



ENTERTAINMENT

Arts & Culture Newsletter: Three shows to know at San Diego Fringe





A staged reading of “1996: A blink-182 Musical” at San Diego International Fringe Festival. (Courtesy of Michael Prine)

This week, the blink-182 musical “1996,” “Normal Heights,” “105 Miles from Home,” a major museum merger, Ringo Starr rocks and more

BY DAVID L. CODDON | CONTRIBUTOR

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Good morning, and welcome to the U-T Arts & Culture Newsletter.

*I’m **David L. Coddon**, and here’s your guide to all things essential in San Diego’s arts and culture this week.*

Appropriately, San Diego audiences are the first to experience Daniel Durston’s **“1996 — A Blink-182 Musical.”** Durston, a longtime Elvis on the “Million Dollar Quartet” national tour and a former “Big Brother” house guest, is world-premiering his stage show that incorporates the music of Poway-born blink-182 at the ongoing **San Diego International Fringe Festival** in Balboa Park.

Durston conceived the idea for the show a dozen years ago after seeing the Green Day jukebox musical “American Idiot.” “I walked out not feeling like I got a story,” Durston recalled. “I’m a bit bigger of a blink-182 fan than of Green Day. Two years went by and I thought ‘No one’s doing it, so I’m going to do it.’”

“It” was creating a musical integrating blink-182 songs with a tale about a fledgling pop-punk band that also addresses issues of mental health. Durston spent 10 years writing the show, which is about 2 1/2 hours long, but has been stripped down to an hour to meet Fringe Festival length limitations.

“It’s not just about the blink-182 music,” he explained. “Those songs sell themselves. It’s what I’m trying to say to audiences — we don’t know who’s fighting depression. By doing this, I try to shed light on it and live in memory of those I’ve lost.”

Durston’s dreaming big: He’s hoping to someday take his cast-of-nine musical to Broadway. But before that, he’s seeking official support from blink’s band members. “If they read the script,” he said, “they’ll see I’m very passionate and real and honest about it.”

The Fringe show, which I saw last Sunday, is a staged reading with actors holding scripts. Blink’s music is thoughtfully worked into Durston’s story, which is promising but has some kinks to work out.

You can still catch “1996 — A Blink-182 Musical” at the Centro Cultural de la Raza at 9 p.m. Friday; 6 p.m. Saturday; and 4 p.m. Sunday, which is the Fringe festival’s closing day.

More Fringe



(Courtesy of Michael Prine)

Fresh off a production of his “Monsters of the American Cinema” at Diversionary Theatre, locally based playwright Christian St. Croix is debuting an atmospheric three-hander piece titled **“Normal Heights”** at the Fringe Festival, presented by Loud Fridge Theatre and directed by Kandace Crystal.

The lyrical and consistently surprising script introduces audiences to a riffing “Welcoming Committee” (Ray-Anna Ranae, Markuz Rodriguez and Kaivan Mohsenzadeh) that conducts a tour of one of San Diego’s funkier neighborhoods. Along the way are encounters with Normal Heights residents, ghosts and even a gorilla named Bob who lives in the sewers. Director Crystal says there’s “a layer of malignancy that underlines part of this show.”

Vaguely creepy but richly poetical, “Normal Heights” is a trip — one that not everyone in the audience at the performance I attended seemed to comprehend. Judge for yourself: “Normal Heights” will be performed again at 7:30 p.m. Saturday in the

Marie Hitchcock Puppet Theatre in Balboa Park.

Still more Fringe



The play "105 Miles from Home" at San Diego International Fringe Festival.

San Diego State University student Alexis Hernandez dramatizes the story of her Cuban grandmother's flight from Castro to the purported American dream of living in the United States in her play "**105 Miles from Home.**" The cast, as well, is composed of SDSU students under Hernandez's direction.

This show feels like a work in progress, but it has potential. Its story, a personalization of the Pedro Pan Flights from Cuba in the early 1960s, is an important one. I have much admiration for young theater makers like these. On opening night, the audience was full of other students, none of them looking at their

phones, and two special guests: Hernandez's grandparents.

"105 Miles from Home" will be performed again at 1 p.m. Saturday in the Centro Cultural de la Raza.

Visual art



(Courtesy of Ryan Gobuty)

On Tuesday, **San Diego Museum of Art** and the **Museum of Photographic Arts** announced they will merge operations on July 1. MOPA's collection of more than 9,000 images by 850 artists and 22,000 books and related materials will be added to SDMA's own photography collection. But for at least the next year, the MOPA museum space in Balboa Park will remain open to show previously scheduled exhibitions, and the MOPA's 18-member staff will stay on.

READ MORE: [San Diego Museum of Art and Museum of Photographic Arts announce merger](#)

Music



(Charlie Neuman/For The San Diego Union-Tribune)

Former Beatle Ringo Starr and the 2023 edition of his All-Starr Band were in the area last weekend performing at Pechanga Resort Casino. Despite being nearly 83 years old, Starr showed little signs of age. U-T music critic George Varga reviewed the concert and gave it five “Starrs.”

READ MORE: [Review: Ringo Starr rocks and boogaloos at his 2023 tour-opening concert at Pechanga with his All-Starr Band](#)

Theater



(Aaron Rumley/Matt FitzGerald photos)

The leadership team at North Coast Repertory Theatre in Solana Beach — artistic director David Ellenstein and managing director Bill Kerlin — have taken over the vacant leadership positions at Laguna Playhouse in Orange County. The two men will run both theaters simultaneously. U-T theater writer Pam Kragen wrote about the new leadership model.

READ MORE: [North Coast Rep leadership team will now run Laguna Playhouse, as well](#)

More theater



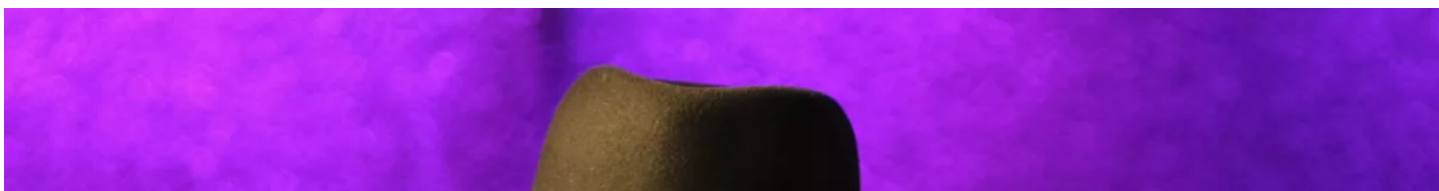


(The Los Angeles Times)

It's been 12 years since Moxie Theatre produced Sarah Ruhl's quirky comedy "**Dead Man's Cell Phone.**" I still smile when I think of its deliberate strangeness and subtle commentary about our existence.

So good news! Roustabouts Theatre Company is presenting a [staged reading of "Dead Man's Cell Phone"](#) at 7:30 p.m. Monday at San Diego Musical Theatre's performance space in Kearny Mesa. Roustabouts co-founder Phil Johnson is directing a way cool cast that includes Sandy Campbell, Jason Maddy and Yolanda Franklin. Your \$20 ticket will be money well spent, I assure you.

Rock music





(Associated Press)

Did you catch **Billy Bob Thornton's** recent picks for his five favorite films ever? "High Noon," he told the Rotten Tomatoes website, was one of them. Understandable. James Dean's "Giant" and Elia Kazan's "A Face in the Crowd" with Andy Griffith were named, too. Both justifiable.

"The Verdict" with Paul Newman? Newman was better than the movie, but OK. Rounding out Thornton's list: "The Ghost and Mr. Chicken" with Don Knotts. Was that Thornton giving Barney Fife equal time, or what?

Regardless, Thornton the musician is [back in town on Sunday night](#) and back at the Belly Up once more with fellow band members J.D. Andrew and Teddy Andreadis. No upstart they, the Boxmasters have been around since 2007. Belly Up regulars know 'em well.

UCTV

University of California Television invites you to enjoy this special selection of programs from throughout the University of California. Descriptions courtesy of and text written by UCTV staff:

“How Modern Slavery Impacts the Environment”

There are 45 million enslaved people in the world today. Slave-based activities, like brick making and deforestation, are estimated to generate 2.54 billion tons of CO₂ per year — greater than the individual emissions of all the world’s nations except China and the U.S. Globally, slaves are forced to do work that is highly destructive to the environment. The links between slavery, conflict, environmental destruction, economics and consumption began to strengthen and evolve in the 20th century. Professor Kevin Bales discusses how the negative environmental impact of modern slavery is just now coming to light.

“Breastfeeding: Common Questions”

When should I start breastfeeding? Why won’t my baby latch? Is my baby getting enough to eat? The early days of breastfeeding are filled with so many questions. While it is a natural and beautiful way to nourish your baby, breastfeeding can also be challenging and overwhelming for new mothers. Nancy White, RN, IBCLC, a board-certified lactation consultant, joins Julia Cormano, MD, FACOG, to talk about basic techniques, the ins and outs of latching, and how to overcome challenges as you start your breastfeeding journey.

“The Cinema of Multispecies Encounters”

Moderator Peter Bloom is joined by Kim Knowles and Carrie Noland to discuss how contemporary experimental film represents multi-species relationships and dependencies. Together, they consider how experimental cinema can animate alternative understandings of the relations between human and non-human animals.

Addressing questions of genre, style, narration and performance, Knowles, Noland, and Bloom highlight the political and aesthetic complexity of the cinematic representation of animals.

And finally: Top weekend events

[The best things to do this weekend in San Diego: May 25-28.](#)

Coddon is a freelance writer.



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