

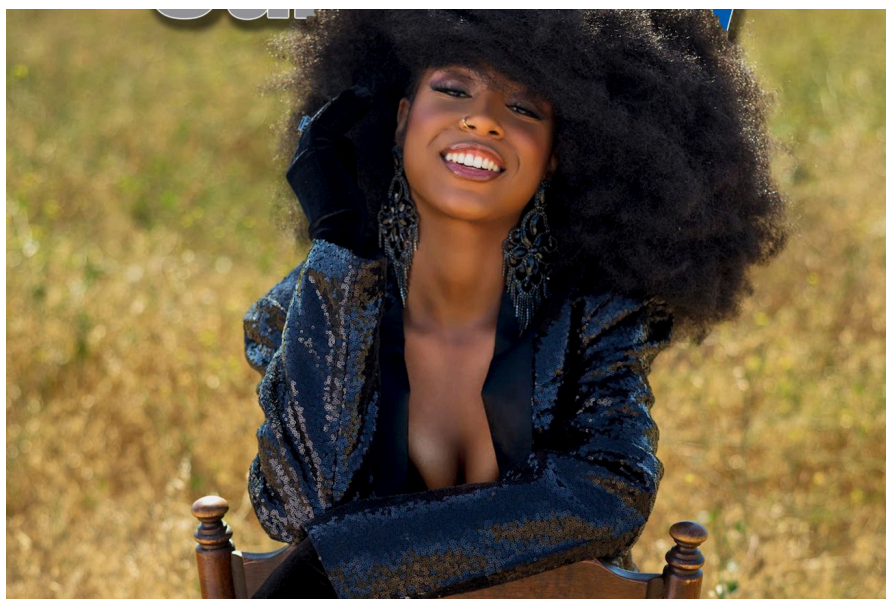
Advertisement

COVERS

Singing the body electric

GREGG REESE

September 13, 2023 . 4:30 PM — 5 min read

*Advertisement*

Cherokee the Chief just might be the Valley's next big thing

Advertisement

Located on the other side of the Santa Monica Mountains just northwest of the Los Angeles basin lies one of the most unique socio-economic enclaves in the country. Officially named the San Fernando Valley (SFV), over the years its societal sway across the nation has earned it near mythical status, SFV is a prime example of suburban sprawl of anonymous apartment complexes and tract houses, or as a cultural backwater of cookie-cutter strip malls lacking depth or substance.

The reality is that since the explosion of the Baby Boom generation during the postwar era, it has nurtured a distinctive, multifaceted culture, in large part due to the out-sized output of the entertainment industry within its borders.

Outside of scores of celebrities who reside or actually originated within its 260 square mile radius, it is the epicenter of a lion's share of the pop motion picture, music recording, and television production that entertain America (and the world). This summer another product of this fabled locale is set to make her debut.

Born Cherokee Araia Imani Fuselier, Cherokee grew up up in the Valley and nurtured both positive and negative feelings in that she rubbed elbows with the offspring of famous parents. This in turn aroused feelings of favoritism and being underestimated as she began to participate in extracurricular activities. On the other hand, it is a largely successful melting pot of the type that America aspires to be. In turn one might personally encounter folks the rest of the country only knows through print, television, and the big screen.

“You’re able to see famous people in passing at coffee shops and it doesn’t feel so pretentious. You’re able to converse with them, and they’re in a laid back state, and feel able to communicate with you,” she says.

Hometown Girl: The Valley is different.

“...each class is like co-existing. There’s really no divide.”

— Cherokee Araia

The Valley posed an additional advantage in that it offers up a cultural smorgasbord of dissimilar ethnic and social cliches within a relatively small area.

“The Valley is different. I feel like it’s kind of retro, so you feel like you’re in the ‘80s no matter what year you’re from,” Cherokee says.

“You’re like being able to coexist with your generation along with generations before you, so it’s almost like growing up in that 80’s “Valley Girl” 1983 movie. It’s a place where you can be yourself. No one’s judging you by what you wear. Each class is like coexisting peacefully-there’s really no divide,” she continues.

“We’re all in the melting pot and respecting each other, and loving where we are.”

Metamorphosis: Getting the Party out Early

“...so around my family people would always call me ‘Cherry’ or ‘Chief.’ And one day I just became Chief...”

—Cherokee Araia

Her alpha personality manifested itself early on as family and friends began to refer to her as “chief,” around the house. This nickname which morphed into the stage name by which she is known professionally.

“This My god dad Carlos was like “Cherokee the Chief!,” and so it became official.

An early aptitude for tennis was overwhelmed by the urge to perform, and “Chief” indulged in a series of acting classes, drill teams, and other activities.

At home, Chief’s Mom had her own considerable resume as a manager of area musicians in the 1990s. She is also a poet who regularly recited her works around the house, which prompted her daughter to keep notebooks, which in turn encouraged literary expression, and eventually lyrical content. Her extended family included her Great Aunt, the noted jazz musician “Sweet Baby J’ai.”

Part of this growth meant embracing that hedonistic lifestyle readily available in Los Angeles in general, and the Valley in particular. Creating her own artistic persona meant “wilding out” with her own personal crew, with whom she would get “Valley Girl wasted.”

“We had house parties that we called ‘functions,’ every weekend when someone’s parents would go out of town - we went to this unoccupied mansion.”

Chief’s rite of passage is unique only because she is willing to share her own personal exorcism of the demons of that particular American malady called adolescence.

The svelte figure that now commands the stage and struts the runway once weighed in at near 300 pounds, and she was, by her own admission, “The Black Snooki,” a reference to Nicole Polizzi the cornerstone of the MTV reality show “Jersey Shore.”

These hedonistic pursuits were in a way cathartic, personally and professionally, a process documented in her video “Skeletons.” The result is a process of airing out her dirty laundry to squash potential rumors.

“I’ve owned everything that I’ve done. We’ve all got some skeletons, so that’s what that record is about.”

Black Snooki or not, there weren’t that many “Brown Valley girls,” which encouraged Chief to forage her own path stylistically in the fashion-obsessed Valley.

“...I didn’t have all the money in the world, so I kinda had to be creative.”

“I just started ‘thrifting,’” she says, using a term for fashionistas who shop for vintage clothing (usually of high quality) by frequenting secondhand shops, flea markets, and, thrift stores, to put together that one-of-a-kind look.

These singular ensembles drew attention, which led to her opening an online boutique, “The Wild Cherry” <https://www.thewild-cherry.store/>.

In addition to “The Wild Cherry,” she has founded “Muzej Sjaja” an all natural skin care company, and “Spin Spider LLC,” an artist development company. The realities of show business in the millennium dictate that aspiring performers have contingency plans to fall back on.

Cherokee the Chief

Her career took a giant leap forward with the filming of her first music videos “Skeletons,” and “The Comeback.” These productions were complicated by the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the mandatory medical precautions in place. The final presentations were enhanced by animations and other post-production flourishes were provided by the third-party website for freelance services, Fiverr.com. As a child of the information age, Chief is grateful for the resources the internet has provided her. She proclaims herself a true “Digital Doll,” which in turn is the title of an upcoming single.

This electronic playground provides an inspirational spark as well. Going about her day in a suitably anonymous Honda Civic, she listens primarily to instrumentals which provide an elegant cushion for the flavorful lyrics she rhymes. In one such inspirational moment, she conjured up a “Rick Ross” type beat, over which she free-styled what eventually became the single “Moon Shadows.” Recovering from the fallout from a bad business relationship, she celebrated her resilience, a reference she re-visits in “The Comeback.”

Chief is also grateful for the support group of family and extended family guiding her over her ascent into womanhood. A Great Uncle paved the way for her performance debut at a local bar “The Last Call” in Tarzana, a performance where she was able to exorcize any suggestion of stage fright. In this, she stresses the following mandate:

“Don’t go into the studio alone.”

A lifelong residency in the Valley has helped her hone her survivor skills, a trait she encourages other youthful performers to develop.

“The business is a beast!” she declares. Piggybacking on this concept, she continues “...and it’s a business that if you don’t know your business, you don’t have any business in that business.” This is a reference to ensure safety, physically and emotionally, which includes having boundaries, and knowing when to take a break. These are lessons learned during the brief lifetime of an old soul. “I’ve been in training my entire life. I’ve been groomed to do what I do.”

CHEROKEE THE CHIEF’s debut album, “Jazzmatikka” will be released August 18. Please visit her website at <https://www.cherokeethechief.com/>.

Related



COVERS
YEAR IN REVIEW
OUR WEEKLY LLC
December 28, 2022



COVERS
World Aids Day continues battle against deadly disease
OUR WEEKLY LLC
November 30, 2022



COVERS
... And the votes are still being counted
LISA FITCH
November 9, 2022



COVERS
Midterm elections days away
LISA FITCH
October 26, 2022

Latest

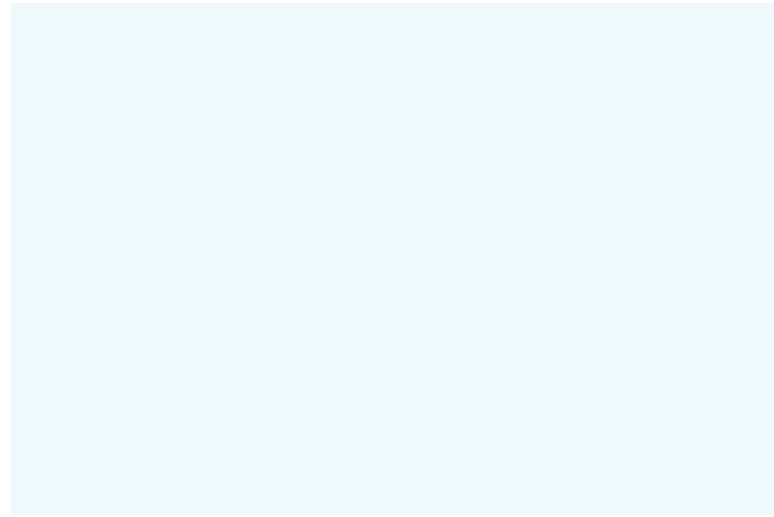


LOCAL

Earth Day events at Natural History Museum

ERIN HERRIFORD

April 19, 2024



LOCAL

Bass announces cleaning of South LA encampment

OUR WEEKLY STAFF

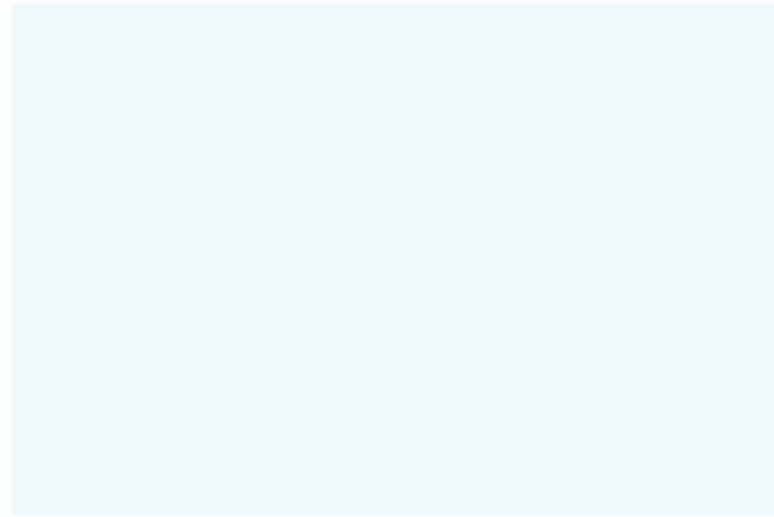
April 19, 2024

EARTH DAY

California, Norway ink climate partnership

OUR WEEKLY STAFF

April 19, 2024



ANTELOPE VALLEY NEWS

Santa Clarita Farmers' Market

ERIN HERRIFORD

April 19, 2024

Advertisement

OurWeekly
Los Angeles



[Get OW Newsletter](#) [323/905-1300](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Media Kit](#)

© 2024 Our Weekly – Published with [Ghost](#) & [Tripoli](#)