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THE WEEKLY'S ENDORSEMENTS
Chances are residents of the San Fernando Valley and Hollywood will wake up the morning after Election Day, and still be in the city of L.A. And well they should. But that's too easy. Voters also face some puzzling initiatives and local measures, with the future of California at stake. Here are [the picks](#).

THE UNHAPPY WARRIOR
Gray Davis was never anyone's first choice for anything. But after 25 years of relentless pursuit, he made it to the top — even if the pleasures of being governor elude him. **BILL BRADLEY** examines [Davis, the enigma](#), who may well be the most calculating politician in America. **HAROLD MEYERSON** explains why, flaws and all, voters should [let Davis stick around](#) another four years. Plus, **CHRISTINE PELISEK** compiles a listing of Davis' [veto record](#).

news

SPECIAL REPORT: THE IRAQ DEBATE
Saddam Hussein may no longer be enemy No. 1. With pressure building around the world and at the U.N. against an invasion, George Bush seems to be examining alternatives, however reluctantly. **CELESTE FREMON** hangs out with [L.A.'s Iraqi community](#); **BRUCE SHAPIRO** examines the reasons why the war in Iraq [may never happen](#); **DAVID CORN** sheds light on the new CIA report that details [greater dangers than Saddam](#); and **CHRISTOPHER LAYNE** gives [the conservative case](#) against the war.

ENRON IS BACK
Ex-Enron energy trader [Tim Beldon's](#) guilty plea last week clears up some of the mystery of California's make-believe power crisis. The question now: How far will prosecutors follow his lead? BY **CHARLES RAPPLEYE**

PLUS: BEN EHRENREICH on the plight of [LAX workers](#) caught up in a counter-terrorism raid last August.

WHITE OLEANDER

Michelle Pfeiffer, the poisonous plant in question, turns up good and steely as Ingrid, an artist and committed narcissist who, even after her imprisonment for the murder of a feckless lover (Billy Connolly), strives for control over every breath taken by her teenage daughter Astrid (a promising Alison Lohman). Batted from one flawed foster home to the next, the equally gifted but confused Astrid struggles to liberate herself, forges a relationship with a stoical comic book artist (*Almost Famous*' Patrick Fugit) and, via the unraveling of a family secret, plows through to freedom. The material — Janet Fitch's novel, adapted by

Mary Agnes Donoghue — leans toward glib, but what might have been a mawkish tale of mommies dearest is handled, by British director Peter Kosminsky, with intelligent restraint and a wonderfully relaxed way with actors. Pfeiffer is great, as are the other would-be moms, not one of whom is demonized: Robin Wright, a complete stitch as a trailer-trash alcoholic; Renée Zellweger, very moving as a kind but weak failed actress; and Svetlana Efremova, brassy and wry as a ravenously entrepreneurial Russian who shows Astrid the way forward. With its open, spontaneous elasticity, *White Oleander* is that rare Hollywood film — an attempt to understand, without judgment, a world on its own terms. (Ella Taylor)

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RAPPO GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

The Girls

DIANA McLELLAN

LA WEEKLY

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