

ELECTION ANALYSIS

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READER

All yesterday's parties

The Bearded Lady and the heady days of Dugan's Bistro, a River North club at the heart of the neighborhood's glittery 1970s queer scene, are the focus of a new book.

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A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

WHATEVER ELSE IT does include, the new normal at least does not include another Mayor Daley. What a time to be alive! This must be how the French felt long about 1792.

But as I promised, this issue isn't so much about the next mayor. It's about the city we will soon choose a progressive black woman to lead. It's chock-full of Chicagoans past, present, and future. It's about what we get up to when we spend time together.

Rising basketball star Markese Jacobs and up-and-coming rapper Brittney Carter are profiled in this issue, while our cover feature is on the Bearded Lady, a 1970s River North scenester—from back in the day when the area

was all glam, glitter, and LGBTQIA—who used to hang out at a club called Dugan's Bistro.

Oh, we've still got politics. Maya Dukmasova digs into 14 races' worth of runoff data in advance of Election Day, April 2, while Ben Joravsky considers the troublingly low—although not worst-ever—February 26 turnout.

We've also got a two-page comics report on Chicago's (lack of) accessibility for folks with disabilities. We look at ShawChicago, a 25 year-old readers' theater that's currently set to close at the end of June. Culture reporter Deanna Isaacs brings us Stanley Tigerman's latest controversial opinions on architecture.

Writer Brianna Wellen looks at a live-lit-style comedy show called *Freshman*, about bad, early art.

All capped off with our original weekly comic strips. Have a favorite yet? I love John P., don't get me wrong, and no one is more dear to my heart than Violet, the pet-crime-solving girl detective. But nothing makes me more excited about the continued future of independent comics than the superweird, downright disgusting P.L. Dermes.

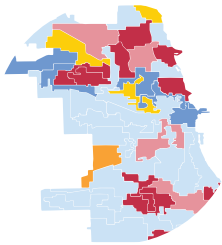
So read up, Chicago. You don't have to start thinking too hard about the next election yet. You have a couple weeks.

—ANNE ELIZABETH MOORE

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CITY LIFE

“FAUX FUR, SNAKE SKIN, hooflike heels, and other abstract signifiers of animality have played a key role in my daily self-fashioning,” says Danielle Rosen. The 30-year-old visual artist, photographed at the Garfield Park Conservatory, is fascinated by the relationship between human and nonhuman animals, and has spent time working on an Icelandic sheep farm in Vermont. There she performed daily massages on three sheep—Luna, Aurora, and Juniper—to remove burrs from their wool. Rosen complements the lush vegetation of the conservatory with a look that she describes as “Bird of Paradise meets Marchesa Luisa Casati.” To match her canary-yellow faux-fur coat from Topshop, she sports a burst of yellow eyeshadow from MAC. From her left ear dangles a string of small colorful sculptures she designed herself, paired with a black hoop from local favorite Hvntr Gvtherer. For Rosen, style can be a form of armor. “Fashion allows me to molt and to build new permutations of being,” she says. “It is a form of world building and a way to carve out new spaces for our bodies.”

—ISA GIALLORENZO

STREET VIEW

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Sixty-five percent of Chicago voters didn't take part in this year's mayoral election 
GEOFF MARSHALL

POLITICS

The ruling 35 percent

The vast majority of Chicago voters sit out another mayoral election.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

A few days before last week's election, I got a call from a local political operative, freaking out over the fact that the lead items on the news were not about the upcoming mayor's race, but about the ongoing sagas of R. Kelly and Jussie Smollett.

"Nobody cares about anything except R. Kelly and Jussie Smollett," the politico exclaimed with an f-bomb or two thrown in for good effect. "If this keeps up, you and I will be the only ones who vote!"

OK, that's an exaggeration. But the relative indifference of Chicagoans to local politics—as reflected by the turnout of 35 percent—proves what I call the Maya Dukmasova theory. Named for the *Reader* staff writer who coined it, the theory goes like this . . .

Damn it, Ben—get on Twitter!

Wait, wrong Maya utterance. No, the relevant Maya theory is that the local electorate is

basically divided between those who passionately care and obsess about Chicago politics—like me and Maya and that freaking-out politico operative—and those, alas, who don't.

And sad to say—these days it seems the don't-cares very much outnumber the do-cares. On the bright side, however, the news isn't as gloomy as we thought.

Going into last week's election, the spokesman for the Chicago Board of Election was predicting the lowest turnout for any mayoral election in history. We beat that rap—barely.

There were 557,000 or so ballots cast last week, or 35 percent of the electorate. That's up from about 484,000, or 34 percent, who voted in round one of the 2015 mayoral election, but down from the 595,000 or so (42.3 percent) in 2011.

But it is up from the 466,000 (33 percent) in the 2007 election. That race pitted Mayor Richard Daley against Dorothy Brown—argu-

ably a low point in the ongoing experiment of democracy in Chicago.

I will now offer several of my own theories for the abysmal turnout, starting with . . . Donald Trump.

Usually, I'm blaming him for the vile and nasty things he does. But in this case I'm pinpointing something he didn't do. He wasn't on the ballot.

For better or worse, Trump's the great energizer in politics these days. Chicago's turnout in November's gubernatorial election rose to about 61 percent, largely 'cause so many Democrats viewed voting as an act of resistance to Trump—even if he wasn't on the ballot back then either. It's hard to make voting for mayor an act of resistance against Trump when all the candidates are already bashing him.

Then there's my friend, good ol' Mayor 1 Percent himself. I have a feeling turnout would have been higher had Mayor Rahm stayed in the race rather than wimping—I mean, dropping—out in September. He'd have probably generated a larger turnout just for being who he is—a symbol of cold indifference to inequality.

In other words, Trump and Rahm represent candidates people might get fired up to vote against. At the same time, there really weren't any candidates to vote for—or at least there was no clear choice around whom progressives could rally.

On the southwest side, people apparently got fired up over Jerry Joyce, the native son of a prominent 19th Ward political dynasty. The vote in many precincts in the 19th Ward topped 60 percent—practically an uprising for this election.

It makes me nostalgic for the mayoral election of 1983, where we had a citywide turnout of 82 percent for Harold Washington's epic showdown against Bernie Epton. In that

election Epton, a moderate Republican, was turned into the "Great White Hope" trying to "save" Chicago (his tagline was "before it's too late") from Washington, who'd defeated Jane Byrne and Richard Daley in the Democratic primary. It was black people voting with pride and white people voting out of fear. Either way, it was the high point of voter participation for a mayoral election in Chicago.

Then, of course, there's the weather. Election Day was a typically cold and dreary day in February. You'd think that after 182 years (to be exact), the powers that be would have figured out that we have something called winter in Chicago. And that it's not a good time to have an election—unless you want a low turnout to help incumbents win.

Guess we just figured out why there's never been an effort to change the state law that mandates mayoral elections in February.

Beyond that there's something more insidious going on. Many Chicagoans have clearly given up hope that a mayoral election has any worthwhile meaning. Politicians and political campaigns come and go, and nothing seems to change, so why bother?

It's a vicious cycle. Vote for the same old, same olds and nothing changes. So it's easy to conclude that you might as well not vote at all. And what's the result? More of the same old, same olds.

The apathy is highest in the black south and west sides. I've seen precinct after precinct—like the third precinct in the Ninth Ward, or the 23rd in the 16th, or the 15th in the 20th—where turnout was in the teens.

No wonder Mayor Rahm feels free to take \$1.3 billion intended for low-income neighborhoods—like those in the Ninth, 16th, and 20th Wards—and spend it on Lincoln Yards in an already gentrifying north-side neighborhood. As long as there are no repercussions at the polls, the inequities will continue.

I'm not sure what I can offer as a way of remedy—other than moving the mayoral election to a warmer month. I mean—duh, people.

Here's hoping that the upcoming runoff between Toni Preckwinkle and Lori Lightfoot fires up the voters. In 2015, roughly 41 percent of voters turned out for Rahm's runoff against Jesús "Chuy" García.

If we can't do better than that, we have to live with the reality that the 35 or so percent of the people who vote will essentially rule the 65 percent who don't.

It's called democracy in Chicago. 

 @bennyjshow



The Titanic, 1978 ■ STANLEY TIGERMAN/ART INSTITUTE CHICAGO

ON CULTURE

The Tiger still roars

Contrarian architect Stanley Tigerman on Mies, the Thompson Center, and the future of architecture

By DEANNA ISAACS

It's a dangerous thing to attempt to categorize Stanley Tigerman, but it's probably safe to say that Chicago's resident architectural curmudgeon is not a preservationist.

When an audience member at a lecture last week at the Chicago Architecture Center asked the notoriously crusty architect and educator what people living in his structures could do to help sustain those buildings for the future, he replied, "What will be will be."

Also, "People die, things change." And "this too will pass."

Tigerman said he's not looking for the kind of veneration for his own work afforded, say, the Mies van der Rohe building he lives in.

"My buildings—I'll be happy if one or two show up in the history books," he said. "But save them? I don't think so."

According to Tigerman, architecture, practiced properly, is an act of criticism, requiring

bravery and ethics. He's an admirer of Jeanne Gang and a fierce critic of what he calls "a whole army of architects who diminish the discipline."

As for any aspiring young architect's chances of real success? "If you're willing to work 18 hours a day, sell your mother for a nickel, are in the right place at the right time, and are lucky, you might have a 15 percent chance."

If that's not discouraging enough, Tigerman hypothesized that, although technology's going to give us a much better world, the profession of architecture might vanish in the next ten to 40 years—taken over, like so many other jobs, by artificial intelligence. As a step in that direction, he cited a 3-D printed building designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill for the Oak Ridge National Laboratory, and, well, printed out in 2015.

And he announced that Archeworks, the public interest architecture laboratory and

postgraduate training center he founded in 1993 with his wife and professional partner, architect Margaret McCurry (and where he worked for 15 years for "zero dollars"), is probably going to close. Its director, Andrew Balster, exited last summer to take a new job. Of this pioneering concept and effort, Tigerman said, "Everything has a time."

Tigerman is in a wheelchair and on oxygen, and says he "feels as embattled now as ever," but nothing kept him from speaking without notes for an hour and half, explaining—among other things—the most glaring contradiction in his famously nonconforming career: his reverence for Mies. He was a founder of the architectural Chicago Seven, a group that came together in 1976 to oppose the hegemony of Mies's modernism, which had ossified into the ubiquitous International Style. They mounted an upstart exhibit (in opposition to a contemporaneous one at the Museum of Contemporary Art celebrating modernism), and Tigerman created a now-iconic image of Mies's S. R. Crown Hall building on the IIT campus sinking into Lake Michigan. He titled it *The Titanic*.

"Mies was always my paragon, my hero—the closest to a godlike figure in my life," Tigerman said. "My problem was with his successors, who never really got it. My living in a Mies building is a daily challenge, an hourly challenge."

He's responding to that challenge by drawing again now, after taking a year off, "Forgive my lack of humility," he said, "but the new drawings are fabulous."

Preservation? "Not for my own work," he told me the next day by phone. In general, "looking backward is not as interesting as looking forward. For me architecture was always fascinating because it was a kind of tabula rasa. You sit down at a drawing board—in the old days—with just a white sheet of paper, and you have to invent. That's the challenge that drew me into this profession. The real challenge is the blank sheet of paper."

For Chicago? "Chicago has this remarkable history," Tigerman said. "Chicago's the most modern city on earth, beginning right after the fire, all the way through Mies. So, yes, I guess it is worth saving."

Two days earlier, in the same room, Preservation Chicago executive director Ward Miller announced that the James R. Thompson Center, a building by Helmut Jahn, who joined the Chicago Seven in time to be part of their 1978 exhibit, has, once again, made his group's annual list of its own Chicago Seven: the city's most-threatened historic buildings. Governor J.B. Pritzker, following the lead of his predecessor, plans to sell the unique, glassy structure to a developer.

Miller said the center's atrium is one of the most remarkable interiors in Chicago, and noted that Preservation Chicago is calling for the city to designate it as a Chicago landmark, which could protect the building and its public spaces.

What did Tigerman think?

"That's a crappy building," he said. ■

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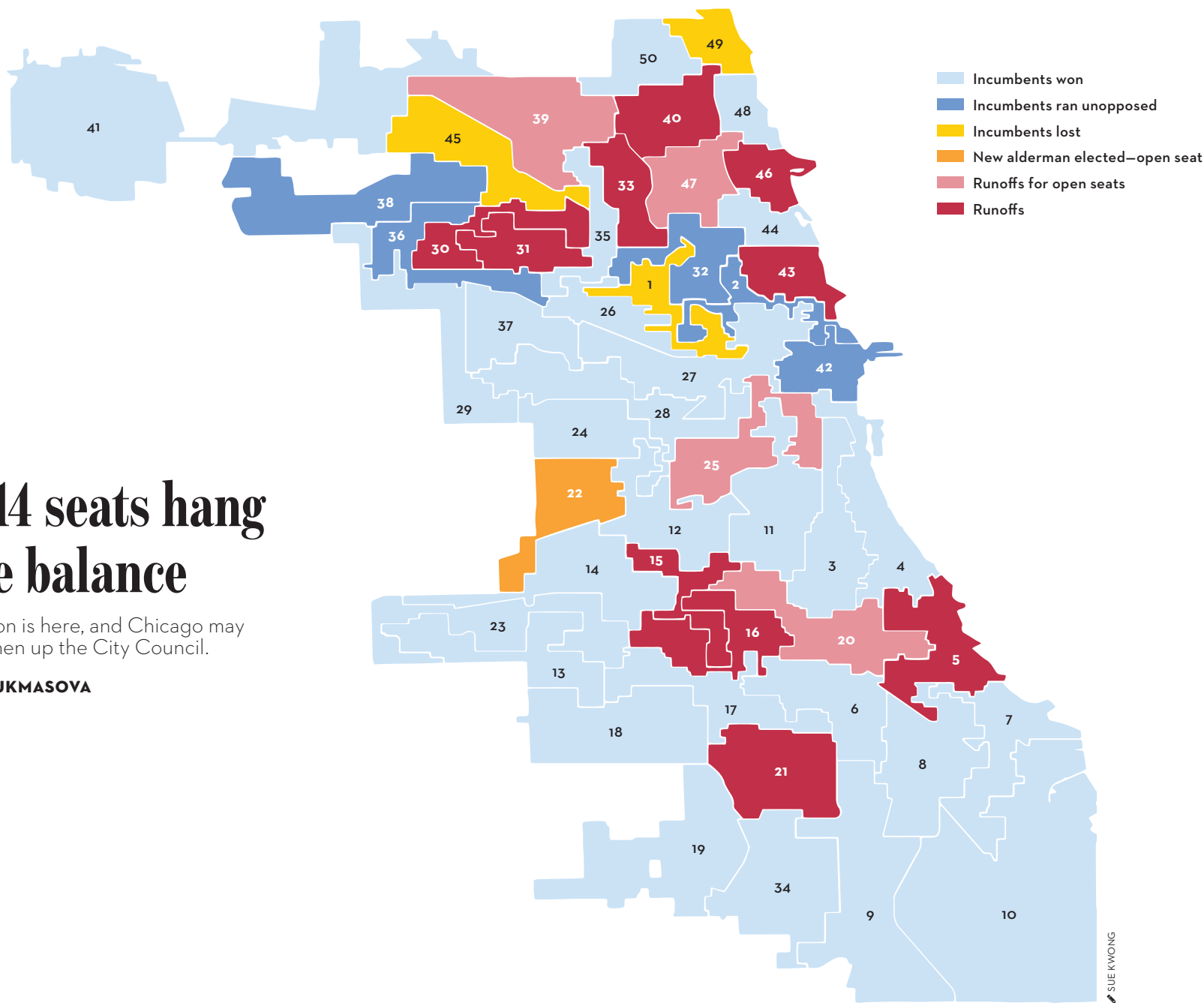
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POLITICS

Just 14 seats hang in the balance

Runoff season is here, and Chicago may further freshen up the City Council.

By MAYA DUKMASOVA



Now that we've all recovered from the hangovers and head-scratching brought on by last week's election results, it's time for the next election cycle. The mayoral runoff promises to be an issue-driven competition over the mantle of the true progressive, good-government choice to lead the city. But what about the Chicago City Council?

Twenty-seven of the sitting aldermen were reelected last Tuesday, including three whose elections the *Reader* watched closely: Marty Quinn, Anthony Napolitano, and Emma Mitts.

In the southwest-side 13th Ward, incumbent Marty Quinn trounced 19-year-old challenger David Krupa with nearly 86 percent of the vote. This is about what happened in 1991, the last time a candidate dared

challenge an incumbent backed by Michael Madigan, the Illinois state house speaker and 13th Ward Democratic committeeman of 50 years' standing. In that race, the incumbent 13th Ward alderman, John Madrzyk—a City Council wallflower, just like Quinn—won with 85 percent of the vote. Indeed, the staying power of Madigan-backed incumbents seems to be unaffected by fluctuations in turnout. While 73 percent of those in the

ward voted for alderman back in 1991, last week just 44 percent of the voters bothered to cast a ballot—still, it was the fourth-highest turnout rate in the city.

Meanwhile, the northwest-side 41st Ward had the third-highest turnout in town, with 47 percent of voters casting a ballot. The result was a landslide for incumbent alderman Anthony Napolitano. He won 70 percent of the vote against opponent Tim Heneghan,

whose appeals to a progressive silent majority were either out of touch with reality or just not rousing enough to get people to the polls.

In the west-side 37th Ward, notwithstanding a social media and community organizing campaign against her, incumbent alderman Emma Mitts won reelection with 54 percent of the vote and won't face a runoff. Despite #AnybodyButMitts, which targeted her for her steadfast support of the \$95 million police academy planned for the ward, voter turnout dipped slightly compared to 2015, from 27 to 24 percent. Though Mitts got just 35 more votes than she did in the 2015 general election, with two rather than three challengers on the ballot, there were fewer candidates to siphon votes away from her.

Five of the 27 incumbents ran unopposed.

Three incumbents lost their seats to challengers: Proco "Joe" Moreno in the First Ward has been replaced by Daniel La Spata; John Arena has been replaced by Jim Gardiner in the 45th Ward; and in the biggest upset of all, seven-term incumbent and erstwhile independent Joe Moore lost to progressive darling Maria Hadden in the 49th Ward. Turnout there was 41 percent, a five percentage-point jump compared to 2015. And significantly, Hadden swept in every precinct but one.

One candidate running for an open seat was elected without a runoff: Michael Rodriguez, who replaces Ricardo Muñoz in the 22nd Ward. Rodriguez, backed by Muñoz and Congressman Jesús "Chuy" García, is likely to carry on his predecessor's legacy as a progressive voice in the council.

This means four new faces grace the council—so far. We'll definitely have four more after runoff elections are decided in wards where the incumbent isn't running for reelection. Ten other runoffs will be between incumbents and challengers. And some are shaping up to be titanic clashes between supermonied establishment candidates and political newcomers.

In the south-side 20th Ward (where incumbent Willie Cochran didn't run for reelection in the face of a federal trial on corruption charges), community organizer,

Dyett High School hunger striker, and union favorite Jeanette Taylor will face former CPS teacher and policy consultant Nicole Johnson, who has backing from large donors affiliated with the University of Chicago and Chance the Rapper. The race is sure to hinge on the candidates' positions on policing, economic development, and the Obama Presidential Center. Contrary to many predictions, 20th Ward Democratic committeeman Kevin Bailey finished in third place, though his endorsement may prove important for the runoff. Bailey gathered only about half of the votes of the other six candidates who didn't make the runoff combined.

In the far-north-side 39th Ward the seat being vacated by Margaret Laurino is contested by Samantha "Sam" Nugent and Robert Murphy. Nugent is an experienced political operative who's worked for former Illinois attorney general Lisa Madigan and has other machine ties. She got the *Tribune's* endorsement. Murphy, the ward's Democratic committeeman, has support from a variety of progressive groups and got the *Sun-Times's* endorsement.

In the north-side 47th Ward—where the aldermanic post was vacated by Ameya Pawar (who's now in a runoff for city treasurer), Matt Martin faces off with Michael Negrón. Martin, a pro-public schools, pro-police accountability, pro-affordable housing civil rights lawyer, is the progressive favorite (and also, surprisingly, the *Tribune's* endorsement). Negrón, on the other hand, is Mayor Rahm Emanuel's favorite (as well as the *Sun-Times's*). He's a lawyer who worked for Emanuel for more than six years and has received \$45,000 in campaign contributions from the mayor. Though Negrón has \$200,000 more in his campaign coffers, Martin won almost twice the number of votes in Rahm's home ward. And that's with seven other candidates crowding the ballot.

With Danny Solis out of the picture, the 25th Ward, which encompasses much of Pilsen and Chinatown, is contested by Byron Sigcho-Lopez and Alex Acevedo. Sigcho-Lopez, a community organizer with the Pilsen Alliance and the pro-rent-control Lift the Ban Coalition, has positioned himself as the anti-gentrification candidate. He's a longtime critic of Solis and has promised never to take campaign contributions from developers, to bring participatory budget-

ing to the ward, and to give residents more of a voice in zoning decisions. (On Election Day his campaign was accused of trying to bribe voters with Amazon gift cards, and the state attorney general's office is investigating.) Acevedo, on the other hand, is seen by most as the machine candidate and is propelled by a mix of unions and real estate interests. Neither of the two was endorsed by the *Sun-Times* or the *Tribune*, but third-place finisher Hilario Dominguez appealed to many progressive groups, and his votes could line up for Sigcho-Lopez.

Finally, these are the runoffs that involve incumbents. Some of these wards have a history of close, contested elections, while others are sites of unusual David-and-Goliath races.

The 15th, 16th, 21st, and 43rd Wards had runoffs in at least four of the last five election cycles.

In Lincoln Park's 43rd Ward, incumbent Michele Smith is facing a runoff for the third

time and enjoys the mayor's support. Challenger Derek Lindblom is a former Emanuel staffer who's garnered some union support but hasn't won endorsements from progressive groups.

In the 15th Ward (an absurdly gerrymandered collection of parts of West Englewood, Back of the Yards, and Brighton Park), incumbent Raymond Lopez is facing Rafa Yañez for the second time. Lopez is a staunch Emanuel ally, while Yañez, a former police officer, has been embraced by progressive groups because of his calls for systemic reforms to the Chicago Police Department and to the way resources are allocated to the police in the city.

In the nearby 16th Ward, incumbent and Progressive Reform Caucus member Toni Foulkes (who's never *not* faced a runoff, neither in her time as alderman of this ward since 2015 nor as alderman of the 16th Ward before the boundaries were redrawn) also faces a familiar challenger. Stephanie →

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Coleman is running for a second time, with funding from Governor J.B. Pritzker, charter school operators, and Greg Mathis, of daytime courtroom drama *Judge Mathis* fame. She actually finished first, with 44 percent of the vote, to Foulkes's 33 percent, but the 16th Ward had the lowest turnout in the city—just 22 percent. Numbers so low could indicate a general disinterest in either candidate. Foulkes enjoys both name recognition and backing from an alphabet soup of labor groups.

In the 21st Ward, which neatly captures Auburn Gresham, four-term incumbent Howard Brookins Jr. is no stranger to runoffs either—he's had one in three of the last four elections. His opponent is Marvin McNeil, who's got about \$5,000 in his campaign coffers (compared to Brookins's roughly \$200,000). He's earned some cred with progressives for his critique of the way real estate interests operate in his ward.

Then there's the 31st Ward, on the northwest side, where incumbent Milly Santiago faces Felix Cardona Jr., a former staffer for disgraced former Cook County assessor Joseph Berrios. His platform isn't significantly different from the police-friendly, pro-charter-school Santiago, and with heavy support from state rep Luis Arroyo it seems likely that Santiago will hang on to her seat.

These five, races, however, promise to be the most hotly contested, and present at times radically different choices for voters between the incumbents and challengers:

In the Fifth Ward, alderman Leslie Hairston, who was once celebrated for being

one of only five votes against former mayor Richard M. Daley's move to privatize the city's parking meters (the others being Toni Preckwinkle, Scott Waguespack, Billy Ocasio, and Rey Colon), faces a challenge from community organizer William Calloway. He was the one who worked to get the Laquan McDonald shooting video released, and he's known for mobilizing demonstrations for racial justice. Hairston, first elected in 1999, has never faced a runoff, and has lost quite a few of her progressive bona fides since Richard M. Daley left office. Though she's still in the Progressive Reform Caucus, Hairston has a near-perfect voting record with Emanuel, including approving the 2012 mental health clinic closures. She's also against a community benefits agreement for the Obama Presidential Center, which would be located in her ward.


Thirtieth Ward alderman Ariel Reboyras (chair of the City Council's Public Safety Committee) also faces a runoff for the first time since taking office in 2003. A staunch mayoral ally with strong support from the police, Reboyras might seem to have a good chance for reelection in his northwest-side community. But his challenger, Jessica Gutierrez (the daughter of former congressman Luis Gutierrez), got only 31 fewer votes than he did. She maintains a slew of progressive endorsements and is backed by CTU and SEIU. Gutierrez has promised to fight for a charter-school moratorium and an elected school board as well as for property tax and police reform.

The dynamics are similar in the 33rd Ward, which stretches from Avondale to

Albany Park. There, incumbent alderman and bowtie aficionado Deb Mell (daughter of long, long, longtime alderman and Harold Washington nemesis Dick Mell) is in a runoff with Democratic Socialist community organizer Rossana Rodríguez-Sánchez. Mell, who was first appointed in 2013 to replace her father, votes with the mayor a two-point-below-average 93 percent of the time. She's been criticized for perpetuating machine politics and for aiding and abetting developers who've spurred gentrification in her ward. All the while, this area of town has seen a flourishing of leftist political organizing. In 2015, Mell escaped a runoff against CPS teacher Tim Meegan by just 17 votes, and since that defeat progressive and leftist groups have built a movement to elect Rodríguez-Sánchez. She's promised to fight against the new police academy and charter school expansion and for abolishing the TIF system. She's also proposing to cut aldermanic paychecks and reopen the city's mental health clinics. There may be no place in the city more likely to elect an openly socialist candidate. Just next door in the 35th Ward, DSA-backed Carlos Ramirez-Rosa won against a three-term incumbent in 2015 and has hung on to it in the face of a challenge from an Emanuel-backed opponent.

In the 40th Ward, the north-side stronghold of incumbent Patrick O'Connor since 1983, the runoff is historic, and the candidate dynamics are similar to those in the 46th Ward. Former rapper Andre Vasquez got 20 percent of the vote, but the other three candidates on the ballot against O'Connor

were also vying for the progressive mantle. Though O'Connor is the second-most powerful alderman in the City Council after Ed Burke, and has nearly half a million in his campaign war chest, the largely self-funded Vasquez could now attract more money and endorsements.

In the 46th Ward, which encompasses Uptown and a bit of East Lakeview, incumbent James Cappleman is facing a runoff against Lori Lightfoot-endorsed chemist Marianne Lalonde. This matchup is proof that when it comes to an aldermanic race, money really isn't everything. While third-place finisher Erika Wozniak Francis out-fund-raised the other challengers and attracted major endorsements from unions and prominent political figures, Lalonde beat her by 167 votes with \$37,000 less cash on hand. And Angela Clay, who finished fourth and had less than \$5,000 in her coffers, only got 141 fewer votes than Wozniak Francis. Still, given their similarly progressive platforms, it seems likely that the other candidates will throw their support behind Lalonde's scrappy campaign. It'll be a tough battle. Cappleman (who has replaced Danny Solis as Zoning Committee chair) enjoys the support of deep-pocketed developers and Mayor Rahm. Though he's been derided for not doing enough to protect the ward's housing stock and not being available to constituents, Cappleman managed to secure 44 percent of the vote. Indeed, he won a plurality of votes in every precinct but one. 

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Bouncing back

Hometown basketball phenom Markese Jacobs was poised to bring glory to DePaul—until he heard a pop in his knee.

By **PATRICK Z. MCGAVIN**

Every Chicago Public League gymnasium contains idiosyncrasies of design and utility, and Uplift Community High School in Uptown is no exception. The most exciting high school basketball game of the year plays out here on January 16. The players, coaches, and the scorer's table are under crepuscular lighting and jammed against a concrete wall on the south side with just a narrow band separating them from the court.

In silhouette, Markese Jacobs is easy to differentiate from the others on the floor. He is a whirl of motion, darting and floating with natural ease. An 18-year-old senior guard at Uplift, Jacobs is one of the best basketball players in the country. ESPN ranks him the number 84 prospect in the class of 2019. His dream is to play in the NBA.

Jacobs first earned national recognition in the summer of 2016 when he made a nonbinding commitment to play college basketball at the University of Kansas. But in a stunning move last November, he backed out of Kansas and announced his decision to stay at home and play at DePaul University.

At five foot ten, Jacobs is muscular, with powerful calves and chiseled arms, built more like a boxer or a football cornerback. He moves gracefully on the open floor and attacks the basket like a gazelle, exploding in the first quarter to throw down a vicious dunk.

The Uplift Titans are playing the Whitney Young Dolphins, a nationally ranked program. The Dolphins have won four state championships and have had two prominent former players, Quentin Richardson and Jahlil Okafor, reach the NBA. Young features junior guard DJ Stewart, a wiry and electric athlete who is also a highly coveted college prospect. (He would finish the game with 33 points.) Uplift is the insurgent program, with an enrollment about one-tenth the size of Young's.

Jacobs takes every game as a personal challenge to prove Uplift is not afraid of any

team in the city, regardless of its pedigree. His teammates feed off of his energy. "He always talks to everybody, the whole team, on the court, and he likes to give instructions about how he wants you to play defense or just how to go out there and play," says Detalian Brown, a senior guard at Uplift.

Jacobs, whose nickname is "the Show," is a young athlete in full possession of his talents. He has a bold sense of theater, and the court is his stage. "I feel like I am an artist," he tells me after the game. "I give the people what they want to see."

On this night, Jacobs makes 22 consecutive free throws, tying a state record. He finishes 25 of 26 at the free-throw line, the fourth-highest single-game total in state history. He scores a personal-best 46 points and contributes six rebounds and a staggering eight steals, underscoring his ability to dominate a game at both ends.

Despite Jacobs's talent, his three-point shot as the buzzer sounds slides off the rim. Young pulls the game out 103-100 in overtime. The crowd seems exhausted and exhilarated when the game finally concludes.

The game is a prelude to a momentous couple of days for Jacobs. On Friday, January 18, he scored a new career-best 47 points and added six rebounds and five assists as Uplift defeated Prosser. This would be his final high school game. The following day, Jacobs slipped awkwardly in a private training session and heard a small pop in his right knee.

After the swelling subsided, Jacobs underwent an MRI. The test revealed a partial tear of his anterior cruciate ligament, one of four primary ligaments that connect the femur to the tibia. Imagine the knee functioning as a hinge: the ACL allows for acceleration and sudden stops. ACL injuries are especially problematic for basketball players, who depend so much on quick movements. Chicago Bulls MVP Derrick Rose was never the same player and drifted from team to team after he tore his ACL in a



Jacobs dunks at the Proviso West Annual Holiday Tournament in December. ©OLAJUWON CORE

playoff game in 2012. The injury will sideline Jacobs for six to nine months.

Jacobs is a 21st-century athlete, a gilded child of the digital information age who is the primary chronicler of his own narrative. He actively cultivates a persona, on and off the court. "The Show" has, at present, 6,471 followers on Twitter and more than 22,000 on Instagram. A YouTube highlight video of Jacobs scoring 41 points against a Saint Louis school last Thanksgiving weekend has generated more

than 202,000 views. He radiates pure joy and flashes his infectious smile while on court during games.

"Social media and technology get everybody's attention," Jacobs says. "When I was being recruited, if college coaches could not come out and make it to my game, they could just go on social media and see the highlights. Your video can go anywhere. It gets you publicity."

Historically the great Chicago high school players—Mark Aguirre, Isiah Thomas, Derrick Rose, Jabari Parker—have matriculated ➔

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continued from 9

at schools on the south or west sides. Jacobs is an outlier, having spent his whole life in the neighborhoods of Uptown and Edgewater. The middle child of a sports-mad family, he was primed for precociousness.

“When it is your child, you try not to be biased, and you try to look at it with a regular eye,” says Marcus Jacobs, Markese’s father. “Since birth he has always been an energetic and fearless kid. He always stayed that way, as if he never got the memo that he should grow out of that.”

Football was young Jacobs’s first passion. From the age of nine to 13, he stood out in youth league at Clarendon Park and Welles Park. He excelled as a running back, linebacker, and cornerback.

“We are a competitive family,” Marcus says. “It’s what we do. It’s in the blood. With Markese, he was just a great natural athlete. I was convinced if he took up hockey or tennis, he’d do really well at that as well.”

His brother Demarius, currently a freshman guard at Saint Louis University, is two years older. Originally the brothers chose different sports to demarcate their own interests. Demarius had basketball and Markese football. The separation was a way for them to assert their own identity and peacefully coexist. “My brother is very laid-back,” Jacobs says. “You won’t know what he wants to do because he won’t tell you. He only knows what he wants to do.”

When Jacobs was a seventh-grader, however, everything changed. He joined an intense pickup game with Demarius and some cousins at Clarendon Park.

Basketball, he learned, amplified his talent, his explosiveness and athleticism, his relentless drive and competitiveness. Because of the scarcity of players on the court at a given time, a great player like a Michael Jordan or LeBron James disproportionately changes the game and potential of a college program or professional franchise. The spontaneity and free flow of basketball allows for a great deal of creativity and personal investment. Jacobs formed an intimate bond with the players, the court, and the spectators.

“With basketball, it is all skills and talent,” he says. “The environment is more boxed in. Your mind has to be there. People are closer to you, in the stands or talking to you, so you have to be mentally ready.”

Uplift Community High School, at 900 W. Wilson, was founded in 2005 and has a student body of about 200. According to Illinois Report Card, the school is 80 percent black, 13 percent Hispanic, and 2 percent white.

David Taylor has been the only boys basketball coach at the school since it began varsity competition in 2007. A native of the north side, Taylor played high school basketball at Senn and later coached at Von Steuben in Al-



Marcus Jacobs, sons Demarius and Markese, and Marcus's brother Carl © COURTESY MARCUS JACOBS

bany Park. In 2003, he was an assistant coach on the legendary Panthers team that became the first north-side school since World War II to qualify for the state finals. By the time the Jacobs brothers arrived—Demarius in 2013 and Markese in 2015—Uplift was the best program on the north side.

When Jacobs arrived at Uplift, he joined a team that had won the state championship in 2015. As a freshman, he started every game and averaged 15.7 points, 2.6 assists, and 2.1 steals.

“He was perfect,” Coach Taylor says. “He had a genuine excitement about what was happening.” Playing with the prominent south-side-based club program Mac Irvin Fire, Jacobs traveled the national club circuit in the spring and summer of 2016, during the school’s offseason. His outstanding talent drew the attention of some of the top college coaches in the country.

Kansas coach Bill Self was one admirer. Self offered Jacobs a formal scholarship during a recruiting trip to campus. Within two weeks Jacobs committed. “My heart was really with Kansas, but I felt like I rushed it a little bit,” he says. “I did not really break down the recruiting process.”

During a city playoff game at Farragut in February 2017, the Titans’ dream season came off the rails during a contentious moment between Taylor and Jacobs. Demarius fouled out in the fourth quarter, and Uplift was trying to get back into the game. According to Taylor, Jacobs ignored his coaching instructions. Taylor removed him from the game and attempted to talk with him on the bench to explain his decision.

Frustrated, Jacobs directed a barrage of profanity at Taylor. Uplift lost the game and was bounced from the city tournament. The coach suspended him for the Titans’ final two games in the state tournament. Without Jacobs, Uplift lost a close state tournament game against eventual Class 2A state champions Orr Academy High School.

Taylor said that success changed who Jacobs was. He saw a young player struggling to live up to a sudden burst of attention and heightened expectations. “Markese is a good kid, a swell young man,” he says. “Once he became a star athlete in Chicago, he adopted an attitude of how stars are supposed to behave. Some of how he behaved in basketball goes against how he is as a person.”

Jacobs says he wasn’t mature enough for the big stage. “I felt like I had everything and I knew everything already, but that was not the case,” he says. “You have to be able to listen before you go. I was pretty much too bighead-



Jacobs holds a trophy as a sophomore. COURTESY MARCUS JACOBS

ed, because everything had been handed to me.”

That summer Demarius elected to attend Hillcrest, a prep school in Phoenix, Arizona, as a fifth-year senior. Upset at not being allowed to play in the state tournament, Jacobs wanted a fresh start at a new school, so he followed his brother to Arizona. His time at Uplift seemed to be over.

“I thought he was in the wind,” Taylor says.

Jacobs knew he left Uplift out of anger, and also knew that the change in scenery didn’t feel right to him. “It was more for [my brother] than it was for me,” he says. “I was just there to be there with him.”

So he returned to Chicago. He was courted by several high school basketball programs, but he had made up his mind. He asked Taylor about rejoining the program at Uplift, and Taylor agreed—but also stipulated that Jacobs had to come off the bench.

During the 2017-’18 season, in a new role as a reserve player, Jacobs averaged an impressive 18.7 points in 23 games. He led the Titans to a Class 2A sectional semifinal, where they lost narrowly to two-time defending state champion Orr.

“When people can live with your mistakes, it motivates you to get up,” Jacobs says. “No matter how many times I fall, I get back up.”

He returned to the starting lineup for his senior year. Before his injury, Jacobs averaged 30.2 points, 4.5 rebounds, 3.3 assists, and 3.8 steals. Only 20 players in state history have ever averaged so many points per game, according to data from the Illinois High School Association (IHSA). He ended his high school career with 1,613 points.

Jacobs has always shown a hunger to stay at the top. Despite coming off back-to-back career-best-scoring games, he scheduled private training sessions to stay sharp. He torqued his body and his knee gave out. “I was working out too hard. I thought it was just a sprain. I did not think it was serious,” he says. “It really broke me at the moment it happened for a couple of days.”

Jacobs is a realist, with intimate knowledge of the brutal nature of college recruiting. He worried while convalescing that his career was over. DePaul, after all, was his second choice. He contacted the school’s coaching staff as soon as the injury happened, and they assured him it did not change the status of his scholarship.

“The injury is still a tragic thing for me,” Jacobs says, though he’s relieved he did not fully tear his ACL. He underwent surgery to repair the torn ligament in early February. He is focused on his rehabilitation and graduating.

Now Jacobs is eager to make his mark at DePaul at the new Wintrust Arena at McCormick Place. He joins highly regarded forward Romeo Weems (ranked number 45 by ESPN) of South Haven, Connecticut, as an impressive one-two recruiting punch to bring new life to a Blue Demons’ program that has struggled to attract top national recruits. Not since Quentin Richardson in 1998 has DePaul signed the city’s top player.

Jacobs says that when he first decided on DePaul, he was told he would be better off getting as far away from Chicago as possible. As he faces an injury that threatens to sideline his career, and months of grueling rehab, he says it is better to have the support of his family and friends in his hometown.

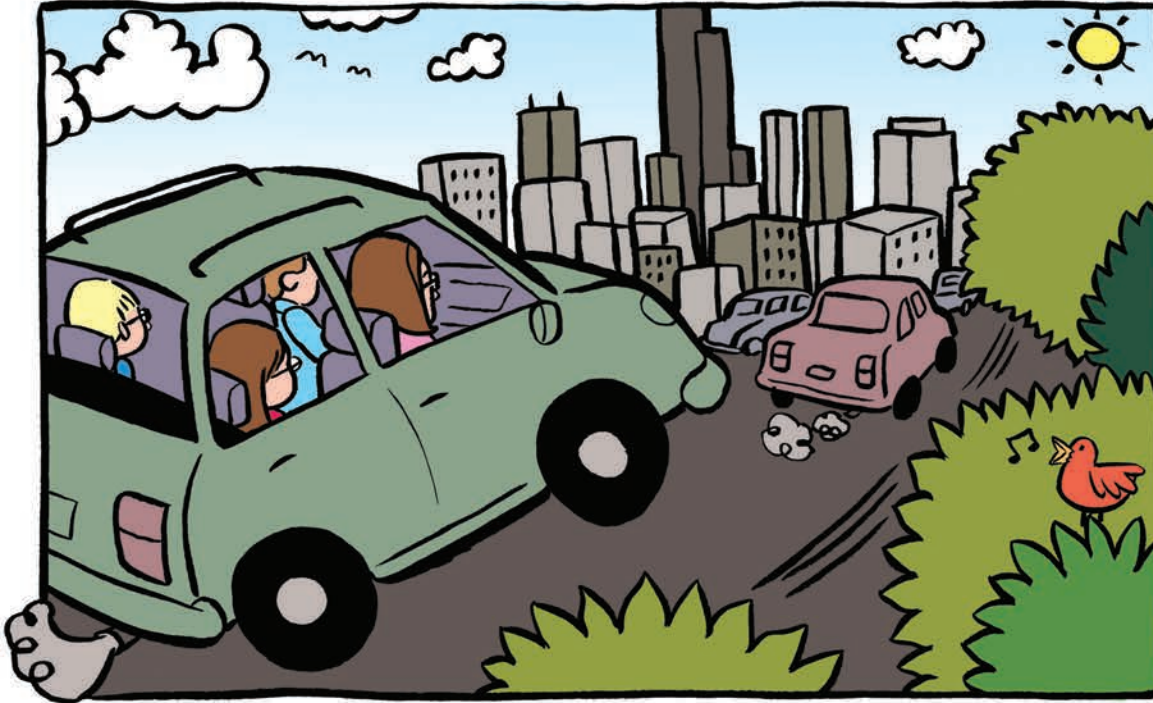
“Staying home is not going to break me,” he says. “Just the opposite. It motivates me. It lights a spark.”

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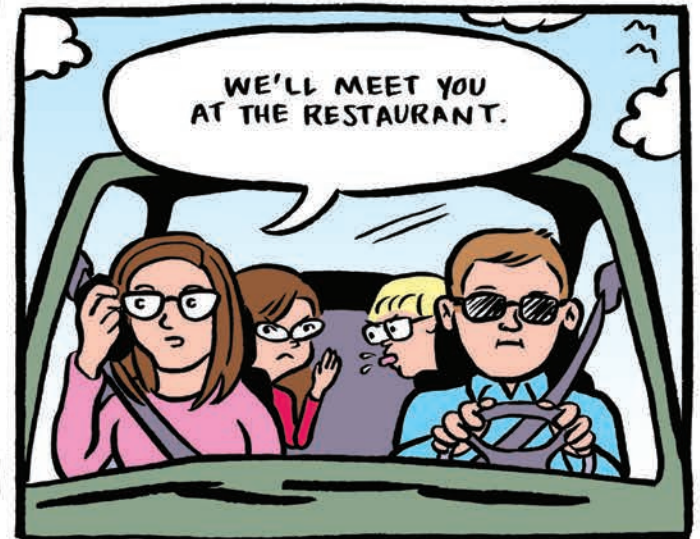
SPINNING OUR WHEELS

by SARAH WATTS
and
LUCIUS WISNIEWSKI

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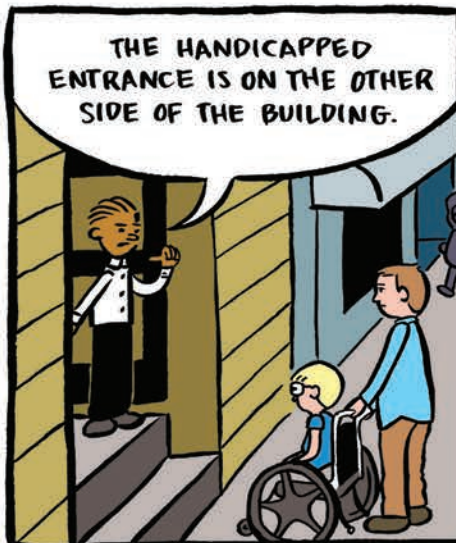
TWELVE YEARS AGO WE MET DURING COLLEGE, FELL IN LOVE, AND GOT ENGAGED. WE LIVED ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE CITY FOR OUR FIRST YEAR OF MARRIAGE, AND THEN MOVED TO THE SUBURBS TO RAISE OUR KIDS.



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BUT AS PARENTS, COMING HERE CAN BE CHALLENGING. ONE OF OUR CHILDREN HAS A VARIETY OF SPECIAL NEEDS AND THE CITY IS NOT ALWAYS ACCOMODATING.



SOMETIMES IT'S ALMOST UNWELCOMING.



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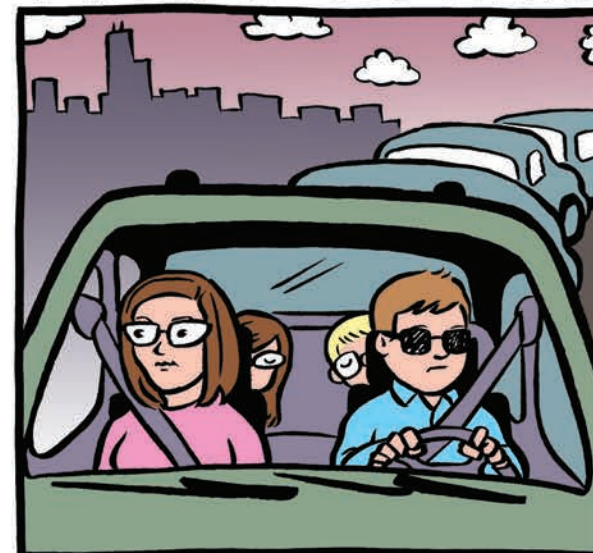
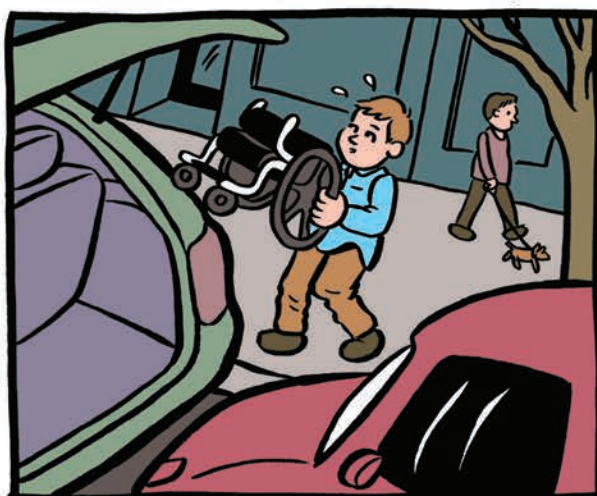
IT'S NOT SOMETHING WE PAID ATTENTION TO WHEN WE WERE DATING, BUT NOW, AS PARENTS OF A KID WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, IT NEVER FAILS TO TAKE US BY SURPRISE WHEN WE VISIT.



IF HALF A MILLION CHICAGOANS LIVE WITH DISABILITIES, WHY, THEN, ISN'T THE CITY MORE ACCESSIBLE?

BECAUSE OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ISSUES, ONE OF OUR CHILDREN WILL INEVITABLY MISS OUT ON SOME OF THE ACTIVITIES WE TAKE FOR GRANTED. WE SEE CHICAGO AS A RICH CULTURAL OASIS — BUT WE FEAR OUR SON WILL SEE IT AS RESTRICTIVE AND THEREFORE NOT WORTH EXPLORING.

WE HOPE—SOMEDAY—IT WILL BE DIFFERENT.





Gao's Kabob Sports Grill; the kitchen of Friend BBQ  KATHLEEN HINKEL

RESTAURANT REVIEW

Give yourself a tongue lashing at Friend BBQ and Gao's Kabob

Two new Chinatown spots warn of the coming northern-barbecue outbreak.

By **MIKE SULA**

You could scratch your back with the red-willow twig that serves as the delivery vehicle for the Xinjiang special lamb skewer at Friend BBQ. You could knock it in a bow and practice your apple shot, William Tell style. Or you could order a dozen or so of these fatty, sizzling, spice-crusting meat sticks and, once you've gnawed them clean, head into the night to hunt the undead that lurk in the side streets and alleys of Chinatown after dark.

Probably you'll just doink them in the metal canister set at each table of this two-month-old purveyor of *shaokao*, or northern-style barbecue, found on the streets of every city in China. That's also known as *chuanr* (串儿), among Muslim Uighurs in the far northwestern Xianjing autonomous territory from where it comes—likewise the particular species of shrub these little charred nubbins of ruminant flesh are threaded on. Like many good things, *shaokao* came to Chinatown via the Richland Mall basement food court, in this case five years ago at Lao Pi, a tiny food stall that specialized in all sorts of charcoal-grilled critters.

Lao Pi, sadly, is no more, though *chuanr* has been replicating quietly in a number of other restaurants in Chinatown, and seems ready for an outbreak with the recent opening of two specialists, Friend BBQ and Gao's Kabob Sports Grill. The former is a satellite of NYC's well-known Friendship BBQ, based in Flushing, Queens, while Gao's is a southern incursion, part of a growing minichain in flux, with locations in Houston and Plano, Texas (where it was recently renamed Focus BBQ). Since they've opened, both spots have been mobbed at times, usually late at night, when eating meat on a stick is the only safe method of exercising your twitchy jaws.

These spicy chew toys beg for beer, but though both places offer it on the menu, you'll have to bring it yourself. Neither is currently pouring—which can be particularly frustrating in the case of Gao's, which opened in July in a narrow shotgun dining room on sleepy 22nd Place, well off the Wentworth stroll.

Of the two, Gao's seems a bit more open to offering the off bits, including, e.g., whole grilled lamb feet, square-angled joints of


chewy cartilaginous connective tissue crusted in the blend of cumin, chile, salt, and sesame you'll find pasted on much of the *chuanr* you'll encounter anywhere. There are pigs' feet too, not unlike the jellylike roasted nuggets found at A Place by Damao. No matter what your anatomical predilection, Gao's will grill it on a stick for you: kidneys, gizzards, hearts, tripe, and tendon from different creatures in all their chewy, snappy, slithery variety. Though simple lamb- and beef-fatted muscles take top billing (red willow again, just for the former), there are lots of parts to explore, from ruddy pork riblets to suckered squid tentacle tips to scored cocktail sausages (notice how the first character in 串儿 looks like a couple of weenies on a stick) to sheets of textured tofu skin wrapped around lengths of chive that almost feel like a breath mint amid the relentless brush fire in your mouth.

There are larger formats with which to fill out a session at Gao's—garlicky oysters, sheets of enoki mushrooms or more chives, piles of crayfish, heaping platters of spicy chicken and noodles. And there's quite a lot of overlap

between this menu and that at Friend BBQ's, in addition to which each is almost indistinguishable in execution (though there seems to be a great disturbance in the Yelpverse with regard to both).

At Friend at least you can distract yourself by staring at six mounted flat-screen TVs livestreaming Dota 2 game play (it's *Survivor* at Gao's). The Xinjiang lamb skewers are a size or two larger here, and I was particularly taken with the ribbons of chewy chicken skin and the cylinders of glistening pork belly wrapped around snappy enoki.

Does it sound like a mess? Each spot provides plastic gloves to protect tender digits, and tables are set with paper to absorb the splatter—though at Friend you'll hardly need them with a roasted half eggplant slathered in garlic that seems delicate in comparison, each strand of the heat-sweetened fruit flesh ready to be chopsticked from the skin like a long noodle. Same goes for the chopped scallop meat served on the shell under a tangle of noodles.

At Friend you can also order a mess of different skewers dunked in a small hot pot—which shows that if *chuanr* isn't supplanting Chinatown's other prevailing eating trend, it's at least trying to adapt to it. Either way, Friend and Gao's, like the many hot-pot spots in the neighborhood, achieve a similar communality that scratches primal itches, if not other hard-to-reach places. 

 @MikeSula



COURTESY DARR GAPSHIS

LIT

All yesterday's parties

Dugan's Bistro and the Legend of the Bearded Lady looks back at a time when River North was full of drag queens and glitter.

By **DEVLYN CAMP**

Though it opened in 1973, four years before the iconic New York club, Dugan's Bistro in River North became known as the Studio 54 of the midwest, attracting appearances from Bette Midler, Diana Ross, John Waters, Andy Warhol, among many others, and often as a surprise to the bar's patrons. But the one star they were almost guaranteed to see was Bob Theiss, better known as the Bearded Lady.

It was a time of new liberation for the queer community, and River North was known for its glamorous gay nightlife. Same-gender dancing had recently been decriminalized in Chicago. The cops were looking for ways to arrest gays on public indecency charges, but with politically mobilized queer groups like Gay Liberation and Mattachine Midwest backing them, the queens were free to dance. When Eddie Dugan opened his club at Hubbard and Dearborn, across the street from a police station, he intended to attract the most flamboyant gay crowd. It drew police harassment starting from its opening weekend.

"After all these years of repression, people were just ready to party," says LGBTQ grassroots historian Owen Keehnen, "and they partied like no generation before them." Some arrived in costume, others rushed to the safety of the Bistro bathrooms to prepare their looks for the Christmas party, featuring a large tree hanging upside down from the ceiling beside an upside down Santa; or the "Roman Orgy party," filled with men in G-strings and giant palm branches; or the circus night with wild caged animals. But no one was as flamboyant as Theiss. Dugan's eventually became known as "The Home of the Bearded Lady."

Now, 45 years later, Keehnen is documenting the tales of the parties remembered, despite many stories lost to a night of cocktails, a devastating epidemic, and the wrecking ball.

Dugan's Bistro and the Legend of the Bearded Lady is the latest in Keehnen's long list of queer history books about various Chicago legends, among them lesbian feminist activist Vernita Gray, Baton Show Lounge founder Jim Flint, and entrepreneur Chuck Renslow, whose many businesses included Man's Country bathhouse, physique photography provider Kris Studios, the International Mr. Leather competition, and the Gold Coasta, a leather bar down the street from Dugan's Bistro.

While he was writing about Renslow's bar, many people asked Keehnen what day-to-day life must have been like for these 1970s club kids. As he asked around, the people who

danced at the extravagant parties sent him their memories.

The club was always packed. "People couldn't believe so many gay people existed in the world, much less in one city," Keehnen writes. Keehnen's interviewees most remembered the Bistro characters who aimed to scandalize the straights. Enter the gleefully subversive Bearded Lady.

Inspired by Hibiscus, the leader of the San Francisco psychedelic hippie performance group the Cockettes, the Bearded Lady, or BL, became known for his bizarre performances, during which he slowly stripped away several layers of "women's" clothing until he

DUGAN'S BISTRO AND THE LEGEND OF THE BEARDED LADY

By Owen Keehnen. (OutTales)
Reading Thu 3/7, 7 PM,
Unabridged Bookstore, 3251
N. Broadway, 773-883-9119,
unabridgedbookstore.com. **FREE**

was left wearing little more than his ornate headdresses made of plastic pink flamingos, kitchen utensils, and birdcages. "He was totally outrageous onstage, very strange," gay activist Rick Karlin told Sukie de la Croix of the *Windy City Times* in 2001 (at the time published by current *Reader* publisher Tracy Baim). BL was the perfect fit for the Bistro. Every aspect of the experience was meant →



COURTESY DARR GAPSHIS

FRESHMAN: A SHOW ABOUT YOUR TERRIBLE EARLY ART

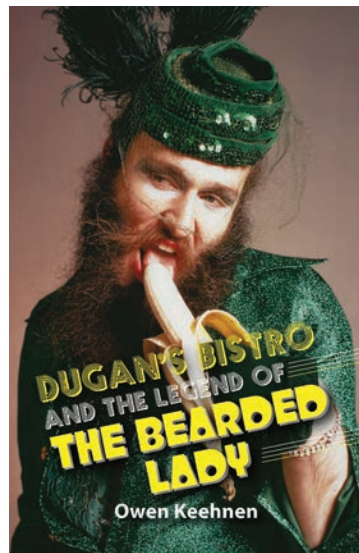
Thu 3/14, 7 PM, Transistor, 5224 N. Clark, facebook.com/freshmanchicago. **FREE**

continued from 15

to be memorable, so flamboyantly against the norm that patrons couldn't help but tell all their friends. Dugan told the drag queens who worked at the club to get on the bar to dance and kick off all the drinks to the floor, and then he'd buy everyone a new drink. For Dugan, people asking one another "Did you hear what happened at the Bistro?" was the best form of advertising.

This type of history, of long-ago parties and nightlife socializing, is almost impossible to document, but it survives in the memories of the people who put on the glitter and costumes, a flagrant transgression against what general public considered "decent" behavior. Keehnen set out to collect their anecdotes in what he calls a "mosaic of stories." His book grew bigger than the story of the Bearded Lady: it became an homage to the many queer people lost in the epidemic in the years after the Bistro's demise in 1982.

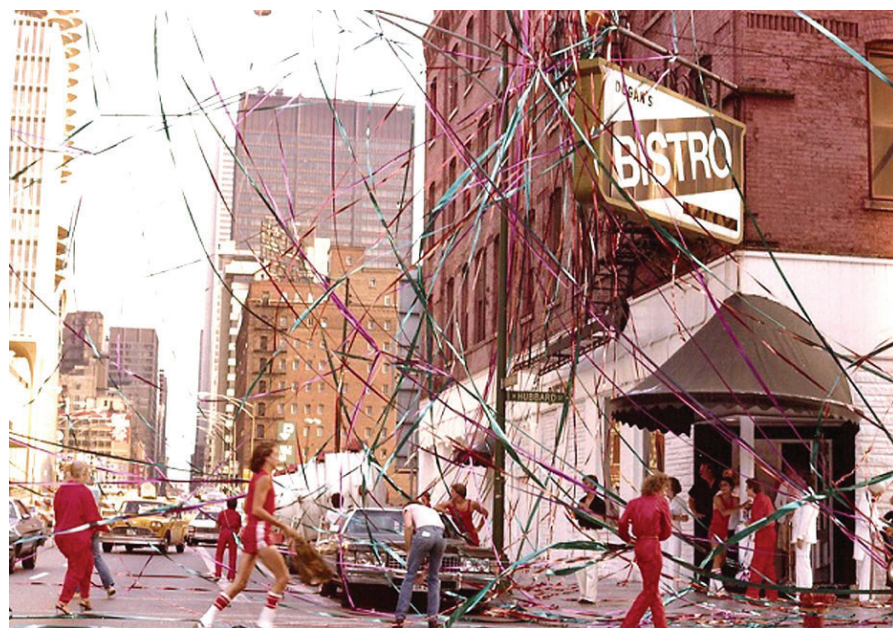
"People like to think we don't have a history," Keehnen says. But that's not true. Much of it wasn't recorded during the heat of the party, and then stories went unwritten as friends took care of each other through the AIDS crisis. Many of the parties have long been forgotten. "It's a very fragile history," Keehnen continues. "But it was an important part of people's lives, and that's the part of history I've always been most attracted to. There's plenty of coverage on the big court



cases, but I think the way you really connect with people is to let people know how they had fun, how they had sex, where they went to party, things that people can relate to on a really basic way."

After disco died due to racism and homophobia, redevelopment began in River North. In 1982, the newspaper *GayLife* eulogized the Bistro as BL's home "succumbed to the wrecking ball and 'progress.'" There remains nothing quite like the Bistro today. **FI**

@devlyncamp



The Bistro's (420 N. Dearborn) sixth anniversary party in 1979. **FI** COURTESY DANIEL GOSS

COMEDY

Hall of shame

Freshman invites performers to share their terrible early art.

By **BRIANNA WELLEN**



Annie Russell **FI** MATTHEW THORSEN

Before Annie Russell became a news editor at WBEZ by day and stand-up comedian by night, she was a college student who wanted to make a real statement with a one-act play. Russell describes the work as a cross between the film *Garden State* and an episode of *Law & Order: SVU*, a revelatory piece about date rape. Years later, she found the play buried on her hard drive. It wasn't quite as profound as she remembered.

"That sort of gave me the idea that I know that other people have things like this sitting under their bed or in a file or on a hard drive, and wouldn't it be hilarious if we all read them," Russell says. "When I read that first piece for the first time in front of an audience, I wanted to shrink directly into the ground. I was so physically embarrassed. But the way the audience reacts to someone who is very clearly getting embarrassed onstage is just sort of comedy gold."

What started in 2015 as a show called *Cringe!* in Vermont, where Russell was living at the time, will be rebooted in Chicago this month as *Freshman: A Show About Your Terrible Early Art*. Performers present work that they earnestly put out into the world and believed to be good at the time, whether it be a song, paintings, short stories, videos—anything that was created as art with a capital A.

Over the past four years of diving into people's most embarrassing creations, Russell

has discovered one common, moody thread. "You see a lot of, especially writing, that is really dark and is really sort of hilariously self-serious," she says. "You can tell that that person was trying to go for this really poignant moment, and it just didn't really work out."

The only stipulation is that performers have to be accomplished in some field now so that it takes the sting out of making fun of their earlier work. That doesn't necessarily mean the work they show has to be related to what they're doing now—even though this inaugural lineup is made up of all comedians, the work presented ranges from performance art to video to a photo series. The goal is to remind performers and audience members alike that if you have a piece of youthful writing or visual art that you're ashamed of, you're not alone.

In many ways, it's a confidence boost to see how far we've all come, but the show's also a reminder of how much better we can still become. "What I'm doing now likely ten years down the road I'm going cringe at," Russell says. "What I feel like is so important is just that ability to look back on work that we did and be understanding that we all start from various places, and we get better over time. That is what the creative process is about for me." **FI**

@BriannaWellen

THE DOCTOR'S DILEMMA

3/23-4/15: dates and times vary; see website, Ruth Page Center for the Arts, 1016 N. Dearborn, 312-587-7390, shawchicago.org, \$40, \$35 seniors, \$20 students.



Bryan Wakefield as Bluntschli in *Arms and the Man*  PAUL PETERSON


For Christian Gray, who first performed with Scogin and ShawChicago in 1997's *Major Barbara*, Scogin's approach "was very much like you do Shakespeare. His whole concept was bringing the music of the language to the audience." Shaw himself described his writing as "word-music," and ShawChicago's recent production of *Arms and the Man*, starring Gray, proved to be a delightful and absorbing example of how effective the readers' theater model can be.

But, Courier notes, selling that model to newer audiences—even in an age when live-lit series are proliferating—wasn't easy. "Shaw is hard to sell to start out with. I would get a phone call and they would say 'I understand you're a readers' theater. Is that right?' And I would say 'yes.' And they would say 'Why would I want to come and see somebody read to me?' And I would say very often, 'Give it a shot. If you don't like it, I will give you your

ARTS & CULTURE

money back.' And I never in all those years ever had to give any money back."

Scogin's legacy may still live on, however. Barbara Zahora, a longtime ShawChicago associate who served as consulting artistic director for this final season, is exploring the possibility of starting a new classical company and posted a fund-raiser on Facebook to obtain funds to file for nonprofit status. Nearly \$2,000 has been raised so far, out of a \$10,000 goal.

Zahora cautions that the new company is still very much in the exploratory stage, and that if it does take off, it may not always hew to the readers' theater model. But for productions that use it, she says, "[We will] stress to people that the reason we're doing it isn't necessarily because we're lacking money or ability to do full productions. It's a choice—an active and positive choice to show the musicality of that type of writing and linear humanist thinking that was happening back in the late 19th and early 20th century." 

 @kerryreid

THEATER

The curtain falls on ShawChicago

After 25 years, the readers' theater is packing up its music stands and calling it a day.

By KERRY REID

After 25 years, ShawChicago is going out the way it started—with a concert reading of *The Doctor's Dilemma*, George Bernard Shaw's 1906 "problem play" about rationed medical care. On February 20, the ShawChicago board of directors announced that the company would be shuttering permanently on June 30.

"Subscriptions had gone down fairly dramatically in the last few years—about 20 percent," explains board member Tony Courier, who also served as ShawChicago managing director from 2002 until he retired in June 2018 (he was replaced by Luther Goins). And that was largely attributable to the age of our audience. We never were really successful at breaking into a younger market."

The company formed originally in 1994 as a project through the Chicago Department of

Cultural Affairs (now the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events) and became a resident company at the Ruth Page Center for the Performing Arts in 2003.

A larger issue than new audiences, however, was the October 2018 death of Robert Scogin, artistic director for ShawChicago for 23 years. Says Courier, "If Bob had been there, it would have been a challenge. But I don't think it would have been as much of a challenge. Because he generally had some pretty good ideas of other things we could be doing to raise funds."

Scogin, who had long been ill, trained most of the ensemble in the readers' theater model, where actors perform facing the audience with music stands holding the script. Production values are minimal—there are some costumes and music and sound cues, but no sets or elaborate lighting.

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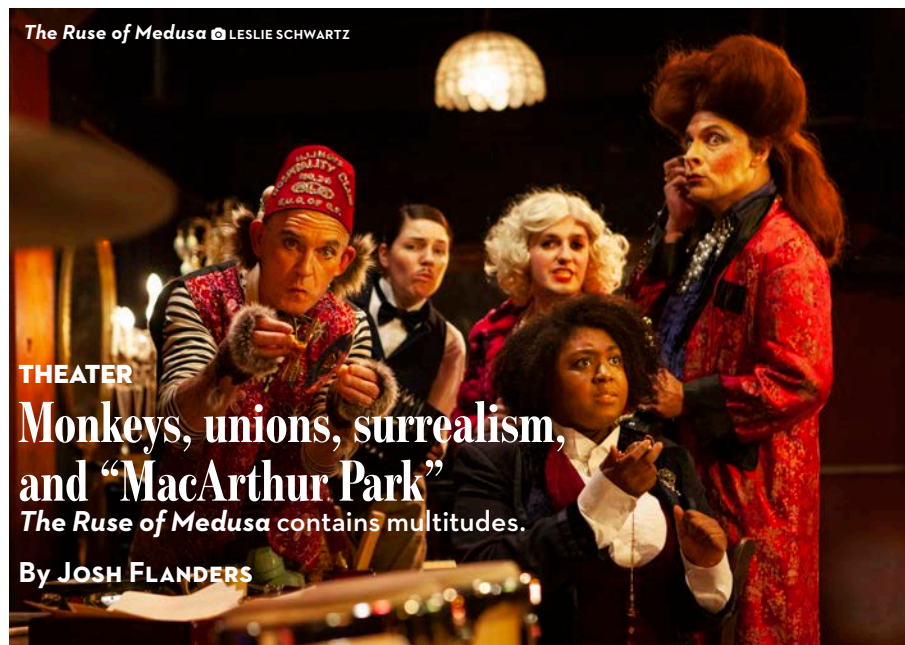
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by Morgan Gould
directed by Jessica Fisch

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RR THE RUSE OF MEDUSA
Through 4/7: Fri-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun
4 PM, Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division,
312-857-3034, facilitytheatre.org, \$25.



The Ruse of Medusa © LESLIE SCHWARTZ

THEATER

Monkeys, unions, surrealism, and “MacArthur Park”

The Ruse of Medusa contains multitudes.

By JOSH FLANDERS

When you enter the Chopin Theatre for *The Ruse of Medusa*, it may sound like a half-dozen wild monkeys are performing a musical cacophony on piano, strings, and horns because they are. Settle in for an hour of wild antics, visual and aural stimulation, screaming (both human and monkey), and total silliness. Written by Erik Satie in 1913, this lyrical comedy is one of the first plays to contain absurdist and surreal elements predating the start of dadaism.

As is to be expected from an artist who referred to himself as a phonometrician (“someone who measures sounds”) and drank himself to death with absinthe, do not presume a straightforward plot in Satie’s work. The story loosely follows Baron Medusa, a farcical eccentric egomaniac; his valet, Polycarpe; foster daughter, Frisette; her suitor, Alstolpho; and Jonas, a mechanical monkey. It occasionally touches on political and labor issues involving unions, which may or may not be relevant to anything.

Originally performed in private French salons, *The Ruse of Medusa* got its most famous production at Black Mountain College in 1948, where it featured an interdisciplinary dream team including architect and inventor Buckminster Fuller as the Baron and dancer-choreographer Merce Cunningham as Jonas, with Arthur Penn directing and decor by artist Willem de Kooning. Those are awfully big shoes to fill, and Dado, who directs this Facility Theatre production, does an admirable job staging this difficult and bizarre production. Dado decided to gender-swap the roles, which

enhances Satie’s script and makes for some interesting dynamics.

Wonderfully expressive and over-the-top, veteran drag performer David Cerda is in his element as Baron Medusa, complete with outrageous wig and costumes. He relishes breaking the fourth wall, directly engaging the audience. Jenni Hadley is powerfully dynamic as Polycarpe, whose demeanor and costume recall those of the White Rabbit from *Alice in Wonderland*. A triple threat, she also accompanies the superb small orchestra on violin and absolutely slays in a solo rendition of “MacArthur Park.” Laurie Roberts brings hilarious physical timing as Alstolpho, along with salacious accordion skills.

Some elements of *Medusa* work well, like the musical direction by Sam Clapp and the beautifully colorful costumes by Kotryna Hilko. The choreography, also by Roberts, occasionally succeeds, like a silly handshake dance highlighting the awkwardness of social conventions. The overall action would benefit from some well-rehearsed clowning techniques and pantomime to help nail the comic timing.

The last 20 minutes bring delightful surprises that directly engage the audience in fun ways that make this surreal sensory show worth experiencing, if for no other reason than the strange joy of witnessing a production unlike anything else playing in Chicago. But beware, much like absinthe, *Medusa* is an acquired taste. **✎**

Twitter @joshua_flanders



Ariodante
© CORY WEAVER

OPERA

Handel gets radical

Bikers, simulated sex, and pole-dancing puppets pull Lyric’s *Ariodante* into the 20th century.

By DEANNA ISAACS

No one wants to see general director Anthony Freud on the stage of Lyric Opera before the curtain rises, but on opening night of *Ariodante* last Saturday, there he was again, bringing the news that mezzo-soprano Alice Coote was down with a fever and wouldn’t be there to perform the title role.

RR ARIODANTE
Through 3/17: Tue 3/5, 2 PM;
Fri 3/8, Mon 3/11, and Thu 3/14, 7 PM;
and Sun 3/17, 2 PM, Lyric Opera of
Chicago, 20 N. Wacker, 312-827-5600,
lyricopera.org, \$49-\$279.

Aagh. Chalk it up as another casualty of this long dirge of a winter. In her place, Freud said, we’d have recent Ryan Training Center alum Julie Miller.

Then the delicious George Frideric Handel overture began, and the curtain rose on three rooms in what could be a castle on a remote Scottish island where the country folk had gathered to hear the stringent admonitions of a black-clad preacher man.

As dramaturg Derek Matson noted in a preopera lecture well worth the early arrival, *Ariodante*, first performed in 1735, is an Italian opera written by a German composer for an English audience. It runs just short of four hours (long was appreciated back when there was no other way to hear music but live), and has a good-versus-evil plot that turns on a patriarchal code of ethics in which a female breach of chastity can result in an “honor killing.” Handel set it in medieval times.

In this version, an international coproduction originally directed by Richard Jones, the

action has been moved forward to 1970, the melodrama ramped up, and the bad guy in a traditional love-and-power triangle turned into an easily recognizable villain—a tattooed sadist in biker’s garb under his priestly cloak.

There’s plenty to take exception to, including simulated abusive sex, props that look like Tom of Finland sketchbook rejects, and a pole-dancing puppet sequence (substituting for a ballet) in which the virginal heroine, Ginevra, foresees herself hitchhiking outta there and rapidly descending into a desperate state of exploited debauchery. All this culminates in a radical change in the story (spoiler alert) that amounts to grafting the walk-out finale of Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* onto what Handel intended as an all’s-well, lovers-reunited conclusion.

Whether that change can offset either the original or the new misogyny of this updated production is arguable, but the heavy-handed melodrama, wedded to a sublime score in which no situation is too dire for delicacy, nuance, and beauty, made for a very interesting evening.

Countertenor Iestyn Davies, fully convincing as Polinesso, the despicable preacher, provided ravishing vocal moments. So did a pair of silken sopranos: Brenda Rae, in her Lyric debut, as Ginevra and Heidi Stober as her easily misled maid, Dalinda. Bass-baritone Kyle Ketelsen was solid as Ginevra’s torn father, the King of Scotland, and Ryan Center tenor Eric Ferring was notable as Ariodante’s brother, Lurcanio; Miller, admirably, held her own. Harry Bicket conducted. **✎**

Twitter @Deannaisaacs

ALVIN AILEY AMERICAN DANCE THEATER

Through 3/10: Wed 7 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; programs vary, see schedule, Auditorium Theatre, 50 E. Ida B. Wells, 312-341-2300, alvinailey.org, \$34-\$130.

ARTS & CULTURE

Linda Celeste Sims and Glenn Allen Sims in Jessica Lang's *EN* PAUL KOLNIK

DANCE**Modern classic**

Alvin Ailey returns to Chicago for its annual visit to the Auditorium Theatre.

2019 MARKS TWO anniversaries for Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater: 60 years since the company was founded in New York, and 50 years of performing annually at the Auditorium Theatre in Chicago. This year the company brings three different programs to town featuring a variety of work, including its first two-act ballet. *Lazarus*, which premiered in December 2018, is inspired by the life of Alvin Ailey and is the third piece created by hip-hop choreographer Rennie Harris for AAADT. Other programs include classic works by Ailey—including the 1960 masterpiece *Revelations*—as well as new works by American choreographer Jessica Lang (*EN*) and British

choreographer Wayne McGregor (*Kairos*), which reflect AAADT's increasingly eclectic repertory.

Robert Battle, the company's artistic director since 2011, says, "If you break down the repertory historically, you see it's already in there. If you look at *Revelations*, there's classical line. When I look at work by McGregor, I see the influence of a work by [former Ailey dancer and choreographer] Ulysses Dove. In *Night Creature*, his collaboration with Duke Ellington, Ailey takes a risk blending classical ballet with jazz. That's part of what we do."

Having directed his own dance company, Battleworks, for a decade and choreographed several works for AAADT prior to assuming its leadership, Battle says, "I feel that same sense of relief and satisfaction curating Ailey's repertory as I get as a choreographer making things. Ailey was one of the first modern dance repertory companies, and it feels like we're only just getting started."

—IRENE HSIAO

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ARTS & CULTURE



Doubt: A Parable © CLAIRE DEMOS

THEATER

RR Where art meets headlines
Doubt: A Parable explores the Catholic Church at a crisis point.

John Patrick Shanley's Pulitzer Prize-winning 2004 play is timely now, in the wake of last month's long-overdue Vatican summit to address what the current pope called the "scourge of sexual abuse perpetrated by men of the church to the detriment of minors." Set at a Bronx church school in 1964, the story dramatizes a test of wills between a young priest, Father Flynn, and a starchy older nun, Sister Aloysius, who suspects Flynn of having "interfered with" a 12-year-old male pupil. Though Aloysius is the principal at the school where Flynn teaches, as a male priest he outranks her, and she fears the church's male-dominated power structure might ignore or cover up the case. So she embarks on a campaign to expose Flynn—a crusade that could bring harm to the boy she believes Flynn victimized, who is the school's first and only black student.

While keeping the audience guessing whether or not Flynn is guilty, Shanley also explores the Roman Catholic Church at a crisis point, when the Second Vatican Council of 1962-'65 was urging the ancient institution to rethink its relationship to the modern world. Aloysius, a traditionalist, thinks that the church must project bedrock certainty—even though she chafes at its restrictions on her authority as a woman. Flynn, a liberal, advocates a "welcoming," inclusive church—but he also clings to his privileged, protected position as a male in the ultimate old boys' club.

The Gift Theatre's intimate alley-style staging vividly expresses the crackling conflict of ideas and emotions between Aloysius (Mary Ann Thebus) and Flynn (Michael Patrick Thornton). —**ALBERT WILLIAMS**
DOUBT: A PARABLE Through 3/31: Thu-Fri 8 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 3:30 PM, 1700 Theatre at Steppenwolf, 1700 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650, thegifttheatre.org, \$45-\$55, \$25 seniors, \$15 students.

Where adolescence never ends

I Wanna Fucking Tear You Apart should be your next online binge watch.

If the 30s are the new 20s, and the 20s are but an extended adolescence, then we may never have to grow up at all if we live long enough. Sam and Leo—"Team FatGay," as they term themselves—are doing their damndest to steer us to that brave new world. These thirtysomethings stay up all night eating Chinese takeout, popsicles, and cornflakes; watch *Top Chef* and *Grey's Anatomy*; play Super Mario; and lip-synch their way through choreography from *Sister Act II*. Yes, they are in fact plucky, young(ish) writers making their way in New York City. Oh, and Sam is fat and Leo is gay.

Morgan Gould's 2017 *I Wanna Fucking Tear You Apart* proceeds episodically through the lives of these two roommates and best friends. Sam (Teresa LaGamba) is a freelance writer hard at work on her first novel, a millennial *Bridget Jones's Diary* told in texts, status updates, and a food diary. Leo (Robert Quintanilla) works for a BuzzFeedesque Web content company and staunchly avoids working on his short stories. Their island of mutual acceptance and submerged shame is disrupted when Chloe (Jessica Ervin), a straight cis white female aspiring novelist from suburban Maine, befriends Leo and tempts him with the siren song of the norm. It's like a sitcom where all the characters are writers. Sam and Leo's relationship is the main attraction and drawn well. —**IRENE HSIAO**
I WANNA FUCKING TEAR YOU APART Through 3/23: Thu-Fri 7 PM, Sat 4 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM, Rivendell Theatre Ensemble, 5779 N. Ridge, 773-334-7728, rivendell-theatre.org, \$38, \$28 students, seniors, and military.

RR Where we celebrate queer joy
 A toast to a chosen family with a shot of Southern Comfort.

Often stage narratives about LGBTQ people use stories of familial rejection as their anchors, but the beauty of *Southern Comfort* is in its centering of trans love and queer joy. Vile parents lurk on the periphery, but this play is not about them. It's never been about them.

A bluegrass musical based on the award-winning documentary, *Southern Comfort* gets its Chicago premiere with Pride Films and Plays under the direction of JD Caudill, with North Homeward starring as Robert Eads, a trans man from Toccoa, Georgia, who has been disregarded by a transphobic health-care system and now faces terminal ovarian cancer. His final wish is to hit the Southern Comfort conference, an annual communion of trans folks where he met his sweetheart, Lola (Kyra Leigh). The couple is part of a larger chosen family that includes Jackson (Lizzy Sulkowski), Carly (Ricki Pettinato), Sam (Benjamin Flores), and Melanie (Sinclair Willman). While the group must come to terms with their patriarch's death, they also hold intimate conversations about everything from Snickers salad to gender-affirmation surgeries. The mundane moments make for sweet sitcom, something rarely afforded to communities forced to defend their humanity to the outside world.

While there are a number of robust performances by trans actors playing trans characters, the show-stopping moments belong to Leigh, whose take on Lola brilliantly encapsulates the shifts in vulnerability that come with self-actualization. Her comedic timing whips air into tense moments, but it's her conversation with Eads's parents towards the end of the show that recently left a Sunday-matinee audience utterly intoxicated, in big, ugly tears. —**KT HAWBAKER**
SOUTHERN COMFORT Through 3/31: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3:30 PM; also Wed, 3/27, 7:30 PM, Pride Arts Center, 4139 N. Broadway, 866-811-4111, pridefilmsandplays.com, \$30-\$40, \$25 students, seniors, and military.

RR Where a lost history is exhumed

We Are Proud to Present a Presentation . . . grapples with giving voice to a forgotten people.

This Steppenwolf for Young Adults (SYA) production's full title is worth sharing: *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as South West Africa, From the German Südwestafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915*. The act of shortening the title reinforces the idea of erasure that's present throughout this play within a play, penned by Jackie Sibbles Drury and codirected by SYA artistic director Hallie Gordon and Gabrielle Randle. The cast of six plays a group of actors struggling to tell the story of the little-known genocide of the Herero people, perpetrated by Germans at the beginning of the 20th century. Since the only surviving artifacts from that time belong to the colonizers, the group stretches to personal, deeply buried, and often shocking places in an effort to identify with their characters and feel empathy for the unwritten Herero story.

Coping with difficult subject matter through humor only gets the actors so far before each begins to grapple with his or her role in giving voice to a forgotten people—or stifling it. That each member of the cast is primarily identified by his or her race drives home the play's main question of who has the right to tell certain stories. For Actor 6/Black Woman (Jennifer Latimore), discovering the Herero is the first time she recognizes her ancestors in a photo. This and other subsequent heartbreaking realizations by the cast reveal how consequences and symbols of oppression can devastate generations. —**MARISSA OBERLANDER**
WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT A PRESENTATION . . . Through 3/16: Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Steppenwolf Theatre, 1650 N. Halsted, 312-335-1650, steppenwolf.org, \$15-\$20.

We Are Proud to Present a Presentation . . .

© MICHAEL BROSILOW



CAPTAIN MARVEL ★★★

Directed by Anna Boden and Ryan Fleck. PG-13, 132 min. In wide release.

FILM

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

**MOVIES****Not “Just a Girl”**

Captain Marvel shows that all female-led superhero movies needed was good writing, acting, and direction.

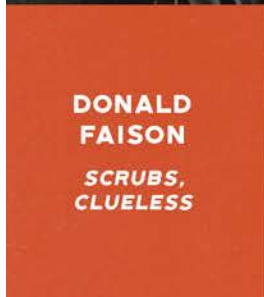
By **LEAH PICKETT**

It is spectacular and unsurprising that *Captain Marvel*, a vivid action-adventure centered on the rise of Carol Danvers, is the first film in the Marvel Cinematic Universe led by a female superhero. The old and stubbornly held Hollywood belief that a superhero movie starring a woman would flop was bolstered by some painful evidence: the critical and financial failures of *Supergirl* (1984), *Tank Girl* (1995), *Catwoman* (2004), and *Elektra* (2005). Enter *Wonder Woman* in 2017, a triumph by every measure for DC and Warner Bros., and the conversation shifted. Studios and audiences began to wonder: What if other female superhero films had failed not because of a lack of audience interest in the leads, or even a lack of demand, but because the films themselves were shoddily written, acted, directed, and marketed? Build a good movie, it turns out, and fans will come.

Thankfully, *Captain Marvel* is a good movie, both because and notwithstanding the fact that the lead is a tough, multifaceted woman. Codirectors Anna Boden →

ALICIA SILVERSTONE

CLUELESS, BATMAN & ROBIN

**PAUL RUDD**
MARVEL'S ANT MAN, CLUELESS**CLARK GREGG**
MARVEL'S AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D.**MING-NA WEN**
MARVEL'S AGENTS OF S.H.I.E.L.D., MULAN, ER**DONALD FAISON**
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continued from 21

and Ryan Fleck (*Half Nelson, It's Kind of a Funny Story*), who also cowrote the screenplay with Geneva Robertson-Dworet, understand that resilience more than physical strength is their heroine's superpower. Repeatedly, she falls down. Repeatedly, she stands up. The feelings roused by this age-old perseverance story are universal; the position of Carol as a woman surrounded by male fighters, however, intensifies her underdog status and raises the stakes of an otherwise conventional hero's journey. Not only are powerful forces in the galaxy hell-bent on her destruction, but the men in her life are quick to belittle her when she dares to do what they can do, and better.

Carol, played with grit and verve by Oscar winner Brie Larson, can't remember who she is. For six years she has lived on the planet Hala as a Kree warrior named Vers, fighting green aliens called Skrulls across the universe, with only flashes of memories that point to who she might have been before: a scrappy child disparaged by her father, an unshrinking fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force, and a devoted friend of other valorous women. But the Kree leader of her Starforce team, Yon-Rogg (Jude Law), discourages her from investigating her emotional cosmology. You're too emotional, he tells her—a jibe most women are used to hearing. Think with your head, not your heart, he says. Sensitivity is weakness. Your feelings will betray you.

Captain Marvel is in many ways a paean to empathy and intuition, qualities commonly associated with women but beneficial to anyone willing to tap into themselves. Yon-Rogg tells Vers a story about herself that on the surface she believes, but deep down, she questions. Self-knowledge is rare, especially among women for whom entire industries are built to eradicate their confidence and convince them they should be more like someone else. Gaslighting, typically perpetrated by men who want to control women under the guise of mental superiority—"She's crazy" is one common refrain—is another tactic with which many women are uncomfortably familiar. Vers, who feels against reason that she is not who her superior claims her to be, represents every woman and girl who was told at some point to be someone unlike herself. In addition to learning her true name and identity, Carol discovers over the course of the movie that

she does know and like herself. She is compassionate, moral, ambitious, sarcastic, and, yes, emotional. Her weakness, paradoxically, was believing that suppressing these parts of herself would make her strong.

This is the movie's radiant core, while the rest of it—like the majority of MCU stand-alone romps—is unselfconscious, action-packed fun. Set in 1995, the narrative accelerates when Carol crash-lands through the roof of a Blockbuster Video in Los Angeles, where young agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. Nick Fury and Phil Coulson (digitally de-aged Samuel L. Jackson and Clark Gregg, respectively) find her chasing down a cadre of shape-shifting Skrulls. Carol and Fury unite in unlikely friendship, with the latter helping the former track down the remnants of her previous life on earth. From his first appearance as Fury in *Iron Man* (2008), Jackson has been a central and beloved figure in the MCU; his presence here, pre-eye patch, is delightful. Annette Bening also shines as a rugged mentor from Carol's test-pilot days; she appears in visions as someone Carol used to find impressive, though she can't recall why.

Similar to the way 1970s music and references fueled *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), 1990s pop culture infuses *Captain Marvel* with nostalgic quirks. Carol visits a Radio Shack in a strip mall with walls papered in *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* posters. Later, she lifts an outfit from a mannequin that Fury deems "grunge": leather jacket, flannel, jeans, and a Nine Inch Nails T-shirt. Mid-90s jams punctuate the soundtrack: "Just a Girl," "Come As You Are," "You Gotta Be," and "Celebrity Skin," to name a few. Troll dolls and *True Lies* sneak into the periphery. A CD-ROM carrying valuable information takes an interminable amount of time to load.

These playful touches, along with plenty of in-jokes and Easter eggs for the MCU cognoscenti, are the sprinkles on top of an already satisfying treat. Though less substantial than last year's *Black Panther* and probably less intense than the upcoming *Avengers: Endgame*, *Captain Marvel* is strong at its center. Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel, is a formidable force and a welcome addition to the MCU. Her debut also evinces a radical truth: that the qualities "emotional" and "powerful" can be synonymous. **✎**

 @leahpickett

NOW PLAYING

RR The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind

In his feature directorial debut, Chiwetel Ejiofor examines the troubling dynamics of family, government, and love through the eyes of a brilliant young boy named William Kamkwamba who builds a wind turbine in his Malawi village. By focusing on William and using his point of view to guide the narrative, the film is more optimistic and less devastating than it could have been. Perhaps the best moments are when characters defy what they know and shamelessly pronounce their beliefs. The use of the Chichewa language throughout the film paired with the naturalness of the characters in the village creates a strong sense of place. Ejiofor captures perfectly the heart of a town struggling to prosper, a family fighting to survive, and a young boy who just wants to keep the world as he knows it alive and well. —**ATAVIA REED** 113 min. Streaming on Netflix

But I'm a Cheerleader

High school cheerleader Megan (Natasha Lyonne) comes home one day to find family and friends gathered in the living room. They talk her into going to a rehabilitation camp for homosexuals that's no more surreal than her suburban community—the absurdist environment, with its rigorously defined gender roles, tweaks reality enough to show how little exaggeration the satire requires. As a ditz who's just smart enough to know something isn't right, Lyonne blends hyperbole and sincerity in perfect proportions. Jamie Babbit directed a screenplay by Brian Wayne Peterson; with Clea DuVall, Cathy Moriarty, and RuPaul Charles. —**LISA ALSPECTOR** R, 85 min. 35mm. Tue 3/12, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Christopher Strong

Tiresome, conventional 30s melodrama about a stiff Britisher (Colin Clive) torn between his wife (Billie Burke) and an aristocratic aviatrix (Katharine Hepburn). Dorothy Arzner's direction encourages feminist sympathies, only to dash them with a punitive finale that seems harsh even for the period. As Molly Haskell has noted, the costume design carries the brunt of the politics—Hepburn's jumpsuit is a revolution in itself (1933). —**DAVE KEHR** 78 min. 35mm archival print. Wed 3/13, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University

Cría Cuervos

An ambitious but unstructured psychological thriller (although that's too strong a word for this deliberately discreet film) from Spain's Carlos Saura. Geraldine Chaplin and Ana Torrent (the little girl from *Spirit of the Beehive*) act out a morbid roundelay of memory and desire, involving a schoolgirl who may or may not have murdered her parents. There is an obvious intelligence at work in this 1976 feature, but the ideas remain elusive. In Spanish with subtitles. —**DAVE KEHR** 105 min. 35mm. Sun 3/10, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Gummo

Written and directed by Harmony Korine, who wrote *Kids*, this poetically disjointed narrative (1997) also follows young people engaged in nihilistic activities and has an ambiguous relationship to both documentary and fiction filmmaking—but none of the earlier movie's prurience or condescension. Killing cats is a pastime and source of income for two boys (Jacob Reynolds and Nick Sutton) who sniff a lot of glue in a town identified as Xenia, Ohio. Much of their behavior and the behavior of other people in the movie was surely guided if not predetermined by Korine, yet few of the performers appear to be actors in scripted roles. In one scene a

The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind



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woman (who was previously shown mothering a doll) shaves off her eyebrows. Filling one hand with shaving cream and trying to use the other to keep her bangs out of the way as well as wield a razor, she exhibits a startling absence of intelligence. Crooned ballads and metal music enhance scenes of perversely enchanting power, and a voice-over tells us in gory detail how a tornado devastated Xenia years before, as if to explain the strangely passive violence in a town where everyone's reason for existence seems to be breaking taboos. The director of photography is Jean Yves Escoffier. **—LISA ALSPECTOR** *R*, 89 min. *Preceded by a selection of shorts by Korine. 35mm. Thu 3/14, 7:30 PM. Music Box*

I Don't Care

Local filmmaker Casey Puccini wrote and directed this no-budget 2018 comedy about no-budget filmmaking; implicating himself in the movie's satire, he also stars as a vain, incompetent director named Casey Puccini. The story follows the accident-ridden production of Puccini's latest feature, a would-be hard-hitting drama of drug addiction in the vein of Abel Ferrara. Chronically high and inattentive to detail, the director screws up nearly every aspect of the shoot, from lighting individual shots to telling his cast when they need to show up for filming. But rather than take responsibility for his mistakes, he lashes out at the people around him when things go wrong, and the production disintegrates into chaos. Much of the discomfiting humor stems from the bad behavior people think they can get away with under

the pretense of being an artist—ultimately this isn't a comedy so much as a cautionary tale. **—BEN SACHS** *103 min. Puccini attends the screening. Sun 3/10, 7 PM. Nightingale*

RR *N* The Ice King

John Curry wanted to be a ballet dancer; his conservative father only allowed figure skating because he saw it as a sport, not an art. As noted documentary filmmaker James Erskine illustrates in this moving portrait of Curry, one of the most elegant skaters to ever grace the ice, the son defied his father with almost every balletic turn. And yet, despite winning Olympic gold for England in 1976 and founding an innovative touring company of ice dancers, Curry battled depression and loneliness as a gay man precluded from living as freely as he danced. Suitably, Erskine forgoes talking heads for interspersed audio of Curry's peers and admirers, keeping the film's visual and emotional focus on the man himself and the transporting power of his art. **—LEAH PICKETT** *88 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sat 3/9, 3 PM, and Mon 3/11, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR *N* If Beale Street Could Talk

Set in 1974, when New York City verged on bankruptcy and its neighborhoods were unraveling, director Barry Jenkins's luminous 2018 adaptation of James Baldwin's novel finds beauty and hope amid the decay and desperation in Harlem and Greenwich

Village. This tender, lushly romantic drama follows Tish and Fonny, childhood friends who grow into adult soul mates (KiKi Layne and Stephan James), but who are sundered after they conceive a baby and a racist white cop frames Fonny for rape. Standouts among the supporting cast include Regina King as Tish's staunchly protective mother, and Brian Tyree Henry as Fonny's friend, hollowed out by his own recent two-year prison term on a trumped-up charge. James Laxton's cinematography is even more richly hued than his work on Jenkins's *Moonlight*, and the sound design and Nicholas Britell's score add to the movie's brimming sensory pleasures. With Colman Domingo, Michael Beach, Diego Luna, Pedro Pascal, and Emily Rios. **—ANDREA GRONVALL** *R*, 119 min. *Sat 3/9, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 3/10, 4 PM. ArcLight, ArcLight Glenview, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Showplace ICON, Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

Ilo Ilo

Anthony Chen, a Singaporean writer-director with a half-dozen shorts to his credit, makes his feature debut with this vividly characterized domestic drama (2013), a prize winner at the Cannes film festival. A middle-class couple, clinging to respectability after the husband loses his job, hire a Filipino immigrant to clean their apartment and look after their bratty, troublesome school-age son. For a while their new employee puts up with his bullying and acting out, but eventually she manages to disarm and discipline the little monster, and his growing affection for her begins to arouse his mother's jealousy. There

are numerous story developments that don't seem to go anywhere—a man in a neighboring apartment block jumps to his death, the mother falls under the sway of a motivational speaker—but Chen is admirably attuned to the family dynamics and how they're shaped by money. In subtitled English, Mandarin, Tagalog, and Hokkien. **—J.R. JONES** *99 min. Sat 3/9, 1 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art* [FREE](#)

Kids

From noted still-photographer-turned-director Larry Clark and young screenwriter Harmony Korine, both making their screen debuts, a slightly better than average youth exploitation film (and grim cautionary fable about both AIDS and macho teenage cruelty) that hysterical American puritanism contrived to convert into big news. (The *New York Times*'s Janet Maslin called this "a wake-up call to the world"—meaning, I suppose, that rice paddy workers everywhere should shell out for tickets and stop evading the problems of white Manhattan teenagers.) But if the news is so big, why does it sound like such tired and familiar stuff? And reviewers who claimed that this depressing movie takes no moral position about what it's depicting must have been experiencing some form of self-induced shock, because taking moral positions is just about all it does. The photography is striking and the acting and dialogue seem reasonably authentic, if one factors in all the sensationalism, but let's get real—this was at best the 15th most-interesting movie I saw at the

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TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT (ESTONIA)
THOU SHALL NOT KILL (ROMANIA)
CENTRAL AIRPORT THF (GERMANY)
ARTHUR & CLAIRE (AUSTRIA)
MY SISTER'S SILENCE (BULGARIA)
TOWER. A BRIGHT DAY. (POLAND)
CARMEN & LOLA (SPAIN)
MISS HANOI (CZECH REPUBLIC)

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FILM

► 1995 Cannes festival. If you're determined to succumb to the bait, I hope you have more fun than I did. With Leo Fitzpatrick, Justin Pierce, and Chloë Sevigny. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 91 min. *Preceded by Gus Van Sant's 2000 short Easter (31 min.), also written by Korine.* 35mm. Fri 3/8-Sat 3/9, midnight. Music Box

RR Maborosi

This sensitive and at times beautiful 1995 feature by Japanese documentary filmmaker Hirokazu Kore-eda focuses mainly on the second marriage and new life of a young mother whose first husband inexplicably committed suicide. She moves to a small coastal village to live with her son, new husband, and stepdaughter and tries to come to terms with her life as a whole. Clearly influenced by Yasujiro Ozu and Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien (subject of one of Kore-eda's documentaries), the film avoids close-ups, favors extended long shots, and often concentrates on the flavor and texture of everyday life. Not a masterpiece perhaps, but an impressive first feature, with moments of real power and lingering aftereffects. The title, incidentally, means "illusion" or "mirage." Screenwriter Yoshihisa Ogita adapted a short story by Teru Miyamoto. In Japanese with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 110 min. 35mm. Mon 3/11, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR Mr. Arkadin

Orson Welles's 1955 film seems a deliberate, bitter parody of *Citizen Kane*, with the grandeur turned to transparent theatrical fakery and the quest for truth deflected into shoddy opportunism. The film has the eerie, placeless quality of international coproduction (France and Spain in this case); many of the minor characters have been dubbed with Welles's voice, which increases the sense of a sinister puppet show. Sporting an outrageously false beard, Welles plays the mysterious title character, an international businessman who lures a young hustler (Robert Arden) into investigating his past. For all of the film's perversity, there is greatness in it—a greatness harshly criticizing itself. With Michael Redgrave, Mischa Auer, and Akim Tamiroff. —**DAVE KEHR** 99 min. *Former Reader film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum lectures at the screening. The 105-minute 1955 U.S. release version is showing.* 35mm. Tue 3/12, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Phoenix

Mutilated by the Nazis, a Jewish concentration camp survivor (Nina Hoss) undergoes reconstructive surgery that renders her unrecognizable; when she tracks down her beloved gentle husband (Ronald Zehrfeld), who secretly divorced her and now thinks her dead, he takes her for a stranger and recruits her to impersonate his late wife so he can pocket her inheritance. The plot of this German drama (2014) is so implausible—like something from an old Bette Davis movie—that one expects a giant thematic payoff in exchange for playing along. Writer-director Christian Petzold (*Jerichow, Barbara*) fails to deliver, but there are some powerful, silent dramatic moments as each character approaches the ugly truth about their relationship. In German with subtitles. —**J.R. JONES** 98 min. Sat 3/9-Sun 3/10, 11:30 AM. Music Box

N Ruben Brandt, Collector

From Nathaniel Kahn's *The Price of Everything* to Dan Gilroy's *Velvet Buzzsaw*, films have pivoted to an illusive and mysterious source of inspiration: the art world. Milorad Krstić's *Ruben Brandt, Collector* is the

category's newest addition—and by far the most visually compelling. Ruben is an art therapist who keeps having nightmares where famous paintings try to kill him. Mimi is a circus performer turned art thief who, along with a ragtag group of Ruben's patients, executes elaborate heists to steal what's keeping him up at night. The setup takes a little too long to come together, and some of the plotlines feel forced and unnecessary, but the film's inventive mixed animation style and character designs reminiscent of Picasso's cubist portraits make it worth watching in spite of its narrative flaws. —**CODY CORRALL** 96 min. At Music Box. Visit [musicboxtheatre.com](http://musicboxtheatre.com/showtimes) for showtimes.

RR Shadow of a Doubt

Alfred Hitchcock's first indisputable masterpiece (1943). Joseph Cotten is Uncle Charlie, aka the Merry Widow Murderer, who returns to his hometown to visit his niece and namesake, played by Teresa Wright. Hitchcock's discovery of darkness within the heart of small-town America remains one of his most harrowing films, a peek behind the facade of security that reveals loneliness, despair, and death. Thornton Wilder collaborated on the script; it's *Our Town* turned inside out. —**DAVE KEHR** PG, 108 min. 35mm. Thu 3/14, 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

Strictly Ballroom

A festival favorite in 1992, this flamboyant Australian crowd-pleaser and first feature by Baz Luhrmann (*Moulin Rouge*) struck me then as one of the more horrific and unpleasant movies I'd seen in quite some time—a glib, brassy, and strident *Rocky*-style comedy about a 21-year-old ballroom champion who teams up with a flamenco dancer. With Paul Mercurio, Tara Morice, Bill Hunter, Pat Thomson, and lots of show-offy ballroom dancing. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 94 min. Thu 3/14, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

RR Things to Come

Isabelle Huppert stars as a respected philosophy professor whose field of study comes in handy when her husband of many years, played by André Marcon, announces that he's moving in with a younger woman. As if this weren't enough, the professor's mentally ill mother, played by Édith Scob, begins to go off the rails, requiring her constant attention. Written

Tower. A Bright Day



and directed by Mia Hansen-Løve (*Eden, Goodbye, First Love*), this French drama (2016) gives Huppert a brilliant, Rousseau-quoting character to play around with, and she saunters through the role, finding fresh moments in every scene. Hansen-Løve, almost three decades younger than her illustrious star, focuses on the professor's relationships with young people—her two grown children; her lively and devoted students; a young writer who offers the vague prospect of May-December romance—and these contribute to Huppert's portrait of a woman who, despite her advanced years, finds herself perched on the edge of discovery. In French with subtitles. —**J.R. JONES** PG-13, 102 min. Wed 3/13, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

N Thou Shalt Not Kill

Catalin Rotaru and Gabi Virginia Sarga's breast-beating Romanian drama feels like a modern-dress version of Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* as filtered through the sensibility of fellow Romanian Cristian Mungiu. A dedicated but hotheaded doctor starts investigating his hospital's practices after a child he operates on dies of septic shock; he discovers that the company that supplies Bucharest's hospitals with disinfectant is purposely diluting the product to save money. As the

doctor tries to expose the conspiracy, he encounters pushback from his hospital's administration, the local news media, and eventually his own family. Rotaru and Sarga employ the sort of hyperrealist long-take aesthetic familiar from much 21st-century Romanian cinema, but this feels particularly like Mungiu's work in its general humorlessness and thematic emphasis on pervasive corruption. Better directed than scripted, the film seriously overstates its moral conflicts and characterizations; Rotaru and Sarga strain for ambiguity by giving all the principal characters one positive and one negative trait each. —**BEN SACHS** 120 min. *Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival.* Fri 3/8, 6 PM, and Wed 3/13, 7:45 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Tower. A Bright Day.

A critics' darling in Poland, this debut feature by writer-director Jagoda Szalc displays an ambitious, elusive sensibility, though its most striking attributes feel recycled from other movies. It depicts the reunion of an extended middle-class family at the countryside home of a thirtysomething woman and her husband. The couple has been raising the child of wife's mentally ill sister, who arrives at the reunion after having not been seen for several years. Szalc charts the growing tension between the sisters obliquely; the film mostly shows the family interacting as a whole, forcing viewers to suss out on their own the dynamics between individual members. This compelling dramatic strategy—which makes the family seem like an amorphous single organism—brings to mind Lucrecia Martel's *La Ciénaga* (2001) and Alice Rohrwacher's *The Wonders* (2014); what's missing is the other films' humor and sympathy. Szalc's outlook is so pessimistic and dark that this often feels like a horror film, and the oppressively spooky score and sound effects heighten this association. In Polish with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 106 min. *Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival.* Sun 3/10, 3:15 PM, and Mon 3/11, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N The Wedding Guest

Writer-director Michael Winterbottom reimagines 1940s Hollywood noir tropes in this understated crime thriller set in contemporary India. Dev Patel stars as a tight-lipped, methodical British Muslim hired gun who snatches a demure bride (Radhika Apte) on the eve of her arranged marriage in Pakistan. He's supposed to get the rest of his commission when he delivers her to her ex, a

Ruben Brandt, Collector



FILM

spoiled, mercurial London jeweler, but that cocky playboy (Jim Sarbh), fearing exposure and disinheritance, gets cold feet when her abduction makes worldwide headlines. A series of double and triple crosses ensue, while the kidnapper and his not-so-innocent captive take a road trip through the subcontinent to Amritsar, Jaipur, Delhi, and coastal Goa, switching identities and transport modes as they chase the cash and evade the law. Cinematographer Giles Nuttgens's (*Hell or High Water*) vivid, lush images of an India throbbing with color and life underscore the interiority of the moody protagonist, and the actors make their untrustworthy schemers mysteriously attractive, a requisite if the audience is to care what happens. In the end, the screenplay is the let-down, hewing too closely to generic convention. Patel's character's past is left deliberately murky, and even though he is smart and media savvy, we have no idea if any of his cultural influences included movies like *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, *Double Indemnity*, and *Out of the Past* (or their remakes and copycats). But arguably viewers of this movie have seen them, and might wish he hadn't turned out to be just another pistol-packing sap. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** 94 min. At Landmark's Century Cinema. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.

ALSO PLAYING

311: Enlarged to Show Detail 3

Wayne Price directed this concert documentary about the rock band 311. 115 min. Mon 3/11, 7 PM. Century 12 and CineArts 6, City North 14, Music Box, River East 21, Webster Place 11

N Amateurs

Gabriela Pichler directed this Swedish comedy drama about a town hoping to lure a megastore to a professionally made documentary on the city, and two high-school girls, one Iraqi and one Turkish, who decide to make their own, more truthful, version. In English and subtitled Swedish, Arabic, Tamil, Kurdish, and Bosnian. 102 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Fri 3/8, 2 PM, and Tue 3/12, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Arthur & Claire

Miguel Alexandre directed this 2017 Austrian-Dutch film about a man with terminal cancer who travels to Amsterdam to commit legal suicide. His plans thwarted, he meets a young woman at his hotel who is dealing with her own issues. In English and subtitled German and Dutch. 100 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sat 3/9 and Mon 3/11, 7:45 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Birthright: A War Story

Civia Tamarkin directed this 2017 documentary about the continuing assault on women's reproductive rights. 105 min. Tamarkin attends the screening. Fri 3/8, 6:30 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art **FREE**

Brule la Mer

Tunisian immigrant Maki Berchache and filmmaker Nathalie Nambot directed this 2014 French experimental documentary about immigrants living in France. In French and Arabic with subtitles. 75 min. 35mm. Thu 3/14, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art **FREE**

N Carmen & Lola

Two teen Roma girls begin to explore their attraction to each other in this Spanish romance. Arantxa Echevarria directed. In Spanish with subtitles. 103 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sun 3/10, 5:30 PM, and Thu 3/14, 8:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Central Airport THF

Berlin-based Brazilian-Algerian filmmaker Karim Aïnouz directed this German documentary about Berlin's shutdown Tempelhof Airport, which is now used as a holding center for immigrants. In English and subtitled German and Arabic. 98 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sat 3/9, 3 PM, and Thu 3/14, 8:30 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

Climax

Gaspar Noé directed this French-Belgian horror drama about dancers on a bad trip after unknowingly taking LSD. In English and subtitled French. R, 95 min. At Landmark's Century Cinema. Visit landmarktheatres.com for showtimes.

Family in Transition

Ofir Trainin directed this Israeli documentary about a husband who comes out as transgender after 20 years of marriage. In Hebrew with subtitles. 70 min. Showing as part of the JCC Chicago Jewish Film Festival. Sun 3/10, 7:30 PM. Century 12 and CineArts 6, Music Box

Gaspard at the Wedding

A man hires a young woman he meets to pose as his girlfriend while at his father's wedding. Antony Cordier directed this 2017 French-Belgian comedy drama that continually shifts narrative direction. In French with subtitles. 102 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Fri 3/8, 4 PM, and Tue 3/12, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

I'm Not Here

Michelle Schumacher directed this 2017 drama about a man struggling to deal with memories of his past. 81 min. At Facets Cinémathèque. Visit facets.org for showtimes.

N Loro

Paolo Sorrentino directed this fictionalized Italian-French biopic about the life of former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi. In Italian, Japanese, Spanish, and Chinese with subtitles. 150 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sat 3/9, 4:45 PM, and Wed 3/13, 6:30 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Miss Hanoi

Zdenek Viktora directed this Czech crime film about a Vietnamese-Czech cop battling prejudice at all turns as she investigates an old case. In Vietnamese and Czech with subtitles. 86 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sun 3/10, 5:30 PM, and Wed 3/13, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N My Sister's Silence

Kiran Kolarov directed this Bulgarian tale about a young teen boy, his mute older sister, and the young man she falls for, who sells her to a Gypsy king. In Bulgarian with subtitles. 99 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sat 3/9, 7:45 PM, and Mon 3/11, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

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Repeat Performance

Joan Leslie plays a woman who kills her husband; regretting the events that led up to the killing, she relives the previous year, but finds that the past is not so easily changed. Alfred L. Werker directed this 1947 crime drama. 92 min. 35mm. Fri 3/8, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 3/10, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

The Rest I Make Up

Michelle Memran directed this documentary about the life and career of Cuban-American playwright Maria Irene Fornés and her later battle with dementia. 79 min. Showing as part of the monthly "Dyke Delicious" series, with a social hour at 7 PM. Sat 3/9, 8 PM. Chicago Filmmakers

Rock 'n' Roll

Guillaume Canet directed and stars in (as himself) this 2017 French comedy drama about an aging actor who is told by a young actress that he's no longer "rock 'n' roll," and sets out to shake up his staid image. Canet's real life

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partner, Marion Cotillard, also plays herself. In French with subtitles. 123 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Sun 3/10, 3 PM, and Thu 3/14, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N The Saint Bernard Syndicate

Mads Brügger directed this Danish comedy about two men who travel to China hoping to strike it rich by selling Saint Bernard dogs, which have become a status symbol for the wealthy set. In English and subtitled Danish. 101 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Fri 3/8, 2 PM, and Sat 3/9, 5 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Take It or Leave It

Liina Trishkina directed this Estonian drama about a man suddenly thrust into single fatherhood. In Estonian with subtitles. 102 min. Showing as part of the Chicago European Union Film Festival. Fri 3/8, 4 PM, and Thu 3/14, 6:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center **FI**

THE ACCIDENTAL LYRICIST



Brittney Carter thought she was just writing poems. Her classmates at Young Chicago Authors heard a great rapper in the making—and the rest of the city’s hip-hop scene is starting to agree.

By **MATT HARVEY**

Since last summer, it seems like the universe has been telling me to pay attention to Brittney Carter. I wasn’t familiar with the 27-year-old Chicago rapper at the time—from her first releases in 2016, she’d been simmering mostly out of sight, dropping occasional Soundcloud singles or appearing on other people’s tracks. Only in early 2018 did she start performing regularly at concerts rather than

at open mikes. But she’s rapidly become one of Chicago hip-hop’s best-kept secrets, earning the backing of a broad cross section of the local arts scene.

Poet and organizer Kwynology has named Carter as the contemporary she’d be most interested in collaborating with. DJ Lena Bandz has listed Carter among the locals she keeps in rotation. Bekoe, concert promoter and founder of Chicago hip-hop and entertainment blog Illanoize, has booked her on his showcases, including one in June at Subterranean and another in October at the Emporium in Wicker Park with Sasha Go Hard.

In November, Carter got a look from star-making west-coast label Top Dawg Entertainment, home to the likes of Kendrick Lamar and SZA. TDE founder Anthony “Top Dawg” Tiffith posted a Twitter poll to pick an opener for a November show at Concord Music Hall by TDE artist Jay Rock, pitting Carter against

Chicago rapper-producer Ausar Bradley and Champaign rapper Gatson. She won the poll and played the show, and with that high-powered cosign, her already substantial stock skyrocketed. Influential Chicago hip-hop blog Fake Shore Drive, which has slowed its torrent of posts to a trickle since founder Andrew Barber started managing rising star Valee, even made time to post one of Carter’s freestyles last month.

So I set up an interview with Carter in the Blue Island Public Library, near her home, and I prepare for it by looking up previous coverage of her. This isn’t difficult, because she’s attracted an unusual amount of media attention for an artist who’s yet to release a full-length project. I find radio, podcast, and video interviews, and I head into our meeting with four pages of scribbled notes—about her old voice-activated password-protected diary, about her love of country music, about the way

she’d started writing what other people decided were raps while trying to create poetry.

Waiting in the library’s foyer, I look up to see Carter walking across the snow-heaped street carrying a small plastic grocery bag. I

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reach for a handshake and she opens her arms for a hug. “I hadn’t pegged you as a hugger,” I say, thinking of all the research I’ve done.

Carter evades easy conclusions. Her musical taste is atypical for a rapper, for instance, and though she’s seriously pursuing a career in hip-hop, she also has a long-standing interest in child care—her mother was a foster →

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continued from 26

parent, and Carter herself studied childhood education in college. But these intricacies feed into her artistry.

We go downstairs, looking for a spot where we can talk aloud, and settle on the new Tech Annex, which features a recording studio, computers, and a 3-D printer. In one corner someone has parked a keyboard, a guitar, and several other musical instruments. We pick a table and Carter, who's skipped breakfast, rummages through the snacks in her bag before deciding not to break the library's rule against eating. "When I was younger, we lived in Blue Island for a few years," she says. "This is just one of the libraries my mother used to bring me to growing up—this one was always my favorite."

Carter's musical output has accelerated dramatically in 2019. She's put out five singles so far this year, and on the first, "Hooligan," she raps about her love of the written word. "Knew the world was not for me when I was three, I could read / What a freakin' oddity." She chose to meet me at the library because it was warm, close, and familiar—it was here that she developed her devotion to reading. "Since I've moved back to Blue Island a year ago, I've tried to make time to come back here more often," she says. "I like to use this place to keep my brain fresh in a creative sense. And of course to read, read, read, and read."

Only since November 2018, when Carter quit her full-time job, has she been able to focus the majority of her energy on her music. "For two years, I was a merchandiser at Home Depot, where I didn't have to deal with many customers and had a steady schedule Monday through Friday, so I could work my music career around it," she says. "I just couldn't do it anymore, so I quit—and I honestly only had enough money to pay rent for the next month."

Carter had been making music for almost three years and was gaining traction in the scene, but her art wasn't earning her enough to cover her expenses. Her mother stepped in to help. "In January, I got a part-time position at my mother's day care, making more than I was at my previous job, and I have more time to dedicate to my art," she says. "Plus, I'm doing something that I actually enjoy doing."

Her studies in childhood education at Parkland College in Champaign, which ended when she dropped out in fall 2013, had been motivated by her dreams of owning her own day care. "I think kids are cool. I saw what my mom was doing and decided that I would someday take over her business," she says. "I wasn't a big fan of school, though. I would be in class writing in

my journals, not really paying attention, and I felt like I was wasting my time and money, so I left."

Carter has kept a diary for as long as she can remember, and she's been writing poetry in it since she was ten. But it wasn't until she returned to Blue Island after quitting Parkland that she began to seek artistic outlets outside those personal journals. She enrolled in intermediate drawing classes at the Salvation Army Kroc Corps Community Center in West Pullman. "I wanted to try something new, just to see how it goes," she says. "I was like the youngest person in a class of a bunch of elderly people. I wasn't very good at it, but they were all raw—it was crazy, and I was having fun."

As late as 2014, Carter admits, she was ignorant of the city's flourishing arts scene. But then she discovered Young Chicago Authors' writing workshops via social media and began making the commute from Blue Island to YCA's headquarters in the north-side Noble Square neighborhood, where she practiced under the instruction of acclaimed poets Kevin Coval and Jamila Woods.

"At the end of each class, we were supposed to share what we'd come up with, but I would always pass when it came to me," Carter says. "They finally called me out on never sharing one day, so I swallowed my anxiety and read aloud what I had in my journal." Without knowing it, she'd begun the process of bringing her private writing to life as music.

To Carter, the poems in her journal were just that: poems. To everyone else, they sounded like bars that had business coming out of the mouth of an experienced MC, not the quietest character at a beginner's workshop.

Hip-hop artist Add-2, aka Andre Daniels, was working with YCA and had created an after-school mentoring program called Haven Studios in collaboration with Florida nonprofit Guitars Over Guns. He first heard Carter spit at a YCA open mike he hosted, and he was one of many people she caught by surprise. "I was like, 'Whoa'—and I don't say this lightly—'She might be better than me,'" he remembers. "I couldn't play favorites, because I was teaching a workshop there at YCA, but her wordplay and delivery were unmatched by anyone else."

In late 2015, another local rapper named EssieL approached Carter after hearing her at a different open mike. She wanted Carter to join an all-woman cypher she was organizing.

"It just sounded like fun to me, and I really saw it as an opportunity to meet people," Carter says. "I was starting to attend open mikes more often, but I would never perform and I didn't really know anybody. Preparing for the

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cypher was actually the first time I sat down and wrote something with the intention of being a rap.”

The “Set It Off” cypher came out a few months later, on February 1, 2016. It featured EssieL, Carter, Syd Shaw, Bella Bahhs, J Bambii, and Freddie Old Soul rapping lyrics they’d written to the classic Mobb Deep “Survival of the Fittest” instrumental, spun by DJ Lisa Decibel.

“When I first heard the cypher, I said, ‘Yo, I gotta get this out to people,’” Daniels says. “I ended up sending it to some key people I knew in the industry.” Thanks to Daniels’s efforts as well as write-ups from hip-hop blogs and word of mouth, the cypher was a modest viral success, and Chuck D of Public Enemy tapped the women to perform it during his show at Metro in March 2016, as part of YCA’s 16th annual Louder Than a Bomb festival.

Daniels recalls Carter coming to him for advice following the success of the clip. “I get a lot of artists coming to me asking to put them on, or get them a spot at this event or with that studio,” he says. “When she came to me, though, she asked me, ‘How do I sustain this?’ From then I lent my help to her in any way that she needed.”

He was able to connect Carter with Kenneth Clair, aka Disrupt, a budding producer who was working with Haven Studios. Clair brought Carter aboard with Loop Theory, the artist development and management collective that he’d founded with veteran MC, educator, and community organizer Rafael Navarro.

“The first time I saw her rap was onstage, and once I saw that she had that live performance aspect down, everything else was within reach,” says Navarro. “Even in the

studio, it’s nothing for her to go in and kill a track—verses, hook, everything—in one take.” At Loop Theory, Navarro is as much a mentor as a manager. In addition to Carter and Disrupt, Loop Theory represents rapper Dre Izaya, artist and producer Heir Porter, and singer-songwriter Ryen. “I saw that this group was truly dedicated and put in the work, so I felt comfortable giving them guidance and leveraging my connections in their favor,” Navarro says.

Daniels and Navarro agree that Carter’s abilities have grown exponentially—her readings at open mikes could be skittish, but her performance in front of Jay Rock’s sold-out crowd in November was calm and controlled.

Carter spits with a slippery delivery, and she doesn’t waste energy coming up with catchy punch lines to emphasize—she chooses every word with the same diamond-cutting deliberation. When you listen to her, it’s easy to let some lines fly past you, then get caught two bars later pausing and dragging the playback slider back 15 seconds to grasp the pith of her bars. On her blustering opening verse from the 2017 crew cut “Operation X” by Chicago producer Dougy, which teams her with rappers AlifortheGo, Stark of Huey, and Femdot, she raps: “Ratchet with my righteousness, prophetic while I’m rapping this / They not who they say they be, the room is filled with actresses.”

“She’s not preaching, but she’s saying something,” Daniels says. “She uses every word to her advantage.”

Carter is an economical writer, not wasting a syllable, and she’s smart enough to avoid punching her listeners in the face with her messages. “She hides the medicine in ➔

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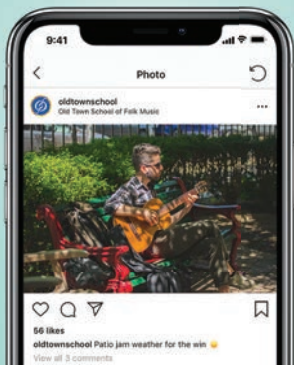
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the food," says Navarro. He could've said instead that she hides it in the candy, but he knows that her work is more substantial than a corner-store KitKat. It's fulfilling, and she means it to capture every aspect of her real-life experience.

Even the 80-second "Beatrix Kiddo," her newest single, packs a lot of meaning into its brief span: "I know they wanna see me passive, but I can't conceal my passion / I'm a sister, I'm a daughter, I'm a rapper." Those two lines are practically a profile of Carter unto themselves.

Carter is used to being taken for younger than she is, but she carries herself with a seriousness that suggests wisdom and experience. Her lyrics too can seem almost childlike in their bluntness and honesty, but their craft and polish speak to her maturity, discipline, and years of practice.

It's also significant that Carter describes herself first as a sister and a daughter, then as a rapper. "My family is very tight-knit. They keep me grounded," she says. "My two younger brothers are super goofy, so if I'm ever feeling frustrated with this music thing, I just go to my mom's crib to take a break for a minute."

Her parents' musical tastes have also shaped what she enjoys as well as where she finds inspiration. "My father is a die-hard hip-hop head. His favorite artist is Jay-Z, I think mostly because they have the same last name," Carter jokes. "My mother, on the other hand, is into old-school R&B and soul." She credits this dichotomy with opening her mind and helping her be receptive to different genres. When she lists her favorites, Tim McGraw, Kelly Clarkson, and Miley Cyrus come up alongside DMX, Lauryn Hill, and Kendrick Lamar. "I was here at the library just four days ago reading up on musicians from the late 60s and early 70s, like Jimi Hendrix and Roberta Flack."

Carter is also a film buff, thanks in part to her parents' massive DVD collection. "Beatrix Kiddo" is the real name of the Bride, the protagonist of Quentin Tarantino's gory action-adventure series *Kill Bill*. "It started when my dad put me onto *The Matrix* when I was a kid," she says. "Just like with music, I like a variety of movies—sci-fi, romantic comedies, thrillers, everything. I see myself writing a film script someday, and even doing some acting." That day will probably be a ways off, though: "I've written stories that could probably be turned into little five-minute films, but nothing substantial."

Carter's love for writing is as vast as her love for music. Besides poetry, fiction, raps, and day-to-day journaling, she's spent time doing




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music journalism—starting in December 2017, she put in a stint writing for Chicago-based hip-hop blog Flows for Days. "They were looking for somebody, and I know a lot about music and know of plenty of artists, so why not," she says. "I was having fun doing it—if I would've stuck with it, I definitely would love to have interviewed some people and done profiles. I just had to stop to focus on my own music."

Last fall Carter was teasing the release of her first full-length, but ultimately she decided the music didn't meet her standards. "I guess I was just feeling like I should at the time, but I didn't want to just put out something just to have something out," she says. "It might've been good stuff, but I just felt like I'd grown too much as an artist to even put those songs out there anymore."

Since the new year, though, Carter has released not just those five singles but also three freestyle videos on Instagram. She's also been featured as part of Queen Bars, a visual freestyle series by rap blog 247HH. (When men are featured—alumni include Juvenile, the Boy Illinois, Bump J, and Navarro—it's called "King Bars.") And she's ramping up to her first video release. "The biggest thing we're working on right now is putting out the visual for her single 'Breakthrough,'" Navarro says.

"I hope to have a project out this year, before the fall," Carter says. For now, though, she's returning to her creative roots, carrying around books to read and journals to write in. Right now she's working her way through Elizabeth Acevedo's *The Poet X* and Colum McCann's *Letters to a Young Writer*. Both books speak to her ultimate goal: "Since I write, I can explore all different aspects of the art," she says. "I want to master my craft." 

 @MattheMajor

A Reader staffer shares three musical obsessions, then asks someone (who asks someone else) to take a turn.



A still from *ReMastered: The Two Killings of Sam Cooke*

JAMIE LUDWIG

Reader associate editor

Deafkids, Metaprogramação There's been no shortage of killer new releases this year, and the brain-altering third album from this Brazilian trio is my favorite so far. On *Metaprogramação*, the group imagines a world where people can truly think for themselves and calls for unity against violence, tyranny, and repression. With a combination of all-encompassing psych, scuzzed-out punk, effects-ridden chants, and hypnotic polyrhythmic percussion, Deafkids expand the language of heavy music—and do justice to their mission.

Adia Victoria, Silences Adia Victoria is often compared to enigmatic artists such as Nina Simone and Beth Gibbons, and like them this Nashville singer-songwriter is in a class of her own. Her no-filler new full-length, *Silences*, draws from blues and southern gothic literature for its vivid narratives about overcoming oppression. In a climate where stylized “gothic” darkness pervades music culture, it's refreshing to hear the real deal.

ReMastered: The Two Killings of Sam Cooke How can any lover of Chicago music not be in awe of Sam Cooke? This documentary explores the artistry of the Bronzeville-raised, golden-throated, boundary-breaking soul icon, as well as his evolving social consciousness in the civil rights era, his commitment to empowering the black community, and most important, the aftermath of his 1964 murder—many believe that racism and white supremacy denied him and his loved ones a proper investigation. It's a powerful tribute to an extraordinary talent.

JULIA DRATEL

Photographer, video artist, show producer

Liz Pelly's writing about Spotify

Liz Pelly has been doing deep dives on Spotify's work to become our corporate cultural overlord, one “chill” playlist at a time, most recently in a series for the *Baffler*. She provides insight into how Spotify exerts increasing control

over music consumers and our data, so that independent artists are backed into a shrinking corner. Her most recent, “Streambait Pop,” covers Spotify's branded content and how it's birthed formulaic genres that lend themselves to passive streaming. Spotify presents itself as neutral, but we should consider what it means for huge corporations to hold such power over how we make meaning in our lives.



Norman W. Long at AS220 in Providence, Rhode Island, in June 2017. COURTESY THE ARTIST

Norman W. Long I was introduced to Chicago musician Norman W. Long and his work through Angel Bat Dawid: with synths, electronics, and field recordings attuned to local ecology, he makes soundscapes that I find surreal and grounding at the same time, a dichotomy I'm drawn to in experimental music and sound art. He always adds a special dimension to improvising groups, so I recommend seeing him live—and his tape *Electro-Acoustic Dubology I-IV* is also well worth your time.

Labelle, Moon Shadow Labelle's 1972 sophomore album is the first where the group (specifically Nona Hendryx) wrote most of its own songs—which was pretty groundbreaking at

IN ROTATION

the time. I've listened to it all winter, and “Sunday's News” is the song I come back to again and again, with its gut-punch intro and outro. Of course, the ten-minute cover of Cat Stevens's “Moonshadow” is pretty awesome too.

ARIEL ZETINA

Producer and Smart Bar resident DJ

Odete, Matrafona The new EP from Portuguese producer Odete, her first on amazing Lisbon label Naivety (an imprint of Naive), is a meditation on club music filled with melodies and polyrhythms that bleed in and out of each other at will. Odete talks about the EP as a texture “to fit the shattered flatness” of her day to day. Buy this EP! Part of the proceeds go to Stop Despejos, who fight evictions due to gentrification in Lisbon.

Central Air Radio on WHPK Chicago artist Jared Brown runs this weekly radio show on WHPK 88.5 FM, broadcast every Tuesday at 11 AM from the south side (Woodlawn, Hyde Park, Kenwood). It features mixes by local underground DJs as well as Jared's impeccable selections, but what really makes it stand out are the interviews with artists, political thinkers, and bringers of change. The moment that really gagged me was Futurehood's guest show, which starts with Jared receiving an anonymous package and ends in a semi-reality filled with throbbing dance tracks.

Nymphowars Macy Rodman and Theda Hammel's podcast is part talk show, part gossip column, part radio play, and part improvised musical. The gag is that Macy and Theda are both dope electronic musicians (Macy as Macy Rodman, Theda as Hamm), so while the tracks they feature are based on random jokes, they're also fully realized. Highlights include a Lady Gaga tribute track about arms, a woman the size of a fly singing about jerking off people on the street, and lots and lots of Macy's impersonation of Caitlyn Jenner. **FI**



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 Sat, Mar. 30 - Honky Tonk Festival
 Fri, April 5 - Lily Hiatt
 Sat, April 6 - Soul Spectacular: A Tribute to Aretha Franklin



PICK OF THE WEEK

Body/Head continue to push boundaries on *The Switch*

BODY/HEAD, JOSHUA ABRAMS & NATURAL INFORMATION SOCIETY

7:30 PM, Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, sold out.

COURTESY OF ARTIST

KIM GORDON ALWAYS struck me as the Sonic Youth member most rooted in a primal punk foundation. Her no-frills bass lines anchored the chaos surrounding them, and the songs she sang lead on always packed a streamlined gut punch. That makes it all the more interesting that in our post-Sonic Youth landscape, she's the only member who's really letting her freak flag fly. While Thurston Moore and Lee Ranaldo continue to release Sonic Youth-lite indie-rock records with various projects, Gordon's been going strong with **BODY/HEAD**, her guitar duo with experimental musician Bill Nace. The group's second full-length studio album for Matador, July's *The Switch*, perfectly captures the classic Sonic Youth spirit, with layers of beautiful guitar squall and Gordon's confrontational spoken-word vocals. The music bounces between grim noise and shimmering soundscape, sending out pulses of danger and joy—and easily making *The Switch* the best release from any Sonic Youth member post-breakup yet. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

Chicago jazz and improvised-music linchpin **JOSHUA ABRAMS** could continue to explore the outer reaches of minimalism with

his **NATURAL INFORMATION SOCIETY** ensemble for decades and have no trouble maintaining a hypnotic atmosphere. The eight-piece band's upcoming fifth album, *Mandatory Reality* (Eremite), opens with two sprawling tracks. The group is so successful at casting spells that "Finite," which features Hamid Drake feeling out a graceful rhythm on the tabla, seems like it lasts just a moment despite being nearly 40 minutes long. And aside from the woodwind trill on "Agree" and the rapid horn stabs on the anxious, occasionally distressing "Shadow Conductor"—played by cornetist Ben LaMar Gay, alto saxophonist Nick Mazzarella, and bass clarinetist Jason Stein—*Mandatory Reality* largely moves with gentle steps. On "In Memory's Prism," Abrams's skeletal guimbri provides a foundation for Lisa Alvarado's sighing harmonium and for the tender, cycling horns, which emerge and dissipate like small waves breaking on a beach. On March 23, the group will appear at the Bohemian National Cemetery as part of the Empty Bottle's Beyond the Gate series.

—**LEOR GALIL**

THURSDAY7

BODY/HEAD, JOSHUA ABRAMS & NATURAL INFORMATION SOCIETY See *Pick of the Week* at left. 7:30 PM, Chicago Stock Exchange Trading Room, Art Institute of Chicago, 111 S. Michigan, sold out.

ALL THEM WITCHES *Plague Vendor* opens. 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$18, \$16 in advance. 18+

All Them Witches are a heavy blues-rock band from Nashville that recently pared down to a trio following some lineup hiccups on the keyboards late last year. The group are kicking off a long tour that'll take them through the U.S. and Europe on the back of their powerful fifth album, last fall's *ATW* (New West). Their sound leans heavily on the Black Sabbath/Blue Cheer/Hawkwind flavors of black-and-blue riff rock, which they pull off seamlessly: "Workhorse" has an irresistible low build and grind, and "1st vs. 2nd" sustains a trance-inducing chug just long enough to blast it into space, Pink Floyd style. With or without keyboards, vocalist Charles Michael Parks, guitarist Ben McLeod, and drummer Robby Staebler are a tight unit that can turn on a dime—perhaps recording in a remote mountain cabin, and stripping back down to basics after their relatively elaborate 2017 album, *Sleeping Through the War*, instilled a new discipline. —**MONICA KENDRICK**

FRIDAYS8

ANGEL DUST *Wicca Phase Springs Eternal* headlines; *Angel Dust*, *Guardin*, and *Curta* open. 7 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$17.

If you just looked at the pedigree of Baltimore five-piece Angel Dust (often styled with a dollar sign in place of the S) you might think they were a hardcore group—Justice Tripp and Dan Fang also play in Trapped Under Ice and Turnstile, respectively, two of their city's best-known contemporary hardcore bands. And they initially had a strong handle on the style, but they've since polished their rough, explosive punk sound to be almost unrecognizably sleek. On their new major-label debut, *Pretty Buff* (Roadrunner), Angel Dust transfer the aggressive delivery of hardcore onto acoustic guitar parts ripped from the hands of frat rockers, delivering the kind of sweet but heavy hooks that were the bread and butter of 90s alternative radio. They do this most successfully on the single "Big Ass Love," while elsewhere they explore lovesick ballads ("Light Blue") and employ rock 'n' roll saxophone squall ("Take Away the Pain"). The results are as euphoric as they are transgressive, and isn't that what you want out of a hardcore band? —**LEOR GALIL**

Find more music listings at
chicagoreader.com/soundboard.

MUSIC

BILIANA VOUTCHKOVA & OLIVIA BLOCK See also Monday. Carol Genetti & Gwyneth Zeleny Anderson open. 8:30 PM, Constellation, 3111 N. Western, \$10-\$15. 18+

The music of Berlin-based violinist Biliana Voutchkova crosses styles and spans centuries. She plays Baroque classical and free improvisation with pianist Antonis Anissegos, she interacts with dancers and electronic musicians in Grapeshade, and she recently released the triple album *Blurred Music* (Elsewhere) with clarinetist Michael Thieke. The collection includes three complete concerts of free-wheeling, microtonal chamber music, one of which was recorded at the Illinois Institute of Technology's Carr Chapel. In that performance, the two musicians blur the lines between composition and free improvisation by spontaneously interacting with their own prerecorded material. Voutchkova will play twice in Chicago this week. On Friday at Constellation, she'll perform live for the first time with Olivia Block—a Chicagoan who shares her interest in working with the emotional and acoustic properties of sound at a granular level. Voutchkova will respond to cassette tapes of her playing that the two women have prepared in advance, while Block manipulates the speed and clarity of the tape playback in real time. Vocal improviser Carol Genetti and visual artist Gwyneth Zeleny Anderson will open the evening with a collaborative performance. For their recent CD *Chyme* (Suppedaneum), Anderson created elaborate, colorful paper fold-outs for listeners to negotiate while listening to Genetti's layered, eerily prelingual vocal tracks; in concert Anderson will project texts and animations while Genetti uses tubes, crystal glassware, and electronics to distort and magnify her voice. On Monday, Voutchkova and Belgian jazz drummer Jakob Warmenbol will perform separately and together at Experimental Sound Studio. —**BILL MEYER**

STRANGE 90S: A BENEFIT FOR JERRY BRYANT 8 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$25. 18+

For a brief time in the 90s, Chicago's music community took its turn in the national spotlight—*Billboard* magazine dubbed the city "cutting edge's new capital" in 1993, as the likes of the Smashing Pumpkins, Urge Overkill, and Liz Phair rose to fame. And for those who couldn't make it to clubs such as Lounge Ax or Double Door (or weren't old enough to get past security), there was *JBTV*, a weekly half-hour music show that aired Saturday nights at 11:30 on Channel 66. Thanks to *JBTV* founder Jerry Bryant and his passion for indie music, viewers were treated to some of the earliest television performances by Green Day, Jeff Buckley, and many others. The Emmy-winning show is still going strong (with multiple time slots on both cable and broadcast TV), but in August, Bryant revealed that he's facing colorectal cancer. Enter "Strange 90s: A Benefit for Jerry Bryant," which Metro hosts with *JBTV*, Charity Bomb, and WKQX 101.1 FM. Bryant's informal approach—he gives guests free rein in terms of set lists and interview topics, and invites fans to attend tapings for free—and the show's understated camera work make *JBTV* feel less *American Bandstand* and more like a real-life take on the intimate filmed-in-a-basement format of *Wayne's World*. And it's a testament to Bryant's deep connection with the city's music community that so many local and touring artists are involved with the fund-raiser. Tonight's lineup includes Naked Raygun, Andrew WK., Plain White T's, Madina Lake, Lizzy Plapinger, and Matt Walker (who's played with Morrissey), as well as members of Local H, Kill Hannah, Stabbing Westward, Lovehammers, Ours, Marina City, and Kontrollad Kaos. In keeping with the 90s theme, the sets will include covers of songs by era-appropriate groups, among them Nirvana, Radiohead, and Garbage. All ticket proceeds will go toward Bryant's cancer treatment. —**KIRSTEN LAMBERT** ➔



Angel Dust © ANGELA OWENS

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continued from 33

SATURDAY9

ARTHUR *The Moses Gun* headlines. 9 PM, GMan Tavern, 3740 N. Clark, \$10, \$7 in advance. 21+

On December's self-released *Lost in the Walled City*, Chicago's Arthtur sound like they would've been signed to DFA Records if they'd been around in the early aughts. They've only been releasing music for a couple years, though: front man Mike Fox launched Arthtur as a solo vehicle, but quickly roped in Matt Ciani (the two also play in a doom four-piece called Flesh of the Stars). Arthtur started as a loose creative project in which Fox and Ciani could go in any stylistic direction, and their first couple albums don't sound much like *Lost in the Walled City*, other than the fact that Fox and Ciani play several instruments on all three; 2016's dour, intimate *Who Needs Friends (When You Have Thoughts Like These)?* borders on slowcore, and last March's quirky, knotty *Come Meet the Opposite Committee* draws on art-rock and emo. To make *Lost in the Walled City*, Fox and Ciani recruited a new member, bassist Luke Dahlgren, and listened closely to the pivotal 1978 No New York compilation and Gang of Four's early recordings. They emerged with tight, blistering songs that resemble dance punk in spirit but move like house and disco cuts constructed from punk blueprints—the heavenly synth melody of “Get Fermented!” could slide into a set at Smart Bar to lock dancers into a deep groove. —LEOR GALIL

MAREN MORRIS *Cassadee Pope* opens. 8 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, \$39.50. 18

Mainstream pop audiences were largely introduced to country singer Maren Morris through last year's smash hit “The Middle,” her collaboration with Russia-born German producer Zedd and electronic duo Grey. The song—which showed off her powerhouse vocals—went platinum in several countries. About a dozen singers, including Demi Lovato and Bebe Rexha, had recorded demos of the track before Morris was selected for the final version—which serves as a testament to her singular chops.

But while to some pop fans it might have seemed like Morris appeared out of thin air, the Texas native had already won acclaim across the country-music world, starting with her 2015 *Billboard*-charting self-titled EP. On her debut full-length, 2016's *Hero*, she tells tales of heartache and hope, using her raspy voice and soulful delivery over twangy country mixed with gospel, rock, and other influences. The passionate girl-power songs that make up her second album, *Girl* (out March 7), continue to straddle the line between country and pop. The title choice seems deliberate—country has legions of female fans, but as Morris said in a recent Genius video, the genre often requires women to be “super-religious—they need to be super conservative, and never show their body.” Such rules inspired her to write a rebuttal of competition between women: on the title track, the 28-year-old sings, “Draw your comparisons / Tryin’ to find who's lesser than / I don't wanna wear your crown / There's enough to go around” over sparse instrumentation that leaves enough room for her message to ring loud. Another standout is “Common,” a brooding, slow-burning plea for unity with lyrics that could be interpreted as a call for sisterhood—or more broadly, for a divided country to find common ground. —RACHEL YANG

SUNDAY10

THE FLESH EATERS *Porcupine* opens. 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 2424 N. Lincoln, \$30, \$25 in advance. 21+

It's been more than 38 years since the Flesh Eaters released their acclaimed second album, 1981's *A Minute to Pray, a Second to Die*. But the classic version of the ragtag rockabilly group that made that recording—which included founder and front man Chris Desjardins (aka Chris D.), John Doe and DJ Bonebrake of X, Dave Alvin and Bill Bateman of the Blasters, and Steve Berlin of Los Lobos—returned to the studio last year to produce a new full-length, *I Used to Be Pretty* (Yep Roc). The band split up in 1983, and Desjardins spent much of the decade leading alt-country band the Divine Horsemen before resurrecting the Flesh Eaters moniker in 1990 as an outlet for his work with other musicians. The *A Minute to Pray* lineup briefly regrouped



Flesh Eaters © FRANK LEE DRENNEN

in 2006, but three California shows and an appearance at All Tomorrow's Parties festival in England that year were hardly enough to do it justice. Thankfully, *I Used to Be Pretty* does. The album stays true to the garage-punk spirit of the band's early material but tightens and spices things up, with more controlled vocals from Desjardins and cleaner production that strips away the lo-fi fuzz and adds clarity. Desjardins seems to have made the most of the group's time in the studio together by fine-tuning some previously released songs: for example, Bonebrake adds marimba to “Miss Muerte” off the 2004 album of the same name and to “Pony Dress” off 1983's *A Hard Road to Follow*. The album includes new highlights such as “Black Temptation,” filled out with wailing saxophone solos and with back-

up vocals by Julie Christensen, Desjardins's ex-wife and previous collaborator in the Divine Horsemen. Tonight's show is a rare chance to catch these old punks together again—and *I Used to Be Pretty* gives us just as much reason to celebrate the band's present as its past. —MADELINE HAPPOLD

MONDAY11

BILIANA YOUTCHKOVA & JAKOB WARMENBOL See Friday. 7:30 PM, Experimental Sound Studio, 5925 N. Ravenswood, \$10, \$8 students and members. 18

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MUSIC



Vince Staples COURTESY OF DEF JAM RECORDS

TUESDAY 12

VINCE STAPLES *JPEGmafia and Trill Sammy* open. 8:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 4746 N. Racine, \$35. 18+

In current hip-hop, Vince Staples is without parallel when it comes to sneering wit. The Los Angeles MC's concise 2018 Def Jam dispatch, *FMI*, is a colorful, subversive assessment of contemporary culture—and he's reportedly set to follow it with four full-length albums later this year. Regardless of Staples's lyrical abundance and profundity, there aren't too many performers in any genre with the dark waggishness to juxtapose tracks called "Fun!" and "No Bleedin"—the latter of which features Kamaiyah talking about jumping into some undefined abyss. It might not be a direct callback so much as a sturdy pronouncement of feeling, but "Jump off the Roof," a cut from Staples's 2015 *Summertime '06*, explores a similar escape plan. His songs often center on characters wading through disillusionment, and at some point on every release, a sense of weariness closes in; a tired-sounding Staples even opens his 2016 EP *Prima Donna* with a rendition of "This Little Light of Mine" punctuated with a gunshot. On *FMI*, that hopelessness is just disguised better, or at least differently. It's almost as if Staples occasionally works these narratives to show that he's exploring life on some previously unrealized plane of critical thought—one that most people can't even conceive of. —DAVE CANTOR

WEDNESDAY 13

EARTHEATER 9 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$10. 21+

New York-based Alexandra Drewchin, also known as Earthheater, creates mellow music that terrifies and/or terrifying music that you can sink back and relax to. On her most recent album, last year's *IRISIRI* (Pan), she mixes elements of acoustic folk and electronica; the music pulses and flows like a heavy mist that dissipates only to show glimpses of waving heather and witches' claws. But Drewchin never settles on one mood or mode, even within a single song. The one through line of the album is its alienating multiplicity. "Trespases" is spooky electronic plainchant, with chorusing monklike vocals that are continually replaced by robotic simulacra; "C.L.I.T." has Drewchin wailing as the music saws and sways like a fire alarm rising out of a faery. "Inhale Baby," featuring the duo Odwalla1221, is perhaps the album's most explicit statement of purpose. "Inhale baby pink / Exhale red," Chloe Maratta says in an almost intolerable sneering whine, and Flannery Silva sounds almost as pissed off when she responds, "There's so much stuff coming out of my skirt." For Drewchin, creativity is a bloody, abundant, feminine process, which is simultaneously assaultive and maternal—and she's determined to be herself, however many sides she has. —NOAH BERLATSKY

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Elvin Bishop's Big Fun Trio 5/30, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 3/7, noon 18+
Boy Band Review 3/16, 9 PM, Bannerman's Sports Grill, Bartlett
Bush 9/6, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 3/15, 10 AM
Roberto Carlos 3/21, 8 PM, Rosemont Theater, Rosemont
Church of Misery, Mondo Generator 5/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Anna Clendening 4/17, 7 PM, Schubas 18+
Diane Coffee 4/24, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+
Alice Cooper 7/21, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM
Dauché, Jabari 5/18, 8:30 PM, Concord Music Hall
Deerhoof 4/21, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Ani DiFranco in conversation with Jessica Hopper 5/10, 7 PM, Everybody's Coffee 18+
Drab Majesty, Facs 5/17, 6:30 PM, Garfield Park Conservatory, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM 18+
Earth 6/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM
Feed Me 6/21, 8:30 PM, the Vic, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM, 18+
Sammy Hagar, Vince Neil 6/7, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park
Maggie Speaks 4/22, 7:30 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 3/7, noon 18+
Mana 10/11-12, 8 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont, 10/12 show on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM
Dave Mason 8/13-14, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Thu 3/7, noon 18+
Mott the Hoople 4/3, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Neurosis, Bell Witch, Deafkids 8/17, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM, 17+
Smashing Pumpkins, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, AFI 8/15, 7 PM, Hollywood

Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM
Superchunk, Negative Scanner 6/9, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Jamila Woods 5/26, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 3/8, 10 AM, 17+
UPDATED

UPDATED

BTS 5/11-12, 7:30 PM, Soldier Field, 5/12 added, on sale Fri 3/8, 4 PM
Dom La Nena 5/4, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, canceled 18+
Sneaks 3/27, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, canceled
Wet, Kilo Kish, Hana Vu 3/12, 6:30 PM, Subterranean, Moved from Metro; Metro tickets will be honored 18+
Upcoming
Aborted, Cryptopsy, Benighted 3/22, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+
Accidentals 6/20, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Acid Mothers Temple, Yamantaka // Sonic Titan 4/13, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Arkells 3/14, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge 18+
Be Forest 3/19, 9 PM, Empty Bottle
Beach Bunny 3/14, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+
Beams, Jessica Risker 3/14, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Beck, Cage the Elephant, Spoon 7/31, 6 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion
Adrian Belew 10/3, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Andrew Belle 5/23, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Jon Bellion 7/19, 7 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion
Alec Benjamin 4/23, 7 PM, Lincoln Hall 18+
Black Lips, Fucked Up 4/27, 8 PM, Metro, 18+
Black Moth Super Rainbow 3/20, 8 PM, Sleeping Village
Black Queen, Uniform 3/16, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+
Billy Bragg 4/25-27, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Tamar Braxton 5/31, 8 PM, Patio Theater

Captain Beyond 4/12, 8 PM; 4/14, 7 PM, Reggie's Music Joint, 4/12 sold out, second show added
Brandi Carlile 6/29, 7:30 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion
Neko Case, Shannon Shaw 4/26-27, 7:30 PM, the Vic, 18+
Chromatics, Desire, In Mirrors 5/31, 9 PM, Park West, 18+
Com Truise, Jack Grace 4/3, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+
Combichrist 5/5, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Commander Cody & His Lost Planet Airmen 3/21, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Cowboy Junkies 4/13-14, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 18+
Cupcakke 3/21, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall
Trevor Hall 3/29, 6:30 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+
Hand Habits 4/4, 9 PM, Hideout
Fareed Haque & KAIA String Quartet 5/19, 1 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Robyn Hitchcock 4/3, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Iron Maiden 8/22, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park
Kemba, Brittney Carter, Calid B 4/6, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Mogli 5/14, 7:30 PM, Schubas 18+
Mono, Emma Ruth Rundle 6/15, 6 PM, Bohemian National Cemetery 18+
Monolord 4/26, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle
Mormor 4/26, 8 PM, Sleeping Village, 18+
Van Morrison 4/24, 7 PM, Chicago Theatre
Mark Morton, Light the Torch 3/21, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Mountain Goats 5/15-16, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Movements, Boston Manor 5/19, 7 PM, Metro 18+
Mr Eazi 4/6, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Mudhoney 5/26, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall
Peter Mulvey 4/5, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Peelander-Z 5/1, 8 PM, Reg-

gie's Music Joint
Neyla Pekarek 4/17, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Pelican, Young Widows, Cloakroom 6/29, 9 PM, Metro, 18+
Perfume 4/5, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre
Perpetual Groove 4/27, 10 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Perturbator 5/9, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Haley Reinhart 4/14, 7 PM, Park West 18+
Reverie 3/29, 8 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 18+
Thomas Rhett, Dustin Lynch 9/14, 7 PM, United Center
Rodrigo Y Gabriela 5/24, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre
Rubblebucket 3/16, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+
Sasami 4/23, 7 PM, Schubas 18+
Satsang 5/3, 9 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn
Michael Schenker Fest 5/4, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Scientists 4/10, 9 PM, Sleeping Village
John Scofield's Combo 6/6-6/27, 7 PM, SPACE, Evanston
Melvin Seals & JGB 3/22, 8 PM, Park West, 18+
John Sebastian 7/8, 8 PM, City Winery 18+
Jane Siberry 4/19, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 18+
Chris Smither 4/12, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn
Smoking Popes 5/10-11, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Snoop Dogg 6/29, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+
Snow Patrol 5/7, 7 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Soledad 5/22, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 18+
Marco Antonio Solis 3/31, 7 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont
Son Volt 4/27, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+
Vince Staples, JPEGmafia, Trill Sammy 3/12, 8:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+
Supersuckers, Blind Staggers 3/12, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen
Twiztid 3/23, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+
Jimmie Vaughan 6/28, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 18+

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GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

CHICAGO POWER TRIO the **Moses Gun** took five years to follow up their scorching self-titled 2012 debut with the equally impressive 2017 EP *Triage*, but since the release of the latter, they've done better at maintaining their momentum! On Saturday, March 9, the Moses Gun drop the brand-new full-length album *Waltz of the Conflicted Yellowjacket*, made at Ambush Recordings, the home studio run by their drummer, **Jim Kendall**. It's by far the band's best work—Gossip Wolf is especially fond of the shoegaze-shaded psych rock of "Blame" and the radio-ready gut punch of "Climb (Star Mode)," which features a blowtorch guitar solo from **Vell Mullens**. Saturday night the Moses Gun play a record-release show at **GMan Tavern** with openers **Arthtur**, who got their own write-up elsewhere in the paper.

On Thursday, March 7, the **Broad Squad** tattooers' collective takes over **East Room** to host "**Draw Your Idols**," an art show, concert, and benefit for **Howard Brown Health** and the **Chicago Period Project**. Local femme tattoo artists will present work inspired by other influential femmes—and because it's on the walls, not on someone's skin, you can look as long as you like! The music lineup includes Wax Idols front person **Hether Fortune**, who lives in Oakland, and several Chicagoans: garage group **Radio Shaq**, outre dance-punk outfit **Powerpup**, and Misfits cover band **Hymen Moments**. The party starts at 10 PM, and admission is \$5; if you can, please bring donations of period supplies such as menstrual pads and tampons.

Few writers explore their subjects as lovingly as **Hanif Abdurraqib**, whose thoughtful, lyrical, insightful new book, *Go Ahead in the Rain: Notes to A Tribe Called Quest*, should be required reading for everybody. On Sunday, March 10, he'll appear at the **Seminary Co-op** in Hyde Park to read selections from *Go Ahead in the Rain* and talk about it with poet and teacher **Tara Betts**. The free event starts at 3 PM. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

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

By Dan Savage

SAVAGE LOVE

Heavy load

Should you share a not-so-kinky kink?

Q: Let's say my kink is edging and I edge myself for a few days leading up to a date. Is it my responsibility to tell my potential partner? This is a first/Tinder date, and it's just a coffee date, BUT she and I have talked about our expectations, and there will likely be a physical aspect in whatever potential relationship may ensue. I understand that it's never cool to involve someone in your kink without their consent, but what are the rules here? If I don't divulge this information, I could see how my production of an unexpectedly large amount of ejaculate could be upsetting. But at least some amount of come is expected, right? If I randomly had massive loads every single time through no effort of my own, would I be responsible for letting a partner know?

Perhaps it would be the polite thing to do. I guess I'd feel comfortable saying, "Hey, by the way, I produce very large loads," if sex was imminent. At what point between sex being "not off-limits" and "my parts are going to be interacting with your parts as soon as our clothes are off" is the right moment to disclose my kink? —**WHAT OUGHT ONE DO?**

A: Let's say . . . you blow that load. I can't imagine your new friend will be shocked. Blowing loads, after all, is what men do* with their penises**, WOOD, and most people who are attracted to men are aware of this fact. And anyone who's slept with two or more men is aware that some men blow bigger loads than others and the volume of an individual man's loads can vary naturally or

as the direct result of an intentional intervention, like edging.

Backing up for a second: Edging entails bringing yourself or being brought to the edge of coming over and over again. It's about getting yourself or someone else as close as you can to the "point of orgasmic inevitability" without going over. Draw out the buildup to a single orgasm for hours or days and the resulting load will be larger than normal for the edged individual. But even so, an edged dude's load can still be smaller than the load of a guy who just naturally produces more ejaculate.

I don't think there's a pressing need to disclose your kink to your date. If it gets sexual, she's going to expect you to produce ejaculate. And even if the load you wind up blowing is enormous, you're →

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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 JVVJ005487, 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.

CLERK OF THE ABOVE COURT (3/7)

Notice is hereby given, pursuant to "An Act in relation to the use of an Assumed Business Name in the conduct or transaction of Business in the State," as amended, that a certification was registered by the undersigned with the County Clerk of Cook County, Registration Number: Y19000642 on February 21, 2019 Under the Assumed Business Name of HARDCORE FITNESS with the business located at: PO BOX 87123, CHICAGO IL 60680 The true and real full name(s) and residence address of the owner(s)/partner(s) is: Owner/ Partner Full Name SHANNON BONNER at 6500 S. MINERVA #2S CHICAGO, IL 60637 USA (3/21)



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SAVAGE LOVE

continued from 37

not going to drown her or wash out her IUD.

Frankly, WOOD, your letter reads like you got baked out of your mind and sat up half the night trying to come up with an excuse to tell this woman about your not-that-kinky kink and “I should tell her as a courtesy” was the best you could do.

If you want to tell her, go ahead and tell her. But since there's no need to tell her that you sometimes like to stroke for a bit without climaxing, there's a strong chance she'll react negatively to your “courtesy” disclosure. Even if she's made it clear there could be “a physical aspect”—even if that's not just dickful thinking on your part—she's going to be scrutinizing you for signs that you aren't someone she wants to get naked with. She'll be looking for red flags at your first face-to-face meeting, and if you come across like a creep with piss-poor judgment—


and a needless conversation about how much ejaculate you produce and why you produce so much ejaculate will definitely come across as creepy—then she may decide not to ensue with you.

*Not all men have penises, not all penises have men, not all men blow loads, not all loads are blown by men, etc.

**Not the only thing men do with their penises, some men don't do that thing with their penises, some penis havers don't do that thing as men, etc.

Q: I'm a queer man who usually tops with men. A bad first try at receiving anal at age 16 led me to not bottom for years. After seeing the looks of delight on my partners' faces, I decided to give bottoming another go. I followed your advice—lots of lube and relaxation, a little weed—and tried lots of different positions and dick sizes. But no matter what, I never seem to get

past the pain and into the pleasure zone. How many times should I try bottoming before I decide it's not for me? —TWENTYSOMETHING INTO GLUTES HAD TO HAVE ORGASMS LUSTILY ELSEWHERE

A: There's no set number of times a queer person has to try bottoming before deciding it's not for them, TIGHTHOLE. A person—queer or straight—can make that call without ever having tried bottoming. An exclusive top who isn't afraid of his own hole, i.e., a queer guy who enjoys being fingered and using a prostate massager, doesn't have a hang-up; he's just a guy who knows what works for his hole and what doesn't. And that's more than most people know. 

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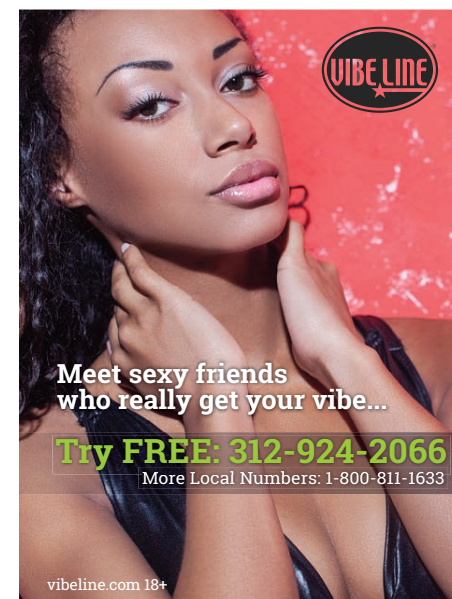
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PRAIRIE POTHOLE

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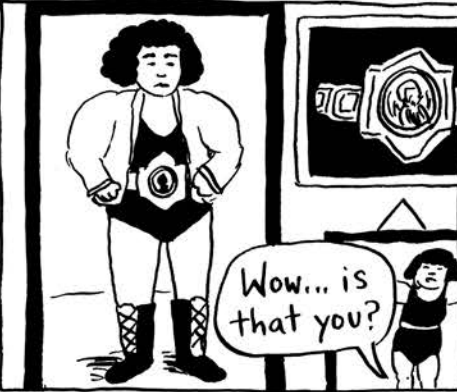
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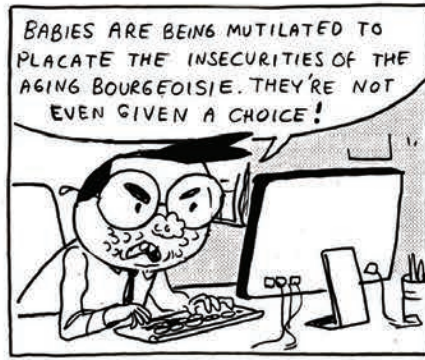
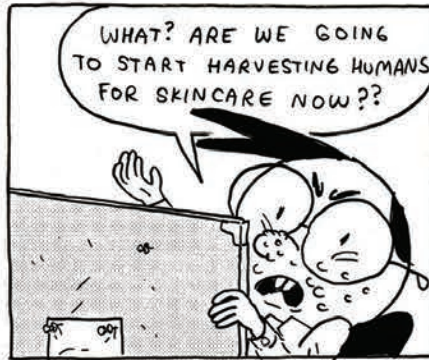
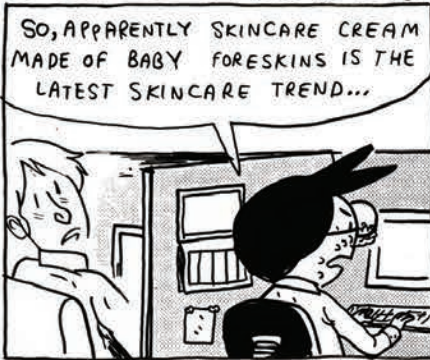


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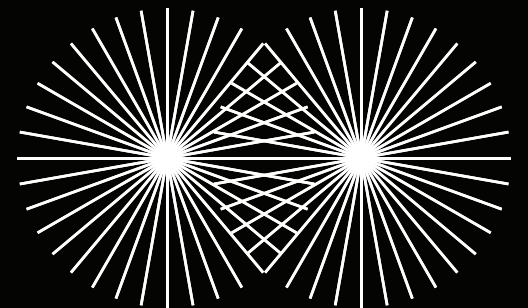


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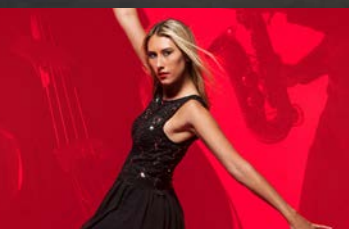


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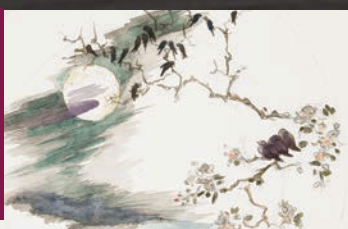


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