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Inside: Gift ideas, Chanukah food, Mazel Tov section and more!



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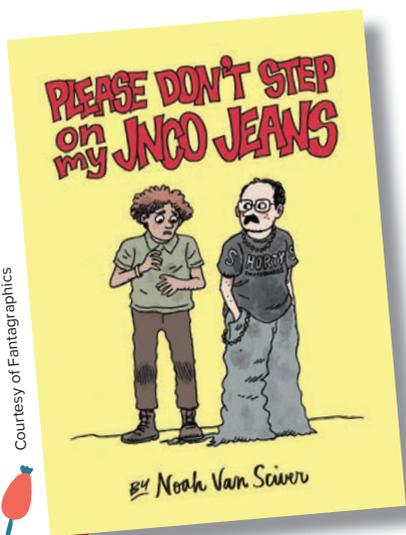
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Winter 2020 Book Guide

JESSE BERNSTEIN | JE STAFF

I don't really believe in the concept of "can't miss" books. We all "miss" books all of the time, to the extent that not reading every single book as it's released is missing it. Without such misses, how would anyone have the particular and unreproducible joy of discovery? That's half the fun of reading.

Consider the books below to be a "Miss It, But Don't Forget It" list. Clip this one out of the paper, stick it on the fridge and, in a month, or six months, or a year, when you're looking for something to read, you'll make the long-delayed catch.



Courtesy of Fantagraphics

"Please Don't Step on My JNCO Jeans"

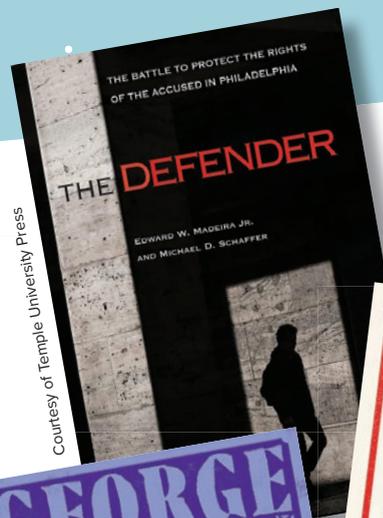
Noah Van Sciver (Nov. 2)

The newest collection of Van Sciver's cartoons is as funny and poignant as his previous work. Produced between 2017 and 2019, Van Sciver's art-as-"survival mechanism," as he calls it, might just help you do the same, too. Check out his previous work, "The Hypo: The Melancholic Young Lincoln," for a real treat.

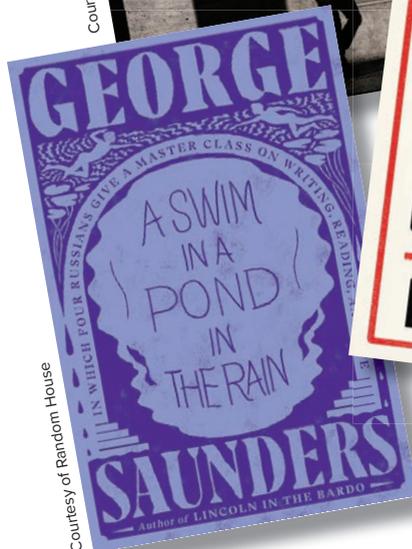
"The Defender: The Battle to Protect the Rights of the Accused in Philadelphia"

Edward W. Madeira Jr. and Michael D. Schaffer (Dec. 15)

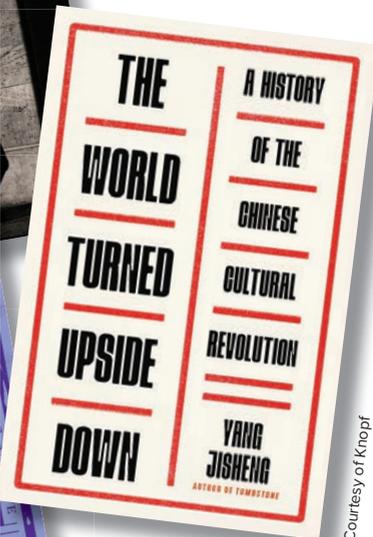
Though Madeira died earlier this year, there's nothing in this new book to suggest that he was anything less than sharp as a tack when it came to a subject that was dear to him: advocating on behalf of public defenders and the people they represented in Philadelphia. The retired chair emeritus of Pepper Hamilton teamed up with longtime Philadelphia Inquirer journalist Michael D. Schaffer to detail the genesis of the Defender Association of Philadelphia, "the best lawyers money can't buy."



Courtesy of Temple University Press



Courtesy of Random House



Courtesy of Knopf



biscotto87 / iStock / Getty Images Plus

“A Swim in a Pond in the Rain: In Which Four Russians Give a Master Class on Writing, Reading, and Life”

George Saunders (Jan. 12)

Saunders’ first book since “Lincoln in the Bardo” gives readers a chance to more or less take a class with one of the most beloved writers in the country. From Chekhov to Turgenev, and Tolstoy to Gogol, Saunders writes with love and grace about the Russian short stories that he’s been teaching in his creative writing seminars for decades.

“The World Turned Upside Down: A History of the Chinese Cultural Revolution”

Yang Jisheng. Translated by Stacy Mosher and Guo Jian (Jan. 19)

For many reasons that Jisheng will easily convince you of, the Chinese Cultural Revolution is one of the most important developments in the second half of the 20th century. Sound smart in front of your friends and learn something about why the world is the way it is, too.

See Books, **Page 8**

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“Let Me Tell You What I Mean”

Joan Didion (Jan. 26)

Hey look, a new book of never-before-collected essays and reported pieces by one of our most famous living writers! Didion’s writings about the likes of Robert Mapplethorpe and Martha Stewart are another way to get a sense of how we ended up with the America that we did.

“Work Won’t Love You Back: How Devotion to Our Jobs Keeps Us Exploited, Exhausted, and Alone”

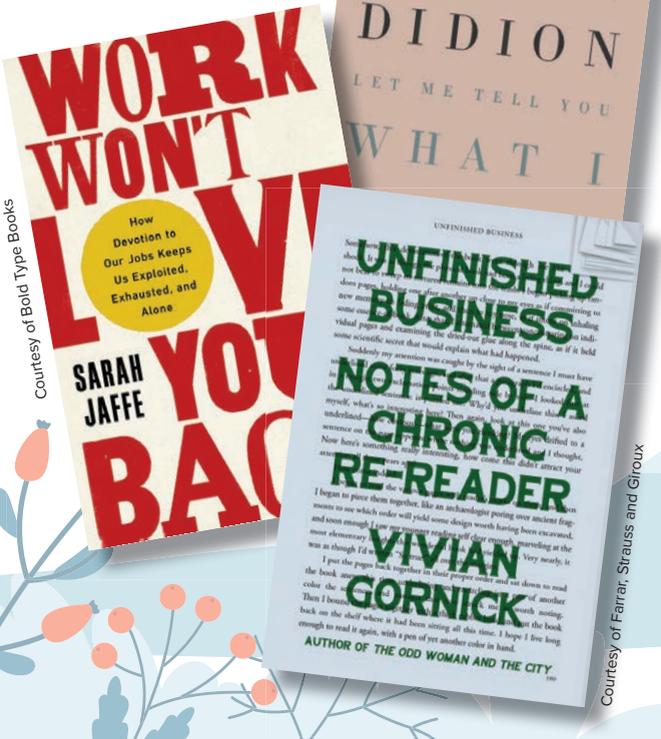
Sarah Jaffe (Jan. 26)

The title is true of everyone except for me. I am completely fulfilled by my work. So if you’re one of those people wondering about why work feels like *that*, check out the newest reported book from Jaffe, a Philadelphia native and Temple grad, to boot.

“Unfinished Business: Notes of a Chronic Re-reader”

Vivian Gornick (Feb. 4)

Interest in Gornick was rekindled last year when Verso released a new edition of her 1977 “The Romance of American Communism,” an ethnographic study of American Communists (mostly Jews). Now, the longtime “Village Voice” writer and author of “Fierce Attachments” is back with a collection of what are more or less odes to the writers that have made her who she is.



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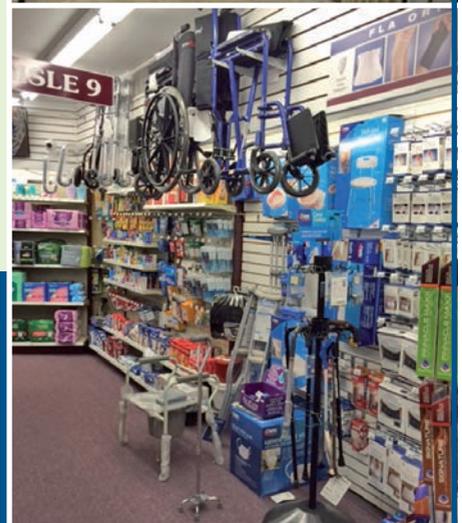
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Books

Continued from Page 8

“Vera Rubin: A Life”

Jacqueline Mitton and Sam Mitton
(Feb. 11)

I don't really know what dark matter is, and had always assumed it was a cool-sounding concept fabricated for science fiction. Apparently, this Vera Rubin, a pioneering Jewish scientist of the 20th century, taught everyone quite a bit about this very real phenomenon. This is the first biography to be written about Rubin, who died in 2016.

“No One Is Talking About This”

Patricia Lockwood (Feb. 16)

Lockwood is one of the funniest, most inventive writers we've got going for us in this country, and you'd be missing out if you didn't give her new novel a shot. For a Lockwood intro, check out her memoir, “Priestdaddy,” or one of her many manic essays for the London Review of Books.



**“Taking the Fight South:
Chronicle of a Jew’s Battle
for Civil Rights in Mississippi”**

Howard Ball
(Feb. 21)

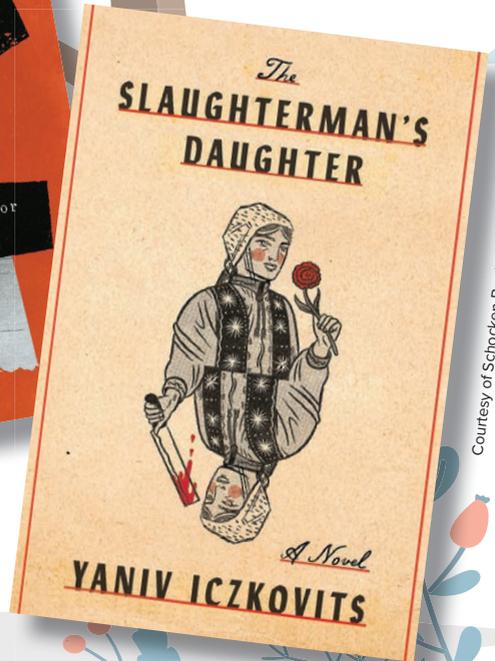
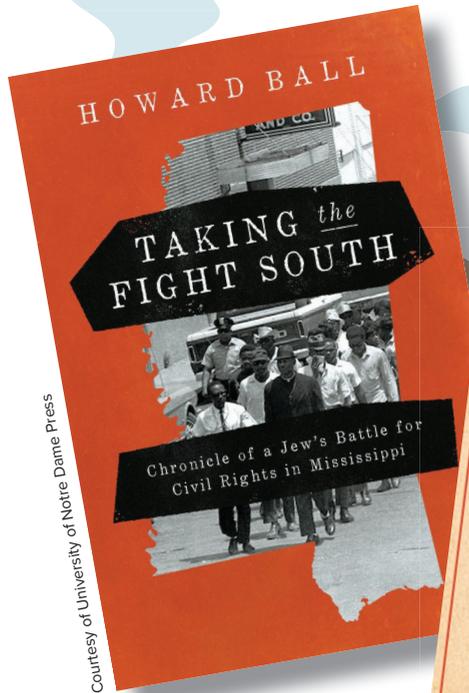
In 1976, historian and civil rights activist Howard Ball moved his family from the Bronx to Starkville, Mississippi, where they’d stay until 1982. Ball describes the experience of his Jewish New York brood as they fend off KKK phone calls and fight for a more just future.

“The Slaughterman’s Daughter”

Yaniv Iczkovits
(Feb. 23)

“With her reputation as a *vilde chaya* (wild animal), Fanny Keismann isn’t like the other women in her shtetl in Russia’s Pale of Settlement — certainly not her obedient and anxiety-ridden sister, Mende, whose ‘philosopher’ of a husband, Zvi-Meir, has run off to Minsk, abandoning her and their two children.” What more do you need than that? ❁

jbernstein@jewishexponent.com; 215-832-0740



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...to be continued



Gift Guide 2020: Something for Everyone

JESSE BERNSTEIN | JE STAFF

The manner in which this year's Gift Guide was assembled is the manner in which these gifts are meant to be bought, received, given and enjoyed: from the comfort of home.

Chanukah, which begins on Dec. 10 this year, is the time for you to let the people that you love know that you're thinking of them, even if you can't be together in the way that you would normally be.



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Faux fur throw blankets

Fur is a little iffy, ethically speaking, but done correctly, there's nothing iffy about it aesthetically. In a winter that's going to involve untold levels of sitting on the couch — or staying warm for an outdoor hangout — these stylish throw blankets are a good way to stay cozy. Prepare to hibernate! These start at \$60 at westelm.com.



Courtesy of westelm.com

“Happy Llamakah,”

written by Laura Gehl and illustrated by Lydia Nichols

Gehl, the author of over 20 books for children, including two others about Jewish holidays, posits that one of the goofiest looking members of the *camelidae* family is the perfect vehicle to teach children about celebrating Chanukah. The Llama family does everything that your family does for the holiday — spin the dreidel, eat latkes and light their menorah — but in their llama fashion. You can buy it on indiebound.org for \$14.99.



Courtesy of Abrams Books

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Gifts

Continued from
Page 13



Courtesy of Clarkson Potter

“Dessert Person: Recipes and Guidance for Baking with Confidence,”

written by Claire Saffitz

The former “Bon Appétit” star has released her first cookbook, a gorgeously photographed slate of recipes that are uniquely arranged; besides the typical separation of meat dishes, sides and starters, there’s a matrix at the beginning of the book to help you determine the difficulty of the recipe and the time it should take to complete. In other words, an efficiency matrix that asks how much you *really* want to bake a babka-challah mash-up called a Babkallah. “Dessert Person” is available on bookshop.org for \$32.30.

Wood Shtender with Golden Design

If you don’t already own one, you’ll find that this is more useful than you realize. When you’re setting up in the kitchen with your copy of “Dessert Person,” it’s nice to not have to prop the book up against a backsplash or lay it flat on the counter. If you have to read at your desk, which you’re probably doing more of these days, a shtender is a good way to make sure you’re not straining your neck. This beautifully designed shtender from Eichler’s goes for \$31.95 on eichlers.com.



Chocolate rugelach, from Marzipan Bakery

If someone in your life reads “chocolate rugelach, from Marzipan Bakery” and they say something like, “Well, why not mix it up and try the cinnamon ones?,” cut that person out of your life, because they do not have your best interests at heart. Don’t reinvent the wheel here; go ahead and order some of the best rugelach on the planet to your front door. \$14.99 on amazon.com gets you a package of 12.

Trade Coffee Subscription

If you really want to get nutty with it — and if there was ever a time to do so, it’s now — then a subscription to Trade Coffee is the way to go. Based on your coffee preferences (and it goes much deeper than just “light” or “dark”), they’ll send you one 12-ounce bag at intervals of your choosing, selecting from a list of hundreds of coffees from around the world. What sounds better than dunking your Marzipan rugelach into a delicious cup of coffee from, I don’t know, Malta? Anyway, your first bag goes for \$12.50, with free shipping and 30% off from drinktrade.com.



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See Gifts, Page 16

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Gifts

Continued from Page 15

UGG Leda Cozy Crew Socks

OK, enough food. I quite like the slippers that I have, but they can quickly feel too warm, and I don't always want the feeling of wearing shoes when I'm in the house. I have friends who swear by these UGG socks. Warm, but not too warm, and cozy as can be. One pair goes for \$18 at ugg.com, but you'll get a lot of use out of these: They're durable, according to most reviews.



Courtesy of ugg.com

Criterion Channel

The thing about Netflix, Hulu and every other movie streaming service is that the overwhelming glut of movies can only mask the lack of quality for so long. How many hours of scrolling have been lost on streaming services, staring at row after row of stinkers? Criterion Channel is the service that picks the highest quality movies, and offers selections from around the globe. This is the antidote to the feeling that there's nothing good to watch, and it's \$10.99 per month at criterionchannel.com.



See Gifts, Page 18



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Gifts

Continued from Page 16

Urban Jungle gift card

This Passyunk Avenue shop is simply a delight just to walk into (especially given the store's COVID-consciousness): a wonderfully wide variety of plants, pots and tools that offer something for everyone, whether you're looking for a windowsill succulent to water once a week or something more labor intensive. Urban Jungle has a kind, knowledgeable staff, and they have gift cards for the verdantly thumbed in your life.



Periwinkle Flower Seder Plate

This seder plate, which comes with a platter and six small bowls, is only available in the National Museum of American Jewish History's online gift shop. It is certainly a hopeful gift, the hope being that by March 27, 2021, the world will allow Jews everywhere to come together once in again for joyous seder meals. Not that there wasn't joy to this past year's celebration, but still, this is a seder plate to be enjoyed by as many people as possible, in person. Find it for \$112 at judaicashop.net. ❄️



Courtesy of judaicashop.net

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CELEBRATE HANUKKAH WITH GIFTS OF ISRAEL BONDS

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The image features a circular inset showing a family of four (a man, a woman, and two children) sitting around a table, celebrating Hanukkah. A menorah with lit candles is on the table. The background is dark blue with various Hanukkah symbols like dreidels and gelt.



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Chanukah Foods From Around the World

SOPHIE PANZER | JE STAFF

North American Ashkenazi Jews may associate Chanukah celebrations with potato latkes and sufganiyot, but there's nothing in the Maccabees story that says these are our only options.

For Jewish communities around the world, the tradition of eating fried foods during the Festival of Lights means holiday tables can feature fried meat, sweet and savory fritters and any kind of doughnut iteration imaginable. This year, I sampled four traditional Chanukah dishes from Italy, Spain, Latin America and India.



POLLO FRITTO PER HANUKKAH

(Fried Chicken for Hanukkah)

Having grown up with brisket or roasted chicken as the protein of choice at a Chanukah table, I was intrigued to find that Italian Jews traditionally celebrate the Festival of Lights with a special fried chicken recipe and wanted to give it a try.

I chose an Italian recipe from Leah Koenig's cookbook "Little Book of Jewish Feasts." It combines lemon, thyme and cinnamon in a quick marinade that makes the chicken moist and tender without requiring it to sit too long (if it does, the acid from the lemon juice will make the meat tough).

I had never had fried chicken made with lemon before, but it's a pretty genius inclusion. The acidity cuts through the fat and prevents the dish from being overwhelmingly oily, which is especially welcome if you've still got piles of other fried deliciousness to plow your way through. I wouldn't think to include cinnamon in a fried chicken recipe either, but it adds a nice depth of flavor.



Pollo Fritto



Keftes de Prasa

KEFTES DE PRASA

These leek fritters are a Sephardic holiday staple and are often eaten at Chanukah because they are fried in oil. They originated in the Iberian peninsula but can also be found in Turkish, Greek and Middle Eastern cuisine.

I found a simple recipe by Michael Natkin on Serious Eats that called for leeks, eggs, bread crumbs, herbs and salt. At least, it seemed simple until I started washing the leeks ... and kept washing the leeks for what felt like two hours because they had so much grit in them. The batter comes out a little thinner than a typical latke, which threw me off as I tried to judge whether they were done, but I managed to avoid burning most of them.

Fine, half of them.

The keftes have a light, sweet, almost nutty taste when they're cooked, and I could easily have eaten four or five at a time. The crispy fried texture definitely screams "Chanukah," although these leek pancakes are a little less starchy and filling than a latke.

See Foods, Page 20

Fascinadora / iStock / Getty Images Plus

Photos by Sophie Panzer

Foods

Continued from Page 19

GULAB JAMUN

I was familiar with these fried sweets thanks to my moderate to severe obsession with Indian food, but I didn't realize until recently that they were commonly enjoyed at Chanukah by Indian Jews.

"Gulab jamun is a traditional Hanukkah treat among the Bene Israel of Mumbai, as it combines the two primary holiday foods, dairy and fried," Gil Marks wrote in "The Encyclopedia of Jewish Food."

The desserts are made by cooking milk and flour in oil at a low heat. When they're golden brown, the fritters are drenched in a spiced *chini pani* (sugar syrup) that often contains cardamom.

You can find gulab jamun at a lot of Indian restaurants — I typically buy mine from Ekta Cuisine in Fishtown. The small sweets have the consistency of a really rich cake doughnut — they definitely strike that decadent, deep-fried note you'd expect from a Chanukah dish. I also like pouring the leftover cardamom sugar syrup in chai tea.

BUÑUELOS

Buñuelos, also known as bimuelos or bumuelos in Ladino, originated in Spain and Portugal and have become popular desserts in Latin American countries. You can find them served at Colombian or Mexican restaurants. They are commonly eaten by Sephardic Jews during Chanukah because, you guessed it, oil.

According to Ty Alhadeff, Sephardic studies research coordinator



Gulab Jamun

of the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Washington, they are also eaten for biblical reasons. The first Ladino translation of the Torah published in Istanbul in 1547 read that the manna God provided to the Israelites in the desert tasted like buñuelos, or fritters, in honey.

They're also quite simple to make at home — all you need is flour, sugar, yeast, water, salt and oil for frying. I made a batch that turned out a little less fluffy and round than the picture on My Jewish Learning (that recipe is adapted from Gil Marks' book "The World of Jewish Desserts") but the results were still a bit lighter and breadier than sufganyot. They remind me of the fried dough you can find at carnivals dusted with cinnamon and sugar.

Although these desserts are technically Iberian and Latin American, I put a North American twist on mine by drenching them in maple syrup. No regrets. *

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Tim Sudall got his first call about filming a microwedding in June.

The couple decided to tie the knot in their own backyard, with a scaled-down guest list of 10.

The owner of Allure Films was happy to help. Many of his clients postponed their celebrations due to the pandemic, which struck a blow to the events industry, including his film and photography business.

He had coordinated reception Zooms a few times before, although not extensively, so he dove into researching the latest technology. By the time the wedding rolled around, he was ready.

“The first one we did was a home run,” he said. “We had people from Israel that were supposed to come over, and they couldn’t, so they were able to watch it on Zoom. We had the guests that were there, we had Grandpa do the HaMotzi.”

In addition to streaming the service live, his team filmed the whole event so the couple could have a keepsake of their day.

“I was just blown away with how amazing it was that not only did the small, intimate group get to have a wonderful wedding ceremony and start their lives, but all these other friends and family were able to join it,” he said.

The requests started rolling in. By September, Allure Films had filmed 17 Zoom celebrations.

Ben Yoblick, owner of Lafayette Hill Studios, and Michael Adelson, owner of Luria Visuals Custom Productions, have received similar requests for photography and videography at scaled down celebrations.

Couples want to start their lives together by getting married, and kids already know their Torah portions for b’nei mitzvah celebrations. Professional-grade videos and livestreams of these events are now deemed absolutely essential to make sure loved ones can still be included from afar.

Adelson said the desire for a high-quality remote experience for guests has placed a renewed emphasis on triple-checking Wi-Fi connections and sound before the big day.

“My big belief is to make it easy and stress-free for all my clients. They’re very nervous and I don’t blame them — you don’t want to invite your entire family to a Zoom meeting or a YouTube link that’s not going to work,” he said.

Yoblick’s company had previously provided livestreaming service for corporate events, and was able to put the same technology to use for small celebrations.

“We started off a little more simple. People just wanted a single camera to be livestreamed to the platform of their choice, you know, whether it’s Facebook or Zoom or Vimeo or YouTube,” he said.

Later, they expanded to using multiple cameras for reaction shots for special moments, like when couples exchange vows.

By using wireless microphones affixed to bimahs and a sound mixer, Yoblick and his team can create sound quality befitting a professional broadcast. Adelson and Sudall also use this technology for their productions.

During Allure Film livestreams, Sudall and his team put up a graphic that welcomes everyone to the Zoom as soon as they log in. Once the ceremony starts, the team shoots with two different cameras. When the bride and groom walk down the aisle at a wedding, they can interact with their remote guests on an iPad.

Adelson has also worked with synagogues to film High Holiday services and started a side business called Love Note Video to keep his editors working. The service creates professionally edited videos of well-wishes sent by faraway friends and family to

See Video, **Page 24**



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Video

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congratulate people during their milestones.

“My editor goes through them and color corrects, audio corrects, puts backgrounds together. Then we send it back to the couple and they have this keepsake forever.

“That’s kind of a bonus that we wouldn’t have had before,” he said.

Yoblick said that while he has fulfilled requests for special effects in past videos, particularly for teens who wanted to appear in a video game or Nike commercial for their b’nei mitzvah celebrations, people are requesting more straightforward documentary-style film techniques during the pandemic. No one wants to accidentally give their relatives the fear of missing out.

“There’s this tone of ‘Not everyone can be there.’ So they’re not trying to be over-the-top with stuff,” he said.

Although Sudall has been inspired by the micro events, the scaled-down celebrations are not enough to bring business back to pre-pandemic levels.

“To be honest, we’re not making any money at them — we’re not charging a lot. We’re just covering costs, but you know the value of seeing these families come together,” he said. “And a lot of them are still going to have the party next year. And we’re going to have something great that we’re making now that they’re going to be able to show during the cocktail hour.”

Adelson’s 2021 calendar is booked solid with people who have postponed their celebrations.

“I hope it does stay booked up, and we get back to being able to do everything that we love to do,” he said. ❁

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Mazel Tov!



Lafayette Hill Studios prepares to film a bar mitzvah. Courtesy of Lafayette Hill Studios

“I was just blown away with how amazing it was that not only did the small, intimate group get to have a wonderful wedding ceremony and start their lives, but all these other friends and family were able to join it.”



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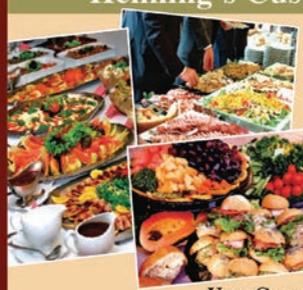


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