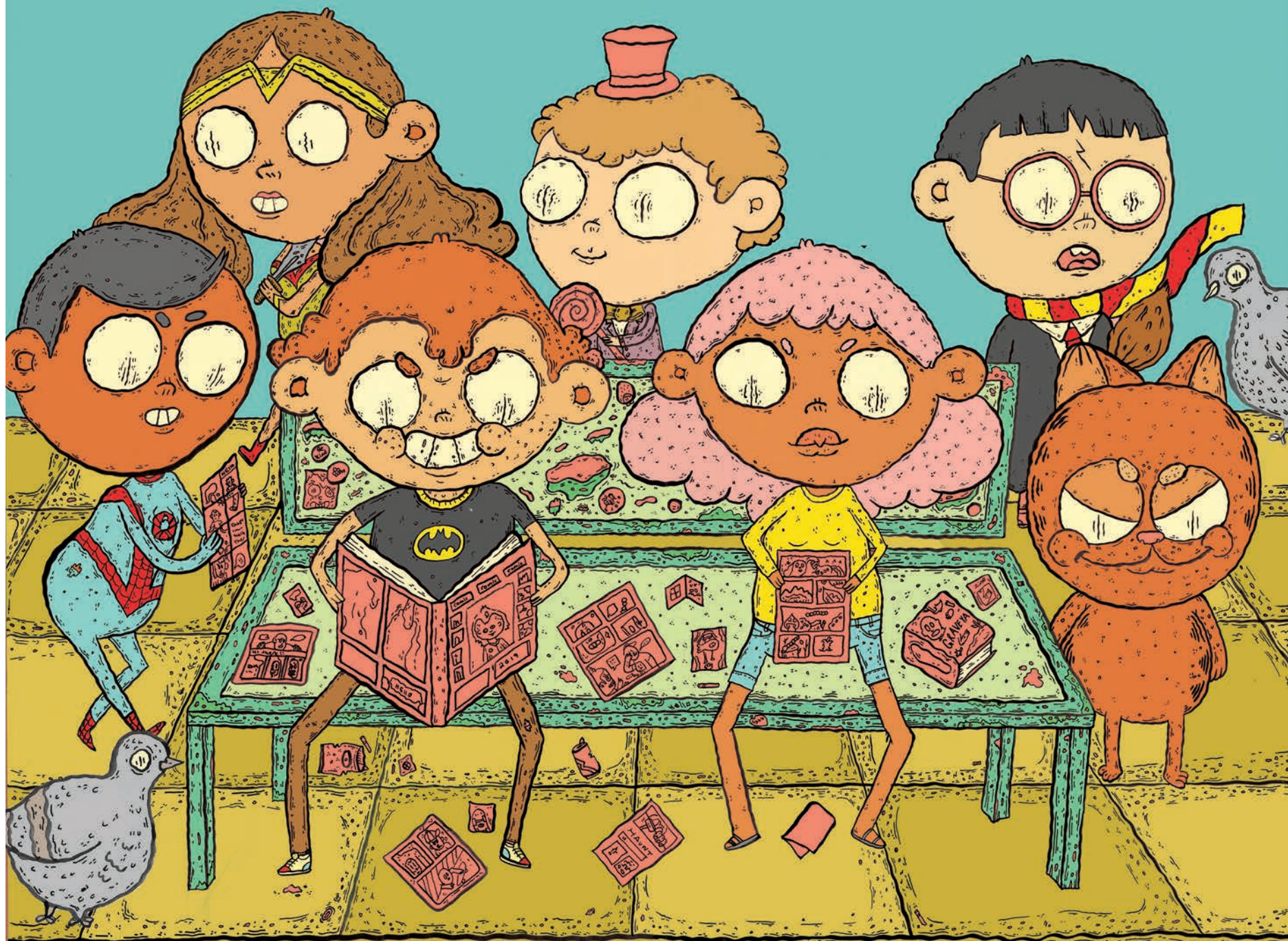


READER

Books and Comics Issue



A BRIEF HISTORY OF RAMEN 10 | FOUR SLICES OF CAKE Mark Peters 12 | THE CITY'S CHANGING LITERARY LANDSCAPE Max Grinnell 18 |
GENTRIFICATION GETS GRAPHIC Tyra Nicole Triche 16 | SELF-PUBLISHING SAVED MY LIFE Mike Centeno 14 | CHICAGO'S SUMMER READING 17

IN THIS ISSUE



CITY LIFE

04 Public Service

Announcement Reading out of the (free book) box

04 Feral Citizen Bee column: see what all the buzz is about.



NEWS & POLITICS

06 Joravsky | Politics Seymour Hersh on quoting people who don't want to say something publicly

08 Isaacs | Culture An article claiming Israel's "moral right" to annex the West Bank has caused an uproar at DePaul.



BOOKS & COMICS

10 Food An excerpt from the comic cookbook Let's Make Ramen!

12 Festival Here are some of the people you'll meet at CAKE, the annual alternative comics expo.

14 Comic How self-publishing saved one illustrator's life

16 Graphic An Afrofuturistic graphic novel captures how white privilege feeds on Black neighborhoods.

17 Nosiness We asked you whose summer reading lists you wanted to see. And then we asked them.

18 Nostalgia A writer surveys the transformation of Chicago's literary landscape.

19 Poem A handwritten answer to the question "What is it like to be a writer?"

20 Pride Five memoirs that made me the pansexual freak I am today

THEATER

21 Review Style & Grace pays tribute to Lena Horne and Nancy Wilson.

22 Plays of note For Services Rendered explores the trauma of World War I, Jackalope once again turns straw into gold in Life on Paper, and most of Henry VIII's wives are back as pop divas in Six.



FILM

23 Review Transit follows refugees in Marseille hoping for a better life. But is it 1944 or 2019?

24 Movies of note The Third Wife hushes interpersonal drama, The Wandering Soap Opera's surrealist humor is often riotous, and Woodstock: Three Days That Defined a Generation is a moving remembrance.

MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

27 Feature Johari Noelle packs years of soul into her first five songs.

30 In Rotation ESS engineer Alex Ingilizian on the synth module that changed his life, and more musical obsessions



31 Shows of note Damon Locks Black Monument Ensemble, Wu-Tang Clan, Juice Wrld, and more this week

36 Early Warnings Cherubs, Ladytron, Mating Ritual, and more just-announced concerts

36 Gossip Wolf Homeroom's Physics for Listeners series connects local trio ZRL with four disparate composers, the Plastic (Crimewave) Ono Band releases its fourth tape-only split, and more.

OPINION

38 Savage Love Dan Savage says cup the balls, elope, and more answers to your burning questions.

CLASSIFIEDS

39 Jobs

39 Apartments & Spaces

39 Marketplace

ON THE COVER: ILLUSTRATION BY VALERIE VON RUBIO. FOR MORE OF VON RUBIO'S WORK, GO TO VALERIEVONRUBIO.COM.



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THIS WEEK ON CHICAGOREADER.COM



Movie Tuesday: 19th-century women

Five films that address the position of women and sexual mores of a bygone era



Flying high

An attorney who specializes in cannabis law answers a burning question about traveling with marijuana.



A visit to the Sweets and Snacks Expo

Intrepid reporters Aimee Levitt and Leor Galil try to avoid drowning in a sea of salt and sugar.



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Bee at Starved Rock State Park NICK ESCOBAR

FERAL CITIZEN

Eat a tomato, thank a bumblebee

A bee brain is vastly more efficient than a human brain.

By **NANCE KLEHM**

Most folks don't know a lot about insects. Insects move fast and we have some sort of phobia. We urbanized animals have a penchant for cultivating turf grass and concrete and tend not to have that many insects around us. But the pollinator-plant connection (and sometimes dependency) is real.

I recently spent some pleasant hours speaking with local ecologist Tomasz Przybylowicz about our shared love of bumblebees. I have warmed them in the palm of my hand by breathing on them and have watched them take shelter in large cupped flowers when it rains. But Tomasz studies bee neurology and he wants to blow our minds about their minds. Before that, we both agree that folks need to get straight on two things.

All things that buzz are not bees: Bees are pollen eaters and nectar drinkers. Bees are hairy, long-antennaed, and usually chunky-bodied. They have four wings, both two fore wings and two hind wings that con-

nect with tiny hooks called hamuli so they can work as paired units. Bees are in the order Hymenoptera along with ants and wasps. Flies, mosquitoes, and gnats are in the order Diptera, as they have two wings.

Bees and honeybees are not interchangeable: There are 4,500 bee species in North America (30,000 on this planet) and currently 150 native bee species in Chicago alone. Eighty percent of these bees are ground nesters, meaning they need undisturbed ground to build nests. The other 20 percent of bees nest in wood cavities. Some native bees are solitary and some social, semi-social, or quasi-social. Some are as tiny as mosquitoes (the bee genus *Perdita*) and others are large, such as carpenter bees. Honeybees are from Europe and are commercialized. They are the only bees that produce and store evaporated and regurgitated nectar, or honey.

Apparently while tiny and almost a thousand times smaller, a bumblebee brain is vastly more efficient than our own brains and can compute visual information 15 times as

quickly. With each repeated tracing of a path from flower to flower, bumblebees progressively wayfind more efficiently. They navigate by the sun and landmarks from trees to swing sets. A bumblebee's working memory is eight seconds long (a point we actually are better at) and can tell when a flower has already been visited that day and the nectar thus emptied.

Bumblebees have two large compound eyes, positioned more widely apart than flies' eyes, and also three eyes on top of their head called ocelli. The compound eyes are for vision to navigate obstacles, pathways, and the ultraviolet patterns within flowers. The ocelli note directional light such as the position of the sun. The bees recognize symmetry.

Bumblebees need 18 mg of sugar a day so will forage for up to 18 hours with favorable weather conditions, and might visit 1,000 flowers during that time. They can muscle their way into somewhat-closed flowers that other pollinators can't, such as the gentians, turtlehead, monkshood, blueberries, and huckleberries. They also do buzz pollination or sonification, where they uncouple buzzing from flight muscles and vibrate to the right frequency to cause flowers' anthers to open and release pollen. Tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant are buzz pollinated. Eat a tomato, whether gown outside or in a hothouse, and thank a bumblebee.

While bumblebees are spotted early in the season, they are also some of the latest to disappear. They can fly under fairly wet conditions. They can survive at temperatures just above freezing, partly due to their fur, but also because of their ability to vibrate or "hum" to bring body temperatures up. This makes them adapt to high altitudes and high latitudes.

After the bumblebee queen emerges from hibernation in the ground in early spring, she forages for nectar from open flowers—witch-hazel, winter aconite, snowdrops, croci, willow. This first foraging flight is the most dangerous time of her life. She is weak and must find nectar and also a nesting site for her brood. Usually this is a hole of some sort: an animal burrow, an old birdhouse, or a crack in your foundation. She enters and, if the spot

is suitable, makes waxen bowls to store nectar when the weather is inclement and others into which she lays ten to 15 eggs and then seals with more wax. Her first brood to emerge are the female workers who take on the foraging, defense, and brood-rearing. The queen spends the rest of her life in the dark, laying eggs until she dies in early fall and new impregnated queens fly to dig burrows to hibernate all winter.

A few weeks back, Tomasz found a very weak bumblebee. It was a queen, because she was so large and out so early in the season. He gently caught her and made a beehome for her out of parts from a honeybee hive—a large bottom board, a hive box with some residual wax stuck on its sides, a bit of comb with both pollen and honey. He covered it with a piece of acrylic sheeting, confident she had everything she needed—safety, warmth, and food to refuel herself.

This queen found a small hole in his construction and promptly left. "What do I know about making bumblebee nests?" he said.

Tomasz is developing a game called *Bombus* based on bumblebee economics. It's both a strategy and educational game where one starts as a queen, has to build her colony, outmaneuver predators and severe weather, develop strategies every day to find flowers full of nectar, and invest in more bees as a cost of more energy. He wants the bees to look like actual specimens and the flowers to be actual species. He insists on it being made from cardboard so people actually have to physically move the bumblebee game pieces from place to place. This makes me grin.

So here's an invitation: before this month ends, lie belly down in a meadow or an uncut weedy vacant lot and prop yourself up on your elbows and watch the air bounce with tiny flying bodies as they drink morning dew from bent grass blades and dodge each other while searching for nectar and pollen.

@NanceKlehm

For more information about native bees check out the *Native Bee Awareness Initiative* and *Xerces Society*.

CITY LIFE



Andersonville book box © JAMIE RAMSAY



A book box at 103rd and Longwood
© PHILIP VON ZWECK

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Let the people get lit

Reading out of the (free book) box

PUBLIC LIBRARIES ARE the backbone of any great community as they serve as not just a repository for ideas, but also a vibrant space for gathering, reflection, and social services. Free boxes and other initiatives with a DIY spirit build upon these principles, and the popularity of organizations like the Little Free Library system means that you can find a lot of free reading material in public boxes all over Chicago. While “Little Free Library” itself is a specific term referring to the national registered nonprofit organization of the same name, anyone who wants to do this can just get a receptacle like a cardboard box or old storage tub, put reading material you want to give away inside, place the receptacle in a publicly accessible space, and make some signage for it so people know that they can drop stuff off or take stuff.

If you want some guidance on making a cute Pottery Barn Kids-style box that would not look out of place in a Thomas Kinkadee gated community, there are building plans on the Little Free Library website. Book boxes live precariously in public, because, well, the public. But as of this writing you can find some well-loved community outdoor libraries in neighborhoods including Back of the Yards (outside of the Back of the Yards Coffeehouse at 2059 W. 47th), Beverly (a box at 103rd and Longwood near the Givens Irish Castle), Pilsen (one on a fence near 18th and Newberry), and Bucktown (Bucktown Book Swap keeps a few going, including one at Lyndale and Oakley). The *Reader* itself was pleased to donate some of our older newspaper dispensers to be used as a children’s books-focused library at Unity Park in Logan Square. A free unveiling event will be held on Saturday, June 1 at the park, 2636 N. Kimball. Families are encouraged to come at 10:30 AM to hear about the project, listen to reading-themed songs, and stick around for storytime. —SALEM COLLO-JULIN

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Seymour Hersh  MARJORIE LIPAN/FLICKR

POLITICS

Going to the source

Seymour Hersh on the challenge of quoting the skittish

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

In 1989, I read an article in the *New Yorker* that changed my professional life—“The Journalist and the Murderer”—Janet Malcolm’s monumental takedown of journalists.

Journalists, she wrote, were con artists who, among other misdeeds, trick their subjects into saying things they wouldn’t ordinarily say on the record. Or, as Malcolm wrote in her first sentence . . .

“Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible.”

Thirty years later, that’s still one helluva lede.

After reading her article, I vowed to be up-front with my subjects—reading my article to them before it was printed, if that’s what they wanted. I made that offer throughout the 90s to profile subjects ranging from Bill Ayers to Norm Van Lier.

At some point, I mentioned my practice to a class of aspiring Medill journalists and their professor ripped me for giving too much say to my subjects.

Fast-forward all these years and I discover that Seymour Hersh—one of the great journalists of our time—well, let’s hold off on what I recently discovered about Hersh.

Suffice it to say, I’ve been up late reading Hersh’s memoir, *Reporter*.

I know you’re thinking—wait! Didn’t you just write a column about staying up late to read some old journalist’s memoirs? Yes, but that was *Working*, Robert Caro’s memoir.

Actually, Hersh and Caro are as different from each other as a hare from a tortoise. Caro is plodding, earnest, and exacting in his approach—dedicating years to a project, if that’s what it takes to get it exactly the way he wants.

In contrast, Hersh is constantly racing toward a deadline, with one eye over his shoul-

der, as though he’s worried some other writer will scoop him.

Not saying one style is better than the other. Just saying they’re different.

Hersh’s memoir begins on the south side in the 1950s, where his father ran a dry-cleaning business at 4507 S. Indiana.

It follows him from the old City News Bureau (right here in Chicago) to the South Dakota state house (he covered politics) to Washington, D.C. (where he made his name as a fearless muckraker).

There are many wonderful anecdotes. Like the time he had to track down Abe Rosenthal, his editor at the *New York Times*, at three in the morning with a question only Rosenthal could answer. Using the tricks of the investigatory trade, Hersh persuaded Abe’s wife to give him the name and number of Abe’s mistress, where the editor was spending the night. The mistress wasn’t happy when Hersh woke her to ask for Abe—but a reporter does what he’s gotta do.

In 1970, at the age of 33, Hersh won the Pulitzer Prize for his series in the Dispatch News Service about the My Lai Massacre, in which hundreds of unarmed South Vietnamese civilians were murdered by American soldiers, led by Lieutenant William Calley.

Hersh’s efforts to verify what happened at My Lai make for a tale of unrelenting tenacity. A key moment comes when Hersh confronts George Latimer, Calley’s lawyer. Hersh had interviewed Calley without Latimer’s permission and Latimer worried that Calley’s quotes could be used against him. So they wound up cutting a deal—you can take the kid out of Chicago, but you can’t take Chicago out of the kid.

“Latimer offered a deal,” writes Hersh. “If I would in some manner avoid saying outright that Calley’s comments were made directly to me . . . he could go over the story, line for line, and correct any factual mistakes he could.”

When I read that, I was like—oh, my god, I’m not alone! Seymour Hersh also reads back quotes!

I was so excited, I almost called Mick Dumke, my First Tuesdays partner, the only other journalistic geek I know who could possibly get so excited about this.

Good thing I didn’t. Man, Mick would have been as grumpy as Abe Rosenthal’s mistress if I woke him up at four in the morning to

say—“Mick, did you know that Seymour Hersh reads quotes back to his sources?”

Point is . . . if reading back quotes to sources is good enough for Hersh, it’s good enough for wannabe journalists at Medill. (As you can see, there’s no statute of limitations when it comes to me and ancient arguments.)

That brings me to a larger issue of sourcing in a story.

Here’s the journalistic challenge: people in the know have something to say, but they don’t want anyone to know they’re saying it. Especially to a journalistic troublemaker.

I know all about this from writing about Mayor Daley’s attempt to bring the Olympics to Chicago.

Basically, corporate and civic Chicago signed on to Daley’s foolishness because they were too chicken to take a public stand against the mayor.


So, they’d tell me things like—“I hope we don’t get the Olympics, but for God’s sake, don’t quote me.” Like getting yelled at by the mayor is worse than watching the city go broke paying for his vanity project.

Back to Hersh: like any good reporter, he’s always cutting deals with his sources. Once he convinced Paul Meadlo, one of the soldiers who killed innocents at My Lai, to fly to New York City for an on-camera interview with CBS News.

“[My publisher] had somehow convinced CBS . . . to pay ten thousand dollars . . . for an exclusive interview with Meadlo the night before my My Lai story was about to be published,” Hersh writes. “There was a huge argument for television exposure, if Meadlo would agree to do an interview, but it would be completely unethical, in the newspaper world, to pay him to do so. You cannot pay for information that the public has a right to know. . . . And so I asked Paul if he would do it, and also made clear that he could not be paid for the interview, and that I and the Dispatch would be.”

Hersh talked Meadlo into doing the interview, but without taking the cash—though CBS did “fly Meadlo and his wife to New York City and put them up in a good hotel.”

Here’s a question for Janet Malcolm: Why is it ethical to pay the journalist but not the murderer for news?

Hersh’s memoir is an enlightening read. I only wish it had come out earlier. His tales of dealing with lying and conniving Washington officials would have come in handy for any reporter covering the Daley/Rahm years. 

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NEWS & POLITICS

ON CULTURE

“Professor Hill, you can’t hide! We know you want genocide!”

An article claiming Israel’s “moral right” to annex the West Bank has caused an uproar at DePaul

By DEANNA ISAACS

Last month, DePaul University philosophy professor Jason Hill wrote an opinion piece for the *Federalist*, a conservative online magazine, that argued for Israel’s “moral right” to annex the West Bank and Gaza.

The article claimed that Israel won the territory in a defensive war and that its Palestinian population, to the extent that it supports organizations that “work for Israeli and Jewish destruction,” lacks “moral authority” and constitutes “a national security threat.”

Along the way, he suggested that “not all cultures are indeed equal.”

It was incendiary, and it got noticed. A DePaul student organization immediately put together a change.org petition demanding a public apology and asking that the administration censure Hill and send him for racial sensitivity training.

The petition, which also cites tweets made by Hill, charges that “[h]is comments create unsafe and uncomfortable spaces for everyone, especially Palestinian and Muslim students who now all refuse to enroll in a class that is taught by Professor Hill.” At press time it had more than 3,400 signatures.

DePaul, still known as the school that denied tenure to “Holocaust Industry” challenger and Israel critic Norman Finkelstein in 2007 (as well as subsequent incidents), responded promptly and, it seemed, unequivocally, on the side of free speech. In an April 24 e-mail to the university community, president A. Gabriel



Jason Hill COURTESY OF JASON D. HILL

Esteban wrote that “The university will not censure Professor Hill for making unpopular statements.”

That should have been the end of it, Hill says. But it wasn’t. A week later, the DePaul Faculty Council took it upon itself to pass (hastily, by a vote of 21 to 10) a resolution that, while it affirmed Hill’s right to publish his opinions, “condemns in the strongest possible terms both the tone and content” of his article. According to the resolution, his article misrepresents history, distorts facts, promotes racism, and, “counter to the DePaul mission, states that ‘not all cultures are indeed equal.’”

The Faculty Council urged Hill “to take cognizance of the real harm his words have caused to students and other members of our community.”

And on May 15, acting provost Salma Ghanem also weighed in, issuing a statement on official letterhead that said she was “deeply saddened that Professor Hill used his right to academic freedom and free speech to disparage one group over another,” and complimenting “the way members of the DePaul community made their voices heard.”

Hill didn’t attend the Faculty Council meeting or a university-sponsored forum that followed it. He was receiving death threats, he says, and didn’t want to put himself into a hostile environment. But at a talk in Wilmette last week about his latest book, *We Have Overcome*, an appreciation of America that reflects on his own journey since his arrival from Jamaica at the age of 20 as a Black gay immigrant with \$120 in his pocket, he opened with an assessment of the situation in higher education. Indoctrination into cultural Marxism, he claimed, has replaced learning in the

NEWS & POLITICS

humanities and social sciences, and a climate of intimidation and fear suppresses First Amendment rights. “It’s not unique to DePaul,” Hill said. “It’s an assault on free speech on American campuses.”

He says he stands by what he wrote, and that his critics are conflating something he did say with something he didn’t. “I’ve always said that all individuals are endowed with equal intrinsic moral worth and value. But not all cultural practices are equal. What about cannibalism, for example?”

He also says his own mixed heritage, which includes a Sephardic Jewish great-grandfather, has nothing to do with his advocacy for Israel.

Faculty Council president Scott Paeth says, “I wouldn’t call what we did a censure. Our goal was to say, on the one hand, that his right as an academic to write what he wanted was something that we recognized and honored. But we did not want to seem to be endorsing his viewpoints. We were seeking a way to thread a very delicate needle.”

Hill says he’s talking with a lawyer, which led me to seek the opinion of DePaul law

school professor and Faculty Council member Mark Moller. He told me that “an official statement by the faculty’s governing body condemning [Hill’s] op-ed is, functionally, an act of censure,” and that “faculty governance bodies shouldn’t be weighing in on the op-eds of individual faculty.” In a follow-up e-mail, Moller wrote: “While I was not impressed with Professor Hill’s inflammatory op-ed, that op-ed is nonetheless extramural speech on a matter of public concern and, as such, is plainly protected against official censure as a matter of academic freedom.”

Says Hill: “I find it ironic that two weeks after the article was published, the Students for Justice in Palestine and other students are free to hold an anti-apartheid week against Israel on campus and I don’t think they felt their safety was compromised in any way, and it’s I who need a security escort on campus.”

The students had also held a demonstration a week after publication. Their chant made an indelible impression: “Professor Hill, you can’t hide! / We know you want genocide.”

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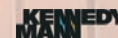
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FOOD FEATURE

Ramen quest

An excerpt from Hugh Amano and Sarah Becan's forthcoming comic cookbook *Let's Make Ramen!*

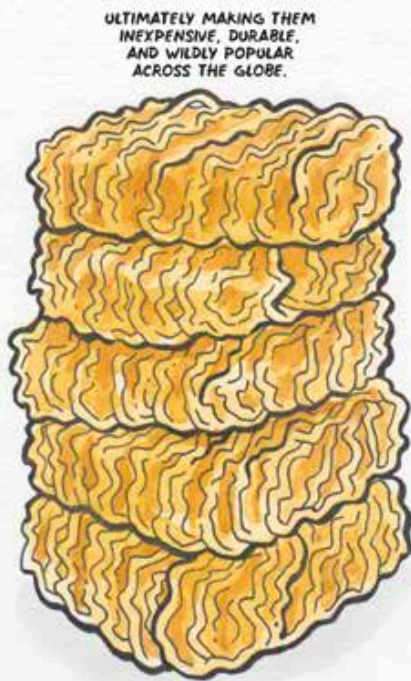
There's a lot to be said for the pleasures of cheap instant ramen. In fact there's a whole genre of cookbooks devoted to pimping Momofuku Ando's revolutionary flash-fried dorm room staple. But ever since the founder of Top Ramen and Cup Noodles launched it in 1958, instant ramen has more or less obscured to the world outside of Japan what real ramen actually was: a working-class street

food—and what it evolved into: a craft that inspires obsession among chefs and eaters alike.

You could argue that obsession didn't quite capture the American imagination until the rise of David Chang inspired the spread of ramen-ya—domestic and imported—across the country, introducing gaijin to a multifaceted soupiverse rotating around base broths such as *tonkotsu*, *shoyu*, *shio*, and *miso*.

Hugh Amano witnessed the golden age of ramen in both Japan and the U.S. As a kid visiting relatives in Japan, he says he always felt like the “big clunky American,” but he still managed to slurp down endless bowls of noodles. “Ramen was just a really big part of my life.” But it wasn't until he teamed up with Abe Conlon for the pre-Fat Rice chef's underground dinner series X-marx that he ever attempted to make it. “It was before I really understood





4

anything other than excess and bombast,” he says. “Pork neck, trotters, chicken feet to the max; a massive dong of umami, with little finesse, as a late-course entrée of a 20,000-calorie meal.”

Amano, the opening sous chef at Fat Rice, went on to coauthor *The Adventures of Fat Rice* cookbook, memorably illustrated by Sarah Becan, who came to the chefs’ attention after eating one of the restaurant’s signatures, Portuguese chicken (*po kok gai*), and send-

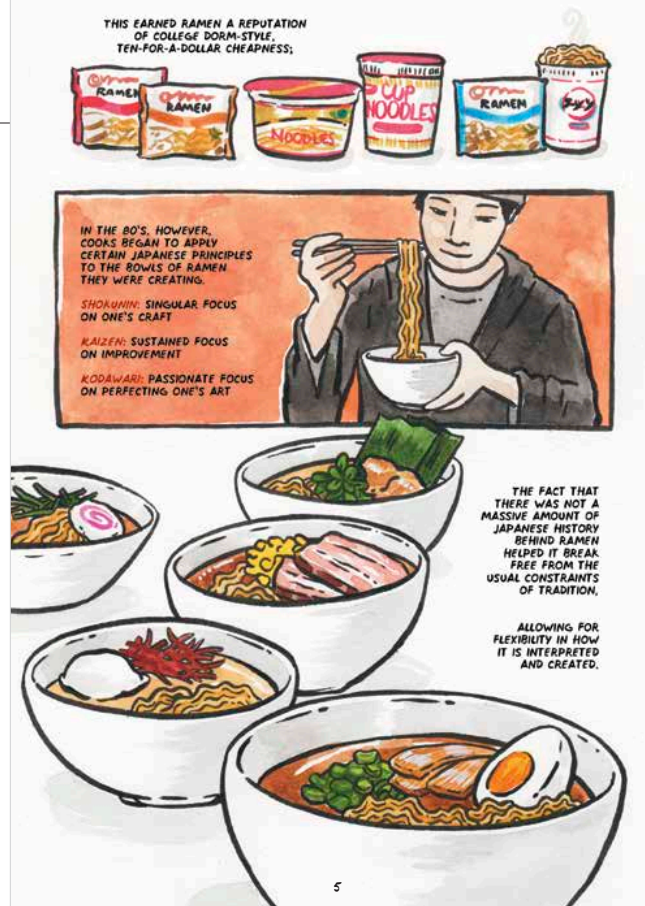
ing them a cross-sectioned annotation of the dish unbidden.

“Comics are an ideal medium for any kind of instruction,” says Becan, who clearly demonstrated the power of pictures over words with regard to dumpling construction in the *Fat Rice* cookbook.

With *Let’s Make Ramen!*, due out July 16 from Ten Speed Press, Amano and Becan neatly codify the elements of ramen and show that with a minimum of organization and planning,

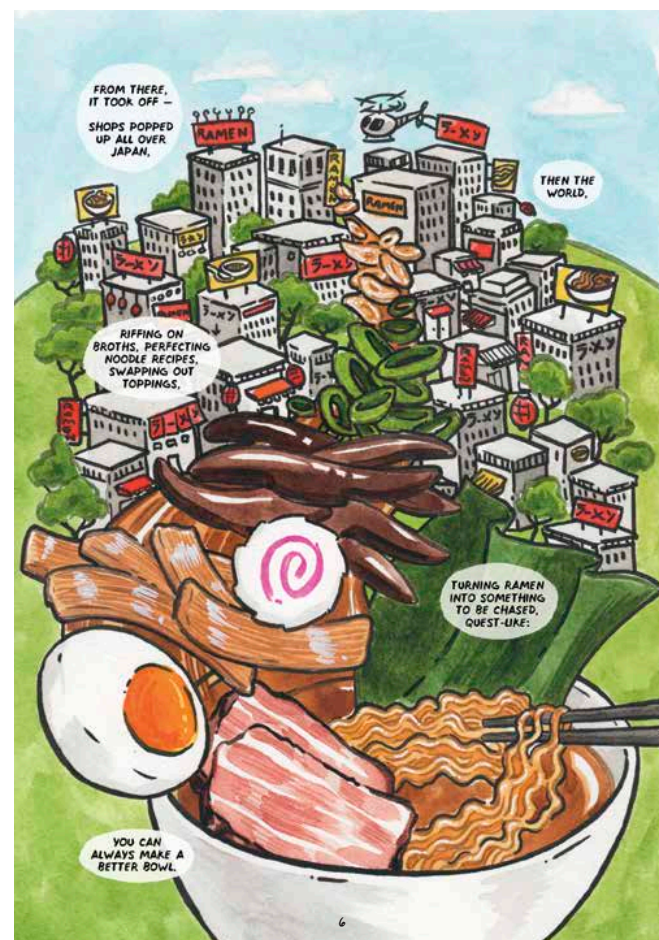
the home cook is capable of layering stocks, broths, seasonings, accompaniments—even homemade noodles—to create bowls of extraordinary finesse. “We wanted to make it accessible at the end of the day,” says Becan. —MIKE SULA

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5

TEN SPEED PRESS



Four slices of CAKE

Here are some of the people you'll meet at the annual alternative comics expo.

By MARK PETERS

Among the many joys of June in Chicago is CAKE, the Chicago Alternative Comics Expo. This annual celebration of the alternative side of comics is a place for marginalized voices and individual visions to dominate. Unlike C2E2, the other highlight of the yearly comics calendar, where the work often feels like a stepping-stone to a movie deal, the comics at CAKE are usually done by a single creator, and they're as far from corporate influence as Mercury is from Pluto. When it comes to creators and comics, CAKE is a decidedly diverse lineup with a surprise at every table, including spoofs of corporate culture, sprawling cosmic odysseys, *New Yorker*-style single-panel cartoons, nonfiction comics about wrestlers, memoirs in multiple art styles, and more. If C2E2 is a four-pack of Crayolas, CAKE is a box of 64,000. If you ever thought about getting into comics, there's no better gateway event.

Here are four of the many accomplished creators you'll see at this year's expo.



Whit Taylor

CAKE IS A showcase of not only the diversity of comics creators, but the diversity of influ-

ences on any given creator. Case in point: Whit Taylor, who has been prolifically creating and self-publishing comics since 2011. Two of her strongest influences are the perpetual teens of Archie Comics and botanical illustration. These loves—a far greater contrast than Betty and Veronica—feed her appreciation as both a creator and person for the wonders of friendship and nature.

Taylor's socially conscious work includes webcomics from publications such as The Nib and longer work, including *Ghost Stories* (an imagined series of meetings with some of her dead heroes) for Rosarium Publishing and *Up Down Clown* (a look at mental health through the unlikely perspective of a birthday clown) for Ninth Art Press. She works in a wide variety of genres and methods, maintaining a balance in several ways, notably by alternating between doing the whole comic herself and working with other artists, such as Shannon Wright and Maki Naro, who illustrated a scary recent piece on life before the FDA.

The comic at hand determines whether collaboration is in the cards: "Some stories, especially personal ones, make sense for me to draw," says Taylor. "Other times, I like pairing up with creators because I think their style will work best for that specific piece. It's usually quicker for me to write, so sometimes it allows me to better juggle projects."

Taylor does both educational nonfiction comics—which fit well with her day job as a clinical health educator—and more personal fictional stories. She sees no need to limit herself to one genre: "There is a place for both for me. Both types of comics are challenging and fun in different ways and add value to my practice as a cartoonist. They also appeal to different types of readers."

Among other comics and illustrations, Taylor will be bringing copies of issues #1 and #2 of *Fizzle*, an ongoing fictional minicomic series about the challenges of life with a retail job and stoner boyfriend.



Michael Kupperman

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN—WHOSE BOOKS published since 2000 include *Tales Designed to Thrizzle*, *Snake'N'Bacon's Cartoon Cabaret*, and *Mark Twain's Autobiography 1910-2010*—is a New York-based comic book comedian with few peers. His cartooning combines a retro style reminiscent of 1960s and '70s superhero comics with a sense of humor that resembles Jack Handey on bath salts, producing absurdities such as Mark Twain and Albert Einstein as a crime-fighting duo. Kupperman's work shows a genuine love for the comic medium and a surgeon's touch at dissecting it for laughs.

"Humor is one of the most deconstructive forces there is," Kupperman says. "When you combine it with art it has a peculiar deconstructive power. I like to think I've combined them in ways nobody else has. It's about freedom. To me comics are the easiest and most direct escape there is, into a sheet of paper or a computer screen."

Kupperman's comedic output alone would keep most creators busy, but he broadened his range considerably in his 2018 book *All the Answers*. In this gutting and honest memoir, Kupperman wrestles with his father's trau-

matic childhood as a quiz-show prodigy.

Moving from comedy to memoir was about as scary as you'd think. "It was absolutely terrifying to open myself up to that level," says Kupperman. "The publisher called it a graphic memoir, but I wonder if a better description might be graphic auto-noir. I followed the mystery of my father and at the end of the trail, what was waiting for me was the realization of how alone I'd been my entire life. It hurt me, badly. And then I presented it as narrative. I had to feel this pain all through it in order to portray it correctly."

Post-*Answers*, Kupperman has been working on more humor and personal work, as well as expanding into new areas: "I'm working on a history of advertising, a book about the Greek gods, and some other assorted pieces right now." Besides *All the Answers*, CAKE attendees can pick up two exclusive Kupperman works: a printed collection of *Supervillains*, a batch of bonkers comics that appeared on the Adult Swim website; and *Tork*, a memoir comic about Kupperman's former neighbor, the late ex-Monkee Peter Tork.



Rosemary Valero-O'Connell

ONE OF THE weirdest subgenres of corporate comics is the unlikely crossover. Over the years, fans have giggled and gaped at preposterous pairings such as *Batman vs. Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Transformers vs. G.I. Joe*, and *Archie vs. Predator*. Writer-artist

Rosemary Valero-O'Connell worked on the similar series *Lumberjanes/Gotham Academy* in 2016, bringing together successful teen series from the creator-owned Boom! Studios and the Batman-adjacent world of DC Comics. Crossovers are natural for Valero-O'Connell, whose life and work thrive on juxtapositions.

"Comics are my truest and oldest love," says Valero-O'Connell, "but there are a lot of other creative muscles that I like to stretch if



CAKE
6/1-6/2, 11 AM-6 PM,
Center on Halsted,
3656 N. Halsted,
cakechicago.com. **FREE**

Corrine Halbert

I'm lucky enough to get the opportunity. I love drawing more than anything, which means for better or for worse, I hardly ever say no to a chance to do it, which has meant a wide breadth of work across different avenues. I think if I stuck to only one or two very specific types of creative output my work would start to stagnate, so I'm very grateful that I get to try new modes of working that teach me new techniques and skill sets."

Valero-O'Connell's creative résumé, which includes the Eisner-nominated *What is Left* (a haunting story of the sea and memory) and the recently-published *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking Up With Me* (a teen tale written by Mariko Tamaki that anyone who's been in a toxic relationship should appreciate), is influenced by her upbringing: she was born in Minnesota, raised in Spain, and returned to Minnesota as an adult.

"I think growing up between two places and two cultures generally means you end up doing a lot of introspection with regards to identity, belonging, community, etc.," says Valero-O'Connell. "A lot of my work comes from mining personal experience, from interrogating and examining my own feelings about the world through fiction, and growing up in a shifting landscape provided me with a lot of rich soil to draw on in that regard. On an aesthetic level, I have a bit of an obsession with the somber and spiritual that is simultaneously gilded and intricate, and I owe that sensibility completely to the art, architecture, and traditions that I grew up with in Spain." That European sensibility makes her work stand out in the crowded field of American comics.

IF YOU'VE EVER been to Catholic school—or if you just have an appreciation for sexy nuns fondling skulls and devils—you'll say a prayer of thanks for the work of Chicagoan Corrine Halbert, which includes appropriately named comics *Hate Baby 666* and *Naughty Nuns*.

Halbert's artistic proclivities originated much as you'd expect: "I was raised Catholic and attended private Catholic school from kindergarten through fifth grade. The brightly colored idols, bold church designs and psychedelic stained glass windows have left a permanent mark on my subconscious. My erotic horror style is a culmination of everything I love aesthetically and consume on a regular basis, i.e. books, films, music, and ephemera."

Aside from the literal world of nuns and crucifixes, Halbert has been influenced by many creators inside and outside comics. "*Black Hole* by Charles Burns is my favorite graphic novel and biggest influence as a cartoonist," she says. "Junji Ito and Al Columbia's work have deeply impacted me as an artist. Horror and cult movies, vintage publications as well as an array of heavy music are constant sources of inspiration."

This profane and powerful set of influences can be seen in Halbert's latest work, which will debut at CAKE: *Demonophobia: Fear of Possession*. Halbert describes this comic as "a meta, demonic possession horror comic with threads of autobio storytelling weaved in throughout the book."

Such sinful, sensual work is hard to resist—as is spending too much money at CAKE. Hey, there's always confession. **FI**

@wordlust

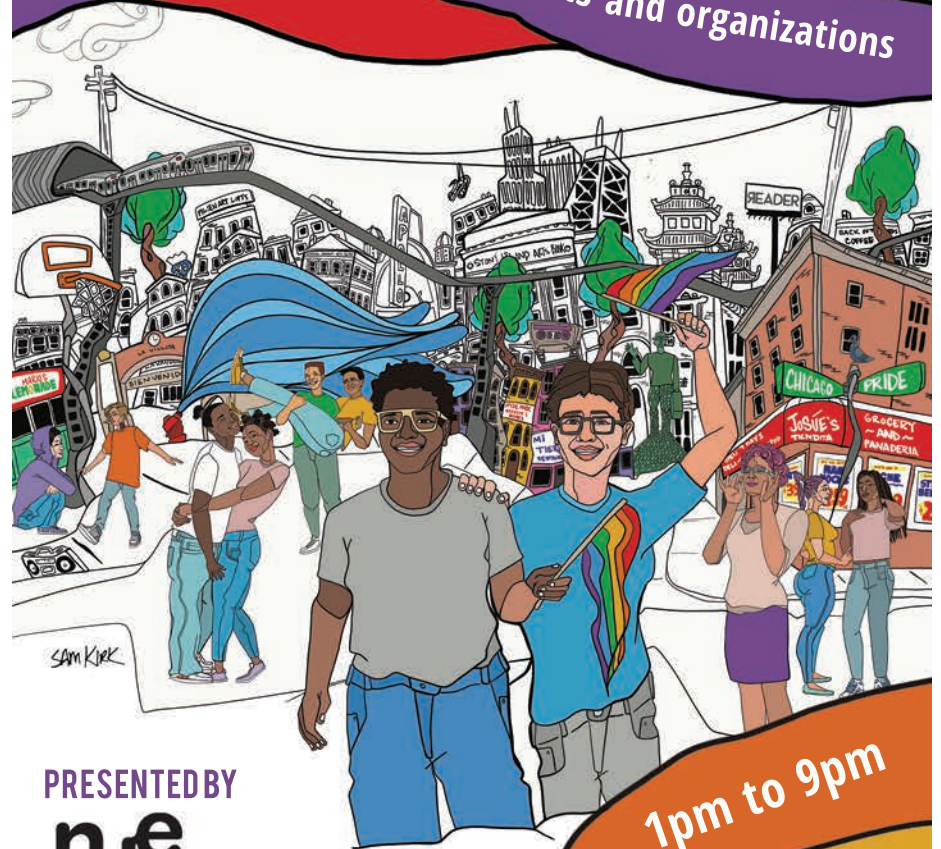
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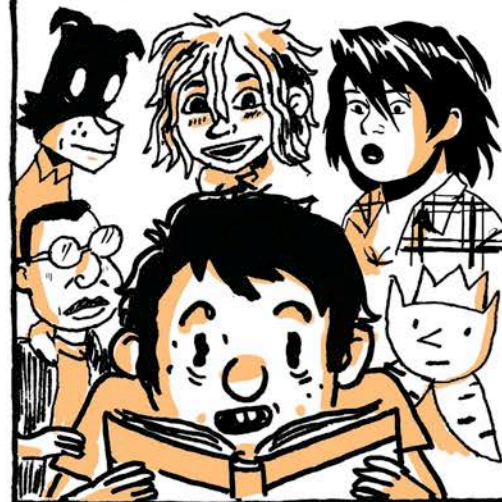
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IN THE GUTTER

BY:
MIKE
CENTENO
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My first year in the U.S. was a pretty lonely one. I moved to Boston, where I didn't know anyone, and lived in an apartment all by myself. This meant I spent a lot of time in the school library during the coldest winter I had ever encountered.



Having access to all the independent comics I had heard so much about, but wasn't able to find in Venezuela, was exhilarating. I would spend hours among the stacks, and rekindled my passion for the language of comics—a language that was instrumental to my development as a creative.

It wasn't until an instructor encouraged me to collect a few of my assignments into a mini-comic that I would even entertain the idea of self-publishing any of my work. One push was all I needed.



I worked on campus as an academic tutor, so I had unlimited access to the school's printers and copiers. I spent long nights putting together a couple of collections of short stories, making lots of mistakes along the way.



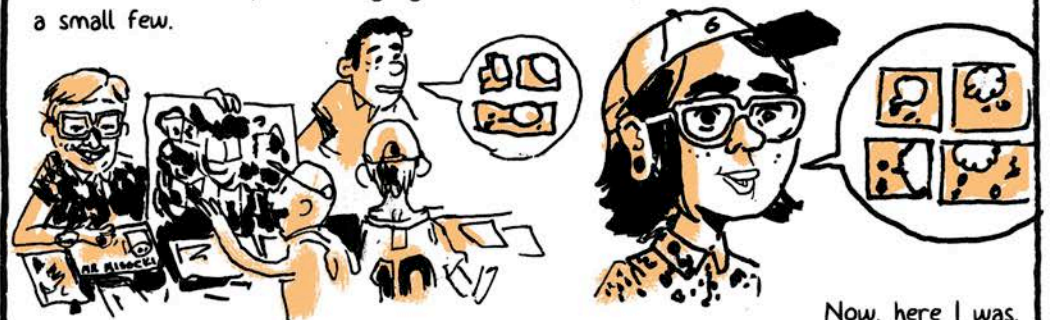
I didn't make a lot of money. But for a brief moment I was a comics artist. For a brief moment, there was a purpose to having left everything I knew behind...



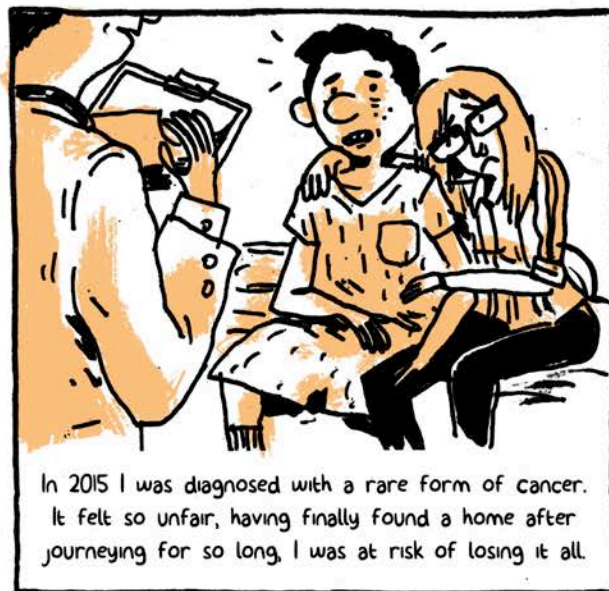
I moved to Chicago with my partner after finishing school and immediately discovered a community of small publishers, and artists that would finally give me a sense of belonging, that I had yet to find in my previous years in the U.S.



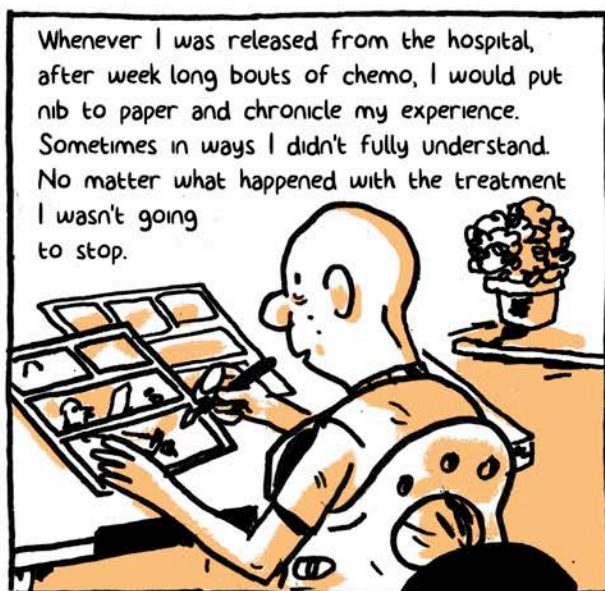
As an immigrant, even if your language is flawless, the need for a shared history and culture quickly becomes apparent. Comics had always existed as an in-between culture for me, a private language that I could only share with a small few.



Now, here I was. Surrounded by people who spoke the language fluently. Regardless of where we were from, we shared this code, this culture. Suddenly I started feeling less alone.



In 2015 I was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. It felt so unfair, having finally found a home after journeying for so long, I was at risk of losing it all.



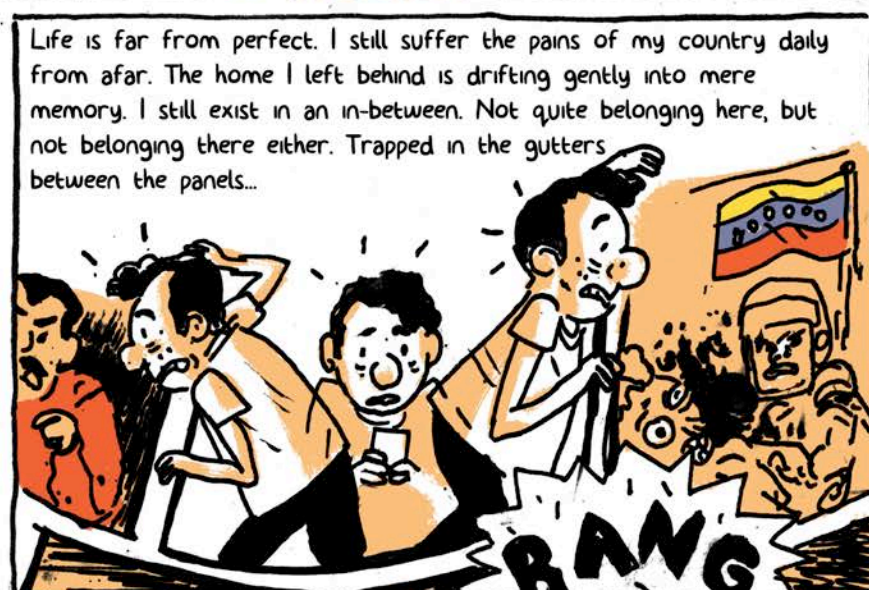
Whenever I was released from the hospital, after week long bouts of chemo, I would put nib to paper and chronicle my experience. Sometimes in ways I didn't fully understand. No matter what happened with the treatment I wasn't going to stop.



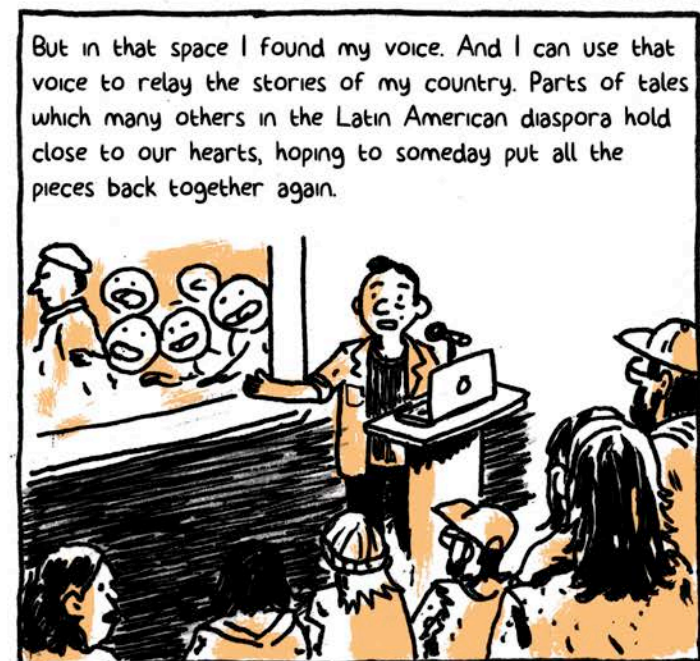
Thanks to the support of friends and family, I got a second chance. Even in the darkest nights of aggressive treatment, thinking of all the comics I had yet to create kept me going.



I tried to burrow myself deeper into the self-publishing culture of the city. As an employee at Quimby's Bookstore I got to witness first hand the excitement of new zinesters or comic artists as they made their first sale. Seeing them find the connection that I still hold so dear felt magical every time.



Life is far from perfect. I still suffer the pains of my country daily from afar. The home I left behind is drifting gently into mere memory. I still exist in an in-between. Not quite belonging here, but not belonging there either. Trapped in the gutters between the panels...



But in that space I found my voice. And I can use that voice to relay the stories of my country. Parts of tales which many others in the Latin American diaspora hold close to our hearts, hoping to someday put all the pieces back together again.



Until then, I will continue my yearly pilgrimages to any comics festival that will have me. Within the limits of these events, a temporary nation is created where I feel welcome by my cartoonist compatriots. No matter how disparate our backgrounds or identities may be, inside that space we are all the same.

So pay a visit to CAKE (Chicago Alternative Comics Expo) this June 1st and 2nd. You may find that story that you didn't know you needed to hear.



Started from the Bottomyards, now we're gentrified

A hyper-colored, Afrofuturistic graphic novel captures how white privilege feeds on Black neighborhoods.

By TYRA NICOLE TRICHE

In the graphic novel *BTTM FDRS*, Ezra Clayton Daniels and Ben Passmore capture the horrors of gentrification in a Chicago neighborhood through a Technicolor lens. The book follows Darla, a young Black artist and Chicago native, as she grapples with the colonization of the Bottomyards, the fictional south side neighborhood that she was born and raised in. She comes to the frightening realization that there has been something living in the walls of her apartment building, a monster that will take her body over from the inside out.

The story articulates what gentrification means in a way that expands beyond Chicago and can be felt around the nation. *BTTM FDRS* is palatable thanks to the medium of delivery: 295 pages of brightly hued, visually compelling panels. “I specifically wanted to use really bright colors, but colors that are also unnatural,” Passmore says. “And I wanted to play with just sort of giving people a feeling of uneasiness.” Shades of yellow, green, red, and violet provide an electrifying feel to each page.

“One of my goals with *BTTM FDRS* was to bring these issues up in a candy-coated, hyper-color, fun graphic novel that will try to instigate these conversations with people that might be living in a situation where it’s relevant for them to be thinking and talking about it, but they’re not,” Daniels says.

The encounters Darla has with people from the Bottomyards present the sad realities of Black folks being pushed out of communities they’ve called home for decades. Meanwhile, the experiences Darla has with those whom Passmore refers to as “colonizers” show how privilege can distort how a person views urban communities.

An example of this ignorance is displayed when Darla presents some clothes she’s designed to an art director who has never been to the Bottomyards. This woman’s opinion of the community has been shaped by the demeaning views of others and hearsay from her friends. She says she knew someone who “drove through once and said it was crazy!” Obviously apprehensive of the neighborhood

at first, the art director’s attitude changes when she hears of some of the artists who have moved to the area. Suddenly the Bottomyards becomes desirable and seen as a crazy yet alluring place that she must visit, no longer one that must be avoided.

“I think there’s a lot of common experiences with people feeling like their neighborhoods are judged in this way,” Passmore says. “Or sort of like measured as exotic and dangerous places.”

While on the surface this Afrofuturistic tale is a satirical take on gentrification, Daniels says that he constructed the arc of the story around cultural appropriation. He notes that he had a few stages of colonization in mind while writing the story as well. “You fear something, you covet something, you take something, and then you abandon it,” he says. Specifically, he built the story and its characters within and around the world of hip-hop.

“Darla and Cynthia [Darla’s rich white best friend] are kind of stand-ins for a Nicki Minaj/Iggy Azalea type of conflict,” he says. “Then there’s another character who represents a record label exec who doesn’t really understand the culture but sees that there’s a way to monetize it. There’s another character of the aficionado who also does not understand the culture but is trying to bring all these conspiracy theories and background stories on something that don’t really exist, but they try to force it into it.”

The news media in the story (whom Daniels named after WGN-TV newscasters) take Darla’s experience and present it as if Cynthia were the one to go through it, a not-so-subtle nod to the ways in which white people are granted access to co-opt Black experiences and narratives, ultimately to their own benefit.

The book delves into social matters that plague disadvantaged communities of color across the nation by being direct about the issues at hand. Daniels and Passmore are based in Los Angeles and New Orleans respectively, and say they, too, have had to interrogate

BTTM FDRS
By Ezra Clayton Daniels
and Ben Passmore
(Fantagraphics Books)

themselves about gentrification and cultural appropriation as they’ve moved from place to place. Daniels moved to Chicago when he was 24 and lived here for a decade. For him living in cheap Chicago neighborhoods “even as a person of color, is something that I had to reconcile with.”

Through Daniels’s words and Passmore’s visuals, the two effectively convey Darla’s internal conflicts. She’s a multifaceted badass, and Daniels says that her plight was inspired by his own experiences, as well as those of close friends and family members.

The story ends on what Daniels says was “not a happy or sad note, but a realistic note.” Through writing *BTTM FDRS*, he says that he found the ways in which gentrification and cultural appropriation mirror each other enlightening, and also frightening. Daniels says that the problem will only get worse as “the disparity between classes gets wider and wider.” Which makes the horror of the book all the more real. [F](#)

[@vivatyra](#)



Ezra Clayton Daniels
COURTESY FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS



Ben Passmore
COURTESY FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS



Chicago's summer reading

We asked you (via Twitter) whose lists you wanted to see. And then we asked them.

By **READER STAFF**

FATIMAH ASGHAR (POET AND FILMMAKER) *Pet* by Akwaeke Emezi, *Odes to Lithium* by Shira Erlichman, *1919* by Eve L. Ewing, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong

BEN AUSTEN (WRITER) *The Death and Life of the Great Lakes* by Dan Egan, *Ordinary People* by Diana Evans, *Patriot Number One* by Lauren Hilgers, *Angels* by Denis Johnson, *Zora and Langston: A Story of Friendship and Betrayal* by Yuval Taylor, *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Jesmyn Ward

MARTHA BAYNE (WRITER AND EDITOR) *High Risers: Cabrini-Green and the Fate of American Public Housing* by Ben Austen, *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* by adrienne maree brown, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* by William Cronon, *Circe* by Madeline Miller, *The Unsettlers: In Search of the Good Life in Today's America* by Mark Sundeen

@CHIPARTYAUNT (TWITTER PERSONALITY) *Da Bears! How the 1985 Monsters of the Midwest Became the Greatest Team in NFL History* by Steve Delsohn, *In Life, First You Kick Ass: Reflections on the 1985 Bears and Wisdom from Da Coach* by Mike Ditka, *The St. Valentine's Day Massacre: The Untold Story of the Gangland Bloodbath That Brought Down Al Capone* by William J. Helmer and Arthur J. Bilek, *Bad As I Wanna Be* by Dennis Rodman, *Crazy from the Heat* by David Lee Roth, *Chicago's Best Dive Bars: Drinking and Diving in the Windy City* by Jonathan Stockton

JOHN CORBETT (WRITER, RECORD PRODUCER, AND GALLERY OWNER) *Tell Them of Battles, Kings, & Elephants* by Mathias Énard, *Keith Rowe: The Room Extended* by Brian Olewnick, *Ideal Suggestions: Essays on Divinatory Poetics* by Selah Saterstrom, *Astral Weeks: A Secret History of 1968* by Ryan H. Walsh, *Songs for Schizoid Siblings* by Lionel Ziprin

MARIA HADDEN (49TH WARD ALDERMAN) *The Power* by Naomi Alderman, *City Power: Urban Governance in a Global Age* by Richard Schragger, *Market Cities, People Cities: The Shape of Our Urban Future* by Kevin T. Smiley and Michael Oluf Emerson

SARAH HOLLENBECK (CO-OWNER OF WOMEN & CHILDREN FIRST AND WRITER) *Emergency Contact* by Mary H.K. Choi, *Patsy* by Nicole Dennis-Benn, *Daisy Jones and the Six* by Taylor Jenkins Reid, *Three Women* by Lisa Taddeo, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong

GRETA JOHNSEN (COHOST OF NERDETTIE PODCAST) *Magic for Liars* by Sarah Gailey, *Evvie Drake Starts Over* by Linda Holmes, *Searching for Sylvie Lee* by Jean Kwok

BEA MALSKY (CO-OWNER OF BUILD COFFEE AND DEVELOPER AT DATAMADE) *Total Destruction of the National Museum of Anthropology* by Eduardo Abaroa, *Conditioner* by Liz Barr, *The Hundreds* by Lauren Berlant and Kathleen Stewart, *The Undying: A Meditation on Modern Illness* by Anne Boyer, *Caramelo* by Sandra Cisneros, *The January Children* by Safia Elhillo, *1919* by Eve L. Ewing, *Film Food Footnotes* by Filmfront, *Ley Lines #18: One & Three* by W.T. Frick, *Heavy: An American Memoir* by Kiese Laymon, *A History of America in Ten Strikes* by Erik Loomis, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study* by Fred Moten, *Mom Zine #1 and #2* by Kim Nguyen, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* by Kari Marie Norgaard, *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice* by Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, *Trick Mirror* by Jia Tolentino, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* by Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Sour Heart* by Jenny Zhang

NATE MARSHALL (POET AND EDUCATOR) *The Twenty-Ninth Year* by Hala Alyan, *1919* by Eve L. Ewing, *How to Hide an Empire: A History of the Greater United States* by Daniel Immerwahr, *An American Summer: Love and Death in Chicago* by Alex Kotlowitz, *We Cast a Shadow* by Maurice Carlos Ruffin

H. MELT (POET AND BOOKSELLER) *Time Is the Thing a Body Moves Through* by T Fleischmann, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* by Ocean Vuong

WHET MOSER (JOURNALIST AND POLYMATH) *Bring the War Home: The White Power Movement and Paramilitary America* by Kathleen

Belew, *The Idea Factory: Bell Labs and the Great Age of American Innovation* by Jon Gertner, *Trampoline: An Illustrated Novel* by Robert Gipe, *The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth* by Josh Levin, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny* by Kate Manne

NATALIE Y. MOORE (JOURNALIST AND AUTHOR) *The Testaments* by Margaret Atwood, *Liberated Threads: Black Women, Style, and the Global Politics of Soul* by Tanisha C. Ford, *The Queen: The Forgotten Life Behind an American Myth* by Josh Levin, *There There* by Tommy Orange, *Searching for Zion: The Quest for Home in the African Diaspora* by Emily Raboteau

J.R. NELSON (GOSSIP WOLF WRITER AND MANAGER AT MYOPIC BOOKS) *Go Ahead in the Rain: Notes to A Tribe Called Quest* by Hanif Abdurraqib, *The Years of Lyndon Johnson: Means of Ascent* by Robert A. Caro, *Last Days at Hot Slit: The Radical Feminism of Andrea Dworkin* edited by Johanna Fateman and Amy Scholder, *Rag: Stories* by Maryse Meijer, *Citizen Illegal* by José Olivarez

BILL SAVAGE (PROFESSOR AT NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY) *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* by Terrance Hayes, *Let's Play Two: The Legend of Mr. Cub, the Life of Ernie Banks* by Ron Rapoport, *The World is Always Coming to an End: Pulling Together and Apart in a Chicago Neighborhood* by Carlo Rotella

LEVI STAHL (MARKETING DIRECTOR AT UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS) *Lady in the Lake* by Laura Lippman, *Underland: A Deep Time Journey* by Robert Macfarlane, *Beast and Man* by Mary Midgely, novels and stories by Craig Rice, *The Small House at Allington* by Anthony Trollope

NELL TAYLOR (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE READ/WRITE LIBRARY) *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* by adrienne maree brown, *The Battle of Lincoln Park: Urban Renewal and Gentrification in Chicago* by Daniel Kay Hertz, *Subject to Change: Trans Poetry and Conversation* edited by H. Melt

BIANCA XUNISE (COMICS ARTIST) *Sweaty Palms Vol 2: The Anthology About Anxiety* edited by Sage Coffey, *My Solo Exchange Diary* by Nagata Kabi, *Laura Dean Keeps Breaking up With Me* by Mariko Tamaki and Rosemary Valero-O'Connell, *Cannonball* by Kelsey Wroten, *Mooncakes* by Suzanne Walker and Wendy Xu



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"Does anyone ever enter a bookstore just to purchase a book?"

A writer surveys the transformation of Chicago's literary landscape.

By **MAX GRINNELL**

When I stepped off the Loyola el station in the summer of 1992, it was oh so very hot.

It was my first visit to Chicago, and I was trying to get my bearings with only the official 1992 CTA map. My goal was the nearby youth hostel on North Winthrop. I was completely lost, despite Chicago's celebrated grid system.

I walked north to a two-story building that contained a hodgepodge of tiny retailers. I noticed a sign for a bookstore on the second floor and made my way upstairs, carefully navigating neatly stacked piles of old *Life* magazines. Once within, I felt at home.

I hadn't come in to purchase a book, but does anyone ever enter a bookstore just to purchase a book? I wanted to meet the owner, to see if there was a cat curled up on a pile of coffee-table books, and maybe find out if they had a special section for urban studies. Before I had a chance to look for felines, a bookseller appeared and asked if I had any questions.

I got my map out and explained my predicament. She laid out the map on the only surface in the store that appeared to be clear of any printed material and deftly drew a series of directional arrows that would lead me to the hostel. She also informed me that there was no better food than Chicago diner food and drew a star around Standee's on Granville Avenue and said, "It's open all the time. And try the franchisee."

I did try the franchisee, and it was a greasy and gorgeous introduction to Chicago diner food.

As I initially contemplated my 25-plus-year personal history with Chicago's bookstores, I found myself taking a sharp turn into a morass of nostalgia, pining for the refined environment of the Rizzoli Bookstore in Water Tower Place, the tall and well-ordered shelves of O'Gara & Wilson in Hyde Park, and, inexplicably, the Borders on State Street that Great Street, which, to its credit, had remarkably clean bathrooms.

Mere nostalgia will not suffice, so here's a modest set of meditations on what I've seen transpire amidst our shared shelves.

In the mid-1990s, there was much hand-wringing about what the rise of Borders and Barnes & Noble would do to independent bookstores in the Loop and beyond. They came, they (mostly) conquered, and for one brief moment they stayed at the top of the bookselling heap. Until Amazon.

The carnage wrought by this one-two punch included the demise of Kroch's & Brentano's on Wabash (once billed as the "World's Largest Bookstore"), Stuart Brent Books on Michigan Avenue, The Savvy Traveller, and Prairie Ave-

nue Bookshop, among others. Stuart Brent had the irascible Stuart Brent himself, a bookseller who once told me, "You're not too pretentious for someone affiliated with the University of Chicago." The Savvy Traveller had a special section for "Urban Adventures." And Prairie Avenue Bookshop had a tiny space dedicated to campus planning. It's where I first encountered the Princeton Architectural Press's Campus Guides and their detailed, peripatetic yet scholarly traipses through Vassar, Harvard, and the University of Cincinnati.

And guess what? There were no algorithms getting between you and those precious tomes. You had to come in and stay awhile and see what serendipitous browsing brought. Sure, books are commercial products, but at least you didn't have to worry about "suggested products" popping up in front of you via a suggestive hologram. (Jesus, maybe that's the next frontier in bricks-and-mortar shopping.)

While once the casual visitor could make his or her way through over a dozen independent bookstores within a mile radius, there are now just a few. Rising rents and real estate investment in the Loop and its immediate environs have made operating a bookstore while not owning the entire building outright an increasingly untenable proposition.

The brightest development in recent years is The Dial Bookshop, which maintains a well-lit space on the second floor of the Fine Arts Building formerly occupied by Selected Works, a used bookstore. It's quite possible, of course, that this much-more-modest assemblage of printed material may be only a passing moment. After all, bookstores have always come and gone from the Loop and every other neighborhood in Chicago with regularity. What remains to be seen is whether they will maintain even this greatly reduced presence.

One of the reasons I still go to bookstores is that I like to talk with other people about books. I also like to hear what other people think about the books that we have read in real time and face-to-face. One of the best places to do this in all of Chicago is the Harold Washington Library Center, which offers more free book-related events than any other institution in the city, more than 300 a year, in addition to events at the 81 neighborhood branches.

The Harold Washington Library Center is a public treasure that is open to everyone. Its programming reflects Chicago's diverse population, something that could not always be said about older and more established bookstores. Where else could you find a talk on Rafael Torch's posthumous memoir *The Garcia Boy*, an artists' entrepreneurship class, and a hands-on musical instructional class for toddlers on the same day?

Bookstores have always had competition for time and money, including movies, concerts, and television. In the past decade or so, they've competed against mobile devices that function as personal appendages, alongside an exposition of entertainment and shopping options that are by turns exhilarating and completely exhausting. And of course, I'd be remiss if I didn't note that while bookstores and libraries do operate with a blush of overlap in their general mission, there certainly can be a bit of friction at times.

As I look over this bookish landscape, I find that more bookstores are adopting the diverse range of programs that one finds at institutions like the Chicago Public Library. They have to be wide-ranging as they continue to expand their tents with programs that make room for the

generally curious as well as individuals with highly specific interests.

What strikes me as the most compelling thing about bookstores like Volumes Bookcafe in Wicker Park and Women & Children First in Andersonville is that they see themselves increasingly as spaces for community gatherings, trivia nights, listening sessions, and places for people to enjoy each other's company.

Sure, they want to sell books and other accoutrements as a function of their business, but they also see themselves, much like libraries, as valuable gathering spaces. They are much more than the books they sell because they offer conversations that enhance and enliven the ideas contained within those books. One can find a place for meditations on Afrofuturist zines, informal dialogues about gentrification that avoid pedantic planning argot, and

get practical information about gardening in an age of climate change.

As for the original bookstore I first visited in Rogers Park? It's gone and the entire building was demolished for a CTA expansion project a number of years back. The hostel is also gone, demolished as part of Loyola University's ongoing campus expansion. And Standee's is no longer a fixture a few feet from the Granville el station, so you'll have to go elsewhere for a franchisee.

But even though I am caught at a loss for the bookstore's name, which I can't find in the *Tribune* archives or any of my Chicago guidebooks, I will not forget that face-to-face encounter given to me by an interlocutor who set me on my way through Chicago. **R**

 @theurbanologist

A portrait of the artist

THIS PHOTO OF Harold Green and his handwritten answer to the question "What is it like to be a writer?" is an extension of my ongoing portrait project "Do you see me?" While you could label Harold a poet he is so much more. He is the creator of albums, videos, plays, and the architect and curator of "Flowers for the living" on July 14, an annual project with some of the best singers and musicians in Chicago.

—MARY RAFFERTY

It's been nights
these pages pulled me
Right out the bed
Sat me right down
and pulled my hand right in
The power of a pen
Crafty.
Right when they thought they had me
I wrote a new narrative
Penned myself in or out of the script
Gave the plot a facelift
Shape shifter
Burden lifter
I took that stress
Outta flesh
and presented it in strokes
Helped me cope
with hope
and all it's failings
Ink stainings
on the sides of hands
The tattoos of a left-handed writer



Harold Green  MARY RAFFERTY

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PRIDE

Five memoirs that made me the pansexual freak I am today

Essential reading for Pride Month

By KT HAWBAKER

During every week this Pride Month, we'll ask one of our contributors to compile a list of essential queer works of art. We start with books.

All months have their periods of high emotion, but they are merely rehearsals compared to the chest-punching power ballad of Pride Month. Of course, there are the

more-public rituals: the gathering of beloved communities, sweet displays of affection, the heated arguments against the politics of homo-capitalism. We're sad, we're angry, we're joyful. It's a lot.

On a personal level, this June will also mark both the second anniversary of my queer divorce and my second trip down the aisle, this time with a straight, white man—two things I swore I'd never do again. A genderqueer second wife, I know that my pansexuality is under the purple petticoat I'm wearing to my wedding, but I'm suddenly grappling with the erasure that comes with a straight-passing relationship. I used to turn to memoir when I was figuring out my identity and community, and now I come back when my queer identity needs company.

Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic by Alison Bechdel

My death plan includes being cremated with

a copy of this book. I first encountered this graphic novel as an undergrad out in Iowa, and I reread it every January—it's literature that grows with me, mostly because of Alison Bechdel's delicate recollection of her late father, who lived his life in the closet, and the hesitant empathy she holds for him.

How to Grow Up: A Memoir by Michelle Tea

Michelle Tea is a goth kid turned punk house-dweller turned outlaw literature hero. Her bald-faced memoir roams through all the dirty nooks and crannies, sweeping her past into a powerful pile of personal history. It's a guidebook from the older sister you wish you had, offering advice on everything from sobriety to queer baby-making. It's brave and reassuring, the first book I pull down when I need solace.


All About Love: New Visions by bell hooks

There is no such thing as love without justice, and we all have to unlearn the oppressive dysfunction—and abuse—that our families teach us. In this book, part memoir, part manifesto, hooks calls for a new love paradigm drawn from activism. I always give my engaged friends a copy, but you definitely don't have to be in love to pull from this one. Hooks makes a case for the importance of nonromantic love, the kind often felt during Pride Month.

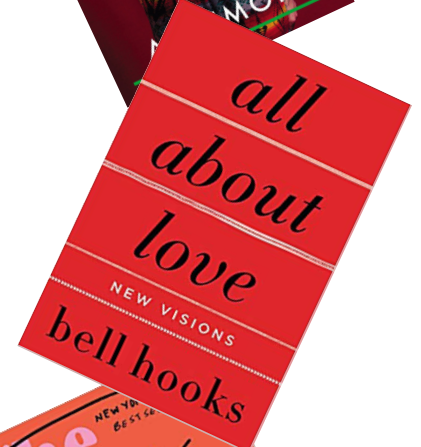
The Rules Do Not Apply: A Memoir by Ariel Levy

My mom always says, "You can have it all, just not all at once." Levy, an accomplished journalist, takes a raw approach to interrogating this idea, recalling her pathway to a solid career and queer marriage followed by the despair of a tragic miscarriage and subsequent divorce—which she famously documented in her essay "Thanksgiving in Mongolia."

Role Models by John Waters

Everyone needs a chosen grandpa, and I pick John Waters (though he would probably hate that). I listened to this memoir during a lonely car ride across Iowa, and the coziness of Waters's honesty and descriptions offered an intimacy that isn't available in his films. I also have mad respect for the work he does in prisons—check this one out if you're looking for a way to negotiate the personal and the political. 

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RR **STYLE & GRACE: IN TRIBUTE TO LENA HORNE AND NANCY WILSON**
Through 6/30: Thu 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun
3 PM, Black Ensemble Theater, 4450 N. Clark, 773-769-4451,
blackensembletheater.org, \$49-\$65.

THEATER

REVIEW

Soul sisters

Style & Grace pays tribute to Lena Horne and Nancy Wilson.

By **MARISSA OBERLANDER**

Lena Horne and Nancy Wilson were two iconic voices, separated by a generation, divergent upbringings, and dramatically different perceptions of their own talent and self-worth. What ties them together are their soulful style, deep connection with their audiences, and strength in the face of an industry that didn't evolve quickly enough to give them the respect and compensation they deserved.

This rousing production is Black Ensemble Theater's new associate director Kylah Frye's debut as writer and director, and it packs a musical punch, going heavy on music and lighter on story and historical facts. A rollick-

ing live band sets the tone, warming up the crowd for the string of classic hits to come. Then the Lenas and Nancys are introduced— young Lena (Aeriel Williams) and mature Lena (Chantee Joy) kick things off with a performance of Fats Waller's "Honeysuckle Rose," followed by young Nancy (Jayla Williams Craig) and mature Nancy (Rhonda Preston) singing Duke Ellington's "Satin Doll." These early songs give a taste of the outstanding vocal performances to come, which are punctuated by narration that could use some work.

Co-hosts Vincent Jordan and Kelvin Davis are responsible for driving the story forward

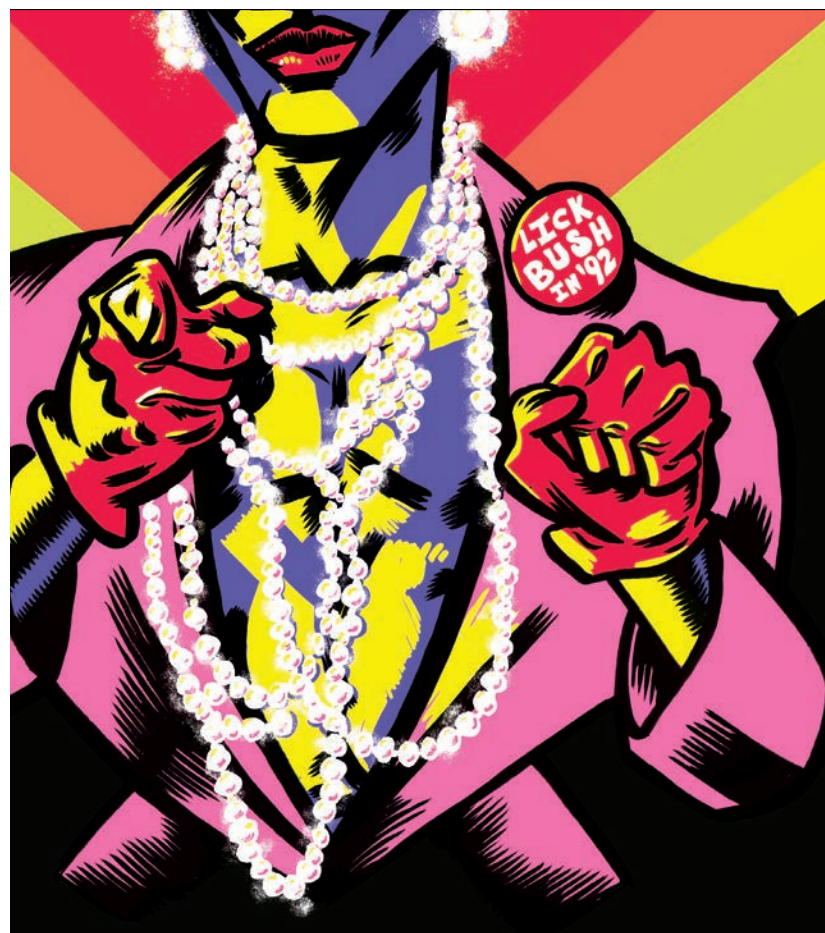
with biographical facts and comparisons between Horne and Wilson's life choices; there are some goofy meta moments (bickering among all four women) that could be trimmed. We learn that after an unstable childhood, Horne was pushed into show business by her mother, a failed actress, and had little confidence in her abilities or her place on larger stages. Wilson, on the other hand, had a middle-class childhood and an innate sense of her own talent, demonstrating it to wide audiences by age 15 on a local TV station in her native Ohio. There could be more exploration here, especially in act two, of the long-term



Style & Grace © ALAN DAVIS

effects of these differing motivations as well as each woman's ability to navigate or fall prey to the challenges of being an African American woman in a manipulative industry run by white men.

Self-determination is a running theme throughout, with Horne's mother, Edna, telling her, "Nobody can own you for life" after she breaks her exploitative Cotton Club contract. Both women's activism is hinted at, especially Horne's efforts to change the way African American characters were portrayed in Hollywood, but where we see them truly break the barriers of time, space, and society is the vocal performances. Although more cohesive mannerisms could help with character consistency, Williams and Joy shine in emotive songs like "Stormy Weather" and "Believe in Yourself," respectively. Craig and Preston are pure diva in Wilson's songs—Craig with a twinkle in her eye during "Guess Who I Saw Today" and Preston bringing down the house during "You Don't Know How Glad I Am." **R**



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For *Services Rendered* © MICHAEL BROSILOW

OPENING

RR **Memorial Day**
For *Services Rendered* explores the ongoing trauma of World War I.

When W. Somerset Maugham's British war drama *For Services Rendered* premiered in 1932, it offered unprepared audiences a stark exploration of the enduring consequences of the First World War and a critique of a political system that offered no protection for those who fought for its honor. In its Chicago premiere, presented by the Griffin Theatre Company and directed by ensemble member Robin Witt, this message feels contemporary and urgent.

The postwar plight of the Ardsley family, whose members are attempting to create normalcy amid devastation, is at the center of the play. The family's composed facade is quickly broken as, through the Ardsley children and their acquaintances, we are given insight into the health and financial circumstances of those who fought, and the ways in which society has forgotten them now that their services are no longer needed. Equally important are those who were left behind, particularly the women whose marriage prospects, identities, and societal roles have been shattered by the war. They must navigate a new way of living in order to rise above their circumstances at home.

Witt's 12-person ensemble uses every word of the classic script to its collective advantage, carefully playing up the ironic comedy and the implicit vulnerability behind each earnest confession. This, along with their ability to react to each other's decisions in scene, keeps each arc from feeling too clean and each character from feeling like a product of a far-off time. Despite the size of the ensemble, no player feels insignificant, a testament to each actor's firm grip on their character's role in advancing the play's narrative and its moral. —**KATIE POWERS** **FOR SERVICES RENDERED** Through 7/6: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; no performance 7/4, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee, 773-697-3830,

griffintheatre.com, \$37, \$32 students, seniors, and veterans.

RR **Theatrical alchemy**
In *Life on Paper*, Jackalope once again turns straw into gold.

Playwright Kenneth Lin's got nothing on Frank Capra. In this gauzy, diagrammatic new play, given its world premiere by Jackalope Theatre, two forensic economists descend upon the aftermath of a plane crash that took the life of Hank Baylor, 63rd richest man in the world. Cynical Mitch (Joel Ewing), hired by the airline, is a once-heralded math genius who's now designing algorithms to calculate the value of lives snuffed out in accidents. Unjaded Ida (Mary Williamson), slogging through a marital breakup, works for the small-town savings and loan that Baylor promised \$50 million before his death. Thus Mitch must push Baylor's life value down, and Ida must push it up—a tidy setup they each explain to the audience more than once. When they meet, sparks, romance, and complications fly, often so speedily the plot runs well ahead of its own logic.

Remarkably, director Gus Menary transforms the mechanical script into a warm, nuanced, deeply felt production. He's assembled a cast who sublimate their every emotion and intention, creating intrigue where Lin offers illustration. They even manage to make expository dialogue sound natural. The approach is particularly helpful in act two, when Lin largely abandons the dueling economist story in favor of exploring the inner lives of ancillary characters. They're the best scenes in the play, even if they feel like they're leftovers from previous drafts, and the actors plumb them exquisitely. This show is another reminder that you don't see better acting on any Chicago stage than Jackalope's. —**JUSTIN HAYFORD** **LIFE ON PAPER** Through 6/22: Thu-Sat 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; also Mon 6/3 and 6/17, 8 PM, Broadway Armory Park, 5917 N. Broadway, jackalopetheatre.org, \$30, \$20 students and seniors.

Václav Havel, playwright
Organic Theater takes a bold stab at the former Czech president's absurdist satire, *The Memo*.

Despite having one of the most radical and inspiring biographies of any theater artist, playwright-turned-prisoner-turned-Czech president Václav Havel hasn't seen much time on Chicago stages over the years. The last time I recall watching a translation of one of his works was in 2012 at Trap Door, a company that has maintained a reputation for masterfully interpreting esoteric and deeply political plays, many of them of Slavic origin, for 25 years. So it's refreshing to see a young company like Organic Theater tackle such dramaturgically rich territory, even if the result feels more like an academic exercise than impactful satire.

The director of a vague, militantly bureaucratic organization (Tricia Rogers) receives a memo typed in Ptydepe, an inscrutable language that her deputy director (Joel Moses) is hell-bent on making the official written correspondence of government and business. Unlike the "mother tongue," he notes, Ptydepe's linguistic rules and tightly regulated translations make it immune to evolution by the proletariat. When the experiment becomes a failed, absurdist disaster, party elites turn on one another in a self-defeating circle of obfuscation, paranoia, and blame.

At nearly two-and-a-half hours, many of the broad comedic choices in Bryan Wakefield's production rob the material of any bite—the decision to portray a language instructor (Nick Bryant) as a classic American charismatic preacher, for instance, limits the character to a one-note joke that barely sustains comedic energy in a three-minute sketch, let alone a two-act play. I did get a kick, though, out of Mary Mikva as a meek admin assistant who is far more concerned about lunch than the infighting of executive overlords. —**DAN JAKES** **THE MEMO** Through 6/16: Wed-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM, Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln, 773-404-7336, organictheater.org, \$30, \$21 students, seniors, and industry.

RR **Divorced, beheaded, died . . .**
Things didn't go well for most of Henry VIII's wives, but in *Six* they're back as pop divas.

History hasn't been this much fun since *Hamilton*. With its high-energy score, stadium lighting, and angular, bedazzled Tudor costumes that evoke a set of futuristic playing cards, *Six*, now in its North American premiere at Chicago Shakespeare, is more concert than musical.

Writers Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss (who also codirected with Jamie Armitage) kick the standard "marginalized women reclaiming their narrative" plot into overdrive with a crisp, electric book and a score that magically makes clunky plot summary uproariously hilarious. Each of the wives of Henry VIII sings the story of her—in most cases tragic—fate (divorced, beheaded, died; divorced, beheaded, survived) and each is inspired by a pop diva, ranging from Beyoncé to RiRi to Britney. Backed by a killer all-female band, every song in the show is a legit banger, and each member of the extremely diverse cast (more than one woman of color!) is a triple threat; dancing, singing, and slaying the entire audience into laughter for the hardest-working 80-minute-no intermission show now onstage in Chicago.

Every actor is top-notch with megawatt personalities and voices fit for *The Voice*. A tiny sampling of the numerous standout moments include a delightfully magnetic and funny Anna of Cleves (Brittney Mack),

snubbed by his highness, and all the better for it; a peppy number from Katherine Howard (Anna Uzele) that takes a powerful and unfortunately relevant turn; and a perky ditty from everyone's favorite unapologetic bad girl Anne Boleyn (Andrea Macasaet) with riffs and runs for days. This candy-coated confection is one of the must-see shows of 2019. #SorryNotSorry —**SHERI FLANDERS** **SIX** Through 6/30: Wed-Fri 7:45 PM, Sat 6 and 8:30 PM, Sun 3 and 6 PM, Tue 7:45 PM; no performance Sun 6/9, 6 PM, Chicago Shakespeare, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$32-\$62.

RR **Step right up**
Volta brings back the full death-defying Cirque du Soleil experience.

Volta is Cirque du Soleil's 41st production since 1983 and, like all the others before it, struggles mightily to be unique. The show's imagineers (reportedly 16 in all under the guidance of "director of creation" Jean Guibert) have fabricated another Cirque wonder, bursting with gorgeous costumes, carefully crafted spectacles, and virtuosic displays of acrobatic prowess, all performed under a retro big top filled with perfectly calibrated state-of-the-art machines of joy.

As in past shows, there is a story, or at least the hint of a story: Waz, an athletic young man with blue hair and an evocative name, finds himself in an almost inexpressible psychological/spiritual crisis—indicated by music, lighting effects, and choreography—and is overwhelmed with images of his past (riding bikes with his friends, going to the beach). Each dazzling circus act that follows represents, more or less, an episode in his life.

The circus acts are dazzling, and dangerous. How dangerous? In 2018 aerialist Yann Arnaud fell to his death during a performance of *Volta* in Tampa, Florida.

It's surprising there aren't more mishaps. All of the acts in *Volta* push things to the extreme. The show abounds in performers leaping on trampolines, rebounding on bungee cords, being lifted high off the ground by only their hair; acrobats somersault through ever-higher and smaller hoops; a squad of BMX bikers careens up and down huge ramps, threatening always to fly out into the audience. The ever-present danger is as much a part of a Cirque show as the spectacle. But if it wasn't death-defying, it wouldn't be the Cirque. —**JACK HELBIG** **VOLTA** Through 7/6: Wed-Thu 8 PM, Fri-Sat 4:30 and 8 PM, Sun 1:30 and 5 PM; also Tue 6/4, 6/18, and 7/2, 8 PM, Soldier Field, 461 E. 18th Dr., 877-924-7783, cirquedusoleil.com, \$49-\$275.

TRANSIT ★★★★★

Directed by Christian Petzold. In German and French with subtitles. 101 min. Gene Siskel Film Center, 164 N. State, 312-846-2800, siskelfilmcenter.org, \$12.

FILM*Transit***REVIEW**

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness

Transit follows a group of refugees in Marseille hoping for a better life. But is it 1944 or 2019?

By **ANDREA GRONVALL**

German filmmakers have, of late, been revisiting the 20th century, exploring their nation's tortured record under the Nazis and, later, Communism. On the heels of his fine two previous features, *Barbara* (2012), about an East Berlin dissident physician's banishment to the provinces, and *Phoenix* (2014), in which a Jewish Holocaust concentration camp survivor, newly remodeled by plastic surgery, returns to Berlin to confront the lover who informed on her, writer-director Christian Petzold turns his gaze to France under Germany's wartime occupation. Adapting Anna Seghers's eponymous 1944 novel about hordes of refugees flocking to 1942 Marseille to keep one step ahead of Hitler's advancing armies, Petzold sticks fairly closely to the author's plot, but he introduces a time shift in

the physical setting: spray-painted wall graffiti, modern architecture and vehicles, and riot police in SWAT team gear instead of swastikas announce that this is the present day. It's a daring stylistic move, one which frequently keeps the viewer as disoriented as the story's desperate characters and helps make the film a profound meditation on the dehumanizing condition of statelessness.

Franz Rogowski (*Happy End*) stars as Georg, a German camp escapee of no particular religious or political bent who arrives in Paris, where he runs into a fellow refugee who entrusts him with an errand: deliver two letters to Weidel, an important writer in hiding, documents that will allow the great man to leave the country. Upon arriving at the writer's hotel, Georg learns that Weidel has committed suicide, and the hotelier, anxious to avoid any trouble with the occupying authorities, foists the author's belongings on Georg. Through a series of events and misunderstandings, Georg, already something of a cipher, becomes even more so when he assumes the dead man's identity, further erasing his own. His subterfuge will send him on a journey through bewildering diplomatic channels as he navigates all the impediments facing refugees in their quest to obtain visas.

There's a passage early in the novel that concisely illustrates this nightmarish scenario as Georg learns that even though Mexico has offered Weidel (whom he will soon be impersonating) a haven and safe passage, he can't leave France without an exit visa, and can't reach his point of departure without a transit

visa. As an elderly fellow refugee with a pronounced sense of gallows humor explains, "My son, it's all because each country is afraid that instead of just traveling through, we'll want to stay. A transit visa—that gives you permission to travel through a country with the stipulation that you don't plan to stay." The trick, the old-timer explains, is juggling the different visas so that one doesn't expire before you can use another. It's an absurdity worthy of a play by Beckett or a novel by Sartre, with its existential dread of no escape, even as the possibility of escape is capriciously dangled.

To explain just how complex that visa tangle could get, you need look no further than the historic case of German-Jewish writer Hannah Arendt, who in her monumental volume *The Origins of Totalitarianism* explained how the Nazis eradicated millions of Jews during the Holocaust by first reducing them to stateless persons. When someone is deprived of rights of citizenship, he or she becomes *persona non grata*, increasingly invisible, as Arendt discovered when she fled Germany—without identification papers—for Czechoslovakia and Switzerland, before landing in Paris in 1933. After escaping the Gurs internment camp in 1940, she hastily planned her departure from France. According to Stephanie DeGooyer, Alastair Hunt, Lida Maxwell, and Samuel Moyn's introduction to their 2018 book *The Right to Have Rights*, "Through a combination of sheer luck, quick thinking, and assistance from several individuals, including an American diplomat prepared to defy his government's directives, Arendt was able to secure a Nansen passport, a French exit visa, Spanish and Portuguese transit visas, and a U.S. emergency visa. These documents allowed her to travel, in 1941, to the United States, where she was granted asylum as a refugee." In 1951, she ended 18 years of statelessness when she became a U.S. citizen. *Eighteen years*.

If it was that difficult for a connected intellectual like Arendt to get out of World War II Europe and start over again, how hard must it be for disenfranchised migrants today—the millions fleeing war, or persecution, or famine, drought, floods, earthquakes or other natural disasters around the globe—to gain entrance to a country, any country, where they can actually remain alive? The movie *Transit* implicitly asks this question in sequences where Georg seeks out the family of one of his colleagues, an injured man who died aboard the boxcar in which he and Georg were heading to Mar-

seille. Georg befriends the deceased man's deaf-mute North African widow and young son; so well do they all get along it's almost as though he has found a second home. But he is also drawn to Weidel's widow (Paula Beer of *Frantz* and *Never Look Away*), and Georg is actively trying to arrange her escape as well, so he leaves his new surrogate family for a time. Later in the film, when he looks for them again, he finds that, left without any protector, they have departed for the hills and their flat is now occupied by a large number of new arrivals from Africa.

Then there are all the other refugees seeking visas, including the elegant Jew who is guaranteed a home in the U.S. only because she has been entrusted with an American couple's show dogs that accompany her almost everywhere, and the conductor who has a heart attack in a consulate before he can leave for his new position with a South American orchestra. The wealth of observational details reflects Seghers's own life experiences of statelessness. A German Jew who joined the Communist Party in 1928 and settled in Paris in 1933, she fled, after the Nazis invaded France in 1940, to Mexico on a ship out of Marseille; her fellow passengers included André Breton and Claude Lévi-Strauss. After the war, still a Communist, she returned to Europe, moving first to West Berlin and then to East Berlin, where her career flourished. She was nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1967 and died in 1983.

If Petzold so thoroughly captures the nuances of her novel while putting his own stamp on the story, that's because he has lived with it for so long. He and his longtime mentor, collaborator, and close friend, the late documentary and experimental filmmaker Harun Farocki, were such big fans of *Transit* that over the course of 15 years they would meet annually to reread and discuss the novel. That kind of devotion not only shows how compelling and sustaining a work of literary art can be; it also, as in the case of this deeply humanistic film, can build a bridge across time, between the victims of global strife in the mid-20th century, and those beleaguered displaced persons in our 21st century. If we all would only learn a few lessons from history and art and act accordingly and compassionately, maybe some of today's wanderers in search of a better life might find one. In at least one corner of the world, the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness are still rights; at least they were the last time I looked. **A**



Ferrante Fever

NOW PLAYING

Agents of Change

Subtitled “Black Students and the Transformation of the American University,” this 2016 documentary traces the rise in black activism at American universities from 1957, when Little Rock High School was integrated, through 1969, when African-American students notoriously took up arms to occupy the student union building at Cornell University. Though directors Frank Dawson and Abby Ginzberg collect some revealing testimony from former activists at Cornell and at San Francisco State University (including actor Danny Glover), the filmmakers never really deliver on their stated intention to connect the events of the 60s to today’s black student activism, except in the most cursory fashion. This works fine as a TV history lesson, but don’t expect any insight into the current agendas of college activists or how today’s well-protected campus protests relate either to 60s activism or to the riskier street-based agitation of Black Lives Matter. —**J.R. JONES** 66 min. *A discussion will follow the screening. Sat 6/1, 4 PM. Stony Island Arts Bank* **FREE**

Black Panther

The first black superhero in mainstream American comics, Marvel’s Black Panther came with an African pedigree: in real life he’s the ancestral king of a small, impoverished sub-Saharan nation that conceals a secret empire, the whole operation empowered by an asteroid from outer space. That premise provides most of the fun in this big-screen adaptation, particularly in the form of the Dora Milaje, the king’s security team, who are badass women with shaved heads, neck rings, and flaming-red uniforms. Chadwick Boseman is appropriately noble and dull as the title character, and director Ryan Coogler (*Creed, Fruitvale Station*) brings along the compelling Michael B. Jordan, his frequent collaborator, to play the Panther’s philosophical antagonist. As in the recent Warner Bros./DC Comics outing *Wonder Woman*, the identity politics provide a fresh spin to the genre’s increasingly tedious narrative formula (like the fake climax three quarters through, which has you looking for your coat before you realize there’s a half hour to go). With Lupita Nyong’o, Danai Gurira, Martin Freeman, Daniel Kaluuya, and welcome cameos from Angela Bassett and Forest Whitaker. —**J.R. JONES** PG-13, 134 min. *Outdoor screening. Tue 6/4, 6:30 PM. Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park* **FREE**

RR The Color of Pomegranates

The late Sergei Paradjanov’s greatest film, a mystical and historical mosaic about the life, work, and inner world of the 18th-century Armenian poet Sayat Nova, was previously available only in the ethnically “dry-cleaned” Russian version—recut and somewhat reorganized by Sergei Yutkevich, with chapter headings added to clarify the content for Russian viewers. This superior 1969 version of the film, found in an Armenian studio in the early 90s, shouldn’t be regarded as definitive (some of the material from the Yutkevich cut is missing), but it’s certainly the finest we have and may ever have: some shots and sequences are new, some are positioned differently, and, of particular advantage to Western viewers, much more of the poetry is subtitled. (Oddly enough, it’s hard to tell why the “new” shots were censored.) In both versions the striking use of tableau-like frames recalls the shallow space of movies made roughly a century ago, while the gorgeous uses of color and the wild poetic conceits seem to derive from some utopian cinema of the future, at once “difficult” and immediate, cryptic and ravishing. This is essential viewing. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 79 min. *Outdoor screening. Tue 6/4, 8:30 PM. Comfort Station* **FREE**

RR Faces

John Cassavetes’s galvanic 1968 drama about one long night in the lives of an estranged well-to-do married couple (John Marley and Lynn Carlin) and their temporary lovers (Gena Rowlands and Seymour Cassel) was the first of his independent features to become a hit, and it’s not hard to see why. It remains one of the only American films to take the middle class seriously, depicting the compulsive, embarrassed laughter of people facing their own sexual longing and some of the emotional devastation brought about by the so-called sexual revolution. (Interestingly, Cassavetes set out to make a trenchant critique of the middle class, but his characteristic empathy for all of his characters makes this a far cry from simple satire.) Shot in 16-millimeter black and white with a good many close-ups, this often takes an unsparing yet compassionate “documentary” look at emotions most movies prefer to gloss over or cover up. Adroitly written and directed, and superbly acted—the leads and Val Avery are all uncommonly good (and the astonishing Lynn Carlin was a nonprofessional discovered by Cassavetes, working at the time as Robert Altman’s secretary)—this is one of the most powerful

and influential American films of the 60s. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 130 min. 35mm. *Wed 6/5, 7:30 PM. Northeastern Illinois University*

N Ferrante Fever

Anyone eager to know the identity of the author known as Elena Ferrante might be disappointed by this documentary, which respects the writer’s professed desire to remain anonymous. This is a noble choice by filmmaker Giacomo Durzi, though his other choices are largely dissatisfying. The movie overflows with adulation for Ferrante’s work, focusing on her fans and, in particular, the New York City literati that turned Ferrante’s books into statement pieces found in many a hip reader’s tote bag. Talking heads include Ann Goldstein, who has translated several of Ferrante’s novels from their original Italian into English, and contemporary authors like Elizabeth Strout and Jonathan Franzen, who relish in peeling back the layers of Ferrante’s rich sentences, characters, and themes. Their comments are worthwhile, though Durzi offers little reason why they should exist in a cinematic medium. He keeps his subject at a long, shadowy distance, using scribbly animation and bland B-roll of New York City to fill in gaps between interviews. Mostly, the film inspires in the viewer an urge to read the books instead. In English and Italian with subtitles. —**LEAH PICKETT** 72 min. *Sat 6/1, 5 PM, and Wed 6/5, 6:15 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR Fight Club

This exercise in mainstream masochism, macho posturing, and designer-grunge fascism (1999) is borderline ridiculous. But it also happens to be David Fincher’s richest movie—not only because it combines the others (*Alien 3, Seven, The Game*) with chunks of *Performance*, but also because it keeps topping its own giddy excesses. Adapted by Jim Uhls from Chuck Palahniuk’s novel, this has something—but only something—to do with a bored Edward Norton encountering a nihilistic doppelganger (Brad Pitt) who teaches him that getting your brains bashed out is fun. Though you’re barely allowed to disagree with him, your jaw is supposed to drop with admiring disbelief at the provocation, and the overall impression of complexity might easily be mistaken for the genuine article. In other words, this is American self-absorption at its finest. With Helena Bonham Carter, Meat Loaf, and Jared Leto. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** R, 139 min. 35mm. *Fri 5/31-Sat 6/1, 9:15 and 11:59 PM; Sun 6/2 and Mon 6/3, 9:15 PM; Tue 6/4, 9 PM; and Thu 6/6, 9:15 PM. Music Box*

RR The General

Buster Keaton may have made more significant films, but *The General* (1926) stands as an almost perfect entertainment. Keaton is a locomotive engineer in the Civil War south whose train is hijacked by Union spies; his attempts to bring it back become a strangely moving and very funny account of man’s love for machine. Marion Mack is the girl, who can’t quite compete. —**DAVE KEHR** 80 min. *Showing with Keaton’s 1921 short The Goat. Fri 5/31, 7 PM; Sun 6/2, 4:30 PM; Tue 6/4, 4:30 PM; and Thu 6/6, 2:30 PM. Music Box*

RR Kaili Blues

Dreams of the dead weave through this enigmatic drama (2016) about a widowed physician who journeys from the Chinese provincial city of Kaili to distant Zhenyuan to find his missing young nephew and deliver a gift to the dying friend of a coworker. En route the doctor reaches the village of Dang Mai, and in one bravura 41-minute tracking shot he’s driven around town

by a motorcyclist who may be the nephew, mysteriously grown to adulthood. This looping shot, reflecting a Buddhist view of the universe as an endless cycle of life, death, and reincarnation, adds to the film’s hallucinatory aura, as does a trippy, ethereal score by Lim Giong (a frequent collaborator of Jia Zhangke and Hou Hsiao-hsien). Bi Gan directed this boldly original debut feature. In Mandarin with subtitles. —**ANDREA GRONVALL** 113 min. *Thu 6/6, 7 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Last Year at Marienbad

This radical experiment in film form by director Alain Resnais and screenwriter Alain Robbe-Grillet was a surprising commercial success in 1961, even in the U.S., and it’s been a rallying point for the possibilities of formal filmmaking ever since. A highly seductive parable about seduction, it’s set in and around a baroque European chateau/hotel, where the nameless hero (Giorgio Albertazzi) tries to persuade the nameless heroine (Delphine Seyrig) that they met the previous year. Shot by Sacha Vierny in otherworldly black-and-white ‘Scope, it oscillates ambiguously between past, present, and various conditional tenses, mixing memory and fantasy, fear and desire. The overall tone is poker-faced parody of lush Hollywood melodrama, yet the film’s dreamlike cadences, frozen tableaux, and distilled surrealist poetry are too eerie, too terrifying even, to be shaken off as camp. For all its notoriety, this masterpiece among masterpieces has never really received its due. In French with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 93 min. *Fri 5/31, 4 and 8 PM; Sat 6/1, 3 PM; Sun 6/2, 5 PM; Mon 6/3, 8 PM; Tue 6/4, 6 PM; Wed 6/5, 8 PM; and Thu 6/6, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR The Middleman

A moving story about a sincere college graduate (Pradip Mukherjee) in Calcutta who gradually enters a life of corruption, made by Satyajit Ray in 1975 and adapted by Ray from Sankar’s novel *Jana Aranya*. It has the best performances of any Ray film I’ve seen and a milieu that may remind you of both Billy Wilder’s *The Apartment* and John Cassavetes’s *Faces*. With Satya Banerjee, Dipankar Dey, and Rabi Ghosh; the effective tone is by Ray himself. In Bengali with subtitles. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 131 min. 35mm archival print. *Wed 6/5, 7 and 9:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films*

RR Mulholland Dr.

I’m still trying to decide if this piece of hocus-focus (2001) is David Lynch’s best feature between *Eraserhead* and *Inland Empire*. In any case, it’s immensely more likable than his other stabs at noir (*Blue Velvet, Wild at Heart, Lost Highway*), perhaps because it likes its characters and avoids sentimentalizing or sneering at them (the sort of thing that limited *Twin Peaks*). Originally conceived and rejected as a TV pilot, then expanded after some French producers stepped in, it has the benefit of Lynch’s own observations about Hollywood, which were fresher at this point than his puritanical notations on small towns in the American heartland. The best-known actors (Ann Miller, Robert Forster, Dan Hedaya) wound up relatively marginalized, while the lesser-known talents (in particular the remarkable Naomi Watts and the glamorous Laura Elena Harring) were invited to take over the movie (and have a field day doing so). The plot slides along agreeably as a tantalizing mystery before becoming almost completely inexplicable, though no less thrilling, in the closing stretches—but that’s what Lynch is famous for. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** R, 146 min. 35mm. *Sat 6/1-Sun 6/2, 11:30 AM. Music Box*

FILM

RR The Navigator

Buster Keaton's 1924 film is about a rich young couple, who have never needed to look out for themselves, cast adrift on a deserted ocean liner. The ordinary difficulties of existence are magnified by the fact that all the facilities are intended not for individual needs but to cater to a thousand people. The situation is perfectly suited to Keaton's natural sense of surrealism—everything is too big, too full, and too much. Keaton and his girlfriend (Kathryn McGuire) become two innocents lost in a threatening, mechanistic Eden, alone in their oversized world. A masterpiece, and very, very funny. —**DAVE KEHR** 59 min. Showing with Keaton's 1922 short *The Paleface*. Sun 6/2, 2:30 PM; Wed 6/5, 2:30 PM; and Thu 6/6, 7 PM. Music Box

9 to 5

Jane Fonda, Lily Tomlin, and Dolly Parton are working women conspiring to turn the tables on nightmare boss Dabney Coleman. Colin Higgins wrote and directed this entertaining 1980 revenge comedy, a zeitgeist hit upon its release. —**J.R. JONES** PG, 110 min. Wed 6/5, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art [FREE](#)

One-Eyed Jacks

Marlon Brando's only directorial effort was this eccentric 1961 western about an outlaw (Brando) who revenges himself on a former partner (Karl Malden) by seducing his daughter. There's a strong Freudian pull to the situation (the partner's name is "Dad") that is more ritualized than dramatized: the most memorable scenes have a fierce masochistic intensity, as if Brando were taking the opportunity to punish himself for some unknown crime. The bizarre action is set off by the classic Hollywood iconography of the western landscape (photographed by Charles Lang) and the supporting cast: Ben Johnson, Slim Pickens, and Elisha Cook Jr. —**DAVE KEHR** 141 min. 35mm. Fri 5/31, 7 and 9:30 PM; and Sun 6/2, 1:30 PM. Univ. of Chicago Doc Films

N Rocketman

This fantastical take on musician Elton John is closer to the unconventional Bob Dylan biopic *I'm Not There* than a straightforward chronicle, which is undoubtedly how the unconventional artist at its center wanted it to be. The story reshuffles reality, especially time and facts, and the film is more enjoyable for it. In lieu of painting by numbers, director Dexter Fletcher (*Eddie the Eagle*) and screenwriter Lee Hall (*Billy Elliot*) draw outside the lines, zigzagging through the memories of John (Taron Egerton) as he attempts to make sense of them during a 1990 stint in rehab. With his cavalcade of hit songs serving as narrative flash points, the movie feels much like a screen adaptation of a flamboyant stage musical. This makes sense on multiple thematic levels and from a creative standpoint: Hall also penned the book and lyrics for *Billy Elliot the Musical*, while John wrote the music. Like John's best-known earworms, the film is over-the-top, yet at the same time, infectious and endearing. With Richard Madden, Jamie Bell, and Bryce Dallas Howard. —**LEAH PICKETT** R, 121 min. Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Cicero Showplace 14, City North 14, Ford City, River East 21, Showplace 14 Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11

RR Seven Chances

Buster Keaton is a bachelor who stands to inherit a fortune if he finds himself a bride by seven o'clock in this 1925 silent feature, which Dave Kehr has described as "a cubist comedy . . . based on a principle

of geometric progression" from the number seven. Adapted from a stage-bound play by David Belasco, it takes off into the stratosphere only at the climax, but that outlandish chase sequence alone is well worth the price of admission. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 57 min. Showing with Keaton's 1922 short *Cops*. Sat 6/1, 4:30 PM; Mon 6/3, 2:30 PM; and Tue 6/4, 7 PM. Music Box

RR Sherlock Jr.

This 1924 comedy finds Buster Keaton anticipating most of the American avant-garde of the 70s: he plays a projectionist who falls asleep during the showing of a detective thriller and projects himself into the action. Keaton's appreciation of the formal paradoxes of the medium is astounding; his observations on the relationship between film and the subconscious are groundbreaking and profound. And it's a laugh riot, too. —**DAVE KEHR** 45 min. Showing with the Keaton shorts *The Playhouse (1921)* and *The Frozen North (1922)*. Fri 5/31, 2:30 PM; Sat 6/1, 7 PM; Mon 6/3, 4:30 PM; and Tue 6/4, 2:30 PM. Music Box

RR Space Jam

From the producers of *Ghostbusters* comes this 1996 comic fantasy combining live action and animation, featuring Michael Jordan and the major Looney Tunes characters (Bugs Bunny is the only one who gets costar status, but they're all in evidence). Simpler and cruder than *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* in terms of story and technique, this is still a great deal of fun, confirming that Jordan is every bit as mythological a creature as Daffy Duck or Yosemite Sam. I was especially warmed by Daffy's interjection "We're the exclusive property of Warner Brothers, Inc.," not to mention his acknowledgment that neither he nor his furry friends get royalties for appearing on lunch boxes. Joe Pytko directed; with Wayne Knight and Theresa Randle. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** PG, 87 min. Fri 5/31-Mon 6/3, 11 PM. Logan

RR N The Third Wife

This debut feature by writer-director Ash Mayfair is surprisingly becalmed given its upsetting subject matter. Set in late 19th-century Vietnam, it follows a 14-year-old girl (based on the director's great-grandmother) who's sold into marriage to a wealthy landowner. Mayfair doesn't shy away from details of the heroine's sexual servitude to her much older husband, but she displays greater interest in the girl's relationships with the landowner's other two wives, which provide her with feelings of safety and belonging. The interpersonal drama is generally hushed (indeed, this doesn't contain any dialogue for its first ten minutes or so), allowing for the setting to become something of a character in its own right. The landowner's estate comes to evoke both confinement and familial warmth, and this ties into the film's complex depiction of Vietnam's feudal past. In Vietnamese with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** R, 96 min. Fri 5/31, 4 and 8 PM; Sat 6/1, 5 PM; Sun 6/2, 3 PM; Mon 6/3, 8 PM; Tue 6/4, 6 PM; Wed 6/5, 6 PM; and Thu 6/6, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

RR The Trials of Muhammad Ali

Ali's life has been recounted so many times that you'd think no one could come up with a fresh angle on it; documentary maker Bill Siegel (*The Weather Underground*) succeeds, primarily by delving into the story, largely downplayed by the mainstream, of the fighter's great political awakening in the Nation of Islam. —**J.R. JONES** 93 min. A memorial screening for director Bill Siegel, who passed away in December. Special guests will participate in a Q&A. Wed 6/5, 9:20 PM. Music Box

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FILM

→ RR Waiting for Happiness

Written and directed by Mauritanian expatriate Abderrahmane Sissako, this 2002 French/Mauritanian drama presents a kaleidoscopic portrait of a West African village wedged between the desert and the sea. A young man returns home after years of travel; the rather elusive narrative follows him through a series of impressionistic encounters with villagers (an old electrician and his orphan ward, a Chinese vendor who sings karaoke tunes in Mandarin, the local hooker) who, like him, are fleeting figures in the transition from tradition to modernity. The images Sissako unscrolls are artfully composed and arrestingly exotic, and the film's meditative languor conveys a feeling of mystery and regret. In French, Hassanya, and Mandarin with subtitles. —**TED SHEN** 96 min. 35mm. Thu 6/6, 7 PM. Northwestern University Block Museum of Art [FREE](#)

RR N The Wandering Soap Opera

In 1990 Raúl Ruiz returned to his native Chile (which he had fled during the Pinochet dictatorship) to film a series of scenes satirizing South American telenovelas. Only after his death did his widow, Valeria Sarmiento, complete the project, assembling the scenes into this current form. The sequences hold together quite well in spite of the film's sketchbook nature, but even if they didn't, this would still be essential viewing for fans of South American cinema and Ruiz's cerebral absurdism. The film hits on all of the director's favorite themes—paranoia, narrative intricacy, fleeting but meaningful friendships—and the surrealist humor is often riotous. (In a characteristic moment, a businessman attempts to seduce his sister-in-law by pulling a piece of raw meat out of his coat pocket.) One of the more compelling motifs is that the characters often stop to comment on the serial narratives they're in (as well as other serials they watch on TV), evoking a Borgesian hall of mirrors. In Spanish with subtitles. —**BEN SACHS** 80 min. Facets Cinematheque



The Wandering Soap Opera

RR The Weather Underground

This fascinating documentary by Sam Green and Bill Siegel (2002) looks at the Weathermen, whose radical antiwar activism during the late 60s and early 70s culminated in acts of domestic terrorism. By far the most provocative commentary comes from former Weathermen Bill Ayers, Bernardine Dohrn, Brian Flanagan, David Gilbert, and Mark Rudd; some of them, like Dohrn, remain proud of what they did, while others, notably Rudd, are now somewhat ashamed. Unfortunately, the closer the filmmakers get to the present, the less politically adventurous they are. They're graphic and powerful on this country's slaughter of innocent Vietnamese (which, rightly or wrongly, motivated the Weathermen's terrorism) but are completely silent about the recent and ongoing slaughter of innocents in the Middle East and Afghanistan, so that Rudd's pivotal comparison of Weathermen terrorism with 9/11 is denied any wider context. —**JONATHAN ROSENBAUM** 92 min. 35mm. A memorial screening for director Bill Siegel, who passed away in December. Special guests will participate in a Q&A. Wed 6/5, 7 PM. Music Box

RR N Woodstock: Three Days That Defined a Generation

Marking the 50th anniversary of the legendary Woodstock music festival in the summer of 1969, this film offers a moving remembrance of the people, music, and extraordinary circumstances that aligned to produce a cultural touchstone. Though the 1970 documentary Woodstock remains the definitive portrait of the event, the stories woven through this retrospective carry the additional weight and wisdom of time gone by. Director Barak Goodman conveys the narrative entirely through archival footage and off-screen commentary from the festival's organizers, attendees, and performers. The effect is complete immersion, with Goodman steeping the viewer in a living, breathing memory. We see for ourselves how a capitalist enterprise became a free concert and political act when 400,000 people—united in being anti-Vietnam War and pro-sex, drugs, and rock 'n' roll—showed up outside of Bethel, New York. The sprawling music and art fair was mostly peaceful, and the movie hints at why: a palpable, shared sense of purpose, resulting in mass magnanimity. This answer also raises an uncomfortable question: what do people go to music festivals for today? —**LEAH PICKETT** 96 min. Fri 5/31, 2 and 6 PM; Sat 6/1, 3 PM; Sun 6/2, 5 PM; Mon 6/3, 6 PM; Tue 6/4, 8 PM; Wed 6/5, 7:45 PM; Thu 6/6, 6 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

ALSO PLAYING

N Chicago Underground Film Festival

The Chicago Underground Film Festival presents 24 programs of narrative, documentary, and experimental features and shorts over five days at the Logan Theatre. Wed 6/5-Sun 6/9. Full schedule at cuff.info.

N Çiçero

Serdar Akar directed this Turkish drama about the real-life Ilyas Bazna, who worked as a Nazi spy while employed at the British Embassy in Turkey. In English and subtitled Turkish and German. 126 min. Sat 6/1 and Tue 6/4, 8 PM. Gene Siskel Film Center

N Godzilla: King of the Monsters

Godzilla battles humans, Mothra, Rodan, and King Ghidorah in this sequel to the 2014 reboot Godzilla. Michael Dougherty directed. With Kyle Chandler, Vera Farmiga, Millie Bobby Brown, Bradley Whitford, and Sally Hawkins. PG-13, 132 min. ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, Cicero Showplace 14, City North 14, Ford City, Navy Pier IMAX, River East 21, Showplace 14 Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, 600 N. Michigan, Webster Place 11

N Juggernaut Film Festival

This two-day festival presented by the Otherworld Theatre Company features programs of science fiction and fantasy features and shorts at the Music Box Theatre. Sat 6/1-Sun 6/2. Full schedule at juggernautfilmfestival.com.

N Ma

Octavia Spencer stars in this horror film about a lonely woman befriended by a group of teens, whom she lets party at her house, but who grows increasingly obsessed with her. Tate Taylor directed. R, 99 min. Block 37, ArcLight, Century 12 and CineArts 6, Chatham 14, City North 14, Ford City, Harper Theater, River East 21, Showplace 14 Galewood Crossings, Showplace ICON, Webster Place 11

Othello

Liz White directed this 1980 all-black cast and crew adaptation of Shakespeare's play, updated to 1960's New York. With Yaphet Kotto as Othello. 115 min. 16mm restored print. Sat 6/1, 7 PM. Logan Center for the Arts [FREE](#)

N The Tomorrow Man

A man worried about the apocalypse (John Lithgow) and a shopaholic (Blythe Danner) find love. Noble Jones directed. PG-13, 94 min. At Century Centre. For showtimes visit landmarktheaters.com. [FI](#)

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Johari Noelle packs years of soul into her first five songs

The Chicago native's polished debut EP benefits from years of choir and theater, half a season on reality TV, and nearly 18 months in the studio.

By JACK RIEDY



Johari Noelle © DANNYXPHOTO

Singer-songwriter Johari Noelle lives in a South Shore apartment that's filled with art. Colorful paintings—slices of nature, simple human figures, abstract symbols—cover the wall between her kitchen and living room, most of them her own work. They're complemented on the adjoining wall by an array of black-and-white photos and several photography backdrops, courtesy of her boyfriend and manager, James McCarter. Noelle's resumé includes acting, musical theater, and reality TV, but for the past 18 months, the 23-year-old Chicago native has focused less on bringing other people's visions to life and more on creating a musical statement of her own. Her resulting debut release, due May 31, is the sleekly produced EP *Things You Can't Say Out Loud*, whose five soulful songs dissect relationships with conversational ease.

Born Johari Noelle Dodd, Noelle developed an early understanding of pop history while growing up in South Shore, thanks to her parents' mammoth vinyl collection—a by-product of her father's college DJ career. "It was very important for him to make sure that we knew who people were, and knew where stuff comes from," Noelle says. "Because you hear new music, and you're like, 'Oh, this is amazing. This person invented this sound.' He was very big on making sure we know—'No, it started *here*.'"

Noelle and her twin sister, Jamila, are the oldest of her family's four children, all daughters. Her parents enrolled them in a smorgasbord of activities beginning at an early age—including choir, dance, and gymnastics. "They literally put us in everything you can think of," Noelle says. "What stuck to me most was musical theater and choir." She discovered a gift for performing, and refined her talents throughout elementary and high school—though she stresses that she's had no formal vocal training aside from what she got through these extracurriculars. She further developed her acting and public speaking

JOHARI NOELLE, CHRISTIAN JALON, KRISTAL METCALFE

Wed 6/5, 7 PM, the Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. West, 312-801-2100, promontorychicago.com, \$7, all ages

skills by competing in speech tournaments, and during her senior year she capped her student theater career by playing the lead role of Scheherazade in Homewood-Flossmoor High School's production of *The Arabian Nights*.

After graduating from high school in 2013, Noelle studied corporate communications →

continued from 27

at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, hoping to parlay her speaking abilities into a career asset. But at the same time, she was also working on her own earliest songs. “I was young, so the things that I was talking about, none of it was super serious,” she says. She collaborated and performed with other members of NIU’s artistic community, including fellow Chicagoan Matt Muse, who’s since become a rapper and producer as well as a teaching artist with Young Chicago Authors. Noelle also demonstrated her range with vocal covers, which she shared on YouTube and Instagram. Though most have since been scrubbed from the internet, a few traces remain—including a dead link to a cover of Lana Del Rey’s “Young and Beautiful” that Noelle posted on Del Rey’s Facebook page six years ago.

During her junior year at NIU, Noelle got a message from someone claiming to be a producer who’d noticed her through one such cover. The alleged producer complimented her sound and invited her to audition for a group that Destiny’s Child alum Kelly Rowland was assembling. Noelle was initially skeptical. “I thought it was a big scam, and I was like, whatever,” she says. She was convinced only after hearing from multiple people affiliated with the project, who sent her information and forms for setting up an audition.

Noelle flew to Atlanta, where she learned that she was trying out for the BET reality series *Chasing Destiny*, a *Making the Band*-style competition with Rowland in the Sean Combs role. (The five-piece girl group Rowland eventually put together is called June’s Diary.) Noelle was one of 60 singers called back for a second day of auditions, where she tried to break Rowland’s poker face—she sang solo, delivering a cover she’d prepared of Monica’s “Love All Over Me,” and in a randomly assigned group that worked up an arrangement of the Whitney Houston hit “I Will Always Love You.” There were 30 singers left standing at the end of the audition, Noelle among them, and she traveled back to Chicago to await final word from Rowland. “I’m pins and needles the next three weeks,” she says.

Noelle got the good news two days before Christmas 2015, when Rowland FaceTimed her to invite her to Los Angeles for filming. “I of course screenshot it,” Noelle says, laughing. “She was like, ‘I hope you’re a team player. I would love for you to come out.’” Noelle’s parents were enthusiastic too, even though she’d have to leave college to join the show. “My parents were like, ‘What are you still doing here? Go.’”

Noelle spent the first six weeks of 2016 in Los Angeles, competing with 17 other women

for a spot in the final group and learning from famed choreographers Frank Gatson Jr., JaQuel Knight, and Chris Grant. “It was really cool to learn from all of them, and just be a sponge,” she says. Though she was eliminated from the show five episodes into its ten-episode run, Noelle appreciated the grueling rehearsals, which typically ran from 10 PM to 4 AM six days per week. They taught her the importance of preparation, and she emerged more confident in her own talents. “Being picked out of all those girls—and they’re all so talented—I often had this feeling of, like, ‘Why did you pick me? I’m just starting. I’m not classically trained. I just sing because I love to,’” she says. “It really taught me to recognize that I have my own gift, and I have my own message, and that’s what makes me special.”

Things You Can’t Say Out Loud is the first iteration of that message. Noelle uses her lyrics to unpack the emotional nuances of navigating a romantic relationship, focusing on individual drops from a stream of consciousness: the moment you suspect you’re being cheated on, for instance, or the moment you muster the courage to tell your partner exactly what you want.

Noelle is the sole songwriter on the EP, adding her words and melodies to instrumental tracks from several different producers. She’s direct and conversational, and she always addresses a “you”—it’s a simple, effective way for her to convey her personality in each song. Her favorite songwriters are either behind-the-scenes figures from the pop-R&B industry (Tayla Parx, James Fauntleroy, Kevin Garrett, Priscilla Renea) or stars who also excel at writing for others (Stevie Wonder, Frank Ocean, James Blake, Bruno Mars, Terius “The-Dream” Nash).

Opening track “CrazyLonely” uses a trick straight from Ocean’s 2016 album, *Blonde*: it’s two dramatically different songs stitched together. In the first section, busy drums knock and bump under piercing synth smears, but in the second, reverberating guitar arpeggios dominate an arrangement that moves at half the tempo. The beat switch mirrors a shift in perspective: The first part is about how “we let our thoughts get the best of us,” Noelle explains. “You may see something on your partner’s phone, and your mind just starts to wonder. So much festers because you don’t say anything.” The second section is about hoping your partner stays true in a long-distance relationship. “I hope that you don’t do anything crazy just because you’re lonely. Don’t go and call up the girl off Instagram just because you’re lonely,” she says.

The two halves began as distinct songs, but Noelle found a thematic thread to connect



DANNYXPHOTO

them. “They’re both hopeful. The first one is like, I’m hoping that I’m not crazy enough to kill you. The second one is, I’m hoping that you’re not crazy enough to make a mistake that could make me kill you,” she says, laughing.

The arresting background vocals on *Things You Can’t Say Out Loud* were arranged by local musician Manasseh Croft, though Noelle overdubbed them herself (except on “Release,” which uses both their voices). Croft recalls his thought process while working on “CrazyLonely”: “If the conversation of the song was a hallway, what would you hear walking through that hallway?” He picked up a “spooky” vibe from the song’s second half, and decided to draw on the horror-film trope of off-screen singing by creepy, wispy children’s voices. “It’s like in scary movies when you walk down the hallway and it’s like, ‘One, two, buckle my shoe.’”

Noelle met Croft by chance, after filming on *Chasing Destiny* had wrapped and she’d returned to Chicago. She was holding down a day job, but she was also working hard to immerse herself in the local music scene—and in May 2017, Chicago rapper L.A. VanGogh invited her to a recording session for his song “& Effect” at Fort Knox Studios. He’d invited Croft too, and the two of them hit it off right away. “We became arrangement buddies,” Noelle says.

“I instantly just loved her because she’s so sweet,” says Croft. “I said, ‘Ooh, on this song, we should make you sound like a 90s girl.’ I started putting together these different layers for her to sing, and the finished product was amazing.”

Chicago engineer Matt Hennessy, who mixed the VanGogh session, was similarly impressed. “There’s something about her smoky, low-mid register that just makes me

smile every time I hear it. It’s very authentic to her. Very beautiful sounding and warm and mellow, something that I don’t hear a lot—from not only new, local, young talents, but across the national scope,” he says. “Her voice sounds much more seasoned and mature than it should be for the years that she has on her.”

Hennessy offered Noelle time at his own facility, VSOP Studios in Noble Square, which has also hosted the likes of G Herbo, the O’My’s, and Jamila Woods. Hennessy acted as executive producer, helping select the best of Noelle’s demos to develop further and mixing each of the five final tracks. “CrazyLonely” is his favorite, because of the way the two-part arrangement “chops and screws itself.”

Noelle began recording her debut in earnest in late 2017. VSOP has five studios, and she used one of the smaller complexes so that she could take the time to riff and write over instrumentals. She didn’t want friends dropping in and going live on Instagram, so when she worked, she was joined only by VSOP engineer Sheepman (who also contributed production to “CrazyLonely”). “I don’t want any distractions or to be thinking about, ‘Oh, this person’s in the room,’” she says. “I’m very protective of my music, so I’m like, ‘I don’t want you to record my recording session.’”

Noelle most often writes to prerecorded instrumentals, building songs around beats. She put together “Regrets” while home with strep throat, and was so taken with the result that she went to VSOP to record her initial takes while still sick. When an engineer wondered why she didn’t wait, she replied, “Just let me get this idea out.”

Hennessy guesses that Noelle spent a year writing her debut. Because she had no deadline she hadn’t given herself, she could accumulate ideas organically and revise songs

from session to session—in one case, she cut out Manasseh’s backing-vocal arrangement to leave more space for the lead. “You’ll hear something later, and you’re like, ‘OK, This was cool in January, and in March I want it clean,’” she says. “I appreciate his patience of that, because I’m like that with a lot of things.”

Lead single “Show Me” was one of the last things Noelle recorded, but she insisted it be released first. The song makes for a great introduction to the EP, as the narrator lays her cards on the table: “Fluent in your native tongue / I wanna be the only one / Whether we’re forever or not / I wanna give it all that I got.” Noelle cites “love languages” as inspiration. “There’s so many different ways that people connect romantically,” she says. “I feel like the best way to really keep it strong and keep it going is to learn, and you’re constantly learning.”

“Release” is a classic slow jam. It’s about opening up to emotional and sexual intimacy, and Noelle’s voice cycles through a tension-building tune, accompanied by sticky, sensual 6/8 guitar lines. Croft contributed relatively minimal backing vocals: “The empty spaces in the song actually allow the song to breathe,” he says. He was pleasantly surprised that Noelle didn’t replace his voice with hers in the final mix.

Not every song was inspired by romantic relationships. “Regrets” arose from a platonic form of FOMO—that is, being sick and missing out on work and time with friends. And “Too Much” arose from Noelle’s frustration with a manager she’d had while working at a south-side gym. “One day, we had a really bad falling-out, and she was like, ‘If you want to quit, you can quit,’” she says. “When she said that, I was like, ‘Oh, I should really think about this, because this woman is really trying to bring this demon out.’”

Noelle developed the melody for “Too Much” on the way to the studio, stuck in traffic and seething. She estimates she pieced together the final song in an hour. “Everyone has had a crappy boss, but it also speaks to just encountering someone who’s got a really crappy energy. If you put up with it long enough, it starts to create that feeling of, like, I have to address this,” she says. “Healthy confrontation.” The video for “Too Much,” released May 10, is Noelle’s first. It’s directed by Bradley Murray of Chicago company Square56 Productions.

Noelle looked outside the studio for feedback as she worked on *Things You Can’t Say Out Loud*. Once she had recordings to workshop, she turned every visit with friends into an impromptu listening party. She also tested new ideas at Sofar Sounds shows, where she

was backed by just a guitarist. “It’s really great feedback to have an unbiased audience that doesn’t know you. They don’t know you from Adam,” she says. These performances also gave her the opportunity to return to covering songs made famous by other artists, such as Amy Winehouse and Erykah Badu.

She’s relieved that the months of revision are over and that *Things You Can’t Say Out Loud* is mixed and mastered—she’s been forced to let go of her impulse to continue tweaking the songs. “I can be really indecisive as an individual, anyway, and I own that wholeheartedly,” she says. “Add music to that, and just being a critical artist, and it’s like, I’m losing it. So I can’t tell you how happy I am to be done, and not be able to kink or change anything.”

Noelle is a full-time musician now, and has turned her attention to rehearsing for her record-release show at the Promontory on Wednesday, June 5. She’ll lead a five-piece group, with Croft singing backup. “It’s a family affair,” he says.

Croft is happy that Noelle shows off so much “vocal shine” on the EP. “Sometimes you’ll get a project, and you’ll have to pick through the music to really hear the vocals, but on this project, you’ll be able to hear her vocals and what she’s doing and what she’s capable of at this point in her career,” he says. “Of course, this isn’t the final stop for her.”

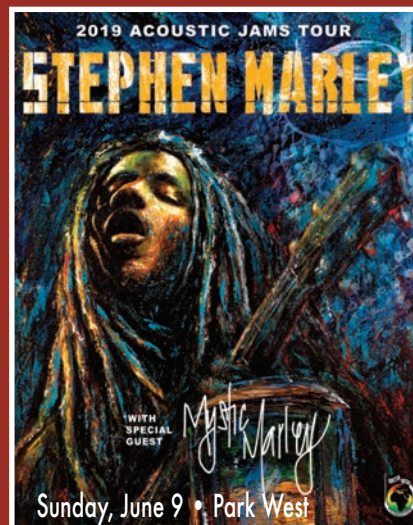
Hennessy is similarly pleased with *Things You Can’t Say Out Loud*. “It’s the best thing in this business when you get to see an artist really stretch out into their own space and become what you hoped that they could become,” he says. “From the first song when she came to the studio to where we are now with this release, I feel like she really did that.”

Noelle already has her eyes on goals further down the road. She hopes to play festivals locally and collaborate with more musicians, and she’s started learning piano to help her writing process. “It would be cool to just be able to arrange my own melodies,” she says. “Just becoming more independent, as far as my creative process.” She dreams of creating a song entirely at home, without relying on an outside producer. She’d also like to tour.

“I want to have traveled and brought my music to different cities and groups,” Noelle says. Last year, she points out, she was working a day job and didn’t have any music released. “This year, I’m releasing a project, and I released my first video,” she says. “That growth itself has been great. So that’s my big goal—to constantly be growing and evolving.”

👤 @jackriedy

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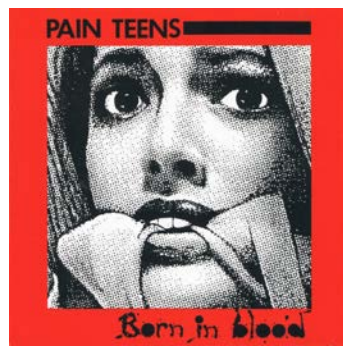
PHILIP MONTORO

Reader music editor

Pain Teens Guitarist Scott Ayers and vocalist Bliss Blood formed this almost comically lurid Houston band in 1985 and soon joined the likes of the Cherubs, Crust, and the Butthole Surfers in the circle of noise-rock perverts signed to Austin label Trance Syndicate. The Pain Teens had a weakness for collages of “edgy” samples, but when they fired on all cylinders—combining filthy guitar fuzz, junkyard industrial beats, sinister psychedelic fuckery, and icy, sneering vocals—they transcended their adolescent fixation on depravity and evil. I’ll stick up for “The Basement,” “Shallow Hole,” and “Daughter of Chaos” any day.

MusicRepublic: World Traditional Music From LPS and Cassettes The anonymous founder of this amazing blog aims to “highlight the great diversity of our traditional music heritage, to bring rare and little-known recordings to the music-loving public, and to offer a doorway for people who have an interest but don’t know where to begin.” In the past two months, MusicRepublic’s posts have included 1930s Indian recordings on sitar, surbahar, and sursaptak; a 1970s album by a 35-member trans-ethnic Malian ensemble; and a 1960s Mexican split LP of indigenous and mestizo music. I hope they never stop.

Shows in conservatories Last year I saw Lykanthea perform in the Lincoln Park Conservatory twice, and a couple weeks ago I caught Mulatu Astatke and Angel Bat Dawid at the one in Garfield Park. I think I’m ready to say: more live music in places that actually smell good, please.



The Pain Teens released *Born in Blood* in 1990.

ALEX INGLIZIAN Head engineer at Experimental Sound Studio

Iannis Xenakis, *Concret PH* This 1958 composition by Greek-French composer Iannis

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



The Morphagene synthesizer module

© COURTESY MAKE NOISE

Xenakis is one of the quintessential examples or early sound art employing the technique of “microsound.” Using only the noise of burning charcoal on analog tape, Xenakis splices, loops, and transposes recordings to create a granular cloud that transforms and modulates throughout the composition. The texture and density of the sounds are absolutely beautiful. *Concret PH* debuted at the Brussels World’s Fair in 1958, projected through an 11-channel system over 425 loudspeakers.

Curtis Roads, *Microsound* This seminal 2004 book by Curtis Roads covers the history, theory, and compositional practice of microsound—which not only dissolved the familiar building blocks of music but also laid the groundwork for what we now call granular synthesis. Roads lays out meticulous recipes for exploring the realm of sound particles briefer than one-tenth of a second—a kind of quantum sonic world.

Make Noise Morphagene It’s rare that a single piece of gear can completely change the course of my output as a sound artist. The Morphagene by Make Noise is one such piece. The mad scientists at Make Noise have created a sound sampler/granular synthesizer that’s inspired by the musique concrète and microsound composition of the 1950s but seamlessly fits into a modern music-production workflow. The Morphagene can generate soundscapes

and textures unlike anything you’ve heard, limited only by your own creativity.

ROB FRYE Bitchin Bajas, Flux Bikes, Inferno Mobile Recording Studio

Ida y Vuelta As the band *Ida y Vuelta*, Laura Cambron, Jaime Garza, Daniel Villarreal, and Zacbe Pichardo present live *son jarocho* music on the first Thursday of every month at Honky Tonk BBQ in Pilsen. *Son jarocho* is a regional folk style from the Mexican state of Veracruz that fuses elements of indigenous, African, and Spanish cultures. Besides taking audiences there and back again each month and staying true to the roots of the music, the band’s members are also activists and educators (and play in *Sones de Mexico*, *Dos Santos*, and other projects).

Voices of the Peruvian Rainforest This humbling listen into the sonic world of the Amazon, recorded mainly by Ted Parker and released in 1985, is available for free through the National Audubon Society. A legendary ornithologist, Parker developed the Rapid Assessment Program to document threatened species in the tropics—and around 10,000 of the sounds in the Macaulay Library are his contributions.

Sylvia Hallett I learned about this British violinist and composer from Tom Relleen of UK duo Tomaga. He mentioned her work because of her use of bicycle wheel. On Hallett’s 2001 album, *White Fog*, she bows a wheel, an eerie-sounding technique that brilliantly complements voice, violin, and tape collage. A supporter of experimental music since the mid-70s via the London Musicians Collective, she improvises regularly and collaborates with loads of other top-notch musicians, theaterers, and dance troupes.



Sylvia Hallett bows a bicycle wheel at London’s Vortex Jazz Club in 2011. © MOPOMOSO/YOUTUBE



PICK OF THE WEEK

Polymath Damon Locks honors Black culture and resistance on *Where Future Unfolds*

CHRIS HERSHMAN

DAMON LOCKS BLACK MONUMENT ENSEMBLE

Sun 6/2, 3:30 PM, Chicago Cultural Center, Sidney R. Yates Gallery, 78 E. Washington FREE

IN A 2016 INTERVIEW for Lewis University's online arts journal, *Jet Fuel Review*, Chicago polymath Damon Locks spoke about running into celebrated artist Kerry James Marshall in a local comic book store. Locks, a vocalist, musician, and visual and video artist, was gratified to discover that they share the habit of checking out the comics, but that's not the only thing they have in common. Both men have used their art to challenge stereotypical representations of Blackness by creating nuanced depictions of the diversity and complexity of the African-American communities in which they live. With his 80s/90s band *Trenchmouth* and its still-active spinoff, the *Eternals*, Locks has embedded those messages within music that combines punk, dub, Afrobeat, 70s Brazilian pop, and other influences from around the world. But on the new *Where Future Unfolds* (*International Anthem*), the debut LP by his *Black Monument Ensemble*, Locks works entirely within an African-American tradition that understands artistic and political endeavors as complementary tools in the fight for self-definition, self-affirmation, and survival. The ensemble includes an instrumental quartet (Locks on electronics and bells, alongside clarinetist Angel Bat Dawid, drummer Dana Hall, and percussionist Arif Smith), five singers (plus an appearance by Rayna Golding on "Rebuild a Nation"), and a dance troupe. Samples from speeches from the civil rights movement remind listeners of the never-ending struggle, while the presence onstage of dancers from youth company *Move Me Soul* and alumni of the *Chicago Children's Choir* show why it's important to keep pushing. And even if you don't tune in to the message, you can let the BME's joyously uplifting mix of sounds—which includes spiritual-jazz sonorities, hip-hop grooves, gospel harmonies, and sampled field recordings of African folk music—carry you away. —BILL MEYER



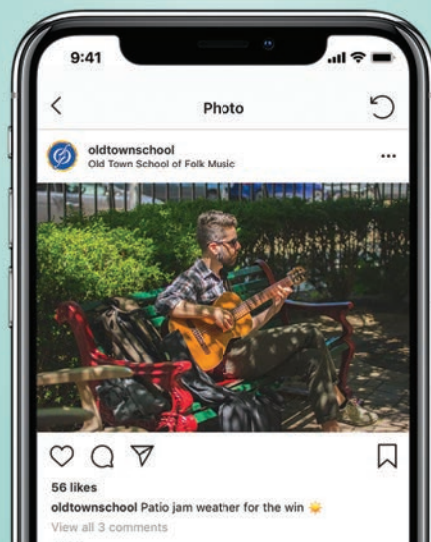
Juice Wrld COURTESY THE ARTIST

THURSDAY30

JUICE WRLD *Ski Mask the Slump God* opens. 6:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, \$105.

My girlfriend has a Spotify playlist called "Emotional Bangers," and it's made up entirely of too-earnest, heart-on-the-sleeve hip-hop jams. Though it leans pretty heavily on Drake and the Weeknd, Chicago native Juice Wrld is a major presence as well. To hear him tell it, Juice Wrld has a lot of feelings; Juice Wrld also has lots of weed and pills. Though he's only 20, he's spent the past couple years redefining what's possible in chart-busting hip-hop, evolving past not only its traditional hard-hitting beats and acrobatic wordplay but also the woozy trap of recent years. On his two albums, the astonishingly good 2018 debut *Goodbye & Good Riddance* and its slightly less solid follow-up, *March's Death Race for Love*, he sings some of the catchiest, deepest melodies ever put to tape over airy, melancholy backing tracks that border on minor-key pop. His lyrics address depression, addiction, and isolation, and their realism is enough to make you uncomfortable. At the same time, you could catch a contact high from his glazed-eyed, mumbling delivery. If his songs were a little less preoccupied with illicit substances, Juice could be the world's next biggest pop star—but drugged-up and sad is what we get, and it's perfect. —LUCA CIMARUSTI →

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MUSIC

continued from 31

FRIDAY31

CHICAGO DOOMED AND STONED FESTIVAL

See also Saturday. Torche headline; Forming the Void, Frayle, High Priest, Starless, and Uncouth open. 6 PM Reggies' Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$25-\$35. 17+

For its second year, the first with new partners Empire Productions, the two-day Chicago Doomed and Stoned Festival has scored some big names: on Friday the headliners are Florida heavy legends Torche, warming up for the July arrival of their new album, *Admission*; on Saturday, they're occult-rock primogenitors Coven, who formed in Chicago in the late 60s, and eerie flute-wielding Canadian witch rockers Blood Ceremony. Led by front woman Alia O'Brien, Blood Ceremony work their penchant for folk-magic aesthetics and their obvious Jethro Tull influence into a distinctively sparse, primitive fairyland sound. In January the group released a melancholy new single, "Lolly Willows" on Rise Above (the B side is a cover of the Who's "Heaven and Hell"), a tight, compact song within which O'Brien fluidly transitions between tranced-out oracle and soul-hunting banshee. Make sure to come early and invest the time to savor all 15 bands, because this is also a great showcase for up-and-comers: to my ears the standouts are Louisiana's stormy, trippy Forming the Void, twisted Vegas-based apocalyptic doom creepers Demon Lung, local thrash- and punk-influenced riffmeisters Uncouth, and Asheville's superheavy Americana-inflected mountainman sludgelords Bask, but there's not a weak link in the chain. —MONICA KENDRICK

DO DIVISION STREET FEST See also Saturday and Sunday, when Why? and the Meat Puppets headline, respectively. Russian Circles headline the East Stage, and the Skatalites headline the West Stage; the bill also includes Void of Sabbath, Bumpus, Rezn, and Green Room Rockers. 6:15 PM-10 PM, Division and Damen, \$10 donation requested. 🍷

PILE C.H.E.W. and Blacker Face open. 8 PM, Subterranean, 2011 W. North, \$15. 21+

Few contemporary indie-rock bands deliver as consistently as Boston's Pile. Roughly every other year since 2007, they've dropped a collection of pummeling, direct songs executed with posthardcore aggression and postrock grandeur, their lyrics carrying a twinge of subversive indignation. Their seventh studio album, May's *Green and Gray* (Exploding in Sound), arrives following a time of transition. Guitarist Matt Becker and bassist Matt Connery left the band after 2017's *A Hairshirt of Purpose*, and front man Rick Maguire moved to Nashville, where he was joined by two new members, former touring guitarist Chappy Hull and bassist Alex Molini. (Drummer Kriss Kuss stayed in Boston.) The songs on *Green and Gray* reflect some of these changes, and Maguire—long a wry and impressionistic lyricist—has become an even more penetrating writer



Blood Ceremony play the Chicago Doomed and Stoned Festival on Saturday.

📷 COURTESY RISE ABOVE RECORDS

and performer as he's settled into his 30s. On the somber "My Employer," he sings about his workaholic and the pain it's caused him and his loved ones, his inflection suggesting a wealth of complicated emotions behind his self-confessed bad habits. *Green and Gray* displays Pile's command of a nuanced dynamic range—they can be just as heavy in their most intimate passages as in their most explosive. —LEOR GALIL

SATURDAY1

CHICAGO DOOMED AND STONED FESTIVAL

See Friday. Coven headline; Blood Ceremony, Demon Lung, Bask, Witch Ripper, Wolf Blood, Wizzerd, Somnuri, and Snow Burial open. 3 PM, Reggies' Rock Club, 2105 S. State, \$25-\$35. 17+

DO DIVISION STREET FEST See also Sunday, when the Meat Puppets headline the West Stage at 8:30 PM. Why? headline the West Stage tonight, and the Cool Kids headline the East Stage; the bill also includes Kari Faux, Makaya McCraven, Brittany Campbell, Paul Cherry, State Champion, and Pile. Noon-10 PM (Why? at 8:30 PM), Division and Damen, \$10 donation requested. 🍷

Weeks before the official start of summer, Do Division helps Chicago kick off music-festival season. Empty Bottle Presents and Subterranean programmed its East and West stages, respectively, with a lively mix of bands and DJs from Friday night through Sunday evening. Among this year's notable acts are two groups that have recently celebrated career milestones: Cincinnati indie-rock and alternative hip-hop band **Why?** and southwestern alt-rock giants the Meat Puppets (now based in Phoenix and Austin). Last year Why?'s groundbreaking second album, *Alopecia*, turned ten, and the group marked the occasion with an anniversary reissue on Joyful

Find more music listings at
chicagoreader.com/soundboard.

MUSIC

Noise and a tour where they played it in full at each show. *Alopecia* remains relevant in part for its intricate production, which fuses the slick grooviness of programmed hip-hop beats with the freshness of live-tracked acoustic instruments, creating an eclectic sound that's complemented by front man Yoni Wolf and his rambling but finely crafted collages of witty metaphors and slippery memories. Even today, you can discover something new every time you listen to it. In March, the **Meat Puppets** released their 15th studio album, *Dusty Notes* (Megaforce), the first to include all three members of their original lineup since 1995's *No Joke!*—though the band is now filled out by guitarist Elmo Kirkwood (son of front man Curt Kirkwood) and keyboardist Ron Stabinsky. The Meat Puppets' signature overdriven instruments and endearing vocals are there, along with healthy doses of acoustic guitar and banjo and a newfound sense of calmness and restraint. Whether this lineup will continue past the shows planned around this record remains to be seen, but as long as they continue to surpass the reunion hype, I'm more than ready to hear what further growth a fourth decade of the Meat Puppets will bring. Both bands headline the West Stage at Do Division, Why? on Saturday and the Meat Puppets on Sunday, but don't ignore the rest of the bill—this year's diverse bookings include chill pop-rock whiz Paul Cherry and jazz explorer Makaya McCraven. —**IZZY YELLEN**

WU-TANG CLAN *Reignwolf and the Soul Rebels* open. 7 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 1106 W. Lawrence, \$79.50. 17+

Every few years, the always-active, always-killing-it Wu-Tang Clan explode out of the trenches and back onto the front page of the zeitgeist. In 2015, they released the one-copy-only double LP *Once Upon a Time in Shaolin*, which was infamously bought for \$2 million by pharma douche Martin Shkreli (and later seized by a federal court). Over the past year or so, the Clan have been thrust back into the spotlight for a far better reason: 2018 was the 25th anniversary of their debut record, *Enter the Wu-Tang (36 Chambers)*. Arguably the greatest hip-hop album of all time, it showcases and celebrates the Staten Island crew's larger-than-life personalities and mind-bending eccentricities. The anniversary has

been celebrated with the production of a powerful four-part documentary series, *Wu-Tang Clan: Of Mics and Men*, first broadcast on Showtime this month. It dives into the group's roots in the ghettos of New York and their rise to international fame, while highlighting the importance of brotherhood, gratitude, and individualism. The series also features footage of some of the rawest, most incredible hip-hop performances of all time—demonstrating where the Clan got the energy and passion that they can still tap into, even as some members close in on their 50s. —**LUCA CIMARUSTI**

SUNDAY2

DO DIVISION STREET FEST See Saturday, when *Why?* headlines the West Stage at 8:30 PM. *The Meat Puppets* headline the West Stage tonight, and *Mikal Cronin* headlines the East Stage; the bill also includes *Lowdown Brass Band*, *Ryley Walker*, *Manwolves*, *Sam Coffey & the Iron Lungs*, *Habibi*, and *JJUJJUU*. Noon-10 PM (the Meat Puppets at 8:30 PM), Division and Damen, \$10 donation requested. 🍷

DAMON LOCKS BLACK MONUMENT ENSEMBLE See *Pick of the Week*, page 31. 3:30 PM, Chicago Cultural Center, Sidney R. Yates Gallery, 78 E. Washington. 🍷 FREE

MALCI *Little Church* headlines; *Jordanna and Malci* open. 8 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, \$12. 18+

In 2017, Chicago rapper-producer Malci dropped his impressive third album, *Do You Know Yourself*, smoothing cacophonous shards of samples into outre-pop songs with an oddball charm. Malci has plenty of comrades in the local scene, some of whom he's turned into collaborators too: he produced almost half of Mykele Deville's February record, *Maintain*, and he appears on Ruby Watson's April album, *Balance*, on the group cut "Royalty" (along with MVK3R, Rich Jones, Davis of Udababy, Rahim Salaam of Sex No Babies, and Watson's ➔

Malci @REMSY ATASSI



THALIA HALL



JUN 04
ROLLING BLACKOUTS COASTAL FEVER



JUN 06
DUFF MCKAGAN



JUN 20
RON FUNCHES



JUN 22
KARL DENSON



JUN 25
LEELA JAMES



JUL 11
CONNAN MOCKASIN

MAY-JUN 31-1
RANDY RAINBOW LIVE

JUN 14
NOT ANOTHER D&D PODCAST

JUN 16
THE MUSIC OF GRATEFUL DEAD FOR KIDS

JUN 07-08
KEVIN MORBY

JUN 14
DOUGHBOYS

JUN 16
JUST A TIP WITH MEGAN BATOON

JUN 08-09
PILSEN FOOD TRUCK SOCIAL 2019

JUN 15
HIGH & MIGHTY

JUN 16
WE HATE MOVIES

JUN 09
SUPERCHUNK

JUN 15
WHY WON'T YOU DATE ME? WITH NICOLE BYER

JUN 19
POD SAVE THE PEOPLE

JUN 13
KILL TONY SUMMER TOUR

JUN 15
IF I WERE YOU WITH JAKE & AMIR

JUN 21
THE FANTASY FOOTBALLERS PODCAST: LIVE

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JUN 05
JOHARI NOELLE



JUN 08
BABY SOUL PROM



JUN 11
GREG MURPHY TRIO



JUN 12
URBAN LYRICS - SUMMER BREEZE OPENING NIGHT



JUN 14
LIQUID SOUL

MAY 30
JAI MATT & DR. SRIMIX

JUN 01
A DIFFERENT VIBE

JUN 08
D9-3 & THE LYT MOB

MAY 31
JAY ELECTRONICA

JUN 03
MECCA MONDAY "JAMMIN"

JUN 08
IN LIVING COLOR: SUMMA TIME CHI

MAY 31
OFFICIAL GEMINI BASH

JUN 05
WAYBACK WEDNESDAYS

JUN 09
PROJECT TARWAY 2ND ANNUAL SUMMER FASHION SHOWCASE

JUN 01
HYDE PARK BREW FEST AFTER PARTY

JUN 07
RONNIE LAWS AND LONNIE LISTON SMITH

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JUNE 2	LOCAL BOYS
JUNE 3	THE RIP UPS
JUNE 5	ENVIRONMENTAL ENCROACHMENT 6PM
JUNE 6	CHESS AT BREAKFAST FROM DENVER 9PM
JUNE 7	CHICAGO SKYLINERS BIG BAND 7PM
JUNE 8	PROSPECT FOUR 9PM
JUNE 9	MORSE & WAGNER 5:30PM
JUNE 10	THE SINCLAIR EXPRESS
JUNE 11	SMILIN' BOBBY AND THE CLEMTONES
JUNE 12	RICKYD BLUES PARTY
JUNE 13	HEISENBERG UNCERTAINTY PLAYERS 7PM
JUNE 14	RC BIG BAND 7PM
JUNE 15	JON RAHICK NONET 9PM
JUNE 16	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
JUNE 17	ELIZABETH'S CRAZY LITTLE THING
JUNE 18	FEATURING DANETTE MARK 9PM
JUNE 19	FLABBY HOFFMAN SHOW 8PM
JUNE 20	THE JETSTAR 88S
JUNE 21	RANDALL PIKE

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THU 6 **Chris Knight** In the SideBar
- Bitters -

SAT 8 **Tom Russell**

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Sat, June 15 - Keep Dad Weird Day (1-5)
with Flirting With Disaster (Tom Petty Tribute)

9pm - Benefit Concert for St. Jude's Hospital

Wed, June 19 - Big Band Dance Party

Thu, June 20 - The Tillers

Fri, June 21 - Expo '76 10th Anniversary Show

Sat, June 22 - John Fullbright Band / Brian Dunne

Fri, June 28 - Country Night In Berwyn

Sat, June 29 - Webb Wilder / David Quinn

WED - SAT, JULY 3,4,5 & 6

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Walter Trout - CJ Chenier - Michael McDermott
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MUSIC

continued from 33

Free Snacks collaborator, Joshua Virtue). In early May, Why? Records (Watson, Davis, and Virtue's label-slash-collective) put out Malci's fourth album, *Papaya!* But while Malci has proved he can play well with others, his solo work remains anomalous—though I wish more rappers would follow his lead and blur together noise rap, spiritual jazz, and verbose verses packed with mundane ruminations and deeply personal confessions. The album's song titles help contextualize Malci's music: some name-check boundary-pushing artists ("Marina Abramović," "Stan Getz"), while others seem like references to contemporary acts who might be his distant cousins ("Money Store" shares its name with a Death Grips album, and "Anxiety Raps" is part of the title of an Open Mike Eagle track). For *Papaya!*, Malci leans less on samples and more on analog synths and field recordings, creating a less-hecktic aesthetic overall—but his music still feels like it could take a thrillingly bizarre turn at any moment. —LEOR GALIL

MONDAY 3

TEEN DAZE M. Sage and Shazmatic open.
8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western. 21+ FREE

Canadian producer Jamison Isaak, who began releasing music as Teen Daze in 2010, emerged as part of a loosely defined scene specializing in hushed, woozy, and intimate electronic songs, which felt like bedroom recordings even when their creators used more robust studios. The ironic poet laureate of late-aughties indie culture, Hipster Runoff founder Carles, dubbed this style "chillwave." The trend crashed a year or two later, and Isaak is one of a handful of chillwave veterans who's continued to explore the boundaries of the aesthetic. His sixth album, April's *Bioluminescence* (Flora), is conspicuous in its earth-positive consciousness. Even if the name doesn't clue you in, you're likely to pick up on the warmth of his field recordings, which of course include the sound of waves breaking on the shore. Natural and computerized sounds not only coexist in Isaak's music but blur together, and the best cuts on *Bioluminescence*—including the gentle deep-house epic "Ocean Floor"—use this synthesis to summon hypnotic bliss. —LEOR GALIL

TUESDAY 4

ARIANA GRANDE See also Wednesday.
Normani and *Social House* open. 8 PM, United Center, 1901 W. Madison, \$144.95-\$249. 18+

Ariana Grande has dominated TMZ headlines and pop charts this year—the latter with a series of confessional singles whose lyric sheets could be pages from her diary. And Grande has had a lot to process lately. In 2017, she survived a deadly terrorist attack at her concert at Britain's Manchester Arena. In 2018, her long-term love and ex-boyfriend Mac Miller died of an overdose. Soon after, her engagement to *Saturday Night Live* It Boy Pete Davidson fell apart under intense media scrutiny. Grande knows people are paying attention to her every move, and she's been harnessing the power of her celebrity in



Ariana Grande © COURTESY OF REPUBLIC RECORDS

the studio: in August she released her fourth studio album, *Sweetener*, and in February she followed up with a darker-toned full-length, *Thank U, Next*. On the hip-hop-influenced hit single from that record, "7 Rings," a haunting sample of "My Favorite Things" from *The Sound of Music* provides the backdrop for lyrics about a grim spending spree, with Grande singing that "happiness is the same price as red bottoms." Though authenticity often feels mutually exclusive with commercial pop, Grande confidently rules this empire built on her own trauma, and due in part to her rapid release schedule, her music has the honesty that comes with producing art while still dealing with that trauma. She also provides a moment of optimism in *Sweetener*'s "Pete Davidson," which at 1:12 is almost as long as her relationship with the comedian—and that's part of its charm! The song embraces the unabashed naivete of new love, ending with a fade-out on a simple promise: "Gonna be happy, happy, yeah." —MEGAN KIRBY

DWIGHT YOAKAM *Desure* opens. 7:30 PM, Arcada Theatre, 105 E. Main, St. Charles, \$59-\$125. 18+

Dwight Yoakam's most recent single sounds like it could've been found in a jukebox of obscure 45s at a 1960s California honky-tonk, despite having been written and released (on Reprise) last year. "Pretty Horses" has a steady backbeat shuffle, and Yoakam peppers his smooth tone with twangy flourishes. He leans into his high notes hard, almost turning them into pitch bends, and gives an occasional yelp—though they're usually masked by driving drums or dropped into organ solos. The song simultaneously fits in with modern roots music and classic Bakersfield country, and thankfully lacks the Nashville slickness that Yoakam has avoided for much of his 35-year career. The B side, "Then Here Came

Monday," is a heartbreaker with beaten-down, love-gone-wrong lyrics a la Merle Haggard: "Friday's never long / It feels real easy / Till Saturday winds up just Friday's fool." Yoakam continues to champion the music that inspires his work, not only by hosting his Bakersfield Beat channel on SiriusXM but also by sprinkling his concerts with covers of his heroes, including Haggard and Buck Owens. At this show, you can also look forward to seeing Yoakam break out his trademark one-man line-dance boogie when he gets transported by the beat. —SALEM COLLO-JULIN

WEDNESDAY

ARIANA GRANDE See Tuesday. *Normani and Social House* open. 8 PM, United Center, 1901 W. Madison, \$144.95-\$249.

DAWN RAY'D *Lifes* open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$10. 21+

Black metal has long been contaminated with bands that embrace fascist politics, but the genre has a left-wing tradition as well, which includes the anti-war themes of 2001's *The Haunted House* by South Korea's Pyha, the pro-union slant of Panopticon's bluegrass-laced 2012 album *Kentucky*, and the radical environmentalism of Botanist. To that list you can add anarchist, antifascist UK trio Dawn Ray'd. On their 2017 album, *The Unlawful Assembly* (Prosthetic), the band imagine revolution in the first track, "Fire Sermon," and spit bile at those who seek control through scapegoating and fearmongering (which implicitly includes Trump and Brexit proponents) in the wonderfully named "A Litany to Cowards." On that song, vocalist Simon B indulges in clean vocals to ensure his message will be intelligible: "The lies, they might be different / The sentiment's the same / You chose the weakest / To shoulder all the blame," he sings, before launching into a Renaissance Faire-esque violin solo. Celtic touches run throughout the album, but most are buried

beneath a satisfyingly fierce black-metal buzz. Folk influences in black metal are hardly new, but where some bands deploy retro melodies to suggest a pure, implicitly xenophobic ethnic folk, Dawn Ray'd are more in line with Woody Guthrie or Sinead O'Connor—using folk styles to evoke community and provide a springboard for resistance. If fascism in politics—or in black metal—fills you with raw, enormous rage, you'll want to get to this show. —NOAH BERLATSKY

JOHARI NOELLE See the story on page 27 for more on Johari Noelle. *Christian JaLon and Krystal Metcalfe* open. 7 PM, the Promontory, 5311 S. Lake Park Ave. West, \$7.

Few artists want to be called "neosoul," partly due to the perception that the genre is inauthentic or a short-lived trend. Singer Jaguar Wright was so forthright in her distaste for the term that she named her 2005 album *Divorcing Neo 2 Marry Soul*, which seemed to nod to fans who couldn't deal with plasticky R&B sounds in the Top 40 but didn't want their organic, 70s-influenced soul to sound like an out-and-out throwback. Chicago native Johari Noelle hits that exact sweet spot on her new debut, the EP *Things You Can't Say Out Loud*, proving that neosoul isn't dead and isn't necessarily an insult. Noelle first came to national attention on a 2016 BET reality series, *Chasing Destiny*, where Kelly Rowland of Destiny's Child auditioned members for a new girl group, June's Diary. Noelle didn't make the final cut, but that might've been a blessing for all of us—if she had, she might never have finished the slow, simmering grooves of this EP. She's also played small roles on *Empire* and *Proven Innocent*, but despite her time in the spotlight, her songs are strikingly intimate and personal. *Things You Can't Say Out Loud* is far from faddish dance music, and I'd absolutely recommend checking it out if you like Wright, Leela James, Anthony Hamilton, D'Angelo, or any other contemporary soul artist of the past 15 years who isn't ruled by the drum machine. —JAMES PORTER



Dawn Ray'd
 ROB ADAMSON



SATURDAY JUL 06 / 1PM / 21+
 at Lakefront Green at Theater On The Lake
 (2401 N. Lakeshore Dr.)

Metro & smartbar welcome

BONOBO PRESENTS OUTLIER
 WITH BONOBO (DJ SET) / DERRICK CARTER
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SATURDAY JUL 06 / 1PM / 21+
 at Lakefront Green at Theater On The Lake
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Metro & smartbar welcome

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NEW

Acid Witch, Against the Grain, Gozu, Without Light, Unto the Earth 6/12, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+

Angels & Airwaves 9/21, 7 PM, House of Blues

Anthony Pateras 6/8, 8 PM, Graham Foundation, part of Lampo performance series **FREE**

Babymetal, Avatar 9/20, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom

Bad Books, Brother Bird 6/19, 8:30 PM, Metro, 18+

Birdhouse Festival 9/7, 3 PM, Theater on the Lake, on sale Thu 5/30, 10 AM, 18+

Jim Brickman 8/11, 8 PM, City Winery

Junior Brown 7/15, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/31, noon

Buku, Esseks, Frq Ncy 10/12, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM, 18+

Cafe Racer, Ethers, SPVD 6/7, 9:30 PM, Cole's **FREE**

Cherubs, Sweet Cobra 8/15, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

David Cook 9/18, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/31, noon

Cosmic Honky Tonk Revue with Chuck Mead & His Grassy Knoll Boys, Jim Lauderdale, Jason Ringenberg 7/18, 8 PM, City Winery

Crystal Method 8/17, 9 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Lucy Dacus 10/10, 7:30 PM, Park West, on sale Fri 5/31, 9 AM

Dad Hat, Spacewolves, Wilde, Sweet Hudson, Dopeheads on Mopedz 6/16, 5:30 PM, Bottom Lounge

Gus Dapperton 10/4, 7:30 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM

Devendra Banhart 11/3, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM, 17+

Don Broco 10/8, 6 PM, Bottom Lounge

Conya Doss, Gordon Chambers 7/30, 8 PM, City Winery

Wendy Eisenberg 6/17, 7:30 PM, Experimental Sound Studio

Fast Preacher, Bur, Moon Type 6/9, 9 PM, Schubas **FREE**

Feminist Happy Hour 3-year anniversary of comedy series with music by Ready Freddie's Redux 6/29, 6 PM, Empty Bottle

Funkadesi 7/7, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/31, noon

Jeremy Garrett, Aaron Dorfman & Ben Wright 6/9, 8 PM, Martyrs'

Gramps the Vamp, Deep Fayed, Family of Geniuses 7/24, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Arlo Guthrie, Sarah Lee Guthrie 10/18, 8 PM; 10/19, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 5/31, 9 AM

Lalah Hathaway 8/27, 8 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/31, noon

Heart Bones (Har Mar & Sabrina Ellis), Good Fuck 7/10, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

Ari Hest 8/15, 8 PM, City Winery

Chris Hillman & Herb Pedersen 10/13, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music, on sale Fri 5/31, 9 AM

Dave Hollister 7/3, 7 and 9:30 PM, City Winery

Immortal Bird, Warforged, Barren Heir 7/16, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Wed 5/29, 10 AM

Inter Arma, Thantifaxath, Pulchra Morte, Atonement Theory 6/6, 7 PM, Reggie's Rock Club, 17+

Leela James 6/25, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

Jessica Hernandez & the Delatas, Cell Phones 8/31, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Joyryde 8/24, 8 PM, Concord Music Hall, 18+

Kaleta & Super Yamba Band 6/11, 8 PM, Martyrs'

Kindo, Sirintip, Adrian Bellue 8/8, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge

King Khan & BBQ Show 8/12, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM

Ladytron 12/11, 8 PM, Metro, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM, 18+

Last Word Quintet 6/10, 8 PM, Martyrs'

Lingua Ignota 9/9, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Thu 5/30, noon

Little Simz, April & Vista 6/11, 7 PM, Lincoln Hall

Logic 11/15, 7:30 PM, Allstate Arena, Rosemont

Lost Dog Street Band, Matt Heckler 8/18, 8 PM, Martyrs'

Magna Carta, Demetruet 6/26, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

Marika Hackman 10/25, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

Mating Ritual 10/26, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Mean Girls, Dead On, Loa Hex, 6 Kitty 6/29, 8 PM, GMan Tavern

Ingrid Michaelson 10/19, 7:30 PM, The Vic, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM

Terry Mullan, Woody McBride aka DJ ESP, Frankie Vega 7/12, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Muqata'a 6/15, 11:59 PM, Hideout

Mutts, Archie Powell & the Exports, Lung, Vamos 6/29, 7 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Telethon, A Dumb Special Secret Guest, Sad Witches 6/21, 8 PM, GMan Tavern

Terrapin Flyer (Grateful Dead tribute) 7/4, 3 PM, City Winery, on sale Fri 5/31, noon

Titus Andronicus 9/6, 9 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM

Twin Peaks 11/29, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM

Twin XL 7/15, 8 PM, Schubas

UB40 featuring Ali Campbell & Astro, Shaggy, Steel Pulse 9/18, 6:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park

Violet Crime, Johari Noelle, Bright Kid 6/29, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

John Waite 8/22, 8 PM, City Winery

Windy City Soul Club (DJ night) 6/29, 9 PM, Empty Bottle

DJ Zzzosma 6/20, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village **FREE**

Penny & Sparrow 9/27, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Thu 5/30, 10 AM

Perro Feo, Moon, Model Stranger, Kelroy 6/8, 8 PM, Martyrs'

Photay (DJ set) 8/17, 2 PM, Virgin Hotel

Pinback 8/7, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, on sale Fri 5/31, 10 AM, 17+

Queen! pride edition with Ladies of LCD Soundsystem, Nancy Whang & Rayna Russ, Derrick Carter, Michael Serafini, Ariel 6/30, 10 PM, Metro

Jordan Rakei 11/3, 8 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

Reader Pride Block Party 6/23, 1 PM, Marz Community Brewing Co.

Reckless Kelly 9/21, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn

Reso, Ultrasloth, Maru 6/14, 10:45 PM, Bottom Lounge, 18+

Riot Fest 2019 9/13-9/15, 11 AM, Douglas Park, on sale Wed 5/29, 10 AM

Sizzy Rocket 6/16, 3:30 PM, Rattleback Records **FREE**

Sabertooth 6/23, 8 PM, Martyrs'

Scarlxrd 8/31, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, on sale Fri 5/31

Sleep On It, Like Pacific, Homesafe, In Her Own Words, Never Loved 7/20, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge

Sonny Falls, Maneka, Floatie 7/6, 9:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Speedy Ortiz (DJ set) 6/30, 10:30 PM, GMan Tavern **FREE**

Star Tropics, Clever Girls 7/23, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, on sale Wed 5/29, 10 AM

Steffi, Harry Cross 6/29, 10 PM, Smart Bar

Shane Sweeney, Todd May 6/9, 8 PM, GMan Tavern

TC Superstar, Sean Green, Slaps 6/8, 9:30 PM, Cole's **FREE**



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

CHICAGO NONPROFIT arts programmers **Homeroom** coordinate the concert and recording series **Physics for Listeners**, which connects local composers and performers from diverse musical traditions. For the current iteration (following installments in 2010 and 2012), Homeroom worked with improvising trio **ZRL** (clarinetist **Zachary Good**, percussionist **Ryan Packard**, and cellist **Lia Kohl**) to commission ten-minute pieces by **Ben Lamar Gay**, **Ayanna Woods**, **Sam Scranton**, and the members of **Ohmme**. Reader critic Peter Margasak has said of ZRL that "it's difficult to describe them in terms of genre—they're interested in exploration, wherever it may take them." On Saturday, June 1, ZRL play their four commissioned pieces at **Constellation** to celebrate the release of the music on vinyl—as an album also called *Physics for Listeners*.

Last week **Steve Krakow** (aka Plastic Crimewave) released the split cassette *Approximately Unknown Universe*, the fourth on which his band the **Plastic Crimewave Syndicate** collaborates with avant-garde luminaries **Ono**. The tape-only release consists of live recordings from 2019's **Chicago Psych Fest X**: PCS and Ono on side two, and **Mako Sica** with untouchable drummer **Hamid Drake** on side one. Krakow says the Plastic (Crime-wave) Ono Band's set includes covers of the Troggs' "I Want You" and Yoko Ono's "Why" and "Mind Train." He hopes to place copies in shops, and tapes are \$6 plus postage via plasticcw@hotmail.com.

The stubby stage at **Cole's Bar** has hosted many of the city's best bands, among them Melkbelly, Meat Wave, Negative Scanner, and Oozing Wound. Owner **Coleman Brice** is celebrating the bar's tenth anniversary with a bunch of concerts and comedy shows between June and August. The first concert is Friday, June 7, with psychedelic postpunks **Cafe Racer**, local garage supergroup **Ethers**, and experimental Glyders side project **SPVD**. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

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

3/2ures

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OPINION

SAVAGE LOVE

Weddings aren't terrible, people are

Cup the balls, elope, and more answers to your burning questions

By **DAN SAVAGE**

SAVAGE LOVE LIVE swooped into Seattle's Egyptian Theater and Denver's Oriental Theater over the last two weekends. I couldn't get to everyone's questions at these sold-out shows—there were so many great questions and I'm just one lousy advice columnist—so I'm going to power through as many as I can in this week's column.

Q: Weddings are terrible. I attended "Dueling Dallas Lesbian Weddings," and both couples are pressuring me to tell them whose wedding was better (or better in the eyes of social media). Am I obligated to "rat" these couples out to each other?

A: Weddings aren't terrible, people are—some of them, not all of them. But you certainly aren't obligated to "rat" these couples out to each other. You aren't even obligated to speak to any of these terrible people again.

Q: What is the best relationship advice you've ever received?

A: Cup the balls.

Q: I've been talking to a guy for four months, and we still haven't met in person. He's recently divorced, and I find it odd that he is all into me with sexting, etc., but doesn't want to meet. What do I do?

A: Stop wasting your time.

Q: I have always loved anal sex with my partner of more than a decade. He loves it, too. We've noticed a trend over the years where he gets melancholy after we have anal sex. He doesn't know why. Do you have any ideas or theories about why?

A: Nope.

Q: How do I make sure I enjoy my upcoming wedding instead of worrying about how it will go?

A: Elope.

Q: I'm a woman and I've been in a relationship for two years. My partner is not able to make me orgasm. He is my first lover. HELP.

A: If you can make yourself come, show your partner how you do it. If you can't make yourself come—if you're one of those people who have never masturbated—start masturbating, learn how to make yourself come, and then show him how you do it.

Q: My boyfriend is a cuckold and very into the humiliation aspect of cuckolding. I've been hooking up with one guy who is so into humiliating my boyfriend that it's kind of freaking me out. They message each other so much, I feel like I'm the one being cheated on!

A: You get the D. Let your boyfriend have the DMs.

Q: We are married ten

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REAL LOCAL SINGLES

OPINION

years, monogamish, pansexual. My friends are opening up their relationship and so are we. Any good reason I shouldn't have sex with my friends?

A: Only the most obvious one: if someone gets hurt, these friendships could end. But friendships end all the time without anyone getting off, so . . .

Q: I'm 31; he's 44. I know how you feel about splitting the rent in proportion to income, but my higher-earning boyfriend points out that I've opted for more leisure time and less stress with my lower-paying job. How should we split the rent?

A: Someone making two or three times as much money as their partner should be willing to pay more of the rent. Splitting the rent 50/50 wouldn't be fair, particularly if the higher earner wants a larger and/or nicer space, because then the partner making more money is effectively having their lifestyle subsidized by the one making less. But if someone chooses to make less money because they want more leisure time, they shouldn't expect to have that choice underwritten by a partner making more money. I don't think they should pay half the rent—but a higher percentage of their income should go toward the rent.


Q: How can I nicely convince my girlfriend to have anal sex?


A: By using your words—your best noncoercive, nonthreatening, willing-to-take-no-for-an-answer words. And it will help if you tell her you're willing to take it slow and willing to take turns.

Q: My boyfriend of 1.5 years doesn't feel it is "appropriate" to tell me he is in love with me. I want so bad to have our "I love you" moment. What should I do?

A: Say it to him—and if he doesn't hit you with an "I love you, too," then either he's not in love with you or he's in love with you and knows how badly you want to hear him say "I love you" but he won't say it because he likes to torture you.

Q: Blair says all blowjobs should end with a swallow. Thoughts?

A: Blair is entitled to Blair's opinion, but Blair isn't the boss of blowjobs. 

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