

# Los Angeles Times

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## COLUMN ONE

## Not Fade Away

■ The hard living didn't kill Carlos Guitartlos or his passion for music. After years of playing on the streets, the rocker is clean and on the rise.

By BOB BAKER  
Times Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — The 53-year-old diabetic with a weakened heart, a white, unkempt beard and several missing front teeth awakens in his \$35-a-day room the size of a jail cell, cradling his electric guitar. He gets dressed and shambles a couple hundred feet down the street to a seedy BART plaza in the Mission district. He sits on a battery-powered amplifier, plugs in the guitar, puts a cardboard donation box on the ground and begins to play and sing.

It might be Robert Johnson's "Dust My Broom" or an instrumental rendition of "Yesterday," or the haunting coda from "Layla," or "If I Only Had a Brain" from "The Wizard of Oz," or Joe Turner's "Shake, Rattle and Roll." Or this ballad, one he wrote in a hospital a couple of years ago when he thought he might die:

*Lord, help me, I've fallen again  
Straight from the heart  
You can hear my tear when you  
call in again  
Help me make a new start. . .*

The notes are fuzzy and occasionally halting, but the technique is unmistakably sophisticated: chords and melody played simultaneously, the way Chet Atkins might have done. An old gravelly blues voice, perfectly cracked, effortlessly in tune, pours from the slumped singer. The truthfulness of the voice commands you to listen, but it also commands you to wonder: Who is this? What is a guy with these chops doing here?

His name — his stage name for 23 years — is Carlos Guitartlos. Two decades ago, he was a member of a legendarily mercurial L.A. bar band, Top Jimmy and the Rhythm Pigs. The band, a collection of big, obstinate, blues-loving men who played and partied fiercely and disdained rehearsals, was at the epicenter of L.A.'s club scene during a brief era when the roots-rock and punk-music

## INSIDE



FRANCINE ORR *Los Angeles Times*  
"It's something I've wanted to do since I was little," says runway model Gerren Taylor.

### In Command of the Catwalk, at Age 12

She plays with Barbies. Model Gerren Taylor also strolls fashion's runways. **D1**

### Bush Official Criticized at Seniors Event

Activists denounce regulatory czar's ideas on the economic value of people's years of life. **B1**

### Shipboard Terror Threat

A cruise was interrupted after a Laguna Hills woman left threatening notes, the FBI says. **B1**

### Jockey Pincay Retires

A neck injury forces Laffit Pincay Jr., 56, horse racing's winningest rider, to call it quits. **B5**

### L.A. Weather

Mostly sunny and slightly warmer. Partly cloudy tonight. L.A. Downtown: 69/52. **A2**

California News .....**B1**  
Food.....**D9** Obituaries...**B1**  
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AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
**GRAND ENTRANCE:** Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat, left, and Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas arrive at the Palestinian Legislative Council in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

## Immigrant Detention OK'd

Supreme Court rules that people living legally in U.S. can be held and expelled without a hearing if they have committed crimes.

By DAVID G. SAVAGE  
Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—Legal immigrants who have committed serious crimes can be held without a hearing and deported, even if they are not dangerous and are unlikely to flee, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled Tuesday.

The 5-4 decision in a Califor-

nia case upholds a strict 1996 immigration law that seeks to rid the nation of "criminal aliens." The law requires mandatory detention and deportation of all immigrants, even those who are long-time lawful residents, if they have committed a crime that is punishable by a year in prison.

In Tuesday's ruling, the high court rejected the claim that these immigrants have a constitutional right to a hearing before they are jailed.

"This court has firmly and repeatedly endorsed the proposition that Congress may make rules as to aliens that would be unacceptable if applied to citizens," said Chief Justice William

H. Rehnquist.

Legal experts said the decision is likely to speed the pace of thousands of deportations. Rehnquist cited government statistics showing that immigrants with criminal records are deported on average within 47 days of their arrest.

Immigration rights advocates and the American Bar Assn. criticized the decision, saying it allowed imprisonment without a hearing. But supporters said the decision affirms the law's goal of deporting criminal immigrants.

The ruling also gives U.S. Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft a stronger legal basis to hold de-

[See Court, Page A10]

## Palestinian Urges End to 'Armed Chaos'

Prime Minister Abbas embraces U.S.-backed peace plan in his first speech. Hours later, a suicide bomber kills two others in Tel Aviv.

By HENRY CHU  
AND RUTH MORRIS  
Special to The Times

RAMALLAH, West Bank — In his maiden speech Tuesday as the Palestinian Authority's first prime minister, Mahmoud Abbas challenged Palestinian militants to disarm and declared his commitment to a U.S.-backed peace plan that envisions an independent state for his people in less than three years.

The 68-year-old Abbas — who was chosen for his new job by authority President Yasser Arafat — told Palestinian lawmakers that the time had come to end the present situation of "armed chaos" and to "translate our decades and generations of popular and revolutionary struggles into political achievements."

He put Palestinian militia groups on notice that his government would not tolerate the "unauthorized possession of weapons," and he criticized terrorist attacks — such as the suicide bombings carried out by militant organizations — as poisoning the chances for a resolution to the Palestinian-Israeli standoff.

Abbas' 45-minute speech, which outlined his agenda on everything from clean government to civil liberties, was closely watched for clues to how he will try to halt the bloody 2½-year-old intifada that has killed more than 2,000 Palestinians and 700 Israelis.

Just hours later, however, a suicide bomber killed several people at a popular seaside hangout in Tel Aviv early today.

At least three people died, in-



REUTERS  
**BOMBING VICTIM:** An Israeli medic attends to an injured man after a suicide attack outside a Tel Aviv pub.

cluding the bomber, when a blast rocked Mike's Place, a pub along a beachfront promenade, about 1 a.m., Israeli police said. Dozens of other late-night revelers were hurt in the explosion, the worst such attack in Israel in months.

The bombing instantly cast a pall over the confirmation of Abbas and the Palestinian Legislative Council's approval of his 24-member Cabinet after nearly four hours of debate.

No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, but it is likely to be interpreted as a deadly response by radical groups to Abbas' call for them to lay down their weapons.

"We denounce terrorism by any party and in all its shapes and forms . . . because we are convinced that such methods do not lend support to a just cause like ours but rather destroy it," Abbas said. "These methods do not achieve peace, to which we aspire."

At the same time, Abbas called on Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, calling the Israeli

[See Palestinians, Page A4]

## GOP Says Borrowing Is Needed for Budget

Assembly Republicans move to break impasse, propose financing \$10 billion over 5 years.

By EVAN HALPER  
AND NANCY VOGEL  
Times Staff Writers

SACRAMENTO — Signaling a break in California's gridlocked budget negotiations, Assembly Republicans conceded Tuesday that the state cannot simply cut its way out of its \$35-billion financial crisis and that the solution should include borrowing billions of dollars.

The concession was revealed

in a Republican plan for closing the budget gap that included steep program cuts, a spending freeze and raising community college fees.

But the linchpin of the GOP proposal is Republicans' agreement to finance \$10 billion of the state's budget shortfall over the next five years instead of trying to close the entire gap — estimated to be as large as \$35 billion — by mid-2004.

In a 40-page presentation circulated in the Capitol, Republicans called such borrowing "generally repulsive," but acknowledged that the shortfall has become so large that it is "preferable to other alternatives

[See Budget, Page A11]

## Asian Leaders Vow to Join Together to Battle SARS

Pledge comes as South Korea reports its first suspected case. China confirms dozens more.

By TYLER MARSHALL,  
BARBARA DEMICK  
AND ANTHONY KUHN  
Special to The Times

BANGKOK, Thailand — Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and the leaders of 10 Southeast Asian nations pledged closer cooperation Tuesday in the fight to contain the SARS virus as a leading World Health Organization official declared that public fears about the disease had become excessive.

A declaration released at the end of the leaders' one-day summit here included initiatives for improved exchanges of information, joint research projects and coordinated immigration and

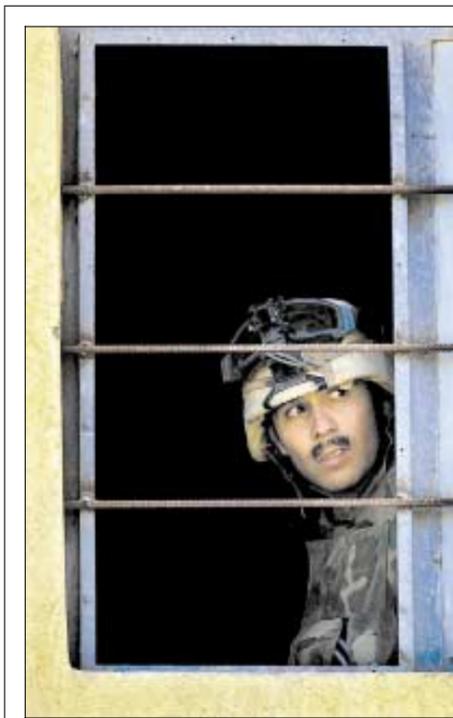
customs controls. The declaration and the comments by WHO's chief of communicable diseases, David Heymann, appeared aimed at easing the sense of panic that has gripped East Asia as the pneumonia-like illness has spread.

Also Tuesday, the WHO rescinded a warning it issued a week ago against nonessential travel to Toronto, where SARS arrived from Hong Kong in late February and has killed 21 people. However, in Asia, there was a raft of disturbing news about the spread of the disease, including 152 confirmed new cases reported in Beijing — one of the

[See SARS, Page A14]

### RELATED STORIES

**Unexpected move:** WHO lifts travel warning for Toronto. **A14**  
**Regarding media:** U.S. coverage seen as alarmist at times. **D1**



WALLY SKALIY *Los Angeles Times*  
**TENSION IN THE AIR:** A U.S. soldier keeps a wary eye on the street outside a school compound in Fallouja the day after a bloody confrontation with demonstrators.

## Hostilities Lead to Bloodshed in an Iraqi Town

Americans say they were only defending themselves when they fired at a crowd of protesters.

By MICHAEL SLACKMAN  
Times Staff Writer

FALLOUJA, Iraq — Residents of this conservative, tradition-bound city west of Baghdad charged Tuesday that 14 Iraqis were killed and 75 wounded when U.S. soldiers opened fire on a crowd of protesters in a melee marked by misunderstanding, confusion and seething anger.

More than 24 hours later, the circumstances of the shootings involving members of the U.S. Army's 82nd Airborne Division were still in dispute.

The Americans said they were only defending themselves after Iraqis started shooting at them Monday night and that they could not confirm that U.S. forces had killed anyone.

Protesters insisted it was a peaceful, if heated, demonstration, and cited scores of dead and wounded.

Sorting through the various accounts of

[See Shooting, Page A6]

## Music Labels Turn Up Anti-Piracy Tactics

The industry sends out legal warnings and song decoys to discourage online file sharers.

By JON HEALEY  
Times Staff Writer

Unable to sue file-sharing networks into submission, the music industry is stepping up its campaign to instill fear and frustration among the people who use them to copy songs for free.

The multifaceted effort tries to paint the global networks as seedy realms rife with unseemly and dangerous material — places where computer viruses,

kiddie porn and legal woes lurk amid the temptations of free tunes.

The Recording Industry Assn. of America on Tuesday launched the latest element of the campaign, sending intimidating electronic warnings to users of the Kazaa and Grokster file-sharing networks.

The notes, which declare that unauthorized file-sharers "risk legal penalties," are sent via the two networks' instant message systems to anyone offering certain songs for others to copy. They aim to show users with fake names such as "bigfishmouth" and "calebsgiri" that they can be tracked as easily as a surveillance camera records shoplift-

ers. The not-so-subtle threat is that those who continue flouting the law will be hauled into court. Indeed, some in the music industry say it's time to start suing heavy users of the networks en masse.

As one high-ranking record executive put it, if parents got subpoenas or high school kids confronted the prospect of being viewed as pirates by college admissions personnel, "that begins to affect behavior."

The instant messages are just one of many efforts the entertainment industry has launched in the last few months to make file-sharing networks seem risky

[See Piracy, Page A10]



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# The Bittersweet Ballad of Fallen Star Carlos Guitarlos

[Guitarlos, from Page A1]

movements collided, forging groups like the Blasters, Los Lobos, X and Fear. These bands were fraternities of elemental musicians, contemptuous of stardom, seeming to long only for one transcendent moment on stage.

By the late '80s, that fervor was largely gone, along with the Rhythm Pigs. Guitarlos became another obscure name in the long list of musicians felled by drugs and booze, desperately following his ex-wife and infant daughter to San Francisco, living by playing on the streets and sometimes sleeping on them, losing himself in cocaine.

Which is where most of these stories end. Every once in a while, though, one of the fallen will rise and, as former Blasters guitarist and songwriter Dave Alvin puts it, "bear the symbolic cross for the others." And so it has come to pass that in this transit plaza, where commuters and drug dealers swirl in separate circles, paying little attention to him, Carlos Guitarlos is on the verge of resurrection, of making that new start.

## 'Because It's What I Do'

Tuesday, a new label started by Guitarlos' nephew released "Straight From the Heart," a CD of 17 compositions, some written as far back as the 1970s. The CD — rough in spots, delightful in others, bearing the influences of a blizzard of styles and sources (blues to Cajun to country to swing, Solomon Burke to Chuck Berry to Curtis Mayfield) — is the first well-produced demonstration of Guitarlos' talents. Amoeba Music's and Tower Records' Hollywood stores have agreed to stock it, and Tower is hosting a free performance by Guitarlos and his band May 8. Gigs in the San Fernando Valley, Hollywood and Alhambra are scheduled later in May and in June. Guitarlos has separate bands of working musicians ready to back him in Southern and Northern California as more dates unfold.

This is a big deal for somebody who has spent the last dozen years singing for spare change, who opened his first bank account two weeks ago and whose most notable award was Best Street Musician in a 1994 San Francisco Bay Guardian survey. But Guitarlos isn't the kind of man who celebrates. He has lived most of his life in self-imposed isolation, communing with six strings. He has convinced himself there is as much validity playing at 16th and Mission as in any club. He has been clean for two years and proudly recites his daily routine: Get up at 7 and play on the street till 10. Go back to the room and write songs. Go back to the corner at 4 and play till 7. Go back to the room at night and write songs.

It's a routine he'll stick with even if the CD leads to out-of-town club dates. "I'll wake up the next day and play on the street there," he says in his hoarse, insistent voice as he sits in a coin-operated laundry, waiting for his clothes. "Because it's what I do." He is addicted to the purity of playing outdoors. "There's no captive audience, so I earn every penny. Every penny. They don't have to put in money. They don't have to stop to listen. But when they do, it means something. And I have the same thank you for the nickel from a wino as I do for a \$10 bill from somebody on the way to work. I do it because that's what I do."

Even his old friends agree that as a Rhythm Pig, he was a genuinely mean guy, glad to pick you up and throw you aside. Time and illness seem to have washed that away, leaving a quirky, self-absorbed sense of humor. On this day, he's agitated about a Bay Area publication that alludes to him as "scraping by." "Look at this," he says, pulling a roll including seven \$100 bills out of his jeans. He's been selling the new CD for 10 bucks a pop at the BART plaza. "Does this look like I'm scraping by?"

The musicians who play with him regard him the way basketball players at Venice Beach might regard a playground legend who would have made it to the NBA but for bad luck and bad judgment: a flawed savant, a muse, a profound talent who warrants extra patience.

They joke with him about the question they pose to each other: "What's your CSP [Carlos Saturation Point] today?" They tell stories about how he carried around a guitar neck to fend off robbers, how he fashioned a cardboard guitar in jail (on a street-brawl rap he eventually beat) to stage a tutorial for his cellmates. They marvel not so much at the technical fluidity of his playing or singing, but the originality, the rawness, the sincerity. "He has an incredible heart," says Max Butler, a Bay Area guitarist who performed with Guitarlos earlier this month.

Adds Alvin, who sings and plays on one of the new CD's tracks and, like many, marvels that Guitarlos is still alive: "A lot



RANDI LYNN BEACH For The Times

**LIVING THE BLUES:** Guitarlos plays at the same BART station in San Francisco that he mans every day with a cardboard donation box on the sidewalk beside him.

of his songs have such a core of truth. He doesn't disguise his faults. He's not striking any poses. Carlos can't, really."

## 'A Story to Tell'

*It's been one spit in the wind  
Two strikes I can't win  
You've been callin' me, callin'  
me,  
callin' me  
Come back again  
Lord, help me, I've fallen again  
Straight from the heart*

He wrote that song in a hospital after being treated for congestive heart failure in 2001. The timing was poignant. Two months earlier, at a wake for Top Jimmy (James Koneck), who'd died of liver failure at 46 in Las Vegas, Guitarlos had sworn off alcohol and drugs. He weighed 80 pounds less than the beefy 280 he'd carried as a Rhythm Pig, and had been struggling with diabetes for a decade. It was not surprising he wrote the song while hospitalized — he writes them everywhere, claims to have penned 3,000 and can regale a listener with scores of them at a time, including the year and place each was written. What was surprising was the commitment that followed.

Guitarlos' nephew, Damon Ayala of Alhambra, who worked for the Los Angeles DWP in materials management and booked blues bands on the side, had grown up idolizing Top Jimmy and the Rhythm Pigs. But he wouldn't manage his uncle as long as he was using and unreliable. Now, in Carlos' hospital room, they talked about recording, and a month later Guitarlos wrote Ayala a letter laying out a session plan. It was, Ayala thought, the first time he'd seen Guitarlos think about his future more than a few hours ahead. "It's going to be a hard-working, wonderful time," the letter promised. "My part will be that of a true leader. . . . No drugs will be par. . . . I feel good!"

Between them, Guitarlos and Ayala recruited Alvin; John Doe, formerly of X; and Mike Watt, formerly of the Minutemen, to play on selected cuts. They lined up bassist Marc Doten to play on and produce the album at his home studio in Tarzana. Doten had long wanted to record Guitarlos; he'd played with him a couple of years before, recording a song called "(I'll Stop Killing the Pain) When the Pain Stops Killing Me," haunting because Guitarlos' drug-weakened voice seemed to be coming from the grave. In two days at Doten's studio last year, Guitarlos and the musicians recorded two dozen of his songs, songs about drinking in a two-tavern town, pledges of love, recriminations, dancing, suicide.

Then Ayala, 35, a father of four, went to work, spending late hours at his home computer, combing the Internet for radio stations that might greet the CD sympathetically. He found a few, including WRVG, a public radio station near Lexington, Ky., where music director Jerry Gerard, who had never heard of Guitarlos, began playing a different track each hour. "Just one look at the [CD] cover and you know the guy has a story to tell," Gerard said. "Any decent-sized city probably has a dozen cats like

Carlos . . . but this guy has delivered a wonderful record."

## 'Get Outta My Way'

"I'm a Cricket, not a Beatle. Write that down," Guitarlos barks gregariously. He is sitting on his unmade bed on the first floor of a single-room-occupancy hotel, reachable through two remote-control-locked doors. He embarks on a looping lecture that seems to say: The Beatles, elegant as they were, as much as they swept him away when he was a teenager, took music to too cute a place. Buddy Holly and the Crickets, by comparison, remained real. They pointed Guitarlos in the direction he wished to head: blues-based music more focused on making you dance than making you think.

Back then he was Carlos Daniel Ayala. Growing up in the northeast Los Angeles community of Cypress Park, he admired the sound of his father singing in the shower. He talked his mother into buying him a guitar at 10, and learned the basics from an older brother. He had a good ear: "By the time I was 13 I could play anything I could hear — jazz, classical, anything. I probably played the notes lame, but I played the right notes." He lovingly remembers radio stations that played it all — black and white — rather than segregating styles. He graduated from Marshall High, played in some undistinguished bands and spent most of his 20s living at home, writing songs and practicing, getting better, going nowhere.

In 1980, at age 30, he got a job as a doorman at the downtown Hong Kong Cafe, working with his guitar strapped around his neck. After hours one night, Top Jimmy walked in and started drinking each abandoned glass. A musician both men knew, Mark Frere, spontaneously introduced the doorman as "Carlos Guitarlos," and it stuck. Soon Jimmy's band broke up and he and Carlos began playing. The Rhythm Pigs evolved to a five-man core whose credo, Guitarlos says fondly, was "Get outta my way" — overpowering the audience with furious cover versions culled from disparate artists.

Top Jimmy, when he wasn't falling-down drunk, could sing anything with majestic soul. The band segued from Merle Haggard's "Working Man's Blues" to an obscure rockabilly classic like "Ubangi Stomp" to the Doors' "Roadhouse Blues" to a Guitarlos original like "Dance With Your Baby," in which Top Jimmy demanded: "What's it gonna take to make you move?" When the band was in sync, it was frighteningly intense. Van Halen's David Lee Roth recorded a song extolling Top Jimmy on the band's album "1984."

"Jimmy," says Guitarlos, "was the greatest singer. So powerful. And with me there pushing him and our [even bigger] bass player [Gil T] — it was like a bunch of animals." Guitarlos never sang back then. Why should I have? he demands. "Nobody could top Jimmy. Only singer I heard match Jimmy died last May." His voice turns sad. "Juliette Valentine, the greatest blues singer in San Francisco." She sang on the streets of the Fi-

nanial District until she was murdered. "Soon as she opened her mouth there'd be a crowd. Her name is Juliette Valentine. And she's dead."

Every Monday night in their heyday, the Rhythm Pigs held court at the Cathay de Grande, a subterranean Hollywood night-spot. On one of those nights in 1983, Guitarlos spotted a clothing designer named Marilyn Pardee, stopped playing, walked over and planted a kiss on her. They kept running into each other, moved in together, married and had a daughter, but after a five-year relationship "things started getting out of hand," Pardee said, and she moved north. Determined not to lose contact with his daughter, Guitarlos followed.

Those times were "dicey," says Pardee, who still lives in San Francisco, but "I've always felt close to him even when I couldn't allow him to be physically close to us." They talk often. "They have a great divorce," says L.A. photographer Gary Leonard, who photographed the couple's wedding.

Two weeks ago, after picking up his laundry, Guitarlos caught a bus one block back to his hotel because his legs were swollen, a consequence of his circulatory problems. Getting off the bus, he spotted a little girl riding a mechanized pony and dropped a quarter in the slot. He crossed Mission Street to his hotel, mocking the drug trade. "Northwest corner is Smackistan, the southwest corner, where I play, is Crackistan.")

He demonstrated a game of identifying the players: "Dealer, buyer, runner, dealer, dealer, in-

formant, undercover cop." A dealer overheard him and cursed. Guitarlos sat on a metal bench in the transit plaza next to a tired woman. He struck up a conversation and bought her an ice cream from a nearby cart. He shouted hello to workmen, cops, any face he recognized.

That night he rehearsed with his Northern California band at the East Bay home of bassist Bill MacBeath. He mocked himself when it was time for a third take of a song — this was so unlike the old Carlos, who prized spontaneity over all else. He was dragging tonight, having trouble controlling his sugar level. MacBeath made him a smoothie and his energy came back.

After rehearsal, he stopped in

at a nearby bar to watch a blues band. He was bored by its plodding style, and between songs offered to sing a number. The band agreed to back him. He spotted a local piano player and invited her up. "Dust My Broom," Guitarlos said. The band broke into the song with a new power. People drinking got up and danced. Guitarlos had admired the lead guitarist's instrument, and bought it from him for \$400 cash during a break.

A few nights later, Marilyn and the couple's 16-year-old daughter, Eloise, drove to Guitarlos' hotel to bring him dinner and the ATM card for his new bank account. They found him resting in bed, cradling his new guitar.

## Sex Slavery Suspect OK to Stand Trial, His Lawyer Says

From Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — The retired handyman accused of holding at least five women as sex slaves in an underground bunker has been found competent to stand trial, a defense attorney said Tuesday.

The opinion came from a psychologist hired by attorneys for the defendant, John Jamelske.

Defense attorney Robert Earl declined to discuss the expert's findings but said the conclusion does not necessarily rule out a psychiatric defense at trial.

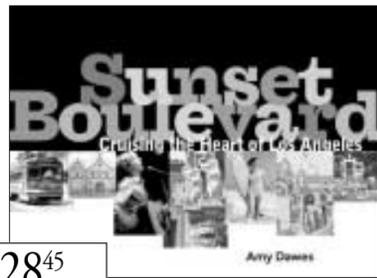
Jamelske, 67, is being held

in jail without bail on charges of kidnapping, rape, sodomy and sexual abuse. He was arrested April 7 after a 16-year-old girl told authorities that he had held her hostage for nearly seven months in a concrete dungeon he built under his backyard.

Since Jamelske's arrest, four other women have told police they were abducted and raped by him. Police, suspecting there are other victims, released photos of Jamelske for the first time Monday.

Police said one of the victims was held captive for more than two years.

## THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO L.A.'S MOST-STORIED STREET.



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