



# TRAVELER

ALL TRAVEL, ALL THE TIME | Nov-Dec 2010

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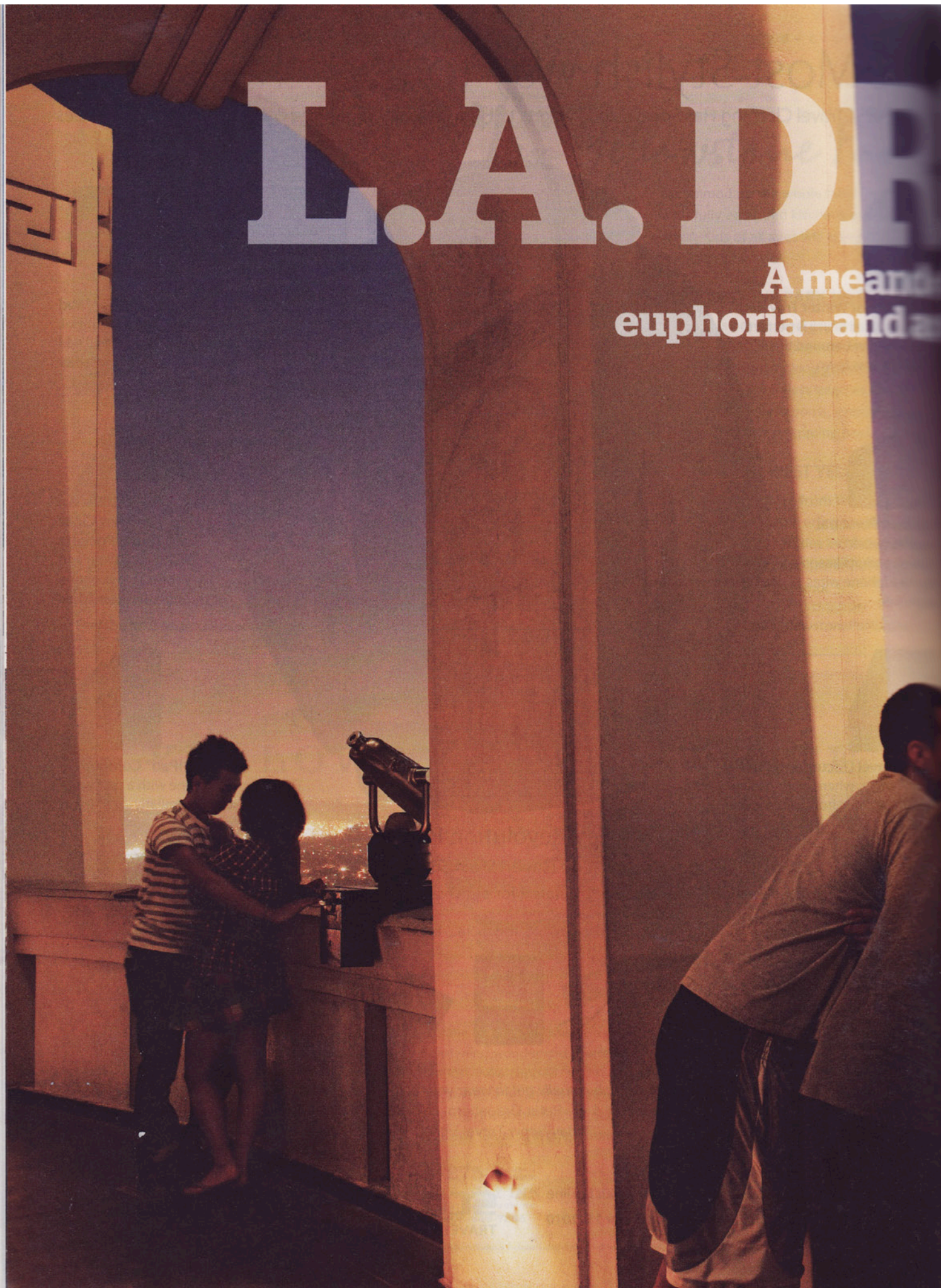


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# L.A. DR

A meander  
euphoria—and a





# REAMIN'

ndelown memory lane reignites the excitement,  
divalence—that only Tinseltown can inspire.

BY **ANDREW McCARTHY**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **CATHERINE KARNOW**



Parallel universe:  
The glittery land-  
scape of L.A. viewed  
from the hilltop  
Griffith Observatory  
fairly shimmers with  
visions of glamour,  
success, and fame.



Maybe it's the American notion that "there's nothing that a hundred bucks and a full tank of gas won't fix." Whenever I fire up my engine, it feels like possibility is waiting just around the corner. Anything may happen.

Chasing the sun on the Santa Monica Freeway with the top down and radio on, I'm suddenly reminded of the car accident I had along this road. Everywhere I turn in L.A., another ghost of my past presents itself for a reckoning. If I were a local, most of these memories would have faded into my everyday life. But I've been coming west intermittently (though regularly) over an extended period of years, so streets and buildings that would go unnoticed with daily familiarity to me resonate with meaning and significance.

I can't visit the Beverly Hills Hotel without remembering drinks I had with an outsize Italian film producer. Whenever I pass a nondescript street off Olympic Boulevard I recall the pyramid scheme I got suckered into by someone I trusted. The sight of an old restaurant on Sunset Boulevard inevitably brings to mind the director who terrorized me in my youth. Otherwise benign landmarks chart the passing of time, the accumulation of a life lived. They either threaten to bury me under their collective weight or add up to not just knowledge of a place, but a relationship, a connection that in some way needs to be, if not honored, at least accepted.

Not all of my memories of Los Angeles are fraught, of course. Most are fond recollections of events and places that tie me, in some small way, to the legacy of Hollywood history. Among these is one of my favorite Los Angeles institutions, a place that has been luring patrons to the heart of Hollywood since 1919 and that I always head for to get my L.A. bearings. Step over the stars of John Barrymore and Gene Autry on Hollywood Boulevard and enter into the world of Musso & Frank Grill—the oldest restaurant in Hollywood. Here, red-tuxedoed waiters bearing trays of lunchtime martinis and chops shuffle among red leather-padded booths along dark-paneled walls, just as they did for Charlie Chaplin, who dined here so often that he was given his own booth.

"They all came here," lunchtime maître d' Manuel Felix, a dapper gentleman in a gray suit with a Felix the Cat tiepin, tells me. "Susan Hayward—whoa!" he exclaims, shaking his hand as if he's just touched a hot skillet.

I ask Mr. Felix how long he has been presiding over the tables at Musso & Frank's. He fixes me with a stare. "Since before you existed." Then he smiles. "But we've changed with the times.



Thirty-six-year veteran at Musso & Frank Grill, Manuel Felix (above) is one of many longtimers welcoming diners to this Hollywood institution. Artful eye candy: Bold sculptures stud a terrace at the Getty Center (opposite).

We've put in electric lights, an icebox, and air-conditioning. And the new room."

"New room?" I look at him, confused. The place looks exactly as it did when I first walked in more than 25 years ago. Even the menu seems the same.

## McCarthy's L.A. Favorites

**Larchmont Boulevard** Not far from the Paramount lot sits this walker's oasis in a driver's town: a small village with a British feel—it dates to 1911—popular for its sidewalk cafés. I always stop here for a smoothie or cup of tea. [www.larchmont.com](http://www.larchmont.com)

**Griffith Observatory and Park** I visited this domed landmark on my first trip to L.A. The third

planetarium built in the U.S., opened in 1935, it offers a magnificent view of L.A. I love visiting at night, when the stars shine above and city lights shimmer below. 2800 E. Observatory Rd.; [www.griffithhobs.org](http://www.griffithhobs.org).

**My Favorite Breakfast Spots** **Marmalade** at 710 Montana Ave., Santa Monica, for the early-morning biking and yoga crowd.

**Dukes**, an old rock 'n' roll joint at 8908 W. Sunset, for its vintage ambience. The **Fountain Coffee Room** in the Beverly Hills Hotel for old Hollywood charm.

**Point Dume State Preserve** I love to drive the Pacific Coast Highway to this beautiful stretch of beach near Malibu. I've shot movie scenes on the rocks above the beach (right) and

watched porpoises ease up the coast while I walked on the sand. This spot of nature makes L.A.

