

CALENDAR

weekend

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Heart attack

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Struck by Cupid's arrow? Or stung by Cupid's error? Valentine's Day can mean a bouquet or a body slam.

February 8th, 2007

Valentine's Day is upon us. You could go the usual flowers, candy and candlelight dinner route, or you might try these.

Hearty alternatives

By JUSTIN HAMPTON
Special to The Times

By the time most adults leave high school, they've already figured out that the game of love has some pretty long odds built into it. People who say they love you are just as likely to send you a subpoena as they are flowers and chocolate, prompting many an emotionally guarded yet fun-loving Angeleno to erase Valentine's Day celebrations from their schedule altogether.

But history — not to mention some of Los Angeles' shrewder event designers — has proved this holiday can be celebrated by practically everyone, any way they please. After all, Feb. 14 has quite a history:

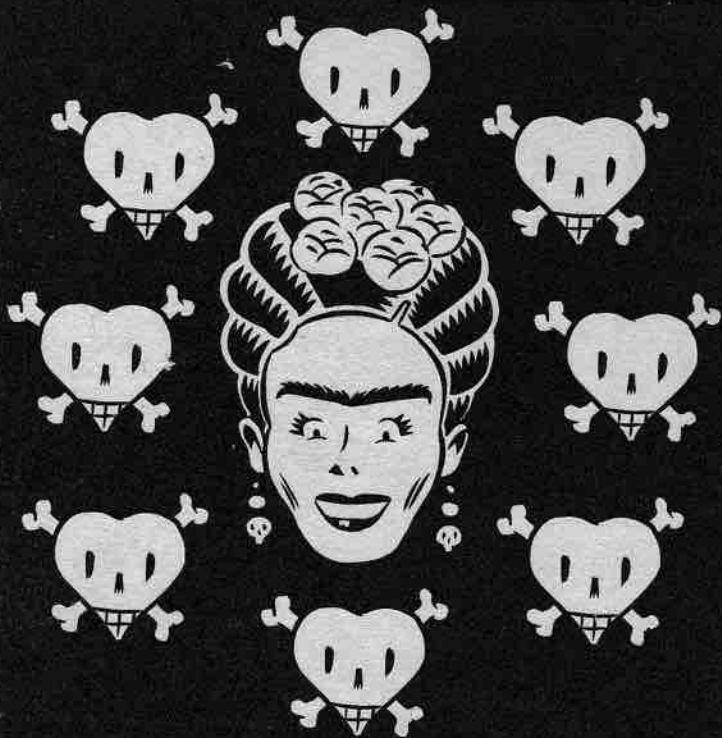
- First, there was the Lupercalia festival, held by the pagan Romans until AD 494. On this day, priests would sacrifice goats, cut strips of skin off the animals' bodies and fashion the rest of the hide into nifty pantsuits. Parading around town later in their new duds, they would slap passersby with their strips of goatskin, particularly women, who felt this would increase fertility and ease the pain of childbirth.

- Emotional traditionalists sighed fondly over the birth of the mass-marketed American valentine, midwived by an entrepreneur named Esther Howland in the mid-1800s. For a woman who never married, Howland cashed in on romantic longing quite well with her lace-embossed declarations of devotion.

- Then there was the gangland violence of the St. Valentine's Day Massacre. Shot through the heart, and Capone's to blame — boy, did he ever give love a bad name.

Outrageous hostility, bizarre and unintentionally hilarious situations, cloying sentimentality and, yes, actual emotion: Put it all together and it spells L-U-V. In this spirit, we've arranged a Whitman's sampler of heart-shaped events. Whether you're lovesick or sick of love, there's at least one place to gather here where the people are feeling it as strongly as you. But remember: No matter how certain you might be of love's strengths or weaknesses, being at the right place at the right time can change it all in a heartbeat.

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My funny valentine

We're not only laughing *with* love, we're laughing *at* love too. Anyone writing a sonnet to a Vivid contract girl comparing her to his mom is basically asking for it, right? However, the right sort of humor can bag the elephant and make all the difference in ending a lonely life, and that's no laughing matter. So take your pick:

The Festival of Mirth: The Love Show — Nothing says "I love you" quite like a Frida Kalho impersonator with skeleton babies crawling out from underneath her hoop skirt. That and a motley band of puppeteers, neo-circus freaks and oddball performers await the mated at the California Institute of Abnormal-arts' first-ever love show. "Everyone's doing love gone wrong," festival organizer Kelly "Satanica" Robin warns. Cal-Arts faculty members Eli Presser and Laura Heit will use sophisticated marionettes and finger puppets, respectively, as stand-ins for humans and their never-ending needs, and comic book artist Dame Darcy will sing a love song to her doll, Isabella. Satanica will host a cross-dressing fire dinner performance on the premises, while Loud Louisa injects the all-important burlesque element into the performance, and it's all rounded out with musical interludes from a host of performers. Should this and the "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" film clips scattered throughout assault the traditional sentiments too harshly, Satanica's only advice is to lighten up. "When you're in love, you're kind of stuck there," she says. "So we embrace 'The Honeymooners' version of love. You love each other,

even though you drive each other crazy."

■ 9 p.m. Saturday at CIA, 11334 Burbank Blvd., North Hollywood. \$10. (818) 506-6353; www.ciabnormalarts.com.

"Say the Word: Love Bugs" — There is a place in the world for the true believers, and their day job almost invariably seems to be sitcom television. You see, all the cheap shots and punch-up sessions in the world have not dimmed the underlying optimism that "Say the Word" producer Gary Miller insists is at the heart of "Say the Word's Valentine's Day Love Bugs" special, which is co-conceived by Beth Lapidés. Here, TV comedy writers share their thoughts on love. "A lot of comedy is about mocking and what you hate and making fun of," Miller says, "and we feel that there is a deeper kind of comedy that comes from love and self-knowledge and understanding." Sure, Rob Cohen will share details of his worst Valentine's Day ever, but what did you expect from a "Simpsons" scribe? Counterbalancing this cynicism will be Jon Kinnally's ("Will & Grace") avowal of fondness for his cat, as well as contributions from Scott Carter, Stephen Glass and Lapidés herself. Their testimonies might be enough to reveal whether *your* relationship is a joke or not. "You can see if you're compatible with a person if you both really respond to the same material or not," observes Miller. "We've had people meet at shows, have first dates at shows, then go on to get married. So it's a comedy show *and* a dating service."

■ 8 p.m. Friday at Skirball Center, 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., L.A. \$8 to \$15. (866) 468-3399; www.uncabaret.com.

Love hurts

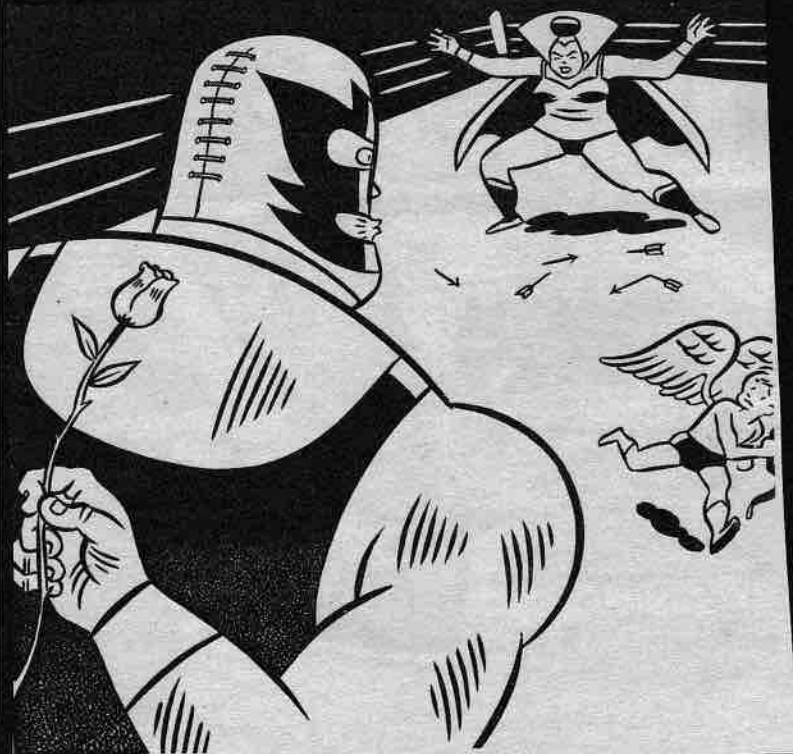
One has to be wary of a holiday presided over by a bratty little toddler aiming at your chest with a projectile weapon. Face it, Cupid isn't exchanging half-dollars for baby teeth or leaving gift cards in your socks on Christmas Day. He's just smirking silently as EMTs apply electric countershock to your body, thinking he's done you a favor. Yes, love is a battlefield, and it's up to you whether you want to enlist or defect. Choose your weapon carefully:

Birds' Anti-Valentine's Day Party — Given up on Feb. 14 yet? You're not alone. In some corners of the world, people have taken steps to block Valentine's Day celebrations as imported social decadence from the West, and even American Greetings has capitalized on the backlash with anti-Valentine's Day cards. So one should expect quite a crowd over at Birds' Rotisserie Chicken Café and Bar, where the fiercely independent gather to tell their war stories, drown their sorrows in cocktails such as the Poison Arrow and listen to anti-love songs all night. Birds' co-owner Mary Preston, who has been running the event for 12 years, recognized early on how inappropriate seasonal clichés would be for her clientele. Instead, she's supplied the Bonfire of the Broken-Hearted, where lonely hearts cast Post-it notes of past loves into a flaming kitchen pot and move on with their lives. Patrons can also compete for worst-ever breakup story and win a gift certificate. And believe it or not, Preston notes that they might also find a date too. "Invariably, it's big groups of single women who come in together, and big groups of guys come in together with the idea of, 'Oh, love stinks.'" she says. "But by the end of the

night, they feel very positive. And they exchange phone numbers, which I think is interesting."

■ 8 p.m. to 1 a.m. Wednesday at Birds' Rotisserie Chicken Café and Bar, 5925 Franklin Ave., L.A. Free. (323) 465-0175.

Lucha Va Voom: Sexo y Violencia — Let's face it: No matter how much you love him, there are some days you just wanna grab the old Santo mask off the nightstand and body slam your significant other straight into the simpler planes of existence. Lucha Va Voom hears it loud and clear. It has integrated a male stripper performing on a pogo stick, a mini-wrestler dressed as Cupid and a "Little Mermaid"-obsessed hula-hooper named Karis into its patented mixture of burlesque, *lucha libre* wrestling and comedy. The ultra-sexy masked wrestler Blue Demon Jr. promises to punish less alluring wrestlers, and any wrestler may end up with his pants around his ankles at any time as scores are settled between grapplers and dancers alike. Dana Gould (a writer and co-executive producer for "The Simpsons"), Patton Oswalt and "SpongeBob SquarePants" Tom Kenny will alter-



nate as MC for each night. Local favorite Lucy Fur will perform a traditional burlesque dance, and New York City's Wau Wau Twins will rain love from above with their aerial act. "It's going to be our biggest show ever in terms of production and theme and polish and everything," promises Lucha Va Voom chief Rita D'Albert. "It's going to be cohesive and romantic in a sexy, violent kind of way."

■ 8 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and next Thursday at the Mayan Theater, 1038 S. Hill St., L.A. \$30 to \$60. www.luchavavoom.com.

Love saves the day

In a city the size of Los Angeles, the law of averages would imply that for every lone wolf, there's one happy couple that might want to actually commemorate their love for each other on this holiday. So here's something for you — and try not to rub it in for the rest of us, will you?

Hot 92 Jamz Love Affair — Love songs. They not only have ceased to make them like they used to, but they're practically forbidden from doing so. Just ask LL Cool J about the grief he faced from hardened B-boys when he released "I Need Love," or ask Beyoncé if she feels bad about sending her boy to the left. No, to truly evoke romance you have to take certain songs out of mothballs, which is why the 6th Annual Hot 92 Jamz Love Affair seems so appropriate. It doesn't matter what else these artists have done in their careers, because Eddie Holman *better* sing "Hey There Lonely Girl," Heatwave *better* sing "Always and Forever" and Barbara Mason *better* sing "Yes I'm Ready" — if they want the tires on their cars to remain unslashed. With R&B warhorses Bloodstone, Dorothy Moore, Evelyn "Champagne" King, Sunny & the Sunliners, El Chicano and Midnight Star rounding

out the bill, this concert is the last honest reminder of civilized society any couple needs before heading home and charging at each other like crazed wildebeests.

■ 7:30 p.m. Saturday at the Forum, 3900 W. Manchester Blvd., Inglewood. \$20 to \$45.50. (310) 330-7340; www.ticketmaster.com.

Be My Valentine — Did people *really* believe in love way back when? Well, they certainly had a lovely way of showing it, as this annual exhibit of antique valentines, teddy bears and kewpie dolls at the Grier Musser Museum has proved time and again. The museum's owner, Susan Tejada, has concrete evidence in the form of scores of handmade cards from the 1890s to the 1950s that there *is*, in fact, enough love in the world. Seen through the rose-colored Depression glass also on display, it's all enough to make you drop your cynicism, until you have to leave and face the modern world anew.

■ 1 to 4 p.m. Sunday (tours at 1 and 2:30 p.m.) at the Grier Musser Museum, 403 S. Bonnie Brae St., L.A. \$10 (reservations required). (213) 413-1814, griermusser@hotmail.com or www.griermussermuseum.com.

Random acts of the valentine's kind

Unlike holidays such as New Year's Eve and Thanksgiving, most couples prefer to celebrate Valentine's Day with as few people as possible. But there's no time like the present for everybody else to try to get prepared for next year ... hint, hint:

Sentimental journeys

Operation Troop Hug: Around the world, people have been publicly hugging each other, as instructed in Juan Mann's now-famous "Free Hugs" video on YouTube. Local organizers have developed a twist for troops stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan: All participants can come wearing a sign of the soldier or division, acting as a stand-in. Someone hugs them, and it's filmed. After it's edited, it's posted on YouTube and participants can send it along to their designated soldier. Event assistant Kimarie Teter explains that it's "so the soldiers know that regardless of how we feel about the war, we thank God for them and their families." 7 p.m. Wednesday outside of Grauman's Chinese Theatre, 6925 Hollywood Blvd., Hollywood. Free. www.myspace.com/troophug.

Festival de San Valentin: This two-day block party may not offer many chances for intimacy, but it will have plenty of opportunities to stock up on cotton candy. 12:15 p.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at Ted Watkins Park, Century Boulevard at Central Avenue. Free. (818) 734-2744.

"Paw-fect Match" Super Adoption Drive: For those who have had it with humans, L.A. Animal Services will hook you up with your soulmate, with reduced pricing, volunteer matchmakers and an animal kissing booth. 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at all six City of Los Angeles Animal Care Centers. Free. (888) 4LA-PET1; www.laanimalservices.com.

Listen, Learn and Make: A Valentine's to Remember: After a half-hour storybook session, children can then make storybooks with their families to give to their own valentines. 1 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday at the Craft and Folk Art Museum, 5814 Wilshire Blvd., L.A. \$6 per child; other family members free. www.cafam.org.

Peace and Love Walk: Think of this as universal love, as evoked in a walking meditation — to be followed by, yes, eating, laughing and hugging meditations. 1 p.m. Saturday at Yoga at the Village, 1306 Sonora Ave., Glendale. Free. (818) 569-3009. www.peaceiseverystepla.org.

Clubs favor hearts

Check Yo' Pre-Valentine's Rave: Feel the hipster love with disco-punk leisure outfits Switch and Acid Girls; DJs Franki Chan and Paparazzi preside. Oh, and be sure to get some ice cream from the Hearts Challenger truck — it's free. 9 p.m. Tuesday at Safari Sam's, 5214 W.

Sunset Blvd., L.A. \$10. www.safarisams.com.

Quango Lounge: DJs Allen Voskarian and Bruno Guez return from winter hibernation in a timely fashion, spinning down-tempo at this elegantly appointed bar-restaurant. 10:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Falcon, 7213 Sunset Blvd., Hollywood. No cover. (323) 250-5350.

Visions of love

Create:Fixate: Love. Beauty. Desire.: This long-running art gallery/DJ party sets its themes accordingly, offering live photography, electronica and a world premiere of the romance documentary "Song of Songs" for the culturally inclined. 7 p.m. Saturday (\$5 preview begins at 4 p.m.), 1530 Ivar Ave., Hollywood. \$15. www.createfixate.com.

The Love Show: Dance, glass blowing, performance painting, Etch-a-Sketch portraiture and maybe even a Magic Slate or two await at this love-themed exhibit and reception. 8 p.m. Saturday at M.J. Higgins Fine Art, 244 S. Main St., L.A. No cover. (213) 617-1700. www.mjhiggins.com.

Feel the Love: A Valentine's Pre-Fix Workshop: Movement and energy workshops, a four-course dinner and even a CPR class await students at this art gallery event. Definitely for the faint of heart. 7 to 10 p.m. Wednesday at Machine Project, 1200-D N. Alvarado St., L.A. \$15; RSVPs required. (213) 483-8761; www.machineproject.com.

Putting it in words

WordTheatre presents Love & Eros: An Evening of Saucy Stories and Poetry: Such actors as "The Shield's" Catherine Dent and Andrew Borba, "Seinfeld's" Marcia Firesten, "CSI's" Paul Gullfoyle and "The Nine's" Jessica Collins read excerpts from Shakespeare, Walt Whitman, Anais Nin, Sappho, Baudelaire, e.e. cummings and others. 7 p.m. dinner (8:30 p.m. performance) Wednesday at M Bar, 1253 N. Vine St., Hollywood. Prices vary. www.wordtheatre.com.

Naughty is nice

Be My Valentine Burlesque Show: If there's no one in your life willing to take off their clothes in front of you this Valentine's Day, at least La Cholita, Vixen Violette, Scarlett Letter and Kat Bardot will, with a wink. 9 p.m. Wednesday at the Whisky, 8901 Sunset Blvd., West Hollywood. \$14. www.whiskyagogo.com.

Miss Kitty's Discotek and Cabaret's Blackhearts Ball '07: For those more inclined toward lust, Miss Kitty's Discotek and Cabaret has supplied go-go girls, amateur strip-offs and a costume contest. 9 p.m. Friday at the Dragonfly, 6510 Santa Monica Blvd., Hollywood. \$13. www.dragonfly.com.