

Unfortunately for the hero of Jerzy Skolimowski's *Deep End* (now at the fifteen, and from the lower and woefully incapable of any reflection. Working a dead-end a run-down bathhouse in London boy (John Moulder-Brown) is an intensive puppy love for mely women's attendant, Jan But puppy love, unlike adolescent-sourcefulness, has its limitations Moulder-Brown's relationship Asher gradually escalates (it y doesn't develop) into some- more and more strange and e. imowski was a contemporary an Polanski's at the Polish Film in the late fifties, and like i he has migrated westward Europe, eventually breaking in- ish films. Skolimowski distin- himself with some low-bur- personal films such as

always influenced Hollywood in making, even when American d' turned out not to be natural eigners, such as Fritz Preminger, or Ernst Lub out the German wing of In the twenties, it w pressionism; in the studio control; in Italian neo-Realis course, the deb. the French Ne making his English, c od is now fully contained within the basic vocabulary of current movie style. That most imported directors failed in their English-language films is a myth of the Old Criticism that is simply untrue. Renoir and Ophuls and Murnau did some of their best work here in Hollywood, and if Clair's U.S. is Gallic master- table talent.

# READER



## 'Theatrics' without Theater

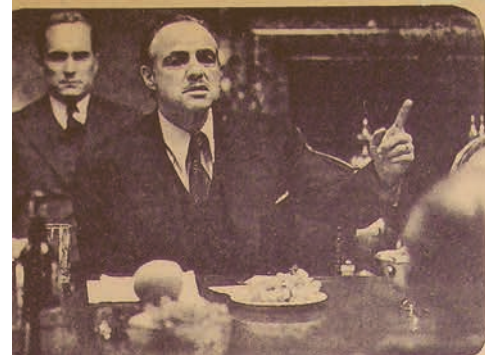
As I walked through the

language, character, and plot for "straight" dramatic or thematic effect rather than more surreal "theatrics" inter-

That the play has restricted its to this type of mental an isn't

make this kind of thing work, to the humor after the to take the nothing, and al out ion is

less physical, less humorously gross when performed grossly, with complete physical abandon. And it's important to the play as a whole since in its deliberate emphasis on the physical and "aesthetic" rather



## NOTES OF A BLEARY EYED CRITIC

## Maxwell Street



## Exclusive! Disgruntled DJ's Hold Secret Talks with SDM

When WEFM changes its format from classical to soft-rock, Chicago will be host to an unprecedented four FM stations (the others being WDAI, WGLD and, of course, WBBM) playing largely the same type of music as the two AM rockers, WLS and WCFL. For blues

his camera placement and he can get away with it, not from force of personality (as does Orson Welles) but measuring his tools of expression holding back when it doesn't that he can make the smallest release. Then he *Le Depart*, an-Pierre one sub- they was The fact Chicago-t blues—in o ironic in

doesn't quite carry the film off with him, given the competition, but his hesitation before a killing is in brutal precision of timing most heart-anger and far superior work here. This myth was criminally perpetuated in the reception accorded Truffaut's marvelous *Fahrenheit 451*, dismissed as verbally clumsy even as its visual grace was totally ignored. If anything, the foreign language barrier seems to loosen up these "heavy" European talents. Certainly the soap-opera conventions used by Bergman in *The Touch* allow a delicacy of expression he has not hitherto achieved. It has worked equally well for Skolimowski, whose limited acquaintance with his Brit- adds an additional



## Fastest Talker and Sax Player in Town

They always say that the jazz saxophone is an extension of the human voice; and in the case of Sonny Stitt, that may literally be true. Sonny's sax style, especially on alto, has been fast, nimble, and fluid, evi- to find a steady blues gig is a bit of myself, who that speak- self. That he found the gig in

April 14, 1972 7  
Tired of Ho-Hum Menus?  
now, and where it's going. "Back when I started," he recalls, "I could play anything other cat could play—blues, soul, rock-r things—but I just liked those old Jimmy F things, old Muddy Waters things the best." soul music wasn't so real to me, you kn Let's face it, you may be tappin' your

## Free and Freaky since 1971 Volume 50, Issue 1: Fall Arts Preview

## Deep End: Bathhouse Macabre

So far as a direct approach was concerned (she) had neglected him, the week now about to end, a civil consistency of chill giving him a higher idea of her resource, threw him back on general reflection that a woman always be amazing

Sabata or Sacco and Vanzetti, or foreign productions with U.S. footage, such as *WR: Mysteries of the Organ- ism*. There hasn't been such a general exodus to the English tongue since the refugee directors of World W

observed national traits as abstract daubs of character development, since they tend to stand out more strongly. Particularly charm

are up there on the screen If there is



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## NOTE FROM AN EDITOR

IF HOPE IS THE THING WITH FEATHERS, as Emily Dickinson said, then we've all been going through a major plucking in recent months. For me, working at and writing for the *Reader* (which I've done, off and on, since 1992, starting back when we were still occupying several floors at 11 E. Illinois) has always been a source of joy. So on Wednesday, March 11, when I left the current (much smaller) *Reader* offices, I was thinking, "Well, may not be back for a couple of weeks or so, depending on how this COVID-19 situation plays out."

I haven't been back since, except to pick up some things I needed. But while hope has been on the ropes as the death toll mounts (and the callousness of the administration grows right along with it), there have been some fledgling flashes of how we can get through our long

national nightmare. And a lot of that has come courtesy of the artists.

It's present in the work of multidisciplinary artist Del Marie, who was supposed to be featured by Jack Helbig in our spring arts preview issue, which fell victim to the shutdown. But she's still creating, as are so many others.

The protests against white supremacy and police violence this summer also helped give wings to the We See You White American Theater (We See You W.A.T.) collective and the BIPOC Demands for White American Theater. Locally, several Black artists have taken the reins at Chicago theaters. Sheri Flanders talked to them to get a sense of what it's like to be moving into these roles at this time in history, and with the many challenges the performing arts are facing.

Emma Oxnevad examines the dilemma of applying to art school in the pandemic, while Ariel Parrella-Aureli looks at how stand-up comics are adjusting to COVID.

Irene Hsiao writes about *CounterBalance*, a dance festival celebrating artists with and without disabilities this month. And Deanna Isaacs caught up with the founders of *Silk Road Rising*, who faced a health crisis together before COVID.

This week also marks the beginning of the *Reader's* 50th anniversary celebration. Through all the challenges of the past months, I couldn't be more proud of my colleagues and of the beautiful defiance of the Chicago art scene, which keeps hope perching in our souls, week after week. —KERRY REID, THEATER AND DANCE EDITOR



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# FROM THE PUBLISHER



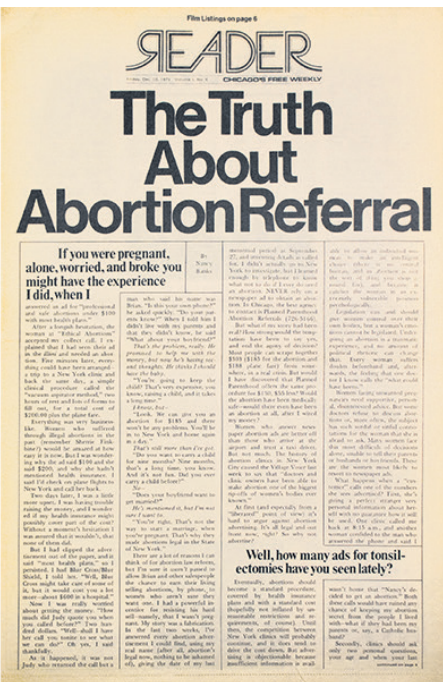
bargains, blues, and bribes on Maxwell: see page 8

## the Beauty and the beast

## Combating the sick call

As I look back on the 50th anniversary of the Reader, I am struck by the fact that it was founded in a time of great social and political upheaval. The city of Chicago was a hotbed of activity, and the Reader was born out of a desire to provide a voice for the people who were being silenced.

The Reader is a unique voice in the city. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their neighborhood. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their city. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their world.



## The Truth About Abortion Referral

If you were pregnant, alone, worried, and broke you might have the experience I did, when I... The Reader is a unique voice in the city. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their neighborhood. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their city. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their world.

Well, how many ads for testosterone have you seen lately? The Reader is a unique voice in the city. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their neighborhood. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their city. It is a place where people can find out what is really going on in their world.

Two of the first Reader covers from 1971

## THE FUTURE OF THE READER

# 'Adapt or perish'

An update on our nonprofit status as we approach our 50th anniversary

"Adapt or perish, now as ever, is nature's inexorable imperative." In these trying times, those words from H.G. Wells are as relevant today as when he wrote them in 1945.

The *Chicago Reader* has had to do some pretty heavy adaptation since the founders sold it to Creative Loafing 13 years ago. It changed hands several times, ending up paired with the *Chicago Sun-Times* until 2018, when Elzie Higginbottom and Leonard Goodman purchased it for \$1 two years ago this week. The duo have done the heavy lift of underwriting its expenses, and supporting our vision.

Now, the *Reader*, believed to be the first free weekly in the U.S., is in a marathon race to make it to our 50th anniversary in October 2021. We have an amazing team of longtime staff paired with newer people, all of them working hard to keep this legacy paper thriving. But we knew we also needed to make some big changes for the long haul.

Several months ago, before COVID-19 caused the shutdown of much of the economy, including our advertisers, the *Reader* applied to the

IRS for 501(c)(3) nonprofit status, through a newly created Reader Institute for Community Journalism (RICJ). In September, the IRS awarded nonprofit status to RICJ. By early 2021, we will make the full transition to nonprofit.

What does this mean? For our readers, we hope it won't even be noticeable. We will continue providing in-depth journalism covering all parts of the Chicago area. For our advertisers, it should also be seamless.

What will change is our ability to get increasing support from a wider range of people and foundations, those who want to support nonprofit journalism for all that it does to make a city better and its government more accountable.

The transition will take a few months. But we are excited about the future, and we are also very grateful to the owners, Elzie and Len, for saving the *Reader*. Adapt or perish, indeed.

—TRACY BAIM, PUBLISHER  
For more details on the Reader, see [chicago-reader.com](http://chicago-reader.com), and for ways to support, see [chicago-reader.com/support](http://chicago-reader.com/support).

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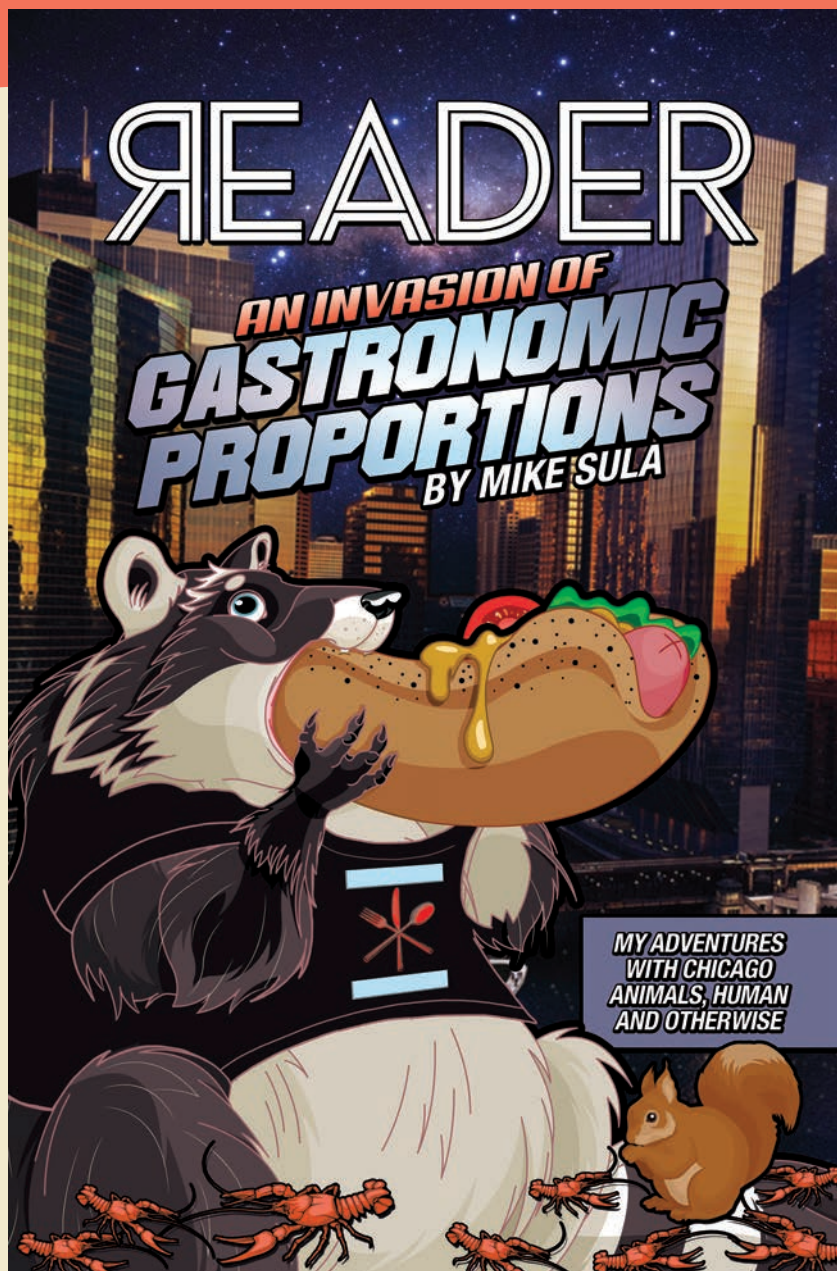
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## CITY LIFE



© ISA GIALLORENZO

### STREET VIEW

## Dressed to chill

No matter where they are, these friends are clad for their best life.

By **ISA GIALLORENZO**

“I’m a jeweler, so my style is really inspired by finding objects and giving them a new life—much like this exhibit,” says metalsmith and accessory designer Eteni Ayeni, 29, owner of the brand ELUKE. She and writer Ambrose Horton, 44, were photographed at the Museum of Contemporary Art during the last day of “Seeing Chicago,” a selection of artworks handpicked all over the city by Nigerian-born British fashion designer Duro Olowu. Most of Ayeni’s pieces were thrifted, with the exception of her boots, her locally made mask, and the accessories she created herself. “My style in general is Afro-futuristic with a little hint of vintage; really comfortable, but still elegant,”

she says. “I know we’re not going anywhere due to COVID, but I still want to feel like I’m stepping out in the world the woman I want to be—even if I’m at home.” Her ready-for-anything ethos is shared by Horton, who says he likes to dress simply and comfortably, while at the same time fitting into all kinds of environments. Or, as he put it: “My style is multifaceted in its simplicity, and is able to breathe in either direction: a little ebb, and a little flow.” Sounds like the right attire for these dizzying and complex times. **FI**

See Ayeni and Horton’s work on Instagram, [@eluke.co](https://www.instagram.com/eluke.co) and [@amywarhol](https://www.instagram.com/amywarhol).

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Rachel Kimura at Hinata Farms in Bronzeville, 4431 S. Federal MATTHEW GILSON FOR CHICAGO READER

## FARM FEATURE

# Rachel Kimura goes all in on Japanese farming

Hinata Farms is a natural.

By **MIKE SULA**

**R**achel Kimura conducted more than a few experiments during the first growing season on her 1/8-acre Hinata Farms.

One was an Asian version of the Native American companion planting method known as the Three Sisters. Kimura, one of eight small commercial farmers operating on a largely empty lot on the site of the former Robert Taylor Homes, planted popcorn on the edge of her plot. The stalks served as trellises for purple and green long beans to climb as they fixed nitrogen in the soil, while kabocha

squash sprawled on the grounds to shade out weeds. But she didn't count on vine borers attacking the squash. She could've surgically removed them with her bypass pruners, plant by plant, but it seemed too labor intensive for a crop she'd only get to harvest once at the end of her season.

Besides, she started the season intending—as much as she could—to implement the principles of the father of Japanese natural farming, Masanobu Fukuoka, who took an indulgent position on pests and weeds.

“We're all expected to apply organic practices, and any fertilizers or pesticides we put in are organic,” she says, speaking of her fellow farmers at the Legends South Farm in Bronzeville, managed by the Chicago Botanic Garden's Windy City Harvest program. “I try not to use any because there's a balance created by nature. If you're killing a specific bug there might be unintended consequences. It sets back the clock and you have to let nature rebalance itself.”

Kimura had to rebalance her crop plan in

mid-March when the chefs she was planning to sell dozens of varieties of uncommon Japanese herbs and vegetables to shut down their restaurants. She pivoted to a CSA model, but worried it would be too difficult to exclusively sell Japanese cultivars to people who'd never cooked with or eaten them before. So she allowed the reseeded ground cherries, sage, and garlic chives planted by last season's tenant to flourish, and she planted zucchini, summer squash, kale, green bell peppers, and Genoa basil, along with five varieties of bitter melon, red, green, and bicolor shiso, *fushimi* and *shishito* peppers, five varieties of Asian eggplant, and more.

Apart from Green Acres Farm in North Judson, Indiana, and the Global Garden Refugee Training Farm, growing commercial Asian crops isn't common locally, she says. “I think a lot of immigrant families don't want their kids to be farmers.” Though her family had a small garden in the West Rogers Park backyard where she grew up, her parents didn't expect she'd become one either. They immigrated in the early 80s, her dad to succeed an aging minister at a Tenrikyo temple.

Kimura believes that because of pressure to assimilate among post-World War II arrivals from internment camps, “there wasn't a clear concentration of Japanese people” in the city by time she was getting into J-Pop and envying her friends in LA. “There wasn't a Japanese grocery store,” she says. “If we wanted anything we had to drive to Mitsuwa in Arlington Heights or just find the closest equivalent in the Korean or the Chinese market.”

She got into growing in her 20s. Helping to convert an empty lot into a community garden as part of an AmeriCorps program led to classes and volunteering, while she launched a teaching career.

“Growing up in the city, a lot of the things we learned about the effects of climate change and just how much humans have messed up the earth seemed really theoretical. It was really easy to not feel that in practice and understand it. I wanted a more concrete connection than just theoretical.” She researched small, sustainable farming methods and eventually came across Fukuoka's 1975 manifesto *The One-Straw Revolution*, in part a rejection of centuries of agricultural methods in favor of a “do-nothing” approach that lets nature take its course. Among other



Kimura checks on a Japanese bitter melon.   
MATTHEW GILSON FOR CHICAGO READER

things, he calls for an avoidance of plowing, tilling, weeding, herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers.


“Nature tries to find balance and it’s been doing it on its own forever, even before we came around,” as Kimura puts it. “It’s almost arrogant of humans to think that we can try to create a system that mimics nature.”

Two years ago, she’d left teaching, and was working as a paralegal and volunteering every week at the Garfield Park Conservatory when she applied for a Windy City Harvest Apprenticeship, an eight-month urban agriculture training program run by the Chicago Botanic Garden. “Ten years later I’m still thinking about all of this stuff,” she says. “I had to try. If I gave it my all, and it didn’t work out, then at least I know I tried.” After completing the program she applied for and was offered a plot at the Legends South Farm among other small farmers such as Just Roots, Finding Justice, and Good Vibes/Nodding Onion Farm, each with their own growing and marketing models.

Kimura couldn’t follow Fukuoka’s principles to the letter. For one thing the farm’s soil is trucked in from Wisconsin and spread across raised beds, separated from the native soil by fabric that roots can’t penetrate. And 1/8 of an acre is much too small to employ Fukuoka’s planting method of tossing clay balls containing hundreds of seeds across the earth, and letting them germinate as the rain

breaks them down.

But she let the vine borers be and the clover grow up under her peppers and eggplant, and overall she had a pretty good season, alternating between CSA boxes and Saturday morning pop-up sales. She’s managed to sell to some chefs too. Elizabeth Restaurant compressed her alabaster Okinawan white bitter melon with liquid *kogi* and sweet pickled vinegar. Mom’s (now at Marz Community Brewing) uses her eggplant, and shishito and fushimi peppers in their miso eggplant *donburi*. But even without those chefs she’s been encouraged enough by the response from Asian customers of all kinds—Chinese, Vietnamese, Korean—to go all-in on Asian varieties next year. She plans to either find a larger piece of land, if she can find one, or stay right where she is now. She’s thinking about expanding her methods too, reading up on Korean natural farming practices.

And even some of her unsuccessful experiments were fruitful. In August some of her popcorn started blooming with *huilacoche*, and the prized inky fungus was quickly snapped up by a customer after she posted a photograph on Instagram (@hinatafarms). “I’ve just been seeing what works and what doesn’t work,” she says. “Just letting nature do what it’s already been doing and doing well.” 

 @MikeSula

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## FOOD & DRINK



A sample of Jennifer Kim's "preservation stuff" ©  
COURTESY JENNIFER KIM

### FALL PREVIEW

## Jennifer Kim's *pojangmacha* and more I'm looking forward to

Everything is terrible, but we're not starving. Yet.

By MIKE SULA

Last week, the city dropped its outdoor dining rules for winter: all about tents, heaters, and safety protocols, and all about as agreeable to restaurant owners as the creeping chill that precedes a patrol of White Walkers occupying a six-top in the parking lot.

The clock has run out on the gorgeous summer that made it possible, every now and then, to forget the grim circumstances the approaching winter presents for the Chicago hospitality industry. I've taken every chance I could to highlight folks who have found ways to pivot in the pandemic; to keep

working and keep feeding people.

And I have every faith that no matter how bad it gets, Chicago's restaurant workers are going to find ways to keep doing just that. Here are a few I'm excited about:

### Pop-ups will abide

I told you a couple weeks ago about chef Jennifer Kim's post-Passerotto preserving project, but she only hinted at the pop-up she's planning in the style of *pojangmacha*, the outdoor street food tents of South Korea. But now here she is with more:

"The pop-up is called Outer Limits Pojangmacha, and we're running it only for the five Saturdays in October (10/3 to 10/31) in a few undisclosed areas near West Town and Ukrainian Village. It'll be a fully-outdoor, Seoul-style KBBQ mirrored after Seo Seo Galbi in the Mapo-gu area of Seoul, Korea ("seo seo" means "to stand"), which we visited on the tail-end of our two-week trip to South Korea in January. It was bonkers good and so much fun, we want to recreate aspects of that experience with Outer Limits. Everyone working alongside this pop-up was on that trip so it's a lovely shared memory for us. All proceeds benefit staff members undergoing financial duress as we gear up for a long, hard winter. Creating viable means of income and community are at the forefront of our minds in these next two months or so." The Outer Limits Pojangmacha website is live now with the menu and some very reassuring safety guidelines.

But that's not all: "I'm also working on a Mutual Aid Market centered around hospi-

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tality workers, artists, and social organizers for some time in late October,” she writes. “Should also have food + cocktails in a safe, outdoor setting.”

And the preserves are ready!

“Been burning the midnight oil to get the website for the preservation stuff up,” Kim writes. “Alteconomy will eventually turn into a community hub for other small biz/alt econ/working artists/pop-ups to share a website together as well as have an online mutual aid component for folx to buy, trade, barter for goods + necessities that doesn’t rely solely on cash as currency.”

### Masa-focused dishes, a cheffy take on Al’s Beef, and BBQ

In mid-October, Jonathan Zaragoza is setting up at the wood-burning hearth at the Promontory for El Oso, a three-month (or so) residency of “traditional Mexican and masa-focused dishes.” Zaragoza, as you well know, has been cooking over live fire since he was a wee *niñito*, well before his family opened Birrieria Zaragoza.

Here’s a peek at one dish on the menu leaked at great risk by a top-secret source: “Crispy pork belly roulade and mole *manchamanteles*, served with house-made tortillas.” 16” on Center’s publicist goes on to reveal that dinner, along with an agave-based cocktail list, will be served “via counter service with social-distancing friendly seating available both on the patio and indoors near the restaurant’s large open front window.”

I’m just as intrigued by what Virtue chef Erick Williams’s interpretation of an Al’s Beef combo is. And for \$17.50, between October 15 and 17, you can find out if you order it through Resy. It’s part of a national corporate promotion, sponsored in part by the American Express Gold Card, “pairing top chefs with legacy restaurants,” that actually appears like it might not suck.

Speaking of legacy restaurants, Gary Wiv-iott, former pitmaster at the erstwhile Barn & Company and coauthor of two Low & Slow art-of-barbecue cookbooks, is popping up October 3 and 4 at the Wildwood Tavern, former home of the legendary Myron & Phil’s,

with hickory smoked ribs, buttermilk brined smoked chicken wings, and Chicago-style hot links on split-top buns with pickled red onion and giard. There’s indoor dining, if you must, but also a covered patio and takeaway available; masks and social distancing will be “strictly observed.” Wiviott says that if you have a large order, contact him directly ahead of time on Instagram via @lowslowbbq.

### Magical Ube Doobie, a Mexican-Lebanese collab, and DIY firepits

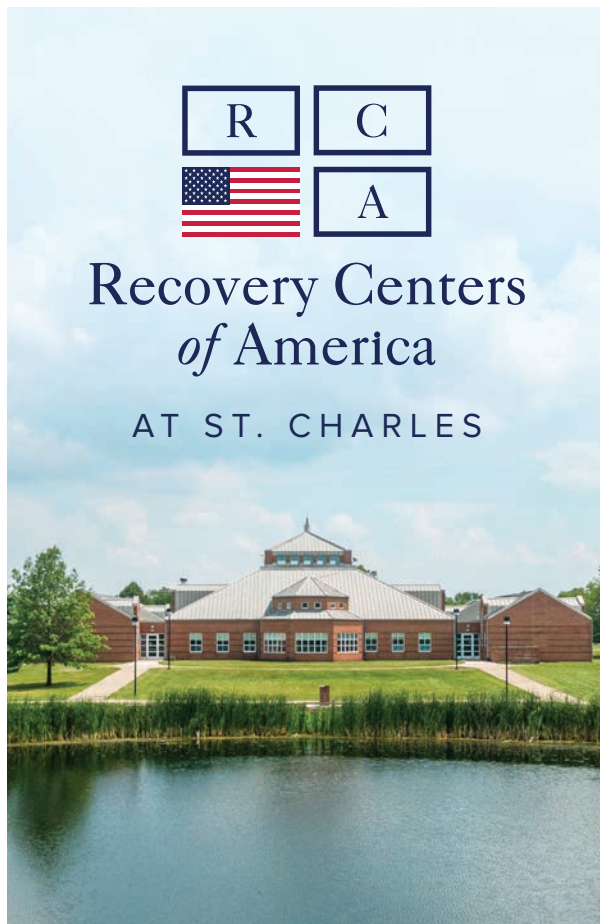
There aren’t too many more details about the cannabis-infused Filipino pop-up promised by @adoboloko chef Rob Menor, whose magical Ube Doobie I wrote about in August, but he’s promising a mid-to-late October event as soon as he nails down the location.

If nothing else, hope isn’t dead. People continue to open brick-and-mortars. I’m particularly keen to order carryout pita nachos and lamb tacos *arabes* from Evette’s in Lincoln Park, a Mexican-Lebanese collaboration between Rafael Esparza (Finom

Coffee, Dorian’s) and Mitchell AbouJamra (DMK Group, Bistro 110, Sur La Table). If that sounds like an unlikely combination, just know that there would be no tacos arabes or tacos al pastor if it weren’t for Lebanese migration to Mexico in the early 20th century. It opens October 5.

And finally, “fire pits are not permitted heaters” for restaurants, according to the city’s rules, but if you’re lucky enough to have access to a private backyard, or similarly sheltered spot, they’re going to be the best and safest way to hang out with your pals this winter. Just in time for that, *Meat Project: A Backyard Fire Cooking Zine*, by El Che Chef John Manion and food writer Maggie Hennessy, hit its Kickstarter goal this week and is already off to the printer. The first issue is all about how to build a backyard firepit and grill a big hunk of meat over it, along with some suitable accompanying recipes by other notable chefs and bartenders. 🍷

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# NEWS & POLITICS



## POLITICS

### Be like Rose

Channel that anxiety and put it to use, Democrats.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

As we inch closer, closer, closer to the November 3 existential, world-in-balance presidential showdown, I realize that some of the best minds of my generation are howling mad. To paraphrase Allen Ginsberg.

Donald Trump has entered their brains. And he's talking to them.

He's saying things like, *You can't beat me. I know you can't beat me. And what's more—I know that you know that I know you can't beat me.* And so on and so forth until they're destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked . . .

Sorry, more Allen Ginsberg.

And then they call me.

Why me? 'Cause I'm the only one they know who boldly and unabashedly—without fear of jinxing myself—predicts Biden will beat

Trump. And they want a little cheering up.

I'm taking a page from my old friend Monroe Anderson—the boldest, most unabashed Trump-is-doomed predictor that I know.

Monroe Anderson, a former *Tribune* and *Sun-Times* columnist, predicts it will be a blue tsunami. He predicts the Dems will hold the House and take back the Senate. That's right—McConnell will lose his power.

As for Trump, Monroe says he'll lose so bad, he may even lose Alabama.

Alabama, Monroe?

"Yes, if everything breaks right."

Hey, barkeep—whatever Monroe's drinking, give me five just like it!

Back to my liberal friends . . .

They have many disadvantages when it comes to dealing with an adversary like

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## NEWS & POLITICS

Trump's act is straight out of the Stone Cold Steve Austin playbook.  COURTESY PHASE 4 FILMS

Trump.

For starters, they haven't watched enough—or any—pro wrestling. As such, they've not been exposed to trash talking.

Half of Trump's shtick at a rally—the braggadocio, the put-downs, the needling—is straight out of the World Wrestling Federation.

My goodness, Trump shamelessly stole most of his material from Stone Cold Steve Austin, who made a fortune mocking his adversaries in front of roaring crowds.

Like the scene from back in the day where he drags Vince McMahon into the ring, puts a pistol to his head and bellows to the crowd: “If you want Vince’s eyes to pop out of his head, give me a ‘hell yeah.’”

When the crowd screams “hell yeah,” Austin pulls a trigger. It turns out to be a toy gun. The crowd howls and Vince McMahon wets his pants. More humiliation. More cheering.

It's the script for any Trump rally. Minus the gun. And the pants.

And it's getting to liberals. Especially when they hear the crowd roaring in approval.

They realize that MAGA is a creature unlike anything in the annals of American politics.

It's a cult, utterly dedicated to Donald Trump, willing to follow him off a cliff. No matter what dirty dark secrets are revealed about his character.

And so over the years we've learned that Donald Trump brags about grabbing women by the pussies. And Trump's been accused of rape. And Trump's called dead American war heroes “losers” and “suckers.”

And now the *New York Times* has exposed him as a fraud.

That he's really not the fabulously successful master of the business world he's always promoted himself to be. That he's really up to his eyeballs in debt. And that if he doesn't win this election, there's a chance he'll wind up in prison for income tax fraud.

Just like with Al Capone—it's not the dirty deeds that get you. It's the IRS.

And if he doesn't win reelection, he won't have Attorney General William Barr commanding the Justice Department to defend him.

Yes, thanks to the *New York Times* we realize the latest, most relevant number in this campaign is 750.

That's how many dollars Trump paid in federal taxes in 2016 and 2017.

Hey, Illinois Republicans—I don't want to

hear one more word about Governor Pritzker removing the toilet in his Gold Coast mansion until you're willing to condemn President Donnie's tax fraud.

At least Pritzker paid back the taxman when his chicanery was revealed.

The best Trump can do is cry “fake news”!

And still MAGA won't budge from their man. They wake up every morning and repeat whatever Trump tweets them to say. I've seen trained parrots with more independence.

So, yes, I understand why my fellow lefties and liberals are freaked out by this kind of Jonestown-like subservience on the part of upwards of 40 percent of the electorate.

And, yes, I also remember the lesson of 2016, which is that the Electoral College works against most of the voters in this country. And we're enslaved to this antediluvian system in which a vote in Wyoming is worth much more than a vote in California or Illinois or New York.

By the way, want a fast way to take control of the country, Dems? Figure out a way to get about 50,000 people who live in California and New York to move to Texas. The Republicans won't win another presidential election for the next 50 years.

Don't laugh. If the roles were reversed, Republicans would already be sending out the moving vans. 'Cause Republicans play to win.

Anyway, back to this year's election and all my friends who are freaking out.

I want you to meet Rose Colacino, a volunteer coordinator with Indivisible Illinois.

Rose is a local Democrat of the leftist persuasion. But she thinks like a Republican.


By that I mean she understands the need to build from the grassroots. She thinks tactically. She's memorized the electoral rule book. And she realizes that if people who think like her aren't proactive, the Republicans will steal the election.

Like they stole it in 2000 and 2016.

So, what's Rose's advice? “Put your anxieties to work—channel it into something productive.”

As opposed to freaking out and shrieking at the moon.

Contact Invisible Illinois via their website ([indivisibleillinois.org](http://indivisibleillinois.org)). Sign up as a volunteer—they'll put you to work helping to get out the Democratic vote in Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin. Especially Wisconsin.

The point is—get out of the fetal position. And get to work. Just like Rose. 

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Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani of Silk Road Rising  COURTESY SILK ROAD RISING

## CULTURE

# Will Silk Road still rise? Will we?

Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani have been facing more than COVID closure.

By **DEANNA ISAACS**

I'd been thinking about Silk Road Rising, the mission-driven performing arts company founded by Jamil Khoury and Malik Gillani in 2002, before I got an e-mail from Khoury last week.

Since the pandemic shutdown, every arts organization I can think of has been throwing content up online—trying, desperately, to keep a connection going with their audiences. But Silk Road, which moved seriously into online programming a decade ago, had a leg up on that. During a 2011 interview, Khoury had told me that they were intrigued by the dissemination opportunities of the Internet and were aiming to produce video plays that

would expand their reach to an international audience. It seemed like an appropriate time to check back in with them.

"Things are good, all things considered," Khoury said, when he picked up the phone, leaving room for an ocean of trouble.

There's the macro hit the arts are taking from the pandemic. According to a Brookings Institution study by Creative Class guru Richard Florida and urban planner Michael Seman, the fine and performing arts are among the industries suffering the most COVID-19 damage. In "Lost art: Measuring COVID-19's devastating impact on America's creative economy," they looked at national data from April 1

through July 31 of this year, and estimated that half the jobs in fine and performing arts (including freelance work) are gone, and that we're in for "a protracted period of restrictions on live performances."

According to Arts Alliance Illinois (citing a survey by Americans for the Arts), 42 percent of Illinois arts organizations "are not confident they will survive the impacts of COVID-19."

Like everyone else, Silk Road shut down in March. They were one day away from preview performances of a world-premiere play, *My Dear Hussein* by Nahal Navidar. But that's not all they've been dealing with:

"In September of 2019, my husband and Silk Road Rising Co-Founder and Co-Executive Artistic Director, Malik Gillani, suffered a heart attack and stroke," Khoury wrote in an e-mail to the Silk Road community last week.

"The double whammy of heart failure and neurologic damage has reset our journey, particularly as the stroke caused significant impairments to Malik's expressive abilities."

If you've ever been to Silk Road's intimate theater in the depths of the historic Chicago


Temple, chances are you've been greeted by Gillani—a quietly welcoming presence with a smile and a handshake for everyone: the yin to Khoury's exuberant yang.

On September 13 last year, Khoury told me, Gillani, then 49 years old, collapsed with a heart attack in the 150 N. Michigan Avenue building that houses the Silk Road office, and was rushed to Northwestern Memorial Hospital. A week later, still in the hospital, he was hit with a life-threatening stroke that left him unable to use the right side of his body or to speak. After 55 days of hospitalization (at Northwestern and the Shirley Ryan Ability Lab), and months of intensive outpatient therapy, a lot of the paralysis is gone and his mind is intact, Khoury says, but the speech will take time to recover.

Gillani made it to one of the last performances of Silk Road's production of Fouad Teymour's *Twice, Thrice, Frice . . .* last year. "The second he walked into the lobby and saw an audience, he kicked into Malik mode, and even though he couldn't shake hands properly he was shaking people's hands, greeting people, speaking a kind of unintelligible language," Khoury says. "I think most people had no idea what was going on, but they just worked with it. Some asked me if he was speaking Urdu or Arabic." That play is now Jeff-nominated, but for Khoury there's an ironic edge: "We run a theater that's about giving voice to people who don't have a voice, and now he's lost his voice."

"It was several months before he could say my name," Khoury says, but in December he spoke his first full sentence: "I love you."

Silk Road had to cancel three plays this season, but will survive financially if they're able to resume live theater production in the fall of 2021, even with reduced capacity, Khoury says. Meanwhile, the videos on their website—all available for free viewing and all with prescient relevance—include *Not Quite White*, a 2012 documentary with a narrative that describes whiteness as like "an automatic upgrade to first class," and a flash to an image of Donald Trump.

"We know that the road to recovery is long, arduous, and complicated," Khoury wrote in his e-mail. He was predicting a positive outcome for his partner, but his words are also apt for these troubled times. 

# The Chicago Reader BOOK CLUB

## Mikki Kendall

*Hood Feminism:  
Notes From the  
Women That a  
Movement Forgot*

### Book Club Month:

October 20

### Author Talk:

10/22/2020

## Sonali Dev

*Recipe for  
Persuasion*  
November 20  
11/19/2020

## Riva Lehrer

*Golem Girl*  
December 20  
12/17/2020

## Emil Ferris

*My Favorite  
Thing Is Monsters*  
January 21  
1/28/2021

## Eve Ewing

*1919*  
February 21  
2/25/2021

## Nnedi Okorafor

*Remote Control*  
March 21  
3/25/2021

## Natalie Moore

*The South Side*  
April 21  
4/22/2021

## Rebecca Makkai

*The Great  
Believers*  
May 21  
5/27/2021

## Fatimah Asghar

*If They Come for  
Us*  
June 21  
6/24/2021

## Kayla Ancrum

*Darling*  
July 21  
7/22/2021

## Jessica Hopper

*(TBD)*  
August 21  
8/26/2021

## Precious Brady-Davis

*I Have Always  
Been Me: A  
Memoir*  
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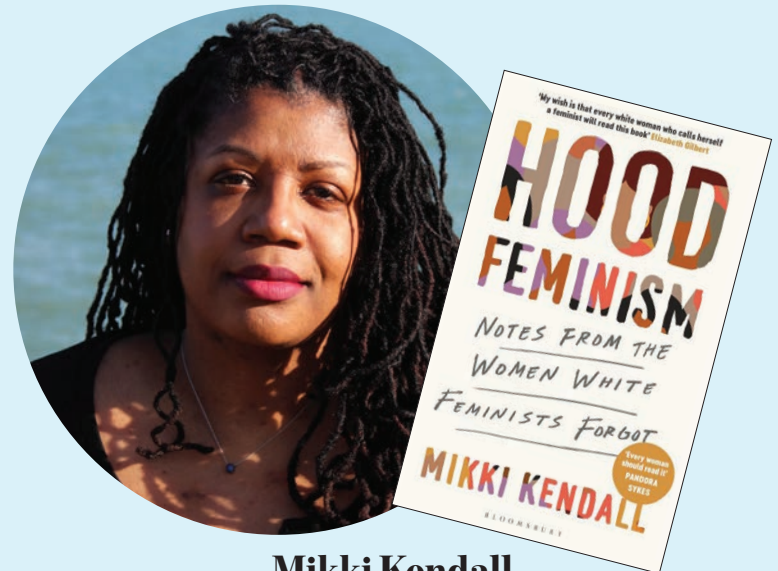


Book Club Month

October 20

Author Talk

10/22/2020



**Mikki Kendall**  
Author

Mikki Kendall is a writer, diversity consultant, and occasional feminist who talks a lot about intersectionality, policing, gender, sexual assault, and other current events. Her essays can be found at *TIME*, the *New York Times*, *The Guardian*, the *Washington Post*, *Ebony*, *Essence*, *Salon*, *The Boston Globe*, *NBC*, *Bustle*, *Islamic Monthly*, and a host of other sites. Her media appearances include *BBC*, *NPR*, *The Daily Show*, *PBS*, *Good Morning America*, *MSNBC*, *Al Jazeera*, *WVON*, *WBEZ*, and *Showtime*. She has discussed race, feminism, education, food politics, police violence, tech, and pop culture at institutions and universities across the country.

She is the author of *Amazons*, *Abolitionists*, and *Activists* (illustrated by A. D'Amico), and *Hood Feminism*, both from Penguin Random House.



**Janaya Greene**  
Moderator

Janaya Greene is a storyteller with passions for film, literature, music, the African diaspora, and mild sauce—and the social media coordinator for the *Chicago Reader*. Her short film *Veracity* screened on Showtime and is now streaming on Amazon Video. Her writing has been published in *Zora*, the *Triibe*, *Here Magazine*, *Red Bull Music's Tierra Whack zine* (2019) and more. House music is her love language. Learn more about the Chicago-based writer at [JanayaGreene.com](http://JanayaGreene.com).

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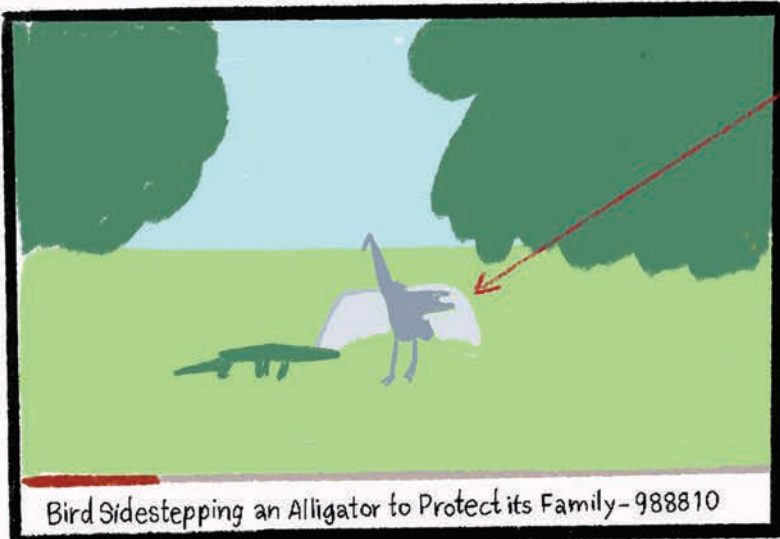
# the comeback crane

BY SOPHIE LUCIDO JOHNSON

LAST NOVEMBER, MY HUSBAND & I DROVE TO INDIANA'S JASPER-PULASKI FISH & WILDLIFE AREA TO MEET OUR FRIEND (the Chicago naturalist) JILL RIDDELL & SEE WHAT ORNITHOLOGISTS HAVE CALLED the most beautiful natural phenomenon in the United States:

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AND THEN THERE WERE THE COLLECTIONS OF BIRDS THEMSELVES,

in dainty whisker formations that swelled

& swelled until they were gargantuan & toppling down before us.

It was like we'd left the continental midwest & gone upside down in time, & emerged in a deep, impossible past full of sounds

& animals not quite of this earth.

THERE WERE ONLY A FEW DOZEN BREEDING PAIRS LEFT. BUT AFTER THE **MIGRATORY BIRD TREATY ACT** WAS PASSED IN 1918, THE DYING SPECIES SLOWLY BEGAN MAKING A COMEBACK. TODAY THERE ARE ALMOST 100,000 BIRDS.

When we hear news about nature, it's so seldom good. So if we have the opportunity to celebrate something that got much, much better, WE SHOULD.

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# ARTS & CULTURE



Stand-up St. James Jackson at the Stoop Comedy Show  ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

## COMEDY

### It's OK to laugh again

Comedians rally to offer outdoor and indoor shows with a pandemic twist.

By ARIEL PARRELLA-AURELI

A few weeks ago, on one of the first chilly nights, I sat in the grass wearing a mask and watched my first live comedy show in over six months. It was like a light was reignited in my body and in my face—real laughs from real people! It was clear the audience around me felt it too; even if not all the jokes landed, there was barely a silent moment in the crowd, which spanned from a spacious Logan Square backyard to the boulevard.

Appropriately, this show is called the Stoop Comedy Show and the organizers have put on weekly open mikes since August—it's one of several in-person comedy shows that have sprung up in the last few months. Comics are

done with virtual open mikes and after brooding inside like everyone else, are creating new, safe, and creative shows to keep the laughs going and blow off much-needed steam from this hellscape of a year. From big comedy clubs to DIY outdoor shows, the comedy scene is alive again and ready to take on whatever the pandemic throws next—including winter.

"Neighbors want to be able to see each other and comics have not had a reason to hang out unless we are at a show," says comic Caitlin Checkeroski, one of the producers of Stoop Comedy. Thanks to the Lincoln Lodge, which donated professional speakers, Checkeroski says the show has gained momentum. With

chairs, stoop lights surrounding the stage, two mikes that are disinfected after each use, and signs encouraging people to buy tickets ahead of time, Stoop Comedy feels like a normal show.

But after the open mike got shut down by the house's landlord at its most recent show, Stoop is in limbo. The all-female crew is looking for other yards or rooftops to run Stoop and keep it going through October.

Under the state's Phase 4 reopening plan, outdoor gatherings with adequate social distancing, mask wearing, and surface-disinfecting are allowed, and indoor venues can operate at 50 percent capacity with seats six feet apart, but those that also serve food and drink must operate at 25 percent capacity.

Like other indoor venues, comedy club owners are taking every precaution to make sure safety comes first. Earlier this summer, comedian D.L. Hughley tested positive for COVID-19 after collapsing onstage during a performance in Nashville, and New York comedy clubs are currently fighting to reopen under the same restrictions as restaurants. The hope for Chicago comics is that by putting safety first, people

who feel comfortable being outside will support the open mikes and comedians, many of whom have not performed or made any income until now.

Over in Lakeview, Rodescu Hopkins II had a similar idea. The cofounder of Trigger Warning Comedy, an open mike show that ran at the Sedgwick Stop until the pandemic hit, started the Backyard Sessions series September 18 in his backyard with cohost Ed Towns. Eager to reawaken the comedy scene and seeing big comedy clubs reopening, the duo felt it was the right time to gather in a socially distant way and provide live shows before the winter hits. They plan to host shows every other week for the next three months with a capacity of 22 people, but if the wheels keep turning then the show might go until there is snow on the ground, Hopkins says with a laugh.

Each Backyard Sessions show features a gallery space—the backyard fence walls—for select artists to show visual artwork. At the first show, local photographer Katia Jackson featured her photos from recent protests. "Everyone needs a relief," Hopkins says. "We are bottled up and frustrated. When we don't have a place to let off steam and laugh, you see how it happens, the world goes nuts."

Hopkins says putting on the shows feels like exercising a muscle that's been dormant for too long. To attend this open mike, tickets must be purchased ahead of time and everyone's temperature is checked at the gate to ensure safety.

Perhaps one of the most innovative comedy shows to come out of the pandemic is the Comedy Pickup, a traveling stand-up show in the bed of a pickup truck created by Donovan Strong-O'Donnell and Ryder Olle. The two started the show at the end of July, driving around the city to parks, secluded street corners, zoo parking lots, and even partnering with Taylor Street Tap for to-go drinks. After seeing the success locally, the comics embarked on a nationwide road trip in that same pickup to bring outdoor comedy to Baltimore, D.C., New York City, Boston, Denver, and more.

"It's been exciting to see what local comics have shown interest, on the road as well—every city scene has been supportive to us," Strong-O'Donnell says.

With portable speakers and amps, the sound system has attracted more than 100 people to shows, he says, which has also helped the comics build their network and experience new cities. The tour has produced more than 45



## ARTS & CULTURE



Sarah Perry on stage at Laugh Factory  
COURTESY CURTIS SHAW FLAGG

shows in ten cities and put nearly 2,000 miles on Olle's pickup. To close it out, there will be one last show October 12 in Chicago.

Ollie says the tour has attracted people who might not ordinarily like comedy and makes it accessible to those on their daily outdoor activities. "Part of the issue sometimes with the exposure of stand-up is it seems so mysterious and dark to most people that the idea scares them, but [with Comedy Pickup], people get to come out and have a really good time at something they would never see," Olle says.

Indoor comedy has started to fill seats again too, with social distancing regulations, safety protocols for comics, and fewer shows and audience members. Deanna Ortiz, the lead comic at the Lincoln Lodge shows, remembers when the Logan Square spot reopened to the public in June. "To go back and do stand-up for the first time in months, there was energy there," Ortiz says. "On our first show back, we had 30 people in a room that sat 200 and it was electric."


Like many creatives, she was not happy to turn her attention to virtual shows during the height of the pandemic but says that time helped her keep the juices flowing, practice new work, and stay engaged as an artist. With a rotating cast of 12 comics plus guests and a cap at 50 people, the Lodge shows are starting off bare-bones with just stand-up, but Ortiz says the crew hopes to bring back its popular variety and character shows.

Sarah Perry, host and comedian at Laugh Factory, says recent unrest, combined with

looting and the pandemic, made it feel like comedy was never going to return. But once the Laugh Factory reopened August 1—with plexiglass everywhere, chairs spread six feet apart, and all the servers wearing face shields—comedy was back. She says the audience was timid at first but once she helped them loosen up, laughs were everywhere. "People that are here really want to be here and support live comedy," Perry says. "People want to literally laugh at anything and talk about anything other than COVID."

However, she says the pandemic inspired some of the best jokes she's ever written, and yes, they include coronavirus-related material as well as a slew of personal experiences that made her new 15-minute set sing.

Zanies Comedy Night Club downtown also opened with only 50 seats and a heavy set list of nearly 30 shows for fall. The downtown club opened July 9 and the Rosemont location plans to open October 9, says Bert Haas, executive vice president of Zanies. He admits that booking shows at both clubs has been stressful and some comedians are still wary of performing in person, but he's excited for several upcoming shows. Highlights include comedian JP Sears, rising stand-up comic Dan LaMorte, Ms. Pat, and the all-Spanish show by Nacho Redondo.

"We keep adding shows and hopefully we will get to seven days a week," Haas says. "In times of stress and duress, people need comedy." 

 @ArielParrella

## POETRY CORNER

### Exodus

by Zakiya Cowan

place your finger on a map & trace it back to your genesis  
follow along through creviced valleys across the ocean's  
gaping mouth what does your beginning look like?  
tell me the tales of your grandparents' journey sailing  
wide waters to a land of promise give me the stories of  
their struggle to dreams & when those dreams came true  
let me savor your tellings of the ladder called generational  
wealth money passed down like machine parts in a factory line  
or like weddings on plantations walking down the aisle while  
you walk alongside ghosts.

you ask for my story & I stumble  
great grandparents and grandma traveled from the lone roads  
and golden lands of Arkansas to a people-studded Chicago  
all noise & crowded space & before that? before before before  
is white noise is the unexplored depths of the ocean is a tale  
I am not privy to knowing what does it mean when you don't know  
where you come from? when the narrative stops halfway down the page?

how fortunate you are to find your beginning to locate an  
axis around which your existence revolves with revolver like desperation  
I am shot into darkness the ultimate disappearing act searching for anything  
to tether myself to a place a people a name and all I find  
is disappearing disappearing disappearing until I am finally gone

Zakiya M. Cowan holds a bachelor's degree in English and Spanish from Lewis University. She is the Interviews Editor for Honey Literary, a poetry reader for *Memorious: A Journal of New Verse and Fiction*, a former editor for *Jet Fuel Review*, and a 2020 Brooklyn Poets Fellowship recipient. Cowan is a Best Small Fictions nominee, and her work is either published or forthcoming in *Hobart*, *Split Lip Magazine*, *Windows Fine Arts Magazine*, *Spoon River Poetry Review*, and *YouFlower/YouFeast: A Harry Styles Anthology*.

Tara Betts is the author of two poetry collections, *Break the Habit*, *Arc & Hue*, and the forthcoming *Refuse to Disappear*. She also co-edited *The Beiging of America* and edited a critical edition of *Philippa Duke Schuyler's Adventures in Black and White*. In addition to her work as a teaching artist and mentor for young poets, she's taught at prisons and several universities, including Rutgers University and University of Illinois-Chicago. In 2019, Tara published a poem celebrating Illinois' bicentennial with *Candor Arts*. Tara is the Poetry Editor at *The Langston Hughes Review* and the Lit Editor at *Newcity*. Betts is currently hard at work to establish *The Whirlwind Center* on Chicago's South Side.

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Work by high school senior Mary Kate Clancy, who would rather take a gap year than attend an arts program virtually. COURTESY THE ARTIST

## BACK TO SCHOOL

# Is a virtual arts degree worth it?

High school seniors prepare for collegiate arts programs amid pandemic

By **EMMA OXNEVAD**

**F**or Vincenza Handzel, a senior at Jones College Prep, dancing isn't just a hobby—it's a passion. She began dancing at the age of two, and is now setting her sights on Pace University in New York City, where she hopes to double major in dance and communications.

Handzel's application process, already described by her as being "double the work" than that of non-arts applicants because of supplemental application materials like a portfolio and a required audition, has been further complicated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Now high school seniors throughout the city must balance their collegiate dreams with an ever-uncertain future.

Applying to collegiate arts programs often involves supplemental materials like self-tapes and portfolio submissions. For those interested in the performing arts, the option of

in-person auditions is no longer a safe reality given the pandemic.

"[For] audition spaces in general, there's about 100 dancers in one audition space and with COVID happening, even with masks on, that's just too many bodies in one space," says Ariana Everett, a dance student at the Chicago High School for the Arts (ChiArts).

Students have remarked that completing their senior year virtually has created something of a communication barrier between them and school counselors, leaving them feeling as though they have to navigate the application process alone.

"I am basically doing this stuff almost entirely on my own, because I don't have the kind of support that I would have had if I was attending school in person, especially because counselors are so busy all the time," says

Eemaan Butt, a senior at Lane Tech interested in graphic design. "So I have even less time to talk to my counselor about how to apply. I remember at the beginning of the year I felt really overwhelmed and I felt like I wasn't gonna be able to do it on my own."

Students also have to consider what freshman year of college will look like for them if the pandemic is to persist into the fall of 2021. For those interested in pursuing a hands-on arts education, the prospect of continuing a virtual education has cast doubt on the value of college.

For Charlie Hancock, a percussionist at ChiArts hoping to attend the Royal Academy of Music in London, learning music in an isolated, virtual setting lessens the overall experience.

"In this school year, there's no interaction between musicians, and it's kind of hard to grow if you're only playing with yourself," he says.

Hancock says that the current reality of virtual school has led him to reconsider college altogether.

"I've been thinking about if I really even want to go to college," he says. "I think I do, but it's been weird just being out of [in-person] school and kind of living my own life outside the classroom setting every day. It's kind of made me realize that I like having the freedom

a lot, and I would love to just go and get to work and like, make money, and live my own life."

Mary Kate Clancy, a senior at Whitney Young Magnet High School, is similarly interested in international programs. She describes her list of schools as being a 50/50 split between schools in and out of the United States. Clancy, who is focused on both illustration and print-making, also expressed doubt over the value of a virtual college education—especially an international one. Instead of taking online classes and missing out on the experience of actually living overseas, she says she would more likely defer or take a gap year until it is safe to travel again.

In addition to missing out on the traditional college experience, some have wondered if the high price tag attached to four-year universities will ultimately be worth potentially learning in a virtual setting.

"I know it's like if I pay that much money to go to school, and then get sent home in less than a month because coronavirus is spreading . . . I know I'm going to feel really bad about it," Butt says. "And just like really angry about it. But at the same time, I really don't know if I can take a gap year or not. So I really don't know what I'm going to do if in-person learning is not a thing next year."

However, some students remarked they would continue with arts programs in a virtual setting, despite the setbacks associated with continuing e-learning.

"I would still continue entering the conservatory program just because I feel like it's still learning, regardless if I'm in-person or not," says Aaron Sanders, a voice student at ChiArts. "I still want to learn more."

Despite the challenges and uncertainty associated with pursuing the arts on a collegiate level amid the COVID-19 pandemic, one thing remains: the passion of these young artists and their individual crafts.

"It's bittersweet in a sense," says Sanders. "Because you can go to school and you could do it completely [virtually] and it's not the experience that you would think you would have. Growing up, as a kid, everybody has their own thought of what college is going to be like. And then it's like now, everything that you thought was gonna happen is not happening. So it's weird but I feel like I would try to make the best of it."

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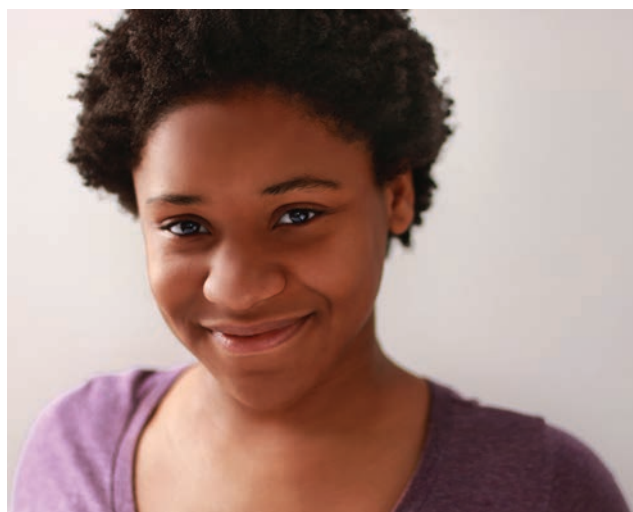


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# THEATER



## THEATRICAL RENAISSANCE

# Building an artistic bridge

A new generation of Black theater leaders reflects on influences, mentors, and inspirations.

By **SHERI FLANDERS**

Chicago theater is in the midst of a historic transition, with COVID throwing companies into financial turmoil, forcing season cancellations, mass layoffs, and in some cases, permanent closures. Yet alongside this devastation, demands for rapid social evolution have led some institutions to step (or be pushed) into dramatic growth. Historically, talented Black theatermakers have largely been relegated to onstage or lower-level administrative roles.

Now a stunning wave of seven new hires (taking the lead at nearly the same time) marks an era of seismic change. Below is a glimpse into the fresh vision for the future of Chicago theater from these new leaders.

In the long tradition of Black mentorship, I asked everyone interviewed who helped shape their careers along the way, as well as what up-and-comers and collaborators they see as the next link in the chain of this Chicago Black

Artistic Renaissance.

Sana Selemon, the executive director for BoHo Theatre, first auditioned with the company two years ago, came on as a company member earlier this year, and was quickly approached about the executive director position. “Honestly, at first I was a little scared because I thought that taking a larger leadership role with an organization was something I thought would happen later on in my life. I think there’s always a bit of impostor syndrome when you first hear these things.” Black talent has often been passed over for critical career-defining promotions. It is imperative that young leaders get a foot in the door with small organizations, so that as they mature they can keep pace with their white peers in terms of career advancement.

As she takes the helm, one of her biggest challenges is grappling with COVID and the safety of returning to live performance. Selemon says,

“We are never going to jump the gun on something like that. There are so many opportunities to keep that measure of artistic integrity while remaining safe.” She sees virtual performances as a silver lining to help bring in historically underrepresented artists. The other silver lining is the opportunity to hear from artists, and incorporate community suggestions such as the We See You W.A.T. (White American Theater) document. Selemon says equity “is something we need urgently in this moment. There is no other way forward.”

For mentors, Selemon lists Shelley Delaney (her acting teacher at Ohio University), her mother, and Brian Evans, her voice and speech teacher in college. “He fostered the love of language in myself.” For up-and-coming artists, she recognizes Neel McNeill and Sophiyaa Nayar of Definition Theatre and actor-singer Mariah Copeland.

Clockwise from top left: Anthony LeBlanc, Charlique C. Rolle, Donterrio Johnson, Mikael Burke, Sana Selemon, Regina Victor, Kamille Dawkins  COURTESY THE ARTISTS

Kamille Dawkins was pleasantly surprised to be enthusiastically voted in as interim artistic director of Strawdog by her company peers, who saw that she was already doing most of the job anyway: serving as co-ensemble manager, the diversity, equity, and inclusion committee chair, and managing conversations between the board, the previous artistic director, and the ensemble. So how did Strawdog achieve a healthy culture where Dawkins's contributions could be celebrated and rewarded organically?

Dawkins says, "We have been trying to sculpt the company so that it's more ensemble-led. We are finding that, when the ensemble gets to make the decisions, they are usually looking out for their fellow artists and trying to make the right choices that go beyond just the business aspect of things." Strawdog is not only presenting a virtual season, but also plans to utilize bold social justice initiatives, ranging from donating a portion of ticket sales to different service organizations, to directly giving back to the Chicago community.

Two of Dawkins's favorite mentors are Sonita Surratt and Kemati J. Porter at eta Creative Arts Foundation. "It's amazing how other Black women who are older than you encourage you to go even further." Artists that she looks forward to working with include Brianna Buckley, Marcus D. Moore, and Wardell Julius Clark. "I gravitate towards artists who use their voice to speak out about injustices, and who make sure the art they create is helping that."

As Regina Victor steps into the artistic director position of Sideshow Theatre, they are one

of the few trans people to lead a Chicago theater company—a bit of information which has proven challenging to fact-check. (Will Davis served as artistic director for American Theater Company before it folded in 2018.) Ironically, the difficulty tracking down this information speaks to the need for more diverse theatrical journalistic coverage—an area where Victor has already led the charge, launching the publication Rescripted (of which I am a contributor).

Upon starting with Sideshow on October 1, Victor's first order of business will be figuring out "How do we take care of our people first, on every level? How do we consider safety? How do we take care of people without shutting our doors? How do we provide new opportunities for people? Because that is how I got into Sideshow, through their new play program. I want to make sure that the pipeline is still flowing."

Victor thinks that the culture of exceptionalism can be detrimental to creating progress within BIPOC communities. "We are fighting so hard to do things for the first time and because of that, people often want to sit on the sidelines to see if it works out, [to see] if we will be the exception, rather than leaning in and helping."

Speaking to that pipeline, Regina cites a long list of mentors that they have had the privilege to work in fellowship with, including Step-penwolf artistic director Anna Shapiro, Azuka Theatre founder Raelle Myrick-Hodges, former Victory Gardens artistic director Chay Yew, Daniel Alexander Jones, and Court Theatre. "They were the first people to give me a staff position as a producer." In terms of future and current leaders, they list Michael Kaiser, Ian Damont Martin of Haven Chicago, and Ken-Matt Martin.

Donterrio Johnson, the artistic director at PrideArts, sees this watershed moment as an

opportunity "to show Blackness on our stages that isn't the 'normal' Blackness seen in theater. Chicago theaters often stage shows that deal with Black pain, and there is a place for that, but there are so many shows that are a celebration of Blackness that I am interested in bringing into the fold." In response to COVID, PrideArts has begun renovating the lobby space, getting rid of old furniture and carpeting, and redoing the bathrooms, as well as imagining smaller shows that will help future audiences and actors to feel safe.

When asked about something that could radically change the Chicago theater community, Johnson answers "Communication. What I would love to see is the community banding together and finding ways to work with each other." The mentors who provided creative guidance and inspiration during his career include Brenda Didier and Jermaine Hill. When he reflects on the next generation of leaders, he lists David Robbins and Jos N. Banks as people who are currently making their mark.

Mikael Burke, the associate artistic director at About Face Theatre, is looking forward to shaping the new play development program, along with educational initiatives that work to decenter whiteness. "I have the great fortune of being in this position at one of the very few queer-oriented companies in town, where I will have direct impact to guide how we are engaging with the up-and-coming generation to foster and create responsible artists who are prepared to step into the world and put an emphasis on BIPOC queer storytelling." Burke is excited that he has agency to steer the ship to ensure that the product About Face develops is truthful and beneficial to everyone and not just the few white artists who already have ample resources.

In terms of mentors, Burke points to Ann

Joseph-Douglas, and his graduate training at the Theatre School of DePaul, specifically Lisa Portes (head of directing), Damon Kiely (head of performance), and most impactfully, Phyllis E. Griffin, the first Black theater professional he had the opportunity to work for as an assistant director, in a room where the entire production was Black. "She had a greater impact on me as a human than she will ever truly understand. She helped me understand my potential as a Black queer artist. I am forever grateful and indebted to her for that."

When thinking about the next generation of artists on the come up, he mentions a trio: Herbert White II, Leah Brock, and Sir King Castro, who have founded a creative hub called BLK Uncommon. As Burke muses on changes that could prove transformative for the Chicago community, he thinks there should be term limits on artistic leadership positions. "I don't believe there is one human being at the head of a cultural organization who can be as in touch with his community ten years later as he was when he first started. A decade is more than enough time to do so much good work and pave the way for someone else to pick up the mantle."

Picking up one such heavy mantle is Anthony LeBlanc, who stepped into the role of interim executive producer of the Second City upon the departure of longtime former owner and producer Andrew Alexander amidst calls for equity. "As an artist who has been a comedian for 20-plus years, you see that some things are cyclical, but you start to see the point where the patterns are starting to break." Drawing a line from Ferguson, to the #MeToo movement, to the BLM movement, he sees a new sustained momentum that won't peter out. "Not only is this [work] worth it, but there's a possibility



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## THEATER

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of seeing the change that you are working for while you can still experience it.”

When asked about those who provided a helping hand along the way, LeBlanc mentions the Black performers who were at Second City when he started performing, including Claudia Wallace, Keegan-Michael Key, David Pompeii, and John Hildreth, who provided emotional support weathering microaggressions from white colleagues in the greater comedy community at crucial junctures in his career, and his mother. “I grew up in southeast Texas and my parents grew up in the Jim Crow South. One mantra that I often say in rehearsals that I learned from her is that she was someone who followed the rules, so that when you break the rules, it means something.” To that point, LeBlanc muses on the audition process and how actors often leave the room never knowing why they weren’t cast. “Do we have to do it that way?”

“I want to create a place where you not only reduce the need to struggle, but you also support those folks to find their voice to continue to persevere.” Mentioning up-and-coming leaders in the Chicago artistic community, LeBlanc names Asia Martin, an actor and writer who recently presented a show at the Kennedy Center, and me, the author of this article. (I am an instructor at the Second City and LeBlanc was my first Black improv instructor.)

Not every theater has been behind the curve on equity. As a matter of fact, some, like Congo Square, have been quietly leading for years, and its appointment of Charlique C. Rolle as managing director is a continuation of a long history of Black leadership. “Starting a new job in the middle of a pandemic is wild and crazy. It has been exciting coming into this amazing company that has been producing for over 20 years, being really grounded and rooted in the Chicago community, creating a platform for Black voices.”

Reflecting on the differences between working in predominantly white and predominantly Black spaces, Rolle notes that, in white spaces, “There’s a sense that my Blackness or my culture is an exciting convenience . . . Coming to Congo, there’s an innate freedom; you don’t have to ‘put on’ just to be yourself.”

Rolle continues, “We aren’t in the middle of a white theater trying to get them to understand and to hear us. This is our heart, our mission. This is who we are. There is no separation for us. In the midst of all of this uprising we are rooting and anchoring more deeply, so

that the work we are producing, even in the digital space, still maintains that integrity where Black voices can be heard.” To that end, Congo Square is nurturing the next generation of Black artists and administrators through a series of industry training workshops to ensure sustainable community growth. “It’s not enough just to make sure people get into the space if they can’t keep the space.”

Rolle lists Richard Smith and Robert McKee of Inaside Chicago Dance as mentors (“They were able to see things in me that I was not able to see in myself”) as well as Jackie Taylor, founder of Black Ensemble Theater, and Vershawn Sanders-Ward, founder of Red Clay Dance. “They as leaders have made an impact on who I am and where I am in this moment.” Two up-and-coming leaders Rolle respects are writer-director-activists Kristiana Rae Colón and Sydney Chatman.

The oft-repeated adage in Black households that “You have to work twice as hard to get half as far” is evident in the substantial bodies of work that precede all of the artists interviewed for this article, illustrating that they have earned their titles in full. However, the realities of racism, even in liberal spaces, can unfairly paint notable successes by BIPOC artists as unearned tokenism to satisfy quotas. Fortunately, these leaders are unfazed by such racist sentiments.

Burke says, “If all of this hadn’t gone down, would there be six or seven of us taking positions all at the same time? Probably not. But I hear these kinds of things and I roll my eyes and sigh at how limited their worldview must be to feel that way.” Says Dawkins, “It’s bizarre to me to think that a company would even put themselves in jeopardy by giving a job to someone who isn’t qualified just for optics. Companies don’t do that, ever.”

LeBlanc passes on advice from one of his mentors. “If you are a person who is different from anyone else, you have to be good. If you got to that place, it’s because you deserved to get it.” Victor says, “I think we have an opening right now and we need to take as many positions as possible and not worry about things like tokenism. White supremacy will always devalue anything that any ‘minority’ has ever had.”

Selemon quips, “If people want to think that, let them think that. That’s not my concern.”

Succinctly, Johnson says: “Watch us work.”

@SheriFlanders



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READER



## DANCE AND ACCESSIBILITY

# Moving every body

*CounterBalance* highlights performers with disability.

By **IRENE HSIAO**

“I’ve been a dancer all my life,” says *CounterBalance* founder Ginger Lane. Trained primarily in ballet, Lane performed, taught, choreographed, and briefly owned a dance studio in Wilmette before a spinal cord injury in 1984 resulted in quadriplegia. Yet Lane did not allow her injury to sideline her. Instead, she channeled

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her creative energy into independent living and disability rights at the Rehabilitation Institute of Chicago (now the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab), where she provided peer support services and disability awareness training, before joining the independent living center Access Living to coordinate its Arts and Culture Project in 2008. As part of the initiative

to feature art and events by artists with disabilities—including visual art, cabaret, readings, theater, and an annual battle-of-the-bands—Lane was determined to bring dance to Access and accessibility to dance.

Though Lane’s vision was ambitious from the start, Access Living was designed for accessibility but not designed to accommodate dance. “The first several years we had *CounterBalance*, we had to rent a dance floor. We had to bring in lighting from outside. We had to put blackout shades on the windows. It was a big conference room—and everything was very haphazard and make-do,” she remembers. As *CounterBalance* outgrew its first home, it migrated to a variety of locations, including the National Museum of Mexican Art and Victory Gardens. Center on Halsted made a five-year pledge to host the performance at their Hoover-Leppen Theatre in 2018.

Now in its tenth production, the first *CounterBalance* concert featured Dance>Detour,

*CounterBalance 2015*, Alice Sheppard and Laurel Lawson LISA GREEN

Chicago’s first physically integrated dance company, as well as Oak Park dance company MOMENTA, which became physically integrated in 2003. Over the years, *CounterBalance* has featured a stellar roster of dancers with and without disabilities, including butoh dancer Wannapa P-Eubanks, Portland’s Wobbly Dance, disabled dance luminaries Alice Sheppard and the late Lisa Bufano, and guest artists from Israel and South Korea. The event gradually expanded from a single performance into multiple days of performances and workshops.

Though *CounterBalance* brings nationally and internationally renowned dancers and dance companies to Chicago, the heart of the event is local. “*CounterBalance* has been focused on providing opportunities for local dancers and choreographers with disabilities to give a voice where there was no opportunity to be produced on that scale,” says codirector of *CounterBalance* Ladonna Freidheim. Founder of ReinventAbility, which offers dance classes and other trainings to promote inclusion, as well as a company member with MOMENTA, Freidheim performed in the first *CounterBalance* concert in 2008. Like Lane, Freidheim trained in classical ballet. A degenerative disability and several surgeries landed her in rehabilitation with wheelchair athletes at the University of Illinois.

“I was introduced to disability culture there,” she says, remembering with a smile how she began to dance with them. “I had lost my dance world. I wanted to fit into theirs. Their impulse was that they wanted to go out to clubs—we were in college—and pick up girls! So they went along with it.” Freidheim credits Dance>Detour founder Alana Wallace with bringing dance back into her life. “I get around with leg braces and a cane most of the time. Alana taught me to dance in my chair so I could rejoin the world of dance. Dance is freedom—freedom of the soul, as corny as that sounds!”

“Dance, like any artistic endeavor, allows people to express themselves,” says Lane. “The arts enrich life, they enrich the spirit, and sometimes they hold up a mirror to life. Part of the impetus for integrated dance was to help dispel stereotypes and myths about people with disabilities, who have traditionally been shuttered away in a room, a closet, a hospital, and not seen in public. As dancers, we’re on display all the time—and with dis-

abilities, we’re even more on display. We’re saying, ‘Here I am. I’m doing my thing—you make your own judgment about whether you like what you see or not. You can decide for yourselves whether the lives we live have value or not.’ We dance because it’s what we do. We dance because it’s who we are.”

“And it’s a huge part of society,” adds Freidheim. “We dance at weddings, we dance at dances. It’s part of life. If you’re excluded from that—if people say, ‘We don’t need an elevator. This is a dance studio!’, which I’ve heard a lot—you’re not part of society.”

This year’s *CounterBalance*, copresented by Access Living, MOMENTA, Bodies of Work (a consortium of 50 cultural, academic, health care, and social organizations based in UIC’s Department of Disability and Human Development), and Studiothread (an organization specializing in digital development for nonprofits), takes place online from October 7-11. It features inclusive dance workshops, a panel discussion on the history of integrated dance, a video compilation of pieces from past *CounterBalance* performances, new short films, a tribute to Lane, and a dance jam.

Reflecting on past productions, Lane and Freidheim cite experiences that bring dancers and choreographers of different generations, with and without disabilities, together to learn from one another. Learning to dance and learning to choreograph for dancers with disabilities is inevitably a collaborative process, notes Lane. “I had to learn to set choreography on what my dancers could do, rather than my perception. So dance that is created for dancers with and without disabilities is much more of a collaborative process between the choreographer, dancers, and musicians, rather than from the top down.”

Collaboration and inclusion have always been keywords for *CounterBalance*, and with performances and workshops moving online, Freidheim sees even greater possibilities for the future. “This online ability we’re all developing includes people who could not be included for reasons of disability, economics, location—what a wonderful opportunity! It’ll cost a little extra to do a show that’s also being broadcast, but it can be done. We’re opening up how we can share what we do and how we can collaborate with choreographers across the country because we’re all teaching over Zoom. I believe this will bring about greater understanding in society of anyone who’s different.”

@IreneCHsiao



Del Marie © RYAN BRANDOFF PHOTOGRAPHY

## ARTISTIC SURVIVAL

# Dancing in the mouth of the monster

2020 was supposed to be Del Marie's "coming-out year."

By JACK HELBIG

2020 started off so well. January and February were great months for 27-year-old rapper, dancer, and performance poet Del Marie. After years of performing at small live events, things were finally coming together for her. She had branched out from performance poetry to writing and singing her own songs and had recently completed a video of one of her songs, "Black Wall Street." The video, which featured both Del Marie rapping and documentary footage shot at Chicago Black-owned businesses, dropped February 28.

The video was the first salvo in what was shaping up to be a very busy late winter/early spring, culminating in an evening of live music, fashion, and dance she planned to call *Learning to Fly*, scheduled to take place at Que4 Radio.

"I was going to take March to prepare for

[*Learning to Fly*] and in April, hit it with a concert, and then after that I had wanted to drop more projects," Del Marie recalls. "This was supposed to be like my coming-out year"—the year Del Marie showed the world she was "really an artist [and not] just some open mike girl."

And then COVID-19 hit. And the world shut down in early March.

Suddenly Del Marie, who made most of her income as a visiting artist in schools, had no income.

"I was a dance instructor," she sighs. "I was cut down to like one hour a week." Then she got a call from Que4 Radio letting her know they wouldn't be able to do *Learning to Fly* "because of COVID regulations" restricting the number of people allowed at public performances.

"It was very bad."

Like a lot of Chicago artists, actors, and performers, she was, in the blink of an eye, down-and-out.

Del Marie had been saving money for her projects. Once shelter in place started, Del Marie self-evicted. "I self-evicted because I didn't have funds," she said in an e-mail. "(And still don't but am looking for a place to stay. I would love to live in an artist loft, or find a studio.)"

She turned to her family for food and shelter. She spent the spring and summer couch surfing, moving from one family member's place to another. Del Marie qualified for food stamps and got groceries from food depositories. "I felt very sad," Del Marie tells me. "I didn't have the money to push the creativity that I have in my head. I had tons of ideas but, you know, sometimes funding blocks that from actually being a thing."

At her lowest point, Del Marie thought of giving up her dreams. "I thought I should be normal and quit." What kept her going was family ("My family believes in me"), her religion ("God gave me these gifts for a reason"), and her art.

Before the pandemic, Del Marie wrote every day. But during the lockdown "words became too much." Del Marie turned to drawing, playing music, and dancing for solace.

"I started dancing when I was like eight. I was in the after-school program at the James R. Jordan Boys and Girls Club of Chicago. And it was homework hour, so it was quiet. But then I heard this loud music coming in from the hall. It was—WOW—I had never heard nothing like that in my life. I grew up with my grandma, so I had heard James Brown, I heard a lot of R&B, but I never heard anything like this loud, monstrous music that just was like crazy. I couldn't help it. And I just ran out of class. And my teacher was like, 'Come back!,' but I ran and I ran.

"I went down to the room where the music was coming from. And there was this lady who was standing there. She was tall and beautiful. She was a Black lady, and she had like this yellow-orange [outfit] and like bright yellow energy all around her.

"And then there were all these teenage girls—I was like, eight and the girls were much taller than me—and they were doing the steps the tall lady was doing. And there were older men with dreads shaking their long hair, with sweat, lots of sweat, just laying it on these

drums, you know, just hitting them at angles, making these crazy sounds come out. I felt like they were all inside of a monster's mouth, and the monster was roaring.

"The lady looked at me and she was like, 'Come here. Come into the dance.' And I was like, 'I'm not going in the monster's mouth.' And she was like, 'Come here.' And I looked at her, and didn't she look so nice and so kind and so warmhearted? So I went in.

"She had me stand next to her. And she showed me these two small steps. And so I did the two steps. She was like, 'Good. Now do it like this.' It was like a game. It was, like, step on the beat, and then move your arm at the same time as the beat. Then step on the beat and move your arm. Step on the beat.

"So next thing you know, I was inside the music, inside the moment, and suddenly I had been there for hours. And it was time to go. And that started my love of dance."

Looking for a creative outlet during the shutdown, Del Marie participated in free Zoom-based West African dance workshops held by Muntu Dance Theatre. Interestingly, the Muntu workshops were led by the same dance teacher who had introduced Del Marie to West African dance when she was eight—Mama Ika. Del Marie had over the years lost touch with Mama Ika. Mama Ika was a catalyst for Del Marie's dance, but not a long-term mentor.

"The first time I logged onto the Zoom, I saw Mama Ika [was teaching the class]. I was like, Ooooooo."

The Zoom sessions rekindled Del Marie's relationship with Mama Ika; Mama Ika and her workshops played a role in Del Marie's healing, helping her regain what she lost in March.

She is still living at home with her family, but she is working a little more, making a little more money, and slowly has been getting more performing gigs. She will be performing with Young Chicago Authors on October 27. Que4 Radio has contacted her to perform in a live show in November. And she is working on her next music video with the Chicago-based media company XBT91.

Is she back on her feet? "I'm still working on it," she admits. "I'm rolling with the punches."

"But ever since I was little, I just felt like I was gonna speak to the world one day, and I was going to give them beautiful art, beautiful stories, and songs and creations. I still feel like I'm supposed to give these things to the world."

It will just take a little more time. **✎**

**🐦 @JackHelbig**



## PREVIEW

# A Chicago International Film Festival unlike any other

The 56th annual celebration of cinema features nearly 60 films, seven of which are world premieres, online and at the drive-in.

By KATHLEEN SACHS

If someone had told me a year ago that I'd be able to see Spike Lee's *American Utopia*—a filmed version of David Byrne's Broadway show—at a drive-in theater, I'd have said, "Cool!" If someone had also told me I'd be doing so because a global pandemic had temporarily decimated the communal moviegoing experience, making drive-ins the only safe way to see a film on the big screen with other people in the immediate vicinity, I'd have said, "... oh."

But so it goes, and here we are. It's true that audiences will be able to see the Chicago premiere of *American Utopia*, along with seven other films, at the ChiTown Movies drive-in (2343 S. Throop) as part of this year's 56th Chicago International Film Festival. These events show how the organizers are making the best of a not-so-great situation, creating experiences that are on par with those of the festival's in-person editions—and, in many ways, altogether different. I caught up with the festival's artistic director, Mimi Plache, to chat about the festival and what it'll be like in this pandemic year, even for those outside the city. (Full disclosure before we go any further: I did a bit of prescreening for this year's festival and last year served on the Narrative Shorts Jury.)

"The one thing about this year's festival is that it's going to be a completely new and fresh and hopefully innovative experience for audiences," says Plache. "One of the aspects of online that we're really embracing is this question of accessibility. You don't have to be in Chicago to experience the festival. For most of the films in

the program, they'll be available nationally, with a limited number being available to Illinois and the surrounding states. It's a great opportunity, I think, to reach new audiences and to bring that festival experience to people who otherwise wouldn't have that opportunity to see the films and hear from filmmakers."

This year's festival, which takes place from October 14-25, includes 58 feature-length films (seven of which are world premieres) and 56 short films spanning nine shorts programs. In addition to *American Utopia*, films playing at the drive-in include the festival's opening night selection, R.J. Cutler's documentary *Belushi*, about the legendary Chicago-born comedian; Bryan Bertino's *The Dark and the Wicked*, copresented with the Music Box Theatre as part of their Music Box of Horrors at the Drive-In event; *Bad Hair*, a horror-satire from Justin Simien (*Dear White People*) that costars Chicago native Lena Waithe; Francis Lee's eagerly anticipated *Ammonite*, starring Kate Winslet and Saoirse Ronan; the world premiere of *The Road Up*, a new documentary from *Louder Than a Bomb* directors Greg Jacobs and Jon Siskel; and the Chicago premieres of Regina King's directorial debut, *One Night in Miami*, and Chloé Zhao's *Nomadland*, the follow-up to her 2017 breakout *The Rider*, also the festival's closing-night presentation. (Note that some of these films are only playing at the drive-in, while some will be available virtually as well.)

And there are many more films that are available to screen online. The Masters program

*American Utopia* screens at ChiTown Movies Drive-In on Thursday, October 15 at 7 PM.

includes Christian Petzold's *Undine*, Hong Sang-soo's *The Woman Who Ran*, Agnieszka Holland's *Charlatan*, Tsai Ming-liang's *Days*, François Ozon's *Summer of 85*, Daniele Luchetti's *The Ties*, and Mohammad Rasoulof's *There Is No Evil*. The documentary selection, curated by senior programmer Anthony Kaufman (who also programs the U.S. indies and the Industry Days events), is especially exciting this year, with Steve James's *City So Real*—including the world premiere of its never-before-seen fifth episode—Werner Herzog and Clive Oppenheimer's *Fireball: Visitors from Darker Worlds*, and documentaries about such luminaries as Del Close (Heather Ross's *For Madmen Only*), Greta Thunberg (Nathan Grossman's *I Am Greta*), and Stanley Kubrick (Gregory Monro's *Kubrick by Kubrick*). With the Chicago premiere of his new documentary, *Notturmo*, Italian filmmaker Gianfranco Rosi (*Fire at Sea*) will receive the festival's Artistic Achievement Award.

"We still will have those bigger titles, as always, but . . . I think about the festival's 56-year history, and the sense that we feel we're discovering stuff, but also we want audiences to have that same experience of discovering something new or something inspiring, really programming to that," says Plache, who is personally excited about films showing as part of the New Directors and International Competitions, such as Andrei Konchalovsky's *Dear Comrades!*, Julia von Heinz's *And Tomorrow the Entire World*, and Sabine Lubbe Bakker and Niels van Koevorden's *Becoming Mona*.


She continues: "And programming to this moment that we're in, and connecting with audiences that way, whether it's an escape, through the comedies, or something that helps us all to reflect on what's happening in the world right now, whether it's the pandemic or a lot of political, social, and cultural changes that are happening . . . I think it broadens the lens and gives us a different angle from which to view our own contemporary experience right now."

Many examples of films that help achieve this are included in the Black Perspectives program, curated by Joyy Norris (who also programs the After Dark section), which features such narrative films as Simien's *Bad Hair*, King's *One Night in Miami*, Philippe Lacôte's *Night of the Kings*, Eugene Ashe's *Sylvie's Love*, Ignacio Márquez's *The Special*; documentary features like Tommy Oliver's *40 Years a Prisoner* and Sam Pollard's *MLK/FBI*; and a slew of shorts. One of the documentaries, Luchina Fisher's *Mama Gloria*, show-

cases the Chicago icon, a Black trans woman who famously ran a charm school for trans youth. "It's not only inspiring," says Fisher during a press conference for the festival, "but it's really rare to see a Black trans elder on screen."

There are likewise programs of films directed by women and those centered on the LGBTQ experience. The former includes films directed by Julia von Heinz, Ekwa Msangi, Stefanie Klemm, Suzanne Lindon, and Nishikawa Miwa, among several others. *I'm Your Woman*, directed and cowritten by Julia Hart, features *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel* star Rachel Brosnahan, who will appear virtually in conversation. Around *Ammonite*, star Kate Winslet will receive the Career Achievement Award, another celebration of women in film. Francis Lee's film is part of the Out-Look Competition along with Fisher's *Mama Gloria*, Tsai's *Days*, Ozon's *Summer of 85*, and Bruno Santamaria's *Things We Dare Not Do*. And, as always, the shorts programs (curated by Sam Flancher) are robust, each grouped by theme: City and State, Animation, After Dark, Documentary, Drama, Comedy, Black Perspectives, Experimental, and Family-Friendly Animation. Of note are shorts from directors Jennifer Boles, Zach Woods, Lisa Barcy, Tebogo Malebogo, Ben Rivers, Guy Maddin, Evan Johnson, and Galen Johnson.

Another staple of the festival experience are events where filmgoers can connect with the filmmakers and even each other. Plache says this tradition won't go away with the pandemic. "For us, the festival is a celebration of cinema, but part of that celebration is the audience participating, and that audience interaction with the work, which is amplified by having the director or the cast or the screenwriter there," she says. "And so it's really about the experience, not just about watching the film. It won't be the same, but I think that's the question that we're always getting to, what can we do that will make it more than just watching the films."

The slogan for this year's festival is "Let film take you there," apropos considering that cinema, now more than ever, is enabling us to leave the confines of quarantine, figuratively and even spiritually, if not physically. This edition of the Chicago International Film Festival will be unlike any that came before it, and might even lead to a different kind of festival-going experience altogether. Plache is optimistic that, ultimately, the films will benefit as much as the viewers: "I think if it's done right, there's a way to actually grow audiences for the type of cinema that festivals show." Here's to hoping. 

 @chicago\_reader

## NOW PLAYING

RR *Enola Holmes*

Once again proving that YA content is tops, director Harry Bradbeer's take on the ridiculously popular and tragically overproduced Sherlock Holmes story feels surprisingly fresh. Millie Bobby Brown embodies the plucky title character Enola Holmes, the little sister of the indomitable Sherlock (a charming and perfectly cast Henry Cavill—a more kindly take on the character's traditional narcissist portrayal) and curmudgeonly Mycroft (a reliably and delightfully cranky Sam Claflin). Enola strikes out to solve her first mystery—the disappearance of her mother (played by a shockingly grounded and only slightly fantastical Helena Bonham Carter)—creating possibly the best adventure movie of 2020. The screenplay by Jack Thorne hits the perfect notes of mystery, swashbuckling action, and tween-centric feminism. Brown's character is empowered in a way that seems natural and attainable for real girls, rather than an idealistic superwoman scale feminism that many adult women fail to reach. Despite her cleverness and skill, Enola takes her lumps, experiencing real danger and setbacks that stem from the encroaching darkness of the adult world, while still remaining firmly in the realm of youth. Thorne's success with *Enola Holmes* is creating a YA fantasy world that feels real without being overly sanitized. A romantic subplot with Louis Partridge as Tewksbury is charming without overwhelming the daring caper with trea-

cle, and a fabulous Susie Wokoma quietly steals the show in one scene with promises of an expanded role for her in what one hopes to be many, many sequels in perhaps the first truly intersectional Sherlock universe. —**SHERI FLANDERS** 123 min. *Netflix*

RR *Kajillionaire*

Counter to most of its online summaries and descriptions, Miranda July's *Kajillionaire* is not about a "major heist" or anything close to it; it's a character study of two parents, Theresa and Robert (Debra Winger and Richard Jenkins), who think they're winning by not playing by the rules. In truth, they're grifters who are bad at grifting, and they're loveless in a matter-of-fact way to their daughter and scam partner, Old Dolio (Evan Rachel Wood). Gina Rodriguez is there, too, though it's never made clear why her character Melanie sticks around, a foil of normalcy against the neurotic and out-of-touch family she's stumbled into. On the surface, they're just people looking to make money for rent, but *Kajillionaire* opens the door to someplace totally new. The film dances between reality and the surreal, which will be a success to some and a turnoff to others, but it's immediately captivating; thanks to the brilliance of July's writing, every moment of *Kajillionaire* produces the most genuine sense of uncertainty as to what will happen next. It's full of complicated family dynamics, birth and death, refreshing but confusing queerness, and more, showcasing talented actors and captured with impressive camera work.


It lacks depth and cohesiveness in some places, so it may not be worth rewatching again and again, but if viewers enter the film with some background in July's disinclination for reality, *Kajillionaire* will be a delightfully engrossing and memorable experience like no other. —**TARYN ALLEN** 106 min. *In wide release in theaters*

RR *Oliver Sacks: His Own Life*

Imagine being such an effervescent character that your sheer presence in a documentary about yourself elevates it from run-of-the-mill hagiography to a damn near life-affirming experience. One suchlike figure is storied British neurologist and writer Oliver Sacks, who passed away in 2015; in the months leading up to his death, he spoke extensively with documentary filmmaker Ric Burns (brother of Ken), and the result is a stirring portrait of a remarkable person. There's nothing unique about the documentary—it spans the entirety of Sacks's life, from his wartime childhood in London to formative years in California to an expansive medical career in New York City—but going through it with Sacks himself is eminently illuminating. In addition to covering his accomplishments in neurology and the great writing spurred by that work, the film also includes stories and related ephemera from his gym rat, leather-laden 20s and 30s in San Francisco and his struggles with his sexuality, which was a source of inexorable shame and the impetus for much of his self-destructive behavior. In spite of his later, exalted reputation, Sacks is shown as a complex person

who made just as many missteps as he did great strides; it's strangely inspirational to hear about how often he failed—at work, at love, at life in general. Thankfully, however, his story has such a happy ending that, for the first time in as long as I could remember, I was sobbing with elation. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** 111 min. *Music Box Virtual Cinema*

RR *Possessor*

*Possessor* is an especially timely film. Playing to writer-director Brandon Cronenberg's strengths, his sophomore feature is a stylish body-horror full of striking and unshakable images, much like his 2012 debut, *Antiviral*. Aimed at capitalism instead of celebrity, this cautionary tale follows elite agent Tasya Vos (Andrea Riseborough), who works for a secretive organization that uses brain-implant technology to inhabit other people's consciousness. Once inside, the agent commits assassinations for high-paying clients. It's an impressive and well-executed premise, which the cast's acting chops support skillfully. When Tasya enters her newest mark, Colin Tate (Christopher Abbott), at the direction of her boss, Girder (Jennifer Jason Leigh), a struggle ensues as their respective consciousnesses battle for control of the body, underscoring Cronenberg's assertion that in our capitalistic society, even our own autonomy comes at a price. He asks us to think, what is one willing to leave behind in pursuit of a perfect performance review? —**BECCA JAMES** 102 min. *Thu 10/1 at ChiTown Movies Drive-In as part of Music Box of Horrors, Music Box Theatre* 

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THE NEWBERRY



# Spelunking in the Reader of 1971

The music ads in the paper's very first issues add context—and curiosities—that the stories alone can't provide.

By LEOR GALIL

## Make Your Own Ad

Yes, WDAI Stereo 94.7 wants to give you the chance to be Mr. Advertising. Just cut out any or all of the copy and visual elements below and paste them together tastefully on the piece of paper of your choice. Just like a real Ad Man! For maximum enjoyment while you work, turn on WDAI Stereo 94.7, and feel good.

### 1. Headlines

They laughed when I sat down to tune in the radio.

Alice Cooper sez:

**TROUBLED BY WARTS?**

Say Girls,

Where Feel Good Is.

### 2. Copy

"Earl doesn't know beans about music." Sally snickered as I scanned the FM dial. But lucky for me, I'd read an ad just like this one a few days earlier. It spoke in gracious terms of the benefits of WDAI. There it was! 94.7! "Wows" and "far outs" filled the room. I felt good. And no warts!

When you reach your 9th Anniversary, it's time to sit back and reflect on the past. The good times and the bad. The laughs and the tears. The fun. The work. And like that. We at WDAI say "Thanks, ChicagoLand, for making it all possible." WDAI Stereo 94.7. 9 mos. of quality service.

If you're with the scene and live life all the way, get with the WDAI 94.7 generation. It's the Real Thing.

Now, from WDAI 94.7 Research and Development Corp. comes the Ultimate Gimmick!

Rock-a-matic

It slices through predictable music formats like apple juice through wheat toast.

Try it soon.

### 3. Visuals

### 4. Logos

This is no contest.

I miss a lot about working in the *Reader* offices: bantering with my colleagues, learning about their current projects, even watching music editor Philip Montoro assemble his complicated and presumably delicious lunches. I especially liked combing through the paper's print archives, which reach back to its first issue on October 1, 1971, and whose heavy blue bound volumes filled shelf after shelf in our front hallway. I was always looking for something particular when I started—such as a 1984 piece on Wesley Willis, believed to be the first story anywhere on the cultishly beloved Chicago artist and musician—and I always got derailed by the ads.

As much as the *Reader's* old stories say about the character of Chicago—much of it missing from the daily papers of the era—the ads alongside them add even more detail and context. In 2011 *Reader* typesetter and archivist Vera Videnovich compiled an online series called Ads From the Past that reproduced a choice selection, among them spots for a 1972 gig by the Fred Anderson Quartet and a 1974 staging of David Mamet's *Sexual Perversity in Chicago* directed by Stuart Gordon (later of *Re-Animator* fame). A 1976 plug for a "concert pipe" promised a new way to smoke clandestinely: "Fool your friends, enemies, and most of all, the Chicago P.D." I'd often get completely lost in the music advertisements. Pick a venue

concert calendar from the mid-1990s at random, and its dense typographical sprawl of bands will reliably include so many that have since been canonized that you'd swear you were looking at a Riot Fest lineup.

The *Reader* has its 50th birthday in October 2021, but because newspapers (unlike people) are born at one, not at zero, this is already the first issue of its 50th yearly volume. To begin the *Reader's* protracted commemoration of this golden anniversary, the music staff looked back at the very earliest issues—specifically the ads.

Chicago folkie Bonnie Koloc took out a free classified on the back page of the inaugural *Reader*, advertising an album-signing party at the Old Town School of Folk Music, and my colleague Salem Collo-Julian used that as a jumping-off point for an online essay. I looked at the first few months of the paper, when it was slim and music ads were in short supply—but I still managed to find some interesting stuff, including ads for Evanston instrument retailer Sound Post, a concert featuring prog-rock misfits and Secret History of Chicago Music subjects McLuhan, and a head shop selling eight-track tapes. You'll find scans of those and other treasures from my expedition to 1971 below.

@imLeor

Left: This whimsical full-page WDAI ad appeared in the issue of November 12, 1971.

Below: These ads both ran December 3, 1971—long before record stores had CD prices to list.

## One Octave Higher

1608 N. Wells (Piper's Alley) 787-1339      2833 N. Broadway 929-2116

ANY **4.98** LIST LP **3.00** NOW

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ANY **6.98** LIST TAPE **4.95** NOW

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## Albums of All Local Folk Singers

*Folk instruments & accessories plus a super collection of books. 911 West Armitage, 528-1818.*

## Old Town Folklore Center

**"Free Electric Classifieds"**  
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FRIAR TUCK SPECIALS

**5¢ hot dogs**  
(with real tomatoes)  
Saturdays, Noon 'till 6:30

**5¢ chili**  
(homemade)  
Sundays, Noon 'till ?  
Mondays, Noon 'till ?

(must be 21 and prove it)

**Friar Turk**  
3010 Broadway

**We have YAMAHA's in stock!**

*Part of the city may be out, but we have an excellent selection. Plus a super collection of books and other supplies.*

**Old Town Folklore Center**  
911 West Armitage

**Spend Thanksgiving evening at Orchestra Hall with Kris Kristofferson...**

**...enjoy Kris on Monument recordings**

Hear all the great songs that you've heard everyone else sing. Sung by the composer himself. They're all here on Kristofferson's first Monument album. Featuring the title song, "Me and Bobby McGee."

Magnetic poet/performer Kris Kristofferson delivers an amazing second album that marks him, without doubt, as one of the most important music people around.

**KRIS KRISTOFFERSON ME AND BOBBY MCGEE**

including:  
Help Me Make It Through The Night  
For The Good Times, Sunday Mornin' Comin' Down  
Blame It On The Stones, Casey's Last Ride

2.30817

**KRIS KRISTOFFERSON THE SILVER TONGUED DEVIL AND I**

including:  
Jody And The Kid Capron, Back And Blue  
Lying In The Sun  
I'm Not A Star, I'm A Fool  
I'm Not A Star, I'm A Fool  
When I Loved Her The Fear

2.30679

Distributed by Columbia Records

Left: Kris Kristofferson ad from October 22, 1971

Below: Another Old Town Folklore Center ad, this one from November 19, 1971. Discount Records plugged its Art Ensemble of Chicago offerings on December 3, 1971.

<p><b>The Old Town Folklore Center</b> 911 West Armitage 528-1818</p> <p>Folk Instruments - Accessories Strings - Books Professional Help and Repairs</p>	<p>Chicago's Largest Dealer in Used Books, Paperbacks, Texts</p> <p>15,000 Paperbacks at half price</p> <p><b>Powells' Bookshop</b> 1503 East 57th 955-7780 (At the 57th I.C. stop)</p>
<p>Chicago's Largest Dealer in Used Books, Paperbacks, Texts</p> <p>15,000 Paperbacks at half price</p> <p><b>Powells' Bookshop</b> 1503 East 57th 955-7780 (At the 57th I.C. stop)</p>	<p><b>Court House Restaurant</b> Harper Court 5211 S. Harper</p>

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n-4 / LES STANCES A SOPHIE—A MOVIE SOUND-TRACK with Jarman (his first tenor saxophone solo), Mitchell, Bowie, Favors, Fontella Bass, and introducing Don Moye, drums. "Theme de Yoyo", "Theme de Celine", "Monteverdi Variations I & II", etc.

n-1 / LESTER BOWIE—NUMBERS 1 & 2, with Mitchell, Favors and Jarman. "The most creative ensemble in jazz today"—*DownBeat*

n-2 / ROSCOE MITCHELL ART ENSEMBLE—CONGLIPTIOUS, an amazing quartet work with Bowie, Favors and Robert Crowder, drums, and 3 brilliant extended solos.

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LONG-PLAYING RECORDS AT A SAVING!

Above: On October 8, 1971, WDAI sponsored the Reader's free classifieds. The Old Town Folklore Center, which in its various incarnations has advertised in every issue of the paper, ran this ad about Yamahas on November 5, 1971.



MAURA WALSH

## Maura Walsh, creator of *Tiny Guide to Chicago Arts*

“Our city is just exploding with creativity and music and art, and all of these truly irreplaceable spaces are in danger of closing.”

As told to JAMIE LUDWIG

*Chicago native Maura Walsh is a visual artist and concert enthusiast. This year she raised \$37,000 for local music venues battling the financial hardships of the pandemic with Our Tiny Guide to Chicago’s Best Music Culture Spots, which she created in 2019. She’s also working with nonprofit fundraising initiative Support Chicago Arts to launch Tiny Guide to Chicago Arts, which will help an even wider range of local performance spaces.*

I remember being a teenage girl, learning how to drive, and sneaking out to go to concerts—I’d tell my dad I was going to my friend’s house. Obviously the Bottle and Double Door were always 21 and over, but I remember calling them begging them to let

me in and saying, “I’m not going to drink, I just want to see the show.” So when I turned 21, it opened up the whole world. I usually went alone, which my dad would be mortified to hear, but I wasn’t going to let not having anyone to go with stop me. It was just so important to my well-being to see live music.

I had a lot of hardship and sadness in my childhood, and for some reason being in a crowded, tiny music venue where there were lots of the people who probably felt just like me was really life altering. I really don’t know if I’ve ever felt happier than I do at a show.

I tended to gravitate towards heavier music, like punk rock, hardcore, metal, industrial, and experimental shows, but I al-

ways tried to keep an open mind. Sometimes my dad would say, “I want to see this blues guitarist,” and I’d go with him. I just think it’s really important to our mental health to share creativity and to be physically present with creativity.

Music venues are the kind of places where people could say, “Oh, this isn’t super important right now,” but so many people have lost their jobs, their livelihoods, or their whole lives they put into these businesses. And they’re so important. I remember some lady commented on one of my projects like, “Shouldn’t you be helping build houses for homeless people?” These places get written off as “Oh, they’re just a bar” or “They can put their programs online,” but they’re more than that, and we’re going to lose them if someone doesn’t help.

A couple of years ago my partner and I were at the Chicago Diner, and I was talking about this little sketchbook thing I was drawing. We thought, “Oh, it’d be cool to make a little guide to places we would recommend to a friend who was coming to Chicago and wanted to check out the live music scene.” I drew a small little book with about 30 music venues, record stores, and a couple of places to eat and drink. I posted a video of me opening up the book on Facebook when it was done. Somehow I woke up the next morning and had all these people begging me for a copy. I made around 150 copies, which sold out immediately, and I made another edition, which also sold out. And then I sort of dropped it, because I got busy with other things.

And then COVID-19 hit. Last year, my partner and I kept track of how many shows we went to, and it turned out we went to 53 concerts in 2019. We’d purchased a bunch of tickets for 2020, and we started getting refund notifications. A random thought popped into my head, “Oh, I have this drawing. I can post it and give the money to help show some support.” I thought I would just raise a little bit, but word spread, and after just a few months I raised about \$37,000 to give to these venues.

So that was that. Then recently I got an e-mail from this great person named Bridget Gunden at Support Chicago Arts, asking if I wanted to collaborate with them to help out theaters and other spaces in Chicago that are

also hurting.

Thirty-seven thousand dollars is a lot, but divide that by 30 spaces—it’s not that much money. So we have to keep going. With Support Chicago Arts, we came up with a new *Tiny Guide*, which includes 21 spaces more focused on the performing arts and theaters. They are donating 100 percent of the profits to the Save Our Stages nationwide initiative. I’m hoping these sorts of projects will inspire others to jump up and help, and continue to ask their legislatures to make major changes and to support our stages. Our city is just exploding with creativity and music and art, and all of these truly irreplaceable spaces are in danger of closing.

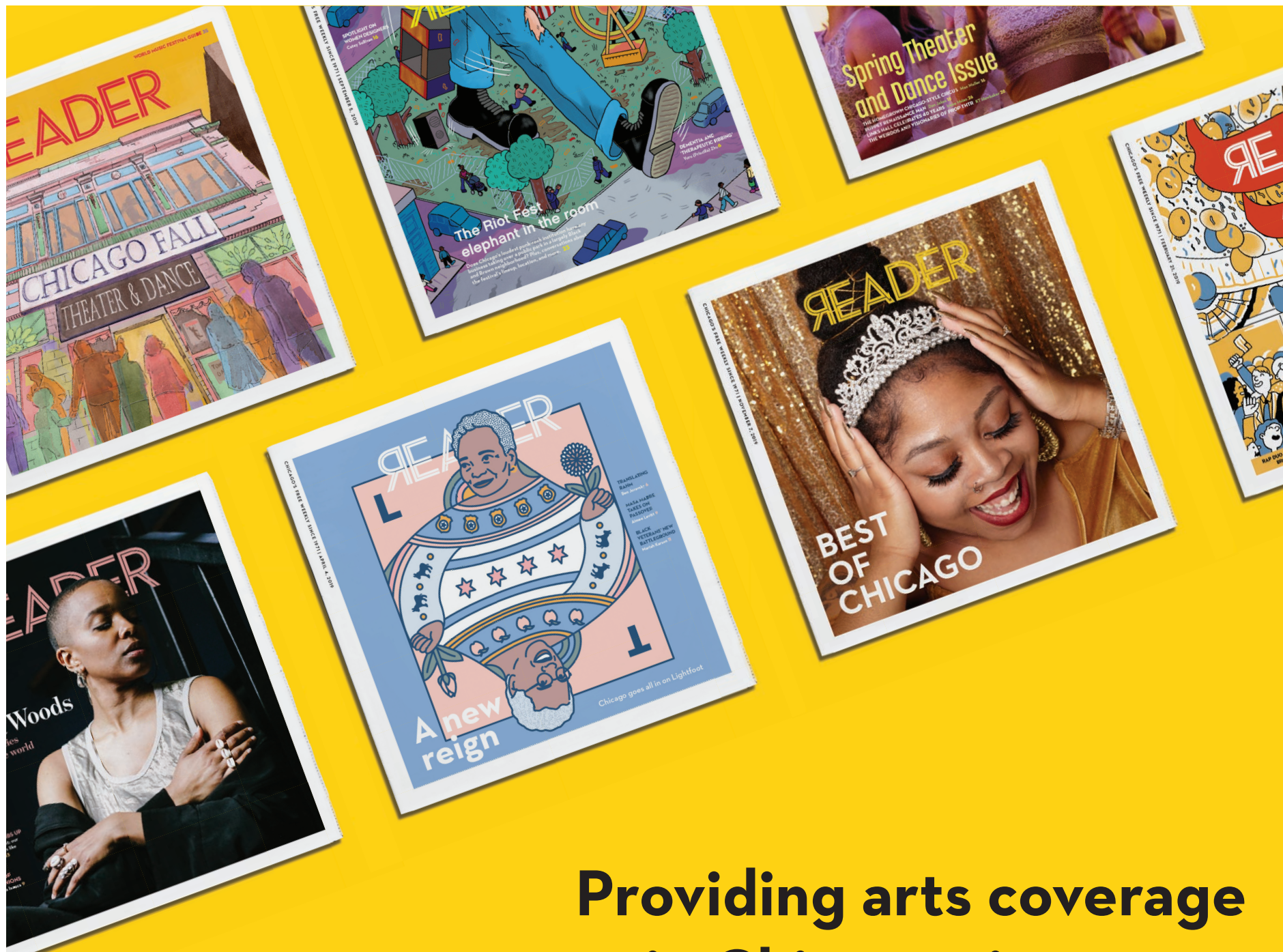
When I started my first guide, I was trying to figure out, “OK, I want to draw these little places, but how do they fit together?” All of these places make up the whole culture. It was about finding out how they all fit together and letting the architecture of the building find its place in the drawing. There’s no hierarchy, there’s no implied importance, and all these places are literally touching each other and connected; they’re physically supporting each other and Chicago. I’m kind of developing that a little bit more, and I’m working on some secret, exciting new things.

You know how you hear about small rivalries between certain bars or places? That’s silly. We’re all literally in this together—we’re all fighting. So this is like I’m forcing you together and connecting you, in a way. But it’s from a place of love. I think that’s why this format works so well for these drawings—these places are connected whether they like it or not.

A couple of months into the pandemic I noticed some venues were also taking their time and resources to support the Black Lives Matter movement, or doing food and supply drives. These are organizations in the midst of not knowing if they’re going to stay open, and I think that in itself is an incredible gesture of what Chicago should stand for: “We’re gonna help you out even when we are hurting.”

At the beginning of the pandemic, I was thinking, “Oh, people could frame this drawing and put it on their wall, look at these places, and think, ‘I can’t wait to go back there when it’s safe.’” We’re not going to lose them all, necessarily, but we have to remember them and support them. When things are back to normal, if they are ever back to normal, we can’t take this for granted. **✎**





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## MUSIC

### PICK OF THE WEEK

## Emerging Chicago rappers Semiratruth and Tre Johnson make supersize fun together



Semiratruth @ COURTESY THE ARTIST

### SEMIRATRUTH & TRE JOHNSON, YES!

Layaway  
[semiratruth.bandcamp.com/album/yes-by-semiratruth-tre-johnson](http://semiratruth.bandcamp.com/album/yes-by-semiratruth-tre-johnson)

**CHICAGO RAPPER SEMIRATRUTH IMPRESSED ME** with her 2019 EP *I Don't Wanna Have to Yell for You to Listen*, where her sly lines springboard off rickety underground-style instrumentals and her expressive joy makes the grimmest beat shine like a diamond. On this month's EP *Yes!* (Layaway), she's found a great foil in Tre Johnson, whose languorous flow belies his surprisingly vigorous playful streak. On the dilapidated, modern-funk-infused "Face," the two rappers absorb each other's energies: they leave so little daylight between their turns on the mike that it sounds like they're deliberately giving each other the chance to show off by casually picking up the thread without missing a stitch. Semiratruth and Johnson are clearly having fun in each other's company, which is a salve for listeners who can only celebrate with loved ones in person by taking big risks and potentially making even bigger sacrifices. *Yes!* is a reminder of the happiness that we can still look forward to. —LEOR GALIL

### MATT CHRISTENSEN, A SWOLLEN SUN

Self-released  
[mattchristensensolo.bandcamp.com/album/a-swollen-sun](http://mattchristensensolo.bandcamp.com/album/a-swollen-sun)

For more than two decades, singer and guitarist Matt Christensen has led Zeliénople, a Chicago trio that explores the outer limits of slowcore by dismantling its melodies and song structures. Christensen focuses on similar territory in his solo work—at least, that's the impression I get from what I've heard so far. His Bandcamp page features more than 120 releases he's made since 2011, though one is a retrospective-slash-primer compilation he put together as part of a 2018 interview for Glassworks Coffee's website (the roaster's founder, Ben Crowell, worked for Touch and Go before launching his coffee business). But Christensen's work doesn't require you to develop an encyclopedic grasp of this expansive catalog in order to understand what's moving about it. Though the songs on September's *A Swollen Sun* sound like they're always almost falling apart, his sparse, spacious guitar playing and murmured vocals, awash in gentle reverb, reliably come through to keep the music moving. Christensen sometimes flirts with rootsy guitar tones that make parts of the album sound like disintegrating country ballads, but mostly the auras he summons feel mystical, monklike, and deliberately open to interpretation. —LEOR GALIL

### DEFTONES, OHMS

Reprise  
[deftones.com](http://deftones.com)

*Ohms* (Reprise) is the new ninth album from alt-metal giants Deftones, whose 25 years of boundary-blurring music have inspired a generation of bands. Announced just weeks before its September release, the ten-track offering in many ways represents a return to form, starting with the band's decision to work with Terry Date, who produced their classic first four LPs in the late 90s and early 2000s. Deftones' previous album, 2016's *Gore*, was spearheaded creatively by front man Chino Moreno, who ventured a little further into atmospheric postrock than the group ever had. On *Ohms*, Moreno took a step back to allow more direction from guitarist Stephen Carpenter and drummer Abe Cunningham, which has led to a noticeable shift in tone. The new record retains the blend of styles that's made Deftones an anomaly in metal, but it's considerably more aggressive than *Gore* and even summons some spooky vibes. Carpenter employs a nine-string guitar for the first time on *Ohms*, and he displays its range on "Pompeji"—his beautiful clean-channel melody, accented with pickslide effects and reverbed seagull samples, pays off with a simple, deep groove and a two-note chorus riff before the song culminates in a somber synth outro. Lead track and second single "Genesis" similarly swirls together disparate elements: downcast, echo-drenched guitar, bludgeoning riffs, toneful accents, syncopated beats, and Moreno's alternately screaming and sensual vocals. Those seagulls aren't the only new sound the band introduces either—elsewhere you get glistening keys, bits of thrash, and reverberating finger snaps. While *Ohms* doesn't chart a new direction for Deftones, it widens the band's uncharted path. —SCOTT MORROW



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## MUSIC



Exhalants © COURTESY THE ARTIST

### **EARTHEATER, PHOENIX: FLAMES ARE DEW UPON MY SKIN**

PAN  
[earthteater.bandcamp.com/album/phenix-flames-are-dew-upon-my-skin](http://earthteater.bandcamp.com/album/phenix-flames-are-dew-upon-my-skin)

As a genre designation, “folk music” can mean a wide variety of things, including early rural Americana, politicized revival strumming, and weird psychedelia. Alexandra Drewchin, who makes music as Earthteater, doesn't really fit in any of those categories. Instead she approaches folk as chthonic, atavistic druid witchery, making gentle music for sacrificing goats—complete with buzzing electronic flourishes that crawl across the steaming flesh. To those familiar with Earthteater's rituals, the new album *Phoenix: Flames Are Dew Upon My Skin* (PAN) won't appear to break new sonic ground, though Drewchin shifts her focus a bit from electronic to acoustic sounds—for instance, she commissioned Spain's Ensemble de Cámara to provide chamber music backing. On songs such as “Good-bye Diamond,” “Diamond in the Bedrock,” and “Volcano,” she evokes geological imagery, revealing a new, more literal fascination with the “earth” in her name. Longtime collaborator Marilu Donovan of Brooklyn experimental duo Leya contributes lovely, ominous harp, and Drewchin's voice swoops and dives with its usual chilling purity. While Earthteater isn't entirely without precedent—the likes of Comus and Spires That in the Sunset Rise have also reveled in the dissonance of fey pagan lullabies—the odd lushness of her aesthetic and her consistent vision remain singular. It's as if she's channeling the music of a feral race of cyborg demigods waiting to be reborn. —NOAH BERLATSKY

### **EXHALANTS, ATONEMENT**

Hex  
[exhalants.bandcamp.com/album/atonement](http://exhalants.bandcamp.com/album/atonement)

On their self-titled debut full-length in 2018, Austin's Exhalants sounded oddly like a Chicago band. Aus-

tin noise-rock has a very specific feel: whether we're talking about the unhinged no wave of the Butthole Surfers, the loose-limbed pummeling of Cherubs, or the deadpan country-fried twang of Spray Paint, it always feels more slippery and acid-laced than similar music from other noise capitals. But Exhalants, with their aluminum-necked guitars and sturdy rhythms, came out of the gate with the wiry, relentless attack of Tar, the locked-in simplicity of Shellac, and moments of sad introspection a la Slint (surely an honorary Chicago band). On their new record, *Atonement* (Hex), the trio have swapped that classic midwestern vibe for an early-90s New York City feel. Exhalants sound bigger, meaner, more aggressive, and more muscular, and their newly streamlined structures, sludgy tones, and blown-out vocals give a huge tip of the hat to Helmet and Unsane. Noise-rock is strongest when it's simplest and most direct, and Exhalants pull that off spectacularly. There's no fluff, no fat, and no bullshit on *Atonement*—these songs are heavy, succinct, and crushing. No matter what city they were from, Exhalants would be one of the best noise-rock bands operating today. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

### **REZN, CHAOTIC DIVINE**

Self-released  
[rezzn.bandcamp.com/album/chaotic-divine](http://rezzn.bandcamp.com/album/chaotic-divine)

Chicago has no shortage of bands making metal or psychedelic rock (thank God), but relatively few operate in that sweet spot where the two genres overlap. If you're into that kind of thing, you're going to want to keep your eye on local four-piece Rezn. Over the past few years, they've released a couple of more-than-solid records that marry familiar stoner riffing with heady, thoughtful exploration; on last year's sea-monster-themed *Calm Black Water*, they blanket their intrinsic heaviness and darkly mystical lyrics in calming cosmic atmospheres. On their new album, *Chaotic Divine*, Rezn elevate their experimental impulses to triumphant new levels. As often as the band tread well-traveled

# Stay Home. Stay Positive. Stay Connected.



We can't wait to get back to making music and dancing together at the Old Town School!

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We are so thankful to be part of the wonderful and supportive arts community in Chicago and are especially thankful for all our dedicated students and teaching artists persevering with us during this time.

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## MUSIC

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Matthew Shipp © COURTESY THE ARTIST

### continued from 35

ground (as they do with the chugging doom of “Scarab”), they also lay out combinations of sounds that have no obvious touchstones. Some of these experiments sound strange on paper but work surprisingly well in practice: “Garden Green” combines loose desert-rock drums and soulful vocals with hints of dub, and when the saxophone solo hits, you can picture people grooving to it at a smooth-jazz festival. This is never Lite FM fare, though, and the monolithic guitar that kicks off the next song, “The Door Opens,” provides a swift reminder. Many of *Chaotic Divine*’s best moments are less chaotic and more divine: “Mother / Forever Time” taps into what I’d call the sensual side of doom, with its lush, understated harmony vocals, intense buildups and releases, and clouds of ambience that turn foreboding on the lengthy outro. We won’t have a chance anytime soon to hear Rezn’s live show shake the walls of our favorite clubs till we’re lost in a psychedelic haze, but *Chaotic Divine* gives us another reason to keep hoping for a less terrible future. —JAMIE LUDWIG

### MATTHEW SHIPP TRIO, *THE UNIDENTIFIABLE*

ESP Disk

[matthewshipp.bandcamp.com/track/the-unidentifiable](http://matthewshipp.bandcamp.com/track/the-unidentifiable)

Matthew Shipp can’t have had his own playing in mind when he named his latest record *The Unidentifiable*. With his powerful command of the grand piano’s lowest notes, his adroit manipulation of its sustain pedal, and the complex harmonies nurtured by his prodigious technique, he obtains a massive and instantly recognizable sound. This New Yorker can create extraordinary space and movement within a dense sonic field, and it’s made him an essential accompanist to saxophonists such as Ivo Perelman and David S. Ware. But while *The Unidentifiable* has plenty of weighty moments, it balances them with exploratory and analytical ones. On the brooding “Dark Sea Negative Change” and the more abrupt “Virgin Psych Space 2,” Shipp and the rest of his

trio—bassist Michael Bisio and drummer Newman Taylor Baker—lay bare the mechanics of their interactions, which rely on melodic counterpoint and rhythmic undertow to summon intrigue and tension. And the celebratory Latin groove of “Regeneration” proves that Shipp, who’s about to turn 60, is still eager to investigate new ground and make it his own. The title track actually has some pretty clear antecedents, hardly a given with a player as idiosyncratic as Shipp: its solemn opening and mercurial shifts of attack evoke John Coltrane’s classic quartet, and the sudden gaps in Shipp’s playing recall Thelonious Monk. Perhaps what he intends to call “unidentifiable” is the thing he heard in those masters and has achieved in his own way—the elusive spark that makes possible the lifelong pursuit of a singular but continually evolving creative voice. —BILL MEYER

### STARING PROBLEM, *ECLIPSE*

Modern Tapes

[modern tapes.bandcamp.com/album/eclipse](http://modern tapes.bandcamp.com/album/eclipse)

In 2010, Chicago underground music maven Patrick Scott (formerly of My Lai and 97-Shiki) launched postpunk label Modern Tapes with the self-titled debut cassette from Carbondale coldwave three-piece Staring Problem. The band have since relocated to Chicago, and Scott now lives in New York City, but their relationship has remained intact: Staring Problem’s first vinyl full-length, *Eclipse*, arrives as Modern Tapes celebrates its tenth anniversary. *Eclipse* wears its DIY pride on its sleeve, and the rawness and cavernous echo of Staring Problem’s lo-fi recordings keep their skeletal arrangements from sounding too thin. Staring Problem draw heavily from 80s goth and postpunk, though their deft melodies give even their coldest songs a therapeutic warmth—and they sometimes break from the genre’s obvious reference points with infusions of classic girl-group sweetness. On the forlorn “Primrose,” bandleader Lauren Owen sings about trudging through tragedy, her bereft but unbowed vocals reaching for the better tomorrow that can only come if she keeps moving. —LEOR GALIL 7

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A newly improved version of America's best-selling male performance enhancer gives 70-year-old men the ability and stamina they enjoyed in their 30's.

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One double-blind, placebo-controlled study (the "gold-standard" of research) involved a group of 70-year-old-men.

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But only five minutes after the first dose their blood flow increased 275%, back to levels of a perfectly healthy 31-year-old man! "It's amazing," remarks nitric oxide expert Dr. Al Sears. "That's like giving 70-year-old men the sexual power of 30-year-olds."

## WHY SO MUCH EXCITEMENT?

Despite the billions men spend annually on older nitric oxide therapies, there's one well-known problem with them.

They don't always work.

A very distinguished and awarded doctor practicing at a prestigious Massachusetts hospital who has studied Nitric Oxide for over 43 years states a "deficiency of bioactive nitric oxide... leads to impaired endothelium-dependent vasorelaxation."

In plain English, these older products may increase levels of nitric oxide. But that's only half the battle. If it's not bioactively available then your body can't absorb it to produce an erection.

Experts simply call it the nitric oxide "glitch." And until now, there's never been a solution.

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Upon further research, America's No. 1 men's health expert Dr. Al Sears discovered certain nutrients fix this "glitch" resulting in 275% better blood flow.

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Dr. Sears is the author of more than 500 scientific papers. Thousands of people listened to him speak at the recent Palm Beach Health & Wellness Festival featuring Dr. Oz. NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Namath recently visited his clinic, the **Sears Institute for Anti-Aging Medicine**.

*Primal Max Red* has only been available for a few months — but everyone who takes it reports a big difference. "I have the energy to have sex three times in one day, WOW! That has not happened in years. Oh, by the way I am 62," says Jonathan K. from Birmingham, AL.

## HOW IT WORKS

Loss of erection power starts with your blood vessels. Specifically, the inside layer called the endothelium where nitric oxide is made.

The problem is various factors THICKEN your blood vessels as you age. This blocks availability causing the nitric oxide "glitch." The result is difficulty in getting and sustaining a healthy erection.

How bad is the problem?

Researcher shows the typical 40-year-old man absorbs 50% less nitric oxide. At 50, that drops to 25%. And once you pass 60 just a measly 15% gets through.

To make matters worse, nitric oxide levels start declining in your 30's. And by 70, nitric oxide production is down an alarming 75%.

*Primal Max Red* is the first formula to tackle both problems. Combining powerful nitric oxide boosters and a proven delivery mechanism that defeats the nitric oxide "glitch" resulting in 275% better blood flow. There's not enough space here to fully explain how it works, so Dr. Sears will send anyone who orders *Primal Max Red* a free special report that explains everything.

## MORE CLINICAL RESULTS

Nutrients in *Primal Max Red* have logged impressive results.

In a *Journal of Applied Physiology* study, one resulted in a 30 times MORE nitric oxide. And these increased levels lasted up to 12 hours.

"I measured my nitric oxide levels, you can buy a test kit from Amazon," reports 48-year-old Jeff O. "Monday night I showed depleted."



A new discovery that increases nitric oxide availability was recently proven in a clinical trial to boost blood flow 275%

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"If you want passionate 'rip your clothes off' sex you had in your younger days, you need nitric oxide to get your erection going. And testosterone for energy and drive," says Dr. Sears. "You get both with *Primal Max Red* and *Primal Max Black*."

## HOW TO GET PRIMAL MAX

To secure free bottles of *Primal Max Black* and get the hot, new *Primal Max Red* formula, buyers should contact the Sears Health Hotline at 1-800-376-4455 within the next 48 hours. "It's not available in drug stores yet," says Dr. Sears. "The Hotline allows us to ship directly to the customer."

Dr. Sears feels so strongly about *Primal Max*, all orders are backed by a 100% money-back guarantee. "Just send me back the bottle and any unused product within 90 days from purchase date, and I'll send you all your money back," he says.

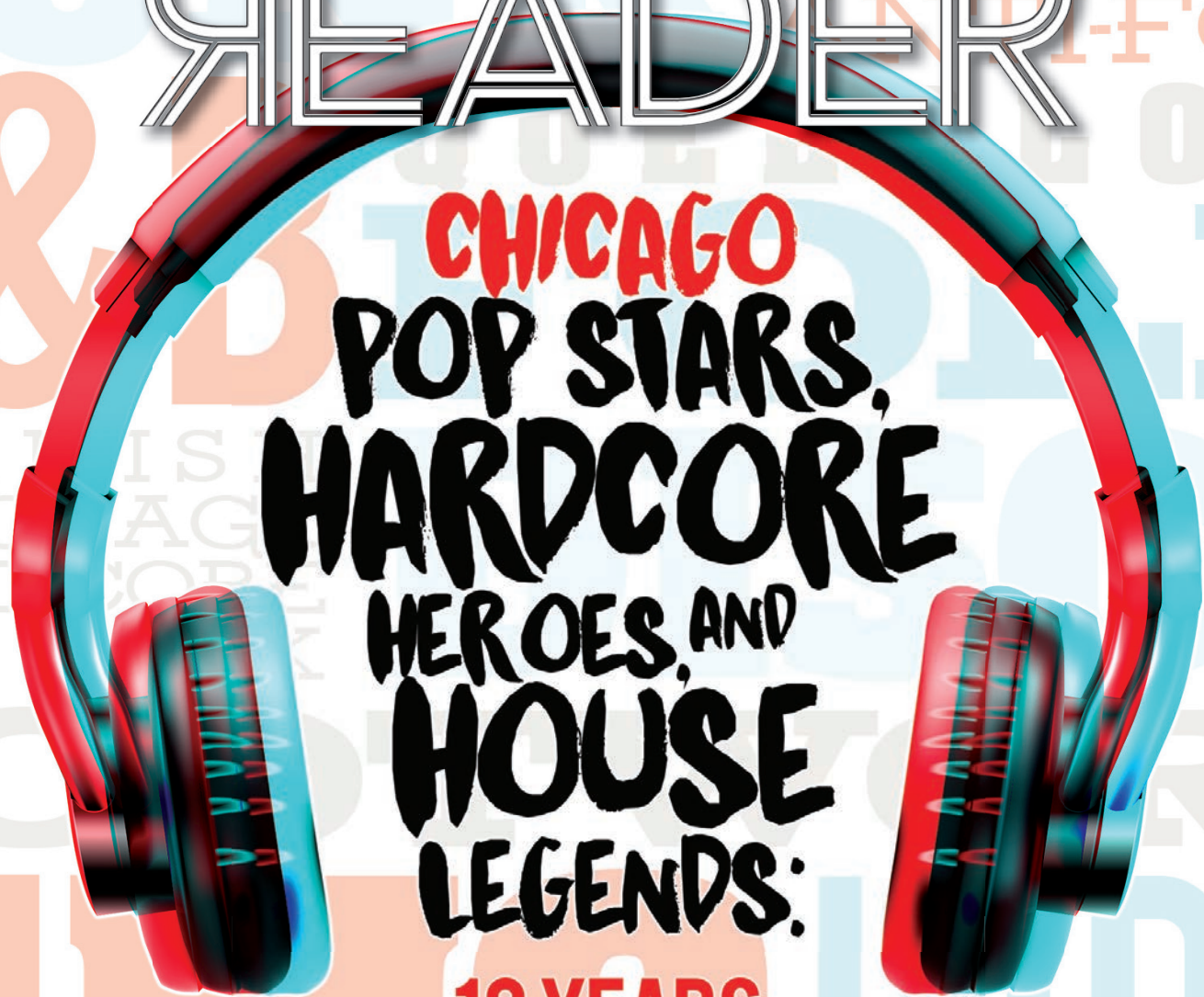
The Hotline will be open for the next 48 hours. After that, the phone number will be shut down to allow them to restock. Call 1-800-376-4455 to secure your limited supply of *Primal Max Red* and free bottles of *Primal Max Black*. You don't need a prescription, and those who call in the first 24 hours qualify for a significant discount. Use Promo Code NP0920PMAX401 when you call in. Lines are frequently busy, but all calls will be answered.

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**LEGENDS:**

— **10 YEARS** —  
OF CHICAGO READER MUSIC FEATURES  
BY LEOR GALIL



## GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

**LOCAL FOUR-PIECE Slow Pulp** had to deal with some real-life nightmares to make the dreamy indie rock on their debut full-length album, *Moveys*, which arrives Friday, October 9, via indie label **Winspear**. Near the end of the writing and recording process, singer and guitarist **Emily Massey** had to return to Madison, Wisconsin (where the band had formed), to help her parents convalesce after a severe car crash. A week later COVID-19 shut down the country, so the rest of the band (bassist **Alexander Leeds**, guitarist **Henry Stoehr**, and drummer **Theodore Mathews**) finished the instrumental portions in Chicago while Massey recorded vocals at her father's home studio. Though Slow Pulp were physically separated, the swirling ballad "Falling Apart" and the tuneful epic "At It Again" prove the band have a hand-in-glove command of their sound.

Last week **Pelican** guitarist **Dallas Thomas** dropped his latest solo instrumental release, *Vortex*—whose album art is an amazing old photo of kiddie Dallas with a mullet. Thomas's heated, layered playing gasses up cuts such as the fiery "Head Hammer" and the tense, cyclical "Scripter." This is the fourth solo project he's posted to Bandcamp so far this year, and the others include an acoustic version of the April release *Like Concrete*.

Under the name **Okay Alright**, Chicagoland singer-songwriter **Bryce Waitkus** tenderly blends folk and emo, hitting a sweet spot in the Venn diagram where indie rock overlaps with bedroom pop. Waitkus has recruited a dozen like-minded acts to contribute to a compilation called **Community Garden**, which came out last week—they include **Basement Brain** from Nashville, **Carter Ward** from Indianapolis, and **Crywank** from Manchester, UK. *Community Garden* benefits nonprofit environmental advocacy group **Natural Resources Defense Council**. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

**Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip\_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.**

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

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Cafe Racer © JASON NELOMS

### NEW

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**Michael Brown** 12/4, 7 PM, livestream via the University of Chicago; access provided with ticket purchase

**Frank Catalano Trio** 11/5-11/7, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Andy's Jazz Club

**Chicago Farmer** 10/25, 4 and 7 PM, City Winery

**Chicago Honky Tonk DJs** 10/11, 3 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

**Chicha Roots** 10/8, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Anat Cohen & Marcello Gonçalves** 10/16, 7 PM, livestream via the University of Chicago; access provided with ticket purchase

**Deadmau5** 10/30-10/31, 6 PM, SeatGeek Stadium, Bridgeview, 18+

**Dream Concert featuring Jackson Browne, Shawn Colvin, Bruce Cockburn, Calexico, Sihasin, Michael Franti, and more** 10/10, 8 PM, livestream at fans.live

**Rachel Drew** 10/10, 4 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Duophonic** 10/17, 11 AM, SPACE, Evanston

**Expo '76** 10/9, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Fabulous First Fridays featuring DJ Wayne Williams** 10/2, 4 PM, livestream at twitch.tv/waynewilliams FREE

**Rajiv Halim Quintet** 10/29-10/31, 7 and 9 PM; 11/1, 4 and 8 PM, Jazz Showcase

**Hanson** 10/9, 7 PM; 10/10, 1 and 9 PM, livestream; access provided with ticket purchase

**Charles "Rick" Heath Trio** 10/8-10/10, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Andy's Jazz Club

**Hoyle Brothers** 10/11, 1 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Brandon James** 11/7, 3 PM, Reggie's Roof Deck FREE

**Jazz Community Quintet** 10/11, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE

**Rich Jones, Kai** 10/8, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/hiddenout

**Kickin' It Curbside featuring Brendan Kelly** 10/14, 6:30 PM, Tack Room

**Kickin' It Curbside featuring Sophie Rae** 10/11, 1 PM, Tack Room

**Rick King's Royal Hustle** 10/11, 7 PM, City Winery

**LP's Happy Hour featuring Lawrence Peters and guests** Fridays, 5 PM Through 11/1, livestream at noonchorus.com/hiddenout

**Leyla McCalla record release for Vari-Colored Songs: A Tribute to Langston Hughes** 10/16, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/hiddenout

**Moonspell** 10/31, 3:30 PM, livestream at bol.pt; access provided with ticket purchase, 17+

**Sen Morimoto** 10/24, 8 PM, livestream at audiotree.tv

**Music Friendly Distancing presents Cafe Racer, Rob Sevier of Numero Group, and more** 10/2, 5 PM, livestream at emptybottle.

**Nois** 11/20, 7 PM, livestream via the University of Chicago; access provided with ticket purchase

**Okkervil River** 10/29, 8 PM, livestream via the Old Town School of Folk Music; access provided with ticket purchase

**Pacifica Quartet** 10/23, 7 PM, livestream via the University of Chicago; access provided with ticket purchase

**Jon Kimura Parker** 11/6,

7 PM, livestream via the University of Chicago; access provided with ticket purchase

**Pigface featuring Martin Atkins, Mary Byker, Chris Connelly, Randy Blythe, Curse Mackey, En Esch, Lesley Rankine, Charles Levi, Bobdog Catlin, Bradley Bills, Orville Kline, Greta Brinkman, Bruce Lamont, Andrew Weiss, Danny Carey, and more** 10/10, 6 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com

**Eric Schneider & Andy Brown** 10/11, 7:30 and 9:30 PM; 10/18, 7:30 and 9:30 PM; 10/25, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Andy's Jazz Club

**Soul Asylum, Local H** 10/10, 9 PM, livestream via JAM Productions; access provided with ticket purchase

**A Standing Witness: A conversation with Rita Dove, Richard Danielpour, and members of Music From Copland House** 10/12, 6:30 PM, livestream via the University of Chicago; access provided with registration

**Aaron Lee Tasjan** 10/13, 7 PM; 10/20, 7 PM; 10/27, 7 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com

**Smiley Tillmon Band featuring Kate Moss** 10/14, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

**To the Front hosted by Sen Morimoto** 10/15, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com/hiddenout

**Hannah Truckenbrod Trio** 10/18, 11 AM, SPACE, Evanston

**Thaddeus Tukes** 10/29-10/31, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Andy's Jazz Club

**Jeff Tweedy in conversation with Nick Offerman** 10/14, 7 PM, a virtual book release party for Tweedy's new book, *How to Write One Song*, live-

stream at noonchorus.com  
**Waco Brothers** 10/10, 7 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn FREE  
**Water Music on the Rocks featuring Alexander Massa, Simon Anderson, Ben LaMar Gay & Rob Frye, AJ McClenon, Anna Martine Whitehead, and more** 10/3, 3 PM, 6018 North

**John Wojciechowski Trio** 11/5-11/7, 7 and 9 PM; 11/8, 4 and 8 PM, Jazz Showcase

**ZINEmercado 2020 with Jimmy Becker, Chrontadon, Esteban La Groue, Bumbac Joe, Shazam Bangles, Supreme Court, Señor Eddy, DJ Fotoflow & Sonido Tritón, and more** 10/4, 11 AM-5 PM, Comfort Station

### UPDATED

**Pancho Barraza** 4/18/2021, 8 PM, Rosemont Theatre, Rosemont, rescheduled; tickets purchased for the original and previously rescheduled dates will be honored

**David Bisbal** 10/14/2021, 8 PM, Copernicus Center, rescheduled

**Paul Cebal** 10/18, 4:30 and 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, 4:30 PM added; 7 PM sold out

**Isaiah Collier** 10/7, 7:30 and 9:30 PM; 10/14, 7:30 and 9:30 PM; 10/21, 7:30 and 9:30 PM; 10/28, 7:30 and 9:30 PM, Andy's Jazz Club, dates added

**Fozzy, Through Fire, Royal Bliss, Zero Theorem** 5/8/2021, 6:45 PM, the Forge, Joliet, rescheduled

**Heaven 17** 1/28/2021, 7:30 PM, Park West, canceled

**Jayhawks, Mastersons** 5/8/2021, 4:30 and 8 PM; 5/9/2021, 3:30 and 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, rescheduled; 8 PM show on 5/8 as well as both 5/9 shows sold out

**Luce Kaplansky** 11/20, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, postponed until a date to be determined

**Knuckle Puck** 11/20, 8 PM, Subterranean, canceled

**Little Big Town** 10/22-10/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre, postponed until a date to be determined

**Shawn Mullins** 10/27, 8 PM, City Winery, postponed until a date to be determined

**Off Broadway** 10/31, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn, canceled

**Rotting Christ, Borknagar, Wolfheart** 2/20/2021, 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, canceled  
**Dave Spector & Brother John Kattke** 10/9, 4:30 and 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston, early show added; 7 PM show sold out  
**Spleen** 12/5, 8 PM, Park West,

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postponed until a date to be determined, 18+

**Squarepusher, Hieroglyphic Being** 12/3, 9 PM, Metro, canceled

**Tech N9ne, Rittz, Krizz Kaliko, King Iso, Maez** 301 5/22/2021, 7:30 PM, the Forge, Joliet, rescheduled

**Tony Trischka** 10/18, 3 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, postponed until a date to be determined

**The Weight Band** 11/6, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, postponed until a date to be determined

**Susan Werner** 10/25, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, postponed until a date to be determined

**David Wilcox** 10/24, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, postponed until a date to be determined

### UPCOMING

**Agnostic Front, Sick of It All, Crown of Thorns** 4/25/2021, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

**Born of Osiris** 10/8, 7 PM, Adler Planetarium parking lot, 17+

**Fuzz** 2/4/2021, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

**Jon Langford & Sally Timms** 10/28, 7 PM, FitzGerald's FREE

**Stephen Marley** 3/27/2021, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston

**R&B Spring Fest featuring Brian McKnight, Tevin Campbell, El DeBarge, Res** 4/24/2021, 8 PM, Wintrust Arena

**Santana** 7/3/2021, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park

**Secret Sisters, Logan Ledger** 5/21/2021, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music

**Harry Styles, Jenny Lewis** 9/24/2021-9/25/2021, 8 PM, United Center

**Tennis, Molly Burch** 4/18/2021, 8 PM, the Vic

**Teskey Brothers, Joshy Soul** 10/15/2021, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

**This Stream Sucks Ass: The Pup Band Livestream Experience** 10/23, 8 PM, livestream at noonchorus.com  
**Richard Thompson** 10/11, 4 PM, livestream via SPACE and Old Town School of Folk Music; access provided with ticket purchase

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## OPINION

### SAVAGE LOVE

## I don't want to be just friends (who have sex sometimes)

Foursomes, threesomes, and what to do when the honeymoon phase ends

By DAN SAVAGE

**Q:** I'm a thirtysomething gay man married to a thirtysomething gay man. For almost two years, we've been seeing another pair of married gay men around our age. They were our first experience with any sexual or romantic interaction outside of our relationship. The first six months were hot and heavy. We were together constantly and having sex almost every night. After the "honeymoon phase" ended, one member of the other couple ("Roger") wanted to slow things down. Roger and I had some conflict over this, and I have to admit that I showed a pretty bad side of myself while grappling with insecurity. Eventually, Roger pulled me aside to talk one-on-one. He wanted us to be "friends who have sex sometimes."

Then, right after the COVID-19 lockdown started, Roger and I had another heart-to-heart on my birthday. After many drinks and a lot of making out we both said we loved each other. Roger walked it back the next day. "I don't know what you thought you heard last night," he basically said, "but I'm not in love with you." I was devastated. This isn't what I want. I am in love with Roger and his husband. I don't want to be "friends who have sex

sometimes." My husband is OK with just being friends with Roger and his husband, especially since their large friend group has adopted us and he worries we'll lose all these new friends if I end our friendship. I would really like to talk this out with Roger, but I'm not sure I can get through that conversation without DTMFAing him. I mean, which was it? Were we a fun sexy fling and nothing about the last two years mattered? Or was he in love with me but decided the conflict and complication of this relationship wasn't worth it?

—TROUBLE IN THE QUAD

**A:** Roger doesn't want what you want.

That sucks and I'm sorry. But we've all been there. Falling for someone who doesn't feel as strongly for us as we do for them, whether we're dating as couples or singles, is always painful. But that pain is an unavoidable risk. And while it may seem unfair that you can only have Roger in your life on his terms, that's the reality. That's everyone's reality, TITQ, because loving someone doesn't obligate that person to love us back or love us in the same way that we love them or want the same things we want. But Roger can't impose his terms on you. If being "just

friends" feels like an insulting consolation prize after what the last two years has meant to you, if that's not good enough, then Roger doesn't get to be in your life. You can have terms too.

Backing up for a second: You seem to believe that if the relationship mattered—if Roger and his husband loved you and your husband and vice versa—then it wouldn't have ended. That's false. Something can matter and still end. Something can also matter more to one person than it did to another person. (Or couple.) You don't have to dismiss or minimize what the four of you had because Roger has decided, for whatever reason, that being in a quad with you isn't what he wants.

And if you're hoping to get this quad back together... and it's entirely up to Roger... you're going about it wrong. If Roger got cold feet due to the "conflict and complication" of being in a poly relationship, TITQ, then your best move is to avoid conflict and complication. If you think Roger told the truth on your birthday and lied to you the next day, then you need to demonstrate the kind of emotional maturity that makes you a more attractive partner to a person like Roger. And provoking a confrontation with Roger—staging a

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## OPINION

scene where you're likely to dump a guy who has already dumped you—will have the opposite effect. It will only confirm for Roger the decision he has already made.

Your best bet—your best strategy—is to accept Roger's offer of friendship and refrain from blowing up at him. You should also tell him, just once and very calmly, that you and your husband would be open to getting back together with him and his husband. Best case scenario, the quad gets back together. Worst case scenario, you have some great memories, a whole bunch of great new friends, and maybe once in a while a hot foursome with Roger and his husband.

Two last things . . .

I would love to see video of you showing the “bad side” of yourself to Roger. Given the way people tend to minimize their own shitty behavior—all people do it, myself included—I'm guessing it was/you were ugly. If you're prone to blowing up when you don't get what you want, well, it's understandable that someone who dislikes conflict and complication would start getting cold feet once the honeymoon phase ended. I'm not suggesting you're toxic or unbearable, TITQ, only that different people have different tolerance levels for romantic conflict. But if what you want is for Roger to reconsider the decision he's made, well, you might also wanna let him know you're working on your approach to conflict. If you don't want Roger to regret getting the quad back together and then quickly end things again, TITQ, or for the next Roger or Rogers who come into your life to head for the hills after their honeymoon phases end, you'll talk with

someone who can give you the tools to better handle conflict.

And finally, TITQ, the other two men in this quad feel strangely inert—more like houseplants than husbands. I mean, you have nothing to say about how Roger's husband feels and very little to say about how yours does. Is Roger's husband interested in keeping the quad together? Besides not wanting to lose some new friends, does your husband give two shits? Because even if Roger decides he wants back in, TITQ, and that's a big if, your revived quad won't last for long for if your houseplants—sorry: your husbands—aren't just as invested as you are.

**Q:** The man I'm seeing is the first person I ever opened up to about my bisexuality. Over our first year together, we had several threesomes, but we both became uncomfortable with them and one day he told me he could not have that kind of sex with a woman he cares about. We quarantined together and he felt COVID-19 had forced us to rush things. We decided to spend less time together to focus on our careers, which had both taken a hit. Now we only see each other every two weeks or so. I thought it could be fun to reconnect and do some more threesomes. He agreed but asked me to handle things. I found us some amazing girls. But as in the past, our threesomes led to problems. I feel threatened, he feels jealous. We fight, I cry, he gets angry and acts like an asshole. I'm very insecure, depressed, and have spent years in therapy. The threesomes feel like too much but we have great

sex when we talk about other women. Is there any way we can make this work? —LOST INTO MY EMOTIONS

**A:** I feel really sorry for the women you two are having threesomes with—even if you're doing your very special guest stars the courtesy of waiting until they leave to break down in tears, LIME, and even if your boyfriend is polite enough to wait until they're gone before acting like an asshole, these women are most likely picking up on the tension and may feel conflicted about the sex after they go. If you're having these meltdowns and blowups in front of these women, LIME, they definitely leave feeling terrible and may worry they did something wrong when it's you two who are doing something wrong: continuing to have threesomes despite knowing they never end well.

While I don't think a woman should waste her time (or pussy) on a man who tells her he can't have “that kind of sex”—sex she enjoys, with a woman he cares about—I can understand why you might want to keep seeing this guy. (COVID-19 is making it hard to find new partners.) But you should stop doing the thing that doesn't work—having threesomes—and do the thing that does work instead: talking dirty to each other about other women. And if you still want to get with women, LIME, do it solo. He doesn't need to be there for you to enjoy an amazing girl. 📧

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## RENTALS

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Love Rock Star Bunny-Elle Lia Lakely L. GaGa Born this way 2011-2012 #1 Album Cover of the Year.

## READER matches

**Looking for love**  
I wish to meet a Black woman between 40 to 60. She is easygoing, medium built, and enjoys movies. I'm 61, Taurus, 5' 6" tall, & retired. She should be open to a long term relationship with lots caring and sharing. I enjoy cooking, movies, bike riding, and walks in the Park. stevehorvath59@gmail.com

**Seeking the Thelma to my Louise**  
Fulfilling my "Pina Colada Song" fantasy as I write this — except in my version, it's a 22 yo queer man in Logan Square looking for someone to share an afternoon (and drinks?) with under the eagle monument. Vintage style, vegetarian, nervous. I really miss The Burlington. (708) 680-7094

**Let's Meetup And Walk The Beach**  
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due to the pandemic. I walk the beach several times a week from Oak Street to North Avenue. Would enjoy a "walking partner". Age/race open. I'm male and prefer a female. Strictly platonic, just walking the beach. Ready, set, walk. email goldcoastchibeachwalker@gmail.com

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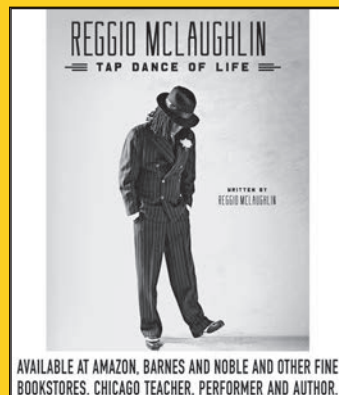
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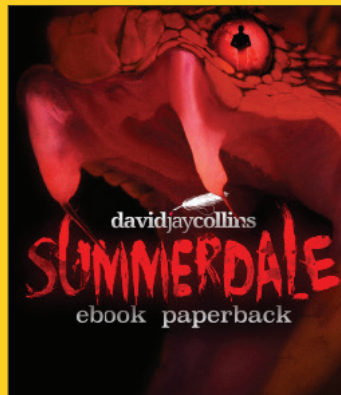
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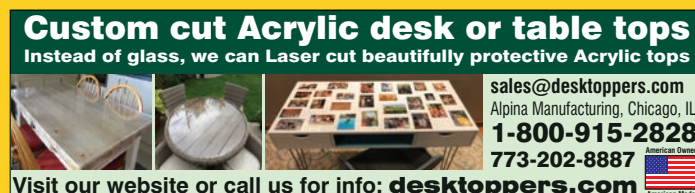
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**THURS, FRI, AND SAT TICKETS ONLY AVAILABLE AT**  
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Wrightwood 659's presentation of *Balkrishna Doshi: Architecture for the People* is made possible by support from Alphawood Exhibitions.

**The exhibition is a project by the Vitra Design Museum and the Wüstenrot Foundation in cooperation with the Vastushilpa Foundation.**

IMAGE CREDIT – Balkrishna Doshi, Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore, 1977, 1992, © Vinay Panjwani India

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