

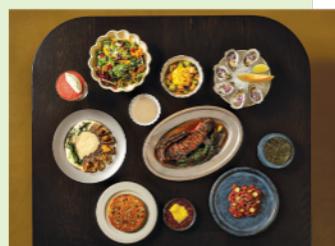
Hi-Fi Heaven

Riffing on the tradition of Japan's *jazz kissa* cafés—where patrons listen to jazz on vinyl in respectful silence—new high-fidelity listening bars and restaurants are springing up throughout SoCal, with a livelier, more social vibe and genres not limited to jazz. **» WENDY O'DEA**

West Hollywood **»** Notable Southern chef Sean Brock opened **Darling** after falling in love with the listening lounge concept in Japan. His first West Coast foray pairs a dramatic dining space with a lounge equipped with a retractable roof. The music program features rotating DJs—including Brock, who occasionally spins tunes. *Closed Mondays and Tuesdays.*

Santa Ana **»** Next door to their longtime downtown restaurant Kaizen Shabu, siblings Lamson and Diane Nguyen opened **Sonder**, a music-centric restaurant and bar where sustainability and style converge. The menu highlights Southeast Asian flavors, while the soundtrack and bold interiors are designed to bring people together. On Thursdays, bring in your favorite record and they might give it a spin. *Closed Mondays.*

San Diego **»** On a custom-built sound system, DJs at **Kiku Room** play music that ranges from Balearic house and dark cosmic disco to global funk and Japanese pop. Patrons enjoy affordable drinks, moody lighting, and sets curated to open listeners' ears to fresh rhythms. *Closed Wednesdays.*



Clockwise from top: Darling's lounge and sound system; a sampling of Darling's dishes; chef Sean Brock.

GENTLE GIANTS

The elephants are ready for their close-up. More than three years in the making, San Diego Zoo Safari Park's immersive **Elephant Valley** is set to open in March. While longtime visitors are accustomed to seeing elephants from a distance, the new 13-acre habitat at the Escondido park allows guests to feel as though they're walking among the pachyderms. "You can see their wrinkles, their eyelashes, and how they interact and communicate with each other," says park director Pat McTigue.

Visitors can wind through a plantscape that replicates the African savanna and grasslands, learning how elephants act as ecosystem engineers. While barriers keep both people and animals safe, guests can get close-up views of the creatures playing and socializing. Elevated views can be found at the two-story Mkutano House restaurant (pictured lower left), where there are three African-inspired dining options. The restaurant is situated near one of Elephant Valley's two expansive watering holes, where the herd often gathers to splash and play. Educational programs and community gatherings will take place in nearby Mkutano Park (the Swahili word means "gathering with purpose").

"You'll get the full story of living among elephants, seeing them in nature, and how communities can thrive with wildlife around them," says McTigue. "The park makes the world a little bit smaller—we hope our visitors will leave inspired to experience and protect wildlife in their own neighborhoods." *Included in general admission; adult tickets start at \$78; parking is \$20.* **» MEGHAN O'DELL**



COASTAL CONVERGENCE

The opening of **Linden Square** in Carpinteria revitalized the town's Linden Avenue last year, providing a new hub for residents and visitors to gather. Several independent Central Coast businesses make up the square, whose open-air courtyard features lush plants, murals by local artists, comfortable seating, firepits, and play areas. The resulting indoor-outdoor aesthetic is right at home given Carp's beachy, laid-back vibes.

Shoppers can grab ethically sourced roasts at Dart Coffee before browsing apparel, accessories, home decor, and art at The Shopkeepers; support local artisans at Macher; or check out the goods and gear at Channel Islands Surfboards. Meanwhile, Corazon Cocina Sur offers innovative twists on classic Mexican dishes, Tina's Pizza specializes in naturally leavened pies, and Third Window Brewing serves burgers and brews. Olada offers yoga and Pilates, and on Tuesdays, local musicians fill the courtyard with live music. **» CHUCK GRAHAM**

FROM TOP: RON DE ANGELIS (3); COURTESY LINDEN SQUARE

COURTESY SAN DIEGO ZOO WILDLIFE ALLIANCE (3)