

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

THE PIZZA'S ALMOST gone here in the *Reader* newsroom, and you know what that means—election results are starting to come in. Finally!

It's been a long road, hasn't it? So many memories. Someday we'll look back on this time and pine for a text message from Paul Vallas that we definitely never gave out our numbers for. Nostalgic chatter will linger on the question of where Jerry Joyce's wife got her money. We'll chuckle upon recall of Toni Preckwinkle's staff's latest foibles, musing aloud about the latest Daley to emerge from the sewers of Bridgeport.

Then one day we will stumble across the name Neal Sales-Griffin somewhere online and it will spark nothing. No recognition, no platforms, no endorsements, no memories. "Ah," you will say to yourself. "That is someone's name." And then you will move on, strapping yourself in to Elon Musk's new citywide jet-pack rental device—a deal at only \$780 per minute.

After all, it is not so much the drama of the campaign that matters as the fact that we went through it all together.

Just kidding! The drama of the campaign—who's tied to Alderman Ed Burke, who's in support of the new police academy, who's caught on Solis's wiretap, and whether anyone can outmoney Daley—this all matters a great deal, and we know it.

So play a couple more rounds of Aldermania! The Board Game while you gird yourself for several more weeks of intensive election coverage. Now that Ben Joravsky is back, this time on the virtual airwaves (lives-treamed and via podcast on our very own website!), we'll be looking more closely at our final mayoral potentials. "That's going to be a race about issues," Maya Dukmasova said as a Preckwinkle-Lightfoot runoff started to look feasible. "That will be interesting."

But that's for next week. In the meantime, our music feature on Marcus Mixx will remind you of what truly matters

about Chicago: amazing people doing amazing things with very few resources. The house legend is still going strong, Leor Galil writes, from his makeshift offices down at the Chicago Cultural Center, and on the airwaves at CAN TV. Photographer Davon Clark introduces us to a thrilling spate of black artists upending the narrative and coming back home to Chicago. Yolanda Perdomo visits a Hyde Park exhibition of painter Nikko Washington, an artist member of the Save Money collective. And Kat Sachs previews the Gene Siskel Film Center's 60-film-strong Chicago European Union Film Festival.

Let's face it. No artist can capture the wonder of a surprise text message from Vallas suggesting you should vote for him solely because he's neither Preckwinkle nor Lightfoot. But after tonight you'll have to find something else to entertain you.

We'll have to order more pizza.
—ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

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TO CONTACT ANY READER EMPLOYEE, E-MAIL: (FIRST INITIAL)(LAST NAME) @CHICAGOREADER.COM

PUBLISHER TRACY BAIM
EDITOR IN CHIEF ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE
MANAGING EDITOR, PRINT SUJAY KUMAR
MANAGING EDITOR, DIGITAL KAREN HAWKINS
DEPUTY EDITOR KATE SCHMIDT
CREATIVE LEAD SUE KWONG
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CULTURE EDITOR AIMEE LEVITT
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SENIOR WRITERS DEANNA ISAACS, BEN JORAVSKY, MIKE SULA
STAFF WRITERS MAYA DUKMASOVA, LEOR GALIL
GRAPHIC DESIGNER DAVON CLARK
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR BRIANNA WELLEN
MUSIC LISTINGS COORDINATOR LUCA CIMARUSTI, SALEM COLLO-JULIN
FILM LISTINGS COORDINATOR PATRICK FRIEL
THEATER ASSIGNMENTS EDITOR CATEY SULLIVAN
CONTRIBUTORS NOAH BERLTSKY, ED BLAIR, DAVE CANTOR, LUCA CIMARUSTI, MARISSA DE LA CERDA, SHERI FLANDERS, ISA GIALLORENZO, ANDREA GRONVALL, JUSTIN HAYFORD, JACK HELBIG, IRENE HSIAO, DAN JAKES, MONICA KENDRICK, STEVE KRAKOW, MAX MALLER, BILL MEYER, J.R. NELSON, MARISSA OBERLANDER, YOLANDA PERDOMO, LEAH PICKETT, KAYLEN RALPH, KAT SACHS, BEN SACHS, DMITRY SAMAROV, KEVIN WARWICK, ALBERT WILLIAMS, IZZY YELLEN, YASMIN ZACARIA MIKHAIEL

DIRECTOR OF DIGITAL

JOHN DUNLEVY
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & PROGRAMS KRISTEN KAZA
OFFICE MANAGER S. NICOLE LANE

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CITY LIFE

STREET VIEW

Walk like a Pokémon trainer

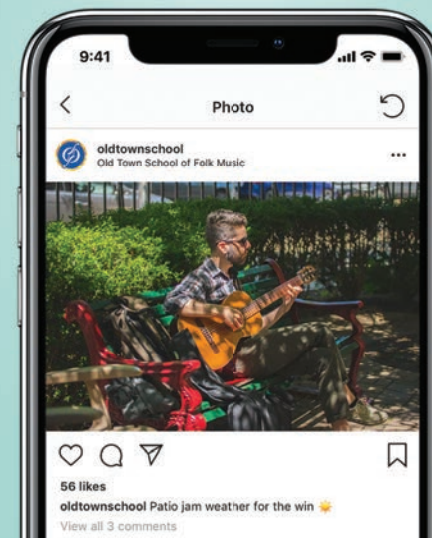
Egypt and anime come together in one woman's style.



FROM AN EARLY AGE, Ariel Couzan was fascinated by the ancient Egyptians, whose skin was the same shade of brown as hers. The 27-year-old Loop transplant smiles and rattles off stories about gods and goddesses and their legendary adventures. Couzan incorporates elements of this obsession into her style with feline earmuffs and a Cleopatra-like bob with gold dreadlock cuffs, topped with a hat whose brim is adorned with a hieroglyphs-inspired design; her zip-up windbreaker has a sphinx face. An aspiring actress and model by day, Couzan is also a diehard anime fan who cosplays often. On this day, she's equipped with a Pikachu backpack for a downtown adventure of her own: a game of Pokémon Go on her phone. Couzan says she's going for the look of the warrior goddess Sekhmet—if Sekhmet were also a Pokémon trainer. Couzan's catlike eyes are a piercing yellow and red. "My contact lenses represent the fierce fire in my soul," she says. "It burns bright like the sun." She adds that her contacts do have a prescription. —ISA GIALLORENZO

ISA GIALLORENZO

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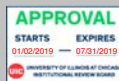
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Dr. Margaret Wardle
Director
Department of Psychology
1007 W. Harrison St. (MC 285)
Chicago, IL 60607

TRANSPORTATION

A hole is a hole

The election will likely decide the fate of Elon Musk's plan for the O'Hare Express, which transit experts view with skepticism.

By JOHN GREENFIELD

Last June, Mayor Rahm Emanuel announced that the city had selected tech guru Elon Musk's *Jetsons*-esque scheme to build and operate the O'Hare Express, an airport transit system employing high-speed electric pods as a faster, cushier alternative to the Blue Line. The inventor says his Boring Company will use proprietary digging technology to tunnel some 18 miles from Block 37 to O'Hare at a fraction of the cost and time of conventional methods. Then, he says, he'll shoot customers through the passage in 16-person pods at over 100 mph using "electric skate" technology, reducing the current 40- to 45-minute trip time to a mere 12 minutes.

Musk says he can complete the project within two years for only \$1 billion, then operate the system at a profit by charging \$25 a ride. Both he and the city swear there's no way the project will wind up costing taxpayers a dime.

The municipal election could decide the fate of the O'Hare Express. Most of the major mayoral candidates have voiced opposition to the project. "If we are going to make public transit investments, it should be to CTA and Metra," Toni Preckwinkle said at a January transit forum.

Musk's plan is "going to die on its own," Gery Chico said during the event. "This thing is goofy."

"I'd kill it," added Paul Vallas. "I can't wait to kill it."

The notable exception has been Bill Daley, who's in the running as the most business-friendly candidate as well as the younger brother of former mayor Richard M. Daley, who tried and failed to build an airport express. While Bill Daley told the *Tribune* he has some questions about the Musk project's cost and fare structure, he also said Chicago shouldn't fear innovation.

The current administration is hoping to ink its contract with the Boring Company before Emanuel leaves office in May, although there could be resistance from aldermen to voting to approve the deal before the next mayor takes over. Last week Jennifer Martinez, spokesperson for the Chicago Infrastructure Trust, which is representing the city in the negotiations, told me, "Our goal is to present the City Council with a proposed contract that protects taxpayers and requires no taxpayer funding." She said that, unlike Chicago's disastrous parking meter deal, which Richard M. Daley pushed through the council in a matter of days, there would be "adequate time for review and discussion before a vote is taken."

Martinez assured me that taxpayers won't be on the hook if the excavation affects utility lines, buildings, or the water table; if the tunnel is left unfinished; or if the service proves unprofitable and the Boring Company decides to stop running it. She said the contract will include "financial and performance assurances that the city will be well protected should any such instances occur."

Moreover, Martinez said, if Musk builds the system and then abandons it after failing to turn a profit, he'll be required to hand over the keys to the city. Chicago wouldn't be obliged to continue the service, she said, but with no additional infrastructure costs or outstanding debt, "it is likely . . . the project will be of beneficial use and revenue-positive."

In December, Chicago officials attended a press event for a 1.14-mile tunnel the Boring Company dug in the Los Angeles area. While some of them claimed to be wowed by the demo, it consisted of bumpy rides in a Tesla

Model X electric car instead of the autonomous pods Musk had promised prior to the unveiling. And rather than using next-level tunneling technology, the company had excavated the 12-foot-wide passage with an old tunnel boring machine (a machine with a circular cross section that can dig through everything from sand to hard rock) previously used to build sewers in Oakland.

Despite this evidence that Musk's hypothetical technology doesn't actually exist yet, Martinez indicated that the city is confident he can pull off the project at the promised cost and time line. "The tunnel is a tunnel. The Boring Company is refining more efficient approaches to tunneling, which makes the economics of this project work."

So what do actual transit experts have to say about all this?

DePaul transportation professor Joe Schwieterman said that "there isn't a huge downside" in allowing Musk to take his moon shot. "Of course, there are many obstacles . . . but there is also the possibility that the Boring Company is willing to spend large amounts to prove the concept works."

P.S. Sriraj, head of UIC's Urban Transportation Center, is skeptical. "I'm apprehensive of how this will all play out," he said. "Even if the technology has been perfected and the service is up and running, will there be enough people to use it?"


Sriraj cited the cautionary tale of Toronto's Union Pearson Express airport service, which saw dismal ridership until fares were slashed from about U.S. \$20 to roughly \$9. Keeping the service running at that ticket price would likely require a subsidy of tens of millions

of dollars a year in taxpayer funds. He added that initial ridership projections for Denver's A-Line airport train, which currently costs \$10.50, were also overly optimistic.

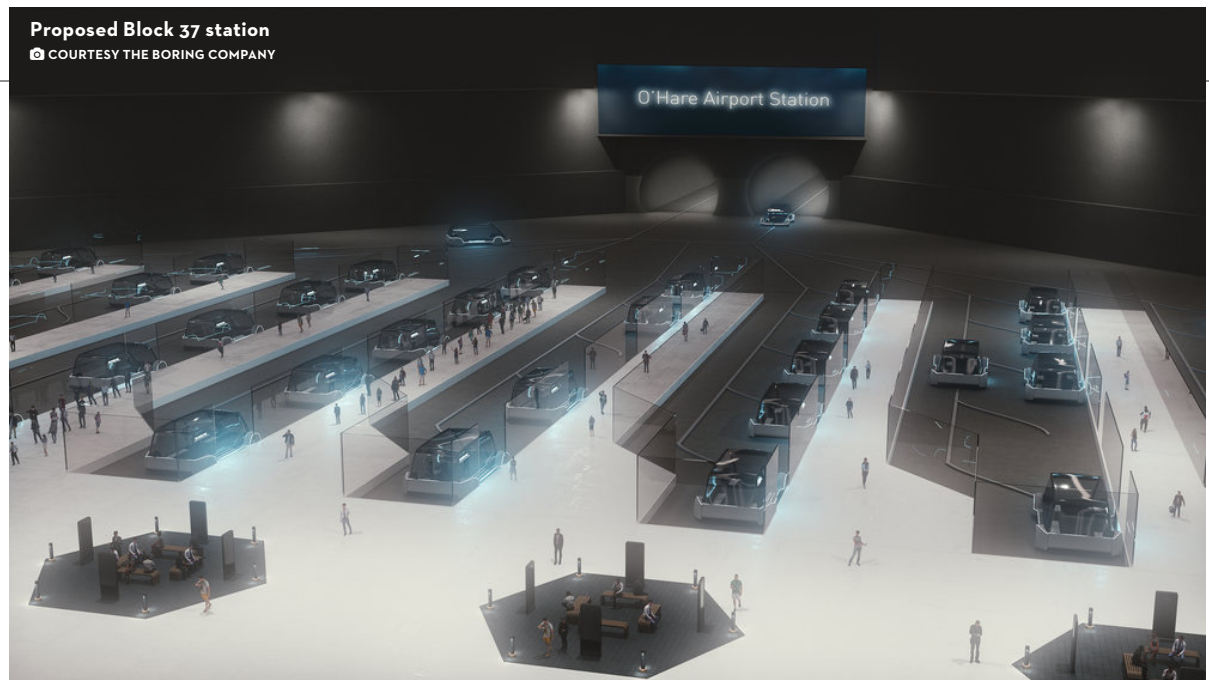
Sriraj said that a much more sensible strategy would be to simply convert two lanes of the Kennedy Expressway to car-free bus rapid-transit lanes to provide speedy nonstop service between downtown and O'Hare. "If it didn't work out, it wouldn't cost much to dismantle."

Fritz Plous, spokesman for Corridor Capital, a Chicago-based passenger-rail development, finance, and management company, is even more dubious of Musk's scheme, which he called "the whims of an entrepreneur peddling an unproven new technology that he can't even be bothered to explain."

Plous argued that the whole idea of building transit that only runs between the airport and one downtown station is flawed, even if aimed primarily at business travelers. "Not [even] that many O'Hare users go to the Loop, and Musk's tunnel has no intermediate stops in the neighborhoods, as the Blue Line does." He noted that many business travelers these days are headed for River North, Streeterville, the West Loop, or South Loop. "When they disembark under Block 37 they'll still need a cab or an Uber—so they'll probably just catch one at O'Hare instead."

Depending on the outcome of the election, Plous's beefs against the O'Hare Express may well be moot. "Rahm's days are numbered, and so, I believe, are the days of the Musk tunnel." 

 @greenfieldjohn



Proposed Block 37 station
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Ben Joravsky

POLITICS

The happy ending

The Ben Joravsky Show returns, streaming live Tuesdays through Fridays on the websites of the Reader and the Sun-Times.

By BEN JORAVSKY

As you may recall, my first run as a political talk show host didn't end so well. It was a Thursday afternoon—December 27, 2018. I'd just finished a show and the station's bosses called me to the conference room to say . . . “Get out—and don't come back!”

Well, they were a little more subtle than that. But that was the gist. Bottom line—after almost two years on the air, they unceremoniously fired me. Apparently I was just a little too progressive for the progressive radio station. Happy New Year!

By the way, this column has a happy ending, I swear.

Once fired, I entered my Moses-in-the-desert phase of existence. Not that I'm likening myself to a towering biblical figure—it's just an analogy. The thing is, I'd fallen in love with talking politics with people on the air. And then—bam—I'd been cut off. Cold turkey.

Making it worse—there was tons of stuff to talk about. I mean, just think about some of the wacky shit that went down in the weeks since I got fired. The mayoral race zipped along. One alderman—Ed Burke—got indicted. Another—Danny Solis—got outed for wearing a wire on Burke. According to the *Sun-Times*, Solis was swapping his approval on zoning requests for Viagra. Man, I could have talked about Danny and his Viagra for days.

So, I was like this political junkie wandering around the streets of Chicago, looking for someone—anyone—to talk politics with.

Stick with me, folks. That happy ending really is on the way . . .

You go through several stages of grief when you've been publicly fired—at least, I did.

I went through this weird week or two when I didn't want to be seen or heard between the hours of two and five in the afternoon—when my old show aired. 'Cause people might think—oh, poor guy, he doesn't have his show anymore.

I took to taking long walks in the neighborhood at that time of the day. Once I wandered over to the local library and who did I see? Political activist Sameena Mustafa, a regular on my old show. “Oh, my god, Ben, isn't it a coincidence that I see you at the very time you should be on the air,” she said. “Except you're not on the air 'cause—you got fired!”

OK, she didn't remotely say anything like that. I'm sure she wasn't even thinking it—but I was. To make it worse, Sameena was clutching several books by W.E.B. Du Bois, the brilliant African-American sociologist and activist. You know—serious reading.

In contrast, I was holding *London Boulevard*, a sleazy mystery about an ex-con who gets drunk, snorts coke, beats up bad guys, and has wild sex with beautiful women. Though not necessarily in that order.

Hell, if I'd known I'd be bumping into Sameena, I'd have checked out Marcel Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*—which falls into the category of epic novels I plan to get to one of these days. At least she'd think I was making good use of my free time.

Trust me—this really does end happily . . .

I must admit there were those who openly rejoiced at my misery. Like the guy who wrote an e-mail along the lines of—so, you got fired, huh? Welcome to the real world, pal!

You know, he sort of has a point.

But most people offered encouragement and advice. I even got an unexpected offer of assistance from Bob, one of my Trump-voting friends. (Yeah, I've got a few.)

Bob: Are you and your family going to be OK financially?

Me: Yeah, we're good.

Bob: 'Cause, if you need some help—let me know.

Don't tell Bob I told you this—but I got all choked up when he said that. The progres- ➔



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NEWS & POLITICS

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sives fired me, and the Trumpster offered me assistance. The world works in mysterious ways.

And now, the happy ending—or endings . . .

Anne Elizabeth Moore, my editor at the *Reader*, had a great idea for a podcast called the *Back Room Deal*. It would feature Maya Dukmasova—ace *Reader* reporter—and me, talking politics from the studio in the back room of the Lumpen Radio station in Bridgeport.

They sat us down one Friday afternoon in January—and we spent almost five hours gabbing about aldermanic races. It was a blast—and there are more *Back Room Deal* podcasts to come.

If that's not happy enough, consider this . . .

I'm back on the air.

The *Reader*, the *Sun-Times*, the Chicago Federation of Labor, and several local unions have joined forces to sponsor *The Ben Joravsky Show*.

Yes, yes, I've wandered out of the desert.

We'll be podcasting live from 1 to 3 PM Tuesday through Friday on the websites of


both the *Reader* and the *Sun-Times* as well as the *Sun-Times's* YouTube channel. Plus, you will be able to find our shows wherever you download podcasts.

We'll start Wednesday, February 27. As I write this, it's before the election. But by Wednesday, I'm pretty sure we'll have a runoff (or recount) to discuss.

My former partner in crime—producer Dennis, aka Dr. D—will be joining me. I'll regularly bring on writers from the *Sun-Times* and *Reader* to talk about the latest headlines.

And many of my favorite guests from the old show have promised to return—including Monroe Anderson (“talking Trump, Trump & Trump”) as well as Ed Maher and Ryan Kelly and Stacy Davis Gates and Joanna Klonsky and—well, pretty much everyone will be back.

I'll make sure to keep the collection of Proust on my desk for Sameena's return.

Talking politics with cool people—OK, so maybe it's not as “nice” as the ending Danny Solis had in mind. But it's a happy one for me. 

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NEWS

Not the end of profit-driven policing

SCOTUS's civil asset forfeiture decision sets an important precedent but hardly solves the problem.

By **MAYA DUKMASOVA**

Last week the Supreme Court issued a landmark unanimous decision that the Eighth Amendment's protections against excessive fines apply to the states, not just to the federal government. The decision was hailed by many as a major blow to the practice of civil asset forfeiture—when law enforcement agencies permanently seize property or money tied to criminal activity. However, despite the importance of the decision, experts familiar with civil asset forfeiture in Illinois caution that it won't necessarily change much about the unfairness of the practice.

Civil asset forfeiture ramped up in the mid-1980s as part of the war on drugs. By giving law enforcement agencies the ability to seize and keep cars, jewelry, cash, and other property discovered in the wake of arrests, it was considered an effective way to paralyze criminal organizations. But the practice has been increasingly criticized by liberals and conservatives alike for its infringement on private property rights and its disproportionately punitive impact on poor people of color.

In 2016 a *Reader* investigation created a first-ever record of how the Chicago Police Department uses funds derived from civil asset

NEWS & POLITICS

forfeiture. With the help of FOIA'd records we found that between 2009 and 2016 CPD forfeited more than \$70 million. About 65 percent of this was retained by the department and the rest divided up between the Cook County State's Attorney's Office and the Illinois State Police. While this may not seem like a lot of money given the CPD's more than \$1.5 billion annual budget, the funds essentially created a substantial "shadow budget" for one unit within the police force—the Bureau of Organized Crime. This money was often spent on controversial surveillance equipment (like Stingray cell phone data capture technology), undercover officers' car rental and cell phone bills, and office supplies.

The fact that a division of CPD has a source of money not subject to the city's budgeting process or regular public disclosure is also troubling because civil asset forfeiture often impacts people who aren't themselves accused of a crime. For example, if a relative borrows someone's car and is arrested after driving the vehicle to conduct an alleged drug deal, the owner of the car can have it taken away even if they have no knowledge of what the vehicle was used for and there's been no conviction in the criminal case.

In 2017, the ACLU of Illinois and allied groups successfully lobbied for reforms to the state civil asset forfeiture statute. Under the new law, property owners no longer have to pay to argue against the forfeiture in court. Law enforcement must auction off, rather than keep, forfeited property. The burden of proof for forfeiture has been shifted onto the state—it now has to make a more solid case for the property owner's involvement in the crime to hang on to the seized assets (the presumption is no longer that the property owner is guilty). Finally, the new law requires the Illinois State Police to maintain a public database on civil asset forfeiture statewide, which is supposed to go live in 2020.

Ben Ruddell, an attorney with the ACLU of Illinois who worked on the bill, calls these changes "incremental progress," given law enforcement groups' staunch opposition to the bill. "We did ultimately get them to the table to negotiate, but we had to sacrifice significant things," he says. Assets can still be forfeited from third parties without any convictions in the associated criminal cases. The cops still get to keep funds derived from seizing assets and can use them however they want. In other words, there's still "a built-in incentive for law enforcement agencies to seize property


because it just comes back to them," Ruddell explains.

Ruddell has found some of the coverage of the Supreme Court decision to be "overstating" its consequences. But it may still have some positive impact, especially in the long term, he adds. While the decision doesn't end profit-driven policing, people may now be emboldened to file more lawsuits claiming forfeitures of their property as unfair and disproportional.

"As more of those cases are filed and adjudicated there'll be a body of case law that gives shape and meaning to the question of when does forfeiture go too far," Ruddell explains.

The case that yielded the Supreme Court's decision, *Timbs v. Indiana*, revolved around a \$42,000 Land Rover SUV forfeited by the state in the wake of a conviction for selling a small amount of heroin. Tyson Timbs, who bought the car not with proceeds from drug sales but with money from his deceased father's life insurance policy, sued Indiana for imposing an excessive fine. The value of the car was far greater than the maximum fine he could have been assessed for his particular conviction. While a trial and appellate court had ruled in his favor, ordering the state to return the car, the Indiana Supreme Court decided the state didn't have to, reasoning that the Eighth Amendment excessive fine prohibition didn't apply to state governments.

"Now that the question has been definitively settled," Ruddell says, "I think you'll see a lot of litigation being filed for people seeking to challenge forfeitures on [Eighth Amendment] grounds." He's hopeful that more legal aid groups will find resources to take these cases on behalf of low-income people whose lives can be wrecked by the loss of a car, house, or other asset "contaminated" by a crime they may not have committed.

Still, it's worth remembering that often the cash value of the money or assets forfeited by the law enforcement is relatively small. The *Reader's* investigation found that the median value of each forfeiture in Illinois was just \$530—unlikely to be fodder for a constitutional challenge though it's frequently enough to trigger eviction, job loss, and other disastrous consequences. The biggest hurdle to preventing such losses is that, unlike Timbs, most people who find themselves in civil asset forfeiture proceedings don't have lawyers to help them fight in court. 

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Chicago's black artists are coming home

Despite the black exodus from Chicago, black artists are thriving and tell a story with a common thread: the city provides comfort and inspiration.

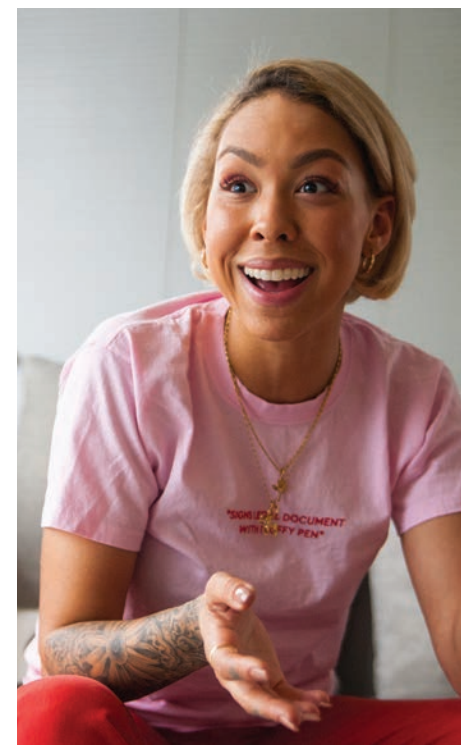
Story and Photos by **DAVON CLARK**

Swopes @swopes

ELISE SWOPES IS a photographer and graphic designer who uses scenes from nature—giraffes and waterfalls—to turn the mundane into the marvelous. She pairs her images with down-to-earth commentary and daily affirmations that humanize her and her city. She first

started using Instagram in 2013 as a portfolio to share her surreal visuals and the clean-cut camerawork she captured on her phone, which she only recently supplemented with a DSLR camera. Many of her fans know Swopes by her miragelike takes on the Chicago skyscrapers and freeze frames of the Loop amid rain, snow, fog, and other elements. Swopes's on-the-go shooting and editing process have helped her

amass hundreds of thousands of followers on social media and opened her up to gigs and collaborations with global brands like Dunkin' Donuts and Adidas that want to appeal to Chicago at the street level. Swopes wants to put resources and opportunities in front of city youths pursuing multimedia careers, and she shares tips and secrets on living as a freelance creative on her podcast, *Swopes So Dope*.





Femdot

@femdotdotcom

FEMI ADIGUN, BETTER known as Femdot, is a Chicago-based rapper. With equally ambitious artistic and academic goals centered on hip-hop, culture, and his hometown, the young gun is taking any shot he can at success—last year alone he got his college degree from DePaul, spoke 2018 Lollapalooza into existence, played Apple’s Music Industry Summit, and released his album *Delacreme 2*. After leaving for a year to study at Penn State in 2013, Adigun returned to pursue a rap career back home. In

Chicago, he finds the best opportunities, along with something he hasn’t found anywhere else: comfort. “It’s just a different feel. The comfortability of hearing niggas talk like me,” he says. “I’m someone who, growing up in the burbs and in the city, I’ve seen how the culture spreads on all sides of town, no matter where you’re at. It’s something about that feeling of being home, even the winter. It’s something about what that does to your kin. How that builds you.”



“I rap. A lot. And other things, but mostly rap.”

Toaster

@toastersmodernlife

AFTER THREE YEARS in California, Tim Henderson resumed an art-based lifestyle here in Chicago, where he’s always been heavily involved with Young Chicago Authors. His paintings and dynamic poetry performances pour into each other, allowing him to appeal to crowds of all kinds. He’s done everything in performance from personifying a blind date between a spider and a bug to painting a *Twilight Zone*-like scene of a man trying to stop the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. His paintings →



“I do art shit. I’m a performer, an artist, a poet, teaching artist, whatever pays the bills and keeps me happy.”



continued from 9

feature a trademark toaster character that takes on several faces and colors and often is surrounded by clouds and texts of thoughts. Though he's traveled across the country, it's the city that gives him the fuel to keep creating. As a cofounder of Big Kid Slam, a free monthly poetry slam for young adults, and a teaching artist at YCA, Toaster works hard to create a community for young artists—after all, he learned to create because of community.

Kenyatta Forbes


urbanmacramefibers.com

INTERSECTIONS ARE THE thread of Kenyatta Forbes's creativity, and that comes through in her hometown approach to living as an artist: having her hand in multiple projects—teaching, homemade natural products, macrame fiber work, the Trading Races card game—is what helps her keep things fresh and new. In the world of macrame fiber, a typically homogenous trade, she uses a spectrum of colors and textures to make her work stand out from the fun-size beige ornaments that are often thought to be the industry standard. Though she doesn't shy away from things like off-white plant holders, taking up half of her living room wall is a large black-stained wall hanging. She says that Chicago's affordability gives her the option to do what she wants, how she wants it, and with the people she wants to work with. Her apartment is outfitted with Chicago-made art, and her clothing style reflects a love for the city: when I interviewed her she was wearing some Nike Blazers from a limited run that pays homage to the late Chicago DJ Timbuck2, a hoodie by Chicago luxury lifestyle boutique Sir & Madame, and she'd had a makeup artist homie who lives up the street get her ready. **FI**

This article was produced in collaboration with City Bureau (citybureau.org).





Chinese bhel; chicken lollipops; sichuan shrimp; chili paneer  COLIN BECKETT

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Indo-Chinese food escapes from the suburbs at WokNChop

Wok this way to a subcontinental chicken wing that demands your respect.

By **MIKE SULA**

“**W**e have eaten meat on a stick ever since the caveman killed his first chicken. It was a simple logic. Bones make great handles.” So said chef Sanjay Thumma, aka Vahchef, in a 2008 YouTube video posted around the time he sold his Chicago-area minichain Sizzle India, moved back to India, and went viral among the Indo-expat diaspora. In the

video—which at press time was clocking just over 1.4 million views—Thumma demonstrates increasingly Fieri-esque variations on Hakka-style lollipop chicken wings—chubby frenched drumettes first marinated in a masala yogurt, then battered and fried hard in a turmeric-and-chile-stained fry suit. They’re a product of the particular style of Indo-Chinese culinary cross-pollination that spread after ethnic-Chinese Hakka settled around Kolkata

and native Indians started adapting the newcomers’ food to their own tastes.

Many lifetimes later, Indo-Chinese food bears as little resemblance to Chinese food as Korean-Chinese food does, but the two share similarities, chicken lollipops being one of them. *Gampongi*, which according to WBEZ’s Monica Eng were invented right here in Chicago at a couple of Albany Park restaurants (Peking Mandarin and Great Sea), are the analogue to Hakka lollipops.

Sizzle India wasn’t an Indo-Chinese restaurant, and if memory serves Chef Thumma didn’t offer lollipops on Devon Avenue. As far as I can tell, the first and only place within city limits ever to labor over them (and they are labor-intensive) is WokNChop, a year-old halal restaurant housed in a former White Hen, a bit less than a mile north of the birthplaces of gampongi.

WokNChop is owner Mustak Hira’s first (nonfranchise) restaurant, though his chef, whom he declines to name, has worked at


Hoffman Estate’s Bombay Chopsticks. Their menu isn’t as sprawling or indiscriminate as the latter’s, the region’s preeminent representation of Indo-Chinese, but there are some striking outliers, such as Thai-style coconut curries and pizza. It’s a potentially bewildering variety, with not much to go on menu-wise, if you’re unfamiliar with standards of Indo-Chinese; and it isn’t particularly helpful, loaded with regional descriptors—Manchurian, “Schezwhan,” Mongolian—that wouldn’t be out of place on any typical Ameri-Chinese menu but are in fact specific to this style.

Manchurian sauce, for example, bears some resemblance to the inky glossy sauces (glaucous?) you might encounter at Great Beijing or Great Sea, not black bean, but soy sauce-dominated, with a hint of chile heat and not a lot of sweetness. It’s a silky nightgown for ruddy lamb meatballs or lightly fried cauliflower, though you have to attack these early before their crispiness degrades into mush. The profile isn’t dissimilar from the black-pepper gravy that blankets that tofu with fins, fried tilapia fillets, or lighter, almost fluffy chicken meatballs.

Drier, lava-colored chile sauces, often tempered with honey, predominate on other dishes, like chewy nubs of paneer, crinkle-cut fries, or deep-fried baby corn cobs, which may be the only redemption of this otherwise dispiriting staple of the pan-Chinese culinary canon. Maybe the most overt integration is the Indian street snack bhel puri, Sinicized with chow mein noodles that somehow maintain their crunch in a tomato-chile sauce.

Noodles—variations of stir-fried, Hakka-style wheat noodles—and fried rice are distinguished by two particular options: one with crispy burnt garlic, and house style, which tinges the starches an attractive pastel green with mint, cilantro, green apple, and chile.

But if it weren’t for these relatively rare and notable items, WokNChop could stand alone on those fearsome-looking lollipops. If challenged to a duel I’d choose these sculpted cudgels of flaming chicken over the righteously gnarly gampongi, but that’s deceptive. That turmeric-strained batter is crunchy and adhesive, but it protects a juicy interior, well preserved from the ravages of the fryer.

At WokNChop, they don’t stuff the lollipops with cheese and bits of naan the way Vahchef does, but these wings are every bit equal to the gift of Chicago gampongi. 

 @MikeSula



Nikko Washington
© NOLIS ANDERSON

man wearing a jacket and tie. His eyes are downcast. There's a large X at the right edge of the painting, a nod to Malcolm X.

Stiff is one of ten paintings Washington made that focus on black expression. These include subjects that have often been depicted as white: for example, a Madonna and child, Adam and Eve.

"I want people to get their own reactions and feelings from the work," Washington says. "But if you ask me, it's just interpreting black expression through a different lens and through an abstract lens."

In the past, he explains, "black expression was struggle and pain. People would show work based off historical movement, the mistreatment of people of color throughout generations. Sambo characters or slave drawings, anything of that sort that would represent black people in the struggle. But then it's being sold and produced and sold to different people. It's people profiting off of black struggle and not just artists but other galleries are selling black struggle. This way I'm reinterpreting it through a lens that's not in my head makes me feel guilty.

"I do feel that artists have a responsibility to represent [social] issues," he says. "But nobody can tell you how to do it. Everyone has their own way because artists are human beings."

One of the subjects he tackles is gentrification, which has affected Hyde Park. The painting *Thank You for Gentrifying* is a commentary on the development that's overtaking his neighborhood. Washington says this is a double-edged sword.

The title of the painting, Washington says, was intended as sarcastic. "It's from THANK YOU FOR SHOPPING [plastic] bags, because that's where it all comes from, retail, shopping, and consumerism," he explains. "But it's also 'thank you' because if that didn't happen, I wouldn't be in the [Café Logan] show. Because they're looking to connect more with the community."

Painting canvases is only part of Washington's vast portfolio. He's also a graphic artist with the Save Money collective, an informal group of friends that includes musicians, videographers, and other creatives who support one another's work. Washington has produced cover art for albums by Towkio, Sterling Hayes, and Vic Mensa.

"Sterling and Vic I've known since I was five, Chance [the Rapper] since I was 12," Washington explains. "We've all been friends

VISUAL ART

Nikko Washington looks from *53 'til Infinity*

The painter in the Save Money collective has a solo show just blocks from where he grew up.

By YOLANDA PERDOMO

Nikko Washington looks like any other student coming in to Café Logan on the University of Chicago campus to grab a bite between classes. But the 25-year-old finished his studies at the School of the Art Institute three years ago. And there's another difference: the oil paintings on the wall are all by Washington, together comprising an exhibit called *53 'til Infinity*, on display through March 31. These are his most recent works, mostly portraits, all characterized by bold colors and the serious but joyous expressions on the subjects' faces.

For Washington, who now lives in Pilsen, having a show in Hyde Park, blocks from where he grew up, is nothing less than fantastic.

"I used to go to summer camp down the street at the Ratner Center," Washington says. "It's full circle. It's amazing."

The title *53 'til Infinity* comes from 53rd Street, a place where Washington hung out as a kid. A place that's gone through changes. "There were permission walls for graffiti," Washington remembers. "There [were] a whole bunch of boutiques that are not here anymore. Food places that had their own unique vibe." Washington grew up on 51st, and credits his mother, an artist, for giving him one of his earliest memories of artistic expression.

"My mom drew a mural of *Space Jam* on my wall," he recalls. "It was very detailed. I was five years old, and I just knew that that was art somehow, and I could draw that."

Washington went to Whitney Young High School, and participated in the After School Matters program, where he worked with professional artists and had work displayed at Gallery 37.

"That's what gave me the idea that I could make money off art," Washington says. "Gallery 37 gave me a stipend of \$1,000 for ten weeks, which was the craziest thing to me, to get paid to do what I was doing anyway."

His mother and father, who worked as a salesman for a book publisher, both supported his decision to pursue art. He credits Jean-Michel Basquiat and Andy Warhol as his early influences, as well as Chicago artist Hebru Brantley.

The summer after he graduated high school, Washington worked in an office where he had to wear a suit and tie. The experience would have a profound impact on the way he saw himself. It wouldn't be his last corporate job, but it inspired him to paint a self-portrait of sorts, inspired by questions he asked himself at the time: "Will I lose myself? Will I become a corporate stiff?" *Stiff* is a painting of a black



Stiff COURTESY NIKKO WASHINGTON

for a while, a long-ass time. It was only natural [for the collective to develop].”

Mensa remembers first meeting Washington in karate class. “He was funny and popular, and people always liked him.” For as long as he could remember, Mensa adds, Washington was always drawing and painting. Always making art.

“He’s always been a dope artist,” Mensa says. “I think what interests me about his art is like how natural it feels. There’s a freedom and intrinsic expression in his art. It really feels like it represents him.”

While they’re all busier these days than when they were kids, with everything from music projects to their own families, the Save Money crew makes time to create together and even go bowling. (Of the group, Washington would say he and the rapper Kami are the two best bowlers.)

“Work is always happening,” Washington says. “Being friends and coming together as coworkers is the same. We don’t clock out.”

Along with his painting, Washington is now designing title cards and show logos for Hulu through a new advertising agency the Times, headed by Jason Peterson, the former COO of the global ad giant Havas.

Washington’s current exhibit will overlap with a new show that opens at Soho House on March 9. He won’t reveal much about it; the only clues he gives are the word “blue” and that it’ll be an immersive environment.

But his Hyde Park show is different. Washington always knew Hyde Park was special, but now he gets to hear it from others.

“The best response I got was people saying, ‘This was my excuse to finally come down to Hyde Park,’” Washington says with a slight smile. “Or ‘I’ve never been down here.’ Now I have a reason to come down here.”

@yolandanews

BOOK SWAP

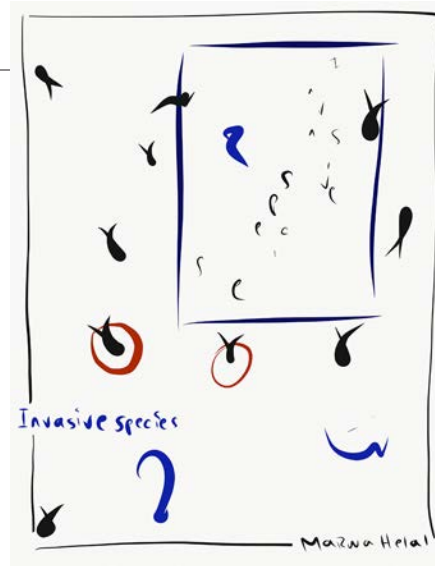
Lit recs for talking about race and gender

In Book Swap, a *Reader* staffer recommends two to five books and then asks a local wordsmith, literary enthusiast, or publishing-adjacent professional to do the same. In this installment, *Reader* digital managing editor **KAREN HAWKINS** swaps book suggestions with author, visual artist, and educator **XANDRIA PHILLIPS**.

Karen Hawkins, Reader digital managing editor

We’re talking a lot about women’s anger these days, thank goodness. But what’s been missing for me is validation for my rage as a black lesbian who feels surrounded by straight white women who demand to be heard about sexism but aren’t willing to listen when I talk about race and LGBTQ issues. Fortunately for me there’s **ELOQUENT RAGE: A BLACK FEMINIST DISCOVERS HER SUPERPOWER** (St. Martin’s) by Brittney Cooper. She had me at the opening words, “This is a book by a grown-ass woman written for other grown-ass women.” If you ever spot me on the CTA angrily muttering “YES, girl” to myself, this is probably what I’m reading.

Conversely, if you see me snort-laughing on the bus, there’s a good chance I’m enjoying **I’M JUDGING YOU: THE DO-BETTER MANUAL** (Holt) by wickedly witty Chicago author Luvvie Ajayi. I count on Luvvie’s blog Awesomely Luvvie to concisely—and hilariously—articulate the things I’ve been thinking but didn’t want to say out loud about pop culture, -isms, tech, and more, and her book delivers in the same way. Reading it feels like sitting down for tea with your funniest friend who is proud to be petty, pulls no punches, and has strong opinions about just about everything.

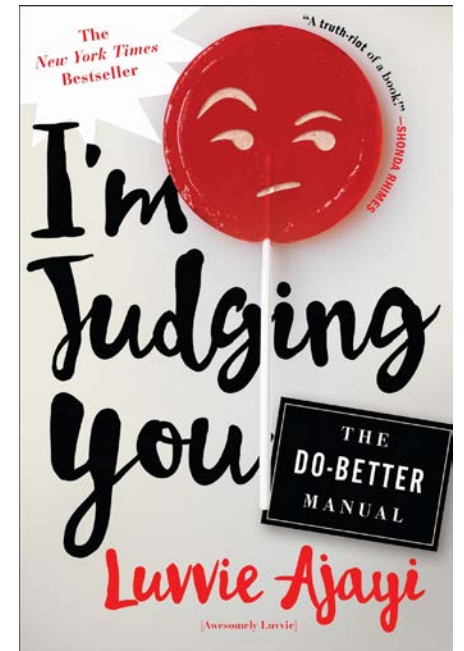


To balance out all of that rage and pettiness, I’ve also been interested in books devoted to, well, how to be less angry and petty. Enter Shawn Achor, author of **THE HAPPINESS ADVANTAGE: HOW A POSITIVE BRAIN FUELS SUCCESS IN WORK AND LIFE** (Currency). Achor makes a compelling argument for being consistently grateful, kind, and gracious, both for your own personal satisfaction and for building and managing teams. It’s enough to offset even the longest el ride’s worth of rage and cackling.

Xandria Phillips, author, visual artist, educator

BLACK ON BOTH SIDES: A RACIAL HISTORY OF TRANS IDENTITY by C. Riley Snorton (University of Minnesota Press) is the book from 2018 that has continued to populate my headspace daily. I think we live in a time when gender is considered precious and overexamined. Snorton shows us that gender has always been elastic—and a matter of life and death for black people, beginning with its mutability during chattel slavery. The language in *Black on Both Sides* manages a buoyancy in its lyricism despite its weighty context. The tether I feel to this book is in the consistent subversion of gender expectations as a means to liberation. Here I read the ways my ancestors’ very breath was abolition.

I don’t think we truly deserve **INVASIVE SPECIES** by Marwa Helal (Nightboat Books), an Egyptian-born writer currently based in New York, but here I am holding it in my hands. It opens with a quote from Chinua Achebe: “Let no one be fooled by the fact that we may write in / English, for we intend to do unheard of things with it.” Marwa suc-



ceeds in “doing unheard of things” with the English language. Pitched as poetry, this book shifts through hybrid forms as a means of addressing migration, displacement, and the intimate violence of the state. Whether she’s writing about humanity, the mystic, or future ghosts, Marwa has the ability to foretell the footholds of disaster. *Invasive Species* is the kind of book I sleep with under my pillow hoping its lushness will infiltrate my dreams.

Presently I am reading through **AN ATLAS OF RARE & FAMILIAR COLOUR** from the Harvard Art Museums (Atelier Éditions), and I have been savoring the feeling of learning for the sake of pleasure. Following a brief essay on each color’s historical rendering, every chapter displays numerous pigments both natural and man-made, archived from all over the world. I must trouble the complicated pleasure I derive from this book because it is lanced with colonial ideology. Every bottled pigment I see from a region in the global south raises a question: Was the acquisition consensual? I relish this book with an eye of wonder and an eye of curiosity. Blood has been spilt for the use of color. What we do and say with it might just be our most subconscious political acts.



Anne Thompson (Sharlene), Heather Chrisler (Jaycee), Hayley Burgess (Clarice) and Becca Savoy (Sam)  LIZ LAUREN

THEATER

Six women walk into a bar . . .

The Goodman's production of *Twilight Bowl* is all female—onstage and behind the scenes.

By **KAYLEN RALPH**

“A guy walks into a bar . . .” or so goes the familiar joke setup that works because guys are always walking into bars. Except in Rebecca Gilman’s *Twilight Bowl*, now playing through March 10 at the Goodman Theatre, the token guy never enters the scene. Over the course of the show’s 90-minute running time, not one man makes an appearance onstage—or even so much as issues a cue backstage.

Twilight Bowl first premiered at the Goodman two years ago as part of the 2017 New Stages Festival. For its second run, all

six members of the all-female ensemble are reprising their original roles, imbuing the production with the sense of familiarity that gels any female friendship after long enough.

“We were able to go deeper into these characters this time, because we were given more time and we were able to live with them for a year in our heads, and so everything just marinated more,” says Anne E. Thompson, who portrays one of the show’s six characters. “This time we got to talk about these characters and their shared histories and put in some of that backstory that roots them to each other, and so the moments feel like they have a

different weight than they did the first time.”

The 2019 iteration is a significant production for both the Goodman and for contemporary theater, especially in Chicago. During the 2015-’16 Chicago theater season, only 36 percent of the plays were directed by women, and only 25 percent were written by women, according to research by Chicago-based artists Kay Kron and Mariah Schultz. The gender disparity between men and women in the artistic positions of set design, lighting, and sound were even worse. In *Twilight Bowl*, all of those positions are filled by women (all of whom are local). Coming from the Goodman,

one of Chicago’s better-known theaters, this move carries weight, especially in the #MeToo era.

Thompson says the space immediately felt safe. Director Erica Weiss made sure that everybody in the cast and crew felt heard, encouraged, and celebrated on a daily basis, even in moments of frustration.

“One of the first things that I said on the day of first rehearsal was—without presuming anyone’s experience in terms of their working environments in the past—that especially in light of the broader cultural conversation that we’re having, this process feels somehow healing in whatever way that meant to people personally,” says Weiss. “That was a huge prerogative of mine, because that can mean whatever it means to any individual person. It was important for me to articulate that as a way of setting off the safe space. One of the things that I have observed, in terms of that safety, is that we have talked a lot about the freedom to fail and flail in the room, and try something and have it totally not work and break into giggles, or be like, ‘Well, this was off the rails.’”

She continues: “I think it created an environment that was loose enough and supportive enough that we maybe got away from any feeling of embarrassment or [feeling] that they might be judged in that moment.”

Twilight Bowl was originally commissioned from the Pulitzer Prize finalist Gilman by the Big Ten Theatre Consortium, a collegiate conference made up of the Big Ten’s 14 theater departments and schools, which began commissioning plays by and about women in 2014 as part of its interscholastic New Play Initiative. The intention was to provide more roles for women in their 20s.

“They did not have plays for their students, essentially,” Gilman says.

Twilight Bowl begins with four young women clustered around the table of a bar within a small-town Wisconsin bowling alley. Gathered for what Gilman once wrote in an earlier draft of the play as a baby shower—“or something,” adds the playwright—the women are giving a send-off to their friend Jaycee

TWILIGHT BOWL

Through 3/10: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org, \$15-\$45.

ARTS & CULTURE

(Heather Chrisler), who's headed to prison in the morning for selling prescription meds. The other women in attendance represent different parts of Jaycee's past. There's her younger cousin, Sam (Becca Savoy), who's nervous about leaving her hometown for Ohio State that fall; her oldest ride-or-die friend, Clarice (Hayley Burgess), who works at the Twilight Bowl but is growing weary of the low pay and the lack of long-term career prospects it offers; and then there's Sharlene (Thompson), the God-fearing Christian who tries to see the best in each member of the group—especially Jaycee—despite their foul mouths.

It's a scene full of biting one-liners—you can tell these women have grown up together, reckoning constantly with each other's evolving personalities—that pierce an otherwise intense period of anticipation for an experience none of these girls can imagine: *Orange Is the New Black* is their only frame of reference for what life is like for a woman behind bars.

The bowling-alley bar is the epicenter of the entire play. Once Jaycee is off to prison, updates as to her incarcerated life are relayed to the audience through conversations between her friends “on the outside” and the bartender, Brielle, expertly portrayed by Mary Taylor.

Gilman's original draft of *Twilight Bowl* featured a male bartender, “And because he was the bartender, everyone kept talking to him, and he took on this significant role,” she says. “And then I thought, ‘You know what? Why is he a guy?’ So I got rid of him.”

Brielle's slight removal from the core group of friends lends her the omniscience of any good bartender character, but her female perspective keeps the characters' conversations firmly rooted in the exploration of their shared, small-town female identity, as varied as the particulars of these young women's individual experiences. Maddy (Angela Morris), a preppy Chicagoan who is a “friend” of Sam's from school, dominates the middle third of the play as a fully formed foil to the other girls' small-town culture and politics.

“I think that when we think about rural life, [when] we think about working-class people, too often we think about what the male experience of that is, and we do not think about what life is like for women in small towns,” says Gilman, who herself grew up in a small town in Alabama. “I felt like there's a whole lot of people out there who are working really hard and doing their best, but they have limited opportunities because capitalism is unfair to most people. And I wanted to look at what


that was like, specifically what that is like for women in the United States. Because I think that, in addition to obstacles brought about by class disparity, there is also obviously gender politics in play for these women.” That sense of transition is woven into every scene due in large part to the set's design.

“This is their place, their pub, an extension of home, so it is important to have pictures of the teams and trophies peppered through the bar and not just in the trophy case,” set designer Regina Garcia writes in an e-mail. “These are reminders of the ‘good ole’ days,’ a time for family and community. However, no one is visiting the bowling alley anymore, and traffic is less than ideal. The furnishings are simple and dated. It is time for these ladies to make other choices.”

The choices and the reality these women face are very specific to their geographic location and the timing of their coming of age (the play starts two years in the past and ends in the present day). The specificity of the roles that result from this setting is what Gilman and Weiss agree the theater world needs more of for young women. The more roles for young women that are written, and the more culturally and demographically specific they are, the more inclusive the stage becomes.

“The need to expand the canon, the contemporary canon, of female roles also includes women of color across the cultural spectrum, because I think we are still missing a lot of perspectives of female characters across the border of cultural experiences,” Weiss says. “I am really interested to see more and more stories that focus on these specific cultural experiences through a female lens, and especially a young female lens, voices that just are not taken particularly seriously in society across the board.”

It's the Bechdel test, really.

“I think what we're starting to realize is women have complex lives in and of themselves that oftentimes do not have particular attachments to men, and that those stories are also interesting,” says Thompson. “As you see in *Twilight Bowl*, on paper all of these women can seem kind of similar, but once you get into each of their stories, you feel for every single one of them, and you start to see just how different they each are. I'm on board for more weirdo women that you want to spend an hour and a half with, not just for a few minutes in the second act.” 

 @kaylenralph

“ALIVE, REAL, RAW AND IN THE MOMENT”

—Chicago Tribune

“A STRONG WORKING CLASS DRAMA FOR OUR TIMES”

—Daily Herald



TWILIGHT B·O·W·L

BY **REBECCA GILMAN** DIRECTED BY **ERICA WEISS**

After graduating from a small Wisconsin high school, Sam heads to college on scholarship—but her cousin Jaycee's future isn't looking as bright. As the young women and their friends face adulthood, their local bowling alley becomes a place to celebrate triumphs, confront challenges and forge new identities.

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ARTS & CULTURE

Act(s) of God
Through 4/7: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat-Sun 2 and 7:30 PM; also Thu 3/7, 3/21, and
4/4, 2 PM; no 7:30 PM performance Sun 3/17 and 3/24, Water Tower Water
Works, 821 N. Michigan, 312-337-0665, lookingglass theatre.org, \$40-\$60.

THEATER

Why are we here?

Act(s) of God provides no answers.

By JACK HELBIG



Act(s) of God © LIZ LAUREN

Chicago actor Kareem Bandeaaly is a busy man, with a bio packed with A-list acting gigs at, among other places, the Goodman, Court Theatre, Writers Theatre, and, of course, Lookingglass, where he's an ensemble member. Still, somehow, he found time to write a play. And get it produced, at Lookingglass. And now it's being reviewed, by me.

Watching the world premiere, directed by Heidi Stillman, it's hard not to wish Bandeaaly had spent more time writing—or more time deciding what he wanted to write about—before leaping into a full production. The play as it stands now feels more like a loose collection of theatrical ideas, theological jokes, and cleverly written scenes than an actual play with a compelling reason to exist beyond the need to fill a slot in the season.

Set in the near future, in 2029, in an isolated suburban home in the desert, the action concerns an upper-class family that might have been lifted from a play by Edward Albee: a regret-filled middle-aged mother; her passive, ineffectual husband; and their three disappointing adult children. Except that Albee was a much angrier and sharper writer. Having summoned up these people in this world, Bandeaaly doesn't seem to know what to do with them. Or why they are there.

Part of the problem is that Bandeaaly sets out to do too much. He tries to use a familiar genre, the estranged-family drama, to go after the biggest existential issues we human beings face: mortality, God, our place in the universe. But he doesn't deliver. Instead he teases us, promising that in the next scene or the next act, this will all add up to something. And then it doesn't.

Of course, this has been done before—and better (see *Waiting for Godot*). Bandeaaly gives us a lighter version of theater of the absurd: milder, sweeter, and stripped of its anger and conviction and passion. Instead of staring into the void or raging at the dying of the light, Bandeaaly mocks an old man for chattering on about how much he likes fruit and allots nearly a third of the play to a discussion of a character sleeping in the next room whom we never meet but who may or may not be God.

Bandeaaly's brand of absurdism is not an expression of frustration at having been thrown into an absurd world. Instead this is a play about the myriad petty annoyances of life, a theme better suited for a stand-up routine or a half-hour sitcom episode.

Still, the folks at Lookingglass, led by director Stillman, throw everything at their disposal to create a pleasant evening of theater—and they do have an impressive arsenal of theatrical tricks and devices. The cast is first-rate, especially Shannon Cochran as the family's rightfully angry matriarch. Stillman's production unfolds at just the right pace to keep an audience amused—provided they don't think about what they're watching or see how shallow and unsubstantial this all is. **A**

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ARTS & CULTURE



DANCE

A new *Giselle*

Akram Khan and the English National Ballet bring the 1841 classic into the 21st century.

By **IRENE HSIAO**

Since its 1841 premiere, *Giselle* has been an exemplar of romanticism, with its depictions of frolicking country folk, feminine virtue, and ghosts. The innocent peasant girl Giselle dies of heartbreak when her lover, Albrecht, turns out to be an aristocrat in disguise with a well-to-do fiancée. Like other maidens who perish before their wedding day, Giselle joins the *wilis*, spirits dressed like brides who lurk in the woods, luring men into furious, fatal dances. Yet when Albrecht wanders into their ethereal sorority, doomed to die, Giselle forgives him and protects him from harm.

This week, the English National Ballet makes its first foray across the Atlantic in three decades to bring its wildly anticipated new *Giselle* for an exclusive North American engagement at the Harris. Commissioned in 2016 by artistic director Tamara Rojo, the ballet was choreographed by Akram Khan, who uses his background in contemporary dance and kathak, a form of Indian classical dance, to reenvision the classic to a new score by Vincenzo Lamagna.

The English-born son of immigrants from Bangladesh, Khan worked with dramaturg Ruth Little to develop an international context for the ballet that reflects current events. “At the time of creation, how Europe was treating the migrants was quite horrific,” he says. Haunted by the tragedy of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, in which 1,134 people died when a

building housing several apparel factories collapsed, Khan and Little reimaged *Giselle* and her clan as migrant garment workers. “We’re all in the end migrants,” notes Khan.

Khan also revisited the character of Giselle as he created the ballet. “In the classical version, Giselle is portrayed from a man’s perspective—coy, sweet, fragile,” says Khan. “But the women in my life are not that. They are fierce, strongheaded, and leaders, like my mother, like my daughter, like my wife.”

Yet he insists that Giselle’s mercy towards the deceitful Albrecht is also the key to her power—and to the necessity of such narratives in our time. “To forgive is the hardest thing. It’s not a sign of weakness. As human beings, we need empathy again. We are so used to the Western system of right and wrong, good and evil, black and white. It’s so much more complex in the [Sanskrit epics] Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana. Within the good there are elements of the bad; within the bad there are elements of the good. In order to create, you have to destroy first. In order to destroy something you have to create something. The human condition is complex. We haven’t grieved for climate change or xenophobia yet as a species, because we’re in such denial. We haven’t learned from our past by forgiving—and the only way to forgive is to see.”

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ARTS & CULTURE

THEATER

RR The love that dares to speak its name

Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde is incandescent theater.

Brian Pastor's remounting of his 2016 gender-blind production of Moisés Kaufman's 1997 nonfiction play about the slow, painful judicial destruction of one of the 19th century's greatest writers is not perfect. Some of the acting is rough. The performing space is a little cramped. The set is perhaps too spare. And it's clear that the production has been put together on a shoestring. But it is, at its core, inspired theater.

At the heart of the show are two actresses, Jamie Bragg and Heather Smith, who perfectly embody Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas, the lovers at the center of this tragic story. Bragg is great as Wilde, playing equally well his highs and his lows; his fine, high-flying wit; and his dark depression after he's sentenced to two years of hard labor at Reading Gaol. And Smith is terrific as the mad, impetuous Douglas. Her nuanced performance shows there's more to the man than the beautiful spoiled brat he's usually been portrayed as. And together these two are incandescent. From the moment they appear together onstage their love speaks its name loudly and clearly. In this production

it's clear that this tragic tale is also a love story of the highest order.

Of course the show is built on a very strong foundation: Kaufman's script is first-rate. His research is sound and exhaustive, his deconstruction of the texts and Victorian era thorough. Yet the show also works as fine, entertaining theater. —**JACK HELBIG** **GROSS INDECENCY: THE THREE TRIALS OF OSCAR WILDE** Through 3/23: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 3/4, 7:30 PM, Strawdog Theatre, 1802 W. Berenice, prometheatheatre.org, \$30. \$25 seniors, \$15 students and military.

Don't worry, you won't have any trouble following this one

An Inspector Calls has all the nuance of a thermonuclear blast.

J.B. Priestley's 1945 chestnut, a staple of the modern theatrical canon, is not what anyone would call subtle. Set on the cusp of World War I, it focuses on the well-to-do Birlings, led by self-satisfied industrialist and politician Arthur, a man singularly devoted to protecting "the interests of capital" and pooh-poohing the burgeoning socialist ideal of "community and all that nonsense." Into their swank ranks comes mysterious, hard-nosed Inspector Goole to inform them that a young woman's just committed suicide and left a diary in which several of them are named. For the bulk of three painstakingly

foreseeable acts Goole shows how each family member's privilege and self-absorption contributed to the dead woman's despondency and dissolution. Is there a lesson waiting for everyone about "community and all that nonsense"? Could be.

So it's perplexing that director Stephen Daldry, known for his exquisite restraint on Netflix's *The Crown*, applies the nuance of a thermonuclear blast to Priestley's script. On Ian MacNeil's gorgeously overdetermined set, everything is metaphor writ large, from the Birling manse, barfed up from the earth and teetering on spindly metal girders, to the puddle of filth that will receive

more than one Birling visitation. The actors match the set in bombast and obviousness. This production premiered in 1992, when Daldry was all of 32, so perhaps we can excuse it as a youngish man's undisciplined squeal. Then again, even at that age he might have realized that audiences can figure a thing or two out for themselves. —**JUSTIN HAYFORD** **AN INSPECTOR CALLS** Through 3/10: Wed 1 and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM, Tue 7:30 PM, Chicago Shakespeare, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$46-\$98.



Gross Indecency: The Three Trials of Oscar Wilde

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ARTS & CULTURE

A little less conversation . . .

The visual splendors of *The Man Who Was Thursday* compensate for its extreme verbosity.

G.K. Chesterton's 1908 satire about the battle between order and chaos gets a spirited and beautifully staged production at Lifeline. Though the extreme verbosity of the piece becomes tiresome by about the halfway point of the two-hour-plus show, there are enough visual touches to keep one interested beyond the chatter.

The shaggy-dog plot involves a poet recruited by Scotland Yard to infiltrate a supposed anarchist cell. After quickly gaining entry into the inner sanctum, he becomes involved with the anarchists' various plots to blow up, assassinate, and otherwise disrupt good bourgeois society. But wouldn't you know it, he isn't the only infiltrator in this cabal. The rest of the running time is devoted to a parade of spy-versus-spy chases and unmaskings. These machinations are what I could've done with a lot less of.

The two things that carry the piece are Eric Watkins's lighting design and Lizzie Bracken's sets. My favorite moments were the wordless pantomimes as the cast changed scenes, lit by noirish spotlights or candlelight that made them barely visible as they skulked about. The set, full of doors, and featuring a wrought-iron catwalk and staircases—used brilliantly to visually evoke how characters operate on different levels—does a lot more to tell Chesterton's story than his many, many words do. The gist: evil can lurk in plain sight while men's pride and need to be right will blind them to what's in front of their faces. Bilal Dardai adapted Chesterton's novel for the stage and Jess Hutchinson directed. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** *THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY* Through 4/7: Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 4 PM, Lifeline Theatre, 6912 N. Glenwood, 773-761-4477, lifelinetheatre.com, \$40, \$30 seniors and military, \$20 students.

RR You can't always judge a play by its marketing

There's humor and hope in *May the Road Rise Up*—along with plenty of whiskey.

A play about an Irish family rarely breaks the mold of being too long, too sad, and too predictable. Usually someone important dies halfway through and we're stuck with the remaining characters who have to deal with it. But Shannon O'Neill's *May the Road Rise Up*, directed by Spenser Davis at the Factory Theater, is a stellar example of why we shouldn't always judge a play by its marketing.

The people who die are already dead when the play begins, and it's their absence that causes much grief and propels the plot. The audience is seated in a semi-circle around a middle-class kitchen that offers intimate playing space around the edges. Everything is precisely organized, from the draped dish towels behind the sink to the framed photos lining the teal-painted walls. This home doesn't feel lived-in save for an athletic jacket hanging on the back of one kitchen chair.

This calm and order dissipate as we become acquainted with the ensemble of ten who bustle through in an expertly crafted opening montage that takes up every inch of the stage. We meet the Murphys, including bottled-up mom and excellent nurse Patty (Loretta Rezos); her son, Michael (Vic Kuligowski), a recovering addict; and her father, Danny (Patrick Blashill), a former boxer full of pride and whiskey.

Michael's brief return to his small hometown to attend his grandpa Danny's birthday is the catalyst that shows how an abundance of blame and inaction can cause a community to implode. Yet unbridled friendship and good alcohol prove choice comfort. This is a play about how we heal and cope in a time of turmoil, internal and external. Through major tragic losses, combined with deep-seated guilt and gut-wrenching revelations, O'Neill has crafted an exemplary work that leaves much room for humor and hope. —**YASMIN ZACARIA MIKHAEL** *MAY THE ROAD RISE UP* Through 3/30: Fri-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Factory Theater, 1623 W. Howard, factorytheater.com, \$25.

RR Yes, we are recommending *Mike Pence Sex Dream*

Dan Giles's satire is Orwell by way of David Lynch, and it's electrifying.



Mike Pence Sex Dream

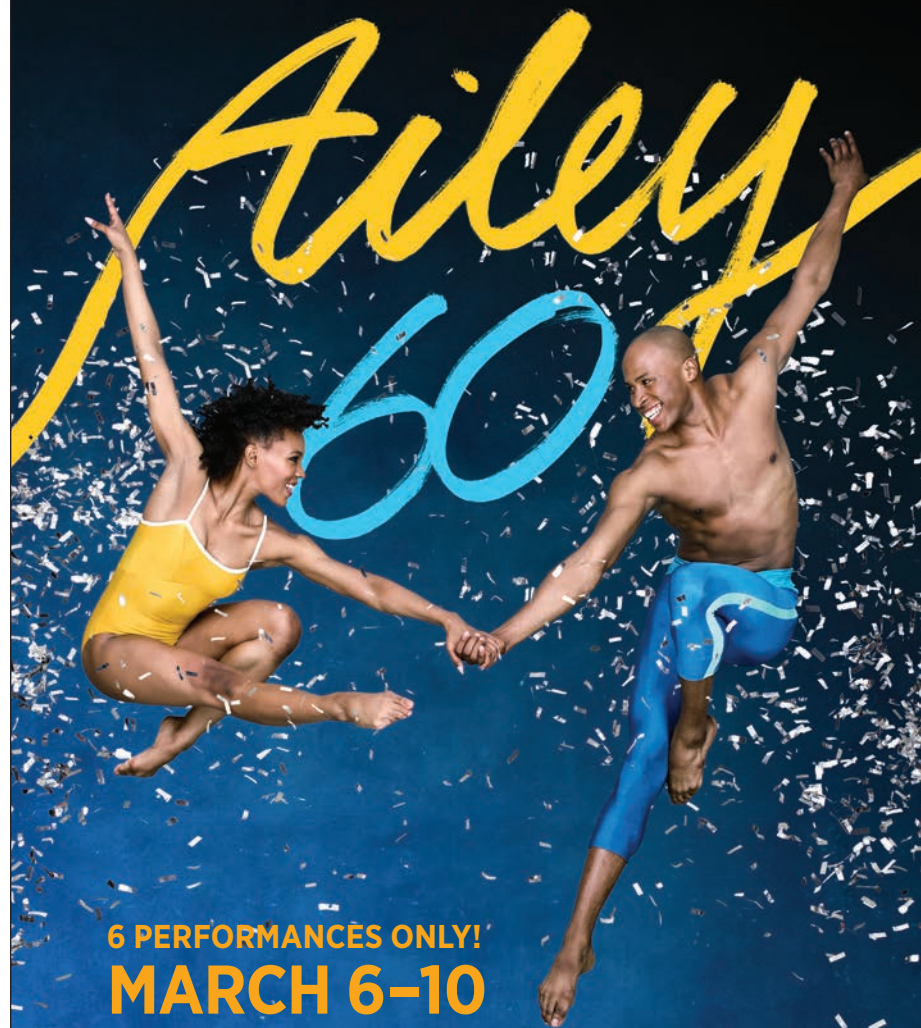
Our long national nightmare isn't over. It's barely begun. That's the dystopic message of Dan Giles's play, now in a world premiere at First Floor Theater. As reflected in the mirrored walls of William Boles's set, with Claire Chrzan's lighting and Eric Backus's sound creating a disco hellscape environment, we're through the looking glass of Trumpian times. Do we throw down for resistance, or do we game the system for our own benefit?

That's the dilemma facing fiction-writer-turned-adman Gary (Scott Shimizu) and his spouse, Ben (Collin Quinn Rice), an elementary schoolteacher who uses nonbinary pronouns and whose acts of defiance range from wearing a dress to class to fighting a MAGA parent. Gary's subconscious punishes him for selling out with dreams of working as a beleaguered assistant/boy toy to the vice president. These are only slightly more disturbing than his waking-life encounters with Tom (an eerily deadpan Gage Wallace), the client whose factory-farmed bacon allows Gary to strike gold with the catchphrase "It's the Sizzle."

Giles's script and Hutch Pimentel's fearless direction trace the characters' journey from existential dread to rationalization. (Rice's Ben abandons their activist instincts for the safer realm of corporate philanthropy.) Wallace and Rice take turns as the bad-dream Pence, with the latter nailing a dance interlude choreographed by Breon Arzell.

Tom tells a story about pigs who get smarter the more they're abused—who still turn on each other. Giles gives us Orwell by way of David Lynch, and the results are electrifying. —**KERRY REID** *MIKE PENCE SEX DREAM* Through 3/16: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 3/11, 7:30 PM, and Sat 3/16, 3 PM; no performance Sat 3/17, 7:30 PM, the Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, firstfloortheater.com, \$25, \$20 students.

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Samantha Figgins and Jeroboam Bozeman, photo by Andrew Eccles.

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ARTS & CULTURE

→ **RR** On the five-year plan
Tango shows that ideas alone can't
change society.

In Stawomir Mrożek's 1965 satire of life in communist Poland, everything's topsy-turvy. A family and a couple hangers-on live in a chaotic household in which every member's role is constantly shifting. It's a vision of society in flux and disillusioned despair—which shouldn't be difficult for Americans in 2019 to identify with.

At the beginning, Arthur, the uptight son, is imposing his will on the rest of the clan. Arthur is bent on restoring a sense of order to his anarchic home, but can't quite settle on a unifying theory under which to govern. He's horrified that his eccentric father has retreated into an imaginary world of sock-puppetry shows he refers to as his "experiments," while his mother is openly carrying on an affair with their boor of a neighbor. His grandmother and uncle are similarly debauched. In a desperate bid to bring sense to his world, Arthur decides to marry the neighborhood floozy. He thinks that a traditional wedding will restore honor to his family and begin to build the principled, orderly society he longs for. It all goes sideways.

Utterly committed performances from a standout cast and a crudely painted set of backgrounds on rollers—between which characters keep disappearing—make the instability under which these people live palpable. Though set at a time when Eastern bloc communism was beginning to crumble, the notion that top-down ideas—however well-meaning—can't truly change society for the better, often leading to authoritarianism instead, should be crystal-clear to anyone living today. Emily Lotspeich directed. —**DMITRY SAMAROV** *TANGO* Through 3/30: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Trap Door Theatre, 1655 W. Cortland, 773-384-0494, trapdoortheatre.com, \$20-\$25, two-for-one admission Thu.

The girls at the bowling-alley bar
Twilight Bowl takes a close look at overlooked
lives.

Rebecca Gilman's portrait of five young women in a small Wisconsin town (and one annoying interloper from Winnetka) is a minor-key chamber piece, with a few wince-worthy dramaturgical air horns thrown in. Set in the bar of a bowling alley, it follows the women's lives over two years, from the farewell party for soon-to-be-incarcerated Jaycee (the dynamic Heather Chrisler), caught helping her father sell prescription meds, to a celebration for Sam (Becca Savoy), whose bowling scholarship to Ohio State promises a way out. Along the way, the women try to figure out where they belong, and whether they still have room for each other in their lives.

Erica Weiss's direction mostly allows plenty of breathing space, and Gilman's story balances uncomfortable group dynamics with honest one-on-one encounters. A conversation between Sam and bartender Brielle (Mary Taylor), who had her own abortive attempt at attending college, teases out the emotional strains of trying to fit into a place you're not sure you deserve to be (or want to be) in the first place with compelling empathy. But a scene involving Maddy (Angela Morris), Sam's self-absorbed North Shore college acquaintance, leans too heavily on rich-girl clichés even as we learn some disturbing things about Maddy's own circumstances.

Despite some jarring false notes, the cast (including Anne E. Thompson as Sharlene, an awkward but



Tango

well-meaning Christian, and Hayley Burgess as stoic workhorse Clarice) ultimately fleshes out these overlooked lives with wit and emotional honesty. —**KERRY REID** *TWILIGHT BOWL* Through 3/10: Wed-Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 and 7:30 PM, Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, goodmantheatre.org, \$15-\$45.

Peppy, bright, and oblivious
Regressive and toothless, *The Vagina Melodies: Here We Go Again* is Feminism 101 for the 80s.

Peppy, bright, and oblivious, this musical revue at the Conservatory, first performed in 2016 and "updated" for 2019, feels like it was created during a middle-school sleepover in a small, all-white midwestern town. Propped up by the music of powerful black women—from the songs of Missy Elliott, Beyoncé, and Janelle Monáe to parodies of Ciara and Whitney Houston hits—performed by a cast of 13 white women, this may be the least-nuanced portrayal of feminism I've seen since the 1980s. Apparently nobody thought to include a discernible token from any other demographic.

Lacking all self-awareness, the show delivers a series of occasionally successful but mostly mediocre sketches. Hosted by the charming Deanna DeMay as Rosie the Riveter, the sloppy monologues could use more polish and structure. A lazy nod at celebrating famous heroines from history feels like a hastily written midshow book report. A parody of "Cell-Block Tango" from Chicago has the delicious potential to skewer rape culture; instead, it pulls its punches in favor of safer jokes.

Lyss Dutkanych displays hilarious comic timing as the Pubic Hairy Fairy, and in a sea of mostly good-enough-for-comedy voices, Briana Bower and Bryce Saxon provide a lovely rendition of Houston's "I Wanna Dance With Somebody" with great harmonies. The enthusiastic cast gives the show their all, and a bit about the lack of pockets in women's clothing is gratifying if not terribly original.

Still, the noninclusive Feminism 101 of *The Vagina Melodies: Here We Go Again* is regressive and toothless, especially in the way it ignores race, gender expression, and class. It'll be fun for anyone that finds the mention of a dildo the height of indecency. —**SHERI FLANDERS** *THE VAGINA MELODIES: HERE WE GO AGAIN* Through 3/30: Thu-Sat 8 PM, The Conservatory, 4210 N. Lincoln, cornservatory.com, \$12-\$20.

FILM



Coincoin and the Extra Humans

MOVIES

The melting pot

The 22nd Chicago European Union Film Festival offers a mix of major auteurs and relative unknowns.

By **KATHLEEN SACHS**

It seems that audiences now expect film festivals to be road shows of the latest and greatest in independent, art house, and foreign cinema rather than an opportunity to discover work not yet buzzed about. This year's Chicago European Union Film Festival lineup has plenty of the latter, and the chance to discover new films and filmmakers makes perusing the schedule all the more exciting.

All of the European Union's 28 member states are represented in the festival's 22nd iteration, which includes 60 films in total, ranging from narrative to documentary to animated features. Twenty-two of the 60 films are helmed by women, accounting for more than 30 percent of the schedule. Per usual, the lineup is a healthy mix of the biggest names in European cinema and relative unknowns, making the festival a great opportunity not just to catch up with major auteurs but to discover filmmakers whose work might be unfamiliar to U.S. audiences.

First, the heavy heavy hitters. *Loro* is the latest by Italian writer-director Paolo Sorrentino, whose *The Great Beauty* won

the best foreign-language film Oscar a few years back. It's a fiction film about former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi and his sleazy inner circle; originally released in Italy in two parts, the international cut is just a single film. Not available for preview, its trailer gives off *Wolf of Wall Street* vibes, vulgar platitudes of the privileged uttered like sordid catechisms.

French provocateur Bruno Dumont follows up his 2014 miniseries *Li'l Quinquin* (which played at CEUFF that year—his most recent achievements, *Slack Bay*, from 2016, and last year's exceptionally absurd *Jeannette: The Childhood of Joan of Arc* also played in recent lineups) with *Coincoin and the Extra-Humans*, another miniseries cum cinematic experience that again finds its young and peculiar protagonist in ludicrous scenarios, this time involving alien cow parties and strangely gestated doppelgängers. Dumont's droll absurdity is matched by deceptively halcyon widescreen compositions that further elucidate his wacky ambitions.

Polish master Krzysztof Zanussi, whose works from the 70s and 80s are among

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FILM

the greatest Polish films ever made, again foregrounds his preoccupation with faith in *Ether*, a Faustian historical drama in which the anesthetic, here in the hands of an amoral doctor, serves as a metaphor for both power and pain, specifically the ability to either exacerbate or alleviate the latter. Like many of Zanussi's recent films, it's a bit ham-fisted, especially in how it incorporates the Faustian elements. Still, it's confidently realized, and worth watching for anyone who hopes to catch a glimpse of Zanussi's erstwhile genius.

The documentary selection features a trove of films from directors both well-known and those less so. The former category includes Mark Cousins's *The Eyes of Orson Welles* (UK), an examination of an oft-overlooked facet of Welles's life, his interest in drawing and painting; Peter Lataster and Petra Lataster-Czisch's *You Are My Friend* (Netherlands), an unassuming follow-up to their popular 2016 documentary *Miss Kiet's Children*, about a teacher and her immigrant students, this time focusing on just one of the previous film's young subjects; Ruth Beckermann's *The Waldheim Waltz* (Austria), a smartly edited examination of the Waldheim affair that includes footage Beckermann shot during the mid-80s protests against the Austrian president who was alleged to have participated in Nazi war crimes during World War II; and Corneliu Porumboiu's *Infinite Football* (Romania), which is idiosyncratic in its portrayal of a middle-aged man whose football injury inspired him to amend the rules of the sport, the discussion of

which inspires near-philosophical discourse on a range of subjects.

Lesser-known documentary gems include Donal Foreman's *The Image You Missed* (Ireland-France), credited as a film "between" Foreman and his estranged father, documentary filmmaker Arthur MacCaig; Robert Bahar and Almudena Carracedo's *The Silence of Others* (Spain-USA), produced by Pedro Almodóvar, about some of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco's victims seeking justice for crimes committed under his rule; Niels Bolbrinker and Thomas Tielsch's *Bauhaus Spirit: 100 Years of Bauhaus* (Germany), a comprehensive look at the title subject; Giacomo Durzi's *Ferrante Fever* (Italy), about Elena Ferrante, the elusive author of the much-lauded Neapolitan novels; and James Erskine's *The Ice King* (UK), an elegantly heartbreaking portrait of acclaimed British figure skater John Curry, openly gay when it was still illegal to be so, whose fortitude on and off the rink is especially moving.

The narrative offerings are where female filmmakers really shine. Standouts are Valeria Bruni Tedeschi's *The Summer House* (Italy-France), Jagoda Szalc's *Tower. A Bright Day.*, Adina Pintilie's *Touch Me Not* (Romania-Germany), Iveta Grofova's *Little Harbor* (Slovakia-Czech Republic), Gabriela Pichler's *Amateurs* (Sweden), Liina Trishkina-Vanhatalo's *Take It or Leave It* (Estonia), and Carmel Winters's *Float Like a Butterfly* (Ireland). Two first-time feature directors, Moonika Siimets and Marine Francen, ➔



Buñuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles

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make imposing if somewhat wonted period dramas that embody their native countries. Siimets's *The Little Comrade* is based on the childhood of noted Estonian writer Leelo Tungal and features an astonishing performance by Helena Maria Reisner as young Leelo. Francen's *The Sower* (France), based on real events, is about a village whose men are all arrested in the wake of Louis Napoleon's 1851 coup, leaving the women without male companions for two years; they agree that if a man should come to them, they'll share him for both labor and sex. Beautifully rendered, its love scenes are refreshingly sensual.

As is the case with any large festival, some films fall short. *The Saint Bernard Syndicate* (Denmark), the first narrative feature from controversial documentarian Mads Brügger, is so intentionally unwieldy as to be artless, while Lars Kraume's *The Silent Revolution* (Germany), about a protest by East German students in solidarity with the victims of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution, proves that not every political protest is worthy of a dramatization. Judith Davis's *Whatever Happened to My Revolution* (France), a portrait of a young woman with no outlet for her righteous indignation, doesn't succeed as any sort of commentary, and *Ray & Liz*, from British photographer Richard Billingham, an autobiographical story of a family on the dole in Thatcher-era England, is visually stunning but more an idea than a film. It remains to be seen whether Louis Garrel—whose second directorial feature, *A Faithful Man* (France), is playing in the festival—will live up to his father's reputation, though its title certainly recalls those of Philippe's recent masterpieces (*Lover for a Day*, *Regular Lovers*).

Two animated features, Salvador Simó's *Buñuel in the Labyrinth of the Turtles* (Spain), about a turning point in the surrealist director's prodigious career, and Raúl de la Fuente and Damian Nenow's *Another Day of Life* (Poland-Spain), reminiscent of *Waltz With Bashir* in its exploration of Polish journalist Ryszard Kapuscinski's experiences during the 1975 Angolan civil war, round out an eclectic program. There's much to catch up with, but there's also much to discover, with even more in store for those up to the task. **FI**



Capernaum

REVIEW

Lebanese neorealism

Starring a cast of nonactors, *Capernaum* examines the lives of refugees in a Beirut slum.

By ANDREA GRONVALL

The past 12 months have seen the theatrical releases of three extraordinary dramas powered by nonactors: Chloé Zhao's lyrical contemporary western *The Rider*, starring horse trainer Brady Jandreau as a Native American cowboy on South Dakota's Pine Ridge Reservation; Alfonso Cuarón's sublime *Roma*, an homage to the strong women who reared him in 1970s Mexico City, with first-time actress Yalitza Aparicio carrying the movie as its lead; and now Nadine Labaki's searing take on the global refugee crisis, *Capernaum*, in which the director is the only professional actor among a cast of hundreds who portray migrants in a Beirut slum. It is a sprawling epic that is also intimate; in its rawness, pathos, and intensity it recalls Italian neorealist films by Vittorio De Sica and Roberto Rossellini, particularly the latter's war trilogy—*Rome, Open City* (1945), *Paisan* (1946), and *Germany Year Zero* (1948)—works that also examine traumatized survivors rebuilding their lives amid ruins and ghosts of the past and that, also like *Capernaum*, employ a little melodrama to heighten impact.

Shot over six months, *Capernaum* is documentary in feel, based on years of research

and interviews Labaki and her collaborators conducted with refugees and neglected, abandoned, and/or incarcerated minors. It offers an immediacy and authenticity that would not have been possible without its nonprofessional performers improvising versions of their own experiences. In this story of an abused street child who sues his monstrous parents for bringing him into the world, no one is more compelling than Zain Al Rafeea, the youngster who plays the protagonist (also named Zain), a real-life refugee from Syria's civil war who was only 12 years old and barely literate when the director met him. He is also small for his age, a result of malnutrition; with haunted eyes and a stunted frame, he's every inch the heartbreaking urchin.

Make that *scrappy* and heartbreaking urchin. *Capernaum* opens and closes with Zain being shuffled through the legal system, having been sentenced to jail for five years for knifing a predatory scoundrel who, let's just say, had it coming. Through flashbacks, we witness his sorry childhood: how he and his many siblings are pressed into their parents' drug trade; how his shiftless father puts them to work rather than send them to school; and how Zain escapes to live on the streets rather

than sleep seven to a bed and endure his parents' deceptions and cruelty. One day he meets another refugee, Rahil, a working Ethiopian single mother (Eritrean migrant Yordanos Shiferaw) who offers him shelter in her corrugated plastic shed if he will mind her baby son, Yonas (female toddler and scene stealer Boluwatife Treasure Bankole). When Rahil and other undocumented laborers are caught in a police roundup, Zain must fend for himself again, except now he has another mouth to feed, and after he learns about a horrific death in his family, he snaps. Labaki plays the advocate who represents him in his lawsuit against his parents.

(It should be noted here that although Al Rafeea shares certain things with his character—like having worked since the age of ten, having a temper and a habit of swearing—he's not a criminal, nor is he unloved. Shiferaw's life, however, has had uncomfortably close parallels to her character's: during the film shoot the actress was arrested and imprisoned for two weeks for being an illegal immigrant.)

A popular actress in her native Lebanon, Labaki has been lauded at the Cannes Film Festival since her 2007 writing-directing feature debut, *Caramel*, and her follow-up, *Where Do We Go Now?* (2011), which won two prizes at Cannes and remains Lebanon's top-grossing Arabic-language film. At last May's festival, *Capernaum* was nominated for the Palme d'Or and won three other awards, including the prestigious Jury Prize. (It was also nominated for an Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film.) But the film almost didn't get made: with no stars, no firm shooting schedule, and no fixed locations—which consequently meant no concrete budget—the project initially wasn't considered bankable. So Labaki's husband,

★★★★ EXCELLENT ★★★ GOOD ★★ AVERAGE ★ POOR ● WORTHLESS

cowriter and composer Khaled Mouzanar, assumed producer duties, letting her film the way she wanted: shooting almost the entire screenplay chronologically while setting up scenes that were meticulously plotted, but whose dialogue was devised by the amateur actors who could readily follow her beats despite not having a copy of the script. She worked with only two cameramen and a boom operator so that no extraneous equipment would hamper anyone's freedom of movement, and pushed for as many takes as she felt necessary, winding up with 520 hours of footage.

The end result has the stark grittiness of Matteo Garrone's Neapolitan crime story *Gomorrah* (2008), captures the dangers of a teeming slum with the veracity of Fernando Mereilles and Kátia Lund's *City of God* (2002), and chronicles the end of innocence as harrowingly as Cary Joji Fukunaga's *Sin Nombre* (2009) and *Beasts of No Nation* (2015)—all of which used nonactors to great effect. But those films are more violent than *Capernaum*, which is humanist in its outlook and purpose: Labaki wants to elicit empathy from her viewers, as well as instill outrage that such things can happen to children. The original French title of her film, *Capharnaüm*, can be loosely translated as “chaos” or “a jumble,” while *Capernaum* itself is the name of an ancient village on the Sea of Galilee's north shore, site of the remains of two of the oldest synagogues in documented history, and legendary as a place where Jesus is believed to have resided early in his ministry.

God is nowhere to be found in Labaki's film, except in some deep-seated human impulse to do good. If the film has a flaw, it's an occasional repetitiveness of language and affect; it's also relentless in the travails it hurls at its young hero. *Capernaum* demands a lot from audiences, some of whom may find one or two middle passages too emotionally draining. But it's essential viewing for the ways in which it illuminates brutally hard lives many of us could otherwise not imagine, and for the craft of its nonprofessional performers, who, rescued from obscurity, have gifted us with indelible screen presences. Mostly, though, it is worth the investment just to see the last, long close-up of Zain at the end of one decisive chapter in his fight. His future is by no means certain, but he's earned, many times over, his first glimmer of what might be happiness. **R**

NOW PLAYING

RR Barbara

German suspense director Christian Petzold (*Yella*, *Jerichow*) has found an ideal setting for his quietly oppressive tone: East Germany in 1980. Nina Hoss, his icy blond muse, plays the title character, a doctor and former left-wing conspirator who's released from prison and assigned to a provincial mental hospital. Her kindly boss at the hospital tries to help her adjust and clearly wants something personal with her, while the Stasi keeps close tabs on her; yet she's secretly planning an escape to the West. The occasional ravings of the patients, ringing off the walls in Petzold's measured quiet, provide an appropriate backdrop to the heroine's need for freedom, yet the movie's politics never trump its humanity: in one unexpectedly moving scene, Barbara glimpses the Stasi agent who's been bearing down on her suffering in silence as his wife receives cancer treatment. With Ronald Zehrfeld. In German with subtitles. —**J.R. JONES** PG-13, 106 min. 35mm. Sat 3/2-Sun 3/3, 11:30 AM. *Music Box*

RR N Birds of Passage

Ciro Guerra and Cristina Gallego's follow-up to their 2015 gem *Embrace of the Serpent* is a stunner, from the bookend device of a blind bard who spins the tale of a legend at once local and universal (echoing antique roots in Homer and *The Illiad*) to the division of this Colombian drama's narrative into five cantos, or songs, which are distant cousins to the burgeoning *narcocorrido* Mexican musical genre and tie this drug-smuggling tale, circa 1968-1980, to the present. What at first seems like an ethnographic chronicle of an old Wayuu tribal mating ritual—an exotic dance where a marriageable young woman (Natalia Reyes) simulates a fiery bird to be captured—soon becomes a saga about the costs that her suitor (José Acosta) shoulders in order to win over her mother, the clan's revered matriarch (Carmiña Martínez). The swain labors hard for the required dowry, but he's smart and impatient, so when he stumbles upon a group of hippie Peace Corps volunteers who preach anti-communism but are also looking for weed, his solution, in its capitalist supply-and-demand paradigm, seems obvious. The alliance he enters with his relatives who farm the marijuana whose market he soon corners will threaten the family traditions he vowed to uphold. In Wayuu and Spanish with subtitles. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** 125 min. At *Music Box*. Visit musicboxtheatre.com for showtimes.

Border

Like the recent Brazilian masterpiece *Good Manners*, this Swedish feature begins as a naturalistic drama before transforming into a modern-day fairy tale. It

Birds of Passage



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never reaches the delirious heights of *Manners*, however; director Ali Abbasi maintains the same muted tone throughout (his color palette is also limited and bland), and the characters fail to evoke much sympathy. The film centers on an androgynous customs agent who possesses the ability to intuit people's emotional states by smelling them. She meets a stranger who looks curiously like she does and becomes drawn to him, ultimately letting him move in with her and her boyfriend. For a while the film hovers around notions of identity (both national and gender based), but it abandons them in the second half in favor of narrative trickery. I found this compelling as I watched it, though I don't feel I gained much from the experience. In Swedish with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** R, 108 min. Sat 3/2, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 3/3, 4 PM. *Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Burning

Burning (based on Haruki Murakami's 1992 short story “Barn Burning”) paints vivid portraits of three distinct characters and inspires sympathy with a bewildered protagonist; moreover, it depicts a particular social

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milieu—that of underemployed twentysomethings in contemporary Seoul—in such a way that one comes to see it as existing beyond the subjects' control. Director Lee Chang-dong works on a grand scale here, shooting in wide-screen and often employing long takes that convey an epic sense of anticipation, and by rendering the story so monumental, he makes it seem somewhat unapproachable, much like Murakami does through his forbidding minimalist prose. At the same time, Lee's art works at cross-purposes to Murakami's. He likes to explain things that the author would prefer to keep ambiguous; in a sense, he wants to get deeper into the characters' heads than even Murakami does. Lee's insistence on three-dimensional realism takes him only so far, since he also does his best to preserve Murakami's sense of unresolved mystery, and this has the effect of nullifying the director's social observations. The movie feels like an extended stalemate between two very different master storytellers, though the clash of sensibilities is also instructive, pointing to a tension in contemporary life between individualist and systems-based philosophies. —**BEN SACHS** 148 min. Fri 3/1, 3 and 6:30 PM; Sat 3/2, 2 PM; Sun 3/3, 2:30 PM; Mon 3/4, 6:30 PM; and Wed 3/6, 6:30 PM. *Gene Siskel Film Center*

→ **RR** Caught

European exile Max Ophuls looks at American materialism in this 1949 story of a woman's involvement with a Howard Hughes-ish millionaire, and finds it just as stifling as the old-world variety. Ophuls's famous tracking shots seem to define absences instead of spaces, moving through a desert of shadows and cold surfaces. With James Mason, Barbara Bel Geddes, and Robert Ryan. —**DAVE KEHR** 88 min. 35mm archival print. Fri 3/1, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 3/3, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Chutney Popcorn

An Indian-American lesbian (Nisha Ganatra) agrees to carry a child for her infertile sister and anxious brother-in-law; predictably, the laughs in this 1999 comedy come from cultural clashes (the protagonist's Indian-born mother refuses to acknowledge her daughter's homosexuality, her lesbian friends can't understand her willingness to give birth) as well as the nuts and bolts of artificial insemination. As director and cowriter, Ganatra brings to the project an insider's view and a sure handling of girl talk, but she isn't particularly good with actors (only Jill Hennessy as her statuesque girlfriend and Madhur Jaffrey as her exasperated mother stand out), and her own character is underwritten, an impassive, petulant Madonna who somehow commands adoration. It doesn't help that the film runs out of comic situations after the first hour and resorts to too many senseless montages (accompanied by the entrancing fusion sounds of Karsh Kale). —**TED SHEN** PG-13, 92 min. 35mm. Tue 3/5, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Dirty Dancing

A rather novel *Flashdance* spin-off, this coming-of-age dancing romance (1987) is set in a Catskills resort during the summer of 1963. What sets it apart from others of its ilk is that some of the leads—notably Jennifer Grey, who achieves her apotheosis by learning the mambo, and Jerry Orbach—actually resemble real people rather than actors. The plot hinges on class differences between resort customers and staff members (“dirty dancing” is what the latter do at their own parties), and before the movie collapses into the utopian nonsense that seems obligatory to this subgenre, a surprising amount of sensitivity and satirical insight emerges from Eleanor Bergstein's script and Emile Ardolino's direction. There's also a memorable use of the resort location, and while the music on the soundtrack is predictably overloud, the period detail is refreshingly soft-pedaled. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** PG-13, 100 min. 35mm. Thu 3/7, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR Drag Me to Hell

After directing three *Spider-Man* movies, Sam Raimi makes a masterful return to the horror genre, though the crazed kineticism of his *Evil Dead* trilogy is replaced here by a fable of guilt, shame, and insecurity (2009). Soulful Alison Lohman plays a loan officer snooty to get ahead at work so she can impress the snooty parents of her ardent sweetheart (Justin Long); prodded by her boss (David Paymer), she forecloses on the mortgage of an awful old crone (Lorna Raver), who retaliates by saddling her with a demonic curse. The biggest howls involve the delicate heroine helplessly ingesting or inhaling bugs, worms, and bile—physical equivalents of her destructive emotions—and Raimi ends the story with the sort of black punch line that's become his signature. —**J.R. JONES** PG-13, 99 min. 35mm. Fri 3/1-Sat 3/2, midnight. Music Box



In Another Country

N Fighting With My Family

Stephen Merchant, cocreator of the BBC series *The Office*, wrote and directed this comic docudrama about WWE fighter Paige (nee Saraya Knight), who rose to international prominence on the pro wrestling circuit when she was in her late teens. Don't expect any of the discomforting humor or camerawork that made *The Office* so influential; this is pat, sentimental stuff, from its underdog narrative to its corny one-liners. The story follows Paige as she gets plucked from her family's amateur wrestling show in Norwich, England, to train for the WWE in Florida. Needless to say, she faces setbacks on her journey to stardom, such as missing her parents and dealing with the jealousy of her older brother, whose own dreams of becoming a pro wrestler have gone down the drain. The film is basic and predictable, but its sincerity is hard to overlook. With Vince Vaughn, Nick Frost, and Florence Pugh as Paige. —**BEN SACHS** PG-13, 108 min. ArcLight, Ford City, River East 21, 600 N. Michigan

N Greta

After a six-year hiatus from feature filmmaking, Neil Jordan returns with a visually splendid, though thematically thin, New York-set thriller. A well-to-do recent college graduate (Chloë Grace Moretz) mourning the loss of her mother befriends a lonely widow (Isabelle Huppert), only to find out that the woman is a psychopath obsessed with terrorizing young strangers. The opening passages, which detail the characters bonding over their mutual loneliness, are intriguing and sensitively realized: Jordan succeeds at making New York seem unusually small (foreshadowing the frightening depictions of confinement that occur later on), and the two leads are highly sympathetic. But once the older woman reveals her true nature, the film becomes a relatively conventional stalker tale, and the psychological insights of the first act seem for naught. Even then the film doesn't lack for fun visuals—I just wished there were a better script to go with them. With Maika Monroe and Jordan's perennial favorite actor, Stephen Rea. —**BEN SACHS** R, 98 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37, ArcLight, River East 21, Webster Place 11

RR The Hitch-Hiker

Actress Ida Lupino (*High Sierra*) enjoyed a second career as a director of B movies in the late 40s and early 50s, and this hell-for-leather noir (1953) demonstrates her facility with actors and her flawless pacing. Two pals (Edmond O'Brien and Frank Lovejoy, both excellent) head off for a fishing trip in Mexico but get carjacked south of the border by a fish-eyed serial killer (William Talman, later the DA on the *Perry Mason* series). There's a subplot in which the authorities close in on the fugitive, but Lupino, who cowrote the script, devotes most of the screen time to the fear, rage, and despair of the two friends, who realize they're marked for death. —**J.R. JONES** 71 min. Author Elizabeth Weitzman (*Renegade Women in Film and TV*) introduces the screening. Mon 3/4, 7 PM. Music Box

RR In Another Country

Hong Sang-soo's first collaboration with Isabelle Huppert from 2012 is the South Korean writer-director's liveliest, funniest film. It comprises three stories, each one about a different Frenchwoman named Anne (all of them played by Huppert) visiting the same Korean beachside resort town. In the first Anne's a successful filmmaker thwarting off the romantic advances of a married (and frequently drunk) Korean director; in the second she's a Korean businessman's wife in town for a tryst with her filmmaker lover, who never arrives; and in the third Anne is a tourist traveling with a female friend after her French husband leaves her for a Korean woman. The second story, in which Hong at several points reveals the onscreen action to be a dream, is the most formally playful, but the whole film is a joy—rarely has the director generated so many laugh-out-loud moments from his characters' passive-aggression and self-delusion. The singing lifeguard played by Yoo Joon-sang may be Hong's most delightful creation. In English and subtitled Korean. —**BEN SACHS** 89 min. Wed 3/6, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Kanal

Andrzej Wajda's 1957 film was the first to call world attention to the Polish cinema, though it hasn't aged gracefully. Its social theme and allegorical style now

seem typical of the defensive tendencies of the 50s art film; it doesn't let you forget that it's “poetic.” An underground group retreats through Warsaw's sewers during the uprising of 1944, and most of the members come to grim ends. In Polish with subtitles. —**DAVE KEHR** 91 min. Sun 3/3, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

N Mapplethorpe

In her first scripted feature, documentary filmmaker Ondi Timoner attempts to tell the story of Robert Mapplethorpe, the queer photographer known for his powerful yet controversial black-and-white images of BDSM and gay sex, but Timoner falls short of capturing what made Mapplethorpe so daring. Though the film doesn't shy away from showing his work or some of the traits that made him complicated, like his narcissism or tendency to destroy personal relationships, it refuses to lean into those scenes in a way that would give the story a bit more nuance. Instead, it jams in as many of the important moments in Mapplethorpe's life from 1967 to his death from AIDS in 1989 as it can in an hour and a half, another entry in the list of biopics (like *Bohemian Rhapsody*) that reduce the career of an iconoclast to a formulaic biopic that refuses to scratch beneath the surface. —**MARISSA DE LA CERDA** 102 min. Fri 3/1, 4:15 and 8:30 PM; Sat 3/2, 4:45 and 8 PM; Sun 3/3, 3 PM; Mon 3/4, 6 PM; Tue 3/5, 8:15 PM; Wed 3/6, 6 PM; and Thu 3/7, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR Margaret

A spoiled Manhattan teenager (Anna Paquin) distracts a city bus driver (Mark Ruffalo) with her flirty behavior, causing him to run a red light and kill a pedestrian (Allison Janney). At her mother's urging, the girl tells police the light was green, but eventually an attack of conscience—from which she conveniently spares herself—impels her to launch a vendetta against the driver. This moving drama was shot in 2005 but tied up in court for years after writer-director Kenneth Lonergan (*You Can Count on Me*) failed to deliver a cut under 150 minutes, as his contract demanded. Released at long last (2011) and running 149 minutes, the movie shows obvious signs of having been hacked down to size (Matt Damon's fine performance as the girl's math teacher seems to have suffered particularly). But even in its truncated state, this is pretty gripping stuff; just think of it as an epic commercial for the director's-cut DVD. Among the stellar cast are Matthew Broderick, Jean Reno, Kieran Culkin, Rosemarie DeWitt, Olivia Thirlby, and J. Smith-Cameron as the girl's mother. —**J.R. JONES** R. The 186-minute director's cut is screening. Mon 3/4, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR Othello

For all the liberties taken with the play, Orson Welles's 1952 independent feature may well be the greatest Shakespeare film (Welles's later *Chimes at Midnight* is the only other contender)—a brooding expressionist dream made in eerie Moorish locations over nearly three years, yet held together by a remarkably cohesive style and atmosphere. (The film looks better than ever in its 1992 restored version, though it sounds quite different thanks to the restorers' debatable decision to redo the brilliant score and sound effects in stereo, altering them considerably in the process.) The most impressive performance here is Micheal MacLiammoir's Iago; Welles's own underplaying of the title role meshes well with the somnambulist mood, but apart from some magnificent line readings he makes less of a dramatic impression. With Suzanne Cloutier (as Desdemona), Robert Coote, Fay Compton, Doris Dow-

ling, and Michael Laurence. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 92 min. *The original 1955 release version (not the 1992 restoration) will be screening. Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the screening. Tue 3/5, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Princess Cyd

Writer-director Stephen Cone (*The Wise Kids*) ventures into Eric Rohmer territory with this philosophical, dialogue-driven 2017 comedy about a bright 17-year-old girl (Jessie Pinnick) spending the summer in Chicago with her novelist aunt (Rebecca Spence). The girl is in the process of discovering herself both intellectually and sexually, and her development sparks the curiosity of the solitary older woman. Their relationship evolves over the course of leisurely conversations about the nature of fulfillment, which lead both women to question whether they're happy (as in Rohmer's films, the characters use philosophy to mask discussion of their feelings). With great delicacy, Cone metes out details about his subjects through refined dialogue and everyday behavior; this is the sort of movie that makes you feel you've befriended the characters. —**BEN SACHS** 97 min. *Cone and select crew attend the screening. Fri 3/1, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art*

Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One

William Greaves, a pioneering black film actor, went on to direct more than 200 documentaries, host and executive produce NET's *Black Journal*, and teach acting. For this eccentric 1968 experiment, he got two white actors to play a quarreling couple in Central Park and proceeded to film not only them (in both rehearsal and performance) but also himself and his camera crew and various other people, often juxtaposing separate angles in split screen in the final edit. The crew's own doubts and speculations about the film being made were also included. The couple's quarrel is singularly unpleasant, the acting variable, the collective insight into what Greaves is up to mainly uncertain. The title modifies a term referring to the interactions between people and their environment, and the notion of a shifting center is what gives this experiment much of its interest and also limits it from going very far in any single direction. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 75 min. 35mm. *Wed 3/6, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University*

N Tale of the Sea

Bahman Farmanara (*Fragrance of Camphor, Smell of Jasmine*) wrote, directed, and stars in this ruminative Iranian drama, playing a famous novelist readjusting to normal life after spending several years in a psychiatric hospital. Not fully cured of his unspecified mental illness, the septuagenarian writer often goes wandering, and hallucinates that he's being visited by friends who are no longer living (the film is on one level an elegy for departed Iranian artists of Farmanara's generation); his strange behavior places considerable emotional strain on his wife, who's secretly wanted out of the marriage for years. This is dour, yet never oppressively so. Farmanara alleviates the pervasive sense of loss with poetic imagery, gentle pacing, and sympathetic performances. Turning up in the final act, Leila Hatami delivers characteristically strong work as the daughter of the writer's wife's late best friend, who possesses a dark secret about him. In Farsi with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 97 min. *Sat 3/2, 8 PM, and Sun 3/3, 5:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

ALSO PLAYING

Between Two Cinemas

Longtime filmmaker and film archivist Ross Lipman directed this autobiographical essay/documentary film about his career in cinema. 84 min. *Lipman attends the screening. Thu 3/7, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Logan Center for the Arts* **FREE**

Borgman

Alex van Warmerdam directed this 2013 Dutch film about a rich family terrorized by a vagrant. In Dutch with subtitles. 113 min. *Thu 3/7, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

The Competition

Claire Simon directed this 2016 French documentary about the intense process of admitting students into La Fémis, one of France's top film schools. In French with subtitles. 121 min. *Simon attends the Saturday screening. Sat 3/2, 4:45 PM, and Thu 3/7, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

Crime + Punishment

A documentary about NYPD officers who expose the department's quota system for minimum numbers of arrests and summons. Stephen Maing directed. 112 min. *Maing attends the screening. Thu 3/7, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* **FREE**

Jimi Hendrix Experience: Electric Church

John McDemott directed this 2015 documentary about a 1970 Jimi Hendrix concert. 105 min. *Wed 3/6, 9:30 PM. Music Box*

N Leona

Isaac Chrem directed this Mexican drama about a young Jewish woman in Mexico City conflicted by her family's wishes and her love for a non-Jewish man. In Spanish with subtitles. 107 min. *Showing as part of the JCC Chicago Jewish Film Festival. Sun 3/3, 7 PM. Music Box*



Greta

N Level 16

Danishka Esterhazy directed this Canadian sci-fi film about two girls in a prisonlike dystopian boarding school who attempt to discover the reason for their confinement. 102 min. *At Facets Cinémathèque. Visit facets.org for showtimes.*

On Watching Men

Curator Rachel Rakes assembles a program of experimental documentaries (1976-2010) by Chick Strand, Tracey Moffat, Yael Bartana, and Jumana Manna, that look at social representations of masculinity. 82 min. *Rakes attends the screening. Thu, 3/7, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

N One Earth Film Festival

The 2019 edition of this festival devoted to films about environmental issues takes place at various Chicago and suburban locations from March 1 through 10. *For a complete schedule visit oneearthfilmfest.org.*

Our Mother the Mountain

Tamar Lando directed this documentary about the disappearing way of life among aging cowboys in New Mexico. 40 min. *Lando attends the screening. Fri 3/1, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Logan Center for the Arts* **FREE**

The Prairie Trilogy

This documentary trilogy (1977-80) directed by John Hanson and Rob Nilsson explores the radical and socialist history of North Dakota's labor and activist movements through the life of 97-year-old Henry Martinson. 107 min. 16mm. *Sat 3/2, 7 PM. Chicago Filmmakers*

N Stray

A man just out of prison and a woman just released from a psychiatric institution connect and attempt to heal their individual past traumas in a remote mountain location. Dustin Feneley directed this New Zealand drama. 104 min. *At Facets Cinémathèque. Visit facets.org for showtimes.*

N Tyler Perry's A Madea Family Funeral

Tyler Perry directed and stars in this film in his Madea comedy series, with the family traveling to Georgia and having to arrange a funeral. *PG-13, 102 min. AMC Dine-in Block 37, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, River East 21, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11* **FI**

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While his early records fetch hundreds of dollars apiece from a cult of collectors, he just wants a space of his own to make his new tracks.

By LEOR GALIL

Marcus “Mixx” Shannon has been making house music since the mid-80s, when the style was the beating heart of Chicago nightlife. In 1987, Farley “Jackmaster” Funk of the famous Hot Mix 5 played Shannon’s very first release, the 12-inch single “I Wanna House!,” on one of the crew’s hugely influential WBMX radio shows. Original copies of Shannon’s early records now provoke bitter squabbles among hard-core collectors—a compilation he made in 1989 has sold for as much as \$500—but none of the money changing hands makes it to him.

Instead Shannon relies on the generosity of friends and earns a dollar here and there from the roughly 250 new house tracks he’s uploaded to Bandcamp since joining a year and a half ago. “Some days I’ll crap out three or four songs a day, some weeks it may be ten,” he says. He works in GarageBand on a 2018 MacBook, often near the north entrance of the Chicago Cultural Center or in a cubicle on the seventh floor of the Harold Washington Library. He also uses the library’s eighth-floor music practice rooms to shoot scenes

for *Marcus Mixx on TV*, the 30-minute music show he’s made on and off since the 1990s for cable-access channel CAN TV. Sometimes he performs alongside sock puppets, which are really just plain socks with his hands in them, including a white one with a gray heel and a gray toe that he calls “Rockerd.” Shannon says the socks were a donation—with the exception of a couple months last year, he’s been living in homeless shelters since 2014.

Shannon, 52, doesn’t hesitate to discuss his circumstances on Facebook and in short YouTube videos. He has a robust albeit sparsely

MARCUS MIXX ON TV
Broadcast on CAN TV channel 19.
Sat 3/2, Sat 3/9, Sat 3/16, and
Sat 3/23, each night at 11 PM.

trafficked Web presence, which he uses to offer his video-editing skills for as little as \$25 (he usually calls his service “Cheap, but Not

Cheap Video”). Last year he joined the video production team of new label Wake Up! Music, run by Pepper Gomez, a house vocalist who recorded for crucial Chicago imprint DJ International in the 80s. Shannon says he could do more work—he’d like to film events, not just edit video—but he’s held back by the hours of the Garfield Park shelter where he stays. (It’s operated by Franciscan Outreach at Walls Memorial CME Church.) If he doesn’t arrive by 6:30 PM, he can’t be sure of a bed for the night.

On January 7, Shannon launched a GoFundMe to help him rent an apartment. If he finds one, it’ll be his first—he lived in the house where he grew up till 2008, after which he stayed with his father and then his brother, whose hospitality eventually ran out. “I’ve finally come to the conclusion that I have to swallow my pride & just face the facts that I can’t move forward in my life on any level until I get a few basic things in order,” Shannon wrote on his fund-raising page.

He met his \$3,000 goal in two weeks, and so far 125 people have donated. He hopes to find a place for \$500 a month—just a room where he can stash his cameras and computer, sleep,

and do work. “I’m really looking for something with all utilities, and if it had a shared bathroom—I don’t really need a stove or anything,” he says. “I just really need a little space.”

On January 10, Shannon uploaded to Bandcamp a new remix of his earliest song, titled “I Wanna House Now (or at Least a Room)”—No Furniture Needed Mixx.” Many of the commenters on his GoFundMe page appeared to know him only through his music, and a couple even specifically referenced his old material, including the original 1987 version of “I Wanna House!”

Shannon stopped DJing in 1995, and by the turn of the century he was largely isolated—his parents had split, and he was living in their old house alone. But his music had taken on a life of its own—especially the house 12-inches he’d made in the late 80s and early 90s with a loose circle of friends. Back then Shannon had started several labels (Under Dog, Missing Dog Records, Missing Records, Get Wet & Sweat Records), each of which released just a record or two, most in small batches that topped out at 700 copies. Those early recordings have earned him a cult following, and Missing Dog’s 1989 compilation *Volume 2* has sold on Discogs for as much as Shannon hopes to pay for a month’s rent.

Producer Ron Morelli, who runs an important outre dance label called Long Island Electrical Systems (L.I.E.S.), sees Shannon’s offbeat music as critical to the development of a psychedelic strain in early house. “A lot of people don’t like that stuff—a lot of people think it’s too raw or it’s underproduced or it doesn’t hit. But to me, that energy and that spirit is the true energy of house music,” he says. “It’s just a couple people getting in a basement studio, just rockin’ out, and making really tweaked-out stuff for their own enjoyment—maybe with the hopes of a DJ playing it and hearing their stuff on the radio. For me, it’s really the spirit that they did it in—it’s the true DIY spirit.”

In the mid-80s, when Shannon was a student at Columbia College, he saw an advertising card for Head Studios that promised recording for \$12 an hour. He drove to 18th Street in Pilsen, a few blocks east of I-90, where he met engineer Liam Gallegos: “An Italian guy, long hair,” Shannon remembers. “He looked sort of like Rambo.” Gallegos, who would later record and produce as Gitano Camero and L.I.A.M., had set up Head Studios in a one-bedroom apartment with high ceilings. He’d completely emptied out the bedroom so he could use it to track drums, and he slept in a loft he’d built above his studio

setup, which included a reel-to-reel machine and a Commodore 64. One of the few pieces of furniture was a swing.

“One day this black kid comes in and says, ‘Hey, do you do house?’ I was like, ‘Well, this is a loft, dude,’” Gallegos says. “I didn’t know what house was.”

Shannon was happy to demonstrate. “When we did our first session, I was like, ‘Can you turn that bass drum up?’ He looked at me like, ‘That’s too loud,’” Shannon says. “I said, ‘No, that’s house.’” After an hour, Gallegos was hooked—he didn’t even ask Shannon to pay for the session. “He begged me to come back the following weekend—‘Let’s just hang out and do this,’” Shannon remembers.

Shannon and Gallegos liked to party at Head with whichever friends showed up: on the 1987 compilation *Missing Records Special Edition Volume 1*, the follow-up to “I Wanna House!,” the guests include Kevin “Krazy K” Dobbins, Gallegos’s girlfriend China, and Corey “Send” Shannon, Marcus’s brother. Once folks had gotten pleasantly drunk and started to mess around with the studio gear, Gallegos had the foresight to start recording, capturing material that could later be reworked into formal releases. “If there’s a golden moment that happens when you’re doing these jam sessions—I don’t know what it is, but if you go ‘Wait a second, let me record!’ you scare it away. It doesn’t come back,” he says. “The same people there, three seconds later, they can’t do what they were just doing. I would have this tape recorder going, and I would take my finger off the pause just to capture the moment.”

Shannon recalls listening simultaneously to Led Zeppelin’s “Kashmir” and house heavyweight Jamie Principle while jamming, and he says he’d sometimes sing like Pee-wee Herman. The recordings that emerged from this atmosphere pushed house toward the fringe but kept its four-on-the-floor foundation intact: “Psychousic,” from Missing Dog’s 1988 compilation *Volume 1*, is dominated by a robotic arpeggiating synth that sounds like it’s rattling around in a downspout, but it’s spread across blistered tom-toms and an omnipresent, thundering bass drum. “Songs like ‘Psychousic’—there are maybe two or three other tracks like that we did in the same night,” Shannon says.

Most of those tracks never saw the light of day, but what Shannon and Gallegos decided to release they’d send to Dixie Record Pressing in Nashville. “It was cheap as hell,” Gallegos says. “Seventy-five cents a record or something ridiculously cheap.” They’d press a few hundred, and Shannon would distribute most of them to local shops—notably South Loop

house-scene hub Importes Etc. He also enlisted Ray Barney, owner of the Dance Mania label and crucial west-side store and distro Barney’s Records, to help get copies into retailers outside Chicago.

Sometimes shops would ask for more copies after a run had sold out, but Shannon didn’t consistently follow through. “I would press up, press up, but I just didn’t stick to it—I really can’t say why,” he says. “It was like, ‘I’m on my next project, I’ll let that sit and do that whenever,’ even though it was mastered. I didn’t really have that business vibe at the time.”

In the mid-2000s, Gallegos found an eBay listing for one of the 12-inches he’d made with Shannon. “One of our old records is selling for 500 fucking dollars—we were like, ‘What’s going on?’” he says. “All of a sudden, this old work had value. There was this guy who was coming and saying, ‘Look, I want to rerelease some of your stuff.’” That guy was Thomos Oakes, who’d moved to Chicago from Kentucky in 2000.

“I was a hard-core record collector, and I became aware of the Marcus Mixx records and just hunted them like crazy,” Oakes says. “People were paying \$2,000 for these records. I’m still missing a few of them.”

Oakes reached out to Shannon, who asked him to swing by his parents’ house in Beverly Woods on the far south side. “The house is just falling apart—it’s like a weird haunted-house thing,” Oakes says. “I meet him, go in, he gives me beer. We’re sitting there, talking, and it becomes evident to me that the guy is kind of a hermit—he leaves the house, but he leaves the house to go to the liquor store on the corner and to the bus stop, and only on errands that he has to go to.” By that time Shannon wasn’t seeing much of Gallegos, who’d relocated Head Studios to the north side. (In 2006 Gallegos moved to France.)

Oakes pitched the pair on reissuing their old music. “They didn’t really understand,” he says. “They’re like, ‘Oh, this is really cool, but why do you give a shit?’” Oakes convinced Shannon and Gallegos to transfer the rights to their music to him—he made an up-front payment, and he agreed to give Shannon all the proceeds from any releases. Most of the recordings that Shannon and Gallegos made were never issued in any form, however, and much of that unreleased material is unaccounted for. “They gave me this list: ‘Oh yeah, here’s two or three hundred songs that we wrote,’” Oakes says. “I realized that 60 percent of it’s missing still. That just kills me—that it was just thrown away or something, ‘cause nobody thought it was important.” ➔



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In 2006, Oakes started the label Let's Pet Puppies to release three 12-inches of vintage Marcus Mixx material. By the time he'd put out just one more, though, his work with Shannon's music became suddenly urgent: In 2008, Shannon's family home was foreclosed on, and he had to move out. He'd lived his whole life there, more than 40 years, and he had to find somewhere to put all his things.

"I went down there and loaded up my car with shit—and I don't mean, like, pillaging his house," Oakes says. "The walls were lined with posters and flyers, and it was all gonna go in the trash, so I saved it. I saved a couple crates of records, including some white labels that I found out later were test pressings of Missing Dog stuff that was gonna go in the trash. There were two locked closets that I couldn't get into that went in the trash. They could've been full of reels—I just don't know. That kind of stuff haunts me."

By reissuing this old material, Let's Pet Puppies has helped preserve a strange and precious piece of house history: the ineffable chemistry between Shannon and Gallegos. "Musically, it's important," Oakes says. "I was a big disciple of Chicago for a really long time—I still am—but there's certain strains of music across the different producing groups that were derivative, and there was something wholly original about these kids. They didn't really go out and participate with other crews. They weren't faithful regulars somewhere. They didn't try to imitate what they did on the radio. They got drunk and they clicked 'record.'"

Shannon discovered house music in the early 80s by listening to WBMX and the Hot Mix 5—their Friday-night program hit him like a thunderbolt. "Sometimes I actually avoided it, 'cause I loved it so much," he says. "I'm like, 'This is outstanding, how could they do this?'" While still a student at Morgan Park High School (he graduated in 1984), he'd weasel his way into fly-by-night clubs that he was too young to enter legally by offering to carry record crates for DJs. "Frankie [Knuckles], the first time I met him—'If you break my records, I'ma have to beat your bootie,'" Shannon says. "I didn't know what he was talking about. 'I won't break them, Frankie, I promise.'"

Shannon wasn't close with the key originators of house music, but of course he knew who they all were—and some of them soon learned who he was. "When Marcus's music came out in the record stores, I never paid for music—stores gave them to me because



Trax Records just hired Shannon to edit its long-running Cable25 program *Trax TV*.
ALEXUS MCLANE

they knew I would play them on the radio," says Farley "Jackmaster" Funk, aka Hot Mix 5 cofounder Farley Keith. One of the records he was given was Shannon's "I Wanna House!" 12-inch. "Me being the epicenter of house music in Chicago, emanating from the radio show in the WBMX days, I was the one who played Chicago house," he says. Shannon couldn't have hoped for a more powerful cosign. "I would call him an eclectic artist," Keith says. "He's got his own genre—that's how different Marcus has always been."

Keith got to know Shannon through DJ and producer Armando Gallop, who in 1989 would contribute to the second Missing Dog compilation. Gallop worked at JR Records in the Evergreen Plaza mall, and occasionally he and Keith would make the short drive over to Shannon's place. Shannon says Keith taught him a lot about promoting parties and getting his music out there. By the early 90s, he was hosting parties at a handful of clubs, most regularly AKA's and Coconuts, and he'd sometimes recruit a bigger-name DJ to boost attendance (and his take for the night).

Shannon also DJed at gigs other people organized. Evidence of one has been preserved in a June 1988 *Chicago* magazine profile of entertainment lawyer and house-scene advocate Jay B. Ross by Mark Jannott, who talked to Ross and Trax Records star "Screamin'

Rachael" Cain at a house party in a Knights of Columbus Hall on 95th Street. Shannon was on the bill, and Jannott noticed him. "Marcus is tall and thin and definitely house," he wrote. "He's got his hair shaved up the sides and piled on top, he's got these funky old plastic-rimmed glasses, he's got this stud in his ear."

Cain still knows Shannon today. "Marcus always had his own slant of house music—he was always a bit avant-garde, but I love that about Marcus," she says. "He's offbeat, but he's still house—he's house to the core."

Shannon was hardly a recluse in the late 80s and early 90s, but the center of his social life remained Head Studios. He occasionally convinced better-known DJs to come hang out, including house pioneer Ron Hardy, who'd DJed some of Shannon's events. Hardy contributed to a few Head Studios sessions by giving advice on editing songs. "I'd get five minutes: 'Ronny, listen to this,'" Shannon says. "He said, 'Keep the bass line out for like 32 measures.' I'm, 'OK, OK, can I call it the Ron Hardy mix?' 'Yeah, I don't care.'" In 1992, Trax sublabel Streetfire released one of these collaborations, "Liquid Love (Chicago Mix)," on the EP *The Best of Ron Hardy*. Let's Pet Puppies reissued it as part of the 2017 12-inch *Liquid Love*.

The more or less constant party at Head Studios was good for attracting collaborators, but it wasn't great for Shannon's bottom line.

"My whole goal, and thank God it's not like this [now], was just to get my beer money and party money," he says. "That's all I cared about."

Those priorities are just about the only way to make sense of the business decisions Shannon made. "If there was a \$1,200 profit, hypothetically, in one pressing, I would not put the basics in to keep that going—I just partied with it," he says. Even his generosity with friends didn't always come from the healthiest place. "It'd be like, 'This guy needs his rent paid, or this paid,'" he says. "Part of my drinking too, besides liking the buzz factor—for a while I was just depressed. I wanted a girlfriend and family. I had very high anxiety—I would help out anybody."

In 1987, Gallegos began broadcasting a program on public-access channel CAN TV called *The Chicago Underground Explosion*. He and Shannon and their friends would throw dance parties in CAN TV's studio, and he'd chroma-key images onto a green screen behind the dancers.

"It was live on the air," Shannon says. He used the show to promote parties he hosted at bars and clubs. "I would plug probably four, five different events, and it was awesome," he recalls. "I just went out there and said, 'All the ladies that want to lick me, you gotta meet us at the party tonight.'"

Broadcasts included a call-in number, and occasionally somebody would try to bait Shannon with racial slurs. "It was that raw and that live and awesome," Gallegos says. "We would get off on doing the show."

The crew frequently kept partying elsewhere after wrapping the show for the night. "We'd go to AKA's, and we were received like we were gods, man," Gallegos says. "It was just something that was out of this world."

Gallegos says that *The Chicago Underground Explosion*, which he produced concurrently with a stripped-down, surreal music-video show called *Boom TV*, only lasted a few years. "There's a saying: 'A favor once too many times given becomes an obligation,' and so it was almost like I was obliged to do this," he explains. "I was behind the scenes—everyone else was getting famous. And so I kinda got sick of it."

He gave the name *Boom TV* to Shannon, whose own show has gone through a long list of names in the intervening years—*Marcus Mixx on TV* is only the latest. Working on it has helped Shannon refine the skills he also uses for paying jobs as Cheap, but Not Cheap Video (and for video-editing work with Wake Up! Music, L.I.E.S., and other labels).



The center label of the first Marcus Mixx release, 1987's "I Wanna House!"

always him—I don't know how else to explain it," Johnson says. Because CAN TV contributors submit their episodes digitally, she doesn't interact with Shannon much, but he does drop her a line occasionally. "He'll reach out and say, 'Hey, thanks to you for all your support,'" she says. "Not many people do that."

In the early 90s—he can't remember exactly when—Shannon briefly served as an A&R representative for Trax Records. "It was like saying, 'Would you like to play for the Bears or the Bulls?' or something," he says. He made \$350 a week and acted as a liaison between potential signees and label founder Larry Sherman.

"He was kind of special—Larry's right-hand guy," Cain says. Because Sherman had a bad reputation in the business—a long list of artists didn't want to work with him—Shannon's job was often an uphill climb. As Michaelangelo Matos wrote in the 2015 book *The Underground Is Massive: How Electronic Dance Music Conquered America*, "Allegations of Sherman's business tactics run rampant where and whenever he is discussed—with artists persistently raising questions about copyright grants and royalty payments."

CAN TV program director Lesley Johnson estimates that Shannon has produced more than 400 episodes for the station since 1996. "He's obviously found meaning in it, and that makes my job meaningful," Johnson says. "He keeps coming back, no matter whatever else is going on in his life. He's still finding time to create. He wants to share that with Chicago, and he's so persistent."

Oakes found Shannon because of his CAN TV show. "It was crazy—there was this rotating head, it was super lo-fi, and it was just him playing weird videos in his basement with a camera on himself," he says. "He would just flash up a number there and beg people to call him."

Shannon's recent episodes lean heavily on music videos, which he breaks up with short skits recorded with his iPhone. "His shows are

Sherman took a hands-off approach to Shannon, encouraging his latest A&R rep to do as he pleased. And Trax sublabels released a couple of Shannon's creations: Streetfire put out *The Best of Ron Hardy Volume 1*, and Saber dropped the *Tits, Ass & Pussy* EP, credited to Shannon, Gallegos, and Victor Blood. Because Sherman didn't spend much time at Trax headquarters, Shannon delivered the money coming in from sales to Sherman's home each week. "He insisted that I drive one of his three Cadillacs," Shannon says. "I had a station wagon at the time. He said, 'You can't represent us in that.'"

Shannon claims that Sherman's hands-off approach sometimes extended to paying him. "After a couple months, I couldn't even get regular money to put in the Cadillac, never mind my station wagon," Shannon says. He'd sometimes have to ask his family for gas money just to get to Trax headquarters. Eventually he reached his breaking point with Sherman. "They had some kind of crazy falling out," Cain says. "Whatever that was."

Trax had the only operational record presses in town, and Shannon believes that Sherman was running a vinyl bootlegging operation on the side. He says he took an incrim-

inating videotape to Pam Zekman, an investigative reporter for CBS Chicago, but Zekman doesn't recall the incident. "I don't remember ever doing a story about bootlegged records," she says. "It's entirely possible in my old age that I've forgotten."

Cain claims that the Recording Industry Association of America raided Trax; Gallegos remembers it being the FBI. Sherman isn't talking, but Cain says all charges against him were dropped and "everything was expunged."

In any case, the damage was done. It would be decades before Shannon mended his relationship with Trax. "We realized that not only did we fuck Larry Sherman, we fucked ourselves," Gallegos says. "Nobody wanted to talk to us after that."

When Shannon burned bridges with one of the most influential labels in Chicago house, his career predictably suffered. He wouldn't have label representation again till Oakes found him in the mid-2000s. A few years before that, Shannon started selling self-released CDs by promoting them on MySpace. He'd buy cheap CD-Rs from Best Buy, slap homemade labels on them, and put them out through a new imprint he →



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called Marcuss Mixxed Up Records. The CDs were part of a series titled Legal Volume—a dig at pirated editions of his older material.

“A lot of guys try to bootleg his stuff, many times, or take advantage of him,” Oakes says. For more than ten years, Let’s Pet Puppies releases of Shannon’s music have helped stamp out bootleggers, and they continue to provide him with a small income. Oakes periodically sends money through PayPal too: “If I give him three or four hundred bucks on records, that’s fine,” he says. “But it’s more like, every other week I give him 25 bucks.” (Shannon opened a checking account with TCF Bank about 15 years ago, but only so he could link it to PayPal.)

Unfortunately, for years Shannon often spent much of those funds on alcohol. “I’d have, like, two 30-packs a day, no problem,” he says.

Oakes noticed. “When I would get money in, I would give him lump sums that would go *poof* really quick,” he says. “Sometimes I’d be like, ‘Hey man, you have 800 bucks here, can I get you the best laptop I can possibly get you?’ He’s like, ‘Yes.’ I tried to get tools that would help him make more money instead of just giving him cash. He’s not the kind to go out

there and blow it, but on the other hand, back when he was drinking really hard, he would just drink through that money.”

Shannon has been sober since 2014, but he says he used to black out regularly from drinking. After such an episode about ten years ago, he came back to himself at Stroger Hospital. “When I woke up, they said, ‘We need to tell you this, blah blah blah, you’ve got something called epilepsy,’” Shannon says. He takes an anticonvulsant called Dilantin, but he still occasionally has seizures. Oakes sends Shannon money when his Obamacare plan and Medicaid assistance aren’t enough to help him afford the medicine.

Around the time of his diagnosis, Shannon either blacked out or had a seizure (he’s not sure which) and knocked out two of his upper incisors. Oakes took care of getting him dental implants. “He came out of the blue one day and said, ‘We’re going to the dentist and see what they can do,’” Shannon recalls. “I think it was five grand.” He’s since lost the left implant, which he says “wiggled loose.”

Shannon calls Oakes his best friend. Gallegos is his best friend too, he says, and so is a homeless man named Grant who watches Shannon’s bag and laptop when he has to use

the bathroom while he’s working at the library or the Cultural Center. (Grant also makes appearances in Shannon’s YouTube videos and social-media posts.) But some misfortunes nobody has been able to help him through. When Shannon’s family home was foreclosed on in 2008, he went to live with his father, who suffered from dementia.

“He would sing ‘Love Me Tender’ over and over and over—he’d sing it for four or five hours straight,” Oakes says.

His father’s deterioration took a toll on Shannon too. “I just watched him slip, so that got me even more depressed,” he says. Shannon looked after his father until his death in 2011, then moved in with his brother, Corey. He lived in the basement of Corey’s family’s house for a few years, but that arrangement came to a mutually agreed-upon end in 2014, after he was caught urinating in the oven while sleepwalking.

Shannon immediately checked into rehab for 30 days at the John J. Madden Mental Health Center in Hines, Illinois, taking only a small bag of clothes and leaving all his other belongings at his brother’s place. He says he hasn’t had a drink since. “It was refreshing—it was like a mental bowel movement,” he says.

“It was like, ‘Wow, somebody’s not slapping me around saying, ‘Well, you’re Marcus Mixx, you did this, you did this, and you screwed it up.’” I already know that. They really helped me.”

He wasn’t making enough money from his music or his video work to support himself once he got out, but he didn’t want to ask his family for help. Within a month or so he landed at the Pacific Garden Mission homeless shelter, a few blocks north of Head Studios’ original Pilsen location.

Over the years Oakes has given Shannon several computers—two PCs, a Mac Mini, and his wife’s old laptop. After Shannon left rehab, Oakes eventually bought him another laptop, but at first he didn’t have a machine of his own. Shannon started making tracks on public computers on the third floor of the Harold Washington Library, using a free Web-based music-programming tool called Soundation. Often he’d tag them on Soundcloud and Mixcloud with the phrase “Home Is Where House Is.” French producer Joseph Bendavid heard some of those tracks and offered to put them out through his Skylax label. Shannon needed money and an ego boost, and he says he sold 50 songs to Bendavid for \$75. (Bendavid hasn’t replied to an e-mail requesting confirmation

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MAR
3



JD SOUTHER &
KARLA BONOFF

MAR
4
+
5



AARON NEVILLE

MAR
16
+
17



LOS LONELY BOYS

MAR
19
+
20



CHRISTOPHER
CROSS



Marcus "Mixx" Shannon on CAN TV, probably in the late 1980s—toward the beginning of his decades-long relationship with the network

of those numbers.) In 2016, Skylax released two volumes of *Home Is Where House Is*, both as 12-inch EPs.

After moving out of his brother's place, Shannon barely spoke to him. But in January 2018, Shannon was stabbed in the stomach while peeing at a urinal at the Walls Memorial shelter. He spent a few days at Stroger Hospital, undergoing two surgeries that left him with a five-inch scar above his navel and a smaller one to its upper right. He badly needed a source of stability in his life, and he broke years of silence to call his brother.

Corey helped Shannon get a job working an overnight shift at an Amazon warehouse in Romeoville. He also found Shannon a place in Gary, Indiana, rooming with another Amazon employee he knew, in part by offering to chip in on rent himself. But within a couple months, Shannon says, his housemate was acting erratically and frequently badgering him for money. Shannon had to rely on his housemate to get to work, so when he moved out of the house, he was forced to quit the job. He returned to the shelter where he'd been stabbed.


Shannon's Facebook update about the attack helped bring him another windfall, though: while he was still in Gary last winter, it caught the attention of Pepper Gomez, who hired him to edit videos for Wake Up! Music. She'd never met Shannon, but they had mutual friends from the house scene. She decided to take a chance on him. "I think it was a culmination of, basically, seeing the challenges that he was going through, and learning about his mad skills and talent," she says.

Gomez insisted on paying Shannon more than he was asking for via Cheap, but Not Cheap Video. And when the laptop Oates had

bought him broke, she got him a new one. "Working with him is a joy—he's so responsive, he gets everything done really quickly, and he's super enthusiastic," she says. Gomez isn't the only one who's been impressed: Cain, who rebooted Trax Records in 2007 and has run the label ever since, hired Shannon earlier this month to help edit the long-running Cable25 program *Trax TV*.

Even after years of homelessness, Shannon didn't seriously consider turning to crowdfunding till early this year. "I think it was a pride thing," he says. "I was afraid I wouldn't get anything, and it would be more of a mental stress type thing—'Wow, I suck that bad.'"

Shannon has been looking at apartments that will allow him to sign a short-term lease without presenting pay stubs. He says he's got leads on places in Garfield Park and Chatham. He needed a new bank account in order to collect the money from his GoFundMe, but after he created a savings account at Capital One, it took three weeks for the bank card to arrive at the homeless shelter.

For as long as Shannon had the family home to fall back on, it didn't matter much that his income was spotty and meager. But once he lost that safety net, he discovered how biased every public and private bureaucracy is against the impoverished. After years of struggling with those systems and getting nowhere, he's willing to consider even a small step a triumph. "I want an apartment that's made for individual dwelling, where I can have a key," he says. "I'm not gonna have live music up—I don't have any pets, I don't smoke, I won't have people over. Like R.E.M., that's me in the corner." 

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Recommended and notable shows and critics' insights for the week of February 28

MUSIC

ALL AGES FREE

PICK OF THE WEEK

Chicago punks Absolutely Not are creepier than ever on *Problematic*



ABSOLUTELY NOT, PAPER MICE, NO MEN
Sat 3/2, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$5. 21+

MARISA KLUG-MORATAYA

LOCAL PUNKS ABSOLUTELY NOT have never been the type of band to put out accessible music. Their early releases showcased fairly standard garage punk, but they topped everything off with a serious dose of spazzy harshness. On their brand-new third album, *Problematic* (No Trend), the band—vocalist and guitarist Donnie Moore, vocalist and keyboardist Madison Moore, drummer Santiago Guerrero, and Meat Wave front man Chris Sutter newly appointed on second guitar—take the eerie dissonance they hinted at on their previous releases and push it to the brink, hammering out obtuse, disjointed, paranoia-inducing, sci-fi new-wave punk, and cramming more bad energy than should be legal into two-and-a-half-minute songs. The tracks on *Problematic* are so dark and unsettling it's easy to forget how fun the band are at their core. But Absolutely Not are always high-energy and upbeat—even through their most dystopian moods—so come dance your ass off as the world burns around you. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

THURSDAY28

KAHIL EL'ZABAR'S ETHNIC HERITAGE ENSEMBLE 7 PM, Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park, \$10-\$18. **ALL AGES**

Amid Chicago's vast pool of talent are a handful of jazz-related percussionists subject to some combination of local renown and international attention. They include Hamid Drake and Avreeayl Ra—each an integral part of the city's most adventurous wing of astral-reaching jazz—as well as drummer Kahil El'Zabar, who's been performing and recording since the early 70s and has counted saxophonist David Murray and violinist Billy Bang as collaborators. With his Ethnic Heritage Ensemble (just one of his enduring troupes), El'Zabar has been able to take on various sonic personas over the years. That's partially because of his group's shifting lineup, but also because of his willingness and ability to experiment—he moves effortlessly between the kit, the mbira, and various other percussion instruments. His latest iteration of the group, a trio with trumpeter Corey Wilkes and baritone saxophonist Alex Harding, takes historical stock of jazz while affirming the genre's destiny on the upcoming *Be Known: Ancient/Future/Music* (Spiritmuse). On the album, tunes paying tribute to writers and jazz luminaries (including a shout-out to Pharoah Sanders) sit alongside El'Zabar's revisiting of Eddie Harris's "Freedom Jazz Dance." Though it's a well-worn standard, it's clearly important to the bandleader—in 1999 he chose it for the title and opening track of an EHE album for Delmark. On *Be Known*, the group also explore muscular, kit-driven sounds, with Wilkes's assured statements bolstered by boisterous rhythms from Harding and cellist Ian Maksin (who isn't touring with the band) while El'Zabar swings deeply behind it all. Though it might seem anachronistic to see creative music and improvisation through a historic lens, El'Zabar's vision and commitment over decades of musical exploration have enabled the art of Ethnic Heritage Ensemble to flourish. And it seems that there's still plenty of ancient history to heave into the future too. —**DAVE CANTOR**

MIKE KROL *The Steve Adamyk Band and Graham Hunt Gemini City open.* 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$12, \$10 in advance. 21+

Mike Krol makes the kind of distorted pop-rock that's so sunny it's liable to burn you till your skin peels. He's a devoted student of the decades-old magic that allows punk fury and pop sweetness to coexist, which is why the songs on his fourth album, *January's Power Chords* (Merge), feel familiar at first listen. And though the relatively languid beachside tune "Blue and Pink" tips its hat to the long-standing fascination that Beach Boys-style surf-rock has with the sand and ocean, when Krol sings about wanting to feel palm trees fall and flatten his body it's clear he knows that even paradise can fail to cure what ails him. Krol ain't trying to reinvent the wheel, he's just trying to outdo himself: he wants his rock to hit harder and more accurately, and his melodies to linger longer. He's true to the history and spirit of 60s rock culture, but also knows he needs to futz around with it; when he interrupts the furi-



Mike Krol
 © BRIAN GUIDO

MUSIC

ous fuzz of “Little Drama” for an oh-so-clean chorus and a limber Krautrock bridge, he supersedes the song’s sense of urgency. —LEOR GALIL

SATURDAY 2

ABSOLUTELY NOT See *Pick of the Week*, page 32. *Paper Mice and No Men open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$5. 21+*

KISS 7:30 PM, United Center, 1901 W. Madison, \$54.50-\$264.50. 18+

The makeup, the pyrotechnics, the guitars that shoot fireworks, the blood spitting, the levitating band members, the fire breathing, the glitz, the glamour, the rock ‘n’ rolling every night and the partying every day . . . after 46 years, it’s all coming to an end, apparently, as Kiss—one of the most ridiculous rock spectacles ever to exist—embark on their farewell tour. This won’t be the first time Kiss have claimed to be hanging up their seven-inch platform-heel boots—they originally said their 2000 reunion tour would be their last. But if there’s any more money to milk out of the band, you can believe that bassist Gene Simmons will be squeezing with all his might to get at every last dime (after all, this is the man who’s stamped the band’s name on a

\$4,000 coffin). There seems to be a constant circus surrounding Kiss, whether it’s reports of an intra-band feud, lawsuits between current and former members, viral videos of Paul Stanley’s hilarious stage banter, or outrageous and questionable political statements. And with all that crap out there, it becomes hard to remember that at one point many, many years ago, Kiss were actually an amazing band (though their last front-to-back great album, *Love Gun*, came out 42 years ago). The first bunch of Kiss records were ham-fisted, hard-rocking, glam joyrides that heavily tipped a mirrored top hat to Slade and Sweet. Unlike their influences, Kiss had no finesse, but that was fine because they had plenty of irresistible hooks—and when you have the high-gain guitar acrobatics of Ace Frehley up front in the mix, it’s easy to ignore the limp drumming of Peter Criss. Though the farewell tour focuses on that classic era, mixed reviews are already rolling in—the most common criticism being the suspected use of prerecorded vocal tracks. But no matter what else happens, the band will undoubtedly blow up a bunch of shit onstage—and with Kiss, that’s most of the fun. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

MANWOLVES *Floof and Family Reunion open. 8:30 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$10. 17+*

There’s a dangerously high likelihood that a group of white guys who heavily incorporate rapping and

hip-hop aesthetics into their sound will fall into that odd frat-rock zone occupied by jam bands and Dave Matthews acolytes. Manwolves, started as an after-school activity by Evanston Township High School students in 2012, have sidestepped such a cheesy fate, at least for the time being. On September’s self-released *A Safety Meeting*, they perform with uniform tightness while wading through languid melodies. They often play with a comforting touch; their gentle horns are equal parts jazz and adult contemporary, and sometimes their guitars take shimmering yacht-rock dives. Front man Jamie McNear is responsible for much of the hip-hop feel on *A Safety Meeting*, even when he’s not explicitly rapping. The inflection in his soulful drawl on the slack “Georgia Peach” shows he understands how the lines between rapping and singing have increasingly blurred—an evolution that has quickened from Atlanta’s post-Future era to today’s Soundcloud scene. It’s the kind of small detail that suggests bands like Manwolves could play an even bigger role in the shape of hip-hop in years to come. —LEOR GALIL

BLACK DIAMOND 6 PM, Elastic, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10 suggested donation. 18+

Black Diamond recorded their brand-new album, *Chant* (Shifting Paradigm), during a five-week residency at beloved Logan Square venue the Whistler. But rather than host a traditional release show, the two-tenor-saxophone quartet, co-led by Artie Black and Hunter Diamond, are taking part in a multidisciplinary event called Zoetic: A Celebration of Visual, Aural, and Botanic Art. Just as Chicago’s jazz circles constantly break down barriers between genres, Zoetic hopes to break down barriers between artistic communities; its organizers realize how easy it can be to stay within one art circle. “The ultimate goal here is to celebrate new works in a space and manner that will invite tangential sectors of Chicago’s creative arts communities together,” Diamond says. The group conjure a ➔

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Thu, Mar. 21 - Sleepy LaBeef

Thu, Mar. 28 - Country Night In Berwyn

Fri, Mar. 29 - Pat McLaughlin Band / Bono Bros

Sat, Mar. 30 - Honky Tonk Festival

Fri, April 5 - Lily Hiatt

Sat, April 6 - Soul Spectacular: A Tribute to Aretha Franklin

MUSIC

continued from 33

playful spirit through their performance, and that'll be matched tonight by an exhibition featuring visual art from Marine Tempels (who created the album covers for *Chant* and Black Diamond's 2017 debut, *Mandala*) and a botanic installation from Ebimera Vines founder Nyabweza Itaagi. Black Diamond's program will include selections from the album (recontextualized and reworked for the event), improvisations influenced by the visual and botanic art around them, and a piece by Diamond that deals with the theme of sustainable urban agriculture. *Chant* proudly wears its creators' influences on its sleeve; "Henrylle" was created in response to a performance by saxophonist Bill McHenry and drummer Andrew Cyrille. At the same time it shows an evolution of the band's tenor-heavy style, which blurs composition and improvisation. But no matter which direction the quartet or its individual members go, their music always has a warm, welcoming feeling—hearing it is like running into an old friend who's ecstatic to see you. And at Zoetic, they're sure to affirm the importance of discovering the commonalities between mediums that are bound by creativity and growth. —IZZY YELLEN

SUNDAY 3

MYKELE DEVILLE Sam Trump, Jovan Landry,
and Daryn Alexis open. 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424
N. Lincoln, \$15, 18+

Any media outlet referencing west-side native Mykele Deville should be required to include a brief of his CV, partially because he's established himself as proficient in several roles: poet, actor, educator, and rapper. And with the remarkable growth he shows on his new seven-song album, *Maintain* (on



Mykele Deville © ZAKKIYAH NAJEEBAH

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THE SECRET HISTORY OF CHICAGO MUSIC

PIVOTAL CHICAGO MUSICIANS THAT SOMEHOW HAVE NOT GOTTEN THEIR JUST DUES by PLASTIC CRIMEWAVE

Freddie Roulette

FREDDIE ROULETTE IS ONE OF THE MOST DISTINCTIVE MUSICIANS IN THE BLUES—HE'S AMONG THE VERY FEW WHO PLAY LAP STEEL GUITAR. FREDERICK MARTIN ROULETTE WAS BORN IN EVANSTON ON MAY 3, 1939, TO A FAMILY JUST RELOCATED FROM NEW ORLEANS. AS A 7TH GRADER AT ST. MARY'S, HE SAW A GIRL PLAYING LAP STEEL AND PROMPTLY STARTED LESSONS. THE INSTRUMENT WAS MAINLY ASSOCIATED WITH HAWAIIAN & COUNTRY MUSIC, BUT BY HIGH SCHOOL ROULETTE WAS PLAYING IT IN SOUTH-SIDE BLUES CLUBS. IN 1965 HE HOOKED UP WITH LEGENDARY GUITARIST EARL HOOKER, ALSO AN UNCONVENTIONAL PLAYER—HE ADOPTED EFFECTS SUCH AS WAH-WAH BEFORE MOST OF HIS PEERS ON CLASSIC LATE-'60S LPS "THE GENIUS OF EARL HOOKER" AND "2 GIGS & A ROACH," WHICH BOTH SHOWCASE ROULETTE'S SLIDE STYLINGS. IN 1968 HOOKER PUT TOGETHER A FUNKY BAND FEATURING ROULETTE, PIANIST PINETOP PERKINS, AND HARMONICA PLAYER CAREY BELL. ROULETTE DIDN'T STAY LONG, THOUGH, AND IN '69 HE BACKED HARP GOD CHARLIE MUSSELWHITE IN THE CHICAGO BLUE STARS FOR THE LP "COMING HOME." ROULETTE BEFRIENDED MUSSEL-

WHITE, TOURED WITH HIM, AND PLAYED ON 2 MORE OF HIS RECORDS ("TENNESSEE WOMAN" AND "MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE") BEFORE MOVING TO THE BAY AREA AS PART OF JOHN LEE HOOKER'S COAST TO COAST BLUES BAND, WITH YOUNG GUITARIST RAY BRONNER. ROULETTE STARTED THE LONG-RUNNING GROUP DAPHNE BLUE, WHICH SOMETIMES INCLUDED WINDY CITY FOLKS SUCH AS PERKINS AND BIG MOOSE WALKER. FELLOW CHICAGO EXPAT HARVEY MANDEL PRODUCED ROULETTE'S 1ST SOLO LP, 1973'S "SWEET FUNKY STEEL," BUT BECAUSE IT DIDN'T SELL, ROULETTE TOOK A JOB AS A BUILDING MANAGER. HE CONTINUED TO LEAD BANDS, THOUGH, AND IN 1994 HE COLLABORATED WITH MANDEL, STEVE KIMOCK, AND AVANT-GARDE HERO HENRY KAISER ON THE ALBUM "THE PSYCHEDELIC GUITAR CIRCUS." IN '96 HE RECORDED "BACK IN CHICAGO: JAMMIN' WITH WILLIE KENT & THE GENTS," AND HE CONTINUES TO PLAY AND RELEASE MUSIC. HIS MOST RECENT RECORD, 2015'S "DAPHNE BLUE: THE LEGENDARY BLUES INSTRUMENTALS," COLLECTS ARCHIVAL SESSIONS FEATURING THE LIKES OF BRONNER, WALKER, PERKINS, AND JOHN LEE HOOKER.

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local DIY label No Trend), I imagine Deville's name will be on even more people's lips soon. He sounds so confident on the mike it's as if he'd dropped his debut mixtape, 2016's *Super Predator*, three decades ago instead of barely three years ago. He's evolving into a sophisticated spitter who's able to bust out an occasional chopperesque rhythm with stylish swing before smoothly pivoting into a slower flow, as he does on the saxophone-heavy "Free Soul." Lyrically, Deville confronts self-doubt, racism, and the injustices late capitalism imposes upon individuals struggling to voice their own agency—and on the title track, he does it all in one song. Tight and concise, *Maintain* shows how maintaining multiple artistic practices can improve your creative strengths and broaden your artistic vision. This is most obvious on "Loosies + Poem for Us,"

which closes with a spoken-word piece by Deville's Growing Concerns Poetry Collective collaborator McKenzie Chinn. —LEOR GALIL

MONDAY 4

DON DIETRICH See also Tuesday, 7 PM, Experimental Sound Studio, 5925 N. Ravenswood, \$10, \$8 students and members. 🍷

Many of the best sounds in music come from pushing a piece of equipment past its limits. Obvious examples include what Jimi Hendrix created with his electric guitar and amplifier and what King Tubby coaxed from a mixing board. Just as

mind-blowing are the sonorities that Don Dietrich and Jim Sauter, Dietrich's partner in the long-running ensemble Borbetomagus (which also includes guitarist Donald Miller), obtain from their saxophones. For 40 years these musicians have combined the overtones and multiphonics first exploited by saxophonists such as Albert Ayler and Pharoah Sanders with overdriven effects and maxed-out amplification—the results come across like field recordings of the destruction of a city by giant monster-movie insects. Though Borbetomagus don't play very often these days, Dietrich has explored similarly blasted territory on his own and in partnerships with a small number of like-minded musicians. Chief among his projects is New Monuments, a trio with drummer Ben Hall and violinist-vocalist C. Spencer Yeh that combines electronically shredded tonalities with breakneck momentum. Last September, when Dietrich was scheduled for a solo appearance at Experimental Sound Studio's Option series—which presents musicians playing and then speaking about their work in an intimate setting—the performance was canceled due to weather-induced travel delays. So on this visit to Chicago, he'll perform twice: once to make up for the canceled solo appearance, and the next night with New Monuments. —**BILL MEYER**

TUESDAY 5

NEW MONUMENTS WITH DON DIETRICH See Monday, 9 PM, Elastic, 3429 W. Diversey, \$10. 📺

RIVERS OF NIHIL *Entheos, Conjurer, Wolf King, and Cannibal Abortion* open. 6 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$17, \$15 in advance. 17+

On their current tour, Pennsylvania's fast-rising technical death-metal stars Rivers of Nihil are trying their hand at the full-album-set format, focusing on last spring's mesmerizing *Where Owls Know My Name* (Metal Blade). The traditional surprise-set-list show has its advantages for sure, but it's good to see this format getting so much traction for new releases as well as old classics. Rivers of Nihil's third full-length is a fantastic candidate for this treatment: it's a loose concept album about the last human on earth, who's made immortal to bear

witness to the death of the planet itself. They've paced the story brilliantly: savage beats and shredding evoke the desperate desire to hang on to life; guest appearances from horn and string players add poignant, emotional elements. The live experience won't be exactly like the studio version, of course, but it should get close. Patrick Corona of Cyborg Octopus will fill in on sax for Zach Sprouse, a friend of the band who often plays on their records. —**MONICA KENDRICK**

WEDNESDAY 6

PLANES MISTAKEN FOR STARS *Airstream Futures and Canadian Rifle* open. 8 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$12. 17+

Listening to the 1999 self-titled debut EP by Planes Mistaken for Stars feels like taking a bullet train back to the year it was released. The record's twinkly guitars, vocals that mix anguished croons and explosive shrieks, and urgent, vaguely poetic lyrics are clear hallmarks of that specific moment in emotional hardcore. The past couple of years have brought renewed interest in bands from the same time period. But while groups such as Majority Rule, City of Caterpillar, and Jerome's Dream had brief runs, split up in the early 00s, and are now making their comebacks with reunion tours, Planes Mistaken for Stars have remained active over the years (aside from a couple of short breaks in the late 00s). More than that, they've been an ongoing concern for more than two decades—a century in punk years—and they've stayed fresh too. On their most recent album, 2016's *Prey*, they incorporate posthardcore-meets-Thin-Lizzy-style riffage and slurred noise-rock yowls, dragging their emo roots through the mud. Though *Prey* came out a little more than two years ago, the unease and fury that pulse through every song remain as resonant as ever. Tonight's show is their only headlining date on this tour. —**ED BLAIR**

ROBYN 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, sold out. 18+

There's never much debate about whether or not a new Robyn album is a party—it's rather about what



Robyn
 © TOM OVERLIE

kind of party it is. With her 2010 trio of *Body Talk* releases, the Swedish dance-pop phenomenon unleashed a rank of futuristic club bangers, several of which, including "Dancing on My Own" and "Call Your Girlfriend," are still rightfully queued up on TouchTunes jukeboxes as a way to boost bar vibes when bar vibes are badly in need of boosting. But Robyn's most recent full-length, 2018's *Honey* (Konichiwa), simmers and writhes in its own restraint.

Where crescendos and towering hooks define *Body Talk*, on *Honey* she glides rather than stomps through choruses—tracks such as "Missing U" and "Because It's in the Music" melt forward, more subtle in their dance-pop moves and moods. And awesome closer "Ever Again" is damn near future funk in its struts. As a result, *Honey* is a chill, cohesive record that feels personal far beyond its lyrics. —**KEVIN WARWICK** 📺

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- 03.17 - EZRA COLLECTIVE
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- 04.22 - PRIESTS
- 05.01 - DENGUE FEVER

TICKETS AND INFO AT WWW.LH-ST.COM

LINCOLN HALL



SCHUBAS TAVERN

EARLY WARNINGS

CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME



Higher Brothers
COURTESY
CODA AGENCY

NEW

Accidentals 6/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM [ML](#)
Cisco Adler 4/30, 7 PM, Schubas, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM [ML](#)
Adrian Belew 10/3, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston, on sale Fri 3/1, noon [ML](#)
Big Thief, Palehound 10/18, 9 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM, 18+
Black Coffee 5/11, 9 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Sunni Colón 3/16, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
J Fernandez, Coughy, Izzy True 4/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle [ML](#)
FM-84 6/29, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM, 18+
Peter Frampton, Jason Bonham's Led Zeppelin Evening 7/28, 7:30 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM
Fulcrum Point presents March Madness 3/20, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Robbie Fulks 5/19, 2 and 5 PM, Evanston History Center, Evanston [ML](#)
Higher Brothers 5/10, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM, 18+
ife 5/9, 8 PM, Sleeping Village, on sale Thu 2/28, 10 AM
JR JR 6/13, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Juice Wrld 5/30, 6:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom
Korn, Alice in Chains 8/21, 6:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM
Brian Krock's Liddle 5/17, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+
Sleepy LaBeef 3/21, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Lithics 6/22, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Nils Lofgren Band 5/12-13, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 2/28, noon [ML](#)
Bruno Major 5/4, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM [ML](#)
bea miller 4/24, 7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM [ML](#)
PJ Morton, Amours 4/30, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 2/28, noon [ML](#)
Open Mike Eagle, Samsus, Video Dave 4/1, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
Palms 4/15, 8 PM, Schubas [ML](#)
Peelander-Z 5/1, 8 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Pelican, Young Widows, Cloakroom 6/29, 9 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM, 18+
Tyler Ramsey 4/22, 8 PM, Schubas
Lucy Roche & Suzzy Roche 4/6, 4 PM, Evanston History Center, Evanston [ML](#)
Royal Trux 5/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Slightly Stoopid, Matisyahu, Tribal Seeds, Hirie 7/21, 6 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM
Smoking Popes 5/10-11, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Al Stewart 6/3, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 2/28, noon [ML](#)
Terror Jr 4/24, 6 PM, Chop Shop [ML](#)
U.S. Girls 6/4, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Lizz Wright 5/14, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 2/28, noon [ML](#)

UPDATED

Downlink, Al Ross, Eliminate, Phiso 6/14, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, rescheduled from 5/3, 18+

Empire of the Sun 5/30-6/1, 8 PM, Metro, 5/30-31 sold out, 6/1 added, on sale Fri 3/1, 10 AM, 18+
Sunn O))), **Papa M** 4/19 and 4/22, 7 PM, Rockefeller Memorial Chapel, 4/19 sold out, 4/22 added

UPCOMING

Acid Mothers Temple, Yaman-taka // Sonic Titan 4/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Aesthetic Perfection 10/5, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Architects, Thy Art Is Murder 5/25, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall [ML](#)
Baroness, Deafheaven 3/31, 6:30 PM, Riviera Theatre [ML](#)
Basement, Nothing 5/24, 7 PM, Metro [ML](#)
Andrew Belle 5/23, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Better Oblivion Community Center 3/23, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Black Lips, Fucked Up 4/27, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Black Moth Super Rainbow 3/20, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Cave Twins 4/3, 8 PM, 210 Live, Highwood
Chromatics, Desire, In Mirrors 5/31, 9 PM, Park West, 18+
Chvrches, Cherry Glazerr 5/2, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+
Clan of Xymox, Bellwether Syndicate 3/14, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Cursive, Mewithoutyou, Appleseed Cast 5/8, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Dengue Fever 5/1, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Luther Dickinson & Sisters of the Strawberry Moon 3/11, 8 PM, City Winery [ML](#)
Ex Hex, Moaning 4/10, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Ezra Collective 3/17, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+
Flesh Eaters 3/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Flipper 6/28, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Florence & the Machine, Blood Orange 5/23, 7:30 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion
God Is an Astronaut 9/25, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Goddamn Gallows, Scott H. Biram 4/6, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Gooch Palms 3/24, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Steve Gunn, Gun Outfit 4/19, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Hatebreed, Obituary, Terror 4/11, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Health 4/20, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge [ML](#)
Peter Hook & the Light 11/1, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Iceage, Nadah El Shazly 5/7, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Iron Maiden 8/22, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park
Jamestown Revival 8/9, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Japanese Breakfast 3/12, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jerusalem in My Heart 3/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Stephen Kellogg 3/22, 9 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
King Buffalo 3/15, 9:30 PM, Hideout
King Crimson 9/10, 8 PM, Auditorium Theatre
King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard 8/24, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom [ML](#)
La Luz 3/22, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
Last Bison 4/7, 7 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Lemonheads, Tommy Stinson 5/10, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Lord Huron, Bully 7/26, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Lords of Acid, Orgy, Genitourters 3/7, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Jeff Lynne's ELO 6/27, 8 PM, United Center
Meat Wave 5/4, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village
Misfits, Fear, Venom Inc. 4/27, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Mono, Emma Ruth Rundle 6/15, 6 PM, Bohemian National Cemetery [ML](#)
Monolord 4/26, 8:30 PM, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+
Willie Nile 4/6, 8 PM, City Winery [ML](#)
Molly Nilsson 3/20, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Tobe Nwigwe 3/24, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Graham Parker 4/18, 8 PM, City Winery [ML](#)
Maceo Parker 6/13, 7 and 9 PM, SPACE, Evanston [ML](#)

ALL AGES FREE

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T.S.O.L. 5/31, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint
Turnover, Turnstile, Reptaliens 5/2, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall [ML](#)
Xiu Xiu 5/17, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Yheti 5/3, 10 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Yob, Voivod 3/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

SOLD OUT

American Football 3/30, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Avey Tare 4/6, 7 PM, Co-Prosperity Sphere [ML](#)
Andrew Bird 4/2-3, 7:30 PM, Green Mill
Casey 5/24, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge [ML](#)
Daughters, Wolf Eyes, Hide 3/8, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Dave Davies 4/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston [ML](#)
Distillers, Starcrawler 5/22, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Dream Syndicate, Eleventh Dream Day 5/31-6/1, 8 PM, Hideout
Bryan Ferry 8/1, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
FKJ 5/17, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Jess Glynne 3/30, 7:30 PM, the Vic [ML](#)
Grandson 3/12, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club [ML](#)
Conan Gray 4/8, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge [ML](#)
Beth Hart 4/25, 7:30 PM, Park West, 18+
Hives, Refused 5/20, 7 PM, the Vic, 18+
Jungle, Houses 3/13, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Lizzo 5/3-4, 8 PM, Riviera Theatre [ML](#)
Massive Attack 3/23, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
John Mayall 7/31, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Mekons 7/12, 9 PM; 7/14, 8 PM, Hideout
Mumford & Sons 3/29, 7:30 PM, Empty Bottle
MXPX, Five Iron Frenzy 3/29-30, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Lucy Roche & Suzzy Roche 4/7, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston [ML](#)
Santigold 5/8, 8 PM, the Vic, 17+
Lennon Stella, Valley 3/28, 7:30 PM, Metro [ML](#)
Summer Walker, Maya B 3/21, 7:30 PM, Metro [ML](#)
Wallows 5/15, 7:30 PM, Metro [ML](#)



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

DECADES OF PLAYING together have given percussionists **Hamid Drake** and **Adam Rudolph** an almost clairvoyant rapport. They met as teens at a Chicago drum shop, and in the 70s they formed the **Mandingo Griot Society** with Gambian kora player Foday Musa Suso. Rudolph moved to New York in the 80s, but he and Drake have continued to collaborate, most notably in **Moving Pictures**. Last May, they recorded improvisations at NYC venue the Stone with saxophonist and flutist **Dave Liebman**, an NEA Jazz Master whose arid, biting timbres grace fusion-era Miles Davis classics such as *On the Corner* and *Dark Magus* (among hundreds of other albums). Last week, UK label **Rare Noise Records** dropped a full-length from the sessions, **Chi**, which blends a dizzying array of tones and colors, including Drake's trap set and booming frame drum and Rudolph's hand percussion and electronics. On "Emergence," Liebman's saxophone and recorder squirt and spray around the duo to hypnotic effect.

Local riff flayers **Sacred Monster** have been playing their cartoonishly awesome, occult-obsessed thrashy doom metal since 2012, but they're only now dropping their first full-length! On Friday, March 1, they celebrate the self-released **Worship the Weird at Live Wire Lounge**. Gossip Wolf is going just to see if "Minister of Screams" **Adam Szczygiel** always sounds as freakin' possessed as he does on the brutal stomper "High Confessor!"

In December, label and promoter **Feel-Trip** launched an Indiegogo campaign to cover unforeseen overhead for its new Avondale record store, **No Requests** (3358 N. Karlov). Owners **David Beltran** and **Diana Bowden** soft launched the shop last week, and they throw a grand-opening party Friday, March 1, with DJ sets by Composure Squad, Equator Club, Johnny Walker, and DJ Hii, drinks by Goose Island and Letherbee, and food by Your Filipina Lola. It's all free and starts at 5:30 PM. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip_Wolf or e-mail gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com.

By Dan Savage

SAVAGE LOVE

Gay-man (or woman) up

Advice for bi folks on coming out of the closet.

Q: I'm a gay guy in my late 40s with a straight sister in her early 50s. She's been married for a bit over two decades to a guy who always registered as a "possible" on my average-to-good gaydar. But I put "BIL," aka my brother-in-law, in the "improbable" bucket because he actively wooed my sister, was clearly in love with her, and fathered four boys with her, all in their late teens now. It turns out BIL has been far more "probable" than I thought. He has a boyfriend but is still very much closeted and denies he is gay. My sister has apparently known

about this arrangement for four years, but has kept it a secret for the kids' sake. But she recently filed for divorce and told our parents and me what's been going on. Their kids have been informed about the divorce, but not about their father's boyfriend.

BIL needs to gay-man-up and admit the truth to himself and the rest of his family and start the healing process. If BIL won't do the right thing, my sister is going to have to tell the kids the truth. What can I do to help her with this? —**DISHONEST GAY BROTHER-IN-LAW**

A: Secret second families—and a secret boyfriend of four years counts—aren't secrets that keep. I don't think BIL is a closeted gay man. My money's on closeted bisexual man.

In the world we live in now, bisexuals are far less likely to be out than gays and lesbians, and the belief that a guy is either gay or straight keeps many bisexual guys closeted. Because if a bisexual guy who's married to a woman knows he's going to be seen as gay if he tells the truth—if no one will ever believe he loved his wife or wanted all those kids—he's unlikely to ever come out. ➔



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TO: **PERRIE GREEN**

You are notified that there is now on file in the office of the clerk of court for Des Moines County, Iowa, a petition in case number JVV005487, which prays for a termination of your parent-child relationship to a child born on

the 4th day of January, 2011 in Iowa City, Iowa. For further details contact the clerks office. The petitioners attorney is Lucas C. Helling of Foss, Kuiken, Cochran & Helling, PC, 100 East Burlington Avenue, PO Box 30, Fairfield, Iowa 52556. You are notified that there will be a pre-trial conference before the Iowa District Court for Des Moines County (Juvenile Division), at the Courthouse in Burlington, Iowa, at 9:00 A.M. on the 18th day of March, 2019. The Court has ordered if you fail to appear at said hearing, the Court may proceed at that time with hearing on the Petition for Termination of Parental Rights. A person against whom a proceeding for termination of parental rights is brought shall have the right to counsel pursuant to Iowa Code § 600A.6A.

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SAVAGE LOVE

By Dan Savage

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I shall now say something that will piss off my bisexual readers: a family-minded bi guy can have almost everything he wants—spouse, house, kids—without ever having to come out so long as that bi guy winds up with an opposite-sex partner. Coming out is a difficult conversation, and it's one many bi people choose to avoid. And who can blame them? I wasn't thrilled by the idea of telling my mom I put dicks in my mouth, but it was a conversation I couldn't avoid.

Your nephews should be told the truth, but you shouldn't be the one to tell them. Their parents should. Sit down with your sister and make the argument: Yes, your kids are upset about the divorce, and it may add to their upset to learn their father is in a relationship with a man. But they're going to be angry about being lied to when they inevitably find out. And if she's keeping this secret solely at BIL's request, well, he can't ask that of her if doing so will damage her relationship with her kids. I don't think she should immediately out BIL, but she can and should let him know that she will have to tell the

children if he doesn't. You should have a conversation with BIL. Open it by telling him that life is long, marriages are complicated, and that you know he loved your sister. But to stick the dismount here—to end his marriage without destroying his relationship with his kids, he can't hide from them. If he doesn't want to tell his boys about his boyfriend because he fears he might lose them, then he'll have to cut his kids out of his life—and that means losing them for sure. And then butt the fuck out.

Q: I'm a 24-year-old lesbian and I've been dating my girlfriend for three years now. She's incredible but she isn't completely out of the closet. I've been out since 2010. It's killing me. We are compatible in every way possible: sexually, emotionally, and spiritually. But I can't help but feel she's ashamed of me. I bring her around all my friends, family, and coworkers. She's fully a part of my life, and I feel like I'm never going to be fully a part of hers. What do I do? —**BEING A SECRET HURTS EVERY DAY**

A: Two thoughts...

1. Your girlfriend is keeping a secret from her family and friends, BASHED, and she has to hide you to protect that secret. You're keeping a secret from your girlfriend: being hidden, being treated like her dirtiest secret, is making you miserable. Tell her how you feel about being hidden—because she needs to know being hidden is making you miserable.

2. "Don't date closet cases" is one of my rules for out folks, but there are exceptions to every rule. If an out person meets someone on their way out or someone who, for good reasons, can't come out this minute (they're dependent on bigoted parents) or possibly ever (they live in a part of the world where it's too dangerous to be out), an out person can date a closeted person. But dating someone who can be out and isn't and has no plans to come out? They're not dating you, they're dragging you back into the closet. Just say no. **FI**

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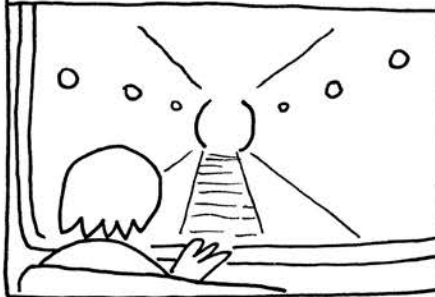
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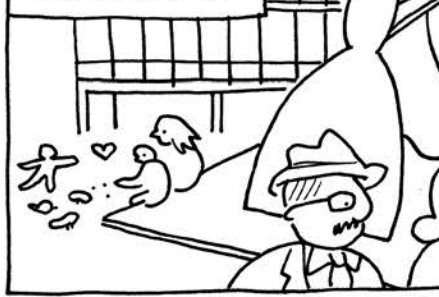
WE'D TAKE THE SUBWAY
DOWNTOWN, TO THE
CIVIC CENTER



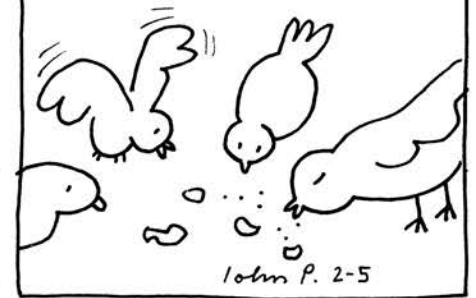
(PRETENDING TO DRIVE
THE TRAIN)



SPENDING THE DAY ON
THE PICASSO, FEEDING
POPCORN TO THE
PIGEONS...

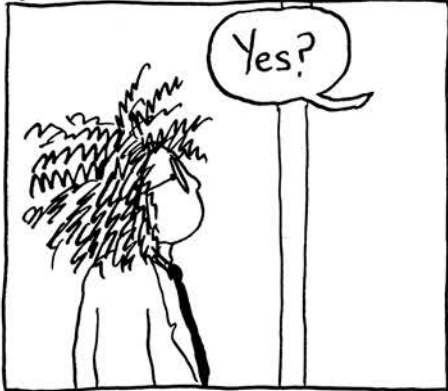


OR OLD BREAD WE
BROUGHT FROM HOME



John P. 2-5

Violet PRIVATE EYE By Melissa Mandes

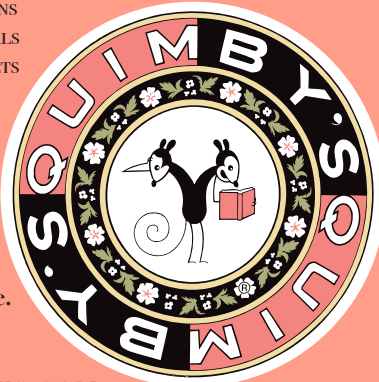


P.L. DERMES IN "PILLS"

BY: MIKE_CENTENO



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