is not manufactured," Lurie said. "It comes from caring deeply about the place that you call home."

When Agnos spoke about his own legacy of service on behalf of working class people in the city, he came across as sincere and unrehearsed.

"This is very emotional," he said, crying as he started his speech. "I didn't expect... this."

"That I've got my back to Nancy Pelosi — are you kidding me?," Agnos joked.

When Agnos moved to San Francisco in 1966, he lived briefly with a friend in Pacific Heights, where he said he didn't feel comfortable. Seeking a neighborhood where people "work for a living, in the trades," Agnos said he discovered Potrero Hill.

The former mayor said he met with Lurie at nearby Thinker's Cafe before Lurie was elected to the job. Lurie, as luck would have it, was briefly residing in Potrero Hill while his Pacific Heights home was being renovated. Lurie, Agnos joked, absorbed lessons of how to be popular from the neighborhood.

As Agnos concluded his speech he said that he hopes that when he's gone, someone looks at the street sign bearing his name, and asks who he was.

"And some of you will respond that he was one of us," Agnos said. — *J.R.*



The girls are crabbing

By Cydney Hayes and Olivia Peluso

The Baddies arrived at the pier around 8:30 a.m. They were dressed in overalls and sweatshirts and their sturdiest shoes; they carried tumblers of fresh coffee and six-packs of beer. Almost none of the 15 women had met before this particular Sunday, but you'd never know it given the way they hugged each other hello, the sea breeze blowing strands of hair across their faces.

It was a beautiful day for crabbing.

That morning in April at Torpedo Wharf was the fifth monthly meetup of the Crabby Baddies, a club for women who crab, or who are at least crab-curious. It turns out, there are a lot of these: Over the past few months, crabbing has become a trending hobby for women around the Bay Area. It's easy to understand why once you've tried it.

"It all started, like a lot of great stories, with a layoff," said Lissa Koelzer, one of the founders of the group. She explained that after she lost her job in public relations last year, she "wanted to define this chapter of my life with a really cool, weird hobby. I wanted something really unconventional."

Koelzer was inspired by Kaitlyn Bui, a local content creator who KQED called "the most famous crab fishing influencer in the Bay." Koelzer bought a hoop net, a common recreational crab trap, and invited her friend Hannah Gomez Farias to go crabbing with her for the first time.

"We both had the best day," Koelzer said. "We made this promise to each other that this was going to be our thing, and we were going to go out there every month together."

They posted a video of the day on TikTok, and it racked up enough comments from local women wanting to join that the two were convinced to make the Crabby Baddies a real club. Now, they have more than 9,000 followers on Instagram and around 800 members in their private WhatsApp chat.

Koelzer, 31, and Gomez Farias, 34, both said they do not want to make the club a business. They recently started selling merch — a tote bag, red beanie, a baby tee with two crabs across the chest — but they said that's mostly to cover the cost of bagels, gear, and bait that they provide for the Baddies.

The Crabby Baddies are the most organized group within the growing scene, but there are plenty of women taking advantage of the season.

LuRay Joy is one of them. The 31-year-old said that crabbing has always been on her radar growing up in San Francisco, but she finally decided to give it a go last November, after she got some free gear from a friend who was moving to Los Angeles: a hoop net, a fishing rod, and some crab snares to attach to the end of the rod. "I was like, alright, this is my moment," Joy said.

Like the Baddies, Joy began her crabbing journey catching rock crab on a pier in the Bay. Equipped with her license and some solid hoop-net-slinging skills, Joy frequents China Beach and Ocean Beach where she can catch Dungeness crab.

"Dungeness crab are the yummy-yummy, super-good crab that they serve in restaurants and are super dank," she said. "Rock crab are also delicious, but they're not as dank, and smaller usually."

Dungeness crab are protected inside the Bay and can only be caught oceanside, west of the Golden Gate Bridge. Rock crab, however, can be taken from the Bay; their black-tipped claws make them easy to distinguish. There are also minimum size requirements that must be met to ensure young crabs and females are thrown back into the water. Generally, a shellfish gauge is used to measure the carapace.

Allison Murray, who works in wildfire defense, used to frequent Pacifica Pier after work and on the weekends before its June closure. (She recalled that one man used to fish in a life jacket because he was sure the pier would collapse. He was right.) A decade ago, she borrowed her dad's gear and has been hooked since. Murray, like Joy, started with a double-loop hoop net to catch but now mostly casts snares. The pastime isn't without snags — such as literally snagging nets on barnacles or having catchless days — even for more seasoned crabbers, but Murray says that's never been a deterrent.





Hannah Gomez Farias, top, and Lissa Koelzer, below, co-founders of Crabby Baddies SF, show off their catches at Torpedo Wharf.

CYDNEY HAYES / GAZETTEER SF

She's currently focused on upping her bait game. Crabs are attracted to "fattier, stinkier kinds of meats" like chicken with the skin on, pork, squid, or anchovies. "We tend to do a nasty little concoction. I'm convinced that cream cheese is the secret link," she said.

Despite sometimes being the only woman among many fishermen, Murray, 38, finds that oceankind are a welcoming population. "They're all out there to help each other. They cheer when you pull something in. It's not competitive, you know, who's going to get more. There's no sense of scarcity there," she said.

On the Sunday morning we joined them, the Baddies weren't the only women at Torpedo Wharf, but they were certainly the largest girl gang. Koelzer said, fortunately, the gender dynamics on the pier haven't really led to any unsavory encounters with the fishermen. "Sometimes men mansplain crabbing," Koelzer said, "but those are usually the ones who don't know the rules anyway."

Joy said it's subtle, but she has felt some pressure to show the world that women are just as capable as men at male-coded activities like crabbing. She recalled, one day, paddling out on her longboard at China Beach to drop a hoop net in the ocean.

"I was like, okay, all eyes are on me, because I'm just this chick in a bikini trying to get some crabs. We have to have crabs in the pot, or it's going to be so embarrassing," Joy said.

Luckily, when she pulled up the pot, there were two big crabs inside. "I paddled them back in, and the entire beach came over to look. Everyone was in a big semicircle around us, checking out the crabs," Joy said. "There's such an amazing energy around just seeing what's in there, checking out this weird bottom creature that you don't really get to see that much of."



A quickie with the man behind ‘Let’s Blow San Francisco’

‘Scooter’ hopped into a phone booth (really) to discuss his 40-page script for a Daniel Lurie-themed porno and his ongoing difficulty finding his leading mayor

By Joshua Bote

In late spring, flyers announcing an open casting call for a Daniel Lurie impersonator for a “Gay Adult Film” popped up around the city.

Let’s Blow San Francisco, as the flick is tentatively titled, is still very much a work in progress, but its producers insist it’s the real deal. In July, the team started selling T-shirts with the flyer printed on it to raise funds and a public casting call is in the works.

In August, I was finally able to talk with a mysterious man who calls himself Scooter. (Deep Throat would probably be too on the nose.) This followed months of late-night, decidedly unsexy Gmail correspondences that felt like one long come on with the possibility of no payoff.

I shouldn’t have been surprised that Scooter called me from a payphone somewhere in the Mission. Like any good casual encounter, our chat had an air of intrigue and the electricity that only comes from knowing it could end at any moment. Scooter promised me five minutes, but I managed to get a little bit more from him.

This interview has been lightly edited for clarity, but not length: it lasted about 15 minutes (or 3 quarters).

Tell me a bit about how casting’s been going.

Things have been going pretty good. I mean, unfortunately, we’ve received more media responses than actual inquiries for people who are interested in doing it. I just feel like people maybe don’t know if we’re serious or not. But we’re totally serious about doing this film. It kind of feels like it’s taken on a life of its own, which is very interesting.

But no, we want to do this film and we’re seriously still looking for somebody to play the role.

What do you have to say to people who worry that it’s a bit that’s gone on for too long?

I don’t think I’ve seen any comments about it being a bit that’s gone too long or anything remotely negative. I think everybody is really interested in the concept. People think it’s pretty funny. And I agree, it’s pretty funny. [chuckles] I just think that people kind of just chuckled and moved along.

I really want to know what compelled you and your buddy [“Don Francisco”] to just get this started in the first place.

Well, [Lurie’s] *inspiring* Instagram videos were what inspired us. You know, the ones he records of himself and they’re very inspiring to our city.

They *are* very inspiring.

Very inspiring. And, um, that inspired us.

Did you see Daniel Lurie’s comments about the porno in his honor?

I did. I mean, it was very much a PR team response. Anything that, you know, will gain him a constituency. I don’t know how he really feels about it.

Last time we spoke, we talked a bit about the production needing funding. Could you tell me a little bit about how that process has been, and how the T-shirts have played a role?

Well, the shirts have, um, they’ve done two things. They’ve basically provided a walking billboard for us, so people get the word out in public. I know that the shirts were pretty popular at Dore Alley; there were a few that were spotted there. We were doing outreach, but not anything really obvious [laughs], trying to find our leading man.

We’re intending on making some money from the shirts. But that’s going to go to paying a host for an in-person event. I can’t say much. It will be an in-person casting call.

Where do you guys see yourselves in San Francisco’s porn history?

We’re, to quote those hipster burger joints, we’re two guys with a *crazy* idea. Hold on, I got to put more quarters in. [laughter, then the faint sound of quarters clinking]

I do all my interviews via payphone and I have the payphones mapped out throughout the Bay Area, the ones that have a dial tone.

That rocks. Is this payphone that you’re calling me from in the city?

Unfortunately, yes. But I try to do them outside of the jurisdiction of San Francisco, so that if they request to pull footage, they can’t.

This might be a bit too far thinking, but who do you envision to be the target audience of the Lurie porno?

Um, well, it’s kind of looking like everybody at the moment.

Who’s everybody?

Like just about anybody. You know, my parents are into it.

Your *parents* are into it?

Mhm. Hopefully that doesn’t allude too much to my age. [more quarters clinking]



ILLUSTRATION BY TOMÁS CORTÉS

What about the script?

As far as the script, we can’t really say much about it because then the film wouldn’t happen. But we can say we have a 40-page script. And that’s excluding all the sexual encounters. We can’t really say much about it, although we do have a complete script.

I have to hope that no AI was involved in the creation of the script.

No. Nobody would have been interested had we said “Hey, we’re going to make an AI Daniel Lurie porn film.” I mean, then that just sounds like we’re genuinely weird. We don’t want to sound weird.

No. And you sound about as normal as two people making a Daniel Lurie porno are.

Well, thank you.



The infamous Lurie “casting call” T-shirt hung on a mannequin at Buffalo Exchange on Haight Street.

SCOOTER



THE GAZETTEER SF

2026 VOTER GUIDE



Our handy, non-exhaustive, totally unscientific guide to the people, policies, and issues that matter most in November 2026

BY THE NUMBERS

23,112,854

The number of registered California voters as of April 2026.

2 miles

The length of the disputed stretch of Upper Great Highway that San Franciscans voted to close for the Sunset Dunes park in 2024, and which they will now vote on to reopen in 2026 with Prop G.

39 years

The amount of time Nancy Pelosi has represented San Francisco in Congress.

$130 million

Estimated amount Pelosi made in the stock market during her tenure.

5%

The percentage of net worth, excluding real estate, the so-called Billionaire Tax would levy on residents owning assets over $1,000,000,000 to fund state healthcare programs, food assistance programs, and public education.

15 minutes

The time it would take to walk from the California side of North Lake Tahoe to Sergey Brin's $42 million home in Nevada that he bought in 2025, allegedly in preparation for the Billionaire Tax.

DISTRICT 8 SF SUPERVISOR

Gary McCoy
Michael Nguyen
Darshini Patel
Manny Yekutiel

Consider this the most dramatic supervisor race in 2026. Manny Yekutiel might've run away with this given his name recognition and glad-handing of literally every entity with political influence, but a sexual assault allegation made against him has shaken everything up. Gary McCoy now has the moral high ground, and may be a default choice for former members of Yekutiel Nation. Darshini Patel is the underdog, despite her experience with the Obama administration and in policymaking. So is Michael Nguyen, a lawyer and elected member of the local Democratic Party who has one heck of an alter ego: the glamorous drag queen Juicy Liu.



Vote for McCoy

If Nancy Pelosi's endorsement sways you.



Vote for Nguyen

If you want Juicy Liu to sing on the Board dais.



Vote for Patel

If you miss Obama.



Vote for Yekutiel

If you can cover your ears when the sexual assault allegation comes up.

DISTRICT 10 SF SUPERVISOR

Dion-Jay Brookter
Theo Ellington
J.R. Eppler
Mike "Trouble" Lin

How to even decipher this smorgasbord of people you've probably never heard of? We could start by pointing out who among the candidates has a major endorsement: Theo Ellington, Dion-Jay Brookter, and J.R. Eppler. The city's progressive wing is throwing its weight behind Brookter, including outgoing D10 Supervisor Shamann Walton and D1's Connie Chan; former supervisors Dean Preston and Aaron Peskin; and former mayor Art Agnos. Ellington has more backers from the center (see: London Breed, D6's Matt Dorsey, and the SF Democratic Party). Eppler, a small biz lawyer, is hoping the Sierra Club could turn the tide. With respect, we're having a tough time distinguishing the rest of the squad, but brownie points for longshot candidate Mike "Trouble" Lin, who appears to have put all his campaign info on a baby-pink Linktree template designed by Olivia Rodrigo.



Vote for Brookter

If you're big on outgoing politicians anointing their heirs.



Vote for Ellington

If you can't help telling everyone that Daniel Lurie has exceeded your expectations.



Vote for Eppler

If you hate the establishment and love the environment.



Vote for Lin

If you like Taylor Swift and a sick nickname.

CONGRESS

Connie Chan vs. Scott Wiener

The campaign to replace Nancy Pelosi in Congress is ruining group chats and dinner parties across California's 11th Congressional District. Whether you choose Scott Wiener or Connie Chan, a Democrat will be going to Washington, but your individual taste in varietal and terroir will decide how well they pair with fellow Dems. Like it oaky and slightly vanilla: Wiener has legs for days. Prefer your pol on the drier side: Chan is so sugar-free, she's practically medicine. Both candidates have deep roots in San Francisco, with Wiener serving as supervisor for District 8 and as state senator and Chan representing District 1. Since Congress is basically an influencer hype house occupied by individual content creators at this point, vote for whoever you want to live in your feed; the loser will still live in your actual city, so choose wisely.



Vote for Chan

If you already miss Nancy.



Vote for Wiener

If you can stand the guy.

SAN FRANCISCO PROPOSITION G, AKA, ALLOWING PRIVATE VEHICLES ON THE GREAT HIGHWAY IN SUNSET DUNES PARK

Have you ever seen *Groundhog Day*, in which Bill Murray repeats the same day over and over until he gets it right? It's funny but frustrating to watch Murray go through all the beats of his day knowing that it will happen again. Which brings us to Prop G, a chance to sunset Sunset Dunes and make the Great Highway great again with weekday car traffic. In 2024, voters passed Prop K, fully closing the road and turning it into a park the next year. Like *Groundhog Day*, in which Bill Murray repeats the same day over and over until he gets it right, we're voting on this again, apparently. Arguments for reopening the road focus on shortened commute times and easier access to the west side of the city; arguments for keeping Sunset Dunes Park tend to focus on reduced pollution and maintaining a new and beloved public space. To us, the proposition and the debates around it feel a lot like *Groundhog Day*, in which Bill Murray repeats the same day over and over until he gets it right.

Vote for Prop G

If you want to vote again on this in two years like the movie Groundhog Day, *in which Bill Murray repeats the same day over and over until he gets it right.*

Vote against Prop G

If you want to vote again on this in two years like the movie Groundhog Day, *in which Bill Murray repeats the same day over and over until he gets it right.*

CALIFORNIA PROPOSITION 40, AKA, "THE BILLIONAIRE TAX"

A onetime 5% tax on the net worth of residents with wealth exceeding $1 billion, Prop 40 is, depending on your politics and whether or not you employ a family office, the first Molotov cocktail in the class war or a good way to raise nearly $100 billion for the state. Before it even made it to the ballot box, Prop 40 has resulted in a statewide "billionaire drain," sending a handful of very wealthy individuals to the welcome climes of Texas and Florida.

Vote for Prop 40

If you still have your Bernie 2016 lawn sign.

Vote against Prop 40

If you plan on spending more than 270 days this year at your Atherton estate, rather than the Big Island villa, Deer Valley ski chalet, or pied-à-terre in the Sixth Arrondissement.

CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR

Xavier Becerra vs. Steve Hilton

Arguably the biggest and least interesting election is for governor. This vote will decide who will replace Gavin Newsom as either the Hand of the President or a thorn in his side. Not included in this vote is who will be the most handsome man in the state: Newsom will continue to serve in that capacity.

Your choices are Xavier Becerra, who previously served as the state's attorney general and as US secretary of health and human services under Joe Biden, and Steve Hilton, who married someone successful and moved to California in 2012. (OK, fine: Hilton was a director of strategy for British Prime Minister David Cameron and has appeared on television many times.) Hilton is running on a platform he calls Califordable, which promises to save taxpayers money by selling several letters from "California" and "affordable." Having grown up in Sacramento, Becerra has the advantage of actually being willing to live in the state capital.



Vote for Becerra

If you want more housing and to make Donald Trump angry.



Vote for Hilton

If you want to own the libs.

Tech

Founders from Down Under

Hyped up by AI and their own big ambitions, waves of charmingly-accented Australians are making a splash in San Francisco

By Cydney Hayes

Ben Kennedy first visited San Francisco in 2022.

At the time, Kennedy was 22 years old and living in Sydney, where he had just graduated from college with a degree in entrepreneurial studies. Struggling to get traction for his first startup, he took the advice of one of his professors and made a plan to spend a few months in the Bay, to see what its storied tech ecosystem had to offer.

It was everything he wanted and more.

"I found this sense of belonging I don't think I had felt in my life," recalled Kennedy, now 27. The AI boom was just beginning, and for the first time, he found himself surrounded by other young founders as energetic and ambitious as he was. New ideas were abundant. So was venture capital. Investors and insiders, ever-elusive to him in Australia, were now just a house party away. Everyone was dreaming big, and those dreams seemed genuinely achievable.

Compared to Sydney's tech scene, Kennedy said, San Francisco was like "playing in the fucking Premier League."

Kennedy now runs his current startup, Gecko, an AI platform for rental businesses, from a hacker house in Polk Gulch. He's lived there full-time since 2024, which makes him, to borrow a term from technology analysts, an early adopter of a growing trend: The influx of Australian founders settling in San Francisco who have traded the beautiful beaches and enviable work-life balance of Oz for the frigid summers and glorious grind of the Bay Area.

Data related to this influx is difficult to measure since not every Australian who has joined the local startup scene arrives in the same way. Some use the ESTA program, a short-term visa waiver, to try out the city before moving here for good. Others get O-1 visas or win the H-1B lottery. For several years now, the vast majority of Aussies entering the American workforce have come on the E-3 visa, an indefinitely extendable, two-year work visa available only to Australians, according to State Department data.

Regardless, one thing is clear: "There are a lot more Australians that are here now," said Sunil Joshi, the SF director for Landing Pads, a startup support program run by the Australian Trade and Investment Commission, or Austrade.

Austrade runs Landing Pads in Southeast Asia, the UK, and the US. The one US-based Landing Pad operates out of a co-working office in San Francisco, in a building in the Financial District that also houses the Australian Consulate. (It also houses the *Gazetteer SF* newsroom.) When the program launched in 2016, the spaces mainly offered Australian tech founders a turnkey office.

In 2020, Austrade added programming like online bootcamps on sales and fundraising to help the founders break into global markets. The idea, Joshi said, is that any prosperity built abroad will "naturally go back to Australia, and more people will be hired at home base."

According to Joshi, Sydney and Melbourne have healthy tech industries, led by big Australian companies like Canva and Atlassian. But for Australia's most ambitious young founders, the pull of San Francisco's AI gold rush is hard to resist. "I've lost count of the amount of Australians who have gone home over the last few years and come back," Joshi said. "They have that FOMO. They want to be back where the center is and where things are happening."



Five out of eight team leads at Superpower are Australian. Back row: Adam Small, Ajay Prakash, Max Marchione, Maulik Shah, Prahbat Dhar. Front row: Manoj Arachige, Hannah Ahn, Shaun Miller.

PHOTO BY MEGAN GOETZ

Matt Boustred is the co-founder of Prompt Cowboy, an AI prompt generator. He arrived in San Francisco from Sydney in mid-July of this year and immediately set up shop at the Landing Pad.

Boustred agreed that the AI is the primary force bringing waves of Aussies crossing the Pacific, but he speculated it goes deeper than that. "There's a change happening in the psyche of the Australian startup ecosystem," he said.

"Traditionally, Australia has been very comfortable. It's been called The Lucky Country. It depended on mining, banking, very old industries," Boustred explained. "Now, there's a younger generation that's looking at how we've been sitting on our laurels, and thinking we actually need to change and invest in the startup ecosystem and sort of give people permission to be ambitious."

> **"It's not even a question. If you're ambitious and want to do great things, you need to be in the US."**
>
> MAX MARCHIONE,
> *co-founder and CEO of Superpower*

"Tall poppy syndrome" is a phrase that comes up a lot in the Australian startup community. It refers to the idea that, in Australia's more collectivist culture, rising above the rest is more of an aberration than an achievement. "Basically, if you're successful, people will try to beat you down," said Annie Liao, a 25-year-old AI founder and moderator of a WhatsApp group named "Aussies in SF" that has more than 500 members.

Back home, there is "a bit of social stigma around failure, around taking a risk and having it not work out," Liao said. But in America, ambition is seen as a virtue. That's freeing to Australian founders. "In SF, failure is, like, rewarded. Even if you start a startup and it doesn't work out, it's still chill," she said.

She described the Australian expat community as generally friendly, supportive, and, despite their big ambitions, very humble. Liao said there's no one bar where Aussies congregate. Kennedy and Joshi both count Balboa Cafe as a favorite spot, and in June, Danny Coyle's on Haight Street was overrun with tech-y Aussies for the Australia-Turkey World Cup game. But in general, several founders told me, the scene converges at park hangs in Golden Gate Park and house parties, often at hacker houses in Hayes Valley, where things can be a bit more intimate. These days, the hosts are often notable Australians in the AI industry, many of whom work at Anthropic, which saw one of the biggest expansions of E-3 sponsorship among American employers in 2026. Sholto Douglas, one of Anthropic's lead researchers, is known to host Australia Day parties, Kennedy said, and Liao recalled a series of waffle brunches hosted by Tobin South, also a researcher at Anthropic, in the backyard of his "semi-Australian hacker house."

To outsiders, the guest lists at these sorts of gatherings can look like roundups of AI power brokers, but Liao said the vibes remain down-to-earth, "bubbly," and "happy."

"Everyone is just chilling and talking not about work," she said.

Liao has hopped between Sydney and San Francisco for about three years, but she's noticed the Australian wave gaining momentum over the past year. Like Joshi, she attributed it to FOMO around AI, as well as to the success of a few pioneering Aussies who have "paved the way" for other young founders from down under.

One of them is Max Marchione, the 26-year-old co-founder and CEO of Superpower, a San Francisco-based personal health and longevity platform.

Earlier this year, Superpower raised a $30 million Series A round funded in part by celebrities like Vanessa Hudgens, Steve Aoki, and Logan Paul. The funding round brought its total valuation to $432 million. Marchione himself has become a personality in the biohacking world: His Andrew Huberman-esque attitude toward optimizing the human body has captured the attention of millions online and coverage by the Australian and American press. Earlier this year, *Business Insider* called Marchione "a peptide poster child" for how he extols the gray-market drugs on X. In August, Marchione told the podcaster Jayden Clark (a fellow Aussie and a friend of many Superpower employees) that height "will be solvable…potentially in the next 15 years" via un-fusing growth plates and taking growth hormones.

"People joke about the Australian mafia," Marchione told me, "but I think there's actually far less of an actual mafia, or, like, allegiance among Australians in the Bay than I would like."

Ideally, Marchione said, the Australian founder community would operate under "an implicit agreement to help each other," elaborating that, "The idea would be, like, if I hear someone's Australian, I will go increasingly out of my way to help and support them."

In January, Marchione stated publicly that he will invest in any Australian founder who relocates to San Francisco to run their startup without even vetting their product. Only partly is this out of patriotism; mostly, he thinks those founders have already proven themselves. "If an Australian decides to move to the US for work, it's a pretty good selecting function for who's the most hardcore of the lot," Marchione said.

About a year ago, Superpower opened a Sydney office but is now in the process of shutting it down. Of the ten employees hired there, almost all have moved to San Francisco, Marchione said. (Three still work remotely from Sydney, but Marchione said they are not making any new Sydney hires. One person left voluntarily due to what Marchione called a "mismatch in engineering values.")

"Australia is seeing a bit of a brain drain," said Hannah Ahn, Superpower's 24-year-old head of design. To Marchione, the reason is obvious: "No matter what the Australian tech scene did, they wouldn't be able to retain talent, short of radical, *radical* policy."

That might mean, say, changes in regulations or significant tax incentives for founders. Marchione doesn't see that happening any time soon, and even if it did, he doesn't think it would be enough to keep Australia's tallest poppies down. San Francisco's tech industry is too sophisticated to replicate in Australia.

"It's not even a question," Marchione said. "If you're ambitious and want to do great things, you need to be in the US."

Kennedy, the Gecko co-founder, has been here on his E-3 visa since 2024 and has no plans to leave, but he says that San Francisco is not for everyone. Over the past two years, he has talked to more than 100 Australian founders about the pros and cons of making the jump.

Late last year, he compiled his insights into a LinkedIn blog titled, "EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MOVING FROM AUSTRALIA TO SF."

He said that he wants it to serve as a resource for Bay-curious Aussies wondering where to stay, who to connect with, and how to properly network. (His tip for that last one: "Australians have an excellent reputation here…don't fuck it up. Don't be transactional. Don't clout chase.")

Sitting on the living room couch of his Polk Street hacker house, Kennedy also offered another bit of learning as an Australian in San Francisco: "It's definitely easier to sell when you're actually over here," he said. Not only are you in the right time zone, but "the Australian accent actually goes a pretty long way." ◉

INTO THE GARRYVERSE

Y Combinator president and CEO Garry Tan has spent years (and hundreds of thousands of dollars) spinning a web connecting tech, politics, and money, placing himself at the center

By Eddie Kim

In June, a few hundred people gathered inside Y Combinator's 60,000-square-foot warehouse at Pier 70, a handsome space framed in floor-to-ceiling windows with steel trusses on the ceiling. The hulking remains of an industrial air compressor, a throwback to the building's shipbuilding past, rises from the center of the venue, signaling to visitors that this is a Place Where Big Things are Built.

The crowd had assembled that afternoon to see Garry Tan, Y Combinator's president and CEO, interviewing Governor Gavin Newsom. This was not a Y Combinator event. Rather, it was for Garry's List, the political nonprofit-cum-blog Tan launched in February as a shiny new vehicle for his activism. Tickets cost $50 for the standing-room-only section, the money serving as a contribution to Garry's List Action, a PAC that functions as Tan's first real foray into institutional campaign funding. (I paid to attend like everyone else.)

Tan, 45, has built a cult of personality, not just because of his influence in the VC and startup world, but for his pugnacious approach to politics. His acolytes are often young founders of would-be unicorns, many new to San Francisco. To them, Tan is like a big brother or a resident advisor. In April 2025, a tech founder was attacked by someone wielding a pipe, prompting one X user to ask Tan "how can we bring justice here?"

Writing about the incident, *The San Francisco Standard* dubbed Tan "the Dork Knight," a sobriquet Tan liked so much he briefly made it his X handle. But Tan is no tortured figure driven to revenge like Bruce Wayne. Looking at Garry's List and Tan's web of influence brings to mind a different superhero: young Peter Parker as the friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, naive but bold, sailing clumsily through the city with an eager cockiness. Reading Garry's List for the last six months, it's possible to see Tan swinging (sometimes wildly) from one thing to another, briefly sticking to topics before peeling free, always, always spinning.

In person, Tan is small in stature, his face framed by simple black glasses and a taper cut. A former coder who worked for companies including Palantir (he designed their logo), Tan went on to found VC firm Initialized Capital before joining YC in 2023 as its head, a job previously held by Sam Altman. He is a son of Fremont, the site of his self-mythologized upbringing as an immigrant kid who got a job making webpages at 14 so he could help his parents buy their first home.

Despite his unassuming presence in real life, Tan's online persona is swashbuckling. On X he's a relentless gadfly and protector of San Francisco's "golden goose," an amorphous term he uses to describe the tech-driven prosperity he thinks can only thrive under "meritocracy" and "law and order." In Tan's view, restrictive guardrails and progressive activism are readying to kill the bird.

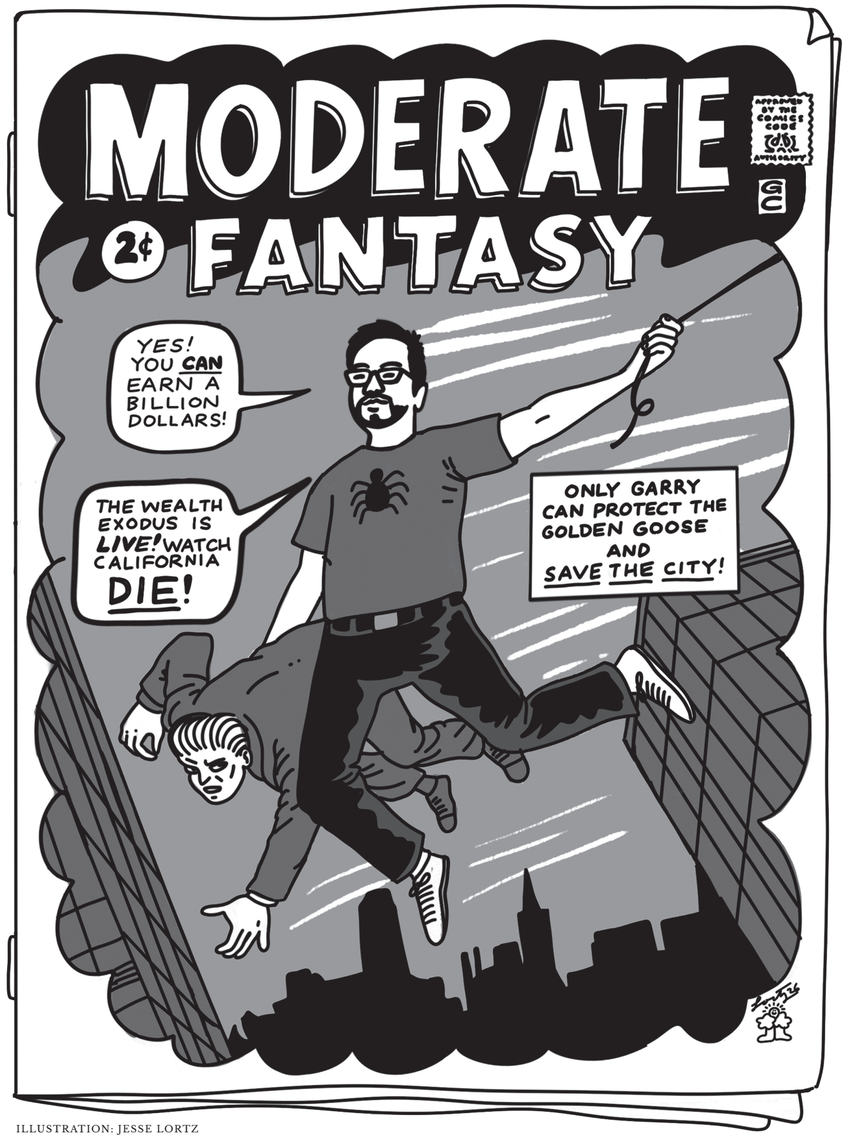


ILLUSTRATION: JESSE LORTZ

How Tan wants to guard the goose has crystallized in the last five years. He advocates for centrist policies, replacing progressive members of school boards, ousting left-wing legislators, doubling down on the tech economy, and rejecting local wealth taxes. He has spent hundreds of thousands of his own dollars at the city, state, and federal level to affect policy, beginning with his $100,000 contribution to the 2021 recall of progressive district attorney Chesa Boudin. This year, the PAC sponsored efforts to block Prop D, the city's "Overpaid CEO" tax that failed to pass in the June election.

More than an X super user, Tan wants to be an avatar of what he repeatedly calls "common sense" politics in San Francisco. He's a fan of Newsom generally, but doesn't shy from criticism: As recently as February, Tan posted on X: "California spends $150B more per year than 6 years ago, but what do we have to show for it?"

Which is why I expected more of a battle between him and Newsom. I would wager attendees, who ran the gamut from city politicos to Silicon Valley heavies, were expecting that, too. Otherwise, why would such a crowd show up? (It couldn't be for the catering: The crowns of chicken skewers were about as cold as the free beers in the adjacent fridge.)

Many of the biggest names, however, didn't show despite their reserved front row seats: Ripple's Chris Larsen; Marco DeGeorge, owner of athleisure brand Alo Yoga; and Akash Jain, Palantir USG's CTO and president. Mostly, the audience was made up of junior executives in cheap suits, backpack-toting coders, Europeans in slim-fit shirts, techfluencers with designer bags, and a few guys who looked more IT than AI.

The big players didn't miss much: Tan let Newsom dominate the conversation, the governor frequently speaking for several uninterrupted minutes while Tan nodded along. The few times Tan did interject, he went soft as silk, unwilling to unsheathe the sharp rhetoric he wields online.

One such moment came in the middle of the interview, when Newsom brought up Big Tech. Tan loves a billionaire, but despite his centimillions and YC's status as probably the most famous tech incubator in the world, he played the role of King of the Underdogs, celebrating "Little Tech," aka... startups.

Tan invoked Elon Musk, half-joking that "Elon wouldn't be able to be Elon" if he focused on creating jobs — a turn of phrase that sounded a lot like Tan glossing over Musk's extremism for the fans in the room.

The vibe seemed to shift. Newsom leaned in: "That goes into a deeper conversation," he said. "You know, think about capitalism. We're all talking about capitalism. The issue of Big Tech, we, you, all of you —"

"You're looking at Little Tech here," Tan interrupted with a smile.

"Yeah, little tech," Newsom responded. You could practically hear his eyes rolling amid the scant laughter in the crowd. Tan couldn't help but grimace, if subtly. The slight had cut the king.

Looking at Garry's List, one gets the sense that Tan wants to say his piece without interrogation. The site is an impressively robust enterprise that presents Tan's ideology and media strategy, but spending time with it, his signature righteous indignation begins to grate. A steady stream of op-eds and articles broadcast Tan's aggrieved views on, well, everything: data center critics (anti), Zohran Mamdani (anti), Daniel Lurie (pro), YIMBY reforms (pro), and fast food business models (sort of mixed!)



Compared to his swashbuckling persona on X, Garry Tan comes across as unassuming in person.

Y COMBINATOR

Garry's List is also a 501(c)4 nonprofit for political funding, not unlike efforts made by groups like GrowSF or the now-defunct TogetherSF, blending commentary and advocacy with political fundraising. For a time, Tan served as a GrowSF board member and benefactor (he's given more than $50,000 to the group), but he stepped down on January 1, 2025, stressing that he remains a "supporter and friend."

The difference between an organization like GrowSF and Garry's List is that the latter's output is not the result of a faceless coalition. It's all about the guy whose name is on the site. Garry's List publishes hundreds of the pieces under Tan's byline, making the site something of a miniature universe with Garry Tan at its center.

Garry's List is run by people who've been in Tan's orbit for some time. One of Tan's cofounders is Shaudi Fulp, a former lobbyist in Sacramento best known for helping to push California politics to the center. Tan's right-hand man is Forrest Liu, a Stop Asian Hate activist who set up a Chinatown patrol during the pandemic and blames progressives (including "activist judges") for being soft on criminals. Tan also quietly poached Dion Lim, the longtime reporter and anchor for ABC7, to serve as the chief strategist of his foundation. Lim's coverage of anti-Asian crime drew Tan's attention: He portrayed her as a truth-speaking hero battling what he saw as crime-loving extremists. Garry's List's spokesperson is Sam Singer, a crisis management pitbull who was once described as "the predator's press man" thanks to his work with clients like Chevron. According to Singer, the nonprofit's cash on hand is $220,220.85.

One mystery of Garry's List is how Tan manages to find the time to publish, on average, more than a dozen op-eds and articles a month under Tan's own name, often with dramatic headlines like "The Wealth Exodus Is Live: Watch California Die" and "Yes, You Can Earn a Billion Dollars."

These pieces appear at a clip that would be impressive for a full-time op-ed writer, much less the busy president of a tech accelerator and father of two. One reason for this may be a reliance on generative AI. Excerpts from five articles scanned by three different top-rated AI detectors showed a high likelihood that the copy was written with AI, although most of the content was deemed to include some human writing. *Gazetteer SF* reached out to Tan about this and received a response from Singer, who pushed back on the AI analysis.

In an email, Singer wrote: "Our edge is data. Garry's List processes a volume of primary-source government material, meeting records, filings, budgets, proceedings, that no traditional local newsroom has the capacity to cover. We do use AI as the engine to surface and make sense of all that data in real time."

Singer also wrote that the mission of Garry's List is "taking esoteric documents and making them understandable, with commentary on how they actually affect people. Every output is directed and reviewed by our team — it's a capability we're improving every day."

Whatever the "esoteric documents" he's drawing from are, Tan's targets are the same ones he decried for years on X and his now-dormant YouTube channel: hate crimes against Asians, criminal justice reform, "wokeism" in public schools, billionaire taxes, homelessness nonprofits, and anything standing in the way of new housing in the city. Tan frames these and other issues as existential threats to not just people like him, but all of us. His is a worldview borne from new money wealth crossed with old money attitudes on race, inequality, and social collapse.

Tan sees himself as a classic Democrat, one left behind in the culture war. That may be true, but Tan has shown himself to be comfortable serving as handmaiden to right-wing titans like Musk and Peter Thiel, who was a special guest for a casual fireside chat on political theology in 2024 at an event at Tan's home called "Holy Guacamole." (Tacos and tequila were served.) That same year, Tan had to apologize for telling Aaron Peskin and six fellow progressive SF supervisors to "die slow, motherfuckers," a mask-off moment when his loathing for the "hard left" got the better of him.

Gil Durán, the author of *The Nerd Reich: Silicon Valley Fascism and the War on Democracy*, has followed Tan's machinations for years and told me that Tan is one of a number of Silicon Valley figures who "believe it is their destiny to remake politics in their own image."

"His ambition for power is accompanied by a profound ignorance of history and policy that will end in disaster," Durán said. "He's a big mouth attached to a big bank account."

"Strangely, he calls himself a Democrat while praising Elon Musk, worshipping Peter Thiel, and rarely finding anything negative to say about Trump's MAGA fascism," Durán continued. "Without the moneybags, he'd be laughed out of town."

I wanted to discuss this and my memory of him claiming he was a "lefty" in an old X exchange with me a few years ago. Tan didn't respond to repeated requests for a one-on-one talk, but through Singer, he did answer a single question: What about Garry's List has made him most proud?

"What I'm most proud of is that Garry's List is bringing together diverse voices and engaging the little tech community in ways that haven't been done before. We're democratizing the tools that let our members find others in their community who share their priorities, and giving them a way to channel that energy into action," Tan stated.

"A big part of that is taking esoteric documents and proceedings and making them genuinely understandable. This is all a work in progress, and we're constantly iterating and improving."

Not only does this statement reiterate Singer's invocation of "esoteric documents," but the response sounded like something whipped up on Claude. If these issues are so important to him — and he's so proud of "bringing together diverse voices" — why was he sending me buzzword slop?

After years of reading him (and occasionally squabbling with him) on X, when I finally found myself in the same room as Tan, I was left with a different question: Where was the Dork Knight?

What I witnessed was a stump speech by the governor, with Tan more or less serving as the stump. Newsom — no one's idea of a spontaneous or even very human human — came off as much spikier and livelier than his would-be interrogator. At one point, Newsom addressed Tan's critique of him in the past and offered an olive branch wrapped in thorns: He apologized for attacking success. "Not a good look, man. Can't begrudge your success."

Then, in classic non-apology form, Newsom continued with his point.

"But, it is about growth and inclusion," he said, looking into the crowd as if lecturing schoolchildren. "And we got to get the inclusion part right."

"That sounds like the California republic I know," Tan responded with a tight-lipped smile.

As the session wrapped, the crowd swarmed Newsom, iPhones on selfie mode; Tan was ushered in the opposite direction. Finally, I saw my chance for a chat with a man I've been observing for years.

When I introduced myself, Tan nodded at me as we mimicked a (brief) walk-and-talk straight out of an Aaron Sorkin script.

"How come you were so soft on the governor?" I asked.

Tan just shrugged. "I had to," he said.

Then he disappeared into a nondescript doorway, back into the Garryverse where I was definitely not welcome.

Plumbing the depths of the Mission's C.G. Jung Institute, where symbols are interpreted and archetypes are interrogated

JUNG PEOPLE THESE DAYS

By Joel Rosenblatt



"There are things that can't be fully understood. Jung wanted to go toward those things."

MICHAEL GRUBB

The C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco appears like something out of a dream. Occupying a former Anna's Linens store on a bustling section of Mission Street near the corner of 22nd Street, its exterior reveals the building's purpose, and the secrets it contains, discreetly. It certainly isn't hiding, with its unusual columned facade of textured, glazed brick tile in hues of terre vert, but then it's also holding something back, asking for passersby to look again — and closer.

A pattern of slight, white arrows running through the green draws you inside. Enter and you will find practitioners and clients of analytical psychology rooted in the teachings of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961). A Swiss psychologist who started as a protégé to Sigmund Freud, Jung went on to develop his own pathways to understanding the self. Whether you know it or not, our speech is rich with words and ideas first postulated by Jung or popularized by his adherents: introvert, extrovert, synchronicity, and the idea of the collective unconscious all trace back to his writing.

The Institute's facade was designed by visual artist Amy Trachtenberg in consultation with analysts at the Institute. She used a combination of high-gloss and matte brick tiles manufactured by Fireclay Tile, based in Salinas, California. At Trachtenberg's direction, the company agreed to apply varying amounts of glaze to reflect different degrees of light and color.

Trachtenberg titled the facade *Verdigris*, after the green pigment resulting from copper oxidation. As Trachtenberg describes the process, it's a metamorphosis. "The Jungians were very interested in both the idea of metamorphosis for their own practice, and the fact that green is widely considered a healing tone," she said.

Her design also met a more practical requirement: spray paint easily washes off the tiles. The C.G. Jung Institute may be dedicated to plumbing the depths of human consciousness, but it lives next to a Skechers store.

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The nonprofit Jung Institute of San Francisco grew out of San Francisco's Medical Society for Analytical Psychology, founded in 1943, and was originally located in a mansion at 2040 Gough Street, at the top of Pacific Heights. In 2018, the organization purchased and completely renovated the building at 2610 Mission Street for about $16 million.

To buy it, the Institute took out a loan, raised money from donors and its member analysts, and sold the Gough Street mansion for about $6 million to pay off the debt, according to Steve Hargis-Bullen, the Institute's administrative director. He declined to name the Institute's donors, saying they wish to remain anonymous. The Institute runs on an endowment fed by donors large and small. A few years ago, Hargis-Bullen said, one such donor was so impressed by members' writings that he left the Institute millions of dollars.

The Institute's Mission location, which opened in 2022, also serves the purpose of offering more affordable therapy to a broader demographic.

"When we bought the building here, we were aware that we were moving from Eurocentric, millionaired Pacific Heights," Hargis-Bullen said. Member analysts see clients at their own offices, while clinicians-in-training offer therapy at the Institute on a sliding scale, depending on financial need, from $35 to $120 for a 50-minute session once per week.

Entering the Institute from the rush of Mission Street, the interior feels spacious and spare. Its tan-painted walls, evocative of giant canvases or sea-washed beach sand, make it feel even bigger.

Visitors are greeted by a framed photograph of Jung from 1955. His balding head is tilted slightly downward, his bespectacled eyes looking directly at the viewer in what can only be described as a Kubrick stare. His expression is placid, yet his forehead is etched with worry lines. Gazing into it, it's not hard to feel it gazing into you.

This sentry hangs at the start of a two-story curving wall constructed as a tribute to Bollingen Tower, the stone structure Jung built on the shore of Lake Zurich in 1923. On the other side of the wall is a cavernous seminar room.

David Trachtenberg, the architect who oversaw the renovation and a longtime collaborator with his sister, Amy, said his biggest challenge was creating a source of natural light. The curved wall draws visitors to his solution: a three-story light well. As David explained, it "keeps revealing itself to you as you walk into the building."

On one of my half-dozen visits to the Institute, I met Gale Lipsyte, who oversees the clinicians-in-training. Lipsyte, who has been a practicing therapist for 40 years, led me down two flights of stairs to an atrium on the basement level, where giant leaves of *monstera deliciosa*, *philodendron gloriosum*, and schefflera plants, surrounded at their bases by round stones, reach for the skylight two levels above.



Above: The C.G. Jung Institute of San Francisco in the Mission shows an unusual columned facade of textured, glazed brick tile in hues of terre vert.

Top: A wall of figurines used for a therapeutic practice called sandplay.

PHOTOS BY TÂM VŨ / CATCHLIGHT LOCAL FOR GAZETTEER SF

I followed Lipsyte as she disappeared behind a plain, tan-colored curtain into one of six nearly identical soundproof rooms, where the clinicians-in-training see clients five days a week, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Each room resembles a decent-sized study.

Lipsyte carefully adjusted the lights to a level that was calming but not too dark.

As we sat across from each other in comfortable tan leather chairs, I couldn't help but feel like a client. Next to me, I was surprised to find shelves containing hundreds of figurines: fairies, soldiers, an assortment of animals, and archetypal figures like Buddha and Batman.

When I asked Lypsyte to explain what takes place in the rooms, she asked me if anything stood out. It was a playful, open-ended inquiry, but I was the one who was supposed to be asking the questions. I played along, noting the hundreds of extraordinary figures.

She quickly hit me with a follow-up: "Do you alight on any? Are you drawn to any particular figure?"

I didn't immediately say so, but her question triggered a deep-seated unease stemming from my childhood. My mom, a now-retired psychotherapist who studied Jung, was particularly drawn to his practice of dream analysis. When I was young, she once asked me about my dreams. It was a line of questioning I found invasive and improper, and I told her so. Even if I wasn't sure what my dreams meant, I sure as hell didn't want my mom interpreting them for me.

With this connection coursing through my consciousness, I worried what Lipsyte might surmise from my choice. I told her I liked the figures of the big cats, pointing to one that looked like a mountain lion. Which was true enough, but also felt like a safe pick.

Lipsyte assured me that she wasn't trying to psychoanalyze me, but, rather, wanted to give me a glimpse of the process. When I asked, half-seriously, if she had any helpful analysis as to why I picked the mountain lion she again turned the tables, asking me what it was about the cat that I found appealing. With some reticence, I noted the animal's qualities of power, stealth, craftiness.

Yes… she said, pausing, apparently wanting more detail.

Athleticism, speed, secrecy, I offered.

"Are those qualities that you sort of…" Lipsyte began to ask.

"Value?" I said, finishing her question.

"Yes," she said, laughing.

As I thought about it, I told her, the qualities I identified are useful to a journalist. When she asked if I ever dreamed about mountain lions, I said, truthfully, that I didn't recall. I went on to explain my mom's Jungian background, and her interest in my dreams. I asked Lipsyte if she thought it was inappropriate that my mom had inquired about my dreams.

"I don't think it's inappropriate, but I think it's incredibly healthy that you might want to say, 'Hey, I'm not sure I want to divulge this, I want something for myself here,'" she said.

Lipsyte went on to say it was understandable that I'd want to maintain my distance from my mom, and "grow and individuate in my own space," like a cat, she added: powerful, stealthy, "a little bit wary."





Clinic director Gale Lipsyte and library manager Miranda Lindelow pose for portraits.

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My attention turned to another unusual feature in the room: a tray of fine, clean sand, which I somehow didn't previously notice. Lipsyte pushed some aside to reveal a light blue bottom of the tray, creating the impression of a pond or lake. Lipsyte explained that the archetypal figurines occupy the top shelf. (Shiva, Shakti, and Jesus were up there with Buddha and Batman). In descending order, each shelf represented humans, animals, and invertebrates. Clients, if they're interested, place the figurines in the sand to "make a little world, and dynamically move it around," she explained.

Sandplay therapy, I learned, is not strictly Jungian. Instead, it is one of a number of ways in which Jungian therapists have used his concepts to create new therapeutic approaches to get beneath the rational thinking we use in our daily lives.

The goal, Lipsyte explained, is for people to uncover their potential and pursue a richer, more spacious, and meaningful life. By learning to not react in "such a difficult and constricted way," she explained, clients can learn to be more responsive in relationships and better able to contextualize their lives. "Instead of perfection, we're really sort of looking for wholeness," she said.

An important tenant of Jungian analysis is learning to hold the "tension of opposites," Lipsyte added.

"So instead of the sort of the black and white, and polarity thinking — do I do this, do I do that, do I make a list of pros and cons, and how do I go about doing that — we really want people to learn to be able to hold uncertainty, and not knowing," Lipsyte said. "Out of that may come generative possibilities you might never have thought about."

The Institute is also home to the Archive for Research in Archetypal Symbolism, which contains tens of thousands of curated, historical images from around the world. A separate specialized library is situated in the other half of the building's bottom floor. On multiple visits, I found it to be perfectly quiet, except for the occasional deep hum of BART trains racing underneath Mission Street.

The library's books are divided into sections devoted to analytical, or Jungian, psychology, and general psychology, as well as subjects that were important to Jung: mythology, folklore, philosophy, religion, alchemy, shamanism, astrology, and divination. It has decks of tarot cards, and copies of the *I Ching*.

Miranda Lindelow, the Institute's library manager, showed me a copy of *The Red Book*, Jung's series of meditations and artwork that detail an often tortured, 16-year odyssey of his soul. The controversial tome was fiercely guarded by Jung's family, and remained locked in a Swiss vault for 23 years before it was finally reprinted in 2009.

Before my visit, Lindelow told me the Institute has handwritten letters from Jung that I was keen to examine. As I interviewed people at the Institute, and unearthed their dedication to Jung's teachings, I wanted to see the man's own handwriting, wondering if his missives might transmit even a morsel of the knowledge generations of therapists, shamans, and searchers have sought.

In her office, Lindelow unlocked a door to a long room that runs behind one of the library walls and contains rare and precious writings kept separate from the traditional books. At the end of it was a giant black safe where Jung's letters are stored. On this particular day, however, Lindelow couldn't open the safe. The code wasn't working. She pressed the numbers on the unresponsive keypad to show me. Whatever knowledge the letters contained would have to wait.

"With the letters, people always assume that they're going to find a secret, or an answer to some really interesting question, kind of like a dive into his mind," Lindelow told me. "But it's more like, 'Hi, can you pick up my dry cleaning?' Everyday things." In one letter, she said, Jung wrote to a member of a previous iteration of the Institute to politely decline her offer of a dog she wanted to send him.

Lindelow assured me that they were far from the most interesting documents in the room, including some "very rich" volumes of the diaries of Joe Henderson (1903-2007). One of the Institute's founding members, and an analyst, Henderson traveled to Zurich in the 1920s to undergo psychoanalysis with Jung himself. Because Henderson lived and worked so long (he died at 104), his writings serve as a portrait of the Institute.

The archive also contains neatly organized boxes of thousands of photographs. Lindelow grew still and quiet as she leafed through them, as if she was looking at a family album. "I kind of know all of them, through the archive, in a weird way," she said of the people in the photos.

Lindelow paused on an image of a woman standing next to a helicopter, whom she identified as Jane Hollister Wheelwright (1905-2004), an heir to the Hollister Ranch, which at one point covered more than 200,000 acres along the California coast. Wheelwright also traveled to Switzerland to undergo analysis with Jung and also became an analyst herself, co-founding the organization that would become the Jung Institute of San Francisco. I surmised the helicopter was likely the same one described in a *Los Angeles Times* obituary. A ride in it overlooking the ranch convinced Wheelwright to sell her family's property.

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Back in the main library, Lindelow and I ran into Michael Grubb, who was doing research as part of his goal to get certified as a Jungian analyst.

Grubb had maintained a private psychotherapy practice in the city for 17 years before he set foot inside the Institute. The Institute's training isn't expensive relative to many degrees (it costs about $25,000) but generally takes around eight years of seminars, case work, consultation with an analyst, and study to complete.

I asked Grubb why, if he already had an established practice, he wanted to get certified as a Jungian analyst.

"It's not just about being good at something, it's about being really as deep as possible with people," Grubb said. "I've experienced it myself, right, being in Jungian analysis myself. There's a personal transformation that's possible, to be most fully who you really are, and who you really can be. That's what this is about."

During his career and after his death, Jung was frequently branded an occultist, a charlatan, and a con artist. I asked Grubb about the reverence for Jung at this institute bearing his name. Is there a risk that all of this was bordering on cult of personality or idolatry? Jung is not regarded by anyone at the Institute as a guru, Grubb said. He distinguished himself from some analysts, who he jokingly referred to as "fundamentalists," who prefer to stick to a close reading of Jung's writings. (It was those members who advocated for the picture of Jung at the building's entry.)

Nonetheless, Grubb said, there is a mysticism to Jung's work. Freud's accusation that Jung was a mystic — an accusation that led to the two men's falling out — was actually a characterization that Jung didn't shy away from, according to Grubb.

"There are things that can't be fully understood," Grubb explained. "Jung wanted to go toward those things."

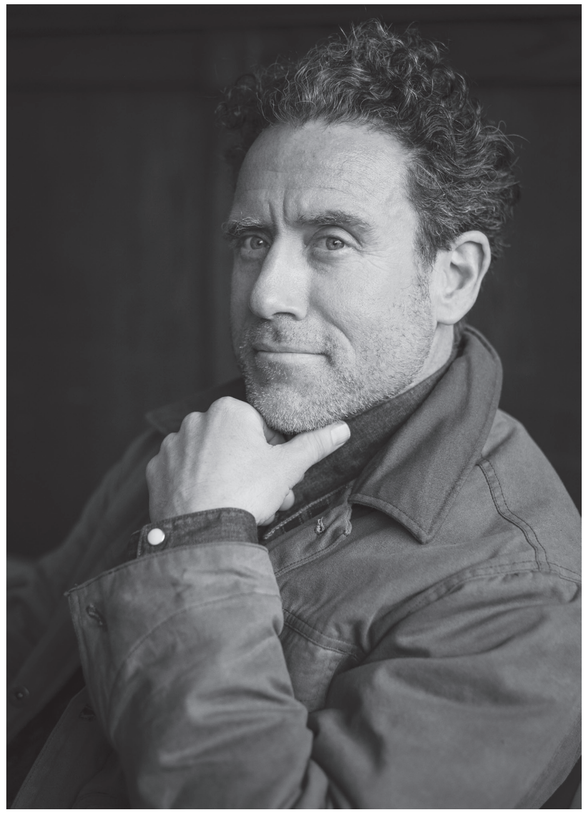
"Everything doesn't have to be rational," he said. "There's a lot that's really valuable in life that's not."

Peter Zottolo is

THE BEST DRESSED ELECTRICIAN IN SAN FRANCISCO

The stylish Marina resident known to his 100K followers as @urbancomposition understands the power of alternating currents and alternating patterns

By Joshua Bote



Menswear enthusiast Peter Zottolo would like to retire from being an electrician and commit to fashion full time. Until then, he'll enjoy being the best-dressed electrician in town.

XIMENA NATERA / CATCHLIGHT LOCAL FOR GAZETTEER SF

Here is Peter Zottolo standing in the rain outside Peet's on Chestnut Street not far from his home in the Marina, the neighborhood where he's lived for 15 years. He is hard to miss.

Zottolo has silvery curls and is cradling his motorcycle helmet in the crook of his arm, his worn-in Canadian tuxedo look (the jacket is from Line of Trade; the pants are from Buck Mason) perfectly complementing his worn-in appearance. At a glance, his all-American style and rugged masculinity call to mind Robert Redford in his prime.

Zottolo radiates the sort of effortless cool that suggests the sort of experience that comes from life, not a curated Instagram moodboard. As we sit down to chat, I comment on his rugged look.

He smiles sheepishly. "It's just how I get to and from work," he says.

Zottolo, 50, has been an electrician for over a decade, working everywhere from the Transamerica Pyramid and Salesforce Tower, to the Chinatown-Rose Pak Muni Station. A proud member of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 6, he currently serves as an electrician for the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission, a job he's held for just over two years.

It's good, steady work, but being an electrician is just his day job. Zottolo's calling, even if he probably wouldn't call it that, is fashion nerd, the kind of guy who obsesses over granular details in his clothing, and lives by a style code that feels both personal and bygone. (He probably wouldn't call himself a fashion luminary, either, even if he is the frequent subject of Instagram moodboards, fan art, and street-style photographers.) He's combined his inspired sartorial choices and his sharp photographic eye into @urbancomposition, where over 100,000 Instagram followers enjoy his immaculate Italian- and Western-inspired looks. With his longtime friend Derek Guy (aka the Menswear Guy), he co-hosts the *Die, Workwear!* podcast.

Unlike other fashion writers and social creators peddling this season's must-have boat-ballet-loafer shoe hybrid or decrying the war crime of skintight, polyester-blend athleisure dress pants, Zottolo is more than the sum of his fits. His life is much more interesting, somehow, than it already looks on Instagram. Zottolo is not just a stylish electrician; he may be the most interesting person in San Francisco.

Born in San Diego into a working-class Italian-American family, Zottolo's upbringing was modest to say the least. His father was a gardener; his grandfather and great-grandfather were fishermen. As a kid, Zottolo watched a lot of old movies, observing the Golden Age's leading men and drawing inspiration from their style and their demeanor. Raised a devout Jehovah's Witness, Zottolo still considers faith a core part of his life and worldview. While living in Oakland in 1997, he met his wife, Angela, at the Kingdom Hall in Berkeley. They married two years later.

After a decade or so bouncing around the tech industry from startup to startup, layoff to layoff, Zottolo was still searching for his purpose. He had already found fulfillment with his faith and his partner; what he needed was a calling.

A friend had told him about the San Francisco Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee's program, sponsored by the IBEW and the San Francisco Chapter of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), the program trains electricians under a traditional apprenticeship and one of the last of its kind in the country.

"I'm not exaggerating, I barely knew how to swing a hammer at that point," he said. "But I liked the idea of working with my hands and working in construction." It also felt like a continuation of his family's legacy working in trades, something passed down like an heirloom watch or a well-worn workshop coat.

So, in his mid-30s, Zottolo became an apprentice electrician. He was nearly twice the age of his contemporaries (they called him apprentice-saurus), but was committed to learning the trade since all of the people he knew who worked blue-collar jobs were still making good money and were still employed.

Around this time, too, is when he started his other apprenticeship in fashion.

To hear Zottolo describe it, it was wholly by accident: He was simply searching for square-toed shoes when he fell into the fashion arcana rabbit hole known as StyleForum.

StyleForum, for the not-terminally-online-in-2010 crowd, is a vintage internet forum full of sartorial devotees evaluating each other's outfits, recommending suitmakers and shoe brands, and debating the merits of Italian versus English tailoring. He had found the forum a few years prior, but this time was different.

Wading through pages and pages devoted to dress shoes on StyleForum, he learned the lingo and what not to do. "There was, 'why you should not wear square-toed shoes' and 'why the classic silhouette is more almond-shaped' and then on Jermyn Street and Savile Row and blah blah blah," he explained. "*Then*, it goes way into the weeds."

In both realms, he was a quick study. After finishing his electrician apprenticeship, he found work at the Salesforce Tower, SFO Terminal 1, and on a few high-rise projects. On the style front, he figured out what works best for him: a mix of Italian-inspired tailoring, heritage workwear, and West Coast casual clothing. In the decade-plus that followed, he's become a journeyman electrician and dresser, earning respect from his peers in both worlds.

In 2013, Zottolo launched his Instagram account as a way to chronicle his own outfits. He shoots all of his photos himself, usually with a tripod and either a Sony or Leica set to burst. Zottolo's photos capture him around Crissy Field, waiting for trains, or taking in the sights in Europe. He gravitates towards props (cameras, typewriters, briefcases, pints of beer, or bottles of wine) and dramatic bits of flair, like scarves and the occasional Stetson. He often looks serious, but sometimes he looks into the camera, a hint of a smile in his eyes.

More than anything, Zottolo comes across in his pictures as a character of sorts: a regular guy doing everyday things while dressed amazingly. He does not come across as a wannabe model or would-be influencer. He can't even imagine how he could. "To do that day in, day out constantly... Like, sometimes a creative idea will come to me, but if I had to think of that every day, I would be tapped out."

As Zottolo's followers have grown (his account has doubled since March), he has moved further into the fashion world. He is currently the American director at Swedish magazine *Plaza Uomo*, and has done brand campaigns for Brooks Brothers, Seiko, Hugo Boss, and Ralph Lauren. Then there's the *Die, Workwear!* podcast, where he and Guy dole out fashion wisdom and history sprinkled with a bit of life guidance.

One day, Zottolo would like to retire from being an electrician and commit to fashion full-time. One dream would be to serve as an in-house consultant or photographer for a brand he admires. Until then, being the best-dressed electrician in San Francisco works for him, despite how improbable that may be.

As a hyphenate, union electrician-style influencer is an unusual one, but not entirely without precedent. In the '90s, Jenny Shimizu was a mechanic and gender-binary-shattering fashion model; before his breakthrough in *Star Wars*, Harrison Ford was better known around Los Angeles as a carpenter (and weed dealer). One reason Zottolo's double life (double-knee pants by day; double-breasted suits by night) works is how at ease he seems in both get-ups. Neither part of his wardrobe feels like a costume: Whatever Zottolo is wearing, he comes across as a man in full.

"I'm fortunate in that I work in construction, but then I'll go out on a date or I'll go to the opera or I'll go camping or I'll go to a fashion show, or I'll go to a religious service," he said. "You can dress according to that occasion. It's almost like an excuse to have a ridiculously large wardrobe."

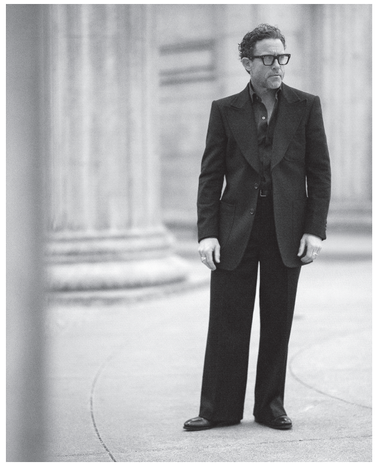
The thing that really makes all of it work is that Zottolo comes across as a gentleman in the most classic sense of the term: he can fix the wiring in your kitchen, but he's just as interested in art and photography. There's an openness about him; the masculinity he embodies isn't hard or cruel.

"He's a true gentleman, not in the socio-economic or performative sense of the term," his friend and co-host Guy wrote in email. it: "He's loving and kind to his wife, puts his friends first, and is considerate of strangers."

Even in our brief encounters, I got a sense of how thoughtfully Zottolo navigates the world. About an hour into our conversation, a woman in a purple puffer jacket came into the coffee shop and interrupted us. "I was wondering who the attractive guy upfront was," she said.

After she left, I asked him if that kind of thing happens a lot.

"Not really," Zottolo said, flashing his full smile. Spoken like a true gentleman.



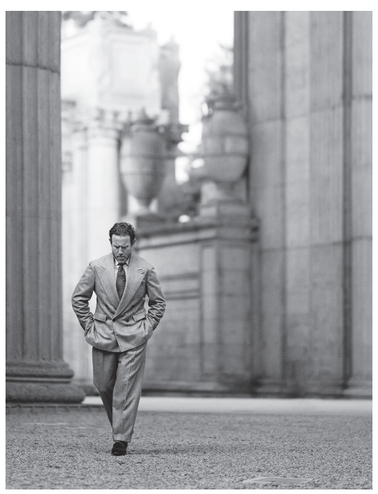








More than anything, Zottolo comes across in his pictures as a character of sorts: a regular guy doing everyday things while dressed amazingly. He does not come across as a wannabe model or would-be influencer. He can't even imagine how he could.





Center: Electrician Peter Zottolo crosses Chesnut Street on a rainy day in San Francisco.

XIMENA NATERA / CATCHLIGHT LOCAL FOR GAZETTEER SF

In surrounding photos posted to Instagram, Zottolo demonstrates his sartorial chops.

INSTAGRAM: @URBANCOMPOSITION

THE JOY AND SADNESS OF Cookbooking

Debbie Berne poured her whole self into her second book. After her death, it's up to her loved ones to share it with the readers

By Olivia Peluso

AT 53, Debbie Berne had designed hundreds of books and covers for everyone from Thich Nhat Hanh to Berkeley Bowl. She'd even written a book about how to design books, but the book she was planning next was a dream project: a visual and historical tribute to her favorite medium, cookbooks.

Rich with photos and meticulous in its research, *Cookbooking: A Fan's Guide* was to examine cookbooks as aesthetic objects and anthropological vessels. Berne sought out titles from the famous to the rare, the practical to the beautiful, lavishing her attention on books such as 1931's *Joy of Cooking*, now considered a bible, to World War II notebooks, "short stapled xeroxes," and hippie pamphlets with line-drawn images.

In September 2025, Berne submitted her final draft of *Cookbooking: A Fan's Guide* to her publisher, Berkeley's independent Hardie Grant. The book would run to over 200 pages long with an index and bibliography.

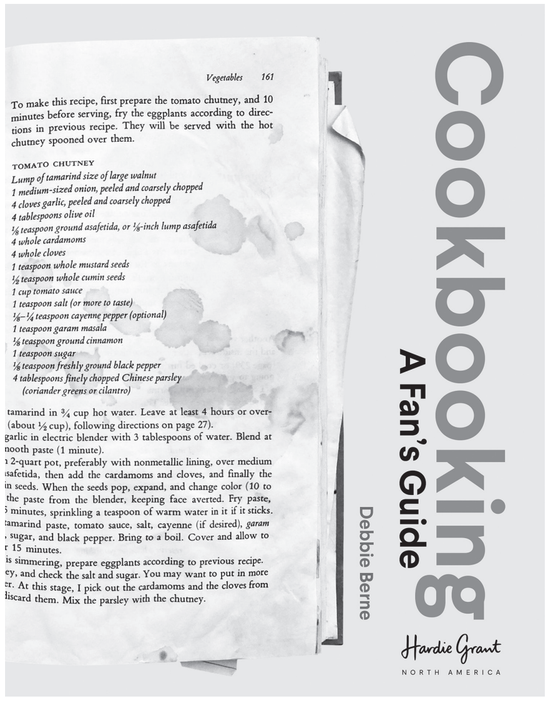
Berne would not live to see *Cookbooking* published. She died a few days short of her 56th birthday on December 24, 2025, after a nearly two-year battle with glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer. Now, in Berne's absence, her husband David Murray, her publishing team, and an army of her loved ones are tasked with bringing *Cookbooking* to the world.

Born in West Orange, New Jersey and raised in West Bloomfield, Michigan, Berne was consumed by books. Throughout her life, whenever she finished reading one, she'd write the title, the author, and the date in lined composition books to keep track. She always knew she'd want to work on books, and after studying art history at the University of Michigan, she landed a job at a publisher as an editorial assistant, eventually teaching herself graphic design.

Murray, who works as a motion graphics designer, met Berne at the University of Michigan. They got together sometime in the '90s after both moving to San Francisco, marrying in 2004. On their first wedding anniversary they welcomed their child, Helvetica, now 21, and decided to move to the East Bay, as Murray said, "like everybody else."

The couple purchased a triplex in Oakland's Bushrod neighborhood with another couple, fellow musicians whom they performed with. Murray plays the fiddle and the banjo; Berne played the banjo as well. With housemate Allegra Yellin on guitar and friend Rachel Kraai on the washtub bass, they performed as the Squirrelly Stringband for about 20 years at gigs and square dances around town. Each family had separate living quarters but shared one large kitchen, living semi-communally and raising their children together for over a decade.

Mealtime was a central pillar of their lives. "There was a lot of cooking going on and a lot of talk about cooking and we had a lot of cookbooks," Murray recalled. He, along with Yellin, were the de facto chefs for the blended family and the friends they'd host at large dinner gatherings. As Berne put in *Cookbooking*, "whoever was there would pull up a chair and dig in."



Rich with photos and meticulous in its research, *Cookbooking: A Fan's Guide* is Debbie Berne's visual and historical tribute to her favorite medium, cookbooks.



Debbie Berne met motion graphics designer David Murray at the University of Michigan in the '90s, and welcomed their child, Helvetica, in 2005.

PHOTO COURTESY DAVID MURRAY

Berne's visual and historical tribute to her favorite medium, cookbooks.

Among the recipes they all enjoyed during that period: Whitney Street Yum Cakes, the household's go-to pancake recipe discovered after years of R&D. "That was always a fun morning, when the yum cakes came out," Murray said.

"One person would be making breakfast for the kids, another parent would be making the lunches for school and someone else would be sitting at the table reading a kids' book to everybody to keep them entertained," he continued. "We were just this big happy family that all cooked and ate together."

Berne was not a chef, but she was fascinated by the creation and sharing of recipes. As she wrote in the introduction to *Cookbooking*, "There's really never a cookbook I open and don't find something interesting within."

During the course of her career, Berne designed books on all subjects, though she's probably best known for her work on a series of "How To" titles from Thiền Buddhist monk Thich Nhat Hanh, published by the Berkeley-based non-profit Parallax Press.

Her passion, though, was cookbooks. She designed the covers and interiors for titles including *The Berkeley Bowl Cookbook* (2018), *The Official Downton Abbey Cookbook* (2019), Anna Voloshyna's *BUDMO!* (2022), and Chay Wike's *The Kitchen Commune* (2024).

She'd tell people that designing them felt like working out a puzzle, trying to incorporate creative and personal elements within a standardized framework. "She loved the challenge of trying to make a large book that has all these parts and get them to fit into a logical format," Murray said. "Every cookbook has its own style and yet, they have to adhere to these certain rigid formatting rules."

After decades of beautifying other people's books, she felt that it was time to make her own. Her first book, *The Design of Books: An Explainer for Authors, Editors, Agents, and Other Curious Readers* was published by the University of Chicago Press in 2024. (Ever the bibliophile, Berne was excited to be published by the same press that put out *The Chicago Manual Style*.)

Even as she was still putting the finishing touches on *The Design of Books*, she was thinking of her next project.

She began shopping her proposal for *Cookbooking* to publishers toward the end of 2023. During that time, she was experiencing what she described as brain fog that she first attributed to menopause. She got Covid in early 2024 and as her brain fog worsened — remembering certain words, especially pronouns, had become difficult for her — Berne and Murray wondered if long Covid was the culprit.

Berne plowed ahead with the project and eventually accepted a deal for *Cookbooking* with Hardie Grant in January 2024. The next week, an MRI revealed that she had a brain tumor.

The Design of Books was to come out the following month and Berne had a launch party planned at Green Apple Books on the Park. Instead of picking out what to wear and choosing a pen to sign books, she was forced to postpone the launch and undergo an operation the following week.

Doctors successfully removed the tumor, though Berne's path to recovery and her ability to finish *Cookbooking* was unclear. Publisher Jenny Wapner encouraged her to take a pause but Berne was eager to get back to the project. On March 14, 2024, a mere six weeks after her brain surgery, Berne was standing in front of a packed house at Green Apple on 9th Avenue for the delayed launch party for *The Design of Books*.

She dove into *Cookbooking* shortly thereafter. What followed was a burst of productivity. In 18 months, she wrote the text, photographed dozens of vintage cookbooks, and designed *Cookbooking*.

She wrote at home most mornings and would head to one of several different libraries, including the Fong Yun Wah Rare Book Room at UC Berkeley or at Omnivore Books in San Francisco to research cookbooks. She'd be on the phone with cookbook stores across the country to discuss what rare, arcane, and precious titles they had hiding in plain sight and routinely scoured eBay. The chemotherapy sometimes brought on waves of fatigue that required rest, but Berne always got up and back at it.

Berne never let her illness stop her, nor did she keep it a secret. During her treatment, she often wore a device called an Optune, essentially a large bandage that looks like a bathing cap with electrodes delivering electrical waves into the patient's skull to slow the growth of the tumor. It was powered by a big battery pack.

There were times she doubted herself, asking "Are my words still working? Is my brain?" With a steady stream of pages coming in, her publishers would tell she was doing fine and to carry on.

"She'd be going to the library wearing this thing on her head and carrying this two-pound backpack with her and she'd come back with like, another 10 pounds of cookbooks in the backpack. And I was like, How are you even carrying that?" said Murray. "She somehow had the strength to do it."

Berne documented her research and findings regularly on her Instagram and left exciting new finds on her publisher Wapner's doorstep. As she finished pages, she would print them out and walk directly into the Hardie Grant office for feedback.

There were times she doubted herself, asking "Are my words still working? Is my brain?" With a steady stream of pages coming in, her publishers would tell she was doing fine and to carry on.

According to Murray, *Cookbooking* gave Berne purpose and helped her through her hardest days. "She was never depressed," he said. "She would just get up and say 'I'm so excited to work on my book today.'"

Berne was highly organized, and with her knowledge of book publishing, she foresaw and planned for every possible scenario. While she had backup designers ready to take over the project should she become too weak, she was able to see it through and deliver a finished manuscript.

A week later, she learned her tumor had returned. She was given a few months to live.

Reading *Cookbooking*, there is not a whisper of her illness. Berne didn't think being sick had anything to do with what she wanted to write about, Murray recalled. And yet, Berne's death is now an inextricable part of the book's story, especially as her publisher and her family bring it out into the world.

"I was telling a guy that I met the other day who had just gotten over some form of cancer and when I told him her story, he was basically crying and was so inspired and moved by it," Murray said. "He was like, that's what I need to do in my life to make it through this period of illness: to find some kind of passion like that."

After Berne's passing, publicist Louise Newlands and Wapner at Hardie Grant sat down with Murray to discuss what promoting *Cookbooking* could look like. They, along with a long list of Berne's friends and former colleagues, are collaborating on community events and social media campaigns to reach as many readers as possible.

The first of these events was a release party for *Cookbooking* on September 1 at Omnivore Books. Guests were encouraged to bring their most used, stained, wacky, arcane, and heirloom cookbooks to share. The plan is to replicate that at bookstores across the country.

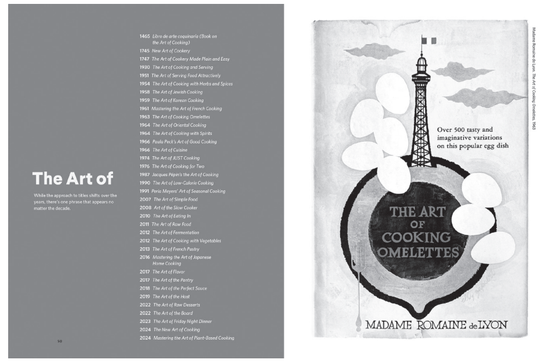
The rollout, understandably, is bittersweet. It's heartbreaking to celebrate a person's passion project when that person is no longer around to celebrate with you. But Berne is present in a way: Her good humor, her cordiality, and above all else, her voice come through on every page of *Cookbooking*.

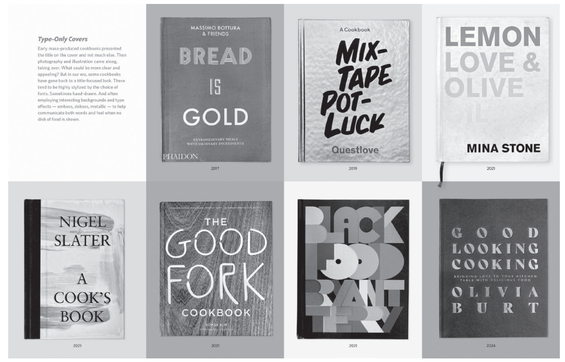
"It's been difficult," Wapner said. "I think every author imagines what it will be like when they're at the bookstore doing an event and to think that she's not going to be there for that…"

At that, she trails off, barely needing to finish her thought.

"The book feels incredibly supported," she said.

In the introduction to *Cookbooking*, Berne explains the appeal these books hold to chefs, readers, and anyone who ever discovered a recipe for Yum Cakes that changed their life. "On the surface, they tell us what to do in the kitchen. Beneath that, they suggest how we could live."







Sample spreads inside *Cookbooking: A Fan's Guide*, published posthumously by author and designer Debbie Berne, right.



Will success spoil the Richmond?

As the once low-key neighborhood is attracting everyone from Bi-Rite to Zendaya, residents and small business owners are bracing for impact

By Paolo Bicchieri



Clifford Yee's family moved to the Richmond District in the 1960s. Yee grew up on 12th Avenue in the Inner Richmond and attended Argonne Elementary. As a kid, he played basketball at Mountain Lake Park and arcade games at 7-Eleven on Clement Street and 10th Avenue. If his family left the Richmond at all, it might be for a Metreon visit downtown.

A social worker who now works in development, Yee still lives in the neighborhood, which he always thought of as more a suburb than part of the city. Russians, Jews, Irish, and, most numerically, Chinese émigrés like Yee's parents settled in the Richmond throughout the 20th century. Per census data released in early 2026, the combined inner and outer neighborhoods are now the third-most populous in the city.

Yee sits on the board of the Richmond Neighborhood Center as its chief strategy officer and has witnessed a lot of changes up close. Many of the families he knew growing up have sold their homes, some getting a million over asking thanks to the city's ultra competitive real estate market. He also sees a lot of continuity: He takes his two daughters to Little Henry's off Balboa Street and Dragon River on Geary and 14th, the same places he went to as a kid. (The 7-Eleven on Clement, alas, has been boarded up for years.)

Looking at it today, the neighborhood is full of cool cafes, boutiques, and the new outpost of Berkeley-based Rose Pizzeria, which *The New York Times* dubbed one of the best pizza places in the country in 2024. Opened on Arguello and Clement Streets, the line outside of Rose spills onto the corner every night.

Soon enough, Bi-Rite will be moving into a long-defunct space at 6001 California St. for its fourth location, a sign of gentrification to some and an answer to others' prayers.

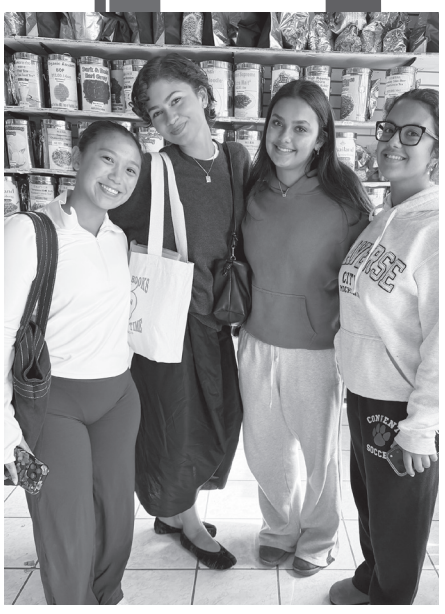
In 2020, restaurateurs Lily and Lucy Lieu brought chef Robert Lam to Clement Street to open Lily. Lam definitely recognizes the neighborhood changing, and is frank about the financial pressures he and other operators are under and how that impacts their customers. "There are no more mom-and-pop shops," Lam told *Gazetteer SF*. "You're charging $12 for a fucking dessert. There has to be a relief on cost of goods."

In May, Zendaya strolled into this ongoing conversation about the neighborhood when she spent the day in the Richmond and made headlines around the world. The Oakland-raised A-list mononym actress went into Pasta Supply Co. at 236 Clement St. and browsed the original Green Apple Books at 506 Clement St., prompting people to wonder, could the Richmond be any hotter right now?

Then again, it may be proving too hot for some. In a *San Francisco Standard* article that went viral in June, a couple in the Outer Richmond learned their landlord was increasing their rent by 90 percent. Ashley and Zachary Waldmans' two-bedroom condo listed for $3,500 a month in 2021. Whoever moves in after them will rent the same place for $7,000 a month.

While the Waldmans' story drew headlines, tens of thousands of people across the city have faced such evictions. Some longtime residents have been quietly priced not just out of their homes, but California. Data presented in the 2021 book *Counterpoints: A Bay Area Atlas of Displacement & Resistance* paints a bleak portrait of how the Richmond district is changing.

In a visualization in the book, Finley Coyl of the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (AEMP) shows that the Richmond (both Outer and Inner) ranked high in Ellis Act evictions, a divisive state law that allows landlords to "go out of business" and evict all their tenants. From 1994 to 2017, the Inner Richmond ranked fifth-highest in the city with 110 buildings evicted. The Outer Richmond saw 96.



Zendaya stopped by Aroma Tea Shop during her visit to the Richmond.

COURTESY YANNA V.

Charlie Lower has a unique vantage point from which to observe the Richmond in this moment of change. Lower, who uses they/them pronouns, moved from the Sunset to 16th Avenue and Balboa Street in 2024 and has worked as a front of house manager at cafe and bakery Breadbelly at 1408 Clement St. for about a year. With its *New York Times* writeup, James Beard Award nomination, and two citations as a top 10 restaurant in the Bay Area by the *San Francisco Chronicle*, Breadbelly could be seen as precisely the kind of place that might signal a once homey neighborhood's glow up, and yet, Lower in their own way is as committed as longtime residents like Yee to keeping the neighborhood livable and affordable.

Contrary to the popular narrative of service workers needing to commute into San Francisco from cheaper cities nearby, Lower lives five blocks from Breadbelly. Many of their coworkers also live in and near the Richmond, creating a sense of connection with the place they work and the customers they serve. "I feel this is rarer and rarer," Lower said.

Working at the shop, they encounter "a true, random demographic of people who happen to live in this neighborhood," introducing them to "all the people I wouldn't have met otherwise. It feels like a privilege to me."

But looking around, it is without question a changing neighborhood. In late January, the Richmond Neighborhood Center's community food market, which provides free food to members of the community in the Inner Richmond, relocated to the Outer Richmond.

The reason for this move was shifting from the 94118 zip code to the 94121. According to Yee, their service areas were based on a poverty rate equal to or higher than the city-wide average of 20 percent. The Inner Richmond no longer qualified. "It wasn't our decision," Yee says, "but that's what the data's saying."

When talking about this, Yee doesn't speak about gentrification necessarily, but an ongoing evolution of his neighborhood that's been happening since before he was born. As a parent, he talks to his kids about these changes, but also what it means to give back to the place that gives them so much.

"We have to take care of ourselves," Yee says. "This is what it means to be a part of the community."

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Food&Drink

DRINKING COMPANION

Fool's Errand is the wise choice

By Olivia Peluso

It's 6:30 p.m. on a Wednesday. You're about to link with a friend for a glass of wine (read: split a bottle) and you need a chill, centrally located gem with an extensive wine list and outdoor seating to soak up every molecule of vitamin D that has elbowed its way through the marine layer.

Don't worry, I've got just the place!

Fool's Errand, a cellar-like bar at 639A Divisadero St. between Hayes and Grove streets, fits all of the above criteria and more. Its brown-gray facade offers virtually zero indication of there being a business inside, but the open accordion-style window seat and bistro tables filled with chatty drinkers will clue you in on its existence.

Neighborly but not locals-only, hip but certainly not hipster, Fool's Errand strikes the perfect balance between nonchalant atmosphere and sophisticated wine selection.

The bartenders typically offer around 15 different wines by the glass, all in the $12 to $15 range, as well as a dozen beers on tap or in cans or bottled. You won't find a hard seltzer.

Fool's Errand wine selection is notably not natty-dominant, which we forget is an option in present-day California. Riesling is the favorite child (communicated on the menu and chalkboard sign), but they offer a vast range of eclectic European and Californian wines.

If you've never let people forget about that one summer you worked in a tasting room (ahem), tuck your hair behind your ears and slink to the back room, where you can easily kill 30 minutes weighing your selection of a bottle. It's a quiet alcove away from the bar, so you're left to your own devices (literally, the phone in your pocket) to inform your decision. (I'm sure the bartender would help if you ask, or you can opt for reckless abandon.)

The bartenders here are steady-handed, so a bottle might be more economical than going by the glass. Prices run anywhere from $35 to $160-plus for the cuttier selects. With a huge array of reds, whites, chilled, and sparkling on offer, you're bound to find something you enjoy.

While they make a nice charcuterie, skip the food: You'll leave as hungry as you came and no less buzzed. A better option is the free popcorn, the perfect sodium-laced lip-smacking confetti that you can mainline without skipping a beat in conversation.

Owner John Dampeer opened Fool's Errand in 2018 after two not-so-successful swings at bars elsewhere in the city: He previously ran Caskhouse in Noe Valley and later Hamlet nearby, but eventually closed both. Then Dampeer bet — correctly — on his NoPa bar's central location, robust foot traffic, and parklet to draw in business.

The bar's rustic-industrial interior, which is two steps below the sidewalk and largely subterranean, offers a handful of bar seats and some six-seat cocktail tables, great for coming with friends or being encouraged to make new ones. Between the chatter and the street sounds pouring in from the bar's ever-open door and windows, it's loud. (So loud, I never noticed what music they were playing.) But this kind of chatty energy, especially on a weeknight in this sleepy city, is worth seeking. Fool's Errand isn't a world to sink into, but rather, a blank canvas that assumes the form of its patrons day by day.

On a weeknight, you'll witness the city's truest fool's errand: first dates. However, much like other great bars that just happen to be hotbeds for Hinge users (Horsie's, The Page, and Dalva come to mind) Fool's Errand shouldn't get a bad rep for this. It's easy to drown out the inevitable conversations about sibling counts and SF neighborhoods by inviting your own pals or digitally acquired romantic prospects for scintillating conversation and slaking pours.

drinking companion

Fool's Errand

GO IF YOU LIKE
Riesling, I guess; a power catch-up with bestie; Warby Parker; The Shins' *Oh, Inverted World*; minimal intervention

ASK FOR
A bottle of the Ayler No. 25, a bone-dry and stony Riesling

LEAVE
Your Marlboro Golds in your purse (not the vibe)

AVOID IF YOU WANT
A cozy booth to disappear into

Fool's Errand is open 2 p.m. to 12 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday and until 10 p.m. on Sunday and Monday.



Fool's Errand strikes the perfect balance between nonchalant atmosphere and sophisticated wine selection.
OLIVIA PELUSO / GAZETTEER SF



There's just enough space for two diners in Alimentari Aurora's 25-square-foot storefront.
COURTESY OF DARIO BARBONE

THE BIGGEST LITTLE MEAL ON POTRERO HILL

Beloved Italian provisions shop Alimentari Aurora makes space for two lucky diners

By Olivia Peluso

Dario Barbone opened his Potrero Hill provisions shop Alimentari Aurora (1415 18th St.) in 2020 after operating it as a pop-up inspired by his nonna. Aurora's walls are lined with special grocery products from across Europe. Barbone keeps it simple: paninis in the afternoon; apéro dishes in the evening; and tinned fish, dry goods, funky chips, charcuterie, and chocolate all day long.

The 250-square-foot deli relies on its parklet for seating. In a place this tiny, Barbone and his team weren't interested in a traditional sit-down experience. They wanted something smaller. Much smaller: two indoor seats for adventurous eaters seeking an intimate dining experience.

"It's more like being part of the place rather than just spending money at the place," said Barbone.

The two street-facing bar seats are for those ready to "ride the evening" with the Aurora crew, Barbone said. The star dish is tinned fish omakase: Diners select a tinned delicacy such as barnacles in brine, Sicilian anchovies, or Spanish mussels, and Barbone rizzes it up with whatever delicious ingredients are available that day in the deli case. Guests are also invited to bring their own wine from neighbor Ruby while feasting on one of Aurora's paninis or focaccias, charcuterie, and cheeses as the kitchen cuts into them for the first time.

Tinned fish omakase is a $10 upcharge on whatever tin you select. The full price of this bespoke experience will vary depending on what Barbone's serving, though he says it will always be affordable: "I love horizontal tables, not vertical."

This tiny experience is all about creating something special for regulars and newbies alike.

"Maybe you come here every Friday, you sit down, you make friends. You become friends with the staff here," Barbone said. "You become more accustomed to our products. You might taste stuff that you wouldn't necessarily buy," he said. "It's very focused. It's me and you."

GAZETTEER EVENTS



SF still eats

Chat Room: Food served up a delicious feast

A crowd of over 200 gathered at Swedish American Hall on June 18 for an evening of food and conversation to close out our second season of Chat Room.

Attendees dined on pop-up offerings including sweet and savory pies by Ovinloven, Oaxacan tostados and pork belly by Provecho, and Filipino-American bowls and buns from Uncle Tito.

Food & drink reporter Olivia Peluso had a scintillating chat with Anna Voloshyna, a chef and recipe writer who made several trips to the frontline for her forthcoming book *Ukraïne*. Olivia then interviewed chefs Kevin Chen (Four Kings), Will Koh (Outta Sight Pizza), and Gary Podesto (Chez Panisse) on how improving food systems starts in the kitchen.

City reporter Eddie Kim moderated a lively discussion with Intu-on Kornnawong (Shoji), Amanda Flores (Flour + Water), and Reem Assil (Reem's) on today's restaurant business in San Francisco. Lastly, Eddie sat down with Thomas Etheve (San Ho Won), Hwanghah Jeong (Jilli), and Ina Jungin Lee (Korner Store, Matko) to deliberate on the city's Korean restaurant renaissance.

Felicia Liang, who designed the official poster for the event, sold merch and artwork, while music partner Amoeba Music set the auditory mood.

Paolo Bicchieri made sure the evening went smoothly as our host with the most. As we ended our season, the crowd left wanting more.

PHOTOS BY PHOTOS BY RACHEL ZEIGLER



Bowls from Uncle Tito's featured grilled pork belly and shoulder or vegan combo of cauliflower and mushrooms.



Savvy, intelligent, beautiful readers checked out the summer issue of *Gazetteer San Francisco*.



Anna Voloshyna shared stories of food and resilience in Ukraine with Olivia Peluso.





Diners made tough choices about what to eat from the selection of hot pop-ups. Luckily, there were no bad choices.

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Local director fundraising to film a proof-of-concept pilot for her murder mystery television series "Swear to Tell the Truth." Filmed in the Santa Cruz Mountains with a Bay Area crew, donate to get this pilot on some Hollywood desks. More info at kaylamarriott.com/swear-to-tell-the-truth

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Commentary

WHO GOES AI?

An interesting and somewhat macabre parlor game from the 1940s is updated for our age



By Matt Haber

It's easy to imagine that the passionate evangelists for AI were grown in a lab or sent here by some extraterrestrial force to feed what is left of humankind's artistry, ingenuity, and creativity into the all-consuming maw of a Large Language Model designed to replace all that is good and holy for purposes unknown. Imagining the carbon-based ambassadors for our slop-drenched future as somehow alien is pleasurable, but it does not explain who goes AI and why.

Portraying the CEOs, VCs, vibe coders, prompters, and social sharers as Other is (irony alert) dehumanizing. It elides or erases the choices they make, the hopes they hold dear, the sadnesses they, like all of us, seek to ameliorate with whatever is within reach or just on the horizon.

And so, with a nod to Dorothy Thompson, let us enter this big, boisterous party, circulate about these stately rooms sipping a drink and chatting with acquaintances old and new and ask ourselves as we do: Who goes AI?

There is no one type of person who succumbs to AI, no ethnicity or social class uniquely susceptible to its promises. AI speaks to people of all ages and educational backgrounds, people who have fallen deeply in love with technologies in the past and others who have been skeptical to the point of suspicion.

Yet here they are at this party, talking animatedly, showing their phones, wishing they were alone with their chatbot of choice, or merely nodding along as someone unspools a well-rehearsed elevator pitch.

Standing by the mantle with a seltzer water is a luminous presence, an actor whose early promise was squandered. In middle age, they won back audiences thanks to their charisma and talent, dormant for so many dark decades. How happy they are to be living out a comedy of remarriage with their career. With the specter of AI films looming, they have chosen to open that marriage to include generative artificial intelligence. While their peers fight to clarify digital replica clauses in their contracts, the actor, hoping to stay forever in the spotlight and share their charisma and talent in perpetuity even as mortality makes its endgame, embraces AI filmmaking. Will this provide the role of a lifetime? Multiple lifetimes? Only time and exigencies of the algorithm know.

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The actor should walk over to the pool where the middle-aged *enfant terrible* auteur is smoking, ash dusting their stained Members Only jacket. Their hair is greasy; their skin greying. The middle-aged *enfant terrible* auteur has not made a film that has seen wide release since the Bush era, and yet they are stroked and cossetted by a small, fierce fan community online. The middle-aged *enfant terrible* auteur once fancied themself in the lineage of European art house directors, but lately their work has been sliced and diced into single panel memes and oft-repeated catchphrases. Where once they found writers at alt-weeklies and adjunct lecturers gathering tenure-bait essays in film journals who'd praise their use of dirt-cheap, analog media to make their noncommercial fare, when the middle-aged *enfant terrible* auteur speaks to the paunchy, middle-aged writers who still remember them, they now rhapsodize about AI like a late-life convert spreading the Good News. AI isn't killing movies; it's saving them! AI doesn't replace craft; it supercharges it! The middle-aged *enfant terrible* auteur can now make movies without expensive location shoots, without unions, or, indeed, without actors, especially ones who may complain about on-set behavior by certain middle-aged *enfants terrible* auteurs. Yes, this is the real and true auteur theory cinema has been working toward, lo, these many years: No producers, no script supervisors, no studio notes, no marketing department, nothing to come between the middle aged *enfant terrible* auteur and their adoring, diminishing audience.



Every gathering features people willing to go AI. All you have to do is ask yourself who they might be.

ROSS DUNN / CC BY-SA 2.0

Huddled together by the hors d'oeuvres (a reflex from their leaner days), two former magazine editors are nibbling canapés and trying to look like they fit in. These print refugees want to appear as though they're not too impressed by this house (bigger than any they've been in) or this crowd (more famous than most) and yet, there is a fetching flush to their cheeks, an undeniable giddiness to their uptalk. Perhaps they are so excited because they survived the fiery plane crash of their former industry, the one thing they aspired to do since reading so many fashion and rock 'n' roll magazines in their youth, tearing out pictures to hang on their walls, and feeling for one heady, too fleeting moment that they were interpreters of the zeitgeist, gatekeepers of the culture. In the years since then, they've dabbled in marketing, technology, technology marketing, and marketing technology only to see so many people less experienced than them, less *interesting* than them, get so, so much richer than them. And so, here they are, running their hands blindly on the rough beast of AI, groping to define the shape of things to come. Just as their highest aspiration was to break a band, mint an it girl, or conjure the hot new neighborhood, they now want to herald the arrival of this impossible-to-define thing: Is AI a medium? A platform? A worldview? An evolutionary step? Nothing quite comes close other than, maybe, *Agape*. The former magazine editors hope their faith in AI proves their place in heaven while also providing for their heirs for generations to come.

In the corner, their eyes casting about, their mouth pursed in pinched disdain is the disruptor. The disruptor is not enjoying the curry roasted shrimp being passed around by servers, the signature drinks mixed with care, or the company of so many chattering, nodding idiots. In fact, the disruptor rarely enjoys anything so much as breaking things and replacing them with something else entirely. The disruptor has no formal job title but their LinkedIn profile describes them as a consultant, a founder, a coach, or a strategic advisor. Passive income somehow accrues as they sleep; their consulting or coaching or strategic advising appears to involve attending conferences, living in white-washed Airbnbs, or standing on beaches in well-cut swimsuits, their sinews tight. The disruptor disdains AI (as they disdained NFTs, crypto, social gaming, VR, AR, and MR before it), is doubtful of its purpose or usefulness, yet they disdain its critics more. They are at this party to be seen on the right side — or is it the wrong side, the switchbacks and boomerangs of the discourse so confusing these days — of history. If AI makes so many people so irrationally angry, it must be doing something right. If the inclusion of two vowels side-by-side in one's Summit bio can spark so much intrigue and potential income, how bad can it be? And even if it's bad, that's good, too.

Tickling the keys of the piano as a few of their junior employees look on as they sneak swipes at their phones is the publisher. They have been so many things for so very long: innovator, pivoter, retrencher, lifer. The publisher has survived advertiser flight, digital predation, reader abandonment, and industrywide ossification to prove to the world (especially their father, who made them the self-made person they are by gifting them a small publishing concern the way other parents might put $20 into their elementary school aged child's first savings account) that the sun shall never set on their empire, even if that empire continues to shrink and that sun grows hotter every day. With AI, the publisher can lower costs, multiply output, translate, grow into untapped markets, and collect small fractions of revenue while telling themself they're still in the game, even if that game is rigged. The publisher's audience, of course, is now largely made up of bots, so it stands to reason that the publisher's team should be, too. Only a bot knows exactly how to please a bot. One day, the employees barely bothering to clap at the publisher's nimble recitation of Chopin will be replaced by bots as well, and AI's much-debated "sycophancy" will be understood as not a bug, but a key feature.

Off to the back in a room that has been given a once-over by an advance team and overseen by earpiece-wearing agents is the politician holding court among the people who matter most: lobbyists. Never one for market testing or useless polling, the politician prides themself on operating by instinct, taking on all challenges with a sound mind, open heart, and clear eyes just as their hard-working parents in their close-knit small town taught them to do. The politician knows that AI is not a tool for making pornography, assisting suicides, or creating fan fiction based on preexisting IP. AI means a level playing field, prosperity, jobs, innovation, the American dream, a chicken in every pot. AI is the future and all who stand in its way are aligned with the past, a past that is both a shame on this great nation and the foundation upon which it stands. Recently, a voter in the politician's district approached them at a hardware store — or maybe it was a local diner or watering hole — and said, "I am afraid of artificial intelligence and what it might mean for my job at my place of work." The politician could feel their pain. "AI is made by good people, creative people," the politician told them. "People who love this country." That those people are also possible donors (unverifiable thanks to *Citizens United vs. FEC*, 2010), doesn't matter. AI is the last and greatest hope for this great nation, which is itself the last and greatest of human dreams. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that had our forefathers had AI, they would've used it to craft our founding documents to be more legible, understandable, and scalable.

As you wait for the valet to bring your car around, feeling the fresh air on your skin and imagining your bed fondly, you may finally understand that the people who go AI are not bad people. Like you, they are human beings. Are they scared? Selfish? Yes, but so are you. Are their motives venal? At times. Are they arrogant? Single-minded? Yes and yes.

Like anyone, they just want to survive and will attach themself to anything they think will help them do so. This may explain why they went AI. Guessing who would is an amusing game. Try it at the next party you go to.

The Fun Page

BANG HEAD HERE

San Francisco Real Estate Stress Reduction System

Directions:

1. Place on FIRM surface.
2. Follow directions in circle.
3. If conscious, look at listing again.
4. If price still causes stress, repeat step 2.

Gazetteer's
Believe it or not!



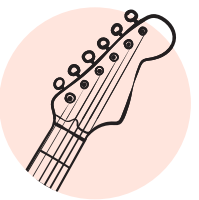
Kanye West rented AT&T Park (now known as Oracle) for an estimated $200,000 to propose to Kim Kardashian on Oct. 21, 2013. A 50-piece orchestra played a cover of Lana Del Rey's "Young and Beautiful" and the scoreboard read "PLEEEASE MARRY MEEE!!!" The couple's divorce was finalized Nov. 29, 2022.



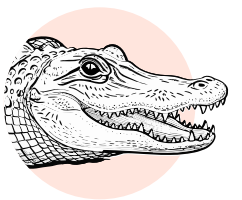
In 2017, Tokyo's Wagyumafia restaurant chain announced a plan to open a location in San Francisco where it would sell Wagyu cutlet sandwiches for $180. After a year of hype, the restaurant never opened.



On Oct. 3, 1974, San Francisco native Jack LaLanne swam from Alcatraz to Fisherman's Wharf handcuffed and towing a 1,000 lb. boat. LaLanne was 60 years old at the time. The next year, he did the same thing for the length of the Golden Gate Bridge entirely underwater.



Courtney Love was born in San Francisco in 1964. Her godfather may be Grateful Dead bassist Phil Lesh.



In 1996, a three-foot alligator nicknamed the Golden Gator was spotted in Mountain Lake in the Presidio. *San Francisco Examiner* executive editor Phil Bronstein and one of his reporters donned wetsuits and tried to catch it. They were turned away by police citing a no swimming ordinance.

The *Offline* QUARTERLY

What to watch, listen to, and taste over the next three months

Compiled by Joshua Bote

STYLE MEETS SUBSTANCE

Filipiñana

The Roxie
September 6 and 7

The trailer for *Filipiñana*, the directorial debut of filmmaker Rafael Manuel, is uniform and picturesque: golfers and caddies in perfect lockstep, manicured grassy fields and pines, and Frank Lloyd Wright-style interiors. Then, Manuel takes that stylish Wes Andersonesque precision and, like the late Filipino auteur Lino Brocka before her, lays bare the cruelty required to uphold all of that prettiness for colonial tourist consumption. After a slew of raves at Sundance, *Filipiñana* is screening as part of FiliKula, the Roxie's new Philippine cinema series. (Don't miss the other screenings as well.)

Tickets: roxie.com

THIRD EYE VISIONARIES

Hiero Day

The Midway
September 7

Helmed by the rap crew Hieroglyphics, Hiero Day is one of the Bay Area's definitive yearly events, a love letter of the region's robust (and still underrated) hip-hop legacy. This year's lineup is appropriately stacked: Atlanta's Killer Mike; Grammy-nominated singer Mereba; and *the* DJ Jazzy Jeff are among the top-billed, while scientist-turned-rapper Ruby Ibarra and the battle rapper-slash-jokester Frak fill out the very strong lineup. And, wait, is that District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton at the bottom of the bill?

Tickets: themidwaysf.com

WATCH WHAT HAPPENS LIVE

I Want To Be Famous book event

Calvary Presbyterian
September 28

Gun to my head (and as I've professed on TV), *Who? Weekly* is my favorite podcast of all time. The pop culture pod hosted by veteran culture writers Lindsey Weber and Bobby Finger is nominally about the D-and-below-list celebs and personalities that fill up Instagram timelines and Netflix home screens; it's more so about the economy of tabloids, influencer marketing, and THAMPS (that's trainers, hairstylists, agents, makeup artists, publicists, and stylists) that propels a fortunate few Whos to Themdom. The duo's upcoming book *I Want To Be Famous* is a distillation of the decade-plus they've spent chronicling up-and-coming and down-and-out lower-tier celebs.

REBIRTHDAY OF SLICK

KALW 85th

The Warfield
September 29

Our friends and neighbors at KALW are turning 85, and have yet to show their age. To celebrate their birthday, they're bringing the jazz group BADBADNOTGOOD and OG hip-hop group Digable Planets to the Warfield, a hop-skip from their new HQ at the Warfield Commons. Singer Rozzi and MC and DJ Wonway Posibul, two of San Francisco's very own, round out the night. As far as celebrations of octogenarians go, this is among the coolest.

Tickets: KALW.org/85

IN HEAVEN, EVERYTHING IS FINE

Eraserhead *Xiu Xiu*

Gray Area
October 8

The San Jose-born experimental rock group Xiu Xiu is not for the faint of heart; their punishing body of work is unsparing, and unafraid. It tracks that the group would find a kindred spirit in the late David Lynch, whom they honored a decade ago with an album of covers of the *Twin Peaks* soundtrack. After Lynch's death in January 2025, Xiu Xiu leader Jamie Stewart wanted to reprise this artistic connection with an even more ambitious undertaking centered on *Eraserhead* (1977): a performance art piece in dialogue with the director's debut film.

Tickets: grayarea.org

F, MARY, THRILL

Oh, Mary

Curran Theatre
October 13–November 1

Since Cole Escola stepped off the stage of their brilliant *Oh, Mary!*, the show's producers have had the unenviable task of maintaining its imperial run of Mary Todd Lincolns — a self-imposed albatross that doubles as a pop culture meme. Casting the lead is a tightrope walk: someone high-profile but not gimmicky, campy but not un-selfaware, someone who's in on the bit but coy about it. For its San Francisco debut, Alaska Thunderfuck dons Mary's curly wig. Alaska is fabulous: A drag artist with an extensive theatrical pedigree, a comedian with a blade-sharp edge and one of the dumbest mantras I've ever heard ("Anus-thing is possible!"). A former *Drag Race* winner and current *Drag Race* critic, Alaska will draw massive crowds.

Tickets: ACT-SF.org

LOOK BIG

Bearrison Street Fair

11th and Harrison Streets
October 17

Held by the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and the Bears of San Francisco, Bearrison — like Bearracuda, Lazy Bear in Guerneville, and a sleuth of bear parties with bearly tolerable pun-names — is a genuinely radical proposition in the year of our lord 2026. When the Castro (or, really, a lot of the city's gay-populated neighborhoods and nightlife) can feel as flat and homogeneous as the torsos on display, a party that centers bears and bear-adjacents and the people who love and desire them is worth cherishing. Highlights from previous years include a wrestling tourney, a competitive bearding contest, and a bicep-off.

BEFORE YOU DIE

The Ring

San Francisco Symphony
October 20

Gore Verbinski's *The Ring* (2002) is, for personal reasons, one of the more traumatizing cinematic experiences of my lifetime. (Word of advice: Do *not* show that movie to your six-year-old.) A key element of the horrors is Hans Zimmer's soundtrack, in all its tremolo violin and low-end menace. Conducted live by Jason Seber, it'll be an excellent way to watch one of Naomi Watts's finest works though it might take an ounce of courage (liquid and otherwise) for me to brave another viewing, even after all these years.

Tickets: sfsymphony.org

HER MIX A LOT

DJ Mandy

The Castro Theatre
October 31

Amanda Shultz, better known to a legion of teens as DJ Mandy, was a sophomore at UC Berkeley when she gained attention on TikTok and the internet writ large for her self-taped videos of practicing how to DJ and its disastrous outcomes. (One video features a repulsive blend of Bad Bunny flowing into thrash metal into Whitney Houston.) She still occasionally features sonic gags, but she's graduated into playing crystalline funk and floor-shaking hardstyle in her sets at EDC, Tomorrowland, and other major electronic music festivals. It'll certainly entertain, no matter if she plays slapstick or serious.

Tickets: thecastro.com

THROWBACK TUESDAY

XG

Oakland Arena
November 3

For touring K-pop-adjacent groups this winter, you won't do much better than XG. This futurist, alien chic Japanese seven-piece group is based in Seoul, and makes sterling English pop songs indebted to Y2K-era American R&B and house. To wit, they covered Bay Area native Keyshia Cole in their 2024 San Francisco set at Bill Graham. It's fun to see a group try very hard to delight their audiences, and delight they do.

Tickets: theoaklandarena.com

ALL YOU CAN EAT

San Francisco Street Food Festival

Ferry Building
November 7 and 8

The food incubator La Cocina is well-liked around these parts for good reason: Their extensive support for small businesses operated by women and immigrants in the city is commendable. A key part of La Cocina's success is its long-operating street food fest, an OG in San Francisco's now-expansive food fest universe and still one of the most popular. After being held last year at China Basin, the fest is back in full swing at the Ferry Building — a much easier trek for much of the city (and our East Bay friends, too).

FALL'S BUZZIEST EVENT

San Francisco Coffee Festival

Fort Mason
November 7 and 8

The San Francisco Coffee Festival is a hopped-up tour of the Bay Area's coffee scene, arguably one of the richest and full-flavored in the country. A ticket secures you a three-hour pass to try out brews and blends from all over the world. Among the highlights: Palestinian-owned Berkeley shop Jaffa Coffee Roasters; Oakland staples Mother Tongue, the Crown, and Proyecto Diaz; and from further out, Napa's Naysayer and Foster City's River Phin.

HUMBUG

Dickens Fair

Cow Palace
November 21–December 20

Looking ahead to the holiday season, no events listing worth its weight in cheese would go without featuring The Great Dickens Fair (and Victorian Holiday Party), a five-weekend immersive fete set in Victorian-era London (minus the typhoid, but still with the yawning class divide). Bust out your vintage crinolines and waistcoats. Perhaps, if you're lucky, you'll run into Father Christmas or the Artful Dodger.

Tickets: dickensfair.com