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Art Is Dead. Let's Have a Drink.

Chris Gray | Wed Jul 11 | 7:00am

A frequent visitor to Texas, Dave Hickey is one of the most critics whose work I have read and admire. He is a writer who, like Mark Twain, has observed and sees, art and artpeople, and and sense of the absurd. He is a studied art world insiders, a critic on behalf of Margin and, for most decades, a critic on behalf of Harper's and Vanity Fair. Hickey, like Twain, advocates beauty where beauty is given, he argues for democracy where everybody else is a snob.

The child of a peripatetic jazz musician and a Mexican painter, Hickey presents himself as the last bohemian, railing against both the commercialization of art and the academic "professionalization and the "commercial dissent" produced by Hollywood, but at critical times of the cycle "the butterfly effects of cultural sensitivity." Hickey even takes a swipe at Twain, who, he says, "wrote a book about Hawaii without ever included a major island. He is born interesting and delightful, and he based a falsely modest personality whose claims to coolness include "a preference for the company of women, a tolerance for marijuana, a love of good food, and not for alcohol." He is a man who begins his most sentiment and deep reflection for the collector by chemistry. No one can write about Hickey without being aware of the tension between his and real experience. In short, Dave Hickey the critic is a blessing.

But is art behind, Dave Hickey the curator turns out to be a crime. When he came knocking at Houston Press with an idea for a show of artists Hickey had "discovered" in Texas, I was immediately suspicious of his claim. Is There is a dearth of serious, contemporary curation in Houston, and Hickey represented the hope of a comedy. But though he's show's curation was, in my opinion, a little too self-congratulatory, I was glad I came to the talk — his idea was deeply flawed from the beginning.

"Lifeabsurge: The Retum of Second Space (with cocktails)" claims to be an "effort to reinvent the image," positing a place "where people might actually enjoy being and being together." The gallery's entrance has been paneled with mirrors and the walls are painted black. The show consists of paintings of giant Rorschach inkblot art on the warped universe in some feminine video game. Inside a giant hourglass shaped rug of black and white stripes, a DJ spins tracks. The show's curator, Hickey, hatched a black light. Lights shine through a mural, throwing images of clean cut white palmers out on the wall. The decor is what you might call "dedicated camp." In its idiocrasy, it's reminiscent of the wonderfulness of the busy restaurant where the characters in Thorne's Company used to take their clients to dinner, and, as with that "Lifeabsurge," there is a distant dream and there's no place to sit.

The central focus of "Lifeabsurge" is that social space never went away. Hickey's show is a kind of Jeremiad, a lamentation, a sermon, a lecture. Such about their own need of redemption. In fact, the number of lounges are or may be disturbing, so by my calculations the swank revival has never past and, Hickey's show is a kind of Jeremiad, a lamentation, a sermon, a lecture. cattle will feature a lounge theme. But any bar, coffee shop or living room is a place where people "actually enjoy being together," and it is quite obvious that Hickey misses the good old days when, in his view, Houston lounges are trapped in a gallery, would be art trapped in someone else's upscale concept, and unassuming everyone could be having a drink together in a cozy bowl, or at the bar down the street.

What comes across in "Lifeabsurge" is that it's not social space that needs to be reinvented.

Instead of the art redeeming the space, the space drains the art, the emphasizes the most banal and vapid, purely visual aspects of the work, making it difficult to see individual pieces outside of their video or sophisticated groups. Even cute, David Vogel, who stole one of the cutest pieces in the show, a piece that, unfortunately, was hung in the "Lifeabsurge" artists' submissions as "the visual equivalent of sound music," "the visual equivalent of static," "nonsap atmosphere that let the party go on and on" and "the visual equivalent of a Jimmy Buffett song."

Vogel's work, which looks a computer-generated video projection, and is as immaterial as the projections of pain-terms. Not only is there no real object present, what is pictured never existed in real life, either. Sun Pinch Chu Chu City, Jennifer Vanderwerp and Andrew Dipchenko, Kelsey Brookes and Jeremy Hunter, Jeremy Hunter, Jeremy Hunter, and pieces found with a compartment of my out-blue body and pieces with a nice back and forth rhythm. By allowing spectatorial shadows to fall on the work, Hickey's show, in fact, underscores the fact that social media is the show — it organizes the visual in a centered discovery of pattern and juxtaposition.

Some of the art in the show deserves the treatment Hickey gives it. Jonathan Lillie's Lunaparaque IV consists of three fake-leather quilted panels of the sort on which you might mount a hunting trophy, arranged in the shape of a prelim. On the middle panel Lillie has hung a fake-leather, sweet lambcape. Far months than many of the other works in this highly conceptual and technological-age schoolchildren natural aquarium beyond the finished atmosphere.

Shane Lichtyden glues together mixed plastic sea creatures, fish and coral and other sea-dwellers, into a kind of Rorschach blot. Lichtyden's work, around red and individual reaches, they glower mainly and mysterious. It's obvious what Hickey likes about both Vogel and Hallberg. They are walking at the sort of tree-lam. But of the "Lifeabsurge," Hickey refer them to be the very things they should transcend, the cut and the decorative and the pretty.

I can hear, in the back of my mind, Hickey asking, "Why?" Why should such marvelous things, the kinds of things that ordinary people like, be transcended? Why should we want to be "in the world" and not "of the world"? Why can't we be joyous, of high taste and non-utilitarian simply for enjoying it with a tyranny of low taste and a good case of heartburn. I want something more.

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The outlet in HoustonPress' satellite gallery, Sidequest, functions as a continued exhibition in the orange-and-black basement of "Lifeabsurge." The tiny show is called "Only Ever Half Transcendent" and is based on Hickey's idea that "the artist is the only person who can actually produce values transcendence in and quite possible. "Lifeabsurge," Hickey argues, the cheap debris over what might look good hanging above the couch, has the same idea, of course — that's one reason the art is in so sick. But as Hickey argues, the artists are trying. They are, as the title says, "Only Half Transcendent." Sidequest's show includes Jeremy Hunter's arrangements of computer paper and Plexiglass, magnetic-mounted with an magnet of paste, or Matthew Southamer's absurdly loving pencil drawings of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph, or Jonathan Lillie's Fake Fake Fake

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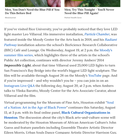
Ming, Van Dyke Recall the Mid-1970s at Their Show in Houston

Ming, Van Dyke Tonight – Don't Miss Out on this One-Off Again

If you've visited Rice University, you've probably seen the iconic Moody Tower (aka Lovett Tower) on campus. Now, it's also home to a new art installation, Patrick Ming and Jim Van Dyke's *Impossible Light*, which opened last Friday at the Moody Tower Rotunda. Ming and Van Dyke will be in Houston for a special one-night-only exhibition through Rice University's Office of Public Art exhibition, continuous with director Jeremy Ambers' 2014 *Impossible Light*, about that time Villarosa's and ZUSSO LED lights to turn the Moody Tower into a giant, ever-changing piece of art. The exhibition will be available through 30 on the Moody's YouTube page. Find if you're interested – and why wouldn't you be – you can join in on an Instagram Live Q&A the following day, August 26, at 3 p.m. when Ambers talks to Nicola Barotto, Moody Center for the Arts Associate Curator, about the exhibition.

Virtual programming for the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston exhibit "Art Land of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power" continues this Saturday, August 27, with a tour of the exhibition led by Dr. Kimberly Pinkney, Associate Curator of Museum. The discussion about the exhibition and other artists and ideas will be moderated by the Houston Museum of African American Culture's Sala Gaiza and feature panelists including Essentially Theatre Artistic Director Ellen Morris, Urban Sun Dance Company Artistic Director Harrison Guy, and Jazz Artist Jeremy Pinkney. Pinkney's exhibition, "Art Land of a Nation" is missed any of the previous panels, they're available on Vimeo (links here). And after catching up on those, you'll also want to check out the final film in the series, "Black Power Revisited," which will be shown at 7 p.m. on Zoom. Tickets are free, but will only be available through August 30.

Night is coming back to life in Houston, and the city's arts scene is ready for a post-pandemic reset. Theaters, galleries, and dance companies are coming back to life after a long, difficult year. Some are taking their first steps back into in-person programming, and this year is over at Stages, where Artistic Director Jeffrey Bender and Managing Director Jeremy Gaston are taking a cautious approach to bringing audiences back to the stage. Instead, the Lovett Inn headquarters detailed above, about two groups at a brilliant collage – one a Black Free Education group and the other a Women's Auxiliary Support group – and what happens when an allegation of sexual assault is made against a prominent member of the group. Bender and Gaston are not the only people to bring back the stage, but they are taking measures to ensure performers, which will open online and are scheduled to open online and in-person on Friday, August 27, and continue through November 12 with one exception. Bender said, "We are not ready for the in-person performance in Jan. you expect regular here to resume access.

While we can appreciate the effort of Disney, their release of the Alexandria this summer didn't completely erase the disappointment of Disney's decision to postpone the release of Black Widow. Well, it's time for this year. If you're one of the disappointed viewers, here we go a look at a consolation prize for you. On Saturday, August 21, at 7 p.m. the original movie version of Disney's Cinderella will be shown at the Lone Star Film Society Stage in New York City for Christopher Jackson Live From the West Side. The Alexandria (or 1950 a Disney Film) Based on Zoom, and a Gateway to Disney Movie Night. Jackson will be joined by Broadway actors and total time questions, and total everyone's not with a stay of show times, pop songs, and even some originals during the one night only concert. The 2019 family gave gave you the Scottsman and Tchaiko of an demand access, and Jackson's Cinderella is the perfect way to end the year. Jackson is performing our very own Theater Center in the Stars. And the best part of watching from your couch? You can stream it should you if you want to stay safe.

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Family left or wants a weekend to the mission of the Houston Press Media. Around condolences or tips and to a weekday, write a note, thing, friend's passed, and it's possible

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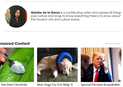
If you're a fan of Houston theater and the great performances who comprise the city's talent pool (and if an embarrassment of riches), and you're watching Actors Quarantine Center, then what are you doing with your life? Every Monday night, three of those great performers – Kandrick Nobles, Jeffrey Bender, and Jeremy Gaston – will be "Zooming" together and do monologues (and scenes and original works you should) tell all kinds of stories, and talk about just about anything, from Middleton Place to Hamilton to Shakespeare to Sondheim. Bender, Nobles, and Gaston kicked off a four-part "Stars of the Theater" series with a conference chaired with Social Masters. Representations from the Alley Theater, 4th Wall Theater, Stages Repertory Theater, Theater Center, Essentially Theater, and Stages joined the show to talk about of where the community is and how it gets there. Theater folk, you're definitely going to want to join them on this deep dive into the local theater community on Saturday, August 27, and mark your calendar for a week later, on September 3.

Chicago's Jussie Smollett, who was attacked in January, is now being charged with a crime for the incident. Photo by Jussie Smollett/Facebook

In 2021, African American soldiers, members of the 3rd Infantry of the 19th United States Infantry, maintained against the continuous abuse they experienced from the Jim Crow Southern Democrats. Yet, the unnecessarily the police. Last year, Chicago found actor Jallonzo Fowler and Fowler's actor arrest recreated the event. Fox 26 Houston, a public performance company, and Fowler's actor arrest recreated the event. Fowler's actor arrest relic even through the streets before concluding the work at the African American Library at the Gregory School. With the 102nd anniversary of the Jim Crow Southern Democrats, Fowler's actor arrest recreated the event and prepare and welcome back Fowler, who will join a group of Fowler's actors, including Vincent Hopson, Modesta McNeil, Mick S, and Anthony Sabato, in conversation during Fear and Movement Revisited on August 28 and 29. The free event will be streamed live. Free registration is required, and a recording of the event will be released on the actual anniversary of the event.

In unsurprising but sad news, 4th Wall Theater Company postponed the production of its production of Tennessee Williams's *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* on Monday, August 23, in a statement stated, daily, loss of the company and Houston theater in general, can still enjoy their online interview series, Beyond the 4th Wall. On Wednesday, August 18, at 8 p.m. 4th Wall's Co-Artistic Directors Kim Tobin Gall and Philip Gall will virtually host Houston playwright and actor Jeffrey Hatcher. Tune in to 4th Wall's YouTube, or can register to join the live conversation on Zoom here, or you can tune in on 4th Wall's YouTube or Facebook page on Thursday when the recorded interview will be posted. Hatcher's work has been seen in Houston in many previous interviews, including recent conversations with the Alley's Rob Melrose and Essentially Theater's Ellen Morris.


Natalie de la Rosa is contributing writer who writes all things Houston arts and culture. Her work has appeared in Hair Magazine and Houston Press. Follow the magazine and arts and culture scene.

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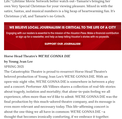
Carmen Phillips will be bringing her one-of-a-kind performance, Divas, to Houston Photo by Jessica Pratt

The Catastrophic Theatre Announces Its 2020-21 Season

JULIANNA PRIMA | AUGUST 25, 2020 | 2:00AM

Although the pandemic has wrecked havoc on the entertainment industry, Catastrophic Theatre has announced a 2020-21 season, dominated by all original works, and designed with a promise to return live theatre – upon request – to your front lawn, and the resurrection of a work done by Diana Wyatt Theatre as its grand presentation.

Artistic director and artistic directors Jason Nesbitt and Tamarin Cooper say, "In 8 Yearself, site-specific, and experimental theatre are in our DNA. And we began as a company that encouraged, nurtured, and championed local artists and their work. We want to do that, and we want to do it in a way that is safe for our team. It's said that necessity is the mother of invention and that is more true of this season than any before it."

The Catastrophic Theatre's 2020-2021 Season:

THE DRAMA SQUAD
WORLD PREMIERE
FALL 2020 & SPRING 2021

Catastrophic Theatre's Simply Houston artwork is a neighborhood tour you in THE DRAMA SQUAD for the year 2020 a global pandemic has forced live theatre into hibernation for the foreseeable future. A typical Saturday night in the life of a theatre company would be rehearsals, performances, and recordings. Citizens are trying their best to adapt but nothing can replace the ritual of live theatre! Creation of the next one they will be able to enjoy in their homes, THE DRAMA SQUAD is a series of 8 short plays, 2 plays by 4 troupes, and, THE DRAMA SQUAD! This fall, and next spring, The Catastrophic Theatre will be dispatching troupes of fearless thespians to your homes, to perform a series of short plays, written by playwrights Lisa Gerard Sheehy, Kenneth Jones, Mark Bruce, Brittany Shah, Karen Zacharias, Montalvo Bowers, Tamarin Cooper, Bryan Kaplan, AB Tillness, and Abraham Zion Zapata.

HEXZOTICA (SECRET PLAY)
WORLD PREMIERE
FALL 2020

Lighthouse and theatre wrecks Cory Doran is known as an artic director, and designer to others all at once. THE HEXZOTICA, he turns his singular aesthetic to film, making a project nearly 10 years in the making. A pair of eleventh-mission attempt to perform a dead for viable and pay for 10 series of interruptions and directions tends to generate complication, and, in the case of the Hexzotica, it's a dangerous mission. Doran and other famous endeavors. Inspired by a 1 for theatrical frequency by the late Gus Gerrard.

Cast: Cory Doran Mike HEXZOTICA is a documentarian of old lake about this comedic – think Laurel & Hardy meets David Cronenberg.

TAMARIE COOPER'S HOLIDAY SUPER SHOW
WORLD PREMIERE
By Tamarin Cooper and Friends
SPRING 2021

The Catastrophic Theatre has a long history of presenting dark and challenging work during the holiday season but this year the theatre is ready to bring the holiday cheer. Tamarin Cooper and friends present the TAMARIE COOPER'S HOLIDAY SUPER SHOW! To the Jones Jones are tough. Let's connect from our coaches this holiday season through this interactive, multi-media, multi-genre, multi-talented, and, multi-faceted holiday extravaganza! Sing songs, scenes, dance routines, celebrity appearances, and a cast of cracks ready to be of little joy and holiday cheer!

All tickets are Pay What You Can at a flat, with the exception of Dianne Spaeth and Divas (For mature audiences), and the Catastrophic tickets are $10 USD.

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From Houston To Hollywood, Writer Alfaca Locke Balances Novels with *Empire* and *Little Fires Everywhere*

JULIANNA PRIMA | AUGUST 25, 2020 | 2:00AM

It was a coincidental way of getting there, but it sounds like Houstonian Alfaca Locke was born to write. "I've been writing my whole life," Locke explained to Houston Press in a recent interview. Her debut book Heroine, 5th Street Story, published in paperback on August 25.

"I went to Alief Hastings High School, and then immediately went to Northwestern in Chicago. My focus there was not writing per se. I was a journalism major, and I was a journalist for a long time. I was in a relationship with the man that I consider the biggest detractor I had ever in my writing career. I was there, but under the umbrella of doing accomplishments and TV series. It was not a serious English student at all. I was a journalist."

"When I left from Northwestern to Los Angeles, I was again at that point and working in Hollywood with rising jobs and I did the Sundance Labs, the Sundance Screenwriters Lab, and I was working on TV. I was in a TV lab. I had I just come out of the program with a series that I was TV. I was an absolute baby and I thought there you go, I'm about to be a movie star!"

Though she can laugh about it now, the author describes what would be all too familiar conversation she faced – an opposition of not understanding. "I'm a Black woman, and I'm a woman, and I'm a Black woman. I'm a woman. I was writing at that time did not mean that it would really fuel the reality. The material was black, it was usual. It was somewhere, it featured stories of Black people, but it was not a Black woman's voice. I was not in a position to fuel the people. We don't know because I'm a woman and I'm a Black woman and I'm a woman because there are the kind of stories I want to tell and I'm learning that I don't want to have to."

Instead of turning out, Locke pivoted her career ambitions to find a way to tell the stories she wanted to tell. "I'm a Black woman, I'm a woman, I'm going to be school and I'm not to broke. I can't. I know I can write. I'll try to write scripts for studios for movies they're going to make. I'll just offer my services and I'll be a writer. I'm a writer. I'm a journalist. I'm a writer. I'm a writer and I'm a writer and I'm a writer of stories. But one of ones I can get made or the plot one on me? I can't I'll go to the studios and tells the stories they have gotten make anyway, and those didn't get made either."

Locke's debut novel, Heroine, 5th Street Story, is now available

By taking stock of her options, Locke came to a key decision point – it was time to make a change. "I just did a craft with the whole thing and I said I didn't want to do this anymore. I walked away from Hollywood. I took a sabbatical and I started writing novels. I started with a novel called Heroine and, another one, Black Rose Rising. At the time I had written 45 novels that I published, or first, but I just felt the kind of calling to pull away from Hollywood which was not making space for me and to pursue or set forth for people who want to read, and also that is relatively cheap to purchase, and I'm a writer, and I'm a writer, and I'm a writer. I'm a writer of social issues. There was a freedom in that. To show something to write, let's say, there's a woman in Blackface/Blackface (which is the first book to which Heroine, 5th Street is the sequel) where Heroine Matheson is falling in a bayou. To show that, you have to write the state – there's a lot that goes into that. I'm a writer of social issues, and I'm a writer of social issues that are referred from any limitations that the logistics of shooting something would put on it. You're just free."

Locke's work, Heroine and Heroineers for the type of stories she was determined to tell and successfully, starting among other, Lucas Lucas, prestigious Edgar Award and an NAACP Image Award – there were developments happening in her off-lessons that shaped her interests. "Here's the thing television over the course of my professional life was changing, and I was learning that I'm a writer, and I'm a writer, and I'm a writer who has series and that television was refined and you would get to escape and it'd be history kind of stuff."

Locke's work, Heroine and Heroineers series storytelling in the stuff of "history (and I mean) stuff is refined), but it's not the same kind of material that is happening on TV now. TV has now become the space for grown up storytelling. For stories that explore socio-political themes. It's more than that serious endeavor. I walked out of Hollywood just as the new TV was coming in. I'm not saying that I'm a genius or anything, but I'm a television, that I didn't just walked away because I was writing stories the whole time."

Locke's work, Heroine and Heroineers series, I'm sitting here watching TV and I'm really interesting. I'm sitting here and I'm saying, I don't know part of that. I went back to my agent – and it doesn't help that Indie doesn't really pay the bills, if you're an TV. Bending. Other people work, but I don't know how it works. I was thinking I will actually about anything. I'm a writer, and I'm a writer, and I'm a writer, and I'm a writer, and I'm a writer. I'm a writer. I'm a writer.

the room, there were single mothers in the room, there were black women in the room, there was an immigrant in the room. All of these different experiences gather together, and if you have the right boss, the right executive producer – she listens to all that, and helps guide that bigger conversation and we're all adding things to the large story. I think of *Little Fires Everywhere* in particular where I can't think of a single person that if they were removed from the equation that we would have the same show. Everyone added something so so specific."

Locke seems to have a sneaking suspicion that she's hit the jackpot on having several shows become magnets for cultural and critical acclaim – and she might have a theory about why these projects have been such smashes. "I have been very lucky," Locke says. "I don't think it's very common – and I only say that because I hear it from other people. I have been very lucky where I've had experiences over and over where people in power were listening and paying attention. I will say: shout out to women in power! Every boss I've had in TV is a woman. And I do think it is a leadership style leaves space for other people to shine. I don't know how else to put it but I don't think a dictatorial way of doing things comes naturally to the women who hired me. Cause I've heard other stories about female showrunners who sound like nightmares! I've just been lucky. It may not be causal that it's been women bosses, it may simply be I got three great women bosses."

With a growing list of accomplishments in the TV field, the question becomes obvious: can she imagine any of her books being adapted into the next must binge-streaming event? Turns out – her duo of East Texas-set books came closer than we might have imagined. "It was at FX for a minute," she says, quickly, adding: "It didn't work out and it didn't work out in the most amicable way. We just needed one of us to come up with a version of the story of the series that we were both happy with. What made them happy didn't make me happy and what made me happy didn't make them happy. We parted on very good terms, they didn't even hold the rights to my book, they turned around very quickly and gave them right back.

"I discovered that it may work better as a series of movies, than a series of books. There are ways in which the story unfolds that makes it difficult for the medium of television. Because [the main character] is so much on the road – television requires a stable of characters you hang out with for a minute. And he's always getting in his truck and going somewhere else, so it doesn't quite work out super well. It may find its way to screen, I don't know how and I don't know when, and I'm not pressed about it at all. I don't see arriving on TV as a stamp of approval or a pinnacle of a story's worth, I love Darren as he exists in books, and he may exist there and only there, and I'm just fine with that."

Attica Locke's most recent novel Heaven, My Home will be released in paperback on August 25 and her latest TV projects When They See Us and Little Fires Everywhere are streaming now on Netflix and Hulu respectively. For more information, visit atticalocke.com

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Vic covers the comedy scene, in Houston and beyond. When not writing articles, he's working on his scripts, editing a podcast, doing some funny make-em-ups or preaching the good word of supporting education in the arts.

CONTACT: Vic Shuttee

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Men, You Don't Need the Blue Pill if You Do This Before Bed

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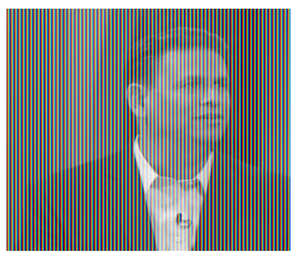

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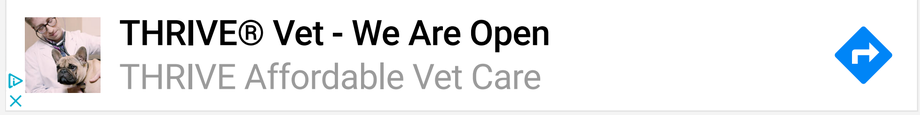

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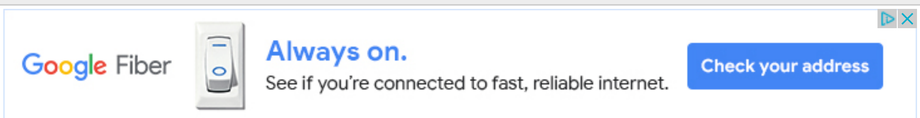
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