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This undated photo released by The Inn at Little Washington shows mannequins set up in the restaurant's dining room in Washington, Virginia. —AFP photos



Mannequins costumed in 1940s era clothing are seated in the dining area of the Inn at Little Washington, a Michelin three star restaurant in the Virginia countryside, in Rappahannock County.

## Dinner with dummies: US eatery fills empty seats with mannequins

Their eyes are vacant, their smiles uncanny — but they're dressed to the nines and they don't need a reservation for some of America's finest dining. A Michelin-starred restaurant in the US state of Virginia has found a fun — or creepy, depending on your tastes — way to enforce social distancing when it reopens at the end of May: costumed mannequins seated among the breathing guests. "When we needed to solve the problem of social distancing and reducing our restaurant's occupancy by half, the

solution seemed obvious — fill it with interestingly dressed dummies," says chef Patrick O'Connell, owner of The Inn at Little Washington, in an e-mail to AFP.

"This would allow plenty of space between real guests and elicit a few smiles and provide some fun photo ops," he adds. The Inn, which says it is "known for being reverently irreverent" and which also happens to be the only restaurant with three Michelin stars in the Washington, DC area, is scheduled to

reopen May 29. The theatrical, life-sized mannequins are dressed to evoke the post-war ambience of the 1940s, with pearl necklaces, checkered dresses and striped suits.

The glamor needs to suit the rest of the Inn, whose sprawling grounds are distinguished by features such as a chicken coop complete with crystal chandelier, and where a tasting menu can cost each guest \$248 before the drink. The Inn has collaborated with local businesses to provide the staging, costumes and

make-up for the mannequins, strategically placed at tables which must remain empty. "We're all craving to gather and see other people right now. They don't all necessarily need to be real people," O'Connell mischievously points out. "I've always had a thing for mannequins — they never complain about anything and you can have lots of fun dressing them up," he adds. Unlike the real guests. —AFP

## Tributes paid after death of Beatles photographer Astrid Kirchherr

Tributes emerged Saturday for German photographer Astrid Kirchherr, whose striking images of The Beatles in the early 1960s helped turn them into cultural icons, following the announcement of her death this week aged 81. Kirchherr passed away on Wednesday in Hamburg a few days before her 82nd birthday, Beatles historian Mark Lewisohn confirmed Friday. "Her gift to the Beatles was immeasurable," he said on Twitter, describing Kirchherr as "intelligent, inspirational, innovative... smart, loving and (an) uplifting friend to many". Those close to her told several German media outlets, including the weekly Die Zeit and NDR public television, that she had died after a serious illness.

Beatles drummer Ringo Starr took to social media to pay his own tribute. "God bless Astrid a beautiful human being and she took great photos," he said. Kirchherr met and befriended the band in 1960 during a tour in Hamburg, before they achieved worldwide fame. "My whole life changed in a couple of minutes," she is quoted as saying. At the time, the group was made up of five members: John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison, as well as bassist Stuart Sutcliffe and drummer Pete Best, who was later replaced by Starr.

## Mop-top hairstyles

Sutcliffe fell in love with Kirchherr and stayed on in Hamburg, but died from a brain haemorrhage in 1962. She later married and divorced twice, but had no children, The Guardian reported. Kirchherr went on to take numerous photos of the group, showing



Picture taken on October 6, 2000 in Itzehoe, northern Germany, shows German photographer Astrid Kirchherr posing in front of one of her photographs depicting British musician and Beatles member John Lennon. —AFP

them both as rebels and romantics. She later lived mainly off the reproduction rights of the pictures, NDR said. She was also said to have worked as a stylist and interior designer and opened a photography shop. Kirchherr was behind the group's so-called mop-top hairstyles of the early 1960s.

The photographer later kept in touch with The Beatles, Harrison in particular. Dhani Harrison, his son and himself a musician, posted a message to Kirchherr on Twitter alongside a photograph of her. "Dearest Astrid, I really wish I could have spent more time with you in this life," he said. "You were always so kind and loving towards me. May God bless you always." Last month saw the 50th anniversary of the Beatles' unofficial break-up, with the so-called "Fab Four" still seen as influential pop music pioneers half a century later. The band remain the best-selling music artists of all time, with enduring hits from "I Want to Hold Your Hand" and "Hey Jude" to "Yesterday" and "Let It Be" familiar to at least four generations of fans. —AFP

## US comedian Fred Willard passes away aged 86

Four-time Emmy award-winning comedian Fred Willard, who appeared in films including "Anchorman" and "This is Spinal Tap" and television shows such as "Modern Family," has died aged 86, his agent announced Saturday. Tributes poured in for the actor, with long-time friend and fellow showbiz veteran Jamie Lee Curtis tweeting "Thanks for the deep belly laughs Mr. Willard." "Fred Willard was the funniest person that I've ever worked with. He was a sweet, wonderful man," tweeted actor Steve Carrell. Willard himself had just paid homage to two other showbiz legends, singer Little Richard and fellow comedian Jerry Stiller, who also passed away this month.

"A bad time! Just getting over the loss of Little Richard, and now I learn my old friend Jerry Stiller has passed away. He was a good friend and a very funny man," he wrote on May 11, in the last thread on his Twitter account. "I met him in the 60s when we played in the same clubs in The Village as he and Anne Meara. Unfortunately for us, they were much funnier! We couldn't be jealous, so we became good friends instead." Modern audiences knew Willard as the TV father of actor Ty Burrell's character Phil Dunphy on ABC's hit sitcom "Modern Family." But his decades-long career saw him make audiences laugh in ensemble films such as "Waiting for Guffman," "A Mighty Wind" and "Best in Show." Earlier audiences encountered him as Jerry Hubbard, sidekick to actor Martin Mull in the 70s talk show spoof "Fernwood Tonight." Willard's stage career began when he moved to New York in the late 1950s. His initial work included a production of "Desperate Hours" at a local YMCA, where he worked with future comedy partner Vic Grecco.

They later performed under the moniker Willard & Grecco in the Greenwich Village area. The comedy



In this file photo taken on November 07, 2013, actor Fred Willard poses on arrival for the AFI Fest opening night gala screening of Disney's 'Saving Mr. Banks' in Hollywood. —AFP

duo found some success touring and made appearances on "The Dean Martin Show," "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour," and "The Tonight Show." Willard also had a recurring role as Hank MacDougall on the later seasons of CBS's "Everybody Loves Raymond." He was cast as a sportscaster in the television series "Back to You," which premiered on the Fox Network in 2007. The Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters presented Willard with the Art Gilmore Career Achievement Award at their celebrity luncheon in 2015. His agent, Mike Eisenstadt, did not specify the cause of Willard's death, nor his whereabouts at the time. —AFP



(From left) Rai, Klaus and Guillem of the Stay Homas music group perform on the terrace of the trio's apartment in Barcelona. —AFP photos

## How lockdown spelled stardom for 3 play-at-home musicians

When the epidemic hit, they were just three musicians stuck at home who started larking around on their terrace with a guitar and a bin in the hope of livening up lockdown. But two months and 27 songs later, the Barcelona trio has become a rooftop sensation, their catchy tunes in a mix of Spanish, Catalan and English winning them an impressive following online — and a contract with Sony. Known as the "Stay Homas", Klaus, Rai and Guillem now have 400,000 followers on Instagram, Michael Buble has covered one of their songs and they have collaborated with Manu Chao and Pablo Alborán. And their first album will be out this autumn. "Not in a hundred lifetimes would I have ever believed this was going to happen to us. That Sony would come knocking because they like the songs we make on our rooftop with a guitar and a metal rubbish bin," Guillem Bolto, 25, told AFP at their flat. "It's completely incredible."

Since the start of the year, the three have shared an attic flat in Barcelona whose hallway is now full of beers and freebies sent in by brands whose products appear in their videos. They play in two local bands: Bolto sings and plays trombone in one, while Klaus Stroink, 25, plays trumpet in another with 28-year-old bass player Rai Benet. But they never wrote anything

together until the March 14 lockdown when they found themselves at a loose end while having a beer in the sun on the roof in Barcelona's Ensanche neighbourhood. "Rai started playing bossanova-style and mucking around and we started to put together a song which we recorded and put online," explains Bolto sitting on the terrace next to pots of cacti. It was a hit, so the next day they recorded another called "Stay Homa" which they took as their name. Another followed and then another.

## 'Please stay homa, don't want corona'

At first, they were recording every day in what they named their "Confinement Songs". "It was out of our hands pretty quickly because people were more and more enthusiastic which really motivated us. Suddenly it just exploded," Bolto said. And over the past two months, they've touched on everything from reggae to folk, flamenco to trap, always in a lighthearted manner and with a sense of humour. "Please stay homa (please stay home), don't want the corona (please stay home), Oh God please stay homa (please stay home) It's ok to be alone," they lyricise in the track from which they took their name. The idea was to "give a sort of positive message which says OK, this is a shitty situation but let's try and find some good in it," says Stroink



Rai of the Stay Homas music group smiles on the terrace of the trio's apartment in Barcelona.



Klaus of the Stay Homas music group poses on the terrace of the trio's apartment in Barcelona.

With all the restrictions, it has been a barebones project, they say, making music "on the cheap" with whatever was lying around the house — a cardboard box, an empty gin bottle, a metal wastepaper bin, a spatula. "Very little has been planned in this project," admits Stroink. "We're using a bin because we don't have drums, if we had drums we'd play them. For the first three weeks we only had one drumstick."

## 100,000 followers in a week

Their tunes have drawn many collaborators who record themselves at home — then send their video which is shown on a mobile phone as the trio performs their latest song. Even so, it took them a while to set up a website and a social media profile — because they worried they wouldn't have any followers. "Within a week, we had more than 100,000 followers — 100,000!" chuckles Benet. But it's a bitter-sweet feeling, coming at a bad moment for the music industry with so many people out of work. And the sudden fame is "a bit overwhelming", Stroink says. "I'm doing just fine with my friends, with my people and I don't want that to change. —AFP

## Scarface reboot penned by Coen bros set in Los Angeles

A reboot of classic gangster movie "Scarface" scripted by the Coen brothers and set in Los Angeles is moving forward with a new director at Universal Pictures, a source familiar with the deal told AFP Thursday. The film will be directed by Oscar nominee Luca Guadagnino ("Call Me By Your Name") and will be the third big-screen take on the blood-soaked immigrant underworld story. The original 1932 movie directed by Howard Hawks — itself based on a novel partly inspired by Al Capone's life — depicted Italian mafia in Chicago.

The action was transplanted to Miami in Brian De Palma's 1983 hit movie, starring Al Pacino as ruthless Cuban refugee Tony Montana, who builds a criminal empire based on cocaine. The new film will reimagine "the core immigrant story" told in both the 1932 and 1983 films. In adapting the story once again, Joel and Ethan Coen ("Fargo") follow in the footsteps of Oliver Stone, who won plaudits for his flashy and ultra-violent screenplay for the second version — which included Pacino's immortal line "Say hello to my little friend." The multiple Oscar-winning Coen brothers wrote the latest version of the script based on previous drafts for the long-gestating project. —AFP



In this file photo actors F. Murray Abraham, Al Pacino and Steven Bauer arrive at the release of "Scarface" On Blu-ray at the Belasco Theatre on August 23, 2011 in Los Angeles, California. —AFP