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ENCINO ENTERPRISE

Volume 6, Issue 137 | A Compendious Source of Information | February 6, 2026

NEWS IN BRIEF

Amazon to Close All Amazon Fresh Stores, Including Encino Location

Amazon has announced they are closing all Amazon Fresh and Amazon Go stores nationwide, including four here in the Valley. The Amazon Fresh at 16325 Ventura Blvd. will close, as well Amazon Fresh stores in Woodland Hills, Northridge and North Hollywood. "While we've seen encouraging signals in our Amazon-branded physical grocery stores, we haven't yet created a truly distinctive customer experience with the right economic model needed for large-scale expansion," reads a statement from Amazon. "After a careful evaluation of the business and how we can best serve customers, we've made the difficult decision to close our Amazon Go and Amazon Fresh physical stores, converting various locations into Whole Foods Market stores."

Brad Sherman to Host Town Hall

Congressman Brad Sherman will host a Telephone Town Hall on Wednesday, February 11, at 7 pm. Sherman will make opening remarks and then answer questions on any issue facing Congress. To participate call (818) 214-8555 any time during the Town Hall. To RSVP, email bradsherman.house.gov/RSVP. Sherman has served in the House of Representatives since 1997. He has held over 252 Town Hall meetings during his time in Congress.

Community Foundation Gives 27 Grants

Individuals, families and businesses with Donor Advised Funds (DAFS) managed by the Community Foundation of the Valleys gave a record 27 grants to nonprofits in November and December 2025. These grants went to a wide range of causes and nonprofit services: food pantries, educational support for students, case management, services for the unhoused, veterans, housing, job training, economic development, and more.

The mission of the Community Foundation of the Valleys (CFV) is to inspire, encourage and facilitate charitable giving for lasting impact on those who live or work in the San Fernando and Santa Clarita Valleys. Community foundations are located in every state and metropolitan area in the United States, and in each location, they solicit and manage donor advised funds, small family foundations, nonprofit reserves and endowments, and business charitable giving funds.

For more information, contact CFV Executive Director Marianne Haver Hill, 818-377-6386 or info@valleygiving.org.

Metro Approves Subway from Valley to Westside

The LA Metro board last week approved a heavy rail subway line for the Sepulveda Corridor, targeting the congested traffic corridor along the 405 freeway. The new line will run from Van Nuys to the Expo/Sepulveda Station, cutting travel from up to 80 minutes by car to under 20 minutes.

The subway will cover 13 miles, with tunnels reaching depths of 500 feet beneath the mountains. It promises a direct connection from the Valley to the Westside through Sherman Oaks, Bel-Air, and UCLA.

This plan from Metro's planning and programming committee last week, would go from Van Nuys to Sherman Oaks, pass under the mountains and Bel-Air, stop at UCLA and ultimately end at the E Line's Expo/Sepulveda Station.

The Sepulveda Pass and plans to improve traffic have been under discussion for decades, The Times' Colleen Shalby wrote. Ethan Elkind, a rail expert and director of the climate program at the Center for Law, Energy and the Environment at UC Berkeley, told her that a variety of political and logistical factors have slowed the project's progress: a focus on downtown transit, opposition to high-capacity transit in the San Fernando Valley and geological challenges in the Sepulveda Pass.

"It's a lot of land," Elkind said. "And the more land you have to go through, the more expensive it is, the more logistically challenging it is."

Lindsey Horvath, L.A. County supervisor and Metro board member, said the project would be a historic development for the LA region, affecting drivers who commute through the Sepulveda Pass along the 405.

Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman, whose 4th District covers parts of Encino and Sherman Oaks, said that construction for the project would create hundreds of thousands of jobs and that revenue from ridership would help local businesses. "We don't have to accept sitting in traffic as our only choice," she said, "and this is our pathway forward."

The Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association, which previously rejected earlier proposals, supported this new route and design. The association's vice president Bob Anderson has expressed concerns over funding of the project, as billions of dollars still need to be sourced.

"We still have not heard from Metro how they're going to pay for this thing," Anderson told The Times. "We don't need to know every financial detail, but we do need to know where they're going to get the funding stream that feeds it and how much the financing is going to cost us."

The estimated cost of the project has ballooned since 2016, when Los Angeles County voters approved transit improvements between the Valley and the Westside under Measure M. The subway was originally projected to cost $6 billion, which then turned into $9.4 billion with current estimates as high as $13.8 billion.

Construction of the entire line was originally estimated to be completed in 2033. Metro does not have a timeline for this new proposal, or a date that construction would start. Metro cited the need for reliance on state, local and federal funding to fill the shortfall and has raised the idea of private-public partnerships — similar to proposals for the state's controversial high-speed rail project.

Currently there is no specific plan for funding what has been approved.

CALENDAR

Community Calendar

* The Encino Neighborhood Council will hold an in-person town hall on Thursday, February 5, from 7 to 8:30 pm. The panel will include representatives from the departments that provide homeless services to answer your questions and provide updates for 2026. The meeting will be held at the Encino Community Center, 4935 Balboa Blvd.

* The Sherman Oaks Encino Chamber of Commerce will be holding their "Lunch Break Live" on Thursday, February 12, from 11:30 to 1:30 pm. This networking lunch will be sponsored by UCLA Health and will be held at Best Ball at Woodley Lakes Golf Course (6331 Woodley Ave). Cost is $30 for members and $50 for non-members. RSVP at shermanoaksencinochamber.org.

* The Encino Tarzana Library will be hosting a forum on financial aid for parents who have college-bound children on Tuesday, February 14, at 4:30 pm. This program is designed to empower students and their families with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate the complex financial landscape of higher education. By exploring the rising costs of tuition, the impact of student debt, and the various financial aid options available, including FAFSA, scholarships, work-study programs, and loans, this workshop aims to equip participants with practical strategies to make college more affordable.

* The Encino Property Owners Association will hold a community Zoom meeting on Thursday, February 12, at 7 pm. California Governor candidate Antonio Villaraigosa will be the guest speaker. There will also be a presentation from the LADWP on the proposed floating solar panel project at the Encino reservoir. For the Zoom link, email info@encinopoa.com.

* The Tarzana Community and Cultural Center will host a tribute to Burt Bacharach and Hall David on Sunday, Februrary 8, at 7:30 pm. This tribute show features vocal artist/producer/arranger Jay Asher, along with featured musical guest Mairéad. Other guest performers include Tiffany Bailey, Claire Bloom, Kelly Huff, JK Jones, Lauren Lundeen and Ingrid Schnell. Tickets are $20 and must be purchased in advance at mytarzana.org.

* The Southern California Garden Club will hold thier next Garden Club meeting on Tuesday, February 17, at 11 am featuring a program, "It's (Almost) Show Time" presented by Rita Desilets and Robin Pokorski. In preparation for this year's Standard Flower Show ("A Night at the Movies," April 17-18), talented designer Rita and NGC Master Flower Show Judge Robin will provide creative design ideas and horticulture tips for participating in the show. The program is preceded at 9:30 am by a plant market, country store, plant specimen display and a workshop, "Camellias for Every Garden," at 10:30 am. This free event will take place at the Sepulveda Garden Center, 16633 Magnolia Blvd. in Encino.

* The West Valley Regional Library will be holding a workshop entitled, "Anger, Frustration and Fighting Tips For Alzheimer's Caregivers" on Saturday, February 7, from 1:30 to 2:30 pm. In this workshop, Alzheimer's LA will discuss why these behaviors happen in those with Alzheimer's, what you can do to help and suggestions for how to handle common challenges and situations.

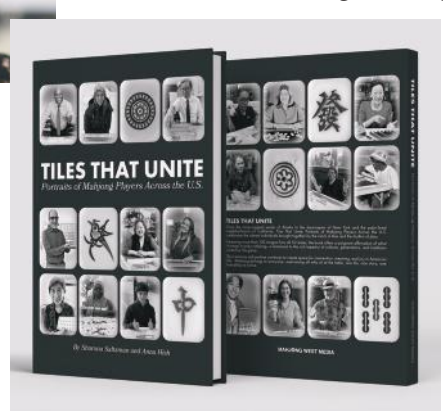
* Blood donations reach a critical low during the winter months and donations are needed now more than ever. Westfield Fashion Square, in partnership with American Red Cross, will hold a blood drive on Tuesday, February 10, from 10 am to 4 pm. Book your appointment at redcrossblood.org.

* The San Fernando Valley Audubon Society will hold their free beginner bird walk on Saturday, February 14, from 9 to 11 am. For details, and meet up instructions, visit sfvaudubon.org/event/free-beginner-walks-at-sepulveda-basin-4/2026-02-14.

People in the News

When Encino resident Sharona Saltzman's only child left for college, the quiet in her home led her to American mahjong — and to a discovery that would shape her next creative project. Though she had tried the game years earlier, this time it clicked. Beyond learning strategy, she became intrigued by the people who played and the communities they formed.

Her interest soon expanded into a broader exploration of mahjong's history and cultural impact. Antique sets sparked questions about the generations who played before, and a trip to China with her daughter offered firsthand insight into the game's origins. Back in the U.S., Saltzman curated a pop-up exhibition at New York's Museum of Chinese in America, highlighting both the game's roots and the players who sustain it today. The exhibition brought together stories, photographs, and sets, showing how mahjong connects individuals across time and place.



Those experiences led to *Tiles That Unite*. The book features more than 150 players from all 50 states, pairing their personal photographs with their stories. From collectors and competitors to teachers and casual enthusiasts, the book demonstrates how a shared game can foster connection, preserve tradition, and create community. It is not a manual on gameplay; it is a portrait of the people who keep mahjong alive.

Saltzman is a writer, producer, and cultural curator. She is the founder of Mahjong West Media, a platform dedicated to documenting the cultural life of mahjong and the individuals who quietly sustain its legacy.

From living rooms and libraries to senior centers and college campuses, one truth emerges: the tiles are only the beginning. What endures are the relationships, the laughter, and the moments of connection that unfold with every game.

Tiles That Unite is available on Amazon.

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English Channel

By Rodger Sterling

English Channel offers the best of the late editor Rodger Sterling's columns that ran continuously in the local papers since 1968.

• This from my daughter's good friend: When I miss my parents, I put 13 expired salad dressings and condiments in my fridge and it feels like home.

• "Doctor," the woman asked. "Every fortune teller I have met is either really depressing or overly enthusiastic." The doctor replied, "It's hard finding a happy medium."

• This from my favorite "church lady" Niki Budd. A poorly worded announcement in the bulletin that read, "Please place your donation in the envelope along with the deceased person you want remembered."

• Never put off till tomorrow what you can get someone else in your office to do today.

• Who said "They couldn't shoot an elephant at this dist..." General John B. Sedgwick, a Union army officer who was killed instantly by a Confederate sharp shooter.

• Overheard at Lovi's Deli. "Our neighbor died yesterday." "Who, Ray?" "I really don't think cheering is appropriate, Kevin."

• What happened when Jack was jilted by a street cleaner's daughter? Why, he was going to sewer.

• A little boy eating candy was approached by an elderly man saying if the boy continued eating candy he wouldn't live to be 80 like the old man. To which the boy replied, "My grandfather is 91 and he got that way eating candy and minding his own business."

• A curious observer saw a man at the Super Bowl with an empty seat next to him. He leaned over and asked him how there was an empty seat. The man told him that he bought the tickets several months ago for him and his wife, but the wife unfortunately passed. The observer give his condolences, and asked him why none of his family members took the ticket. He responded that they were all at the funeral.

Congressman Brad Sherman

TELEPHONE TOWN HALL

WEDNESDAY ✦ FEBRUARY 11, 2026

7:00 – 8:00 pm

A Telephone Town Hall operates like a large conference call, where you will hear Congressman Sherman's opening remarks and then ask questions on any issue facing Congress.

To Participate call (818) 214-8555 any time during the Town Hall

RSVP at: BradSherman.house.gov/RSVP

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Word on the Street

By Kathleen Sterling

What really riles me up is when someone tells me, "Oh, I don't listen to the news anymore. I can't watch it."

Some of it is because I'm in the news business. Some of it is just common sense – you need to know what is going on around you. I've heard it all. It's too negative. It's all bad news. It's depressing. But ignoring the news doesn't mean that the world isn't going to come to you. That if you hide your head in the sand, it won't eventually bury you.

Because it's not all bad news. There are good stories. Important stories.

Yes, there is crime, and corruption, and depravity and murder and every other horrendous thing you can think of. There are also stories of hope, and resilience, and people doing good out there.

First off, there's basic news: weather, traffic, sports.

City and state news: New laws, funding, protests, important issues being debated.

I find that the same people who don't listen to the news are the same ones who will complain the loudest. About politics, crime, the homeless.

But if you truly don't know what's going on out there, you can't help change it. Don't complain to me about the state of affairs if you really don't know what the state of the state is. And honestly, we each have one chance to change the world we live in. And that's our vote.

This year, the midterm elections are probably one of the most important in our lifetime. They will change the course of the next four years – and many more years to come.

Nationally: Ice. Epstein. Abortion. Transgender rights. Court rulings.

Locally: Homeless funding. Olympics funding. Police funding. Fire mitigation. The next leadership of Los Angeles County.

If you don't listen to the news, if you don't know what's going on, you don't have the right to complain. Because you can't really know the statistics. Which crimes are on the rise. Which are falling. What the homeless numbers really are. What the fire danger index is. And what's being done about it all.

So before the June election, I implore you. Turn on the news. Listen to one or two stations to get both sides. Know what's going on in your own neighborhood, your city, your state, your nation.

Take the bad with the good. Just be informed. Because you can't bitch about what's happening if you don't know what's happening.

And where we live, it may be bad at times. But it's better than most of the world - because we have the right to vote. We have one chance to stop whining and actually do something to change the narrative.

So grow up.

Read the papers. Listen to the news. So you can make informed decisions come June. Know the reality of what's happening. And if you still want to complain, then use your voice – and use your vote to change it.

Avoid M&A Headaches with a Pre-LOI Checklist Most Teams Overlook

By Janice L. Miller, Esq.

Most mergers and acquisitions (M&A) stress doesn't come from the Letter of Intent (LOI) itself. It comes from everything you wish you had organized before the LOI ever showed up. When you prepare early, you keep leverage where it belongs. When you don't, buyers compensate for uncertainty with conservative assumptions: lower price, tougher terms, broader protections, more escrow, and a longer path to closing. Pre-LOI preparation is about protecting deal value. The following are pre-LOI tips for an easier transaction.

If Your House Isn't In Order, Buyers Assume the Worst

Buyers want to confirm that the company is properly formed and governed. That means your entity documents should be complete and current, your ownership records should be clear, and major actions should be supported by the proper approvals and consents. ("A comprehensive guide to M&A due diligence with a 20-point checklist." Diligent, July 17, 2025.) The history and paper trail should be easy to follow. Any side arrangements need to be documented. Lack of proper documentation is one of the fastest ways deals get delayed.

Buyers are afraid of hidden risk. If there has been litigation, a threatened claim, a regulatory issue, or recurring customer disputes, those should be organized and understood in context. The way you handle disclosure is important.

Insurance tends to be a straightforward request, but it often catches sellers unprepared. A buyer will want to see current coverage, limits, exclusions, and any claims history. When insurance information is incomplete, it can raise questions about how the business manages operational risk.

If You Can't Explain Numbers, Buyers Will Rewrite Them

Buyers are looking for the story behind the numbers. You need to be able to explain what drives your margins, what normal working capital is, and how cycles affect performance. If you anticipate adjustments, you should know what they are, why they're justified, and how you'd explain them in plain terms. When a seller can't clearly articulate these, buyers tend to assume the most conservative interpretation.

The Agreements That Quietly Control Your Leverage

Most companies have agreements that drive enterprise value: major customer contracts, vendor relationships, key partners, and any agreements tied closely to the founder's personal involvement. Before an LOI, you should know what your important contracts say and whether they allow the business to be sold without third-party permission. Change-of-control restrictions, assignment limitations, exclusivity provisions, or unusual termination rights can all become leverage points for a buyer if they're discovered late. The more you understand your own agreements, the more you can negotiate around them.

Leases tend to accumulate amendments, side letters, informal concessions, and operational assumptions that don't always make it into the official file. Before you reach the LOI stage, the lease package should be complete and easy to review. Buyers want to know what obligations exist and if there are any issues.

Ownership Gaps That Turn Into Deal Problems

Businesses should treat intellectual property and brand ownership as foundational. That means the trademarks you rely on, the creative assets you use, the domains and social handles you operate under, and the materials created by founders, employees, and contractors should all have clean ownership. ("Change of Control?" Sidley Austin LLP, July 2020.) If contractors created important work without assignment language, or if brand assets are scattered across personal accounts, that is the kind of issue that can create disproportionate concern in diligence. The goal is to eliminate doubt before it becomes a negotiating tool.

What Your Data Room Says About Your Company

A good virtual data storage shows a buyer that this company is organized, governed, and ready. Clean folders, consistent naming, a simple index, and a summary can reduce friction. A messy diligence process sends a message that the business may be just as messy behind the scenes. ("Guide to data room for investors: checklist and best practices." ShareFile, Aug. 7, 2024.)

The point of pre-LOI preparation is to keep momentum on your side and protect the economics of the deal. When you do this work early, you negotiate from a position of strength. If you want to approach M&A with fewer headaches and more control, this is where it starts. A pre-LOI readiness review can help identify the issues that are easiest to fix now. Disclaimer: This article is not meant as legal advice. It is solely for educational purposes.

Miller is managing partner of Miller Haga Law Group.

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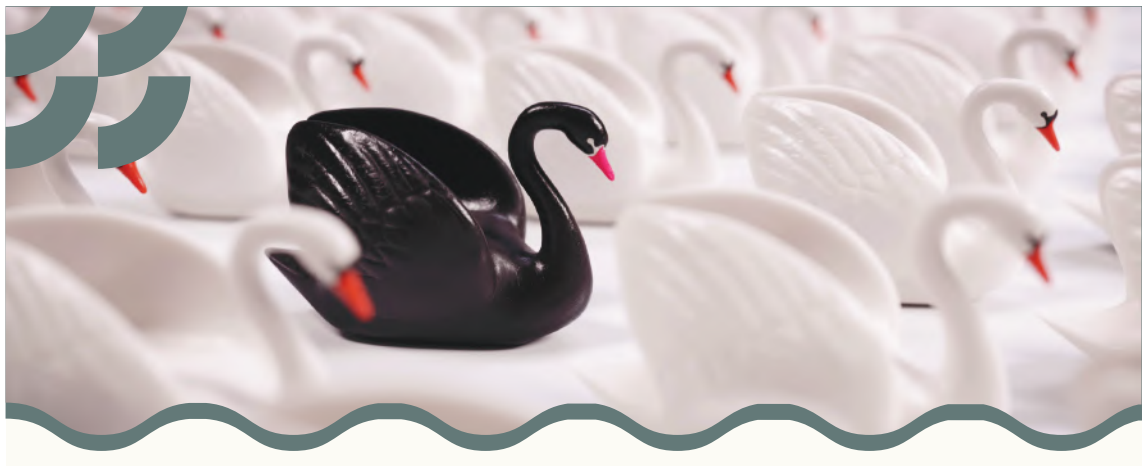

HEALTH

According to New Research, Your Lifespan May Be Heritable

According to a new study recently released in *Science*, your genes might actually have a far greater relation to your lifespan than previously thought. While earlier estimates clocked the percentage at 25%, new studies suggest that a person's lifespan may be 55% heritable.

The authors of the study separated what they coined extrinsic mortality (defined as deaths from external factors such as accidents, homicides, environmental hazards and infectious diseases) and intrinsic mortality (deaths caused by internal biological factors such as age-related diseases, genetic mutations and the general decline of health with age). Their conclusion matched with similar findings of genes in their relation to physiological traits; height, body fat and muscle build are thought to be approximately 50% heritable as well.

"The number that we got is not out of nowhere," said lead study author Ben Shenhar, who researches the physics of aging at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel. "If you look at twin studies on pretty much anything in humans, you get this 50%. If you look at the heritability age of onset at menopause, which is an age-related decline, it's also around 50%."

Scientists also looked at studies of other species where it clear that genes play a significant role in their lifespan.

Naturally, one's lifespan is not completely dominated by genes, but also one's lifestyle choices. While your DNA might hint at how long you'll live, lifestyle having, whether positive or negative, is estimated to move your lifespan needle by about five years in either direction.

Eric Verdin, president and chief executive of the Buck Institute for Research on Aging in California, cautioned against some of this research, pointing to infections such as COVID and its ability to be labeled as death from intrinsic mortality, since vulnerability is at least partially genetic. "We know that your genes play an enormous role in how you respond to infection," said Verdin, who suggested that altering the analysis might slightly lower the percentage genetics contribute to lifespan.

While it's certainly not a definitive conclusion, genetics no doubt play a large role in one's lifespan, but the lifestyle choices being made could prove significantly more important.

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HEALTH

State-of-the-Art DISC Surgery Center Opens in Tarzana

TriasMD, parent company of the DISC Surgery Centers, has announced that DISC Surgery Center at Tarzana is now open and ready to serve the San Fernando Valley.

With a focus on advanced spine, joint and interventional pain care, including motion-preservation techniques, the purpose-built ambulatory surgery center (ASC) has earned full AAAHC accreditation, confirming compliance with nationally recognized standards for patient safety and quality of care.

At 10,930 square feet, DISC Surgery Center at Tarzana includes three high-technology operating rooms and 11 patient care bays, including five private preoperative rooms and six post-anesthesia care unit bays. The ASC is located at the intersection of Ventura Boulevard and Lindley Avenue within a newly constructed two-story medical building that also houses DISC's full-service spine and musculoskeletal clinic, an 8,606-square-foot practice with 11 examination rooms.

Designed to support the safe delivery of complex outpatient care, DISC Surgery Center at Tarzana is equipped to treat a range of spine and musculoskeletal conditions that no longer require hospital admission when performed in appropriately selected patients.

One of three state-of-the-art operating rooms.

The ASC will provide a wide array of same-day procedures, including interventional pain treatments, spinal fusion, artificial disc replacement, hip and knee replacements, and other minimally invasive procedures. Advances in surgical technique, anesthesia, and postoperative protocols have made the ASC setting an appropriate site of care for many procedures once limited to hospitals.

The DISC Surgery Center is located at 18646 Ventura Blvd. in Tarzana. For more information, call 949-988-7800 or visit triasmd.com/tag/tarzana.

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ENTERTAINMENT

Fall in Love with Feeling Good at Burke Williams this Valentine's Day

Looking to pamper your Valentine? Or treat yourself? Burke Williams is ready to transform your Valentine's Day with limited time curated gift card packages to enhance any spa day. Spa guests can choose from the "Sweet Escape," "Purely Pampered," "Perfect Pair (For Two)", or "Cupid's Retreat."

Sweet Escape includes a 65-minute Pure Relaxation Massage or Spa Style Facial, one enhancement of choice and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $220 (gift card valued at $260).

Purely Pampered includes a 65-minute Pure Relaxation Massage, a 50-minute Spa Style Facial, one enhancement of choice and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $375 (gift card valued at $440).

Perfect Pair (For Two) includes two 80-minute Pure Relaxation Massages, two enhancements of choice and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $475 (gift card valued at $570).

Cupid's Retreat includes a 90-minute Burke Williams Experience, an 80-minute Nourishing or Radiance Facial, a 20-minute Spa Bath and access to spa amenities during your visit. This package is $600 (gift card valued at $700).

Enhancement offers exclude CBD and Advanced Eye-Lift where not specified. Enhancement must be redeemed in combination with a service.

Locations closest to the Valley include Woodland Hills in Topanga Village (6256 Topanga Canyon Blvd.) and Sherman Oaks in the Galleria (15301 Ventura Boulevard, Unit 4).

Call 1-866-239-6635 or visit burkewilliams.com to purchase these Valentine's themed packages.

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The Housemaid is a Mindless Adaptation that Misses the Mark

By Katie Sterling

If *Hamnet* is a film adaptation of a novel, *The Housemaid* is a movie adaptation of a book. For some, this sentence is a complete review in and of itself. After all, films tend to engross you emotionally and intellectually, while movies tend to be watched with one eye on the screen and the other on your phone. At least in this day and age of limited attention spans, a story has to really grab you to hold your attention and sadly, *The Housemaid* accomplishes that goal more in a book format, than a movie one. The book is better than the movie?! Shocking!

However, "popcorn" movies aren't bad, don't read that the wrong way. They're simply presented differently; they're light, they're fun, they're possibly on the twelfth installment of the series and keep being made whether you want them to or not. "Popcorn" movies allow people to fall in love with the movies, as much as films can, and frankly, is the reason *F1* is up for Best Picture at the Oscars. While *The Housemaid*, on paper, is the ultimate "popcorn" movie, at the end of it, you're left with more kernels than buttery bites.

Adapted by the Frieda McFadden book of the same name, *The Housemaid* is a domestic thriller directed by Paul Feig (*A Simple Favor, Bridesmaids*). Past movies of his prove that "camp" is his genre of choice, but with this adaptation it feels as if there was a hesitation to go full crazy with it. The book was quite a rollercoaster read, but the movie feels like the ride that perpetually gets stuck at the theme park. With this type of story, you either have to go full-out or not at all.

Millie (Sydney Sweeney) is living in her car when she gets the unbelievable offer to become the live-in maid for the genial Nina Winchester (Amanda Seyfried). The Winchesters live in a home indistinguishable from those in designer magazines and present as a happy family straight from Stepford. It's only when Nina's husband Andrew (Brendan Sklenar) has to talk Nina down from a Bravo-level meltdown, does Millie start to notice the cracks in this family's façade. As Millie spends more time with Nina, tension escalates and mind games point to bigger, hidden issues at play.

Those who've read the book know a twist is coming, but first-time viewers of the movie might be wondering when exactly the narrative will turn thrilling. For the better part of the first half of the movie, it's a slow burn where Millie and Nina play off their class dichotomy, Millie tortured by Nina's antics but not in the financial position to leave. It's only after the first hour that the narrative leans into what you would expect and frankly, that's a bit too long to get to the much-anticipated twist.

Once the twist is revealed, the movie picks up a little, but not enough to make you forget the long journey to get there. Again, *The Housemaid* is not bad per se, it just feels as if it's missing something. Is this a detriment of the story being adapted from page to screen? Was it the choice to change the ending and putting too much effort into that climax and not the lead up?

The only one who seemed to truly get the absurdity memo was Amanda Seyfried, who plays both sides of her character no holds barred. Her switch into her various demeanors is so subtle and exactly the unhinged character you want in this storyline. Sweeney, however, can't match this energy and the relationship between the two women doesn't drive the narrative as much as it needs to. It's not great when a movie is unintentionally cheesy when it's meant to be thrilling.

Granted, the original book is polarizing between readers who either love the ridiculousness of it or think it's literary trash (fun fact: the author is actually a pseudonym for the woman whose daily job is that of a neurosurgeon). But much like the majority of movies in Hollywood, it doesn't matter if you love it or hate it, the sequel is already in the works.

The Housemaid is available on Amazon.

Nighttrek: What to See in the February Sky

By Neill Simmons

The highlight of February is on the 18th and 19th when the planet Mercury is at its highest in the west after sunset.

The Romans named the planet after the swift Roman messenger god, Mercury, because it moves across the sky faster than any other planet. It takes 88 days to orbit the sun. Mercury is the smallest planet in our solar system but has one of the largest temperature range: between a day high of 790 F degrees and a night low of -270 F degrees. That's over a 1,000 degree difference from day to night!

February 1st brings the full moon known as the Snow Moon. A fitting name because currently much of North America is pummeled by snow during this time of the year. February is often the snowiest month for the Northeast and Midwest. This sure makes us appreciate living in Southern California!

Halley's Comet will next make an appearance in 2061!

NASA is planning a manned rocket launch on February 6 from the Kennedy Space Center in Florida. The Artemis II rocket will carry four astronauts on a 10-day test flight around the Moon and back to Earth. This flight will go farther than any manned rocket in history. The three men and one woman astronauts have been in quarantine since January 23 to prepare for this mission. The goal is to set up for a Moon landing with Artemis III's astronauts, who are not yet named.

The next relatively bright comet visible from Earth is C/2024 E1. Around February 17, look in the west with binoculars to see if you can spot it. A comet's center is made of ice but isn't like frozen water. A comet's ice is super cold methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide. Comets lose mass each time they get close to the sun. After many years of circling the sun, a comet will eventually break apart. The most famous is Halley's Comet which visited us in 1985 and is estimated to appear again in July of 2061.

On February 27 (my wife's birthday) look up to see the Moon and Jupiter appearing to be near each other. Jupiter is a brilliant point of light in the east. It is the fifth planet from the sun and the most massive one in our solar system. If Earth was the size of a grape, then Jupiter would be a basketball.

This gas giant has 79 known moons and the four biggest can been seen with binoculars – Io, Europa, Ganymede, and Callisto. Jupiter is the third brightest object in the sky after Venus and our Moon and can be easily seen with the naked eye.

If you are planning a trip to Europe this summer, there will be a total solar eclipse starting in Greenland and traveling south through Portugal and Spain. It will be the first time in 27 years since a total solar eclipse happened in Europe.

Looking ahead, there will be a total lunar eclipse on March 2. A total lunar eclipse takes place when the Earth comes between the Sun and the Moon and its shadow covers the Moon. Eclipse watchers can see the Moon turn red when the eclipse reaches totality between 3:04 and 3:33 am on March 3. This is known as a "Blood Moon."

On Saturday, February 21, the Griffith Observatory will be hosting a FREE public star party from 2 pm to 9:45 pm. There will be a chance for the whole family to look at the Sun, Moon, visible planets, and other objects, to try out a variety of telescopes, and to talk to knowledgeable amateur astronomers about the sky and their equipment.

When not stargazing, Neill Simmons, is an Investment Executive with LPL Financial. If you have any astronomy or financial questions, he may be reached at (818) 936-2626 or neill.simmons@lpl.com.

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