

SMOKE MACHINES: Getting a nitro high at the NHRA Finals



[VENUE]

Party Central

A new club from L.A. nightlife's first lady

» If it weren't for Shereen Arazm, Hollywood would be a lot quieter. She's the 35-year-old owner of such resto-bars as Parc and Concorde (recently relaunched as Shag). In 2004, she teamed with the Dolce Group to launch Geisha House, successfully persuading the company to locate the venture in the heart of the then-fledgling nightlife district ("I was like, this is the future," says Arazm).

Party down: This month Arazm launches Central, at Las Palmas and Hollywood. Billed as the after-party for Parc (Central Parc—get it?), it'll feature her usual formula of slick decor and stringent door policy, but with an intimate, low-key vibe. "I'm over the whole megaclub thing," she says. Note to strobe light manufacturers: lean years ahead.

[EVENT]

What a Drag

Pomona's day at the races

» Close your eyes and inhale: Do the nitromethane fumes sear your nostrils? Do the 7,000-horsepower engines pound your eardrums? Do the fastest-accelerating machines on the planet rattle your coccyx? Good. You must be at the Pomona Fairplex, where the National Hot Rod Association Finals (held November 1 to 4) mark the close of the Glendora-based NHRA's 54th year of competition. **It's the pits:** Long overshadowed by the telegenic celebs and corporate iconography of NASCAR, the NHRA offers an experience more akin to a county fair. At Pomona you can get dirty with the drivers and mechanics in the pits before a race and relive drag racing's "grease monkey" glory days of the 1960s and '70s (the quarter-mile strip is the oldest on the circuit and one of the few surviving local tracks from that era). If a NASCAR race is like a grand coronation, Pomona is more like a storefront revival, with explosions courtesy of the nitro—a cheapskate's rocket fuel that makes for a guaranteed all-around good time. The nitro practice runs held before Sunday's main event are not to be missed. But you'd better open your eyes for those.



[BOOKS]

Key to the City

Santa Monica gets a new insiders' guide

» It's where Anaïs Nin's ashes were scattered, and where *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World* was filmed. We're talking about Santa Monica—and so is *Hometown Santa Monica* (Prospect Park Books, 256 pages, \$24.95), which hits shelves this month, blending city

guidebook boilerplate (shopping, dining) with smart sections on famous local murders, area literary history, and, um, the Milken Institute. Full of color photos, Q&As with regional authorities, and information on everything from Wi-Fi zones to spiritual centers, it's a good read. **Don't feed the stars:** The page on celeb sightings functions like a wildlife manual, with rules for getting autographs and making famous friends. One problem: No mention of KCRW?

// LESLEY BARGAR, DAVID DAVIS, ROBERT ITO, RJ SMITH, AND SARA WILSON

Buzz Cut



Moment of silence: It's only appropriate that the first city to make nutrition a hobby should also be the first without Wonder Bread. After more than 60 years of baking the preeminent symbol of overprocessed food (also, we should add, the ultimate vehicle for a PB&J) at its four Southern California factories, Wonder Bread cut its last local slice on October 29. Those craving carbs will have to head to Las Vegas—the next-closest point of sale. Bleached, all-purpose flour: the newest sin in Sin City.