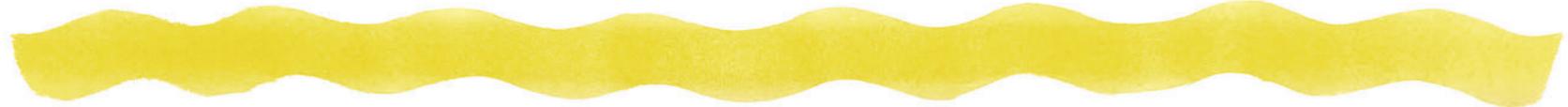


READER



\* BEST OF \*

Weed!

Ajummas!

CHICAGO

\* 2021 \*

Zines!

Fairy doors!



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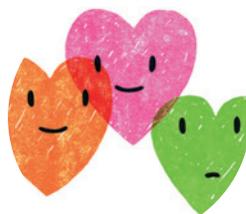
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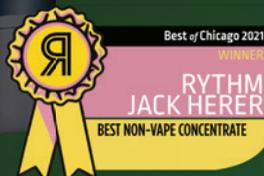
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FOOD FEATURE

## The best tortillas are made with Michigan (and Mexican) corn

Molino Tortilleria is raising the stakes with blue, yellow, red, and white heirloom masa.

By MIKE SULA

When Aaron Harris's wife adopted a gluten-free diet he had to start from scratch when it came to tacos. He was raised on his grandmother's homemade flour tortillas, and she was raised in Chihuahua, where wheat supersedes corn. "She and my mom would make big stacks of flour tortillas, and we would eat those with our meals."

What's more, the Harrises were erstwhile Chicagoans who had resettled in the wilds of southwestern Michigan where proper, freshly made corn tortillas are even more scarce than they are in northern Mexico.

"We went to the grocery stores, and it was a pretty sad state," says Harris, who moved the family to Harbor Country in 2017 for a screen-printing job he didn't particularly care for. "We ate them and we were both just completely underwhelmed. We started to question: Why were they so bad?"

Meanwhile, on weekends Harris would go to the kitchen to escape his traveling consultant gig. "My culinary home base was Mexican food



Top: Heirloom blue and yellow corn tortillas; left: Wesley Rieth, operations manager at Granor Farm in Three Oaks, Michigan; right: heirloom blue and yellow corn grown by Granor Farm COURTESY MOLINO TORTILLERIA

because that's what I was used to eating." So he set about trying to make fresh corn tortillas from home.

Corn tortillas have thousands of years on their flour descendants, which developed in northern Mexico after the arrival of Europeans—and wheat cultivation. Much earlier, and much further south, Mesoamerican cultures pioneered the process of nixtamalization: soaking and cooking maize in an alkaline solution (ash, for instance), which introduces all kinds of nutritional benefits, and makes it easy to grind hard indigenous corn into masa. That, in turn, led to masa-derived miracles from

tortillas to tamales, corundas, sopes, pupusas, champurrado, and more.

As ancient and ubiquitous as the practice is, there wasn't a lot of information in English on how to do it from home. But Harris's interest coincided with the rise of LA-based Masienda, which in 2014 started importing and selling rare, single-origin Mexican corn varieties, and kickstarting what's now referred to as a craft masa movement, analogous to the sourdough surge among home cooks.

"Chicago has always been a nixtamal town," says Harris of the many tortillerias that employ the method on a factory scale. They

mostly work with GMO corn, which makes decent tortillas, but in early 2019 the city's now-60-year-old El Popocatepetl Tortilleria changed the game by nixtamalizing vibrantly colored, intensely flavorful Oaxacan heirloom varieties imported by Masienda on behalf of Rick Bayless's restaurants.

At the same time, the company was reaching out to home cooks as well, first with a paperback guide to nixtamalization, then with video tutorials on each step of the process, from cooking and soaking corn in calcium hydroxide; to grinding it in a tabletop mill, or molino, outfitted with textured lava stones;

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# FOOD & DRINK

continued from 4

mixing and grinding it into fine masa; and forming and cooking perfect puffed tortillas.

That's how Harris began experimenting with his own hand-cranked lava rock molino and a five-pound bag of Masienda Oaxacan Olotillo blanco corn. "I get really obsessive about things, so I had many nights of going down the rabbit hole, researching online, and driving her crazy talking about corn."

Harris practiced and finessed his process—"It's not simple to get blue or red to really pop from tortillas"—until the outline of a business plan began to take shape. They invested in a \$2,500 professional volcanic rock molino from San Luis Potosí, Mexico, and in May 2019 they set up a tented table at the farmers' market in Saint Joseph, Michigan, under the name Molino Tortilleria to showcase what they could do with Olotillo Blanco (white), red-purple Bolita Belatove, and Chalqueño Azul (blue). "It was kind of a weird idea, and we didn't know if it was gonna work or not," he says. "I think we showed up with like 30 packs of tortillas or something and they sold out within ten minutes."

At that same market they met Wesley Rieth, operations manager of Granor Farm in Three Oaks, Michigan, who presented them with a sample of red Bloody Butcher corn he'd grown on a whim. Thus began a relationship in which Granor and Molino test heirloom dent varieties suitable for the short midwestern growing season, unlike the Mexican varieties, which "you can't grow here," says Harris. "We have such a short season here that we're trying to find fast-growing varieties."

While packaged tortilla sales were strong among Harbor Country's itinerant summer tourist market, the couple really wanted to grow a wholesale masa business for local restaurants, an idea that was slower to take off. "If we wanted to run a taco shop it would be the perfect place," says Christie Harris. "It's touristy, and there's tons of people that came through in the summer and want something to eat and experience when they're on vacation."

But restaurants were even less likely to buy fresh heirloom masa during the pandemic, so the couple moved their operations to a storefront in Sawyer, Michigan, where Aaron made masa and tortillas—along with made-to-order

tacos, quesadillas, and tamales—while Christie stocked the front-of-the-house artisan Mexican spices, textiles, and cookware, including comals and tortilla presses.

Chef interest picked up last spring when Molino started showing up at the Green City, Logan Square, and Wicker Park farmers' markets. In January the couple decided to close up shop in Michigan and move back to Chicago permanently.

Molino is currently operating out of the back of Paper Plane Pizza in Lincoln Park, hosting Saturday pop-ups selling fresh masa, tortillas, and tamales for home cooks, and quesadillas and other made-to-order food under the direction of Jonathan Zaragoza, who brought Molino masa into the kitchen at Con Todo in Logan Square. "Whatever he's got we're using," says Zaragoza. "The flavor is just on another level. It tastes like actual corn." Bayless has picked it up too, using Molino's blue corn masa for the taco course at Topolobampo, and masa dumpings at Bar Sótano. Molino is also on the menu at Mi Tocaya, Pilsen Yards, and Antique Taco, and their chips and tortillas are sold over the counter at Ørkenoy and Foxtrot.

There are more restaurant accounts waiting for the Harrises to move into a Humboldt Park production space and storefront this summer. With equipment upgrades they'll be able to produce more than a ton of masa each day, diversifying into different sized tortillas, as well as chips and made-to-order food, which Zaragoza is helping to develop, like the blue corn champurrado; tamales with chicken tinga or rajás con queso; and red and green salsa de molcajete they're selling at the pop-ups. ("Both sides of the aisle can enjoy this salsa," says Zaragoza.)

The Harrises are now working with a range of Mexican corn varieties from Masienda and continuing to experiment with midwestern varieties grown by Granor, and they've also begun grinding Oaxacan-style chocolate with cinnamon and nuts. "A molino in Mexico isn't just used for corn," says Harris. "We're using a single-source, small-farmed cacao, so it really fits in with our ethos of agricultural diversity. Chocolate is just another means to tell that story." 

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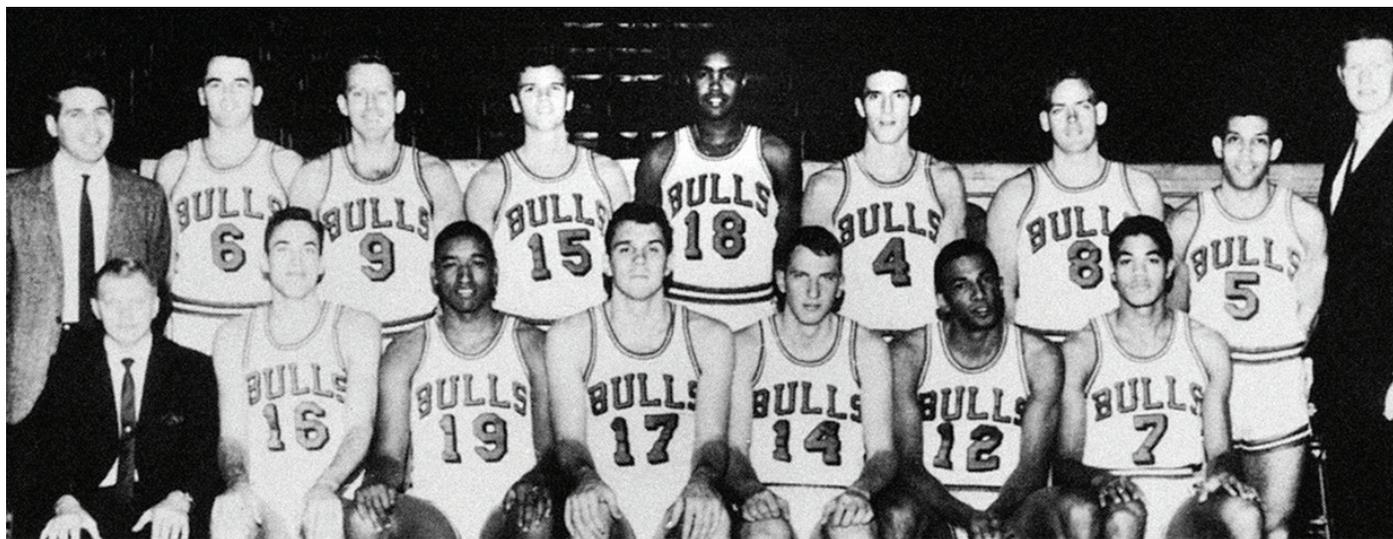
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The first Bulls team came into existence in 1966, the same year young Benny arrived in Evanston.  COURTESY CHICAGO BULLS

## POLITICS

# Best tribute to my favorite team

Get to the United Center early to catch the Bulls' video trip back in time.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

It's an hour or so before game time, and I'm up in the nosebleed section, waiting for my beloved Bulls to start playing, and wondering what, oh what, to write about for the Best of Chicago issue.

And all of a sudden it hits me—right there in front of my face. Up on the huge, center-court scoreboard is the video montage tribute to celebrated Bulls players and coaches from the team's first year until now.

And that's when I knew my Best of Chicago entry would be . . . that montage! The one they play before every Bulls game but that you may have missed. Unless you're so thirsty, you get to games real early. Like me.

So, yes, yes—a shout-out to the Bulls marketing department or whoever's responsible for that video trip down memory lane.

I make a point of watching it every time I visit the United Center. If I'm chatting with a friend, I halt the conversation so I can give it my full attention, even though I've seen it dozens of times before.

People say—man, what's with you and your love for the Bulls? And I'm like—how much time do we have?

It's more than just love for the game—though I love the game very much. It's more personal than that for me.

My family moved to Evanston from Rhode Island back in 1966, when I was a wee lad of ten.

Coincidentally, that was the same year the Bulls came into existence. So you might say their history is my history. They're the only one of the Big Five teams in Chicago for which this is so.

I can't tell you about September 1953, when Ernie Banks broke in with the Cubs.

Or September 1959, when the city's fire commissioner set off the air-raid sirens to celebrate the Sox winning the American League pennant.

Or the summer of 1965, when a couple of rookies named Gale Sayers and Dick Butkus showed up at Bears training camp.

Or the Blackhawks' Stanley Cup championship in 1961.

But with the Bulls? There's no time before my time. I remember the first year with Red Kerr as coach. They made the playoffs. I listened to games on a transistor radio. And when they lost in round one—swept by the Hawks, then in Saint Louis—I cried.

Yes, people, I cried. Real tears. Happy to say I've moved on from crying at tough losses. Now I mostly howl at the moon and say nasty things about the refs.

Speaking of which—on Saturday, the Grizzlies were riding DeMar DeRozan like a horse on that final play, and everybody knows it, even if the refs pretended not to see.

Anyway, the montage starts with that inaugural season and goes through the years to current times. As it unwinds, I've been known to narrate it for my friends. Pointing out such Bulls as . . .

Johnny "Red" Kerr. Jerry Sloan. Bob Love. Chet Walker. Norm Van Lier . . . and on and on through Jordan and Pippen and Rodman and Ben Gordon and Kirk Hinrich and Luol Deng and Joakim Noah and Derrick Rose and so on and so forth right up to DeRozan.

And when the montage is over, I always have this little lump in my throat as I think about time passing.

So thank you, marketing department, for giving this old Bulls fan a nice trip through basketball history. But as long as I have your attention, here's a suggestion. Or two. Or three.

First of all, in the montage, let's get a shout-out to Craig Hodges—one of my all-time favorite Bulls.

Hodges was, of course, the great shooter who won three consecutive three-point shooting contests. His role was pivotal in the 1991 sweep of the Pistons.

Then in October of 1991, President Bush invited the champion Bulls to the White House. And Hodges showed up in a full-length dashiki with an eight-page letter for Bush that laid out the need to invest in Black communities.

It was considered very radical. The Bulls

dropped Hodges after the 1991-'92 season. No team picked him up, and just like that his career was over—though he was still a great shooter.

The NBA didn't even invite Hodges to defend his three-point shooting title at the 1993 All-Star Game. It took a hard-hitting *Tribune* article by Sam Smith to embarrass the league into extending an invitation.

Come to think of it—Hodges was barely mentioned in *The Last Dance*, the epic documentary on the Jordan championship run.

So you might say he got the ultimate black 'n' white treatment—blacklisted by the league and whitewashed from the history books.

While we're on the subject of paying tribute to some of my favorite Bulls . . .

I think we'll all agree it's time to retire at least three more jerseys:

John Paxson—who hit so many big shots through the years.

Chet Walker, the closest the 70s Bulls had to Elgin Baylor or Dr. J.

And my all-time favorite—Norm Van Lier.

Norm was the heart and soul of those teams from the 70s who were really good, but not good enough to get by the Bucks (with Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, then known as Lew Alcindor) or the Lakers with Wilt Chamberlain and Jerry West or the Warriors with . . .

You know, I'd just as soon not relive that 1975 series against the Warriors.

Van Lier played in the backcourt with Jerry Sloan. They were inseparable—a fearsome defensive unit. Couldn't say one without saying the other: Sloan and Van Lier. Or Van Lier and Sloan. And yet, Sloan's jersey is retired, but Van Lier's is not.

Think about it, marketing gurus . . .

You could have a Norm Van Lier appreciation night. Retire his jersey at halftime. And play his favorite rock 'n' roll tunes all night long. Led Zeppelin, Chicago, the Rolling Stones—the man really loved classic rock.

The United Center would be packed with old-timers like yours truly who've been with the team every step of the way.

Just a suggestion from an appreciative fan in the nosebleed section. 

 @bennyjshow





Rally at Saints Volodymyr and Olha Ukrainian Catholic Church, February 24 DEANNA ISAACS

## CULTURE

# ‘Are we calling this an invasion? It’s really a war.’

Chicago reacts to events in Ukraine.

By **DEANNA ISAACS**

There were two crowds in front of Saints Volodymyr and Olha Ukrainian Catholic Church in Ukrainian Village on a frigid afternoon last week.

One was the medieval crowd that’s always there, on the church’s iconic mural—a depiction of the baptism of the Ukrainian people.

The other consisted of several hundred live and livid Chicagoans reacting to Russia’s attack on the Ukrainian nation just hours earlier. They waved Ukraine’s yellow-and-blue flag, sang its national anthem, called for sanctions and other help, and listened to supportive words from the likes of Congressman Mike Quigley.

When the rally broke up, a few migrated across the street to the modest building that houses the Ukrainian National Museum.

Museum volunteer Larissa Matusiak was among them. Born in a displaced persons camp after her parents fled Soviet-controlled

Ukraine during the Stalin era, the retired Chicago Public Schools teacher said that “Ukrainians just want the freedom that people take for granted.”

“We already gave Crimea up and nobody batted an eye,” Matusiak told me. “The whole world sat there and watched. Are we calling this an invasion? It’s really a war.”

Museum administrator Orysia Kourbatov said no one she talked to had expected this to happen, “even though they know Putin is a madman.” With family in the eastern part of Ukraine, Kourbatov said she’d gone from tearful to angry: “Ukrainians are so resilient. They will not give up. They will fight for their country.”

But, she added, “Who would have thought in the 21st century that we would have this kind of war going on?”

Did we go to bed in 2022 and wake up in 1941?

Northwestern University political science professor Jordan Gans-Morse has lived and researched in Ukraine and is an expert on the former Soviet Union. On Saturday, as the situation continued to evolve, I asked him why this [the Russian invasion of Ukraine] is happening. Here’s an edited version of the interview:

**Gans-Morse:** The easiest answer is that Putin has decided this is the only way he can achieve a combination of goals. The first has to do with his security concerns, the idea that Ukraine has been drifting toward the West and someday could join NATO, putting NATO more on the border of Russia than it already is. The second is that Ukraine is a relatively successful—though far from perfect—democracy. This poses a threat to Putin as an example to Russians that there’s another way to live. And third, he seems to be on a sort of deluded quest, trying to recreate something like the Soviet Union, perhaps so he can be remembered as one of those conquerors who expanded Russia’s borders.

**Deanna Isaacs: So, is he bonkers?**

In the past, I would have said that—as much as Putin runs a regime that is increasingly disturbing and not democratic—he had shown himself to be fairly pragmatic. But something has obviously shifted. Interviews he’s given in the last few days, they’re not like the old Putin. They’re not careful, they’re not on script, and they seem, quite frankly, deranged. I hesitate to play the role of armchair psychiatrist, but this does not look or sound like the same Putin I’ve been watching for 20 years.

**What about Putin’s claim that he’s attacking in part to protect Russian speakers and “denazify” Ukraine?**

[Ukrainian president Volodymyr] Zelenskyy was raised as a Russian speaker, is famous [in his earlier career as an actor and comedian] on Russian TV and film, and is Jewish. The claim that he is somehow a radical Ukrainian neo-Nazi is absurd.

**Is Putin actually tossing nuclear threats at us?**

I take his statement [on February 24] to mean that any direct military involvement by NATO or the U.S. to defend Ukraine would be a red

line crossed and he would be willing to use nuclear weapons in response.

**Does that make a Russian victory inevitable?**

So far Russia’s performed worse than expected and Ukraine’s performed better. That said, in terms of ability to directly repel this attack, Ukraine is at a major disadvantage.

That doesn’t necessarily mean that Putin will be able to occupy Ukraine for very long. Even if Kharkiv and Kyiv fall, if the Ukrainian military is able to retreat toward the west, the most nationalist part of Ukraine, that’s something that could potentially be defended for a long time. And how will Russia maintain control? The only likely way is by excessive force. There will be resistance, protests. Russia may be able to get control, but whether it can keep control is an open question.

**How do you see it ending?**

Three possibilities: (1) Somehow Ukraine pushes the Russians back; (2) Russian occupation with a puppet regime; or (3) Russia is somehow able to pacify most Ukrainians and then we’ve got something that looks like the cold war with a heavily militarized borderline dividing Europe. It wouldn’t have the same ideological overtones as the cold war, however. Putin doesn’t stand for anything other than Russian imperialism, so he doesn’t have an ideology to sell the rest of the world.

A scenario that potentially brings this to an end is that with sanctions hurting the Russian people and their sons coming home dead, they begin to turn on Putin, even possibly toppling him. That’s not likely happening soon, but it is one scenario where this ultimately does backfire on him.

**What else should we know?**

The world, and especially social media, has become so hyperbolic it’s hard for a real serious threat to be seen as distinct from all the overblown rhetoric. But this is one. Given that we have essentially a stand-off between a nuclear superpower led by somebody who does not seem stable and an alliance led by another nuclear superpower. This is not really comparable to anything—the closest would be Hitler’s annexation of central and eastern European countries, unprovoked. And that’s not an analogy I use lightly.

@DeannaIsaacs

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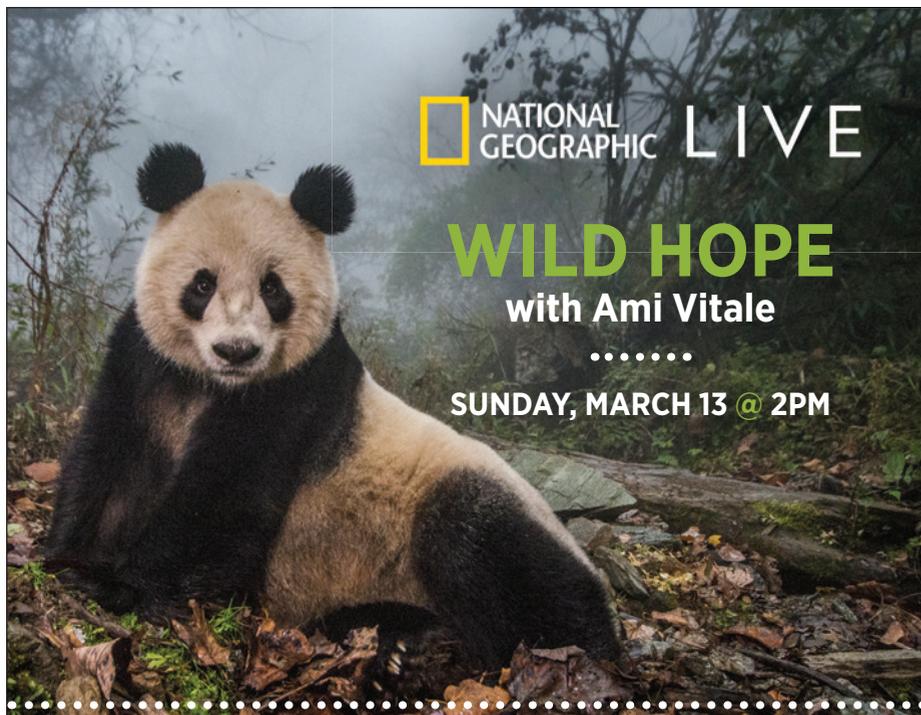
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Photo by Ami Vitale.

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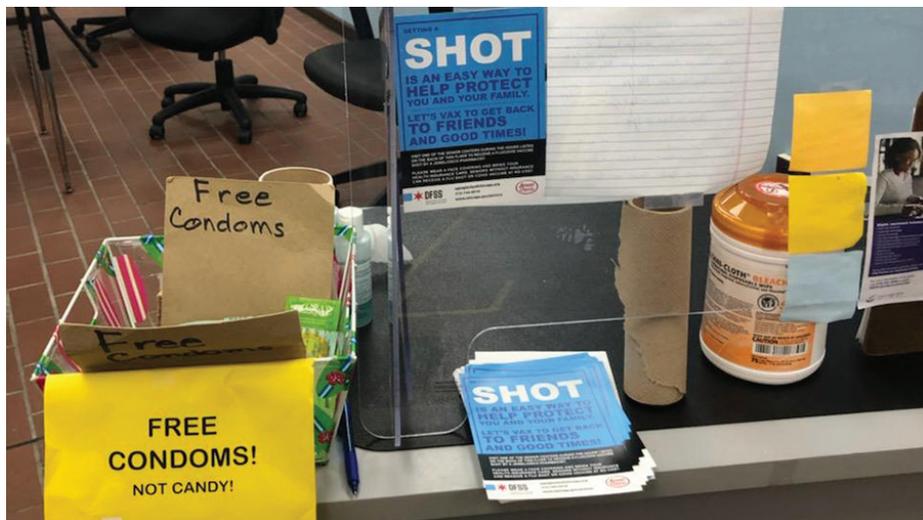
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A desk inside the North Area Community Center  
 KATIE PROUT

## FEATURE

# Lukewarm welcome

“It’s like they got 5,000 reasons to kick you out instead of one reason to help you.”

By **KATIE PROUT**

I didn’t expect to be escorted off the premises of the city’s only overnight warming center on a 28-degree evening, though perhaps I should have. After all, I’d been warned. Last fall, when I learned I’d gotten this job, I asked people who live on Lower Wacker what kinds of stories they’d like to see in the *Reader*. Repeatedly, folks suggested I take a look at the city’s six official “warming areas” run by the Department of Family & Support Services (DFSS). “What about them?” I asked.

“They kick you out the second the weather goes above 32 degrees, and I mean the second.”

“There’s only one on the whole north side!”

“They don’t let you sleep. If you fall asleep, you get kicked out.”

“The security guards are always watching you and cops come in and out. You don’t wanna be there.”

“I don’t even use them anymore.”

While centers are open to every Chicagoan in theory, these conversations gave me the vibe that in practice, they could be inaccessible, inhospitable, and generally unhelpful to the people they were meant to serve. I had many questions, and hoped to have a chance to ask them to both staff at the centers and,

crucially, the Chicagoans who do use their services and find them beneficial in some way.

On February 2, 2022, snow was falling at a rate of one to two inches an hour in Chicago. The night before, Governor J.B. Pritzker had made a disaster declaration for the entire state. The wind was blowing in at nearly 18 miles an hour, the temperature was in the low 20s, and the first warming area I went to—the second floor of the North Area Community Service Center at 845 West Wilson in Uptown—was closed. I’d arrived half an hour before the official closing time, but the security guard who met me at the building’s locked side door told me that the center shut early due to weather. He let me in anyway, because the rest of the building was still technically open, though staff there too would be leaving soon. They’d received an email from DFSS Commissioner Lisa Morrison Butler, explained one worker, weary and friendly, advising staff to leave early due to wintery conditions.

In extreme weather conditions, the city—in collaboration with public libraries, city park facilities, and some hospitals—might open up additional warming areas with additional hours. Usually, there are six community service centers: North Area, Trina Davila, Englewood, Garfield, Dr. Martin Luther King, and

South Chicago. The centers are open Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM.

Using data collected between 2015-2019 by the American Community Survey of the U.S. Census, researchers at the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and Vanderbilt University mapped rates of doubled-up homelessness (when people who’ve lost their homes move temporarily in with others) in Chicago. According to their data, the Public Use Micro Areas (groups of community areas known as PUMAs) with the highest rates of people experiencing homelessness in the city are Chicago Lawn, Englewood/West Englewood, and Greater Grand Crossing; North and South Lawndale, Humboldt Park, East and West Garfield Park; and South Chicago, Pullman, West Pullman, East Side, and South Deering.

Each PUMA is home to at least one warming center (and Lawndale-Humboldt-Garfield Park has two). Although there is only one warming center in the PUMA for Uptown, Edgewater, and Rogers Park, it appears that need and distribution do roughly match up.

Inside the North Area Community Center, I walked around the small first floor. There was a tiny pharmacy that also offered free meds delivery. A box of colorful condoms rested on a desk a few feet away, where people could also make an appointment to get vaccinated against COVID-19. “FREE CONDOMS! NOT CANDY!” read the sign above the box. “¡CONDONES GRATIS! ¡NO SON DULCES!” A banner on the wall announced a summer jobs program for youth was now open for applications. Across the way, a poster taped to a pole advised everyone to KEEP CALM AND WASH YOUR HANDS; underneath it, DFSS fliers in both Spanish and English offered information on the city’s Rental Assistance Program.

Stepping back out into the cold, I was struck by something I knew in theory but needed to see to really understand. The warming areas don’t just exist to warm you up—housed within DFSS community service centers, they’re also access points from which Chicagoans can be connected to other services that have the potential to change their lives. When the warming areas are closed, or difficult to access, so are those opportunities.

Two days later, on a gray, icy day, I visited the Trina Davila Community Service Center at 4300 West North in Humboldt Park. Unlike the center in Uptown, this building was one story, but like that center, a security guard met me at

the door. I introduced myself, and explained why I was there. He pointed me to a window in the wall. Behind that window, a woman sat at a desk. Speaking briefly with her, I was able to confirm that this was the warming center, and no one came to use it today. After that, the woman refused to answer any more questions. I’m sorry, she said politely and nervously, but you’ll need to talk to Joseph Dutra, director of public affairs for DFSS.

While she wrote down his name and contact information for me, I was permitted to stay for a moment and look around. A handful of empty plastic chairs sat spaced a few feet apart, and a TV was on. I didn’t see as many social service announcements, but I did see a large poster enumerating all 18 rules visitors must adhere to. The Community Service Center Code of Conduct rules were too many to take in all at once, but Rule 11—*Refrain from lying down or sleeping on furniture*—jumped out at me, as did the print at the bottom: “PERSONS WHO FAIL TO OBSERVE THESE GUIDELINES MAY BE ASKED TO LEAVE THE BUILDING OR SUBJECT TO ARREST.”

The rules aren’t for show. “Most of the times when you at a place like that, somebody will come and wake you up and be like, ‘Yeah, you can’t sleep in here.’ You see? They be having rules where you can’t be on your phone, can’t play music. It’s like they got 5,000 reasons to kick you out instead of one reason to help you out,” says Antione, 32.

“Where were the bathrooms?” I wanted to ask. “If someone is exhausted and needs a safe place to warm up and nap, will they really get arrested?” I wish I’d had the chance to ask. Instead, I left.

On a frigid day last November, Mariah, 25, went to use the warming area in the Dr. Martin Luther King DFSS Center at 4314 South Cottage Grove, between Bronzeville and North Kenwood. At 5 PM the center closed and she had to leave the building. DFSS advises Chicagoans who still need shelter after hours to call 311 to be connected to options, including placement at an available shelter. Outside, Mariah made the call as instructed.

“I called and I couldn’t get to nobody,” she says. “I called them again. They told me to call, they gave me some kind of ID number, and they said that they’d let me know and pick me up, and take me where I needed to go. But nobody called back, and it was really freezing out.”

Mariah never made it to a shelter that night. Instead, after waiting almost three hours for a call back, Lyte Collective, an organization that supports young people experiencing

## NEWS & POLITICS

homelessness, was able to place her in a hotel for the night. But other evenings, when Mariah called 311 for a warm place to go, she ended up sleeping in her car. “They called me in the middle of the night, [once at 1 AM and once at 3 AM], but they called me just to say they were still waiting on the bed.”

When I ask Mariah if she’d recommend the warming areas to others, she hesitates. “Yes?” she says. “But that’s the only one. There’s no 24-hour warming centers. So if you need shelter, especially around this time of year, I say go to the emergency room, where you know it’s gonna be warm. Somewhere where you know it’s gonna be 24 hours.”

I tell her about the 24-hour warming center in Garfield Park. It’s not open seven days a week, I explain, but it is open.

“See,” Mariah says, “I didn’t know that existed.” A warming shelter is a great idea in theory, she explains, but it can be hard to travel to one, or to know which one is right for your needs.

“[I]n reality, CTA is the largest warming center in the city right now, because, for most people, there really isn’t an alternative,” wrote Sam Carlson, manager of research and outreach for the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, in an email. To back this up, Carlson pointed to DFSS’s 2021 Point-in-Time survey on unsheltered people. The data shows that 32 percent of people counted in the winter aren’t in shelters.

I wanted to see what the city’s only overnight center was like on a night near the end of a winter month, when people are more likely to be short on cash and more in need of safe emergency shelter from the weather. And so, one cold evening at the end of February, I drove over to 10 South Kedzie.

It was about 7 PM when I arrived. The lights were on but the doors were locked. Inside, two security guards sat at a desk. One continued eating dinner; the other got up and walked my way.

“Do you work here?” he asked, standing in the doorway. No, I answered, and identified myself as a writer from the *Chicago Reader*, working on a story about the city’s warming centers and hoping to speak with folks using this one now. He shrugged, and allowed me inside.

“She’s a reporter lady,” the security guard called over his shoulder to his coworker, who put down his dinner and started to rise up out of his seat. “I am a reporter lady,” I smiled, and started to introduce myself. He interrupted. “We can’t talk to you right now.”

“That’s OK,” I said. “Is it OK if I go up to the warming center? I’m just doing a story—”

“You can’t go up to the warming center, we can’t have no press in here.” As he told me I needed city permission to be here, the guard came out from behind the desk to bring me a sticky note with Joseph Dutra’s name and number on it. I asked if I could take a picture of the note, for my records. The guard, watching my phone warily, told me I could take a picture, but then I had to leave the premises.

“I can’t ask if there’s people just using the facility?”

“Nope, nope, nope, that’s an invasion of privacy.”

As the guard escorted me to the door, he repeated again that I had to set up a meeting with Dutra first. (I reached out to Dutra: we spoke briefly on the phone Monday, but he was unable to respond to my emailed questions before we went to press. DFSS Commissioner Brandie Knazze did not return my call.) I thanked him for his time. The door shut and locked behind me. The whole encounter took about two minutes before I was again out in the cold.

This moment left me confused. There are no laws protecting privacy in the United States, and it’s a stretch to call it an invasion of privacy when a journalist asks folks if they consent to talking about their experience in a DFSS center. Also, like Grant Park or Harold Washington Library, these warming areas are meant to be accessible to the public. Being a journalist doesn’t stop me from being a Chicagoan.

The staff at the first center were friendly, but none of them ran the warming area, as that part of the center had closed early. The staff at the second refused to talk to me. The security guards at the third not only refused to answer any questions, but wouldn’t allow me to even enter the warming area itself, and escorted me to the door. Why? And if I was met at every locked door with a security guard asking me to explain why I was here, what does that say about the reality of the access of this good for Chicagoans who need it?

Rules around the warming areas are only useful insofar as they keep everyone safe while also making this crucial service widely available. If the rules of access are nebulous (in my case), punishing (in Antione’s case), or unknown (in Mariah’s case), an area meant for all becomes accessible to few, potentially leaving the rest of us out in the cold. **✍**

 @katie\_prout



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# TEMP CHECK

Chicago art directors & curators discuss working in a pandemic and what they imagine for the future.

C O C O P I C A R D



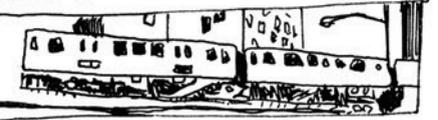
I AM EXCITED ABOUT THE WAYS IN WHICH CURATORS, MUSEUM EDUCATION/ENGAGEMENT STAFF, + EXHIBITION DESIGNERS ARE WORKING TOGETHER TO CENTER COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, THOUGHTFUL PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT + VISITOR EXPERIENCE. THIS WAY OF WORKING EMPHASIZES THAT THE CONNECTIONS MADE + CONVERSATIONS + ACTIONS THAT TAKE PLACE BEFORE + AFTER AN EXHIBITION IS ON VIEW ARE AS IMPORTANT AS THE PRESENTATION OF THE EXHIBITION ITSELF + THE PROGRAMMING THAT ACCOMPANIES IT.

JANET DREES, STEVEN + LISA MUNSTER TANANBAUM CURATOR OF MODERN + CONTEMPORARY ART THE BLOCK MUSEUM OF ART



ALMA WIESER  
DIRECTOR  
HEAVEN GALLERY

FUTURE ART INSTITUTIONS SHOULD DEVELOPE FROM EXISTING CULTURAL LANDSCAPES. EQUITY ARTS IS OUR PROJECT TO PURCHASE + REDEVELOPE HISTORIC ARTS BUILDING WHERE HEAVEN + LVL3 GALLERY ARE LOCATED + TURNING IT INTO A LONG-TERM COMMUNITY OWNED ASSET. WE ENVISION EQUITY THROUGH WEALTH BUILDING PATHWAYS + PERMANENT AFFORDABILITY FOR ARTS + SMALL BUSINESSES.



THE MANY WAYS DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY HAS BECOME NORMALIZED SINCE 2020 IS SO MUCH MORE POWERFUL + DYNAMIC THAN A CRISIS-BASED SOLUTION "UNTIL WE CAN GATHER AGAIN." THERE'S HUGE CREATIVE POTENTIAL SUPPORTING COLLABORATIONS + DIALOGUES FROM ACROSS THE WORLD IN WAYS THAT ARE EASY. REGARDING CURATORIAL ADAPTATION + PRACTICE, THIS IS A MOMENT OF LOW-RISK, HIGH YIELD CREATIVE EXPERIMENTATION.

ASHA IMAN VEAL, ASSOCIATE CURATOR, MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY PHOTOGRAPHY



IN THIS TIME OF UNFORESEEN CRISIS, ART INSTITUTIONS MUST CONSTANTLY SELF-REFLECT ON THEIR OWN POSITION + REDEFINE THEMSELVES. CONTEMPORARY ART MUSEUMS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY + OBLIGATION TO DE-COLONIZE BY CREATING NEW PLATFORMS THAT QUESTION CANONICAL NARRATIVES-PUTTING UP EXHIBITIONS IS NOT ENOUGH BUT RATHER ENGAGING WITH THE CITY + WORLD, BOTH INSIDE + OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM. NOW MORE THAN EVER, ART INSTITUTIONS MUST BE COMMITTED TO ARTISTS + FOR CARING + NURTURING PEOPLE.



DONIT BEHAR  
ASSISTANT CURATOR  
DEPAUL ART MUSEUM

AS SOMEONE WHO PRACTICES SPONTANEOUS PROGRAMMING, I THINK ABOUT TIMES OF INVALUABLE CONNECTION THAT HAVE MANIFESTED IN MY LIFE SINCE THE LOCKDOWN. COVID-19

WHAT'S MOST SURPRISING ABOUT THIS PERIOD IS THE WAY ARTISTS INTERJECT IN THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT + ACTIVIST CONVERSATIONS WITH WORK MADE SPECIFICALLY TO RECORD THIS HISTORIC TIME.



EDRA SOTO, ARTIST + CODIRECTOR THE FRANKLIN



TERESA SILVA  
EXECUTIVE + ARTISTIC DIRECTOR  
CHICAGO ARTISTS COALITION

SINCE COVID-19, THE MOST SURPRISING THING I'VE SEEN IN ARTIST-STUDIOS IS A DEPARTURE FROM MAKING IMAGES OR OBJECTS TO PERFORMANCE. THE ARTISTS I'VE SPENT TIME WITH HAD BEEN DEVOTED TO MATERIAL BUT NOW ARE MORE ATTUNED TO THE BODY + MOVEMENT IN SPACE, REGARDLESS IF AN AUDIENCE IS PRESENT. I'VE NOTICED THAT THE PERFORMANCES ARE IMPROVISATIONS, SURRENDERING TO UNKNOWN THAT COULD NOT HAVE BEEN IMAGINED FOUR YEARS AGO: A GUSH OF DEATH + DANGEROUS INDIFFERENCE. OBJECTS + IMAGES ARE GESTURES THAT PLAY A SUPPORTING ROLE. MANY, LIKE ME, HAVE BEEN WONDERING HOW CONTEMPORARY ART IS TAKING A TURN IN THE AGE OF COVID-19. WE'LL BE FOLLOWING + PROCESSING THIS FOR SOME TIME.





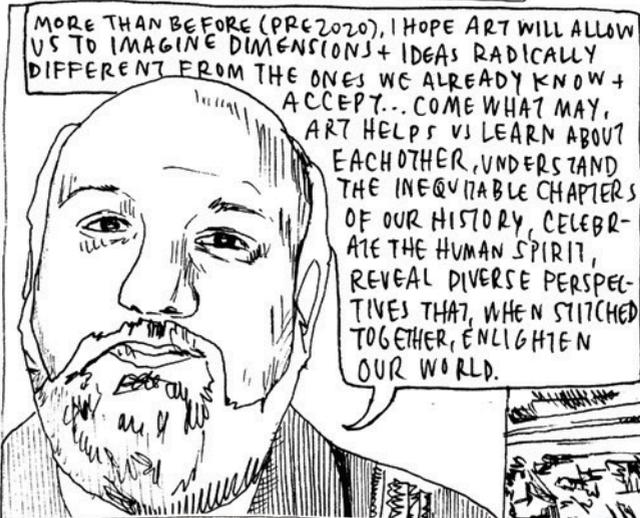
I'VE ALWAYS WANTED ART TO CREATE A COMMON GROUND BETWEEN PEOPLE OF ALL AGES + BACKGROUNDS + CAUSE THEM TO SHARE AN EXPERIENCE. THAT EXPERIENCE COULD BE LAUGHTER, EMBARRASSMENT, SERENITY, OR SHOCK, BUT THAT REACTION IS A RESULT OF BEING HUMAN + WHEN WE REVEAL THAT TO A STRANGER, WE BUILD RELATIONSHIPS. SOCIAL DISTANCING JUST MEANS THERE ARE SMALLER GROUPS TO SHARE WITH, WHICH IS KIND OF NICE + MORE INTIMATE. OR YOU GO TO AN EXHIBITION WITH A LOVED ONE + GET TO KNOW THEM BETTER!

ALLISON PETERS QUINN  
DIRECTOR OF EXHIBITIONS  
HYDE PARK ART CENTER



THE FIRST MAJOR EXHIBITION I WENT TO SEE AFTER THE WORLD REOPENED, HOWEVER BRIEFLY, IN THE SUMMER OF 2020 WAS THE BIG EL GRECO SHOWCASE AT THE ART INSTITUTE OF CHICAGO. THE ONE THING I REMEMBER (BESIDES THE ARTIST'S UNPARALLELED GENIUS) WAS THE SENSE YOU GOT FROM THE WAY THE ARTWORKS WERE HUNG + LABELLED THAT THIS EXHIBITION HAD BEEN PLANNED BEFORE THE DIMMEST STIRRINGS OF SOME VIRAL ALARM: PAINTINGS WERE HUNG IN CLOSE PROXIMITY WITH ZERO REGARD FOR WHAT, IN 2020, HAD ALREADY BECOME A NEW SOCIAL REALITY OF PHYSICAL DISTANCING + PEOPLE NERVOUSLY CROWDED AROUND LABELS MUCH TOO LONG FOR THIS NEW WORLD (HOW CRUEL, THE IMPLIED REDUCTION OF BODIES TO VECTORS!). THIS, TO ME, WAS A POWERFUL REMINDER THAT ART IS NOT SOMETHING WE LOOK AT IN THE SOLITUDE OF OUR INDIVIDUAL ATTENTION; IT IS SOMETHING WE LOOK AT TOGETHER. MUSEUMS ARE SOCIAL SPACES BECAUSE THE EXPERIENCE OF ART FOUNDS TOGETHERNESS. WHEN WE DO EMERGE FROM THIS ENDLESS TUNNEL, WE WILL FIND A NEW APPRECIATION FOR THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF ART'S SOCIAL FABRIC.

DIETER ROELSTRATE  
CURATOR  
NEUBAUER COLLEGIUM



MORE THAN BEFORE (PRE 2020), I HOPE ART WILL ALLOW US TO IMAGINE DIMENSIONS + IDEAS RADICALLY DIFFERENT FROM THE ONES WE ALREADY KNOW + ACCEPT... COME WHAT MAY, ART HELPS US LEARN ABOUT EACH OTHER, UNDERSTAND THE INEVITABLE CHAPTERS OF OUR HISTORY, CELEBRATE THE HUMAN SPIRIT, REVEAL DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES THAT, WHEN STITCHED TOGETHER, ENLIGHTEN OUR WORLD.

CESAREO MORENO  
VISUAL ART DIRECTOR / CHIEF CURATOR  
NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MEXICAN ART.



I BELIEVE ART EXHIBITIONS SHOULD "ADDRESS" LESS + "EMBODY" MORE. I AM LESS INTERESTED IN A SHOW THAT DEALS WITH THE SUBJECT OF, SAY, CLIMATE CHANGE THAN IN A SHOW THAT IS PRODUCED + CIRCULATED IN KEEPING WITH THE VALUES IT SUPPOSEDLY STANDS FOR. I THINK WE'VE BEEN ASKING TOO MUCH OF ART LATELY, WHICH HASN'T CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING BETTER ART! QUITE THE OPPOSITE! SO I THINK WE SHOULD DEAL WITH OUR ISSUES AS A SOCIETY + LET ART DO ITS OWN THING. NO EXPECTATIONS, MORE FREEDOM, BETTER ART!



MYRIAM BEN SALAH  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR +  
CHIEF CURATOR  
THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY



ARTS PLANNING IN A TIME OF SOCIAL DISTANCING HAS INCUBATED A LOT OF CREATIVITY ABOUT HOW TO REACH + TOUCH PEOPLE, + FOSTERED NEW APPRECIATION FOR MOVEMENT + FLEXIBILITY, ON + OFF STAGE. + IT'S MADE CHICAGO SUMMERS EVEN MORE PRECIOUS SOMEHOW, WHEN WE CAN MOST MAXIMALLY STRETCH OUT.

ADRIENNE BROWN  
INTERIM DIRECTOR  
ARTS + PUBLIC LIFE  
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH  
UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO MAKE A TO-DO LIST FOR ART OR IMPOSE FIXED DESIRES ON IT. ART IS MORE LIKE AN OCTOPUS, FOREVER FLOWING THROUGH TIGHT SPACES, EXPANDING SUDDENLY, CHANGING COLORS, FINDING NEW HOMES, FAR MORE FLEXIBLE + ADAPTIVE THAN MOST OF THE WORLD + ABLE TO GRASP IT IN A MILLION DIFFERENT WAYS, WITH AN INTELLIGENCE THAT CAN SEEM AT TURN ALIEN OR DEEPLY RELATABLE. OUR PANDEMIC YEARS HAVE ONLY REMINDED ME HOW DYNAMIC THIS CAN BE.



KARSTEN LUND, CURATOR  
THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY

\*all images based on photographs supplied by + courtesy of participants. Jonit Behar's image is based on a photo by Diana Frida.

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# ARTS & CULTURE



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## EXHIBITIONS

### Let's go see some art

Photography, installations, and other visual art to take in

By SALEM COLLO-JULIN

## OPENINGS

### Adds Donna

Paul VerBurg, "Under Glass"

3252 W. North

[addsdonna.com](http://addsdonna.com)

Opens Fri 3/4, 6-9 PM, then open Sat noon-5 PM and by appointment (email [addsdonna@gmail.com](mailto:addsdonna@gmail.com)) through 4/30

### DePaul Art Museum

"Remaking the Exceptional: Tea, Torture, & Reparations | Chicago to Guantánamo"

935 W. Fullerton

[resources.depaul.edu/art-museum/](http://resources.depaul.edu/art-museum/)

Open 3/10-8/7. Reservations requested (through Tock, see gallery website for details) but limited capacity walk-ins accepted during the following hours: Wed-Thu 11 AM-7 PM, Fri-Sun 11 AM-5 PM

### Museum of Contemporary Photography

"Beautiful Diaspora" and "You Are Not the Lesser Part"

Columbia College

600 S. Michigan

[mocp.org](http://mocp.org)

Open 3/3-6/26. Reservations requested (through Tock, see gallery website for details)

but limited capacity walk-ins accepted during the following hours: Tue-Wed and Fri-Sat 10 AM-5 PM, Thu 10 AM-8 PM, Sun noon-5 PM

## ON VIEW

### Ruschwoman

Surekha, "Smell is the Last Memory to Go: a Photographic Installation"

2100 S. Marshall

[ruschwoman.blue](http://ruschwoman.blue)

Through 4/3: By appointment only, contact gallery for details at [thewaves@ruschwoman.blue](mailto:thewaves@ruschwoman.blue)

### Hyde Park Art Center

Malika Jackson, "Whispers of a World Without Words"

5020 S. Cornell

[hydeparkart.org](http://hydeparkart.org)

Through 5/28. By appointment only (contact center for details at [generalinfo@hydeparkart.org](mailto:generalinfo@hydeparkart.org)) during the following hours: Mon-Thu, 10 AM-7 PM, Fri 10 AM-4:30 PM, Sat 10 AM-4 PM, Sun 10 AM-1:30 PM

### Arts Incubator

Rose Blouin, "To Washington Park, With

Love: Photography from the Summer of 1987"

301 E. Garfield

[artsandpubliclife.org](http://artsandpubliclife.org)

Through 3/19. Reservation required (through Eventbrite, see gallery website for details) for viewing during the following hours: Thu-Sat, 3-7 PM

### Renaissance Society

Meriem Bennani, "Life on the Caps"

University of Chicago, Cobb Hall, 4th Floor

5811 S. Ellis

[renaissancesociety.org](http://renaissancesociety.org)

Through 4/17. Reservations requested (through Tock, see gallery website for details) but limited capacity walk-ins accepted during the following hours: Wed-Thu noon-6 PM, Fri 1-7 PM, Sat-Sun noon-6 PM

### National Museum of Mexican Art

Rubén Aguirre, "Tectonic Reflections"

1852 W. 19th

[nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org](http://nationalmuseumofmexicanart.org)

Through 7/24. Open Tue-Sun 10 AM-5 PM

### The Block Museum of Art

"A Site of Struggle: American Art Against Anti-Black Violence"

40 Arts Circle, Evanston

[blockmuseum.northwestern.edu](http://blockmuseum.northwestern.edu)

Through 7/10. Open Wed-Fri noon-8 PM, Sat-Sun noon-5 PM

### Chicago Artists Coalition

"Timely Sanctification"

2130 W. Fulton

[chicagoartistscoalition.org](http://chicagoartistscoalition.org)

Through 4/7. Open Wed-Fri 11 AM-5 PM, Sat noon-4 PM

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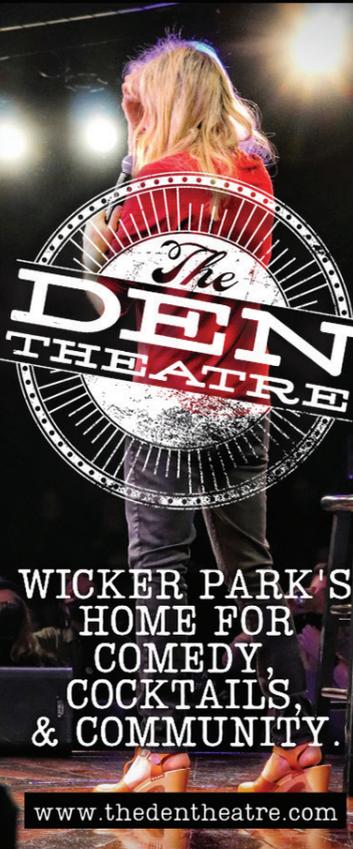
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## SOLO PERFORMANCE

# How the hell did Lesley Nicol get to Chicago?

The *Downton Abbey* star brings a new autobiographical musical to the Greenhouse.

By **KERRY REID**

Most Americans know British actor Lesley Nicol as Mrs. Patmore, the plain-spoken cook who presided over the kitchen at *Downton Abbey* through six seasons and two films. (The newest film in the series, *Downton Abbey: A New Era*, opens in May.)

But before finding international success as the downstairs doyenne in Julian Fellowes's portrait of British aristocracy before and after World War I, Nicol was a regular presence onstage and onscreen in Great Britain. She took a big detour from goodhearted Mrs. Patmore and played a mob matriarch in the 2016 Shonda Rhimes series *The Catch*.

Nicol, 68, is in town this month with a new autobiographical musical show, *How the Hell Did I Get Here?*, featuring songs by her friend Mark Mueller (whose credits include penning Jennifer Paige's hit "Crush" and the theme for *DuckTales*) and directed by Luke Kernaghan.

I caught up with her to hear more about how finding huge success (and love) later in life led to her current show, which moves on to Pittsburgh Public Theater after Chicago. This is an edited version of that interview.

**Kerry Reid: What was the inspiration for doing this show?**

**Lesley Nicol:** What happened was I was living in California for five years. I got to know Mark Mueller socially. I knew he was a successful musician because he had a wall full of platinum discs and stuff. But I knew him as a friend, and one day about a few years ago now I said to him, "I've got this feeling I want to do something—a show. But I don't want to do a cabaret because frankly there are people better in the world at that than me. I want to do something that I can do. And I'd like there to be some

music in it." He said, "Why don't you come around so we can sit down and try and work out what you are talking about and what you really want to do."

So initially the idea was whatever we were just going to create—because he got very enthusiastic very quickly, bless him—there was going to be a little bit of music. And that's why Mark was involved. Well suddenly it was like a light came on in his head and he couldn't stop. So I now have ten songs. I would tell him a story and he would say, "Hmm, well that's a song." And by the end I was getting quite good at it too. And I'd say, "You know what? I think that's a song."

It's a musical autobiography, which is really confusing to people. And I understand that, but although it is my story, it invites you to examine your own. It's not all about show business and theater. It's about being shy. It's about having a terrible experience with a boyfriend. It's about stuff that all of us, one way or another, maybe have some experience of. The music is glorious because he's really clever. The idea is that it does invite you to have a think about how any of us got here along the way. I suppose in essence you could say we are all on the same road—we just all have different bumps.

### HOW THE HELL DID I GET HERE?

3/12-4/3: Tue and Thu 7 PM, Wed 2 and 7 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 3 and 8 PM, Sun 3 PM; Sat 3/12, 8 PM only; Wed 3/16, 7 PM only, Greenhouse Theater Center, 2257 N. Lincoln, 773-404-7336, [greenhousetheater.org](http://greenhousetheater.org), \$30-\$89.

**You tried it out first at your alma mater in England, the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, in 2017. What's changed?**

It has changed enormously since then. We've had two more songs added and we've refined it and rewritten it. It gave us some good clues of just what to put in front of an audience. But what did happen was at the end of that show, the students from the school all wanted to come and talk to me afterwards, but not about me. I'm glad to say they wanted to talk about themselves. They wanted to come and say, "God, you know that bit when you did that. Well, that made me remember da, da, da." Good memories, bad memories, fun things,

all sorts of things, but it wasn't about me and it never was meant to be about me. And so that's what we hope will happen. And it'll give people an opportunity to forget about what's been going on and give you something nice to disappear into for an evening.

**How did the Chicago connection come about?**

We all know Chicago is a terrific theater town. I mean, it would be on anybody's bucket list to go there. I did a tiny little theater thing years ago in Chicago called *Admission: One Shilling*. [The piece was based on the life of British pianist Dame Myra Hess, whose name is honored in the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concert series.] I had a very fleeting visit to Chicago.

**You've been working all along, but *Downton* obviously raised your profile considerably. What did it mean to have that kind of success slightly later? How did it change your perspective on building a career?**

Well, let me tell you, if you have a choice in my book, you want it now, not at the beginning, because we all know of people who had a terrific start and then it all goes downhill from there. I don't envy that. That seems the most awful way around and you know, very difficult. You had a terrific life as an actor, and then suddenly you're too old, you're too fat, you're too whatever, and it all disappears. That must be awful. As a kid, my family always used to say, "She's a late developer," which actually turned out to be true.

I've been able to be in my chosen profession all my life. I've always been very grateful that I've been allowed to do this job because I just love it. But yes, to get a terrific life-changing job later on? I didn't expect that. And I also met my husband late in life and I didn't expect that to happen and that's been amazing. One of the things that I hope this show does is encourage people. You know how people will say, "Oh no, if you haven't met the right person by the time you're 30, then forget it. If you haven't had a big break by that time, that's it for you. And if you're a woman, you'll never get it."

And I'd like to pull my hand up and say, "Just shut up." Don't let people tell you that stuff. Because it's not true. You don't know when you're going to have a life-changing experience. None of us do, but they do happen and they do happen later on.

@kerryreid

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*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* ■ LIZ LAUREN

## OPENING

### Love in the time of fascism

*The Black Knight* takes us on a long quest in Nazi-occupied Prague.

The rescheduled world premiere of *The Black Knight* by Angeli Primlani with Lifeboat Productions (directed by Brian Pastor) is billed as a timely tale of love, trust, and resistance. It's indeed timely—set in Nazi-occupied Prague during 1942-1943, the play is ultimately an exploration of how easily fascism can take hold during periods of uncertainty. More intimately, it's a study in the ways people are conditioned to respond when fascism comes slinking through their front door.

Sweethearts since their shared childhood in Nazi-occupied Germany, Albrecht (Gary Henderson) and Kathi (Katherine Wettermann) are engaged to be married when Albrecht joins the Schutzstaffel, ultimately siding against the growing resistance efforts they all idealized as children. Kathi breaks up with him and leans in the opposite direction, ingratiating herself with the Nazis in Prague only insofar as to glean classified information and aid resistance efforts championed by the Communist Party, with which she sympathizes.

When Albrecht and Kathi are reunited in Prague as young adults, he is unaware of the extent of her resistance efforts, while she is acutely aware of his value to the party of Hitler. She uses their romantic relationship to feed information to another old friend, Fritz (Mac Westcott), a communist with whom she's intimately entangled as well.

The script, while intensely researched and historically accurate, is too long. And I'll admit I followed its many (many) twists and turns with the hope that this would ultimately be a tale of love for the greater good triumphing over evil—but that's not the case here. Albrecht and Kathi's love for each other perseveres, but at great cost to themselves, their friends, their country, and the world. The overture to *Tristan und Isolde* by Richard Wagner courses throughout the play's three acts—sound

designers Benjamin Dionysus, Amber Mandley, and Cheri Tatar's ode to the German opera's themes of will, chivalry, and *liebested* (i.e. self-sacrifice as an expression of love)—but those themes are absent in the characters' motivations, at least outside their own bubble. —**KAYLEN RALPH** *THE BLACK KNIGHT* Through 4/2: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 2:30 PM, City Lit Theater, 1020 W. Bryn Mawr, [hopepunkchicagocom](http://hopepunkchicagocom), \$38.

**RR** Killer queen  
A child pageant star runs amok in *The Drag Seed*.

For lo these past 20 years, Hell in a Handbag has been camping it up under the indefatigable leadership of founding artistic director David Cerda, whose encyclopedic knowledge of drag, pop culture, and their endless intersections serves him well in his latest parodic endeavor, *The Drag Seed* (first produced by Hell in a Handbag in 2019). Directed by Cheryl Snodgrass, this is a boldly, gloriously asinine parody of *The Bad Seed*, that classic 1956 evil-child thriller that laid the foundation for everything from *The Omen* franchise to Netflix's *The Woman in the House Across the Street from the Girl in the Window*. That parody is filtered through an aesthetic inspired by the Charles Quartet, aka drag gurus Charles Busch, Charles Ludlam, Charles Pierce, and RuPaul Charles.

The plot involves 11-year-old Carson (Patrick O'Keefe, more twinkly than Tinker Bell), a budding kiddie pageant queen and a full-on sociopath. When their best friend (and pageant competition) Summer Breeze (Tyler Anthony Smith) mysteriously drowns, Carson's mom Connie Lingus (Ed Jones, a winning mix of Joan Crawford in *Mommy Dearest* and Marion Ross in *Happy Days*) and her kimono-collecting landlady Miss Charles (Cerda) are pulled into a vortex of sequins, suspicion, and sexual intrigue. Snodgrass has the cast going so far over the top they're practically on the moon, which is what you want with this level of fuckery-tuckery. Throughout, Cerda peppers the script with an esoteric

blend of pop culture references—Laganja Estranga to Esther Williams are among the verbal Easter eggs. After its run here, *The Drag Seed* goes to La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club in New York. Hopefully those east coasters will appreciate a uniquely Chicago institution. —**CATEY SULLIVAN** *THE DRAG SEED* Through 3/20: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 4 PM; industry night Mon 3/14, 7:30 PM, Chopin Theatre, 1543 W. Division, [handbagproductions.org](http://handbagproductions.org), \$27 advance, \$32 door, \$50 VIP (reserved seating with drink ticket).

**RR** Cracking the code  
*The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* lights up the Goodman.

First performed by Lookingglass in 1989 (with Ana Gasteyer in the original cast) and then in an expanded run at the now-gone Goodman studio theater in 1993, adapter/director Mary Zimmerman's *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci* is one of the landmark productions in Chicago theater history: long before she won the MacArthur "genius" grant and a Tony Award, the show announced that Zimmerman was in the vanguard of Chicago theatermakers pushing back against the gritty realism that had long defined new work in town. Her style favored a strong physical and visual vocabulary, and as her mentor at Northwestern, Frank Galati (*She Always Said, Pablo*), had done before her, she and her collaborators sought inspiration in nontheatrical texts, rendered without regard to linear narrative structure. "This is to be a collection without order," we're warned at the beginning of the show.

The revival of *Notebooks* now onstage at the Goodman's Owen theater feels both nostalgic and of-the-moment. That's appropriate for the da Vinci we meet here, who is obsessed with paradoxes and binaries—light and shadow (brilliantly anatomized in T.J. Gerckens's light design), and whose firing-on-all-gears brain seems to spill out of the oversized filing cabinets/climbing walls that line Scott Bradley's set, like Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler's mixed-up files on steroids. The contrast between

the gracefulness of a falcon who haunts an early dream and the failure of da Vinci's own flying machine is played for laughs, but highlights the chasm between human dreams of dominance and our inability to fully integrate our desires with the natural world.

Zimmerman's brand of storytelling has become far more commonplace than it was 30 years ago (in part thanks to the success she found after *Notebooks* with more familiar texts such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). Some sections feel a bit arid and academic. But overall, da Vinci's meditations on force, weight, perspective, and so much more still have the power to move and intrigue us, and Zimmerman's eight-member cast (which includes one vet of the first production, Charles Donahue) brings grace, fluidity, wit, and sometimes aching poignancy to this kaleidoscopic portrait of a polymath. —**KERRY REID** *THE NOTEBOOKS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI* Through 3/20: Tue-Wed 7:30 PM, Thu 2 and 7:30 PM, Fri 8 PM, Sat 2 and 8 PM, Sun 2 PM; ASL interpreted performance Fri 3/11, 8 PM; touch tour and audio described performance Sat 3/12, 2 PM (touch tour at 12:30 PM); open-captioned performance Sat 3/19, 2 PM; Goodman Theatre, 170 N. Dearborn, 312-443-3800, [goodmantheatre.org](http://goodmantheatre.org), \$15-\$55.

**RR** Mystery in space  
*Solaris* gets a riveting production with Griffin.

Based on the 1961 novel by Stanislaw Lem, which spawned two films, *Solaris*, the play by David Greig, makes its North American premiere in a Griffin Theatre production under Scott Weinstein's direction. A riveting sci-fi mystery thriller, it opens with a scientist visiting a space station that orbits the ocean planet of Solaris. A crew member is dead and the remaining two scientists are hiding secrets as to the unexplained activities occurring onboard. Full of delightfully manic oceanic peaks and long esoteric stretches of calm, the play delves into the seduction of the past and explores duality and memory. How do we process being essentially alone in the universe, traversing loneliness and loss, all the while pursuing connection? Can we ever really truly know one another?

Isa Arciniegas as Dr. Kelvin is wonderfully dynamic as the newly-arrived scientist, generating the gravitational pull around which the other characters revolve. Nicole Laurenzi's Dr. Sartorius brings a needed grounded stoicism while bursting at the seams with honest emotion. T.J. Thomas's Dr. Snow exudes a joviality nearly lost after two years of isolation, yet he still keeps things lit (including his cigarettes). John Drea as Ray and Larry Baldacci as Dr. Gibarian both give emotionally charged performances that keep the mystery and tension tingling. And Alexandrya Salazar as The Child (alternating in the role with Kajsa Allen)—is she a benevolent presence or creepy apparition? Shout-out to the production team for crafting a sparse yet multipurpose space station that adds to the anxious isolation and scenic variety. —**JOSH FLANDERS** *SOLARIS*. Through 3/27: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Raven Theater, 6157 N. Clark, 77-338-2177, [griffintheatre.com](http://griffintheatre.com), \$40 (students, active military, and veterans \$15) ■

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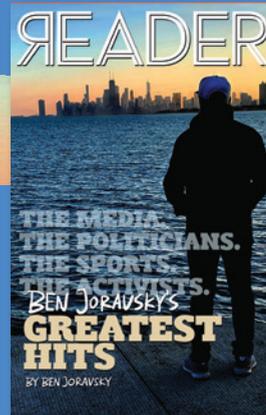
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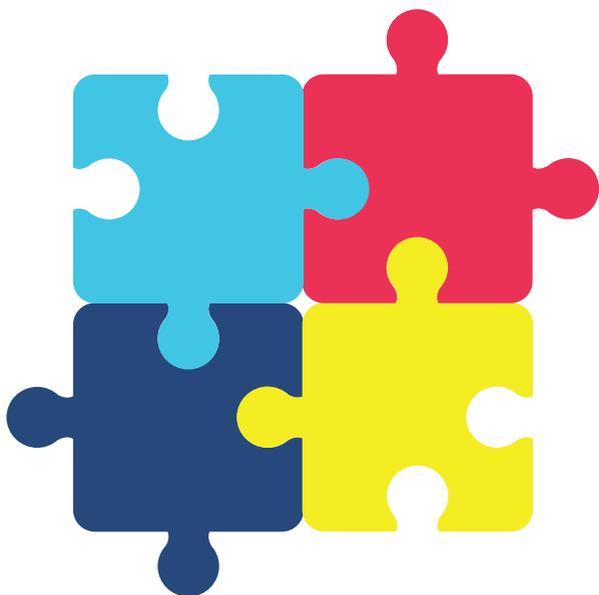
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## NOW PLAYING

### RR *After Yang*

*After Yang* is a subtle, tender perspective on artificial intelligence that is a rarity for modern science fiction. Director Kogonada's sophomore film explores a subtly futuristic world where artificial intelligence is commonplace. Within this subdued vision of the future, Jake (Colin Farrell) and Kyra (Jodie Turner-Smith) purchase a lifelike android, Yang (Justin H. Min), to give their adopted daughter Mika (Malea Emma Tjandrawidjaja) a sibling. The beginning of the film slowly reveals the inner tensions within the family, unfurling when Yang malfunctions and Jake is tasked with bringing his animatronic son back to life. The film voyages into the uncanny valley, and through Yang's eyes, the audience is confronted with the passage of time, grief, and transience.

In the opening sequence, the film shows the principal characters participating in an uncharacteristically energetic synchronized virtual dance battle. Once mesmerized by the absurdity of this future society, the dance sequence abruptly ends and the viewer is jolted back into the daze-like world. With slow moves, Kogonada produces a powerful film that runs its course with restraint, but that is not a disadvantage. Every minor emotion is performed brilliantly by the cast, providing a sentimental projection of the future that investigates grief as core to humanity.

Adapted from "Saying Goodbye to Yang" by Alexander Weinstein, *After Yang* is a reflection on the things we take for granted and the complexities of loss. Throughout the film, Jake is intensely unsettled by the loss of Yang, grappling with buried emotions released by his initial grief but prolonged by Yang's digital memory banks. When faced with a spectacle of his own life, he becomes consumed by a blend of nostalgic and penitent memory. *After Yang* expertly illustrates grief's soul-striking ripples while probing humanity through Yang's memories, presenting the uncanny from a new and satisfying perspective. —MAXWELL RABB PG, 96 min. Limited release in theaters and streaming on Showtime

### RR *The Batman*

Robert Pattinson shuts all his haters up with a vulnerable and terrifying performance in Matt Reeves's *The Batman*. When Pattinson's casting was announced, it was quickly met with criticism—mostly from folks who haven't noticed that Pattinson has spent the majority of his career giving incredible performances in indie flicks after wrapping up his role as sparkly-vampire-stalker Edward Cullen in *The Twilight Saga*. But 'O ye, of little faith; for those of us who watched Pattinson turn New York City upside down in the Safdie brothers' dizzying crime thriller *Good Time*, we knew we'd be in for a treat. *The Batman* finds an angsty Bruce Wayne working alongside Gotham City police as a serial killer runs loose, targeting the rich and powerful and leaving behind twisted clues. The film is immediately violent and genuinely scary; gritty, dark, and fully leaning into the crime noir feel that made *The Dark Knight* one of the best superhero movies of the 21st century. But this is no copycat: Pattinson's Bruce Wayne feels younger with floppy hair and goth-boy eye makeup. He's desperate and dangerous with lots of sore spots lurking just below the surface; this is a Bruce who is still grieving. He's scrappier too, and less suave in flinching action sequences that play out like a real street fight. Zoë Kravitz and her cheekbones are both sensitive and sexy as Selina Kyle, aka Catwoman, the perfect feline, though her burglar backstory is begging for an origin story spin-off. There are bits of cheesy dialogue with a narration that feels out of place and a heavy-handed score, but *The Batman* proves that any story can be retold with freshness and ferocity—plus one of the best third acts you'll ever see. —NOËLLE D. LILLEY PG-13, 175 min. Wide release in theaters

### *The Cursed*

*The Cursed* (aka *Eight For Silver*) is a stylish horror story, and director Sean Ellis is very conscious of horror tropes past. Unfortunately, instead of transforming them, he lets them sink their teeth into his throat. As a result, a film that stalks menacingly around greatness ends up as just another genre exercise.

### *Strawberry Mansion* MUSIC BOX FILMS

The movie is set in France in the late 1800s, and uses that hoary old device, the Roma curse. Seamus Laurent (Alistair Petrie) wants a group of Roma off his land and sends mercenaries to do the deed.

In contrast to films like *The Shining* or *The Amityville Horror*, which reference crimes of dispossession, but refuse to visualize them, Ellis stages by far the most effective and powerful sequence of the film. A single long shot of the ruthless slaughter is like a dark Bruegel painting of genocide. The Roma here are not just plot-device ghosts. They're real people, engulfed in a real horror.

And then Ellis retreats back to tradition, in which white people imagine they are somehow the main victims of their own violence. Seamus's family is cursed. Lycanthropes roam the woods. A noble innocent hero dude with a tragic past shows up (Boyd Holbrook). There's semi-spiritual gobbledegook about Judas and silver, leading improbably to the forging of magic bullets.

The special effects, the ratcheting suspense, and the imagery (for instance, a scene of the blood on fresh linen hung out to dry) are all perfectly competent. But Ellis has made it very clear that the emotional core of the film is the suffering of marginalized, displaced, and slaughtered people. Why then are we spending the bulk of the run time supposedly rooting for those who benefit from that slaughter? The answer is the same as always—casual Hollywood racism. But given the movie's promise, it's more disappointing than usual. —NOAH BERLATSKY R, 111 min. Wide release in theaters

### RR *Fresh*

Director Mimi Cave's feature debut *Fresh* is a clever cut of social commentary that starts off sweet and quickly turns sour. The film's initial moments function as a well-executed rom-com starring a dejectedly single Noa (Daisy Edgar-Jones) who suffers an unyielding series of encounters encompassing the worst aspects of modern dating. When a meet-cute at the local grocery story with the charming Steve (Sebastian Stan) leads to a fledgling romance, the film takes a distinct turn, as Noa's newfound love interest turns out to harbor some darker intentions than he initially lets on. About 30 minutes into the film, the opening credits finally roll, and we're off, taking a morbidly comedic turn towards the truly unsettling.

Without giving away too many of the gory details, though the title and locations of the film more than hint at what's to come, the more squeamish among us may want to switch things off after the first act, as the film has a propensity for showing instead of telling.

*Fresh* is beautifully shot by cinematographer Pawel

Pogorzelski and has some truly audaciously entertaining scenes. Edgar-Jones and Stan are deviously entertaining in their performances and the film is also buoyed by a strong showing from best friend Mollie (Jojo T. Gibbs), who thankfully is allowed to take on a more fleshed-out role than typical. Indeed, the film suffers most when Mollie's narrative takes a back seat for much of the latter half, an issue overall as it loses a bit of steam in that portion.

Cave and writer Lauryn Kahn are less concerned with their metaphorical messaging than they are with creating shock value, and while *Fresh* isn't particularly nuanced in its commentary or analysis, it's certainly a distastefully amusing romp. —ADAM MULLINS-KHATIB R, 114 min. Streaming on Hulu

### *Strawberry Mansion*

It's 2035 and the government has levied a tax on the objects you see in your dreams, which you store and upload off memory sticks. Nattily tweed-coated auditor James Preble (Kentucker Audley) doesn't like it any more than you would. The product placement regime is what grates him most; hitting the drive-through before work for a bucket of fried chicken like the one in his dream from the night before, he sighs at the sorry world from under the nostalgic brim of a porkpie hat. Paying a house call to an eccentric dream-tax delinquent named Arabella (Penny Fuller), Preble begins work on a ramshackle library of her dreams, which exist in a discontinued format: VHS, hilariously. The younger Bella (Grace Glowicki) dreamed with pre-capitalist abandon, ad-free, and at full saturation (the movie was shot digitally, then dubbed off the digital cut using 16mm). Once in, Preble can't get enough of her mind—its saxophone-playing waiters with massive frog heads, its sands and tides, its chases through space.

And that's pretty much what happens in this retro pleasure dome of a movie. Preble's meekness amid the plots and snares set by his and Bella's menacing dream animals recalls the dilemmas of Terry Gilliam's heroes. But on the whole, the film subordinates the drama of Preble's otherworldly capers to the sheer indulgence of lush textures, from room to room and dream to dream—from close-ups of Bella's turtle tank to scenes in Preble's pink-walled nightmare kitchen where he's fed the fried chicken, from the deck of a ship run by mice to getting chained up in the hull by a blue-eyed demon, then escaping. Some bolder flights of fancy even gesture at fluffy 80s fantasy for kids like *The NeverEnding Story*, but always in an endearingly handmade way, which the bedroom grandeur of Dan Deacon's score offsets at key moments. —MAX MALLER 92 min. Music Box Theatre R

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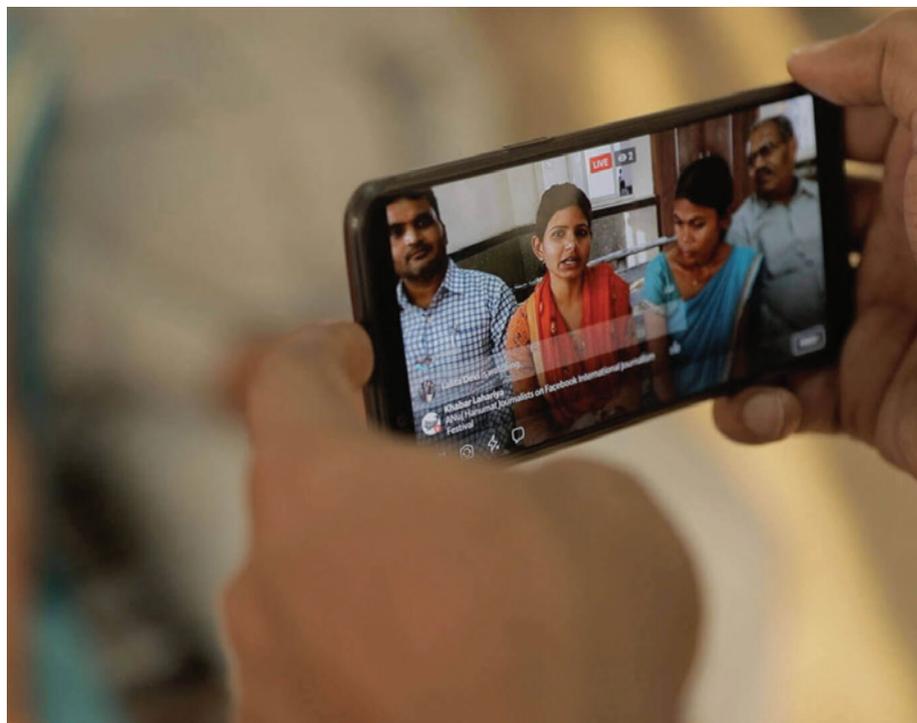
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REVIEW

# Rewriting the rules of journalism (with fire)

The Sundance documentary *Writing with Fire* showcases India's joyful and resilient Dalit women who have become reporters against all odds.

By **SHERI FLANDERS AND JOSH FLANDERS**



*Writing with Fire* BLACK TICKET FILMS

women are constantly laughing and filled with joy, and the film contains many lighthearted scenes. Thomas said, “It was impossible to tell the story without their wit and vivacity shining through on the screen.” Thomas and Ghosh were dedicated to portraying a layered and nuanced view of the women, rather than presenting a simple picture of them as victims or icons for praise. They want people to realize that they are just normal women doing extraordinary things. Said Ghosh, “For us, Neeta, Meera, and Shyamkali are really prototypes of what modern Indian women are and it doesn’t get showcased in the mainstream, so how do we find that space in our storytelling to do that?”

The need for diverse voices in journalism has never been more pressing, yet many challenges remain in providing access. Locally, nationally, and internationally, diverse journalists from all disciplines grapple with issues of access and inclusion. The film *Writing with Fire*, which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival in 2021, winning the Audience Award and the Special Jury Award: Impact for Change, crystallizes this challenge, telling the story of the *Khabar Laharyia* newspaper in India’s Uttar Pradesh. The paper is operated by a team of Dalit women who radically disrupt the caste system that traditionally designated them to menial labor. In doing so, they set a new standard for Dalit women—and for journalism. Nominated for an Academy Award in a competitive field, the film is an underdog for the win, yet was described by Jason Rezaian in the *Washington Post* as, “The most inspiring journalism movie—maybe ever.”

Filmmakers Rintu Thomas and Sushmit Ghosh find themselves drawn to creating movies about the disenfranchised. In an interview during Sundance, Thomas said, “There’s a lot in this world that is not right. We just feel it’s our responsibility as storytellers to offer another perspective. Most of our characters have been people with no resources or clout, mostly semi-literate or illiterate, so (we enjoy filming) when these folks can have a vision and inspire people around them to rally a change.”

The movie follows three women, Meera, Suneeta, and Shyamkali, on the eve of *Khabar Laharyia*’s launch from print to digital. This transition is further complicated by the fact that many of the women journalists are not only illiterate, but have never used a cell phone before. The women quickly master not only the learning curve of technology, but the art of reporting, while also juggling the wifely demands of maintaining a traditional household. Meera’s husband struggles with her choice in the film, saying, “When there’s a man at home, how can a wife work?” Meera’s father astutely notes, “Everyone wants to marry an educated girl, but won’t let her work after marriage, so why marry her?”

The women usually wake up at 5 AM, and by 5:30 they are out of the house, walking an average of three hours a day in very hot temperatures, which forced the filmmakers to shed their bulky camera gear in favor of more lightweight options. This streamlined choice proved to be especially useful in covering hard-hitting news like contentious political candidates, workers’ rights, crime, and police misconduct. At one point when they entered an illegal mine, Thomas and Ghosh were warned, “Don’t take your camera, the mafia’s watching.” They mounted a phone onto a stick and were able to get the footage stealthily.

The cameras capture some truly amazing moments of the journalists confronting story

subjects in tense and sometimes downright hostile situations, including one scene where the tenacious Meera confronts the local police department about neglecting a rape case. Despite the looming threat of reprisal, Meera remains strong in her conviction to expose the truth. She says, “I believe journalism is the essence of democracy.” Ghosh stated firmly, “They have found their way to work within a system that’s designed to exclude them.”

Despite many truly harrowing moments, the

Ghosh said he is honored to have been nominated for an Oscar, but just feels happy that *Writing with Fire* will “be able to open up conversations around what is happening in India, our journalists . . . and also about how far independent documentaries can go . . . and the dreams that can be had!”

Viewers will have a chance to screen the film on March 28 on WTTW PBS, the night after the Academy Awards.

@SheriFlanders, @joshua\_flanders

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FEATURE

# A celebration of Black filmmakers at Block Cinema

Twelve experimental shorts bring both joy and fear to the big screen.

By KATHLEEN SACHS

“Flesh to Spirit: Materiality and Abstraction in Black Experimental Film,” a program of 12 short films screening at the Block Cinema at Northwestern’s Block Museum of Art on Friday, March 4, at 7 PM, engages what it means to be a Black person—a joyful person, an oppressed person, an exploited person, a person once bought and sold as goods, a person that’s so much more than its corporeal form—in ways both nimbly tactile and equivocally abstruse as only art can be, specifically vis-à-vis experimental film and video.

In conversation with Roy DeCarava’s 1960 photograph *Face out of Focus*, Paige Taul’s *After DeCarava* (2018) explores physical abstraction with tender and provocative dis-

cernment. The abstraction of the face in Taul’s film, like DeCarava’s photograph, is beautiful but unrecognizable; it’s a divine image lacking an identity, yet also a face protected by Taul’s lens, rejecting exploitation by way of reverie. (The Chicago-based filmmaker will appear in person for a post-screening discussion and Q&A.)

Edward Owens’s *Private Imaginings and Narrative Facts* (1966) is, like Taul’s film, entirely silent, welcoming the sway of contemplation. Owens, who attended the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and made the film while living here, focuses on his mother, Mildred, with footage of her superimposed upon images of the sort of luxury to which she was not privileged. Still, her presence emits another kind of majesty, one inborn and drawn out

*An Ecstatic Experience* 📍 JATOVIA GARY

by the artist. Alima Lee’s *Flesh to Spirit* (2019), from which the program takes its name, utilizes video to similar effect, evincing the ways a body is more than what it seems through expressive associations and fragmentation.

L.A. Rebellion filmmaker Barbara McCullough’s *Water Ritual #1: An Urban Rite Of Purification* (1979) and Ayanna Dozier’s *Maman Brigitte* (2021) explore the phenomena of bodies producing fluid and noise, respectively. In *Water Ritual #1*, a Black woman walks among a setting that might appear to be located in a developing country but is actually the Watts neighborhood in Los Angeles, the chosen spot having been cleared for the construction of a freeway. When she squats, nude, to urinate, the ability of a body to imply a locale becomes that same body ritualistically cleansing the space that’s betrayed it through gentrification. Where McCullough’s film is silent, Dozier’s is the product of its soundtrack, composed of sounds of people spitting, vomiting, and other such functions. Evoking the Haitian Vodou figure Maman Brigitte, Dozier transforms these banal intonations into the stuff of ceremony.

Through collages of already existing materials, from newspaper ads to scenes from popular media, ariella tai’s *cavity* (2019) and Cauleen Smith’s *Chronicles of a Lying Spirit* (by Kelly Gabron) (1992) probe the manipulation of iconography to narrative effect and how such images can be re-manipulated to tell a truer, more accurate story. A faux revenge narrative emerges in *cavity*; footage of Kerry Washington as Olivia Pope on the show *Scandal*, for instance, is deliriously separated from its origin and remade into something less scandalous and more vengeful. Smith similarly appropriates images to convey a story other than the one initially intended, though more to exemplify how the person telling the story can impact its meaning more than the content itself. The monotony of the white male narrator’s voice is contrasted by the expressive timbre of the second narrator, presumably a Black woman.

Robert Banks’s *MPG: Motion Picture Genocide* (1997) considers the history of African American characters being murdered in film. Rough-hewn animation complements the ways in which the killing of Black bodies on-screen is often two-dimensionalized, the hor-

rors experienced by Black people trivialized for cheap thrills and escapism.

Likewise, Christopher Harris’s *Reckless Eyeballing* (2004) takes its name from a Jim Crow-era law under which a Black man could be punished for merely looking at a white woman. Harris uses footage of Pam Grier and images of Angela Davis in a way that connects the exploitation of the two women by oppressive apparatuses. The aesthetically bold black-and-white style—reminiscent of newspapers, silent films, and wanted posters—emphasizes the culture of objectification within which these and other Black women exist. (Harris will also appear in person at this screening and at a Thursday night screening titled “Environments of Struggle,” with artist and filmmaker Crystal Z. Campbell, who’s giving a solo artist talk on Wednesday).

The moving image is often considered as a means to convey the ecstatic experience. In her aptly titled video *An Ecstatic Experience* (2015), Ja’Tovia Gary uses media and archival footage, the images of which are modified with almost playful lacerations, both to analyze and excavate Black joy in its myriad formations. Footage of actress Ruby Dee portraying an enslaved woman recounting the story of her mother breaking out in ecstatic prayer while working on a plantation is likewise haunting and hopeful.

Haunting could be used to describe Ulysses Jenkins’s 2006 video *Planet X*, wherein the myth of a planet colliding with Earth is connected to the events of Hurricane Katrina. News footage and the otherworldly sagacity of Sun Ra create a daunting, almost *War of the Worlds*-like fiction that has the propensity to become a reality. Where Gary interprets a form of Black joy, Jenkins scrutinizes the meaning of Black fear, likening an imagined catastrophe with a very real one.

Harris’s *28.IV.81 (Bedouin Spark)* (2009) stands out among the program, as it depicts images of stars, the shape, cut out from unknown materials and rendered in various modes of abstraction. It’s said about the film that it “approximates a small child’s fantasy world in the dark.” Ultimately ending on a note of hope, this sublime deviation suggests the ability of spirit to transcend flesh, for Black bodies to become appreciated as Black lives just as the cut-out stars come to resemble the brilliant night sky.

The works in this program will be exhibited in a variety of formats (16-millimeter, 35-millimeter, and analog and digital video); all events at the Block Cinema are free to attend. 📍

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# Best of Chicago 2021

**W**hat you are holding in your hands, or squinting at on a screen, is the **biggest issue** of the *Chicago Reader* in recent memory. Larger even than our before-times Best of Chicago issue in 2019, which was a hefty 88 pages.

**We couldn't have made this 96-page behemoth without you:** the proud, opinionated, ballot-stuffing people of Chicago. Thank you for nominating and voting for your favorites across more than 300 entries, seven categories, and multiple rounds.

We hazard a guess that most media outlets have a love-hate relationship with best-of issues. On the one hand, we get to celebrate what we love about living here; on the other, if there are winners, there are bound to be losers, and don't nobody wanna lose.

And, of course, there are the folks who are left out entirely, a gap that *Reader* staff and freelancers fill with impassioned essays every year.

In the **News** section, you'll find a reported piece by staff writer Katie Prout, who spent the last two weeks visiting Chicago's six public warming centers and trying to interview visitors and employees. She found locked doors, complex rules and regulations for the people seeking shelter at the centers, and even one that was curiously closed for inclement weather.

**City Life** touches on some of the Chicago treasures hidden in plain sight: a 22-year-old website devoted to horror writing, a daily email newsletter compiled by a newsman who's been reporting in Chicago for decades, and a comedian and actress using her social media talents to skew the mayoral status quo are just a few of the highlights we've found around here in the last months.

In our **Buy Local** section, our writers give kudos to Chicagoans who've been plugging away and keeping us in style (Ponnopozz, Agriculture), and who've been supporting the style makers (Chicago Fashion Incubator). Plus we tell you about the crossroads of matrimony and divorce, right in the middle of downtown.

Our **Sports & Rec** essays reinforce our belief that thanks to the city's loyalty and creativity, there are

no better sports fans anywhere.

**Food & Drink** pays tribute to a mouthwatering collection of the most unique and pleasantly surprising local items we consumed last year, including delights sweet, savory, and spicy.

Our **Cannabis** essays express our newfound loves of liquid relaxation, dispensary-line voyeurism, and weed-related comedies, dramas, and reality shows.

In the **Arts and Culture** section, you can find out about a group of Korean American "ajummas" who created a flash mob at a suburban market, or about a long-running public performance art project that brings intriguing work right to your doorstep (or at least your el stop or park). And if you're interested in catching new BIPOC writers early on, then there's a playreading club for you. Even those who have achieved greater fame outside Chicago, like drag sensation the Vixen or Sophie Thatcher, star of Showtime's *Yellowjackets*, got their start in Chicago's theater and performance scene, which constantly asks artists to show up as their best selves.

Just about every publication and every critic puts out a "Top films of the year" listicle. But only in the *Reader* will you find coverage of a drive-in horror screening called "Video Brain Blender," put on by two local zine creators; a celebration of Blacknuss Network, a Chicago-based alternative streaming platform that features Black culture, Black creators, Afrofuturism, and more; and the category "Best fat daddy Dom bitch on TV" (find out who won on page 65).

The essays in our **Music & Nightlife** section go beyond marquee names and stage lights, and they're vivid with detail that no poll could capture. Do you know which 1960s soul star was sponsored by a Mumbo Sauce mogul? Which new zine chronicles the city's most exciting teenage indie-rock scene? Or which west-side arts center has hosted an orchestra made up entirely of local Black middle-school students? Every one of these 16 love letters to Chicago represents a choice plucked from among literally thousands of options—and that exhausting, wonderful profusion is both the joy and the frustration of every Best of Chicago issue. —**THE EDITORS**

A rapidly growing city built of **wood**.

A summer-long **heat wave**.

An **exhausted** and **misdirected** team of firefighters.

Racial, social, and economic **tensions** bubbling just below the surface.

**ALL CHICAGO NEEDED WAS A SPARK.**

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Best of  
Chicago  
2021



CITY  
LIFE



Cover art from Jon Kitley's book *Discover the Horror*  DAVE VOIGT COURTESY KITLEY'S KRYPT

### Best suburban source for horror talk

## Kitley's Krypt

Jon Kitley of Aurora has made a friend of horror. For 22 years he's run Kitley's Krypt, a site devoted to horror films, ranging from the earliest silent nightmares to the latest terrors from overseas. The site started in October of 1998 using the now-defunct Microsoft FrontPage tool. Kitley's Krypt continues to provide regular updates and reviews of horror films from every era and around the world at [kitleyskrypt.com](http://kitleyskrypt.com).

Originally from Michigan, Kitley has loved the horror genre for more than 50 of his 57 years. His earliest memory is of watching the 1972 Sebastian Cabot-narrated TV series *Ghost Story* (later titled *Circle of Fear*). Years later, he came across a book that synopsized the show's plots, sparking a drive to track down and collect the series through the scratchy magic of VHS tape. When he turned 16, he found a gig at a movie theater, where he caught several 80s horror flicks in all their gory glory.

"I got to see a lot of great movies on the big screen," Kitley says, "and more and more fell in love with [horror]."

Collecting and duplicating VHS tapes led to accumulating movie posters and film reference books, which in turn led to attending horror conventions. He recalls his first convention, in April 1988 in California. The experience was eye-opening.

"So there I am walking [into] this hotel. And there's George Romero, standing there talking to fans and signing autographs. Roddy McDowall, from the *Planet of the Apes* movies that I grew up with is there. Anthony Perkins

was there. Which is funny, because when he's up on stage giving a Q&A, you're going, 'Yeah, that's Norman Bates.' Tobe Hooper, the director of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was there . . ." In recalling the past, Kitley evokes the youthful enthusiasm he no doubt felt at the time.

"So, all of these icons that I had watched are in this convention, just wandering around. It was unreal, to be able to walk up, talk to them, get an autograph, everybody was so friendly. It was an unbelievable experience."

Kitley brings that same energy to his site, rarely missing a day or opportunity to share a new discovery or revisit an old favorite. He also wrote a memoir of his 50 years of horror fandom, titled *Discover the Horror*, recollecting the actors, directors, creators, and fans he's met throughout the years. He's a constant campaigner for a genre he feels has gotten short shrift.

"There's peaks and valleys, but the horror genre has been strong since the very beginning of cinema," he stresses. "Anytime I hear people say, 'Well, there's nothing really good that's coming out' . . . Well, unless you've seen everything, there's a ton of great stuff. And with the Internet . . . you get a chance to see stuff from around the world we never would have heard about 30 years ago."

As a horror proselytizer, Kitley keeps newer fans in mind. In fact he envies them.

"You have a lot of amazing cinema yet to discover," he tells them. "You get to watch *Night of the Living Dead* for the first time. I can't, you know. I've seen it 100 times; I'll never get that same rush of seeing a film like that for the first time. So if you're a new fan, man, you're going to have one hell of a ride, and I'm jealous." —DAN KELLY

### Best free daily roundup in your inbox

## Chicago Public Square

In the tradition of 18th-century newspapers like Samuel Johnson's *The Rambler*, or more contemporary efforts like *L.F. Stone's Weekly*, Charlie Meyerson's Chicago Public Square, a daily newsletter containing short capsules of the day's top stories, is a one-man show. In full disclosure, I've known Meyerson personally since the late 1980s. Meyerson started putting out the Public Square in 2017, in response to the flood of news associated with the then-new Trump administration.

"A couple of people came to me," Meyerson recalls, "and said there's so much happening. Do you know anyone who's summarizing it in a coherent way? And I said, no, but then I thought . . ." Meyerson pauses for dramatic effect, "OH . . . I know SOMEONE who can do that."

The first issue came out January 30, 2017, and except for occasional days off, Meyerson has been putting out the Chicago Public Square each weekday ever since.

From the beginning, Meyerson's daily routine has been virtually unchanged. He gets up at 7 or so, lays in bed for 15 minutes checking the news on his phone, then he goes downstairs and pours himself "a cup of cereal" ("It's been Trix through the pandemic, but I've lately, in a concession to nutrition begun in the last week or two, moved to Quaker Oat Squares.") and eats while he continues to scan the online articles and leaf through the print editions of the *Chicago Tribune* and *Sun-Times* he still has delivered to his house. Then he "pads" up to his desk in his Oak Park home and starts writing. At 10 AM Mailchimp scrapes the website, sending out whatever is there. And between 10 and 10:10 AM, the "Square" appears in his subscribers' email boxes.

The Public Square is the culmination of Meyerson's four-decade-long career as a journalist. A graduate of University of Illinois's College of Communications (renamed the College of Media in 2008), he spent the 80s and 90s working in the news departments of various radio stations (WXRT, WNUA) before moving on to the *Chicago Tribune* to work on their then-nascent digital initiatives, in particular their emailed newsletter *Tribune Alerts*, which listed breaking news with links to *Tribune* online stories.



What Meyerson brought to the *Tribune* was the idea that e-newsletters need to be more than a mere list of headlines. “I argued this [newsletter] needs to have some personality, some sense of a human here.” Meyerson tells me, “I’m not sure a lot of people bought into this at the time.” While at the *Tribune*, Meyerson felt he was successful at giving *Tribune Alerts* some personality. “Interestingly,” Meyerson notes, “When I left the *Tribune* in 2009 to go to WGN, they reverted to nonhuman automatic headline lists—because it’s easier, it’s cheaper. You have to pay somebody to make it human. More recently they have eased their way back now to having some measure of personality, though not quite as snarky as it was on my watch.”

Snark is definitely one of the ingredients Meyerson puts into the Public Square. Recent headlines: “March maskless,” “Pepsi denigration,” “Colonel of untruth,” “What’s nu? Omicron.” But snark is only one of the ingredients

that makes up the newsletter. Meyerson’s calm demeanor belies his depth—he is a major high-tech, podcast, and comic book nerd. The Public Square reflects all facets of Meyerson’s rich personality, his ear for news, his eye for finding interesting takes on that news, and his taste for quirky bits of human interest.

“[When I put together the Square] I ask myself what are the five or ten things that I think the audience needs to know right now,” Meyerson explains. “Then you work your way down to stories you might not need to know, but are interesting. When I was working for XRT we always needed a kicker, one last story before you go to just kick it over back to the jock. And the jock would then play a song that riffs on that. So I always put some kickers in every issue.”

Older readers may recall that back in the 80s, when Meyerson read the news on WXRT, the DJs used to tease him on air; Meyerson’s hyper earnest L7 persona was a contrast

**BEST ACTIVIST**

**Jahmal Cole**

Runner-up: Tonika Johnson

**BEST ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION**

**My Block, My Hood, My City**

Runner-up: Brave Space Alliance

**BEST ALDERPERSON**

**Rossana**

**Rodriguez-Sanchez**

Runners-up: Carlos Ramirez-Rosa, Andre Vasquez

**BEST BEARD**

**Hebru Brantley**

Runner-up: Dan Sinker

**BEST BLOCK CLUB**

**Greater Rockwell Organization**

Runner-up: 69th and Stewart Block Club

**BEST BLOG**

**CHIRP Radio**

Runner-up: Chicago Public Square

**BEST CHARITY**

**Greater Chicago Food Depository**

Runner-up: The Night Ministry

**BEST CHICAGO INSTAGRAM**

**ACCOUNT TO FOLLOW**

**@Chicagoismyboyfriend (Shelley)**

Runner-up: @saggiesplinters (Maggie Winters)

**BEST CHICAGO TIKTOK**

**@6figga\_dilla**

Runner-up: @myloststandards

**BEST CHICAGOAN TO FOLLOW ON TWITTER**

**@6figga\_dilla (Sherman Dilla Thomas)**

Runner-up: @saggiesplinters (Maggie Winters)

**BEST CHIROPRACTOR**

**Proper Balance Health & Wellness Center (Dr. Christina Creevy-Knox)**

Runners-up: Chiro One Wellness Center Andersonville, Wrigleyville Chiropractic & Massage (Dr. Christine Rosenkrantz)

# THANK YOU

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We owe this to all readers and writers of Chicago poetry





continued from 33

to their Dr. Johnny Fever hipper-than-thou on-air personalities. When I remind him of those days, Meyerson laughs: “I didn’t know that that came across on the radio,” but then he adds, “It’s true. That’s one reason that the name Chicago Public Square resonated with me—I’m public and I’m also quite square.” —

JACK HELBIG

### Best commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire’s sesquicentennial

## @ChicagoTimeline on Twitter

The year 2021 marked 150 years since the Great Chicago Fire. While acknowledged by major institutions, the anniversary was muted, perhaps because it’s difficult to commemorate a massive tragedy in the midst of another overwhelming one.

For me, the best marker of the anniversary is journalist, historian, and photographer Robert Loerzel’s @ChicagoTimeline Twitter account ([twitter.com/chicagotimeline](https://twitter.com/chicagotimeline)). It’s virtual, intimate, and still lives on the Internet. Loerzel has previously covered topics from Chicago drone music for *Signal to Noise* to the city’s forgotten mass grave for WBEZ’s Curious City. Loerzel took research he did for an article in the October 2021 issue of *Chicago* magazine and expanded it into something sprawling and unusual.

@ChicagoTimeline is more than a history article split up into tweets. Loerzel writes to the format, posting events the day they occurred, occasionally in an approximation of real time. His sources include a deep dig into newspaper archives with a keen eye for quotes that make 100 years ago feel immediate.

Twitter permits tangents and details that would fill multiple standard essays to be woven into a single epic picture. @ChicagoTimeline starts in June 1871 and by the day the fire starts in October, one understands the politics, personalities, and conditions that shaped the disaster and recovery.

It’s the aftermath that most resonates in the present as trauma gives way to a fraught return to normal. In one very 1822 to 2022 moment, City Hall is stormed by rioters opposed to a total ban on wooden buildings. Then, the day after a zoning compromise is passed, “the *Tribune*’s real estate ads included properties with a quality that was attractive for many purchasers . . . just outside the fire limits.”

Loerzel continues to cover post-Great Fire Chicago with occasional updates this year and plans to shift to deep examination of other big anniversaries by 2023. It’s a worthy addition for any city lover’s feed.

—GREGORY GILLAM

### Best mayor impersonation on social media

## Lisa Beasley as “Lory Litefoot”

In the spring of 2020, as memes of Mayor Lori Lightfoot advising ballplayers to ditch basketball courts and stay home amid the coronavirus pandemic made rounds on the Internet, videos of her counterpart “Lory Litefoot” would soon swirl on the interwebs and bring Chicagoans a persona they could actually laugh at without remorse.

Portrayed by comedian Lisa Beasley, Lory Litefoot, “Chicago’s first openly Blay [Black and gay] mayor,” says exactly what most Chicagoans hear when the mayor is speaking. Without the added political poise and cyclical nature of answering—but not really answering—questions from the press and the public, Litefoot tells it like it (kinda) is, bringing major hypocrisies from the mayor to light. For example, being proud to cautiously wait to reopen Chicago after COVID shutdowns while cities in Texas prematurely reopened, yet being angry with teachers for not wanting to return to teaching in person too soon.

In a short gray afro with a large gray blazer, and at other times a blue Columbia pullover, with a raspy tone and calculated speech, Litefoot’s videos provide an ongo-



Comedian Lisa Beasley as her character “Lory Litefoot” in a recent video LISABPOETRY ON YOUTUBE

ing commentary on the real mayor’s public activities. In one video, Litefoot warns her “alleged impersonator” that they will be last to get the COVID-19 vaccine, in another she announces the first Police Pride Parade, and urges Chicagoans to stay home despite her own order to reopen the city in the summer of 2021. Litefoot even took away all of the Chicago Public Schools-issued laptops when she was angry with teachers for striking amidst COVID protection concerns in schools.

More than anything, Litefoot translates the frustrations many Chicagoans feel with the mayor into the true laughter they need. One of her most notable digital appearances was with activist and entrepreneur Ja’Mal Green, who ran for mayor in 2019, where she was grilled on a number of issues, including a seeming disconnect from communities on Chicago’s south and west sides and on her lack of expanding after-school programs for young people.

If you want to catch up with Litefoot these days, there’s a good chance you can find her holding another IG Live press conference sometime soon, or maybe she’ll be taking another stroll through Hyde Park, hiding from kids whose schools she shut down. Regardless, as long as Chicago’s current mayor is in office, I hope Litefoot is here to stay. —JANAYA GREENE

### BEST COWORKING SPACE

#### Guild Row

Runner-up: Honeycomb Network

### BEST DENTIST

#### Northside Dental

Runner-up: Dentologie

### BEST DOCTOR (GENERAL OR PRIMARY CARE)

#### Dr. Alison Cromwell (Northwestern Medicine)

Runner-up: Dr. Maria Reyes (Rush)

### BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL IN CHICAGO

#### Rossana Rodriguez-Sanchez

Runner-up: Carlos Ramirez-Rosa

### BEST ELECTED OFFICIAL IN COOK COUNTY

#### Toni Preckwinkle

Runner-up: Tom Dart

### BEST EMAIL NEWSLETTER

#### Block Club Chicago

Runner-up: WBEZ Rundown

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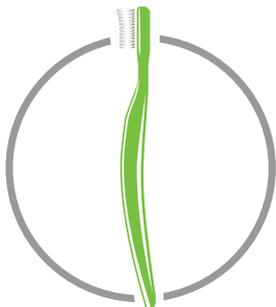
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continued from 34  
**Best tour of non-sentient  
 architecture in Chicago**

## Will Quam

When Will Quam was asked if all bricks want to be arches, he insisted that bricks have neither feelings nor desires, that as wonderful as they are, they simply aren't sentient.

Quam, Chicago's resident "brick whisperer," gives walking tours of Chicago where he shares his infectious passion for—yes—bricks. The tours last 90 minutes, cover 1.5 miles, and cost either \$19 or \$10. There is no difference between the tours at the different prices, he just wants to make sure they are affordable for everyone and the lower price is for those who need it.

In addition to being an expert on and lover of bricks, Quam is a photographer of architecture, a writer, and a researcher. He is convinced that nothing is boring and excitement can be found in anything—even bricks.

Chicago is a great city for brick lovers—bricks can be found all over the place and take all sorts of forms, patterns, colors, and settings. They wear down in various ways. Quam began documenting Chicago's bricks as an exercise in paying attention and it led him to amazing discoveries that he loves to share with others.

Did you know Chicago bricks are special?

After the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 burned down more than 17,000 buildings, and another fire in 1874 caused more damage, the city changed its building codes to prohibit new wood buildings. The result? The Chicago Common brick.

Chicago Commons are made from Chicago River clay and when fired turn into such colors as buff yellow, salmon pink, or deep red. The clays are full of lime iron and little stones and particulate. They were called "commons" because they were rougher and were banished to the backs, sides, and interiors of buildings. The street-facing facades were reserved for out-of-town fancy bricks made of cleaner clay.

Brickyards started sprouting up all over Cook County, going from five in 1871 to 60 in 1881. By 1915, 10 percent of all American bricks were made in Chicago. But nothing good lasts,

and the last Chicago Common brickyard was closed in 1981. None have been made since.

This is just the beginning of facts you can learn from Quam. He also talks about neighborhood histories, underrepresented architecture, and lots of facts about bricks.

His tours cover such areas as Noble Square, Logan Square, or Hyde Park. Or, if you don't feel like walking (or simply don't want to be around people yet as the pandemic—hopefully—waned), you can purchase one of his three tour videos for \$8-\$12 apiece from his website (brickofchicago.com).

While Quam acts as a mouthpiece for bricks around Chicago, telling their stories, he does insist that it is up to humans to take on that task. The bricks themselves are without feelings or desires, which is what makes Quam Chicago's best tour guide of non-sentient architecture. —BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

### Best reason to look down

## The "fairy door" near Clark and Foster

According to legend, fairy doors are portals to the world of fairies—but I'd argue they're also gateways to the imagination. I came across one located in an alley near Clark and Foster this summer



The tiny door is low to the ground. © TONY PEREGRIN

and I was immediately charmed by this diminutive doorway. At first, my journalist's instinct kicked in: who made this and why? While I'm still searching for answers, one thing I know for sure is that this fairy door continues to inspire me to take in my surroundings. I try to remember to look down, look up, look sideways for anything extraordinary, for any magical relief from the pandemic-induced stress and anxiety that seems so pervasive right now.

Fairy doors are not new. They've ap-

peared across the U.S. for decades, in forests and parks (at the base of trees typically) or in some little-used alleyways. In fact, last summer, the Chicago Park District installed 20 "fairy houses" at various natural areas across the city specifically to engage people's interest in the wonder of nature.

Craft stores sell materials to make fairy doors, but what you can't find in any store is much more elusive—that wondrous feeling of finding something magical where you least expect it. —TONY PEREGRIN

**BEST FEDERAL OFFICE  
 HOLDER FROM ILLINOIS  
 Tammy Duckworth**  
 Runner-up: Dick Durbin

**BEST HOME CONSTRUCTION  
 OR REMODELER  
 Rehab Divas**  
 Runner-up: 606 Design  
 & Construction

**BEST HOTEL  
 Chicago Athletic  
 Association Hotel**  
 Runner-up: Palmer House

**BEST HVAC MAINTENANCE  
 OR REPAIR  
 Four Seasons**  
 Runner-up: Guardian HVAC

**BEST LABOR UNION  
 Chicago Teachers Union**  
 Runner-up: Art Institute of  
 Chicago Workers United

**BEST LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION  
 Alliance Française**  
 Runners-up: Goethe-  
 Institut Chicago, Instituto  
 Cervantes Chicago

**BEST LAWYER  
 April Preyar**  
 Runner-up: Eddie Sanders

**BEST LOCAL TV  
 BROADCAST NEWS  
 WGN**  
 Runner-up: WTTW

**BEST NEWSPAPER (MOST  
 VOTES OVERALL)  
 Chicago Reader**

**BEST NEWSPAPER  
 South Side Weekly**  
 Runner-up: *The TRiBE Guide*

**BEST NORTH SIDE  
 NEIGHBORHOOD  
 Andersonville**  
 Runner-up: Logan Square

**BEST OB-GYN  
 Chicago Women's  
 Health Center**  
 Runner-up: Dr. Patricia  
 Boatwright (Weiss)

**BEST OVERALL RADIO STATION  
 WBEZ**  
 Runner-up: WXRT

**BEST PODCAST  
 City Cast Chicago**  
 Runner-up: 77 Flavors  
 of Chicago

**BEST PUBLIC MENTAL  
 HEALTH CARE CLINIC  
 Compass Health Center**  
 Runner-up: Englewood  
 Mental Health Center

**BEST RADIO DJ  
 Lin Brehmer**  
 Runner-up: Jill Hopkins

**BEST REASON TO  
 STAY IN CHICAGO  
 Neighborhoods**  
 Runner-up: The summer

**BEST SECRET OASIS  
 Winter Garden at  
 Harold Washington  
 Library Center**  
 Runner-up: West  
 Ridge Nature Park

**BEST SOUTH SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD  
 Pilsen**  
 Runner-up: Hyde Park

**BEST STATE ELECTED OFFICIAL  
 Tammy Duckworth**  
 Runner-up: J.B. Pritzker

**BEST SUBURB  
 Evanston**  
 Runner-up: Oak Park

**BEST TOUR  
 Chicago Architecture  
 Center Boat Tour**  
 Runner-up: Ugly Buildings  
 (Tours With Mike)

**BEST WEST SIDE NEIGHBORHOOD  
 Humboldt Park**  
 Runner-up: Garfield Park

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**Best of  
Chicago  
2021**



**BUY  
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**Best boutique that started  
on the back of a truck**

## Ponnopozz

**T**he cat sign on the shop window says everything. “I have two cats [Sweet Pea and Naomi] that I bring to the shop when I’m in,” says Adrienne Hawthorne, 36, the owner of Ponnopozz Studio and Store in Ravenswood (4839 N. Damen). “The shop has a sign in the window indicating if a kitty is in, and, if so, which one. Shoppers are always welcome to pet the kitties and socialize with them.” Joy, kindness, and sincere enthusiasm are at the heart of Hawthorne’s business. And efficiency too. Besides running her boutique (brick-and-mortar and online at [ponnopozz.com](http://ponnopozz.com)), making her art (which she sells at Ponnopozz and multiple stockists), and tirelessly promoting her business, Hawthorne also has a full-time job at Google as a user experience designer. “My Google job is remote and operates on Pacific time, so I usually do Ponnopozz things in the morning and then sign in to my day job. Since I am remote, I sometimes work from my art studio. It’s hard some days to juggle them, but overall, it helps my anxiety knowing I have a steady paycheck and it gives me more room to play with Ponnopozz, which is where I run wild,” she says. No wonder Hawthorne named her shop after two imaginary friends she had as a child, Ponno and Pozzer: “The name is about returning back to the unbridled creativity that children feel,” she explains.

Hawthorne’s journey from working at Google in San Francisco—giving her all, but feeling unfulfilled—to moving back to Chicago—making art, but feeling anxious about her finances—to finally combining the two and finding some balance, is detailed in her blog, *Ponno Ponderings*. Available as a section in her online shop, Hawthorne’s blog is filled with honesty about her personal and artistic growth, and very useful tips for artists trying to create or manage a business. Vulnerability and generosity are evident in her musings, present in her Instagram posts as well. Hawthorne not only publicizes her own work; she’s often mentioning other artists, designers, neighboring businesses, and worthy causes. She also shares her storefront with performers and storytellers such as Sierra Carter and Kayla Mulliniks, who were searching for an



Colorful wares are on display at Ponnopozz. © AMY LYNN STRAUB

indoor space to host their You Are Here series. In the second iteration of her boutique, Hawthorne has more square footage to accommodate bigger events, including her workshops.

Hawthorne’s proto-shop started in the summer of 2019 in the back of a Penske truck decorated with polka-dot balloons, a bright-colored Oriental rug, and plenty of her art all over it, complete with hors d’oeuvres and the help of her ever-supportive boyfriend, Seth Thomas. “I just thought of it out of nowhere,” she says. “I remember wanting to do another art show since I had a lot of paintings that needed new homes, and I didn’t have a store yet. I didn’t want to show at a gallery but I wanted something small, interesting, and easy. A moving truck seemed unexpected and fun. It kind of reminded me of the accessibility of food trucks and I just generally thought it would be a swell idea. It turned out to be a wonderful way to sell artwork. A lot of people stopped by, many unexpectedly, and it felt (like just for a moment) that I owned my own boutique. Shortly after that show, I finally signed a lease on my first space on Damen.”

Last October, Ponnopozz moved just across the street, with extra space for Hawthorne’s art studio and even more of her well-curated inventory. The boutique is the perfect place for some retail therapy, since besides the cute kitties, there’s a cheer-up effect provided by the exuberant shop decor itself and all the colorful goods she offers. Hawthorne sells candles (\$20-\$28), apparel (\$30-\$168), jewelry (\$30-\$50), stationery (\$5-\$40), pillows (\$40), puzzles (\$20-\$38), and other home decor items. She carries brands such as Nooworks (clothing), Chunks (hair accessories), Baggu (bags), and Poketo (miscellaneous). Local

### **BEST APARTMENT FINDER**

#### **Domu**

Runners-up: AptAmigo,  
HotPads

### **BEST AUTO DEALERSHIP**

#### **Chicago Northside Toyota**

Runners-up: Autobarn,  
Fletcher Jones Audi/Volvo

### **BEST AUTO REPAIR SHOP**

#### **Ashland Tire & Auto Clinic**

Runner-up: Chinatown  
Classic Auto Repair

### **BEST BARBERSHOP**

#### **Father and Son Barber Shop**

Runner-up: Old Dog  
Barbershop

### **BEST BICYCLE SHOP**

#### **Uptown Bikes**

Runner-up: Kozy’s Bike Shop

### **BEST BOARD GAME STORE**

#### **Chicagoland Games Dice Dojo**

Runner-up: Cat &  
Mouse Games

### **BEST COMICS SHOP**

#### **AlleyCat Comics**

Runner-up: Quimby’s



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**What Greta said ...**



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brands include K-Fleye jewelry, Nicolet Candle, Edgewater Candles, Casa 184, The Vintage Royalty, Lilla Barn clothing, Halo soap, XO Marshmallow, and Drawn Goods. Hawthorne favors gift items that are locally made, or come from small businesses. She also sells her own artwork: originals range from \$40-\$475, and prints from \$25-\$75. Her work can also be seen on a wide range of products and collaborations, such as wrapping paper, cards, clothing, accessories, pillows, and now even armchairs and a book that teaches readers how to paint tarot cards in her style (available for pre-order, \$22.99). “I absolutely love seeing people experience joy in my shop,” Hawthorne says. “Ponnozz is for all of us. It’s a place where we can be our true selves.” —ISA GIALLORENZO

Best place to buy luxurious menswear created by local Black designers

## Agriculture

“To each their own, and Agriculture to all” could be the motto of Christopher Brackenridge, 43, and Milton Latrell, 42, the owners of Agriculture menswear boutique, which offers custom-made suits, personalized styling services, and a wide range of ready-to-wear garments at every price point. “We cater to different people and body types,” says Latrell. “When you come to our boutique, we will style you according to who you are and what your lifestyle is. We focus on what looks good on you and make sure that you get a good return on investment,” he says.

Brackenridge and Latrell, whose mothers were both seamstresses, grew up in Bronzeville and struck up a friendship in high school. Their inherited love of fashion prompted them to become business partners. They opened their first shop in Bronzeville in 2005, and decided to move downtown in 2019 to expand their clientele. If at first their goal was to bring downtown luxury to Bronzeville, now they’re bringing Bronzeville’s charm downtown. Their groovy vibes can be felt immediately upon entering the boutique; the air fragrant with Agriculture’s Merino Wool candle made with sandalwood, and a

selection of gospel, jazz, and R&B music in the background.

Agriculture’s central and most important offering is their dedicated and knowledgeable customer service that can start with a little liquor to “ease the moment.” Latrell explains, “When customers come in for a consultation for a custom-made suit, we offer them some scotch whisky or whatever kind of drink they like—we have a full bar. Then we talk a little

bit about their profession, what they do for fun, and why they’re getting these custom garments.

“After that, we take full body measurements and learn what their body profile is, to enhance their figure. Lastly, we show the customer a selection of luxury fabrics that best fit their lifestyle, and what accessories they can use to complement their suit.” “We’re a mixture of tailors, stylists, and psychiatrists,”

adds Brackenridge.

Agriculture’s custom-made suits start at \$750, with free styling consultation and “therapy session” included. For those looking for a more immediate sprucing up, there are plenty of ready-to-wear garments and accessories available both from the Agriculture exclusive line and from other brands. Local offerings include timepieces from Bronzeville Watch Company, beaded bracelets from Brack’s, items from A Girl in the Gold Coast, and In Truth’s scarves. Beyond local, some of the available brands include hats from Stetson and Dobbs, and wool garments from Romeo Merino, with whom Agriculture recently struck a big partnership. “Soon we want to start putting our products and designs [into] bigger retail stores,” says Latrell, proving that great menswear does take you places. —ISA GIALLORENZO



Agriculture owners Christopher Brackenridge and Milton Latrell © ISA GIALLORENZO

BEST DANCEWEAR SHOP

**Chicago Dance Supply**

Runner-up: Rebirth Garments

BEST FINANCIAL INSTITUTION OR BANK

**Wintrust**

Runner-up: Alliant Credit Union

BEST FINANCIAL PLANNER

**Alison Fyhrie at Northwestern Mutual**

Runners-up: Patricia Ketelaar, Stephanie Zaide

BEST FLORIST

**Flowers for Dreams**

Runner-up: Fleur

BEST GARDEN STORE

**Gethsemane**

Runner-up: Adams and Son and Daughter

BEST HAIR SALON

**Sine Qua Non**

Runner-up: Little Broken Things

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**BEST HOME FURNISHINGS**  
**District**

Runner-up: Dial M for Modern, Velvet Goldmine

**BEST INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORE**  
**Women & Children First**

Runners-up: Open Books, Semicolon Bookstore

**BEST JEWELRY STORE**  
**Adornment and Theory**

Runner-up: Gallery 2052

**BEST KIDS CLOTHING**  
**The Red Balloon Co**

Runner-up: Peach Fuzz

**BEST LANDSCAPE COMPANY**  
**City Grange**

Runner-up: Patch Landscaping

**BEST LOCAL CLOTHING DESIGNER**  
**Sophia Reyes**

Runner-up: Joe Freshgoods

**BEST MASSAGE THERAPIST**  
**Becky Masters**

Runner-up: Amanda Flores

**BEST MOTORCYCLE SHOP**  
**Motoworks**

Runner-up: Federal Moto

**BEST PET ADOPTION OR ANIMAL SHELTER**  
**PAWS Chicago**

Runner-up: One Tail at a Time

**BEST PET STORE**  
**Urban Pooch**

Runner-up: Jameson Loves Danger

**BEST PICTURE FRAMING STORE**  
**Foursided**

Runner-up: Artists Frame Service

**BEST PLACE TO BUY GENDER-NEUTRAL CLOTHING**  
**Big Bud Press**

Runner-up: Penelope's

**BEST PLACE TO BUY LOCAL WARES**  
**Andersonville Galleria**

Runner-up: Foursided

**BEST PLACE TO BUY MEN'S CLOTHING**  
**Cowboys and Astronauts**

Runner-up: Hazel

**BEST PLACE TO BUY WOMEN'S CLOTHING**  
**Hazel**

Runner-up: Milk Handmade

**BEST PLACE TO GET MARRIED**  
**Chicago Cultural Center**

Runner-up: Salvage One

**BEST PLUS SIZE CLOTHING STORE**  
**Luvstick Plus**

Runner-up: Lost Girls Vintage

**BEST REAL ESTATE AGENT**  
**Johnny Mars**

Runner-up: Cindi Sodolski

**BEST REAL ESTATE COMPANY**  
**Living Room**

Runner-up: @Properties

**BEST RECORD STORE**  
**Reckless Records**

Runner-up: Laurie's Planet of Sound

**BEST RECOVERY CENTER**  
**Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation Chicago**

Runner-up: Above and Beyond

**BEST RESALE SHOP**  
**Brown Elephant**

Runner-up: Village Discount Outlet

**BEST SEX TOY SHOP**  
**Early to Bed**

Runner-up: Pleasure Chest

**BEST SHOE STORE**  
**Alamo Shoes**

Runner-up: Lori's

**BEST STREETWEAR BRAND**  
**Fat Tiger**

Runner-up: Englewood Branded

**BEST TATTOO ARTIST**  
**Esther Garcia**

Runner-up: Natalie Andrews

**BEST TATTOO SHOP**  
**Great Lakes Tattoo**

Runners-up: Logan Square Tattoo, Rocket Tattoo

**BEST T-SHIRT SHOP**  
**Strange Cargo**

Runner-up: Raygun

**BEST VETERINARIAN**  
**Ravenswood**

**Animal Hospital**  
Runner-up: Lincoln Square Animal Hospital

**BEST VINTAGE STORE**  
**Lost Girls Vintage**

Runner-up: Broadway Antique Market

continued from 40  
**Best supporter of local fashion talent**

## Chicago Fashion Incubator

“The CFI played a pivotal role in my transition from aspiring designer to working designer,” says Anna Brown, a Chicago Fashion Incubator alum. “Some of my most meaningful professional relationships were formed through the CFI, and my time there provided me with fundamental industry knowledge that I still rely on.”

Brown is one of the many successful fashion designers trained by CFI, a nonprofit arts organization. Other talented alumni include Agnes Hamerlik, Shelby Steiner, and Rakan Shams Aldeen, who, like other CFI graduates, went on to become a Project Runway contestant. Executive director Anna Hovet Dias, 36, (a CFI alum herself) says that the nonprofit has trained and supported more than 50 designers through its designer-in-residence program, which started in 2008 and keeps going strong. Current designers-in-residence include Nigerian-born Lola Osire from Lola Élan, a contemporary womenswear line featuring African wax prints, and Romance Anas-tasa from Queendom by Romance, an inclusive lingerie brand founded in Bronzeville.

According to Hovet Dias, the goal of the Chicago Fashion Incubator is to support fashion designers with mentorship, education, and physical studio space to help them launch and grow their apparel brands. There, they learn how to build a brand around their fashion product through manufacturing, marketing, sales, and business skills. Designers-in-residence commit to a six-month residency, which can be extended for up to three years. Virtual, hybrid, and in-person programs are currently offered with varying time commitments. Hovet Dias says applications are always open for the CFI, with onboarding happening every quarter. To apply, designers must have an established fashion business for at least one year, with proof of sales and a clear brand vision (fashion design students or wholesalers are not eligible). Designers-in-residence pay a monthly programming fee, which helps support the organization. CFI is also sponsored



Pieces from Lola Élan, designed by Lola Osire. Stylist: Sal Yvat. © RYAN BARHAUG

by Macy's, individual donations, and the Driehaus Design Initiative. The latter is responsible for the Driehaus Entrepreneurial Center, a resource center accessible to the CFI's designers-in-residence and alumni, functioning as a gathering place, and a space for workshops and talks with special guests related to the fashion industry. Those talks are occasionally open to the general public, and help the CFI connect with the local community—along with fashion shows and shopping events. —ISA GIALLORENZO

Best cross streets for marriage and divorce

## Clark and Randolph

The most memorable doughnut of my life was from the Do-Rite that used to be right around the corner from Pette-rino's. It was the morning of my divorce. My soon-to-be ex-husband and I were meeting for coffee before walking across Randolph to the Daley Center, where we would kick our three-year marriage to the curb. We needed sugar. I can't remember what he ordered at the time—a sure sign of the self-absorption that contributed to our dissolution—but mine was a glazed doughnut of resignation, a leavened dough I could mush easily between my anxious, sticky fingers. I still had streaks of sugar on my palms as my ex and I held hands in front of the judge, and, sobbing, sliced ourselves in half.

I thought about this doughnut the next time I found myself at Clark and Randolph. I hopped out of an Uber with my fiance with bouquet in hand, \$20 white dress draped across my

eager body, and muddy combat boots poking out from beneath the hemline. While he panicked and quickly realized that he'd lost our marriage license, I panicked and considered how I was getting remarried mere feet from my first failed experiment: "What a fucking fuck-up." I held my breath and jumped anyway, heading west on Randolph, crossing Clark, and marching shamelessly into City Hall. I sobbed through my vows and, with all the sweetness I had, stuck myself to my new husband.

Three happy years into that second marriage, I still get flustered when I pass through the intersection of Clark and Randolph. I think about the ends and beginnings on either side, the people walking into the best and worst days of their lives, the real impermanence of the whole ordeal. The Daley Center and City Hall, standing across from each other on Clark Street, make the same kind of vows and declarations to Chicago itself: We will withstand, love, honor, cherish, ruin, enrage, leave, and stand still. We will fall so short, but we will try again. What a wonderful fucking fuck-up. —KT HAWBAKER



Daley Plaza across from City Hall © PHIL ROEDER/FLICKR

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## Best of Chicago 2021



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#### Sports team with unwavering support from queer Chicago

### The Sky

Before the Chicago Sky made it anywhere near the Women's National Basketball Association finals against the Phoenix Mercury in 2021, you could find droves of queer women sitting in the spacious stands of the Wintrust Arena supporting Chicago's home team. With two-time WNBA MVP Candace Parker, who is from Naperville, returning to Chicago to join the Sky after 13 seasons with the Los Angeles Sparks, there came a newfound excitement for what the Sky could do during the 2021 season.

Still, the road to victory was rocky. The Sky had a seven-game winning streak and a seven-game losing streak in the 2021 season, yet one thing did not change: queer women gathering their friends—non-sports fans included—to go to home games and show support. I was surprised to receive invites to Sky basketball games, as a person who represents athletic teams purely based on my loyalty to Chicago more than any actual love for the games. But what kind of queer would I be not to show up for a team so obviously beloved by my community?

One of my favorite games was in August 2021 when the Sky faced off against the Seattle Storm. Even as I doubted that the Sky would win once we hit the third quarter and still weren't scoring quite enough, my friends' hopes didn't falter—and they were right. By the fourth quarter the Sky were slightly ahead and won after going into overtime. It was a joy to be in a space with so much energy and to see Chicago's hometown heroes persevere through a game that didn't start in their favor. At the time, no one knew the Sky would end up being the 2021 WNBA Champions, but if you ask my friends, they'd say they'd already called it.

No matter how next season begins or ends, one thing is for sure: the girls and gays will be in the stands showing much love and support.

—JANAYA GREENE

#### Best homage to White Sox pitcher Carlos Rodón and his April no-hitter

### Gummy Arts's hand-drawn baseball card

White Sox pitcher Carlos Rodón threw a no-hitter against Cleveland on a Wednesday night in April. Within a couple hours of that victory, Chicago artist Mike Noren tweeted a hand-drawn homage to the grand achievement under the handle Gummy Arts—that's the name Noren uses for his sprawling oeuvre of homemade trading cards that feature lovingly rendered drawings of popular sports figures and musicians. Noren's Gummy Arts endeavors can be traced back to January 2016, when he launched a Tumblr called Cecil Cooperstown to post hand-drawn cards paying tribute to great ballplayers who haven't been gilded by the Baseball Hall of Fame. Noren's got a knack for recreating the stylistic markings of Topps and Upper Deck cards, and his pictures balance touches of whimsy with immaculate detail. You can make out the curved shoelace loop on Rodón's right foot in Noren's drawing of the White Sox pitcher as he throws out the ball. Noren's depiction of Rodón's head is a smidge out of proportion than the rest of his body, but it works well with Noren's established style—plus, it gave him a little more space to identify stray hairs that decorate Rodón's cheeks. Noren's Rodón card is as much a tribute to a great moment in the White Sox 2021 season as it is an example of how fandom can generate genuinely fun creative expression. —LEOR GALIL

#### BEST ATHLETE

### Candace Parker

Runner-up: DeMar DeRozan

#### BEST BILLIARDS

### Surge Billiards

Runner-up: Pressure Billiards

#### BEST CANOE OR KAYAK RENTALS

### Chicago River Canoe and Kayak

Runner-up: Urban Kayaks

#### BEST DOG PARK

### Montrose Dog Beach

Runner-up: Horner Park Dog Park

#### BEST GYM

### Galter LifeCenter

Runner-up: Cheetah Gym

#### BEST LAKE SWIMMING SPOT

### Montrose Beach

Runner-up: Promontory Point

#### BEST NEIGHBORHOOD PARK

### Humboldt Park

Runner-up: Winnemac Park

#### BEST PROFESSIONAL

#### MEN'S SPORTS TEAM

### Chicago Bulls

Runner-up: Chicago White Sox

#### BEST PROFESSIONAL

#### WOMEN'S SPORTS TEAM

### Chicago Sky

Runner-up: Chicago Red Stars

#### BEST SPORTS FACILITY

### Wrigley Field

Runner-up: Guaranteed Rate Field

#### BEST SPORTS TV OR

#### RADIO ANNOUNCER

### Stacey King

Runner-up: Jason Benetti

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FOOD & DRINK

#### Best Girl Scout cookie spin-off

### Samoa cake by Aya Pastry

“It is important for us to have craveable and approachable treats executed at a high level that will make you a little bit happier than when you walked into the door,” says pastry chef Aya Fukai, 38, understating the sublime experience of savoring her scrumptious Samoa cakes—one of her most popular creations. Made with a moist chocolate buttermilk cake, frosted with dulce de leche buttercream, tossed in toasted coconut, and drizzled with chocolate for a crunch, Aya Pastry’s Samoa cake is everything a cake is supposed to be: a perfect mix of texture and flavor in every single bite, with the added portability of a doughnut. “The Samoa cake was created because my personal favorite Girl Scout cookie is the Samoa,” says Fukai. “I love cakes in general, and I wanted to create a cake version of my favorite cookie. I have always liked the personal/individual cake aspect of a cupcake but never was a fan, due to the ratio of frosting to cake. I wanted to make a handheld dessert with the frosting-to-cake ratio that I liked and with different textures,” she says. Texture is definitely the highlight of Aya Pastry’s Samoa cake—a gentle crunch from the chocolate covering is followed by the moist softness of the cake and frosting. The flavors are beautiful too, a classic combo of coconut and chocolate that’s tastefully sweet, unspoiled by any weird gimmicks. Comfort food at its best.

With a background in fine dining, Fukai used to work as a pastry chef for high-end restaurants and hotels in Boston (where she grew up) and here in Chicago. Although she was happy in those jobs, Fukai wanted to offer her creations to a wider audience: “I wanted to create a business that was more easily accessible and approachable for the general public,” she says. “In the Michelin-starred restaurants that I used to make desserts for, it was quite difficult to invite my closest friends and family, since it meant making them sit through a long, costly multiple-course meal just to try a bite-sized dessert. I wanted to create a company that could provide and support the pastry/bread programs of different Chicago venues at a higher quality,” she explains.



Aya Pastry’s Samoa cakes are made with chocolate buttermilk cake, frosted with dulce de leche buttercream, tossed in toasted coconut, and drizzled with chocolate for a crunch.  KRISTEN MENDIOLA

Aya Pastry opened in 2017 in West Town, first as a wholesaler catering to local restaurants, cafes, and markets. Once the pandemic hit, they decided to add a retail storefront to their bakery, complete with a drive-thru located in their parking lot (still open daily from 7 AM to 12 PM). Orders can be placed in person or online, and be picked up in-store or at the drive-thru window. The strategy worked: even though Aya Pastry lost 90 percent of their wholesale accounts during the city’s lockdown, they were able to keep all their workers employed. “I think one of the accomplishments that I am extremely proud of is how our team pivoted and adjusted to the pandemic. . . . With the willingness of the bakery team to quickly adapt to doing retail, and . . . with a handful of our wholesale customers’ huge success with their to-go programs, we were able to continue baking,” says Fukai. Another reason to celebrate is the many awards Aya Pastry has received since its opening, including: Best Pastry Chef by the *Chicago Tribune* in 2018, one of the top 100 bakeries in America by *Food & Wine* magazine in 2020, and being named the Best Bakery Empire for Chicago’s 2021 Eater Awards.

To achieve such stellar results, Fukai employs precise methods and high-quality ingredients such as Plugra butter, Red Rose flour, Cacao Barry Chocolate, and local farm produce

during warmer seasons. “We are not trying to reinvent the classics, but we strive to enhance them with whimsy or to make them to the best of our ability using quality ingredients. . . . We also create treats with Asian-inspired flavors due to my Japanese background but using French and American techniques,” she says. Besides the Samoa cake, other popular items include the classic country sourdough bread, a Japanese white bread called shokupan, almond croissants, kouign-amanns (a muffin-shaped buttery laminated French pastry), and all kinds of slices of cake that are offered on rotation in flavors such as chocolate peanut butter banana cake and cinnamon tres leches, or the Asian-inspired yuzu vanilla cake and black sesame cake.

Aya Pastry’s Samoa cakes can be found at their West Town storefront or in places such as Gaslight Coffee Roasters and Pilot Project Brewing in Logan Square, Passion House Coffee Roasters in Goose Island, Sparrow Coffee in Naperville, Eat Me Milk Me and the Hoxton in Fulton Market, Three House in West Town, the Dandy Crown in River West, Life Time Fitness in River North, the cafe at Steppenwolf Theatre, and Intelligentsia locations around the city. Their breads and pastries can be purchased at their shop and at Maple & Ash, Etta, Olivia’s Market, Plum Market, Foxtrot, and Tempesta Market. —ISA GIALLORENZO



#### BEST BAGELS

##### New York Bagel and Bialy

Runner-up: Chicago Bagel Authority

#### BEST BAKERY

##### Lost Larson

Runner-up: Dinkel's

#### BEST BANG FOR YOUR BUCK

##### Sultan's Market

Runner-up: Taste of Lebanon

#### BEST BANH MI

##### Nhu Lan Bakery

Runner-up: Ba Le

#### BEST BARBECUE

##### Smoque

Runner-up: Green Street Smoked Meats

#### BEST BARISTA (TIE)

##### Kayla Griffin Kiki Kuamo'o

Runner-up: Jordan Reinhardt

#### BEST BARTENDER

##### Mike Vanderbilt

Runner-up: Courtland Green

#### BEST BEER GARDEN

##### Hopleaf

Runner-up: Metropolitan Brewing

#### BEST BEER SHOP

##### Beer Temple

Runner-up: Binny's

#### BEST BREAD

##### Publican Quality Bread

Runner-up: Lost Larson

#### BEST BURGER

##### Small Cheval

Runner-up: Au Cheval

#### BEST BUTCHER SHOP

##### Paulina Meat Market

Runner-up: Gene's Sausage Shop

#### Best Thai food for the money

## The hot bar at Talard Thai Asian Market

Talard Thai Asian Market (5353 N. Broadway) opened in fall 2019, and in summer 2020 it launched a cash-only hot bar in the back of the store. Like the similar hot bar at Immm Rice & Beyond, it approximates the cheap but reliable offerings of the classic Thai rice-curry shop, glorified in the West as “authentic street food.” A combo of two hot-bar items with jasmine rice costs \$7.50, and three items will set you back just \$7.95.

If this were run-of-the-mill American Thai food, a deal like that might still be a “so what.” But Talard doesn't just sell familiar favorites such as panaeng, massaman, and khai phalo. The hot bar is one of only two places in the city I've encountered kaeng tai pla, a pungent, spicy southern curry made with fermented fish entrails—Talard's version uses kabocha, bamboo shoots, fish, Thai eggplant, and long beans, and sometimes includes snappy, vividly bitter pea eggplants too. You'll also routinely find kaeng hang le, an unctuous northern pork-belly curry that balances sour, sweet, salty, spicy, and funky, with plenty of ginger and Thai pickled garlic.

On weekends especially, when the hot bar offers more variety, you might see Laotian dishes, among them kaeng nor mai, a bamboo-shoot soup made with earthy yanang-leaf juice, okra, mushrooms, and squash. Weekends sometimes also mean unposted specials, announced on Talard's Facebook page: be sure to ask what's new, and you could get the chance to order kanom krok, Hainanese chicken and rice, or batter-fried bananas. Any day but Wednesday, you can get som tam, with add-ins including salted egg, brined crabs, and pla ra. The hot bar opens at 10 AM, when the market does, and usually closes at 6 PM (or earlier if business is slow).

And because the groceries at Talard will surely call out to you too, I should mention that it's often even cheaper to cook your own Thai food. I recommend starting with the cookbooks of part-time Chicagoan and friend of the *Reader* Leela Punyaratabandhu, or with her lively and helpful newsletter, the *Epestle*.

—PHILIP MONTORO



Half of the hot bar at Talard Thai Asian Market. Its offerings include familiar American Thai favorites as well as dishes that are harder to find in the city's restaurants. © PHILIP MONTORO FOR CHICAGO READER

#### Best reason to catch a ride to the northwest suburbs with a hot-dog fanatic

## Eggsum Holycow in Glenview

I'm a gourmand when it comes to hot dogs and their crustier cousin, the corn dog. When I went to a Chicago Dogs baseball game on \$1 hot dog night last summer, I took the special promotion as a challenge and consumed an irresponsible number of wieners. But I also recognize a special tubular meat product when I see one, and the Korean corn dogs served at Eggsum Holycow in Glenview are one such delicacy. In the fall, I planned my inaugural trek to a restaurant whose dishes have become a TikTok curiosity partly because of the variety of eye-popping toppings on the menu; you can get your deep-fried

dog-on-a-stick coated in a rainbow-colored rice puff cereal, or Cheetos that have been ground into dust, or spaghetti. I'd be lying if I said I didn't want to visit this place because I had trouble processing the concept of a salty, savory meat stick adorned with a sugary cereal forbidden to me for most of my childhood. And all that was before I realized the “dog” options weren't strictly meat—you can get a whole stick of mozzarella instead of sausage, or go halvesies on the meat and cheese. I suppose I'm a simple guy, because I've only ever tried Holycow's meat-based treats, and I still savor the memory. The Fruity Pop dog worked better than I could've predicted; the sausage's spicy kick played well against the sweetness of the brightly colored toppings and battered crust. I suppose I don't need to trek all the way out to Glenview since a Korean corn dog spot called Kong Dog recently opened in Little Italy, but the Eggsum Holycow offerings are worth another trip. —LEOR GALIL



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**Best hot chocolate mix to sprinkle on everything**

## Salted caramel drinking chocolate mix by Katherine Anne Confections

Sometimes you just need some hot chocolate, and sometimes that's at 2 AM when all you've got is an expired Swiss Miss packet hidden in the depths of your pantry. What a sad state of affairs. Avoid that tragedy by always having hot chocolate mix by Katherine Anne Confections, proudly made in Logan Square. In flavors such as Mexican, semisweet, milk, and superdark, there are options for all kinds of cravings. The honorable mention goes to the salted caramel flavor, which is perfectly rich, sweet, and a tad bitter, with that lovely dark brown hue to be expected from a good cup of hot chocolate. The surprise factor comes with the nutty and buttery caramel taste, which is the real thing, as owner and master chocolatier Katherine Duncan, 37, explains: "I came up with the idea when brainstorming one day of how to get real caramel flavor (not just extract) into a shelf-stable chocolate mix.

We mixed in chunks of our housemade toffee, and loved it. It takes a little bit longer to melt together, but the flavor is incomparable. We use a mix of bittersweet, semisweet, and milk chocolates; sea salt; and our housemade toffee (made with organic sugar, butter, salt, and vanilla)." Both the salted caramel and Mexican flavors received gold soft Awards by the Specialty Food Association—aka the Oscars of the specialty food industry.

The mix is pretty versatile and can be used to top ice cream, yogurt, oatmeal, s'mores, coffee, etc.—or simply be eaten directly out of the jar. To prepare hot chocolate, Duncan suggests heating and whisking equal parts of chocolate and liquid, such as cream, milk, or oat milk. Then, add another one to two parts of hot liquid. "Less instant, more delicious," she says of her brew, which she likes to prepare with cream in the first phase, and coconut milk in the next. I personally make this hot chocolate fairly instantly by heating up almond milk,



Chocolate mixes for drinking, snacking, and eating right out of the jar. **ISA GIALLORENZO FOR CHICAGO READER**

then pouring just enough of it to cover half a cup of the chocolate. I stir until the chocolate melts, then add some more of the hot almond milk. Some of the caramel stays in the spoon and I love it. It takes less than three minutes and three dishes.

But if even that sounds onerous to you, just go to Katherine Anne Confections and choose from 15 different prepared drinking chocolates in the shop, including several vegan choices, and a bevy of seasonal flavors (right now they have vegan butterscotch and brown butter rum, among others). The prices are \$6 for medium and \$9 for large, and all come topped with housemade marshmallows. The mix costs \$26 for the 15-ounce jar, and can make anywhere from six to 15 servings. Mixes can be purchased at Katherine Anne's shop, online through their website (\$15 shipping), by local delivery via Cut Cats courier (\$5-\$20), or at L&M Fine Foods in Lincoln Square.

—ISA GIALLORENZO

### BEST CANNIBIS CHEF

**Mindy Segal**

Runner-up: Manny Mendoza

### BEST CARIBBEAN RESTAURANT

**Irazu**

Runner-up: Jibaritos y Mas

### BEST CARRYOUT OR DELIVERY COCKTAILS

**Lost Lake**

Runner-up: Victor Bar

### BEST CHEESEMONGER

**Beautiful Rind**

Runner-up: Stamper Cheese Company

### BEST CHEF

**Stephanie Izard**

Runner-up: Rick Bayless

### BEST CHINESE RESTAURANT

**Sun Wah BBQ**

Runner-up: Lao Sze Chuan

### BEST CHINESE TAKEOUT OR DELIVERY (TIE)

**Friendship Chinese Sun Wah BBQ**

Runner-up: House of Wah Sun

### BEST COCKTAIL

**Violet Hour**

Runner-up: Scofflaw

### BEST COFFEE ROASTER

**Dark Matter**

Runner-up: Metropolis

### BEST COFFEE SHOP

**Beans & Bagels**

Runner-up: Afro Joe's

Coffee & Tea

### BEST COOKING CLASSES

**The Chopping Block**

Runner-up: The Wooden Spoon

### BEST DESSERTS

**Bang Bang Pie & Biscuits**

Runner-up: Margie's Candies

### BEST DOUGHNUTS

**Stan's**

Runner-up: Do-Rite

### BEST FALAFEL

**Sultan's Market**

Runners-up: Pita Inn, Taste Of Lebanon

### BEST FARMERS MARKET

**Logan Square Farmers Market**

Runner-up: Green City Market

### BEST FOOD RELIEF EFFORT

**Greater Chicago Food Depository**

Runner-up: Love Fridge

### BEST FOOD TRUCK

**DönerMen**

Runner-up: The Fat Shallot

### BEST FRIED CHICKEN SHACK

**Honey Butter Fried Chicken**

Runner-up: Harold's

### BEST GLUTEN-FREE PIZZA

**Spacca Napoli**

Runner-up: Lou Malnati's

### BEST GOURMET MARKET

**Gene's Sausage Shop**

Runner-up: Eataly

### BEST GREEK RESTAURANT

**Greek Islands**

Runner-up: Athenian Room

### BEST HOME GARDEN SUPPLY

**Gethsemane Garden Center**

Runner-up: Adams & Son & Daughter Gardens

### BEST HOT DOG

**Superdawg**

Runner-up: Gene & Jude's

### BEST ICE CREAM

**Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams**

Runner-up: Margie's Candies

### BEST INDIAN RESTAURANT

**The Spice Room**

Runner-up: Ghareeb Nawaz

### BEST ITALIAN BEEF SANDWICH

**Portillo's**

Runner-up: Al's #1 Italian Beef

### BEST ITALIAN RESTAURANT

**Monteverde**

Runner-up: Piccolo Sogno

### BEST KOREAN RESTAURANT

**San Soo Gab San**

Runner-up: Cho Sun Ok

### BEST LIQUOR STORE

**Binny's**

Runner-up: Andersonville Wine and Spirits

### BEST LOCAL BEER

**Half Acre**

Runner-up: Revolution

### BEST LOCAL BREWERY

**Half Acre**

Runner-up: Marz

### BEST LOCAL DISTILLERY

**Koval**

Runner-up: CH Distillery

### BEST LOCAL FARMER

**Mick Klug Farm**

Runner-up: Nichols Farm & Orchard

### BEST LOCAL FOOD PRODUCT

**Upton's Naturals**

Runner-up: Bike a Bee Honey

### BEST LOCAL GROCER

**The Dill Pickle Food Co-op**

Runner-up: HarvesTime Foods

### BEST LOCAL SPIRIT

**Koval**

Runner-up: Jeppson's Malört

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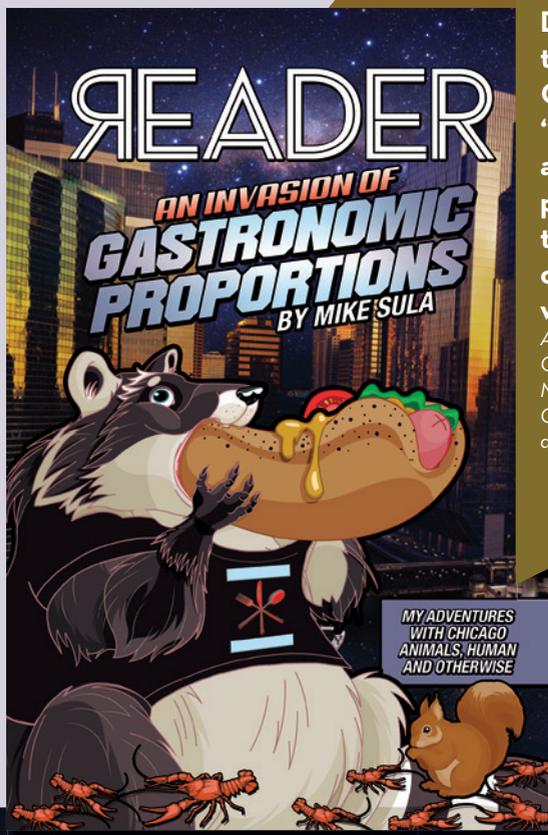


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Head to the nearest Protein Bar & Kitchen before tomato soup season is over. © COURTESY PROTEIN BAR & KITCHEN

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**Best stand-alone tomato soup**

## Protein Bar & Kitchen

Until now tomato soup served mostly as a kind of dip for grilled cheese. (RIP Bite Cafe and their grilled cheese, by the way. A moment of silence.) But that is not the case with Protein Bar & Kitchen's tomato soup, which is a complete dish in its own right—not that it can't be followed by a wrap or one of their protein bowls. Thick and chunky, creamy and packed with flavor, PBK's tomato soup is garnished with melted parmesan and nut-free pesto. According to Kate Rettker, PBK's director of marketing, their tomato soup has nutritional value beyond the "comfort factor"; it is fortified with nutritional yeast, giving it 17 grams of protein with 210 calories per bowl. For an added nutritional boost, riced cauliflower can be added.

Speaking of nutrition, PBK is a bit of a local

gem in terms of chain restaurants, offering both convenience and healthy meals. Founded in Chicago in 2009 by Matt Matros, Protein Bar & Kitchen opened the first restaurant across from the Willis Tower with the goal of serving "fast fuel" as opposed to fast food, providing foods packed with protein—including unconventional ones such as quinoa. Protein Bar is definitely not the only healthy food chain around—gladly there are many other options available, such as Sweetgreen, Freshii, and Just Salad. But PBK is the one that serves some of the most comfort-y items, with a certain juiciness that makes eating healthy foods a bit more enticing. According to Rettker, some of their best sellers are the Mexicali bowl, the PB&J shake, the kale caesar salad, and the egg roll bowl. The tomato soup, which sells for \$5.99 a bowl and \$3.49 a cup, is also one of their most popular items. But it's seasonal, served exclusively during fall and winter months—so run before it's gone. It's worth it. —ISA GIALLORENZO

### BEST MEAL KITS

#### Alinea at Home

Runner-up: Logan Oyster Socials

### BEST MEXICAN RESTAURANT

#### Mi Tocaya

Runner-up: Cafe El Tapatio

### BEST MIDDLE EASTERN RESTAURANT

#### Sultan's Market

Runner-up: Middle East Bakery & Grocery

### BEST NEW FOOD TREND

#### Cocktails to go

Runner-up: Plant based

### BEST NEW POP-UP

#### Snackie Chan

Runner-up: Paper Plane Pizza

### BEST ONLINE COOKING INSTRUCTION

#### The Chopping Block

Runner-up: The Korean Vegan

### BEST OUTDOOR DINING

#### Handlebar

Runner-up: Aba

### BEST OVERALL RESTAURANT

#### Lula Cafe

Runner-up: The Warbler

### BEST PALETERIA

#### La Michoacana

Runners-up: Lindo Michoacan Paeteria, Paeteria las Delicias de Michoacan

### BEST PANDEMIC PIVOT

#### FROM A RESTAURANT

#### Lula

Runner-up: Big Kids

### BEST PIEROGI

#### Kasia's

Runner-up: Gene's Sausage Shop

### BEST PIZZA

#### Pequod's

Runner-up: Spacca Napoli

### BEST PIZZA BY THE SLICE

#### Dimo's

Runner-up: Dante's

### BEST PIZZA DELIVERY

#### Lou Malnati's

Runner-up: Pete's Pizza

### BEST PLACE WORTH A WAIT

#### Lula Cafe

Runner-up: Au Cheval

### BEST POLISH RESTAURANT

#### Staropolska Restaurant

Runner-up: Red Apple Buffet

### BEST PRESERVES

#### Rare Bird Preserves

Runner-up: Southport Grocery and Cafe

### BEST QUESABIRRIA OR

#### BIRRIA DE RES TACOS

#### Birrieria Zaragoza

Runners-up: Birria Ta-Ta-Tacos, Tacotlan

### BEST RAMEN

#### Wasabi

Runner-up: Furious Spoon

### BEST RESTAURANT GROUP

#### Lettuce Entertain You

Runner-up: Boka Restaurant Group

### BEST SANDWICH

#### JP Graziano

Runner-up: Jerry's

### BEST SEAFOOD RESTAURANT

#### Lowcountry

Runner-up: Lawrence Fish Market

### BEST SOCIALLY

#### DISTANCED DINING

#### Parson's Chicken and Fish

Runner-up: Eris Brewery and Ciderhouse

### BEST SOUL FOOD RESTAURANT

#### Luella's

Runner-up: Soul Vegetarian

### BEST SOUP

#### Ramen-san

Runner-up: Soupbox

### BEST SOURDOUGH

#### Publican Quality Bread

Runner-up: Bungalow by Middle Brow

### BEST STEAK HOUSE

#### Tango Sur

Runner-up: Gibsons

### BEST SUSHI

#### Lawrence Fish Market

Runner-up: Gorilla Sushi

### BEST TAQUERIA

#### Taqueria Chingon

Runner-up: L'Patron

### BEST THAI RESTAURANT

#### Opart Thai

Runner-up: Sticky Rice

### BEST UP-AND-COMING CHEF

#### Halee Raff

Runner-up: Arshiya Farheen

### BEST URBAN FARM

#### Urban Growers

#### Collective

Runner-up: The Urban Canopy

### BEST VEGAN RESTAURANT

#### Kale My Name

Runner-up: Urban Vegan

### BEST VEGETARIAN RESTAURANT

#### Chicago Diner

Runner-up: Handlebar

### BEST VIETNAMESE RESTAURANT

#### Pho 888

Runner-up: HaiSous

### BEST WINE BAR

#### Webster's

Runner-up: Volo

### BEST WINE LIST

#### Webster's Wine Bar

Runner-up: Rootstock

### BEST WINE SHOP

#### All Together Now

Runner-up: Vin Chicago

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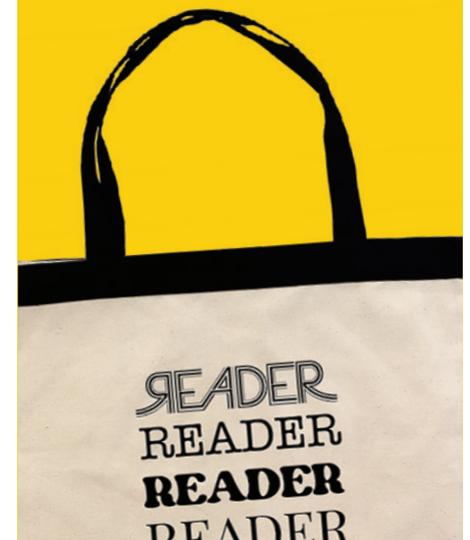


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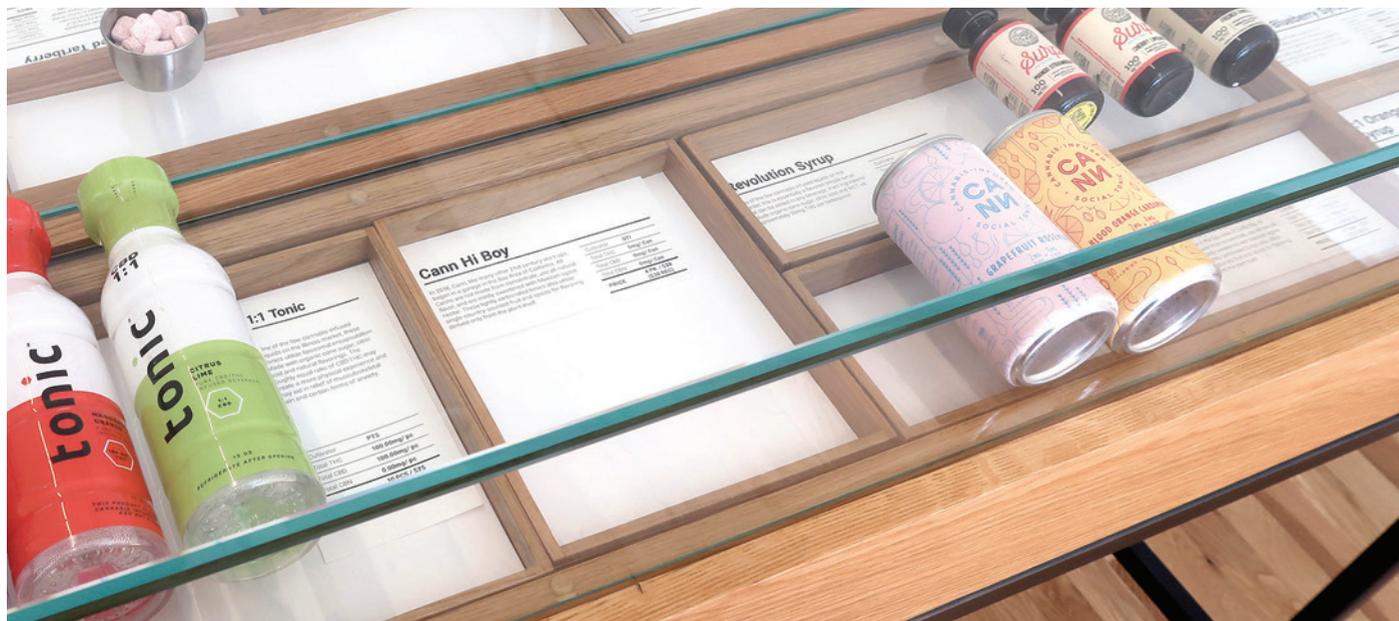




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Cann's tasty, cannabis-infused beverages have turned our friends into Cannabelievers. AMBER HUFF FOR CHICAGO READER

### Best drink for a relaxed high

## Cann

Sometimes you need to wind down after a long day, but the idea of preparing cannabis for a lovely night's rest feels like even more work. This is where Cann's cannabis-infused beverages save the day.

The tonics are a mix of 4 mg of CBD and 2 mg of THC and come in a variety of flavors, like Lemon Lavender and Blood Orange Cardamom. Not to be confused with the potency of most edibles, the low-dose beverages are an alternative to alcohol that can provide a light buzz if desired at gatherings. I've found the drinks are just as effective at outings as they are right at home as a tasty relaxant.

The out-of-the-norm flavors are not even what I love most about these drinks. A few sips have calmed my anxiety on numerous occasions, plus the devilish cramps that pay me a visit every month slowly but surely disappear after a Cann. After introducing the drinks to friends, I've gained an army of Cannabelievers.

More than a relaxer, Cann's tonics can provide for a healthier communal space. While many enjoy the effects of cannabis, not everyone is too keen on its smell. Especially if you live in a multiunit residence, greeting your neighbors with the smell of your cannabis may not bode well for an introduction. I welcome you to visit your local dispensary, grab a six-pack of the flavor that calls to you, and find out how many sips it takes for you to reach your calmest vibe. —JANAYA GREENE

### Second-best reason to visit a dispensary

## People-watching

After I got my medical card in 2020, I was flying high (yep, I said it), sure that it bestowed upon me magical powers that included being able to cut the long-ass line at my chosen dispensary. Not so fast, mama; you gotta wait like everyone else. Which turned out to be delightful, because the best people-watching I've experienced during COVID has been in the dispensary line.

Giggly young couples in matching marked jeans stand alongside a gentleman who I suspect still calls joints "jazz cigarettes," and a woman toting a manual scooter, giant shopping bags, and a penchant for sharing her whole life story with the person checking IDs. I've built sprawling imaginary narratives about my linemates, trying to guess what they've bought and how long they've been coming here. The staff also don't disappoint, from the bored but alert guards outside to the fast-moving attendants inside.

The experience in line also makes me reflect on the impact of legalization on both the public perception of cannabis and my personal willingness to dabble in it. Something that was once underground—and that felt off-limits to me—now has me and dozens of others waiting out in the open on a busy street in a bustling neighborhood.

The line is long but we are patient and unbothered, secure in the knowledge that on the other side of this wait is cannabis-infused calm. My medical card is magic after all.

—KAREN HAWKINS

### BEST "ADULT USE" (REC) BUDTENDER

Jeff Iansiti

Runner-up: Brandon Sherlock

### BEST "ADULT USE" DISPENSARY

Dispensary 33

Runner-up: Sunnyside

Wrigleyville

### BEST CANNABIS ACCESSORY BOUTIQUE (NON-DISPENSARY)

Canna Bella Lux

Runner-up: Saint Lucia's

Smoke Shop

### BEST CANNABIS ACCESSORY SELECTION IN A DISPENSARY

Sunnyside Wrigleyville

Runner-up: RISE Mundelein

### BEST CANNABIS ADVOCACY OR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE ORGANIZATION

Cannabis Equity

Coalition Illinois

Runner-up: Chicago NORML

### BEST CANNABIS SUPPER CLUB, HOME CHEF, OR CATERER

High-minded Events

Runner-up: Manny Mendoza

### BEST CLINIC TO GET CERTIFIED FOR A MEDICAL CARD

Dr. Mauricio Consalter

Runner-up: Acute on Chronic



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# GROWING FOR GOOD with Green Thumb

**Social Equity Empowerment Network: supporting small businesses in cannabis**

Featuring Belicia Royster, social equity applicant, ancillary business owner, and founder/chief empowerment officer of Social Equity Empowerment Network (S.E.E.N.)

**W**hat is S.E.E.N.—the Social Equity Empowerment Network—all about? What need are you aiming to fill and/or what problem are you trying to solve?

**Belicia Royster:** S.E.E.N. is aiming to support and empower small businesses. We're focused on closing the wealth gap by creating more Black-owned businesses and millionaires, and reversing history with the cannabis industry as the catalyst.

**What has S.E.E.N. accomplished to date that you are most proud of? What are your current priorities?**

**BR:** S.E.E.N. is the only equity-based trade association based in Illinois focused on emerging industries such as cannabis, while also being one of the premiere advocacy organizations. S.E.E.N. has been able to remain unconflicted and focused on creating true equity in the cannabis industry. The policy work that S.E.E.N. has been a part of has led to the discontinuation of the hiring qualifier for social equity status. This policy also enacted the lottery that announced the next 110 licenses on time. It also minimized ownership caps to assist in making sure that more people would benefit from these opportunities. S.E.E.N. is continuing to work on policies that will create entry points into the industry. Additionally, S.E.E.N. is focused on creating a more adequate definition for social equity and making sure that there are safeguards in place to ensure that those that deserve to benefit actually do!

The organization also aims to prepare business owners to enter the cannabis industry by advocating through education and providing resources, knowledge, and tools that aim to assist business owners and applicants—all while focusing on success and sustainability in the cannabis industry.

S.E.E.N. has created a cooperative

network of several people. Members are able to create connections for business support and connect into an ecosystem of social equity businesses.

S.E.E.N. has grown to become a national voice. We're launching chapters in Arkansas, Arizona, Michigan, Missouri, Washington, and Virginia. This organization is dedicated to expanding the equity conversation across the country.

**How can our readers help S.E.E.N. reach their goals, to be as effective as possible?**

**BR:** S.E.E.N. welcomes social equity applicants, minority business owners, ancillary businesses, and those aspiring to be a part of the industry to join as a member, sponsor, or volunteer. Anyone interested in donating to our cause or becoming a member can visit our website at [www.equityempower.org](http://www.equityempower.org). Supporters may also follow us on social media.



Born and raised in Chicago, Belicia Royster is a passionate change influencer, advocate, and activist for disenfranchised communities. She works as a risk manager, founder of S.E.E.N., and owner of Vice Life Ventures, providing risk management and insurance consulting for business owners.



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# Spark<sup>o</sup>

## THE CONVERSATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

### Stigma, a silent killer: cannabis and mental health

The adage, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but names will never hurt me,” can be traced back to the late 1800s. It was used to encourage bravery and ward off insults. However, studies have shown that hurtful words can actually cause a physical change. According to an article published in Pubmed in 2006, evidence shows that harmful words can damage the way the white matter in the brain develops. There is a correlation between this damage and undue mental health issues.

When people are judged or tormented based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or physical and/or mental appearances, that is stigma in action. *Stigma is a silent killer because the wounds usually don't manifest themselves in the physical sense.* Therefore, often it remains hidden from others for fear of being judged even further.

Mental health and mental illnesses are often stigmatized. Individuals are often dismissed, gaslighted, or punished for their admissions. In 1999, the U.S. Surgeon General wrote a report stating that stigma is a *public health concern* that causes people with mental health issues to be discriminated against with housing and employment, and outcast from certain social settings.

Responsible cannabis users also find that the same stigmas are often applied to them. The legalization of cannabis has helped to break some of the stigmas associated with its use. Individuals that partake in cannabis come from all walks of life and typically only share this knowledge with those they trust, for fear of being seen as less than.

Let's ask Alia Rechert from the Spark initiative about this silent killer. To continue reading, please visit [chicagoreader.com/ngwspark](http://chicagoreader.com/ngwspark)

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## Best shows to binge-watch in weed

# Chopped 420, Family Business, Growing Belushi, MalaYerba

The year 2021 was another great one for binge-watching weed content. We've seen some new series premiere as well as new seasons drop from old ones. Whether you're into comedy, drama, or reality shows, you can find something that appeals to you in this rapidly expanding viewing category. Here are my recommendations:

### Chopped 420

A reality series that launched on the Food Network in early 2021 (also available for streaming on the Discovery+ platform), *Chopped 420* follows a similar format as the original *Chopped*. Four chefs compete in a three-course elimination competition using mystery ingredients, but in the *420* version, the chefs also need to incorporate cannabis. The winner gets \$10,000, plus the related publicity. Ron Funches hosts, and chef judges include Esther Choi, Luke Reyes, and Sam Talbot.

### Family Business

In this French comedy, after learning that France is about to legalize pot, a down-on-

his-luck entrepreneur and his family scramble to turn their butcher shop into a weed cafe. Created by Igor Gotesman, the show is best described as a mix between *How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)* and *The Middle*. The third season was released in 2021 on Netflix.

### Growing Belushi

Actor Jim Belushi introduces viewers to his southern Oregon cannabis-growing business, Belushi's Farm, on this Discovery+ documentary series. The second season focuses on the farm's expansion as well as Belushi and his staff growing the business nationally. The second season was slated for 2021, but was released in January 2022 due to COVID-related delays.

### MalaYerba

Medical cannabis has just been legalized in Colombia, and three young entrepreneurs attempt to make their way in the new market in this drama that debuted in 2021. Available on AppleTV with English subtitles, this highly rated series is also the first Spanish-language program available through the StarzPlay platform.

### What's next

As cannabis continues to be legalized and cannabis culture becomes more mainstream, look for other shows to debut this year. Rumored series include a sequel to *Weeds* called *Weeds 4.20* on Starz. —**HELAINA KRYSIK**

### BEST CONSUMABLE, OTHER (MINT, TABLET, SNACK FOOD, ETC.) incredibles

Runner-up: 1906 drops

### BEST GROW SUPPORT RESOURCE Soul and Wellness

Runner-up: Home Grow Chicago

### BEST HOME GROW SUPPLY SHOP Chicago Roots Hydroponics & Organics

Runner-up: Brew & Grow

### BEST INFUSED BEVERAGE (DRINK, DROP, SYRUP, TEA) Cann

Runner-up: PTS Tonic

### BEST INFUSED CHOCOLATE Mindy's Caramelized Chocolate Marshmallow Graham

Runner-up: incredibles

### BEST INFUSED GUMMIES Mindy's

Runner-up: Wana

### BEST LOCAL CBD SOURCE (LOCAL NON-DISPENSARY SHOP OR BRAND) Cubbington's Cabinet

Runner-up: CBD Kratom

### BEST MEDICAL BUDDENDER OR PATIENT CARE REP Katie Sullivan

Runner-up: Jeff Iansiti

### BEST MEDICAL CANNABIS DISPENSARY Dispensary 33

Runner-up: RISE Mundelein

### BEST NON-VAPE CONCENTRATE (STRAIN & BRAND/PRODUCER) RYTHM Jack Herer

Runner-up: Cresco Pineapple Express

### BEST PET CBD PRODUCT Cubbington's Cabinet P'Nut Budder Drops

Runner-up: Cubbington's Cabinet Chik'n-licious Drops

### BEST PRODUCT FOR INCREASED LIBIDO 1906 Love Drops

Runner-up: Afternoon Delight

### BEST STRAIN OR CONSUMABLE PRODUCT FOR PAIN RELIEF (INCLUDE PRODUCER) RYTHM Kosher Kush

Runner-up: nuEra LSD strain

### BEST STRAIN OR PRODUCT FOR RELIEF OF ANXIETY (INCLUDE PRODUCER) RYTHM Orange Herijuana

Runner-up: Cubbington's Cabinet Classic CBD

### BEST STRAIN OR PRODUCT FOR SLEEP (INCLUDE PRODUCER) incredibles snoozzeberry

Runner-up: Cubbington's Cabinet Nighttime Reserve

### BEST TOPICAL Dr. Solomon's

Runner-up: PTS Body Oil

### BEST VAPE CONCENTRATE (STRAIN & BRAND/PRODUCER) Cresco Lemon Bean

Runner-up: RYTHM Live

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Best of  
Chicago  
2021



ARTS & CULTURE

Best flash mob by middle-aged  
Korean women in a Korean market

## Ajumma Rising

February 1, 2022: Serpent Day. Candy-Making Day. World Hijab Day. National Baked Alaska Day. International Face and Body Art Day. And a historic day when the Lunar New Year coincided with the first day of Black History Month—and a troupe of ajummas in top-to-toe uniform—perms, visors, puffy vests, patterned pants, and practical shoes—descended as a dancing flash mob upon the Joong Boo Market food court in Glenview and served up a heaping helping of joy, sass, and floral/paisley clash with the chapchae, buns, and soondubu. Step aside for your elders, BTS—the ajummas have arrived!

But what is an ajumma? Korean for “middle-aged woman,” the average ajumma is known for her tenacity, her obsession with her kids, and her sharp elbows in a crowd. Like gochujang, she is spicy, robust, omnipresent, and a touch aged. And now she is also an icon for a sisterhood of shopping, eating, hip-hop-dancing sensations who take care of their families and take care of each other.

“We are the new generation of ajummas,”



Ajumma Rising © COURTESY AJUMMA RISING

says Ajumma Rising founder Joanne Yum Gutierrez. “A good chunk of us are Korean adoptees raised by non-Korean families—and we are not all Korean. Ashley Jackson, who choreographed the flash mob, is a Black single mother and an ajumma. If you are a middle-aged woman, if you have struggles, if you hustle and self-sacrifice for other people, if you work hard—if you fit that criteria, you’re

an ajumma.”

If you missed the moment, you can watch at [youtu.be/MTItYU27uPQ](https://youtu.be/MTItYU27uPQ)

If you’re an ajumma seeking other ajummas, you can apply to join the crew at [forms.gle/D791ay8bWkmmS2S88](https://forms.gle/D791ay8bWkmmS2S88)

For a notion of the nosh at Joong Boo, get a gander at [www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcKPAwKBWwY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CcKPAwKBWwY) —IRENE HSIAO

Best place to read a play

## Perceptions Theatre

If you’ve had your fill of dead white male playwrights, or even if you just want to add some variety to your dramatic play reading list, Perceptions Theatre has the prescription for you. The company, founded by artistic director Myesha-Tiara, has been hosting a play reading club that features BIPOC playwrights. During the pandemic the meetings were virtual, but this coming April will mark their first in-person meetings (though a virtual one will still be available) at locations throughout south-side Chicago.

They provide a PDF of the play each month for participants to read. Sometimes they’ll have the playwright sit in on the discussion, and some months they host a watch party of the play before they discuss it.

They’ll be releasing an upcoming reading list in March of creative writers of color. Their

next meeting is in April and the play is *Scorpio* by west-side Chicago native Alfonzo Khalil. It’s a play that explores relationships, infidelity, and longing. There are four characters whom he says are Black, but can be of any gender. Other recent plays the club has read include *A Soldier’s Play* by Charles Fuller and *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson.

Jerluane “Jay” Jenkins, the executive director of Perceptions Theatre and a playwright in her own right (her play *Black Magic* was the inaugural production for the company), says the club is about creating a safe space for people of all ages.

“Our goal with our play club is to expose our audience to work made by BIPOC and LGBTQ+ writers,” she explained in a promotional video on the company website. “This is our effort to make the theater you see represent you and the world you see today and to change your perceptions on how you view theater.”

So tune in to [perceptionstheatre.org](https://perceptionstheatre.org) to snag your ticket to the next play club meeting and

join Chicago’s best place to read a play. — BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

Best reason for a fully vaxxed  
and boosted person to raise  
their mask and a glass

## Windy City Playhouse

It’s no secret that theater companies (and movie theaters) make a lot of their profits at the concession stand. So curating themed cocktails is not that uncommon for theater spaces around Chicago. However, there is one location that has made their drink menu as iconic as their immersive work—Windy City Playhouse. Not only do their cocktails dazzle at the bar, they often make appearances in the show itself. It isn’t very often (probably never?) that one can enjoy the same drink as the characters they’re watching onstage. (That is, unless you’re very good at guessing a



#### BEST ART GALLERY

##### Co-Prosperity Sphere

Runner-up: Chicago Truborn

#### BEST ART GROUP OR COLLECTIVE

##### Englewood Arts Collective

Runner-up: Project Onward

#### BEST CHOREOGRAPHER

##### Star Dixon

Runner-up: Stephanie Martinez

#### BEST COMEDIAN (NON STANDUP)

##### Maggie Winters

Runner-up: Alex Collyard

#### BEST COMICS ILLUSTRATOR

##### Keith J. Taylor

Runner-up: Chris Ware

#### BEST COMICS WRITER

##### Chris Ware

Runner-up: Megan Kirby

#### BEST DANCE PRODUCTION

##### Fly Honey Show's *DIY Fly*

Runner-up: Hubbard

Street Dance's *RE/TURN*

at Harris Theater

#### BEST DANCE STUDIO OR TRAINING PROGRAM

##### Hyde Park School of Dance

Runner-up: Giordano

Dance Chicago

#### BEST DANCE TROUPE

##### Fly Honeys

Runner-up: Joffrey Ballet

#### BEST DANCER

##### Donnetta "LilBit" Jackson

Runner-up: Dawn Xiana Moon

#### BEST DRAG PERFORMER

##### Lucy Stoole

Runner-up: Derry Queen

show's prop selection or you've read *A Streetcar Named Desire* one too many times.) There is just too much about this one-of-a-kind venue to sum up in so little space. Windy City's immersive style, known for its nosh and libations, has been woefully missed during the ghostlit pandemic. Many theaters are still not allowing beverages in the audience as of yet, though hopefully the day will come soon when we can toast together—even if that means unmasking just in between sips. It's been way too long since we've savored Windy City's hot spiced wine. Making it yourself is just not the same. Little else will feel normal until we can sip a period-appropriate cocktail while having a fly-on-the-wall experience watching someone else's life. (Seriously when is *Southern Gothic* being remounted? We need Cheez Whiz on crackers and champagne, stat!) —**AMANDA FINN**

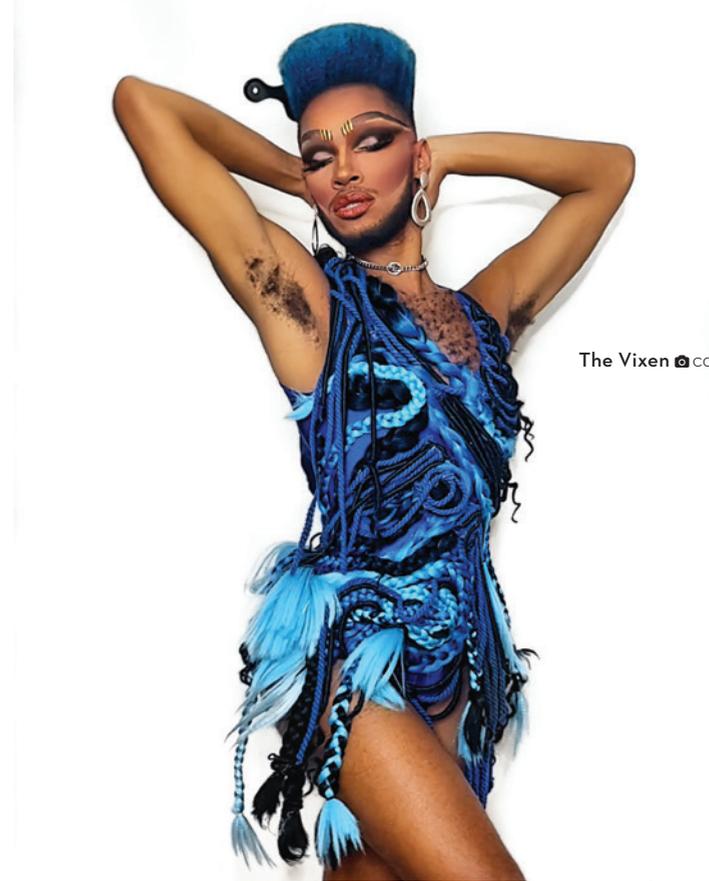
#### Best drag queen and successful equality advocate turned mental health advocate

## The Vixen

**F**ierce, powerful, and incredibly talented, the Vixen is the sweetheart of Chicago's drag scene. Following her appearance on *RuPaul's Drag Race*, the Vixen has become a champion and leader of Chicago queens, with a self-stated mission to "make the community better, be the hall monitor of drag—keeping everyone on their toes." The Vixen has gone above and beyond in her community by promoting and casting Black queens with the goal of creating spaces for visibility and inclusion following Black Chicagoans' concerns with how Northalsted (Boystown) had only made space for white queens in the drag scene.

For the Vixen, the best part of performing has always been the moments just before the performance, waiting to see what the initial reaction will be. Those final moments are when the Vixen centers herself. Oftentimes the Vixen forgets how good she is—drag is not just something that she does, but it's something she is very good at. She has a lot of these revelations while performing.

Hoping more queens like her can share in this feeling, the Vixen started *Black Girl Magic*, a show that hosts a talented mix of Chicago's best and sometimes unknown Black



The Vixen @ COURTESY THE VIXEN

drag queens. The Vixen made it her personal goal to give Black queens the platform they need to succeed. Two years later, with the success of *Black Girl Magic*, the Vixen has declared her mission accomplished. Recently when looking to start *BGM* up again, the Vixen was delighted to see everyone previously cast onstage and in music videos is getting work. The Vixen's desire to have Black queens booked has come to fruition. The future of *BGM* now relies on the next generation of Black queens who need a boost. Until then, the Vixen is turning her pursuits elsewhere, by focusing on touring, promoting their music, and their merchandise for *BGM*. Everyone who loves and wants to support the Vixen can check out her new merchandise, from swimsuits, to makeup bags, face masks, and much more.

Looking toward the future and her overall vision for it, the Vixen states, "Now that I'm in my 30s looking back, I've been doing mantras and exploring things I wish I knew then.

What I really want to do is find better ways to teach useful strategies when it comes to social justice and self-care." Recently, the Vixen has used her Instagram platform to support mental health awareness with a focus on staying true to your fierce self. "I hope with the mantras and philosophy, I am coaching and giving confidence to people that consider themselves fighters."

This year the Vixen plans to release a summer album, which she wants to be technically difficult, so she can showboat her talents. "I love expressing myself because I want to be understood. I love baring my soul." The Vixen can be found in shows around the city and will be in LA in May for *RuPaul's DragCon*, along with other members of *Black Girl Magic*.

The future of the Vixen will lie in her inspiration and advice to those seeking enlightenment. "I'm in my aunty era, listen to me, kiddo! I hope to give good advice to the fiery whippersnappers who come in guns blazing, ready to fight!" —**WANJIKU KAIRU**



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**Best reason to be glad to be back at the theater (no matter what's onstage)**

## The audience

Between Monday, March 16, 2020 and Saturday, July 10, 2021, I saw exactly zero live productions—probably the longest dry spell of theatergoing since my teens. In the 16 months between Theater Wit's *Teenage Dick* and Theatre Above the Law's *Henchpeople*, I saw loads of digital productions, caught up on a ton of television programs, and honed my abilities to stare into space and brood. (We all need hobbies.)

What I didn't do was talk to a lot of people. And when theater returned to something close to the pre-pandemic levels (with most theaters requiring proof of vax and masking ahead of state and local mandates), I found that my ability to engage in lobby chitchat had eroded during the shutdown. I also found that I'd forgotten how much a part of the theater experience (sometimes for ill, but usually for good) depends upon the people around you.

At Mercury Theater Chicago's *Sister Act*, the woman sitting next to me turned out to be a nurse who was one of the first to be vaccinated in the city; she and her sister had a blast (as did I), and their palpable joy in being out at a show (made possible by said vaccines!) added to the feel-good nature of the production. When I got into one of the final performances at the Goodman of E. Faye Butler in *Fannie (The Music and Life of Fannie Lou Hamer)*, the couple sitting next to me shared some of their stories about being activists in the civil rights movement—and several of Hamer's family members were also in the audience and stood up to be acknowledged by Butler at the curtain call.

It's not always fortuitous encounters with strangers; it's been a joy to actually see friends and colleagues in the lobby again. Not all the conversations turn on timely political and social observations; I'm just as happy to hear about new kids or grandkids, new pets, new jobs, and other shows that are happening that I'm assured are absolutely not to be missed.

And sometimes, too, I'm hearing about other people's losses. But it's all a good reminder that theater and life are both ephemeral. And both need other people in order to be

fully experienced. —KERRY REID

**Best trajectory from 'delightful child' to survivalist soccer player**

## Sophie Thatcher

Monica Vitti. Peter Ivers. Béatrice Dalle. Esoteric influences the impossibly cool Sophie Thatcher pays tribute to on her impossibly cool Instagram account, which all have me running for Wikipedia to keep up. After her breakout turn on Showtime's *Yellowjackets*, this 21-year-old product of the Chicago theater scene has literally become her generation's Juliette Lewis. They play the same character on the show, but they also share a rocker/rebel/feminist sensibility whose free spirit and sharp edges will undoubtedly be welcomed by the coming "vibe shift." (For those who missed it, a "trend forecaster" is predicting the return of "indie sleaze," messy style, and more fractured subcultures within music and fashion.)

A decade ago, 12-year-old Thatcher was among a cast of "delightful child actors" I praised in a review of Provision Theater's feel-good original musical, *The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey*. A few years later she took a starring turn in *The Diary of Anne Frank* at Writers Theatre, a 200-show experience she still mentions often as one of her proudest moments as an actor. An obligatory turn on *Chicago P.D.* could have been the peak, and an admirable one at that, but Thatcher has found her way into an intriguing slate of film and TV that doesn't shy away from thrills, horror, trauma, and complex female characters. (Other highlights: *The Exorcist*, *The Book of Boba Fett*, and Stephen King's *The Boogeyman* filming next month in New Orleans.)

Reflecting on her first feature film, *Prospect* (2018), Thatcher credits indie filmmaking great Jay Duplass for some of the best advice she's received to "not give a shit," an attitude that made her character Natalie one of the best parts of *Yellowjackets*. For those not yet initiated (where have you been?!), the show chronicles the plane crash of a high school girls soccer team and their descent into *Lord-of-the-Flies*-meets-*Lost* occult occurrences and even cannibalism. It's dark, even tortuous at times, but it's also a completely



Sophie Thatcher in *Yellowjackets* © PAUL SARKIS/SHOWTIME

spellbinding portrayal of female ingenuity and friendships at their most feral. Thatcher's husky-voiced Natalie vacillates between jaded, self-sufficient maturity and lovestruck vulnerability, a preternatural range with

impressive potential. Moral of the story to Chicago theatergoers—save your programs (unlike me with *Jonathan Toomey*). You never know when you'll be saying "I saw them back when..." —MARISSA OBERLANDER

### BEST DRIVE-IN MOVIE PROGRAMMING

**Music Box of Horrors: Dawn of the Drive-In at ChiTown Movies**

Runner-up: ChiTown Movies

### BEST ESTABLISHED THEATER COMPANY

**Steppenwolf Theatre**

Runner-up: The Neo-Futurists

### BEST FILM FESTIVAL

**Chicago International Film Festival**

Runner-up: Reeling: The Chicago LGBTQ+ International Film Festival

### BEST FILM PROGRAMMING

**Music Box Theatre**

Runner-up: Gene Siskel Film Center

### BEST FILMMAKER

**Elias Rios**

Runner-up: Jennifer Reeder

### BEST INDEPENDENT BOOK PUBLISHER

**Haymarket Books**

Runner-up: The University of Chicago Press

### BEST LECTURE SERIES

**Chicago Humanities Festival**

Runners-up: Great Cities Institute at UIC, VOICES at UIC's Gallery 400

### BEST MOVIE THEATER

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**Music Box Theatre**

Runner-up: Logan Theatre

### BEST MOVIE THEATER BAR

**The Music Box**

Runner-up: The Logan Theater

### BEST MURAL

**Robin Williams mural at 2047 N. Milwaukee (Concord Music Hall) by Jerkface and Owen Dippie**

Runner-up: Dolly Parton mural at Lytle House (5517 N. Broadway) by Michelle Lytle

### BEST MUSEUM

**Art Institute of Chicago**

Runner-up: National Museum of Mexican Art

### BEST MUSICAL

**American Mariachi (Goodman)**

Runner-up: *Sister Act* at Mercury Theater

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March 22, 2022: *Tag You're It* Closing Reception 4-8PM

March 31, 2022: *#MADFORHOOPS* Opening Reception 4-8PM. Join us for an evening of stadium snacks and fabulous earrings at the opening reception of this exhibition of artist-made hoop style earrings and commandeering of March Madness.

May 24 - July 17, 2022: *A Tender Presence* (Pride Month Group Exhibition). Reception to be announced...

August 2022: Sarah Holden Solo Exhibition *Patterns and Power: Feminine Lines and their Rebellious Representation*.



Woman-owned by Chicago native and metalsmith Nora (wearing Wall Flower studs by Aurélie Guillaume)



RING by  
BEN DORY

BROOCH by  
MARGAUX LANGE



RING by  
PETER ANTOR



Sarah Holden Solo Exhibition *Bit, Sliver, Curve* (2019)



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Best public performance art series

## Out of Site

On your way home from work, you get off the train and there is a giant puppet show featuring a man fighting a puppet hydra in an empty parking lot. Or you meander into Wicker Park, the actual park, and encounter a human-sized box covered in floral wallpaper with the words “Look Inside.” All are artworks curated by Out of Site, a public performance art series.

The first is the 2013 performance *Hydra vs. Hercules* by the Mother Daughter puppetry team. The latter is *MOTHERGIRL* by artists Katy Albert and Sophia Hamilton in 2012.

Formed in 2011 by curator and artist Carron Little and curator Whitney Tassie, Out of Site aims to “bring acts of joy” into the public, Little explains. The curators focus on sites that were compromised by violence and try to reclaim them through art. She wants the art to inspire people, inspire conversation, and ultimately create awe. Little wants “the public to feel empowered” by the work.

Little sees public performance art as a means to effect change and affect policy. She wants people to think about dynamics of power in public space and how to make public space safer.

Out of Site initially had its “unexpected encounters” in various parts of Wicker Park, Polish Triangle, and nearby neighborhoods. It has since branched out across the city. They’ve partnered with the park district since 2015, and will be returning to the parks this year.

Each year, artists are selected from Chicago, the U.S., and even internationally to create performances for the general public. Fans of the series as well as unsuspecting members of the public might stumble upon pieces on the sidewalk, in alleys, parks, and walkways. Out of Site volunteers in loud orange shirts linger nearby and offer up flyers to viewers.

Performances range from shows to more interactive performances. In 2015, Austin-based artists performed *Ballenarca*, which was a puppet show including a whale built into a large truck, and other puppets of all sizes creating an underwater wonderland. *MOTHERGIRL* was one of the more interactive pieces.



*MOTHERGIRL*, presented by Out of Site @ CESARIO MOZA

People were invited to stick their heads into the flowery box and greet one of the artists, who was covered in plastic flowers. The artist would take a Polaroid picture of the guest, framed by the flowers inside the face.

Out of Site has been received well by the public in past years. People have been known to watch for hours or even participate. In 2015, artist Janet Schmid’s *Try* had three dancers who choreographed pieces with willing participants. At one point, Little says, there were 20 people all dancing at once. One guy left the performance and said, “I felt good doing this and I feel even better afterwards,” Little recalls.

They’ve had some encounters with people who were less than thrilled with their performances, but on a whole, people have been positive about art.

In addition to these performances, Out of Site hosts digital artist talks called Artist Focus. For eight weeks every spring and fall, Little interviews performing artists about their work.

Last year, Out of Site took their work to the next level with Chicago’s first public perfor-

mance symposium called Flow. This digital symposium brings artists, scholars, and connoisseurs together for lectures, workshops, and performances from Chicago as well as India, China, and Europe. The second symposium is scheduled for June.

An important part of Out of Site has been paying artists for their work as well as supporting the creation of new works. While the pandemic threw many performing and art groups into disarray, Out of Site was able to pivot to the virtual world quickly. This led to new artists experimenting with a new medium as well as allowing performers to collaborate more easily across borders. Now the network of Out of Site alumni and Little help select the next round of performers for the series.

Little draws inspiration from architect Louis Kahn’s quotation: “The city is the place of availabilities. It is the place where a small boy, as he walks through it, may see something that will tell him what he wants to do his whole life.” She hopes that passersby who encounter these moments of wonder might change their lives in big and small ways.

—ELISA SHOENBERGER

### BEST NEW LOCAL OPERA PRODUCTION

***The Magic Flute* (Lyric Opera of Chicago)**

Runner-up: *Macbeth* (Lyric Opera of Chicago)

### BEST NEW NONFICTION BOOK BY A CHICAGOAN

***Three Girls from Bronzeville: A Uniquely American Memoir of Race, Fate, and Sisterhood* by Dawn Turner**

Runner-up: *U2’s The Joshua Tree: Planting Roots in Mythic America* by Bradley Morgan

### BEST NEW NOVEL BY A CHICAGOAN

***Arsenic and Adobo* by Mia P. Manansala**

Runner-up: *This Little Life of Mine* by Shakia Jackson

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**COURT THEATRE**



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**Best performance space for dealing with interior microclimates**

## Lifeline Theatre

Anyone who frequents establishments in the summer months knows that there are generally two temperatures: not cold enough and Hell has frozen over. Even so, some locations deal with that microclimate variety at any time of year. So, when it comes to dealing with indoor temperature changes, no one does it better than Lifeline Theatre, which is housed in a converted ComEd substation building. Anyone who has sat in a *particular* section of the audience at Lifeline knows that the space gets abnormally chilly. There is only so much a fresh cup of hot cocoa can do besides make you rush to the bathroom at intermission to still make it back in time for act two. Luckily the theater folks are well aware and are known for having blankets draped lovingly on certain sets of chairs for audience use. Even if the rest of the seats are pleasantly warm, the patrons in the ice-block section of Lifeline are grateful for those blankets on a regular basis. Though it is admittedly a bit jarring upon one's first visit, it becomes clear very quickly thereafter why the seats need comfort blankets. If that's the small price we pay for preserving gorgeous brick buildings like the one that houses this Rogers Park theater, so be it. We're more than happy to have blankets be our Lifeline. —**AMANDA FINN**

**Best new curated streaming channel showcasing Black cinema**

## Blacknuss Network

“Now we gathered here on the universe at this time this particular time / To listen to the 36 black notes of the piano / There's 36 black notes and 52 white notes / We don't mean to eliminate nothin' but we gonna just hear / The black notes at this time if you don't mind.”

These words come from the titular track on Rahsaan Roland Kirk's 1971 album *Blacknuss*; this epigrammatic paean is the inspiration behind a rebranded iteration of Chicago film stalwart Floyd Webb's longtime screening series,

Black World Cinema. Now called the Blacknuss Network, the organization itself has evolved from regular in-person events to a full-fledged alternative media syndicate, complete with an online streaming channel called blacknuss.tv.

The channel goes outside the bounds of mainstream cinema, focusing on films that viewers likely haven't seen. The organization has expanded behind the scenes as well, with a new team of collaborators—including Chicagoans Imani Davis, Jeff Stanley, and Deah and Whitney Barber—helping to continue advancing its mission.

“I've never made a habit of trying to get the latest Black Hollywood film,” says Webb, who serves as the organization's creative director. “That's not what I want to do. I want to show the films that you're not going to see. The film that'll come and you'll probably never see it again. Because it's too radical, it's too something . . . it doesn't fit into the status quo.”

To wit, the group has livestreamed France Štiglic's 1956 Yugoslavian war film, *Valley of Peace*, about a Black American pilot (played by John Kitzmiller; he became the first Black man to win the Best Actor prize at Cannes for his performance) who risks his life in World War II to protect two orphaned Yugoslav children. Other recent selections include an in-person screening of Wendell B. Harris Jr.'s restored 1989 independent film *Chameleon Street*, a satire based on the life of an erudite Detroit con artist; writer-director Oscar Williams's 1972 blaxploitation film *The Final Comedown*, centered on a fictional Black radical group approximating the Black Panthers; and another 1972 film, Christopher St. John's *Top of the Heap*.

Webb rediscovered the latter film in the early 2010s; he told the *Reader* then that he'd been trying to locate the film since he began programming the Blacklight Film Festival in 1982. That annual event lasted through 1995 and gave way to the Black World Cinema screening series. Meanwhile, *Top of the Heap* was recently restored and enjoyed a theatrical run at BAM Film in Brooklyn in late February. It's now available on the blacknuss.tv subscription channel.

Something of a reluctant curator, Webb is also a filmmaker and producer. Among his myriad achievements in the realm of cinema is being an associate producer on Julie Dash's *Daughters of the Dust*; the two met at a con-

ference for Black independent filmmakers decades ago and have remained friends since.

Subscribers to blacknuss.tv (available for \$3.99 per month or \$39.99 per year, with a seven-day free trial) have access to a wide array of content, including documentary, narrative, and experimental works, both short and feature length. Curated subgroupings include films about Afrofuturism, the African continent, Black militancy, films featuring Black cultural luminaries such as Paul Robeson and Nina Simone, and Chicago-made shorts.

“We're curating a collection of films that would take you some digging to find,” says Floyd. “We're [organizing] things in a way that'll appeal to certain types of people who have radical imaginations.”

The Blacknuss Network is currently in the midst of the several-part “We Fly Away Home: A Film and Discussion Series on Afrofuturism in Cinema.” The most recent event in mid-February included shorts by Chicago-based Ytasha Womack (a filmmaker and dancer who, among other accomplishments, wrote a book on Afrofuturism) and experimental filmmaker Ayoka Chenzira (*Hairpiece: A Film for Nappyheaded People* [1984], *Alma's Rainbow* [1994]), as well as the feature-length film *The Gifted* (1991), by Audrey King Lewis.

She was the first African American woman to direct a science fiction feature, though it never received distribution because Hollywood executives felt it was “too intelligent for Black people,” per the event description. Such histories are explored in discussions around the screenings.

Upcoming in the series are “The Africa in Afrofuturism,” with Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Pierre Bekolo, on March 6 and “Afrofuturism Short Films and Animation” on March 20. (See the website, blacknussnetwork.com, for more information.)

Thus the Blacknuss Network is reminiscent of the song from which it takes its name. But more than just to hear the Black notes, it's time to see them as well—and Webb and his team are here to show us just that.

—**KATHLEEN SACHS**

**BEST NEW PLAY**

**When Harry Met Rehab**

Runner-up: Where the Air Meets the Water

**BEST NEW POETRY COLLECTION BY A CHICAGOAN**

**And She Worthy by Kwyn Townsend Riley**

Runner-up: *There Are Trans People Here* by H. Melt

**BEST NEW THEATER COMPANY**

**Stepping Stone Theater Chicago**

Runner-up: Cabinet of Curiosity

**BEST NONFICTION WRITER**

**Eve Ewing**

Runner-up: Alex Kotlowitz

**BEST NOVELIST**

**Rebecca Makkai**

Runner-up: Kathleen Rooney

**BEST OFF-LOOP**

**THEATER COMPANY**

**The Neo-Futurists**

Runners-up: Porchlight Music Theatre, Raven Theatre

**BEST OPEN MIKE**

**The Open Stage at Annoyance Theatre**

Runner-up: Cole's Bar

**BEST OPERA COMPANY**

**Lyric Opera**

Runner-up: Chicago Opera Theater

**BEST ORIGINAL DIGITAL**

**CONTENT (DANCE)**

**M.A.D.D. Rhythms (Aisha by Star Dixon)**

Runner-up: Hubbard Street Dance Chicago (*Half of Us*)

**BEST ORIGINAL DIGITAL**

**CONTENT (THEATER)**

**The Infinite Wrench Goes Viral (Neo-Futurists)**

Runner-up: ComedySportz Chicago



*Strange Tapes: VHS Oddities Unearthed* print zine, October 2021 SCOTT MILLER

### Best unconventional horror drive-in screening

## Lunchmeat & Strange Tapes' 'Video Brain Blender'

Scott Miller and Josh Schafer publish my favorite zines that excavate the VHS underground in search of bizarre movies and freaked-out footage that's as charming as it is faulty. In addition to publishing *Strange Tapes* (Miller) and *Lunchmeat VHS* (Schafer), both have branched out into releasing movies on VHS—Schafer in particular has done terrific work obtaining the rights and blessings to reissue outre movies with sizeable cults, including Derek Erdman's found-footage short *Girls at the Carnival* and the 35th anniversary edition of crucial verite rock doc *Heavy Metal Parking Lot*. All of which is to say that when the Music Box brought their pandemic-born monthlong block of horror programming back to Pilsen's ChiTown Movies Drive-in in

October, the night that piqued my interest the most was a block of video shorts presented by *Lunchmeat* and *Strange Tapes*. Most of "Video Brain Blender" concerned Massachusetts lo-fi filmmakers Mark Veau and Mike Savino; they eked out a couple shot-on-video scary shorts in the 1990s (*Attack of the Killer Refrigerator* and *The Hook of Woodland Heights*) and failed to launch an ambitious full-length film about a killer turtle, a saga that made for a lighthearted documentary (*Snapper*) that closed the night's programming. Miller opened the night with *Halloween Heck House*, a 20-minute hallucinogenic blend of supernatural-related clips ripped from his deep VHS archives. "Video Brain Blender" gave me an experience I couldn't have replicated at home, and that's exactly what I missed about going to the movies throughout the pandemic. —LEOR GALIL

### Best fat daddy dom bitch on TV

## Juju Minxxx

This year no one repped Chicago queer nightlife like fat daddy dom bitch Juju Minxxx, the leather-clad nonbinary darling of OutTV's reality game show *Hot Haus*. The show brings together seven contestants with diverse experiences as sex workers—from burlesque performers to sex educators to porn stars—to compete for the honor of "next queer sex icon." Minxxx shows brightly with the kinky creativity, intention, and DIY spirit so unique to the Windy City's gay underground.

While it's a treat watching them decked out in sparkling vinyl BDSM gear from local maker Gnat Glitter Kink (first seen in episode one as they ride a rainbow unicorn, then again during episode two's award ceremony), their all-star moments are when they get to celebrate being a trans daddy: joking about being a "bonus-hole boi" (a masc who's comfortable receiving it in both the front and the rear); twirling their strap-on beneath a pair of shorts to entice a pretend "ex-lover" for a Men.com scene; performing sex and gender education during a sexy cameo on CAM4; and joyously rapping about the "too muchness" of being gay, trans, Black, and fat by answering "Why am I so much?" with "Maybe you're not enough!"



HARRIS THEATER  
MILLENNIUM PARK

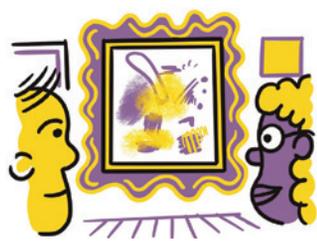
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It's not always fun, though. As they explain during a roommate heart-to-heart: "I've done different kinds of sex work, but it's mostly been pro-domming. . . . It's really hard for me because it can trigger my body dysmorphia as a nonbinary trans person. I feel like I have to advertise myself as this, like, [little girl voice] 'female supremacist! I'm gonna dominate you with my teeny little pussy!' [normal voice] It's just too much!"

Even in their most complicated moments, Minxxx brings humor and humility to the show, making *Hot Haus* a must-binge for Chicagoans of every orientation. —MICCO CAPORALE

#### Best Chicago representation in a groundbreaking music documentary

## Mahalia Jackson, Jesse Jackson, and the Operation Breadbasket Orchestra and Choir in *Summer of Soul*

**S**ummer of Soul, directed by Questlove, is a stunning tribute to the almost-forgotten 1969 Harlem Cultural Festival and to the Black community of New York City. But the festival didn't just feature musicians from New York; it drew on performers from across the country and beyond. San Francisco is represented by psychedelic soul pioneers Sly and the Family Stone. Motown artists like Gladys Knight and the Pips and Stevie Wonder represent Detroit. And Mahalia Jackson, Jesse Jackson, and the Operation Breadbasket Orchestra and Choir take the stage for Chicago.

Mahalia Jackson's big records were released in the 1940s and 50s; by 1969 she was an institution. Specifically, she was an institution closely associated with the civil rights movement, which had embraced gospel music as a spiritual call for this-world equality.

Martin Luther King Jr.'s favorite song was Chicago gospel pioneer Thomas A. Dorsey's "Precious Lord," written after Dorsey's wife and child died. Mahalia often sang it at King's civil rights rallies. There she was sometimes backed by the Operation Breadbasket Orches-



Summer of Soul   
SEARCHLIGHT PICTURES

tra and Choir, under the musical direction of saxophonist Ben Branch. Branch was the last person King spoke to before he was shot; he asked him to play "Precious Lord." Mahalia Jackson sang the song at King's funeral in April 1968, a little more than a year before the Harlem Festival was held.

Reverend Jesse Jackson, head of the Chicago chapter of Operation Breadbasket, was standing by Branch and King at the moment of the assassination as well. He was onstage at the festival to give an inspirational address and drum up support for Operation Breadbasket's work organizing boycotts of businesses that wouldn't hire Black employees or contractors. Jackson describes King's last moments twice, once onstage and once years later in an interview with Questlove. In the film, the twinned accounts are intercut with archival footage of King's work and of his death as the band plays the intro to "Precious Lord." The sequence is almost unendurably sad.

The song isn't just about sadness, though. Jesse Jackson frames King's work not as an end, but as an inspiration for the ongoing work of liberation. He compares King to Moses who didn't get to see the Promised Land. "He didn't die crying or die afraid. He died asking the Lord to lend his hand to help him to lead us."

Mahalia Jackson also finds joy in the performance. She asked singer Mavis Staples of the Staple Singers to help her put the song across ("Baby, Mahalia don't feel too good today; I

need you to help me sing this song"). The two of them treat Dorsey's famous composition as an exercise in showstopping virtuosity.

Staples has one of the all-time great voices in any genre ever, and the camera pans to people in the audience laughing and shaking their heads in disbelief as she roars "Precious Lord, take my hand!" ad libbing "Oh yeahs!" and "Yes I am!," putting a "Hah!" at the end of each line. She literally hops up and down on stage as if the power of her own singing is blasting her off the Earth.

Mahalia is somehow even more stunning. She sings each line with enough vibrato to shake the Earth like an operatic seismic wave. For the climax she and Staples call and respond on the same microphone. "Hold me! Hold me!" they shout back and forth, leaning in close enough to hold each other. "Man, I tell you," Mavis says to the interviewer, looking back, "that was the time of my life."

She and everyone else on stage, and in the audience, do look like they couldn't be happier as they sing a song remembering an incredibly traumatic and horrible death. It's not the death they're celebrating, of course, but the life, and their own lives and genius. When the world, or the country, wants you dead and forgotten, making unforgettable living music is a kind of defiance. Every performer in *Summer of Soul* knows that. But no one puts it over with more force than Chicago's Mahalia.

—NOAH BERLATSKY

#### BEST PERFORMING

##### ARTS FESTIVAL

#### Ravinia Festival

Runner-up: Chicago International Puppet Theater Festival

#### BEST PHOTOGRAPHER

#### Barry Butler

Runner-up: The Kid From Pilsen (William Guerrero)

#### BEST PLAYWRIGHT

#### Tracy Letts

Runner-up: Kristiana Rae Colón

#### BEST POET

#### Eve Ewing

Runner-up: Hannah McDonald

#### BEST POETRY

##### ORGANIZATION (TIE)

#### Poetry Foundation

#### Kuumba Lynx

Runner-up: Chicago Poetry Center

#### BEST READING SERIES

#### Read Some Shit Chicago

Runner-up: Grandma's House

#### BEST SKETCH/IMPROV TROUPE

#### Late Night Shenanigans

Runner-up: Devil's Daughter

#### BEST STAGE ACTOR

#### Carrie Coon

Runner-up: Ana Silva

#### BEST STAGE DIRECTOR

#### Madison Smith

Runners-up: Ron OJ Parson, Barbara Zahora

#### BEST STAND-UP COMIC

#### Eliana La Casa

Runner-up: Luca Ferro

#### BEST STORYTELLING SERIES

#### The Moth

Runner-up: Grown Folks Stories

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**Best footwork video displayed on Merchandise Mart**

## Footnotes

The city of Chicago's bureaucratic institutions don't often deign to acknowledge the wealth of regionally born arts movements and figures until gatekeepers in other cities do so first. So last year's Art on the Mart had the air of coronation for footwork, the dance movement that emerged from the south and west sides in the early 1990s and begat a futuristic house subgenre that's celebrated

around the world. The best of the short videos projected onto the edifice of Merchandise Mart last year was *Footnotes*, which functions as both a love letter to footwork and a firm argument for its deep connection to Chicago's deep history of Black art. Produced by multidisciplinary artists Wills Glasspiegel and Brandon K. Calhoun (of all-star footwork crew the Era), *Footnotes* blends animation and live action to highlight the athletic dance's innate supercharged electricity—it features dancers from some of the city's best crews, including Empire Dance Company, Terra Squad, and the Era. The video's serene, uplifting music came out of an all-star collaboration that spans

genre; Teklife cofounder and footwork innovator DJ Spinn anchors the song, which also features the Chicago Bucket Boys, clarinetist Angel Bat Dawid, vocalist Elisha Chandler, and Hypnotic Brass Ensemble trumpeter Amal Hubert (who is also the son of jazz luminary Phil Cohran). I generally avoided the Chicago Riverwalk even before the pandemic, but *Footnotes* gave me a genuinely great reason to spend a night gazing up at Merch Mart. It's a delight to see footwork elevated to Chicago's skyline, and great to see the love for the form channeled into an inventive, kinetic video that's impossible to deny. —LEOR GALIL



Footnotes 📷 FOOTNOTES ARTISTS AND ART ON THE MART



Portraits on display at Ruschwoman as part of the artist Surekha's installation 📷 COURTESY RUSCHWOMAN

**Best new artist-run project space**

## Ruschwoman

In August 2021, the new art gallery Ruschwoman announced its arrival with the group exhibition "Speculative Magenta Hauntology." The lead image in the exhibition was by the late artist Chiara Fumai. In the photo, titled *Annie Jones Reads Valerie Solanas*, Fumai was dressed as the famed bearded woman Annie Jones; behind her, large, bold letters read, "A Male Artist Is a Contradiction in Terms." It was a fitting summation for the self-described feminist-aligned gallery, not least because Fumai was a formidable feminist artist deeply interested in the occult and in disrupting patriarchal norms. It perfectly encapsulated the curatorial and strategic aims of the space, which include radical inclusivity, a turn toward the provocative, and a politics of care and support.

Operated by art world power couple Matt Morris and Eric Ruschman in La Villita, Ruschwoman could be considered a return to form for the duo, who cut their teeth running the collective gallery U.turn Art Space in Cincinnati. Ruschwoman is a counterpart to the perhaps more commercially minded gallery, Ruschman, located in Irving Park. To date, Ruschwoman's exhibitions have been inspired. "Bells for Her" included three artists who use archival materials as a powerful component of storytelling. A solo exhibition by

**BEST STREET ARTIST**

**JC Rivera**

Runner-up: Sentrock

**BEST THEATER BAR OR LOBBY**

**Steppenwolf Theatre**

Runner-up: The Annoyance

**BEST THEATER DESIGNER**

**(SETS, LIGHT, SOUND, ETC.)**

**Sydney Lynne**

Runner-up: Sam MacNerland

**BEST THEATER PRODUCTION**

**Bug**

Runner-up: *Hot Clown Sex*

**BEST THEATER TRAINING**

**PROGRAM**

**Second City**

Runner-up: The Annoyance

**BEST VENUE FOR DANCE**

**Harris Theater**

Runner-up: Auditorium Theatre

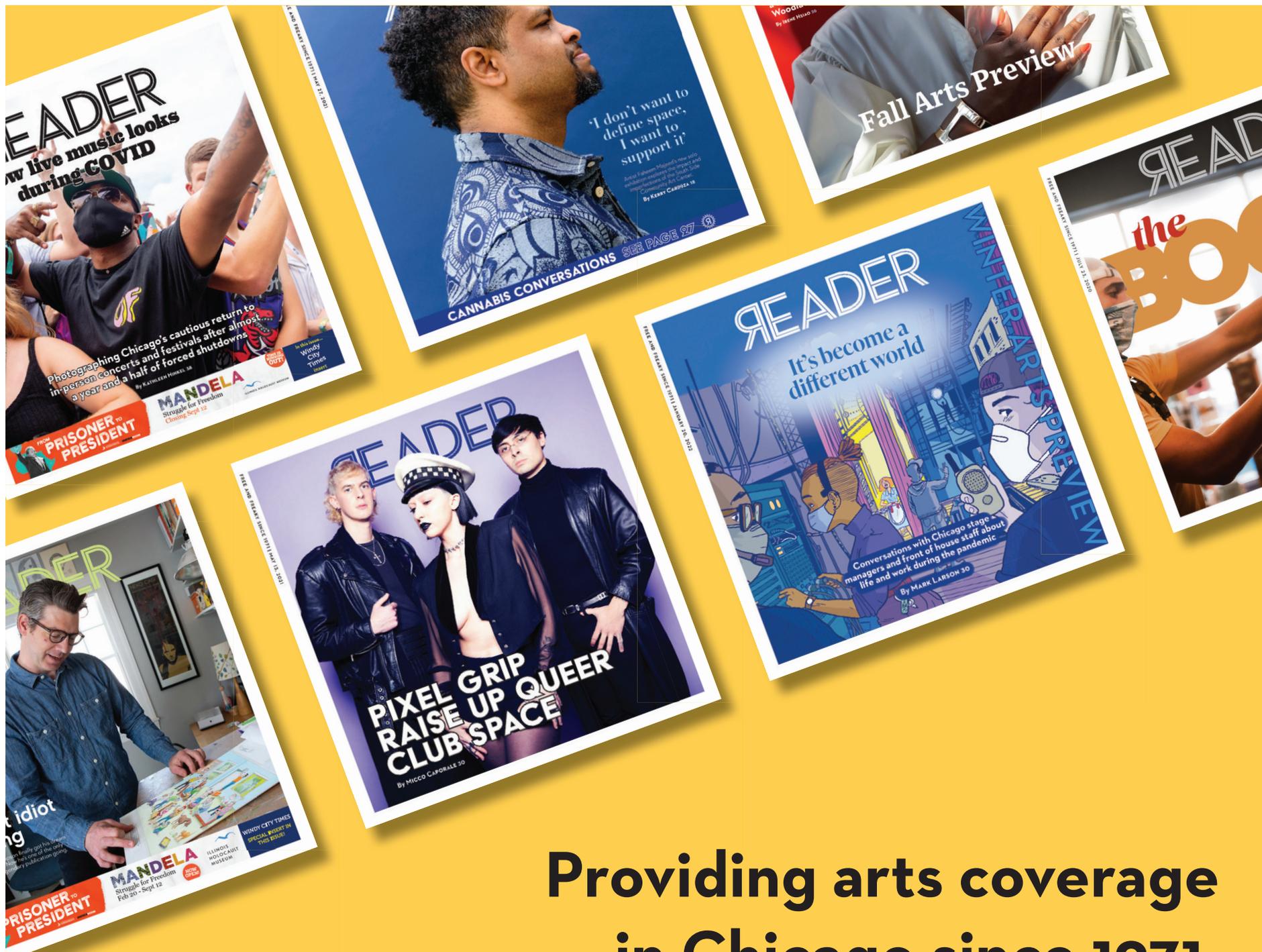
**BEST VENUE FOR IMPROV**

**Second City**

Runner-up: Annoyance Theatre

the Indian artist Surekha consists of dozens of portraits from photo studios in India, showing young women seated before a mirror, to show off their hair braided with jasmine. Field & Florist is providing flowers and fragrance to activate the space.

While Morris and Ruschman do not entirely eschew the trappings of the art world—noting that "we must all find ways to survive and thrive" in the current power structures—their experimental, coquettishly defiant project space is a much-welcomed disruption of business as usual. —KERRY CARDOZA



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Best new inquiry-minded design studio

## School of Many Questions

“Material artifacts are the most concrete things that surround us in our homes,” writes Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi in his book *The Meaning of Things*. Most of us, particularly since the pandemic started, spend the majority of our time in our homes—giving the objects and environments therein an oversized role in shaping our moods, our days, and our identities. What if we had the knowledge or access to make more of those objects ourselves? If instead of

buying the same mass-produced Ikea chair as millions of other people, we built one for ourselves, to our liking?

The recently launched School of Many Questions aims to answer that question. Run by local designers Lesley Jackson, Alessandra Norman, and Danny Rosa, the design studio is offering affordable classes for making and designing utilitarian objects, with the goal of encouraging continual and communal learning. Current class offerings teach participants how to turn wooden candlesticks on a lathe, how to construct a chair with a cane-woven seat, or how to design and assemble a tabletop lamp (in a workshop titled “Illumination and Levity”).

At a soft launch event at the store Tusk in November, printouts (including an essay from *The Meaning of Things*, Bertolt Brecht’s poem “Questions From a Worker Who Reads,” and the Walter Benjamin essay “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”) were available as takeaways. Impeccably made works from the founders were also on view: geometric-shaped lamps lit with round, multi-colored bulbs, tiny side tables with embedded candleholders, and a wall-mounted cloud shelf smoking a cigarette, holding a copy of Marx’s *Capital*. School of Many Questions encourages us to learn the tools of production, positing that objects can be both useful and beautiful. Bread and roses, indeed. —KERRY CARDOZA

Best local conservationist rocking it out on YouTube

## Julian Baumgartner

Julian Baumgartner may be the sole owner of Chicago’s oldest conservation studio, but that doesn’t keep him from being simultaneously the master of old masters and social media.

He’s a man with a fan base in the millions—many of whom claim they know or care nothing about art but are faithful viewers of his videos. In a sign of success (like all good YouTubers), he has attracted memes and merch.

Even a video of him giving a tour of his studio had viewers swooning—and warning him that the pink baby sculpture a client abandoned with him was a cursed relic.

Baumgartner’s YouTube channel has 1.65 million subscribers with total views of greater than 125 million. His most popular video has 6.2 million views. He started the channel five years ago and as of mid-February has posted 109 videos. Those who join his Patreon get early access to videos that are free from ads or sponsor announcements, including his entire back catalog. He also offers those exclusive fans behind-the-scenes videos, additional content, Q&A opportunities, and merchandise discounts.

Merchandise? Yes, with sayings that make sense only to his fans (e.g. “When I say washi, you say Kozo”), the YouTube channel is armed



A screenshot from a conservation video at [youtube.com/BaumgartnerRestoration](https://youtube.com/BaumgartnerRestoration) COURTESY THE ARTIST

with a store selling sweatshirts, aprons, T-shirts, and tote bags.

What does he do to earn so many fans?

He restores art. Lots of art. It’s a family tradition.

His father, R. Agass Baumgartner (whom he’s been known to throw under the bus along with other conservators whose work he sometimes deems “inappropriate”), founded the original studio in 1978. The father, who was born in Switzerland, studied at the Luzern Academy of Art and the École des Beaux-arts in France, where he specialized in 16th- through 19th-century easel-painting restoration and conservation.

Julian, who studied painting and printmaking at SUNY-Purchase College, began his apprenticeship in conservation in 2000. He worked side by side with his father until R. Agass passed away in 2011. Julian then took over the business.

In 2020, he restored an old warehouse space (it used to be the home to organ and egg timer manufacturers, albeit not at the same time) so that he now has 20,000 square feet and can work on much larger pieces of art. Despite the space, Baumgartner keeps the business small—small enough so that clients know that their work will be touched by only one set of hands.

His fans have come to know certain things about him—such as “staples” is a dirty word. Indeed, when Baumgartner did use staples once, memes sprouted across the Web showing his fans’ shock. Also, you can never have too many clamps. Or tables.

Sometimes, his videos don’t even have narration. Fans say they drift off to sleep to his ASMR videos taken while he restores paintings.

To the fan base that describes themselves as chaotic, Julian Baumgartner is a cool, collected rock star—ever aware of his followers—who is making art restoration accessible to all. —BRIDGETTE M. REDMAN

BEST VENUE FOR STAND-UP

**The Hideout**

Runner-up: The Annoyance

BEST VENUE FOR THEATER

**Steppenwolf**

Runner-up: Goodman Theatre

BEST VENUE TO SEE DRAG

**Berlin**

Runner-up: Baton Show Lounge

BEST VIRTUAL PLAY

**Queen Lear**

**(Quarantine Queens)**

Runner-up: *Pride & Prejudice*, *Pride & Prejudice Productions*

BEST VISUAL ARTIST

**Kerry James Marshall**

Runner-up: Keith J. Taylor

BEST ZINE

**Word Brothel**

Runner-up: *Acid Nun* (Corinne Halbert)

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MUSIC & NIGHTLIFE

Best Chicago venues for  
the COVID averse

## Music venues leading the city with vaccination and masking requirements

For a few relatively blissful weeks in July 2021, Chicago's COVID-19 infection rates dropped far enough that it was possible to believe that the worst of the pandemic was over. Then the Delta variant hit. The city didn't lock down again, but Delta posed a dire threat to public health as well as to the financial viability of many small businesses—especially music venues, which had just started reopening for the first time since March 2020. Most could no longer afford to close their doors, so they had to find other ways to protect their patrons.

On August 3, Metro announced that it was requiring proof of vaccination and recommending masks. Dozens of other music venues in the city and surrounding suburbs soon adopted their own policies—mandating masks except when patrons were actively eating or drinking, for instance, or requiring proof of vaccination or a recent negative test—and they were among the first Chicago hospitality businesses to do so. The city didn't issue its own indoor mask mandate till August 20. The Hideout had enacted measures similar to Metro's when it opened its outdoor patio for events in July, and the venue left its indoor stage closed through October. The Chicago Independent Venue League sponsored the website Vax Only Chicago to help the public keep track of which spots required proof of vaccination.

The city didn't mandate that indoor dining and entertainment establishments require proof of vaccination until January 3, 2022. By that point Omicron had surpassed Delta as the variant du jour, and once again many venues went further than the city demanded: the Empty Bottle, Cobra Lounge, the Hideout, and others voluntarily closed for a spell in December, January, or both, attempting to slow the latest outbreak.

So how did it go? “For the most part, I believe our early mask-and-vax policy positively impacted the atmosphere of our shows,” says Empty Bottle manager Matt Ciarleglio. “The



Sean Nyary checks identification and vaccination cards at the entrance to the Empty Bottle on August 27, 2021. © KATHLEEN HINKEL FOR CHICAGO READER

outpouring of support from musicians, customers, and staff far outweighed the negative responses.” Metro marketing director Genna Saccomonto and Hideout co-owner Katie Tuten echo those sentiments. And even when the city lifted its mask and vaccine mandate on February 28, many venues left some COVID mitigations in place. If I weren't already convinced that most of our independent music venues were the best of Chicago, the lengths to which so many have gone to keep our community safer would've done the trick.

—JAMIE LUDWIG

Best zine documenting a  
teen indie-rock scene

## Hallogallo

“Hallogallo” isn't just the name of a song by 70s Krautrock band Neu!—it's also a term that a group of Chicago teenagers have adopted to apply to almost anything associated with their DIY music and art community. That includes the zine *Hallogallo*, launched in early 2021, which has done terrific work documenting this scene. It's edited by Kai Slater, who plays noisy, spindly postpunk in Lifeguard and scruffy, wide-screen indie rock in Dwaal Troupe, but anyone in the community can contribute to the zine. The fourth and latest issue, for example, includes an essay on Black womanism and Marxism by 19-year-old Chicago anarchist and abolitionist Shayla Turner. The *Hallogallo* team understand that zines can encourage countercultural thinking even with their visual style, and they avoid staid layouts in favor of detailed collages and judicious sprinkles of color. As the primary organ for a fast-growing

BEST 4 AM BAR

**The Owl**

Runner-up: The Continental

BEST BLUES BAND

**Joanna Connor Band**

Runner-up: Bear Williams Band

BEST CLASSICAL ENSEMBLE

**Chicago Symphony Orchestra**

Runner-up: Spektral Quartet

BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC EVENT

**Grant Park Music Festival**

Runner-up: Thirsty Ears Festival

BEST COUNTRY BAND

**Hoyle Brothers**

Runner-up: Henhouse Prowlers

BEST DANCE PARTY

**Nocturna at Metro**

Runner-up: Windy City Soul Club

BEST DIVE BAR

**Liar's Club**

Runner-up: Cole's Bar

BEST EMERGING BAND

**Modern Nun**

Runner-up: Nude Bodies

BEST EMERGING LOCAL LABEL

**Sooper Records**

Runner-up: Don't Panic Records & Distro

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+ Fancy Hagood

MONDAY MAR 14 / 8PM / 18+

**PARCELS**  
+ Mildlife

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RP BOO / DJ SPINN  
DJ CLENT / CUENIQUE  
MAJIK MYKE

SATURDAY MAR 05  
Diamond Formation ft.  
INDIA JORDAN  
ARIEL ZETINA  
ZOLITA

SATURDAY MAR 19  
Good Girls ft.  
DJ LADY D  
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+ HEET DETH

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scene, *Hallo Gallo* generates excitement about what's happening within that scene: issue two includes news about Horsegirl signing to big-time indie label Matador. The zine also provides a richness of detail that seems engineered to engage outsiders: issue four taught me more about Dwaal Troupe's charming 2021 album, *Lucky Dog*, than I ever would've known to ask. —LEOR GALIL

### Best Latin alternative music festival

## Ruido Fest

**R**uido Fest debuted in 2015 with a phenomenal lineup of Latin alternative music that's been hard to match, with Café Tacvba, Molotov, Kinky, Ozomatli, Kali Uchis, the Nortec Collective, Chicano Batman, and dozens more. (The recent announcement of the Besame Mucho festival, scheduled for Dodger Stadium in December 2022, also sets a very high bar.) Like any such event, Ruido Fest has faced challenges—including justified criticism for its shortage of Afro-Latino artists,

which compromised its ability to represent the Latin diaspora—but in the years since, it's also continued to evolve.

For its first pandemic incarnation, Ruido Fest presented virtual showcases, and in 2021 it returned to Union Park. Though other similar festivals—LatiNxt, Pilsen Fest, Fiesta del Sol—tried their best, they couldn't compete. They either felt slapped together at the last minute, with lazy lineups, or they failed to engage audiences due to hasty, poorly executed promotion. Ruido Fest, on the other hand, pulled through in the face of 11th-hour COVID-related cancellations (Los Fabulosos Cadillacs, Mexican Institute of Sound, et cetera) to deliver a diverse roster that mixed local favorites with promising bands (Margaritas Podridas, Las Nubes) and renowned veterans (Café Tacvba, Caifanes). It also continued its integration of unexpected genres by booking Bay Area singer and trumpeter La Doña—whose sound mixes mariachi, hip-hop, cumbia, reggaeton, and more—and Puerto Rican reggaeton royalty Ivy Queen. In 2021, Ruido Fest showcased the full variety of Latin alternative music better than anyone else in Chicago. —SANDRA TREVIÑO



### BEST ESTABLISHED BAR

#### Hopleaf

Runner-up: Liar's Club

### BEST GAY BAR

#### Berlin

Runner-up: Sidetrack

### BEST GIG POSTER DESIGNER

#### Ryan Duggan

Runner-up: Dan Grzeca

### BEST HIP-HOP DJ

#### DJ Ca\$h Era

Runners-up: Bonita Appleblunt, BVax

### BEST HIP-HOP GROUP

#### Pivot Gang

Runner-up: Glitter Moneyyy

### BEST HIP-HOP PARTY

#### Ever Evolved at Subterranean

Runner-up: Skoli Moly Donut Shop at Cafe Mustache

### BEST HIP-HOP PRODUCER

#### No I.D.

Runner-up: Montana Macks

### BEST HOTEL BAR

#### Cindy's at Chicago Athletic Association

Runner-up: Palmer House

### BEST HOUSE MUSIC DJ

#### Derrick Carter

Runner-up: John Simmons

### BEST INDIVIDUAL

#### BLUES MUSICIAN

#### Joanna Connor

Runner-up: Bear Williams

### BEST INDIVIDUAL HIP-HOP ARTIST

#### Mick Jenkins

Runner-up: Femdot

### BEST INDIVIDUAL JAZZ MUSICIAN

#### Makaya McCraven

Runners-up: Ben LaMar Gay, Quin Kirchner

### BEST INTERNATIONAL OR WORLD MUSIC ACT

#### Chicago Immigrant Orchestra

Runner-up: Dos Santos

### BEST JAZZ ENSEMBLE

#### Joel Paterson Trio

Runner-up: Damon Locks's Black Monument Ensemble

### BEST LESBIAN BAR

#### Nobody's Darling

Runner-up: Big Chicks

### BEST LGBTQ+ PARTY

#### Queen! at Smart Bar

Runner-up: Slo 'Mo

### BEST LOCAL ALBUM OF THE YEAR

#### Girl K, *Girl K Is for the People*

Runner-up: Heet Deth, *Hooray!*

### BEST LOCAL LABEL

#### Bloodshot Records

Runner-up: Sooper Records

### BEST METAL BAND

#### Huntsmen

Runner-up: Immortal Bird

### BEST MUSIC FESTIVAL

#### Riot Fest

Runner-up: Pitchfork Music Festival

### BEST MUSIC PODCAST

#### Sound Opinions

Runner-up: CHIRP Radio podcasts

### BEST MUSIC TEACHER

#### Bridget Skaggs

Runner-up: Dana Hall

### BEST MUSIC VENUE

#### Metro

Runner-up: Thalia Hall

### BEST MUSIC VENUE BARTENDER

#### Gary Kessler at Liar's Club

Runner-up: Kelly Wey at Transit Nightclub, Metro, Smart Bar

Kaina performs to a hometown crowd at Ruido Fest in Union Park on Friday, August 20, 2021.

© KATHLEEN HINKEL FOR CHICAGO READER



**Best impromptu spiritual-jazz show to celebrate what turned out not to be the end of the pandemic**

## Joe McPhee and Tomeka Reid at Corbett vs. Dempsey on June 19, 2021

When the pandemic shut down live music, Chicago gallery Corbett vs. Dempsey began presenting great online gigs via Experimental Sound Studio's Quarantine Concerts series. I remember the excitement I felt when the gallery made a last-minute, low-key announcement, mostly to friends and supporters, that the sixth of its Sequesterfest livestreaming events would also be open to a small in-person audience. Even more thrilling, the show would feature a duo of beyond-legendary Poughkeepsie multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, who's been making challenging and devotional avant-garde sounds since the late 60s, and composer, improviser, teacher, cellist, and part-time Chicagoan Tomeka Reid, who's played with heavies such as Roscoe Mitchell and the Art Ensemble of Chicago. This wasn't an experience I could pass up, even though the presence of an out-of-town musician seemed oddly foreign: I hadn't been to a show in more than a year, and I was freshly vaccinated.

We'd soon learn never to imagine that COVID is really over, but at the time, that show seemed as safe as could be—everyone was at least my age and thus, I assumed, entirely vaccinated, just as the rest of the world surely soon would be. As I looked around at the friendly, unmasked faces, I naively thought, "We beat this! This is the new normal." McPhee even commented on how amazing it was to have an actual audience, and mentioned his mixed feelings about playing online shows—the streaming setup at the gallery had developed a typical problem out of the gate, and tech issues had been a constant sore spot for him.

Gallery co-owner John Corbett seconded the intensity of feeling in the air—when I asked him about it, he said that the show "had the quality of a culminating event, to the point that Joe was overcome with emotion and was

almost inconsolable afterwards." (When the set was over, McPhee had to retreat to the gallery's office for a bit to be alone.) The concert also fell on Juneteenth, which had just been recognized as a federal holiday for the first time, and according to Corbett that gave the day an extra charge—not just for McPhee but for everyone involved.

It was a life-changing set, and would've been amazing even considered on strictly musical terms. McPhee and Reid charged their playing with breathtaking dynamic extremes, from pin-drop minimalism to full-on glorious sax skronk and string scrape. The sacred and euphoric vibe had us all thinking we'd entered a new post-pandemic era of awareness and gratitude, and . . . well, I don't have to belabor that point. But in difficult and seemingly hopeless times, I still hold onto that glorious moment to remind myself what things could be like. —STEVE KRAKOW

**Best rapper (temporarily) banned from YouTube**

## GreenSlime

Rapper, producer, DJ, and talk-show host GreenSlime has built a cult following with his muddy, sample-heavy production and crass rhymes. In the past few years he's made incredible strides toward establishing his voice as a solo rapper, but he's already been an unsung hero in the local scene for more than a decade, operating mostly in the background. As a producer and DJ, he's known primarily for his work with rappers Mick Jenkins and Qari, and he's built an audience with the YouTube series *Slime's Broke Ass Low Budget Show*, where he interviews other talented creatives from his circle of friends, including Smino, Kari Faux, and Saba.

For the first half of 2021, it seemed like Slime was gaining enough momentum to break out. He released the EP *Rerock, Vol. 1* to streaming services and dropped the new EP *Monk* via Bandcamp. Both projects make strong impressions, despite their brevity, with Slime channeling influences that include Wu-Tang Clan and soul music. When Slime did reach a new level of notoriety, though, it was for something no one had expected: in July he

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woke up to find that YouTube had banned his channel for a song he'd made in 2020 called "Sell Coke to White Folks, Pt. 2."

"Basically they said my video was harmful and dangerous content and that I was selling illegal products over the Internet. They put it in the same category as bomb making," Sllime explains.

"It's clearly a joke and a fake infomercial—I don't even see how someone could be confused. I felt robbed and like there was nothing I could do. Out of all the shit on YouTube, why did I get censored? *Vice* has a video called 'How to Sell Drugs' with ten million views."

The song repeats its title in a tongue-in-cheek call-and-response chorus, and the video is an absurd parody of TV ads—Sllime flies in space via green screen in one scene, and in another actors rub each other's faces in white powder. For some reason, it took YouTube nearly a year and a half to decide the video was a problem, at which point the platform took it down without warning—along with the rest of Sllime's channel, including all his interviews.

Sllime spent three months appealing to YouTube to get his channel back, though even when it was finally restored, "Sell Coke to White Folks, Pt. 2" didn't come with it. Despite the obvious setbacks the takedown caused him, Sllime has built up his underground legend by fighting a battle with an Internet giant—and he's making the most of his second chance on YouTube's platform. Last month he dropped a mesmerizing video for his song "Goodfellas," and he plans to start recording new episodes of his talk show. With his channel back under his control, GreenSllime can continue feeding his fans visuals that match the creativity of his sound.

—ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ

**Best surprise success story kick-started by a Medium essay on emo**

## Snow Ellet

**E**ric Reyes writes clean, bittersweet rock songs whose hooks almost feel like a sugar rush. Under the name Snow Ellet, he renders the admittedly fine lines separat-



DJ Mochi performs at the Link Up party, hosted by Andre Power, at Johnny's West Adams in Los Angeles in January 2022. © MIKEY AVILA

ing emo, indie rock, and pop punk entirely meaningless; his guitar frizz and yearning yelp belong to all of the above, and he can win over dyed-in-the-wool fans of any one of those genres. When Reyes self-released Snow Ellet's debut, *Suburban Indie Rock Star*, in March 2021, few people took notice, but in April local punk writer Hugo Reyes (no relation) praised it in the final post in a four-part series about Chicago emo revival he published on Medium. That kicked off a wave of interest in Snow Ellet, and Pitchfork raised the project's profile still further by running a positive review in May. The whole story is a nice reminder of the need for thoughtful music critics to point us in directions we otherwise wouldn't know to look. You never know where you'll find the next *Suburban Indie Rock Star*. —LEOR GALIL

**Best visual artists turned improvising music group**

## Kouri Hall

**O**n a chilly early evening in fall 2021, during the only proper opening that west-side backyard gallery the Franklin

held all year, a crowd gathered to hear improvised music. Of the handful of live-music events I've attended since the start of the pandemic, it was easily the most magical. The vibe was relaxed and informal, with musicians and instruments popping in and out of songs, and the audience was abuzz with the rare opportunity to socialize.

The show ended with a set by recently formed duo Kouri Hall, made up of painter Andy Hall and multidisciplinary artist Chad Kouri. Hall played mostly drums and Kouri mostly saxophone (the duo's other instruments include synthesizers, samplers, guitar, and bass), and their jazzy, meditative set was inspired by the 1970s collaborations between composer and organist Terry Riley and trumpeter Don Cherry. Their repetitive patterns gave listeners space to concentrate or let their minds wander.

Kouri and Hall have been playing together for years—the two share an art studio—but only recently have they put more focus on performing live and recording. "We both realized that playing music brought us more joy than most other things," Kouri wrote in an email. "And, during a pandemic, prioritizing joy is very important." For now, the duo have

some music available on their Bandcamp page and a handful of shows under their belts—and they're pursuing the possibility of partnering with a label to release a recording of their Franklin set in a physical edition.

Music feeds into both players' visual art, encouraging new ways of thinking and providing a more collaborative creative environment. As Hall put it: "A forever adjacent practice to my visual art, thinking musically unlocks something good in my brain." —KERRY CARDOZA

**Best career breakout by a DJ**

## DJ Mochi

**D**J Mochi soundtracked many of our 2021 nights. At first COVID-19 meant that those parties—including the Global Currency evening he hosts with DJ Iggy at Blind Barber—were virtual, but soon most everyone returned to the dance floor. Even in the midst of a pandemic, Mochi's nights could pack rooms, with lines outside. He helped hold us together as we all tried to gain a sense of normalcy in these weird times, our bodies two-stepping and boogying in spaces such as the Darling and the Hideout.

As the name Global Currency suggests, Mochi's bag of DJ tricks runs pretty deep: his expansive taste encompasses rap, R&B, soul, Afrobeats, house, amapiano, funk, and more. Last year he launched the No Stress parties at the now-defunct Ace Hotel's rooftop bar, Little Wild, where he stood in front of a swarming crowd, armed with his computer and surrounded by a host of hype men, grinning from ear to ear and eagerly flexing his skills as a tune selector while leading his audience on a winding path through many genres. He employed those same skills when he opened for Andre Power in October at the Chop Shop and when he headlined the Whistler on Halloween. And he brought that energy to many beloved spots throughout 2021, in every part of Chicago and beyond, including the Promontory, the Emporium in Wicker Park, Virgin Hotel, Soho House, and Good to Go. His Global Currency residency with Iggy also got the upgrade it deserved in 2022: they hosted their first party of the year at Sleeping Village. —TARA C. MAHADEVAN



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Best new west-side arts space

## Kehrein Center for the Arts

To activist Glen Kehrein, it was appalling that Austin lacked a center for fine and performing arts to showcase the neighborhood's homegrown talent. His dream was to convert the unused auditorium in the former Siena High School expansion—one of the city's finest remaining examples of midcentury modern architecture—into a professionally equipped community arts center.

Kehrein's untimely death in 2011 left his dream deferred until local volunteers, backed by public and private funding, picked up where he left off. By fall 2019, they had restored the auditorium, transformed its lobby into an art gallery, and named the nonprofit center after its visionary.

The Kehrein Center for the Arts advocates for social justice through music, theater, dance, spoken word, film, visual arts, and other forms of creative expression by local and national artists. In its first few months, the 850-seat auditorium presented performances of classical music, gospel, and musical theater, including concerts by Catalyst Circle Rock's Sistema Ravinia Orchestra, one of the nation's only such ensembles consisting entirely of African American middle-school students.

The pandemic forced some programs to be postponed and others to be livestreamed, but in 2021 the KCA nevertheless played host to much of the Ear Taxi Festival, screened new films, sponsored stage plays and symposiums, and presented the Apollo Chorus and the City Lights Orchestra. Last month, Music of the Baroque brought Bill Barclay's play *The Chevalier*, about 18th-century Black composer Joseph Bologne, to the KCA. An opera premiere is planned for June.

"KCA programming for 2022 is an opportunity for us to engage with the community in our beautiful new space," says Vanessa Stokes, the KCA's interim executive director. "It's a chance to show what it means to have an asset like this, right here on the west side."

—ROBERT MAROVICH

Best R&B artist on a hot streak

## Jean Deaux

Since 2018, Chicago singer-rapper Jean Deaux (aka Zoi Harris) has released at least an EP or full-length every year, and there's hardly a bum note in her growing discography. She harnesses the enticing aesthetics of R&B, reaching for the sublime with whispery percussion, lithe and steamy guitar melodies, supple keyboards in plush, downy drifts, and smokily smoldering vocals that pull you into the song like a vaudeville curtain hook. Her performances combine that sound with elements of hip-hop and pop, demolishing the already porous borders that separate the genres. At the start of "Every Night After," from last year's *Most Wanted*, she flits between sultry singing and sharply delivered rapping, pulling off a balancing act that reliably earns male rappers praise that she doesn't get—even though she outstrips the pack with every lyric. Deaux is also a go-to collaborator for some of the city's most talented rappers and singers of the past decade, and you can hear her voice on some of the best songs by the members of Pivot Gang. Given her track record so far, I expect my list of her own best tracks to keep getting longer for years to come. —LEOR GALIL

Best rainy Sunday-afternoon activity

## Record shopping to escape into an immersive rabbit hole of sound

Perhaps on a spring day, when the falling water draws out the musky smell of earth and everything seems to be coming alive, or maybe in the fall, when the cold shards of rain feel more menacing than welcome—no matter the season, there's no better place to be than a record store on a rainy Sunday afternoon. Each store invariably has its own idiosyncrasies: One day at Beverly Records, I met a son of 1960s Chicago soul legend Major Lance who looked strikingly like his father (a frequent collaborator of



Jean Deaux © DENITA TURNER

Curtis Mayfield). That afternoon he found a Major Lance LP among the stacks and held it up to his own face to hammer home the eerie resemblance.

He went on to share that one of Major Lance's signature songs, 1963's "The Monkey Time," was inspired by an actual monkey that Major owned at the time. And this sort of thing is far from an isolated incident at Beverly Records: the 50-year-old far-south-side shop (11612 S. Western) is known for attracting a colorful array of old-school local music notables. We in Chicago are blessed with myriad vinyl-centered shops, with enough variety to suit nearly every taste. Perhaps you're looking for a store with a deep sense of history, and you delight in having an inquisitive yet remarkably low-key cat jump in your 45 RPM box

mid-dig? Then Out of the Past Records (4407 W. Madison) is the place for you.

Or maybe you're looking for a delectable selection of original vintage jazz and soul, with a surprising collection of Black studies books and ephemera? Hyde Park Records (1377 E. 53rd) is right up your alley. Also, extra points because their reggae section smells like incense, years of nag champa smoke having permeated the cardboard sleeves.

Certainly a music fan could listen to a Spotify playlist and never risk confronting inclement weather, but there's something desperately romantic about wandering aimlessly in a record shop, selecting a stack of pretty faces, and ultimately dropping the needle on a dusty new love on a rainy Sunday afternoon.

—AYANA CONTRERAS

BEST NEIGHBORHOOD BAR

### Skylark

Runner-up: Rogers Park Social

BEST NEW BAR

### Nobody's Darling

Runner-up: Golden Dagger

BEST NON-ORCHESTRA

CLASSICAL ENSEMBLE

### Third Coast Percussion

Runner-up: Fourth

Coast Ensemble

BEST POP ARTIST

### Nnamdi

Runner-up: Justice Hill

BEST PUNK BAND

### Naked Raygun

Runner-up: Sincere Engineer

BEST R&B ARTIST

### Jamila Woods

Runner-up: Jean Deaux

BEST RECORDING STUDIO

### Electrical Audio

Runner-up: Uptown Recording



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**BEST ROCK BAND**

**Wilco**

Runner-up: Local H

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**Tasha**

Runner-up: Girl Named Nino

**BEST STREAMING**

**CONCERT SERIES**

**Hideout**

Runner-up: Audiotree

**BEST SUBURBAN MUSIC VENUE**

**FitzGerald's**

Runner-up: SPACE

**BEST VENUE FOR BLUES MUSIC**

**Kingston Mines**

Runner-up: Rosa's Lounge

**BEST VENUE FOR**

**CLASSICAL MUSIC**

**Millennium Park**

Runner-up: Symphony Center

**BEST VENUE FOR DANCE MUSIC**

**Metro and Smart Bar**

Runner-up: Berlin

**BEST VENUE FOR HIP-HOP**

**Subterranean**

Runner-up: Promontory

**BEST VENUE FOR JAZZ**

**Green Mill**

Runners-up: Constellation,

FitzGerald's

**BEST VENUE FOR MAGIC SHOWS**

**Chicago Magic Lounge**

Runner-up: Liar's Club

**BEST VENUE FOR ROCK MUSIC**

**Metro**

Runner-up: Empty Bottle

**Best LGBTQ+ bar 75 steps from the Mag Mile**

**Second Story Bar**

Look for the unassuming, narrow doorway wedged in between an Armenian restaurant and the former staff entrance to the now-shuttered Gap behemoth on Michigan Avenue, climb the nearly vertical and carpeted stairway to the second floor, and you've entered the best LGBTQ+ watering hole this side (or any side) of the Mag Mile. Known for its strong, inexpensive pours and dark, cozy atmosphere, Second Story Bar (157 E. Ohio) is a gritty but charming pub open since 1984 with a lone disco ball providing the only sparkle to the place—which is just how the patrons of this little gem prefer it.

The vibe at this tiny, unobtrusive bar is laid-back cool. You'll encounter everyone from slightly disheveled residents after a long shift at nearby Northwestern Memorial Hospital to buttoned-down professionals in search of a no-frills happy hour to wayward tourists too tired or tapped out to venture farther north or west for a gay enclave.

An interesting feature of Second Story Bar is its closed-circuit TV, which allows patrons already perched around the U-shaped bar to view new guests (prospects?) as they ascend the lengthy escalier.

Before you go, visit the ATM (this is a cash-only establishment) and make sure you have a photo of your vaccination card and proper ID at the ready.

Soak up the intimate atmosphere and cheap booze at this unassuming tavern, but when you leave, latch on to the hand-rail as you descend the stairs—unless you want to go tumbling right back to reality.

—TONY PEREGRIN

**Best entry in a long-running science fiction saga by a power-metal band**

**Mechina's album *Siege***

In a world where doorstep science-fiction and fantasy novels have become gold mines for networks and nearly every comic book



Liam McDonald, aka Opliam, performs at the Old Town School of Folk Music for the Indigenous Peoples' Day Concert in 2019.

© MEREYA LACHEL BLANCO

aspires to be a movie treatment, it's such a delight to come across genre work that has zero interest in becoming anyone else's intellectual property. Batavia trio Mechina have been reliably putting out entries in their vast "As Embers Turn to Dust" saga for more than a decade at this point, creating a sprawling but wonderfully dense story, the stuff of fan theories and wiki wormholes.

Regardless of your lust for lore, Mechina have undeniable chops—in a banner year for the oft-forgotten genre of power metal, *Siege* stands easily with the best the band's contemporaries have to offer. Marrying industrial crunch with symphonic grandeur, Mechina have mastered the art of making long, complicated songs breeze by. They effortlessly build on a foundation of death metal and djent to craft ethereal Cynic-inspired triumphs anchored by the soaring voices of Mel Rose and David Holch. *Siege's* title track (with guest vocals from Conflict's Anna Hel) displays the band at their most apocalyptic—clean singing battles with guttural howls as the song lurches gracefully from breakdown to breakdown. It's the story of a massive war machine grinding to life, but it ends with unsettlingly quiet vocals in wordless, celestial flights—the calm after (and before) the storm. As entry points to staggeringly complex epics go, you could do worse than this stunning example of Mechina's skill. And for those who'd prefer to start somewhere else, they've already released another album: *Venator* came out in January 2022. —ED BLAIR

**Best 184-page love letter to Chicago**

**Ayana Contreras's book *Energy Never Dies: Afro-Optimism and Creativity in Chicago***

Chicago is too often presented as a violent wasteland rather than a cultural wonderland, for terrible reasons and occasionally for less terrible reasons. Many fantastic facets of our city have been underdocumented not out of nefariousness, but because everyone who cared already knew. In pre-Instagram days, who had an incentive to record a sight as familiar as barbecue king Leon Finney cruising through neighborhoods in his Rolls Royce with its custom "LEON RIB" plates? Thankfully, Ayana Contreras won't let the lesser-known histories of Black Chicago's art, music, commerce, and daily life fade. By collecting interviews (sometimes via her *Vocalo* show), records, obscure pamphlets, and family lore, she has crafted a magnificent manifesto about the power of Afro-optimism. Her new book, *Energy Never Dies*, is an accessible love letter to Chicago that's whimsical enough to juxtapose Brighton Park's beloved Tom Tom tamales with Tom Tom Washington, the genius arranger for Earth, Wind & Fire. Whimsy doesn't imply triviality—connections between grassroots commerce and art are as real as a



Mumbo Sauce mogul sponsoring soul superhero Garland Green in the 1960s and as contemporary as pre-*#10Day* Chance the Rapper turning a Black-owned boutique into a mini Coachella. Just like when Finney's Rolls rolled down 79th, space is shared by producers and consumers of music, meat, and Ultra Sheen. As dancers on the local *Soul Train* proved, Black creativity isn't just for professionals. When Contreras surveys neighbors about life, luck, and the lottery, it's playful, but when it comes to listening to the voices on her block, she does not play. —**JAKE AUSTEN**

#### Best concert for a cause

## The third annual Indigenous Peoples' Day Concert at the Old Town School

On Wednesday, October 13, 2021, the Old Town School of Folk Music's third annual Indigenous Peoples' Day Concert shook the rafters of the auditorium with Opliam's rock-tinged blues, Huguito Gutierrez's Andean pan flute, and the NuFolk Rebel Alliance's mishmash of folkloric music, acoustic Americana, and tropical punk. Artist and activist Opliam (aka Liam McDonald, who's of Kanien'kehá:ka descent—his family comes from the Kahnawake Mohawk Territory) founded the annual event in partnership with the Old Town School, via his production company Sky People Entertainment. Run by Native Americans and also connected to the Indigenous Peoples' Day Coalition, the concert showcases Native American musicians to advance a good cause: replacing Columbus Day with Indigenous Peoples' Day in Chicago, as more than a dozen states and 130 cities have already done. The 2021 edition extended the event's vision and mission to connecting decolonization struggles across the globe, and also featured Eugene Hütz, front man of multicultural punk band Gogol Bordello, who's of Ukrainian, Russian, and Roma heritage. Plans for October 2022 involve a multivenue

weekend that will further expand this inclusiveness by bringing together speakers, multidisciplinary artists, and powwow dancers and musicians from Indigenous peoples across the Americas (including Mexico and Canada). It hopes to become a signature Chicago event in a state that's home to 75,000 tribal members representing the cultures and traditions of 150 first nations. —**CATALINA MARIA JOHNSON**

#### Best use of cicadas on a jazz album

## Damon Locks's *Black Monument Ensemble, Now*

The dense, iridescent drone of an untold number of singing cicadas seeps into *Now*, the 2021 sophomore full-length by Damon Locks's Black Monument Ensemble. In August and September 2020, 11 of the collective's members gathered to record in the back garden of Edgewater's Experimental Sound Studio—and the environmental sounds audible on the album carry the resonant signature of summer's heat, which sticks to the group's melodies like a sweaty shirt. The insects don't overwhelm the music, and thanks to tasteful editing their song sometimes drops in and out the same way Locks's weathered samples do. The cicadas get plenty of airtime on "Now (Forever Momentary Space)," and their unruly pulse sometimes seems to react to the ensemble, slipping into a polyrhythm or aligning with a beat. "I hope y'all don't cut the cicadas out," clarinetist Angel Bat Dawid says at the song's close. "That ending, *wooo*, they sounded good." The Black Monument Ensemble made *Now* as a salve against the despair of several overlapping crises; as bad as things have gotten, they seem to say, we can draw on our communities to improve tomorrow. The cicadas charge the air in a way that intensifies the electricity these musicians share and enhances their message. The natural world isn't distinct from the world where we live, work, and play, and on *Now* the environment responded to a communal human experience with a nurturing sound bath. —**LEOR GALIL**

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## MUSIC

ALL AGES FREE

## PICK OF THE WEEK

Kaina proves herself worthy of pop stardom with *It Was a Home*

© DENNIS ELLIOTT

**KAINA, SILAS SHORT, SEMIRATRUTH**

Sat 3/5, 7 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$20, \$16 in advance. 5+

**KAINA'S CONCISE DEBUT ALBUM**, 2019's *Next to the Sun*, confirmed her as one of Chicago's best and most accomplished emerging musicians. Her new *It Was a Home* (City Slang) makes an argument that she belongs among marquee pop stars. She maintains a confident cool while juggling the distinct elements of her hybrid style, which always feels welcoming, comfortable, and just right—it never shows its seams. When she transitions from the swooning 1960s soul of “It Was a Home” to the ostentatious kitchen-sink bedroom pop of “Good Feeling,” she brings with her the rhythmic smoothness and ebullient harmonies of postwar Black pop. Even the elegance with which Kaina carries herself comes across as informal and friendly, inviting us to linger and absorb every precisely executed detail. *It Was a Home* feels as sculpted and labored-over as any big-tent pop album, and Kaina's down-to-earth personality elevates these songs to realms she's only dreamed about. —LEOR GALIL

CONCERT PREVIEWS  
FRIDAY<sup>4</sup>**RADKEY** *Human Errors* open. 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle, 1035 N. Western, \$15. 21+

When teenage brothers Isaiah, Dee, and Solomon Radke emerged as Radkey in the early 2010s, their hook-driven garage punk made an immediate impression. The Missouri band probably weren't trying to split the difference between the over-the-top spookiness of the Misfits (guitarist Dee sang a little like Danzig did in his devilock days) and the unabashed wholesomeness of fellow sibling trio Hanson (though they never got as squeaky-clean as “Mmmmbop”), but they very nearly did. Since then, though, Radkey have shed easy reference points in their explorations of punk and rock styles; the 2020 album *Green Room* shows them to be equally adept at power-pop melodies, hard-edged ragers, and arena-worthy anthems. Their energetic performances and unrelenting touring schedule have made them darlings of the club circuit and festival season alike. In January, Radkey dropped a new single, “Games (Tonight),” whose sweet harmonies have a bubblegum-pop feel that contrasts with its melancholy lyrics about being stuck in bad habits, family strife, or other frustrating circles (“My granny voted Reagan. Ouch / I'm just the token. I write her off / They won't waste my time, alright?”). That same month, as part of Vans' artist-focused ad campaign These Projects Are Ads for Creativity, the trio released a video for “P.A.W.” (from their 2019 record *No Strange Cats*) that seeks to spark conversation about injustices such as redlining and racial discrimination. Last year Radkey played Lollapalooza and Riot Fest, so it hasn't exactly been difficult to see them around these parts, but this Empty Bottle show is a welcome return to a more intimate setting.

—JAMIE LUDWIG

SATURDAY<sup>5</sup>**KAINA** See *Pick of the Week* at left. Silas Short and Semiratruh open. 7 PM, Metro, 3730 N. Clark, \$20, \$16 in advance. 5+FRIDAY<sup>11</sup>**CASPER MCFADDEN** *Vegyn* headlines; DJ Taye and Casper McFadden open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$40, \$35 in advance. 21+

Casper McFadden's breakcore tracks hum with hyperactive energy—the Chicago producer sounds like he can't sit still, and he releases music often enough to prop up that impression. Two months after Vancouver label Kitty on Fire released his *Stasis (Log)* in January 2021, Casper dropped the full-length *Original Soundtrack* and an EP called *PPP Parasites Eve*, the latter of which underground NYC dance label Death by Sheep issued on cassette. He followed those up with a trio of releases this winter: December's *Medicalmechanica*, another album

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MUSIC



Casper McFadden @ JAMES BAROZ



Shane Parish @ COURTNEY CHAPPELL

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on Kitty on Fire; January's *2021 Demos/Unfinished*, a compilation of previously unreleased material; and February's *Abyss Chasers: Hollow Memory*, a full-length collaboration with Saint Louis producer Manapool. On *Medicalmechanica*, Casper's distinctive percussive loops draw from the breadth of dance-music history, and his drums careen through the tracks in a jittery frenzy that'll make you itch or push you onto your feet to start sweating. He never loses control of his songs, even as he prods and agitates them till they sound like they'll explode, and he provides relief from that tension with his ear for melody. "Beginners Break," for example, rides a relaxed chiptune-like synth lead, but Casper

blends it into the tempest of the album—he includes enough samples and breaks to guide you back to his regularly scheduled rager already in progress. —LEOR GALIL

TUESDAY 15

SHANE PARISH *Lia Kohl opens with a solo set; additional support acts may be announced.* 9:30 PM, Elastic Arts, 3429 W. Diversey, \$15. [www.elasticarts.com](http://www.elasticarts.com)

There's no pinning down Shane Parish. On acoustic guitar, he spins webs of bright, densely packed

notes; plugged in, he dips into a deep well of jagged rhythms, gnarled chords, and elongated ribbons of humming sound. Stylistically, he seems equally at home meditating upon American folk tunes, negotiating high-speed hairpin turns with mathy combo Ahleuchatistas, and matching wits with improvisers such as Tatsuya Nakatani, Wendy Eisenberg, and Jacob Wick. He's already delivered two albums this year. On January's *Viscera Eternae* (Ramble), he uses nylon- and steel-stringed acoustic instruments to externalize lengthy, stream-of-consciousness reveries; on the brand-new *Liverpool* (Dear Life), he adapts old sea shanties via alternately tense and playful treatments for electric guitar. What makes Parish persuasive in every context is his capacity to engage fully with the material at hand while infusing it with restless, investigative curiosity. For this concert, his first Chicago-area appearance in three years (he's based in Athens, Georgia, after a long stretch in North Carolina), Parish will perform alone. While he expects to play songs from *Liverpool* and from a not-yet-recorded singer-songwriter venture, his improvisational instincts might divert the action in any direction. The openers for tonight's show include local musician Lia Kohl, who's also performing a solo set. She's best known as a cellist, but on her new solo cassette, *Too Small to Be a Plain* (Shinkoyo/Artist Pool), she combines strings, electronics, radio static, and field recordings into diaristic expressions of pandemic-era solitude. —BILL MEYER

ALBUM REVIEWS

MELISSA ALDANA, *12 STARS*  
Blue Note  
[melissaaldana.net](http://melissaaldana.net)

For her 2019 record *Visions*, jazz saxophonist Melissa Aldana looked outside herself, crafting songs around meditations on the work of Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. But on her new Blue Note debut, *12 Stars*, the 33-year-old bandleader taps into the realities of the pandemic era to explore inward, plumbing familial links and self-care as well as a newfound interest in tarot. She opens the album with "Falling," a look at her own life after the end of a relationship, which came when the world began to roil with social unrest and COVID uncertainty. Aldana's unflinching glissando helps her express the unrelenting weight of isolation, a slurry of notes that serves as a calling card—one that helps define her recognizable tone and phrasing. She considers the possibility of motherhood on "Emilia" (where Sullivan Fortner guests on Rhodes piano) and endless roaming on "The Fool," named after a character from the tarot (where she's ably accompanied by guitarist and producer Lage Lund). Elsewhere, Aldana explores her thoughts about the world around her. "Los Ojos de Chile," where she winds a knotty main statement around a midtempo tune, most directly delves into themes of social justice: she draws on her feelings about a movement in her native Chile to protest wealth disparity and what were seen as exorbitant public-transit rate hikes. On "The Bluest Eye," inspired by Toni Morrison's novel of the same name, Aldana interrogates notions of physical beauty, tying the personal to the political and the internal to the external. Her spirit is hardly tempered on *12 Stars*, but her

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[chicagoreader.com/musicreviews](http://chicagoreader.com/musicreviews).

## MUSIC



Melissa Aldana EDUARDO PAVEZ GOYE



Mae Shults of Everson Poe COURTESY EVERSON POE

compositions feel moodier and more contemplative compared to earlier works. The album demonstrates her ability to channel the unceasingly weird experience of pandemic-era isolation into music—and it confirms her development into a major voice in jazz. —DAVE CANTOR

### EVERSON POE, *THE NIGHT COUNTRY*

Trepanation  
[eversonpoe.bandcamp.com](http://eversonpoe.bandcamp.com)

Chicago multi-instrumentalist Mae Shults began self-releasing heavy rock laced with doom metal under the name Everson Poe in 2009. In the ensu-

ing years, she's moved deeper into metal, amplifying her ambitious, cinematic vision with its grim cacophony and outsize theatricality. Last year's *Grief*, for example, closes with "Acceptance," whose oceanically distorted guitars and minimal, thundering drums maintain their murky mood for long enough that it'll seep into the rest of your week. In 2020, Shults contributed to *Hope in the Face of Fear*, a 58-track compilation organized by Scottish antifascist black-metal project Order of the Wolf that raised funds for Amnesty International and doubled as a showcase for left-leaning metal acts (the first song is "TERF Crisis" by antifascist black-metal trolls Neckbeard Deathcamp, and Damián Antón Ojeda also appears with two

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# MUSIC

## continued from 85

of his projects). *Hope in the Face of Fear* helped link Shults, who's queer and trans, to a loose network of like-minded metal musicians deliberately rooting out the genre's worst elements. As she told the extreme-music site *Growls and Shrieks* last year, the compilation helped "lefty metal Twitter" discover her work, which in turn led her to connect with UK underground label Trepanation Recordings.

On her new album, *The Night Country*, Shults confronts insecurity and powerlessness with unsparring fury. Even in the album's sidwinding, proggy passages, when chaos threatens to blot out the road ahead, her confident strength of purpose makes the way feel clear. Many years of making music alone have taught Shults to express complex emotions so effectively that it barely matters if you can understand her lyrics—I can't make out most of what she's saying over the dense barrage of drums that cannonballs through the second half of "I Am the Maker of My Own Evil," but the agonized desperation in her shriek does what language can't. —LEOR GALIL

## NEQUIENT, DARKER THAN DEATH OR NIGHT

Nefarious Industries  
[nequient.bandcamp.com/album/darker-than-death-or-night](https://nequient.bandcamp.com/album/darker-than-death-or-night)

Chicago's Nequient hit the ground running in 2015 with the EP *Infinite Regress*. By the time of their 2018 full-length debut, *Wolves at the Door*, they'd solidified into a brutal, versatile metallic-hardcore unit. They'd also established their studio methods and favorite producers (Pete Grossman at Bricktop Recording), and they accumulated some DIY touring experience. The pandemic temporarily halted their activity, but the four-piece whetted appetites in November 2021 with another EP, *Collective Punishment*, two of whose four tracks are live recordings from 2019.

If the four-year wait for a new Nequient album dimmed anyone's interest, *Darker Than Death or Night* should fire it up again. "Minotaur" starts with a rigorous D-beat rhythm anchored by drummer Chris Avgerin, with bassist Keenan Clifford riding shotgun; it builds into massive, menacing layers of hardcore, grindcore, thrash, and straight-up gnarly metal. "Consensual Hallucination" uses a stuttering stop-start to build up to a primal chant of resistance, and puts me in mind of the symbolic violence of a mosh-pit crowd hell-bent on catharsis. Many of Nequient's lyrics are about the impossibility of escaping the panopticon of numbing media and manufactured consent, as well as the necessity to continually cultivate anger to bolster resistance. As exhausting as that sounds, the alternative—a blanked-out acceptance of the unacceptable—is even worse. The band can also conjure more personal moments of terror, as they do with the elec-



Nequient © NICOLAS CÔTÉ

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trifying nervous energy of “Death Bridge,” which feels like driving a dangerous stretch of road. It explicitly nods to Metallica’s Cliff Burton, who died in a tour-bus crash in 1986: “Will any of us live to see the other side? / Will we go down like Cliff on this final ride?”

On “City Killer” guitarist Patrick Conahan shows off some of his tightest playing in fierce, constricted, escalating spirals. It’s also the album’s most unhinged-sounding track, striking fast with naked anger and then just as quickly ending. *Darker Than Death or Night* closes with the monumental “Golden Age of the Grift,” which features a blistering guitar solo and a roaring imprecation from front man Jason Kolkey: “Marks are everywhere in this bankrupt culture / And parasites to drain their last buck.” In this volatile day and age, it might not seem wise to deliberately incite rage, but Nequient’s fierce, well-crafted fury could snap you out of even the most deadening binge of fatalistic doom-scrolling and get your heart focused on what matters again. —MONICA KENDRICK

**NILÜFER YANYA, PAINLESS**  
ATO  
[niluferyanya.bandcamp.com/album/painless](http://niluferyanya.bandcamp.com/album/painless)

Fans of the eclectic sprawl of Nilüfer Yanya’s 2019 debut album, *Miss Universe*, may be a little disappointed in her more conventional follow-up; there are no satirical parodies of wellness culture on



Nilüfer Yanya © MOLLY DANIEL

*Painless*, and no surprising jazzy sax solos. But if the new record isn’t an advance over its predecessor, its consistency suggests that the West London singer and guitarist is settling in for the long haul. The music effortlessly conjures a dreamy indie-pop groove, with trip-hop beats offset by Yanya’s angular, brooding guitar fuzz. Her half-mumbled vocals, which shift from a low whisper to a wispy falsetto, are her most distinctive sound, but what makes *Painless* work is her gift for writing melodic pop hooks and quiet earworms. The singles “Stabilise” and “Midnight Sun” are both excellent, but any of

these songs could’ve easily headlined the collection. Listen to the strummed chorus of “Shameless” once or twice, and you might find yourself humming it for days—right up through the multitracked harmonized call-and-response section that steers the tune in an unexpected left turn just before it ends. The more up-tempo “Chase Me” has a strutting, summery melody that feels all the sweeter in contrast with the song’s distorted proto-industrial beat. *Painless* isn’t dramatic or in-your-face, but its carefully, lovingly crafted songs are all the more impressive for that. —NOAH BERLATSKY

**YOUNG GUV, GUV III**  
Run for Cover  
[youngguv.bandcamp.com/album/guv-iii](http://youngguv.bandcamp.com/album/guv-iii)

In all my years contributing to the *Reader*, the artist I’ve written about the most is probably Toronto’s Ben Cook—partly because he’s been so incredibly prolific for the past two decades, but also because his widely varying output is so consistently solid and great. He cut his teeth in the hardcore world while fronting No Warning and playing guitar in Fucked Up, but with the solo project Young Guv (formerly Young Governor) he’s explored every facet of the pop realm, playing with garage rock, electro-funk, new wave, pop punk, and more. Since 2019 Cook has been writing and recording with his best and most fully realized version of Guv by far: an opulent, endlessly hooky, Big Star-inspired guitar-driven power-pop band. His latest record, *Guv III* (out this month on Run for Cover), shows a new level of sophistication and a growing mastery of heartfelt melody. Recalling Big Star’s Chris Bell and Oasis’s Liam Gallagher in equal measure, *Guv III* brims with chiming Rickenbackers and layered, glammy vocals, and the whole pristine, warm-and-fuzzy thing is fun, shimmering, and beautiful. Cook has been on a roll ever since his debut solo seven-inch, 2008’s “Virginia Creeper,” and every time a new release comes out, it’s better than the last. *Guv III* is sheer brilliance front to back, the type of record that feels fresh and timeless at once and will surely stand the test of time. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

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# EARLY WARNINGS

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Garcia Peoples © ETHAN COVEY

## NEW

**Greg Abate Quartet** 3/24-3/26, 8 and 10 PM; 3/27, 4 and 8 PM, Jazz Showcase 🍷

**Able Baker, Disaster Kid** 3/30, 6:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+

**Above Ordinary AOMG Tour featuring Woo, Coogie, Devita, Sogumm, DJ Wegun** 3/27, 8 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

**Oleta Adams** 3/20, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Christian Scott Atunde Adjuah** 3/29, 7 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Adventure Club** 5/13, 10 PM, Radius Chicago, 18+

**Muriel Anderson** 4/16, 2 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Anfang, Alright Maybes** 3/20, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

**Ariel's Party featuring DJ Ariel Zetina** 3/19, 11:59 PM, Hideout

**Arkells, Mobley** 5/26, 6:30 PM, House of Blues 🍷

**Astronomers, Neuhaus** 3/20, 7 PM, Hideout

**Bats** 3/18, 9:30 PM, Hideout

**Beausoleil with Michael Doucet** 4/24, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Behemoth, Arch Enemy, Napalm Death** 5/2, 6:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

**A Benefit for Charles Levi featuring Stabbing Westward, Combichrist, Chris Connelly & Martin Atkins, and more** 4/15, 8 PM, Metro, 18+

**Benny the Butcher** 3/17, 8 PM, the Promontory

**Biffy Clyro** 4/17, 6 PM, House of Blues 🍷

**Big D & the Kids Table** 5/15, 7:30 PM, Reggies Rock Club, 17+

**Big Time Rush, Dixie D'Amelio** 7/7, 8 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion 🍷

**Sir Richard Bishop** 3/18, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

**Black Diamond** 3/20, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

**Black Keys, Band of Horses** 7/17, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park 🍷

**Samuel Blaser & Russ Lossing** 3/17, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

**Luke Bryan, Riley Green, Mitchell Tenpenny, DJ Rock** 9/10, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park 🍷

**Canynn, Souls Extolled, Dorian Taj, Bandy** 4/9, 8:15 PM, Burlington

**Chicago Cabaret Professionals present Passing the Torch: Generations of Cabaret** 4/4, 7:30 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Christian Death** 5/6, 9 PM, Reggies Music Joint

**Circles Around the Sun, Mikaela Davis** 3/27, 8 PM, Park West, 18+

**Coheed & Cambria, Dance Gavin Dance, Mothica** 8/6, 6:30 PM, SeatGeek Stadium, Bridgeview 🍷

**Cold, University Drive** 5/4, 7 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

**Omar Coleman, Joanna Connor** 3/31, 8 PM, Kingston Mines

**Alex Cuba** 4/7, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Kabir Dalawari Quartet** 3/24, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

**Tiffany Day** 3/21, 7:30 PM, Schubas 🍷

**Dayseeker** 4/29, 6:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

**Defeated Sanity** 3/17, 6 PM, Reggies Rock Club, 17+

**Dehd, Pixel Grip** 6/4, 9 PM, Metro, 18+

**Del Water Gap, Taylor Janzen** 3/24, 8:30 PM, Lincoln Hall,

18+

**Duma, Ono, Fruit Looops** 3/24, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

**Dwele** 3/25, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Earthgang** 5/11, 7 PM, Radius Chicago 🍷

**Efterklang** 4/5, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

**Elephante, Hoang, Sabai** 4/30, 8:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

**Eve 6, We Are the Union** 5/10, 7:30 PM, Bottom Lounge, 17+

**Expansions featuring Anja Schneider, Aïme (live), Camelphat, DJ Pierre, Hiroko Yamamura, Ida Engberg** 5/20-5/21, 9 PM, Radius Chicago, 18+

**Facs, Mike Lust, Lifeguard** 3/19, 7:45 PM, Metro 🍷

**Flat Five** 3/18-3/19, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Flume, DJ Seinfeld, Chrome Sparks** 5/27-5/28, 8:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

**Forester** 4/9, 9 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

**Frank Turner & the Sleeping Souls, Bronx, Pet Needs** 7/10, 6 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

**Fredo Disco, Disco Boiz, Brotherin, Cack** 3/26, 7 PM, Subterranean 🍷

**Bill Frisell Trio** 4/3, 7 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Funkadesi** 3/17, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn 🍷

**Galactic, Lowdown Brass Band** 3/25, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

**Ganja White Night, Sodown, Sully** 4/23, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 18+

**Ganja White Night, Truth, Subdocta** 4/22, 7:30 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+

**Garcia Peoples** 3/19, 9 PM, Schubas, 18+

**Gera MX** 5/22, 8 PM, House of Blues 🍷

**Josh Groban** 6/25, 7 PM, Holly-

wood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park 🍷

**Sammy Hagar & the Circle, George Thorogood** 8/27, 7:30 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park 🍷

**Sarah Harmer, Charlotte Cornfield** 4/1, 8 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Dave Hause & the Mermaid, Hi Ho** 3/20, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall

**Heartfield** 3/26, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn 🍷

**Herbsaint** 3/25, 9 PM, Hungry Brain

**Into It. Over It., Mock Orange** 3/17-3/18, 8 PM, Sleeping Village

**Ethan Iverson (solo); Ethan Iverson, Matt Ulery, and Jon Deitemyer** 3/19, 8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

**Hayden James, Cassian** 5/21, 9 PM, the Vic, 18+

**Jeezy, K. Michelle** 3/19, 8 PM, Chicago Theatre 🍷

**Peter Jericho** 3/23, 8 PM, the Promontory

**Joan, Wildlife** 3/25, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

**Joydog, Dwaal Troupe, White-wolfsonicprincess, Gaffes** 3/26, 8 PM, Montrose Saloon

**Juicebox Collective showcase featuring Iris Temple, Piwa, Sarob, Soh Darling, DJ Ubabu** 3/27, 6 PM, Schubas, 18+

**Jvna** 3/25, 9 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

**Aaron Kamm & the One Drops** 3/18, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn 🍷

**Kampire, Jana Rush, Bonita Appleblunt** 3/20, 8 PM, Empty Bottle

**Stacey Kent** 3/19, 7 and 9:30 PM, SPACE, Evanston 🍷

**Kings Kaleidoscope** 6/10, 8 PM, Park West 🍷

**Roy Kinsey** 3/21, 8 PM, Hideout

**Korine, New Canyons** 3/25, 8 PM, Subterranean, 17+

**Ray LaMontagne** 5/27, 7:30 PM, Chicago Theatre 🍷

**Scott Lucas & the Married Men, Kevin Tihista & House-sitters** 3/25, 10 PM, Empty Bottle

**Luna Luna, Dent May, Pearl & the Oysters** 3/27, 7 PM, Lincoln Hall 🍷

**Rick Maguire, V.V. Lightbody, Lillian King** 3/28, 8 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

**Man on Man, Aitis Band III** 3/31, 8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

**Gerrald McClendon, Theo Huff** 3/18, 8 PM, SPACE, Evanston 🍷

**Anna Meredith, Holland Andrews** 3/26, 9:30 PM, Empty Bottle

**Jim Messina** 3/17, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Midnight Oil** 6/10, 7:30 PM, Riviera Theatre, 18+

**Mitis, Rico & Miella, Mancub, If Found** 4/2, 9 PM, Concord

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Music Hall, 18+

**Modest Mouse, Crips** 6/4, 8 PM, Aragon Ballroom, 17+

**Juana Molina** 4/28, 8 PM, Maurer Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Bruce Molsky** 4/2, 7:30 PM, Szold Hall, Old Town School of Folk Music 🍷

**Chanté Moore** 3/26, 7 and 10 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Samuel Mösching** 4/8, 7 PM, the Promontory 🍷

**Move D, Sassmouth, Pat Bosman** 3/18, 10 PM, Smart Bar

**Mulligan Mosaics Big Band** 3/17, 7:30 PM, Epiphany Center for the Arts

**My Morning Jacket, Indigo De Souza** 7/2, 7 PM, Huntington Bank Pavilion 🍷

**Naked Giants, Ganser** 3/19, 8:30 PM, Empty Bottle

**Bob Nanna, Andrew Paley, Lightleak** 3/19, 8 PM, Burlington

**Nappi Hour: A Night of Amapiano with DJ Maphorisa, Mochi, Mike Orié, Mike Abrantie** 3/24, 9 PM, the Promontory

**Nation of Language, Ducks Ltd.** 4/1, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

**Onerepublic, Needtobreathe** 8/3, 7 PM, Hollywood Casino Amphitheatre, Tinley Park 🍷

**Other Favorites, Edwin** 3/21, 8 PM, City Winery 🍷

**Papadosio** 3/18-3/19, 9 PM, Chop Shop, 18+

**Paul Cherry, Dougie Poole** 3/21, 8 PM, Lincoln Hall, 18+

**Pell** 3/25, 8:30 PM, Schubas, 18+

**Perfume Genius, Hand Habits** 3/29, 8:30 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

**PnB Rock** 4/7, 9 PM, the Promontory, 18+

**Point North** 3/19, 6:30 PM, Beat Kitchen 🍷

**Post Sex Nachos** 3/27, 7:30 PM, Subterranean, 17+

**Caroline Spence** 5/7, 8:30 PM, FitzGerald's, Berwyn 🍷

**St. Paul & the Broken Bones** 3/22-3/23, 8 PM, Thalia Hall, 17+

**Andy Stott** 5/12, 9 PM, Sleeping Village

**Summer Salt** 3/18, 8:30 PM, Beat Kitchen, 17+

**Sun Ra Arkestra directed by Marshall Allen** 3/26, 7 and 9 PM, Constellation, 18+

**Dorian Taj, Innkeepers** 3/18, 8 PM, Liar's Club

**Tech N9ne** 5/11, 7 PM, Concord Music Hall, 17+

**Weathers** 4/28, 6:30 PM, Cobra Lounge 🍷 📺



## GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

**MARK "MARKO" RAHMAN**, aka Chicago rapper the **Mad Thinker**, died February 18 at age 54. Rahman came to prominence in the early 90s as part of **East of the Rock**; his childhood friend and EOTR bandmate the **Flux** says Rahman came up with the name—the group's members lived east of Stony Island. Kool Keith was Rahman's biggest inspiration. "He did not want to do that style without putting his own mark on it," the Flux says. "He had the delivery, he had the voice, he had the cadence, he had the rhymes, and he had a way of incorporating small experiences in his rhymes. He knew that so-and-so person would be listening to a song at some point, so he would throw something in there just for that person." The Flux says East of the Rock nearly broke out a couple times before splitting up in 1995, and helped the local scene go mainstream. "We were the first rap act ever to play Metro; we were the first rap act ever to play Double Door," he says. EOTR's recordings were hard to find till the **Black Pegasus** label released the **Galaxy Rays EP** in 2010.

**Taylor Ford** plays bass for mathy indie band Origami Button and guitar for fifth-wave emo songwriter Eric Reyes (aka Snow Ellet), but he also has a solo chillwave project called **Toloro**. On the new **Channel Zero: Forgotten Media**, Ford combines glistening dream pop and montages of late-night TV ads—it feels like nodding off in front of the tube just before dawn.

Producer **Na'el Shehade** and singer-songwriter **Via Rosa**, aka local electro-R&B duo **Drama**, established themselves as pillars of the city's pop firmament with their 2016 debut EP, **Gallows**; on their 2020 LP, **Dance Without Me**, they crystallized their stately, classically proportioned sound. Last month the duo released the EP **Don't Wait Up**, whose tracks "3AM" and "Hit My Line" offer listeners sanctuary in their most lovelorn and introspective moments. On Saturday, March 12, Drama celebrate with a show at **Metro**. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

Got a tip? Tweet @Gossip\_Wolf or e-mail [gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com](mailto:gossipwolf@chicagoreader.com).

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## SAVAGE LOVE

### Poly paradise

Three types of jealousy and saying goodbye to heteronormativity

By DAN SAVAGE

**Q:** I'm a 34-year-old straight cis male. About 18 months ago I met a lovely human that I'm crazy about. When we started dating, she said she needed us to be poly and I agreed. It was a first for both of us! I'd always been interested—my parents are queer and have been poly my whole life—so it wasn't a new concept to me. Early on, we went on some random dates, made out with some other people, but took it slow because we wanted to build a foundation of trust and love first. Now we're there. She recently started dating a close friend of ours. In theory, I'm good with it. I adore him and he cares about us as a couple. There's lots of communication happening in all directions. We've even tossed around

the idea of some threesomes or foursomes. I can't wait for the day when I am truly stoked for this, and we can all play and love on each other. But I don't want to "overcome the jealousy" or "deal with it." I want being poly to be something that makes life amazing! But I am still being restricted by silly feelings put in my head via some nefarious patriarchal capitalist hack. Any advice for moving on as quickly as possible into a polyamorous paradise? I want to feel queerer and a little less mainstream! —**SEEKING POLYAMOROUS EFFORTLESS WONDERS**

**A:** No relationship—closed, open, or poly—is a paradise. Ideally a relationship brings more joy into your life than

pain. (Unwanted pain; wanted pain is its own kind of joy.) But misunderstandings, disagreements, and hurt feelings are a part of every romantic partnership. And the longer that partnership goes on, the likelier the people in it—couple, throuple, or quad—are going to face the kind of relationship-extinction-level event that requires contrition, forgiveness, and aggressive memory-holing to survive.

As for jealousy . . .

My husband has been with his boyfriend for five years; there are times when I see them together and I am not just happy for them, SPEW, but made happy by them. (I'm straining to avoid the term "comparison" here, or "the other c-word," as it's known at our house.) But there are

JOE NEWTON

times when I feel jealous . . . and if I'm still experiencing jealousy after 20+ years in an open relationship . . . and still feeling jealousy after 30+ years being pretty fucking queer . . . I don't think jealousy is something you need to completely overcome before opening your relationship or that being "queerer" cures.

And it's important to distinguish between different kinds of jealousy. There's the healthy kind of jealousy (someone is being neglected or taken for granted, and their feelings need to be considered); there's the unhealthy kind of jealousy (someone is controlling and manipulative, which is a red flag for abuse); and then there's the sexy and energizing kind of jealousy (seeing your partner through another's eyes and recognizing—or being reminded—of your partner's desirability). Instead of trying to expunge all feelings of jealousy from your emotional repertoire before opening your relationship (which no one does before entering into closed relationships), you need to ask yourself what kind of jealousy you're feeling at a particular moment. If it's the healthy kind, ask for what you need; if it's the unhealthy kind, get your ass into therapy; if it's the sexy and energizing kind, enjoy the ride.

And finally . . .

It's good that you're taking your time, because rushing things is a good way to fuck this up. But paradoxically, SPEW, if you wait until you're no longer experiencing any jealousy—or no longer have conflicted feelings about this—you'll never get there.

**Q:** I'm a 36-year-old cis gay man who came out a decade ago and found widespread acceptance from friends and family, but

I fear my unique situation now might change that. Last summer, my husband died unexpectedly, leaving me widowed and trying to pick up the pieces. I couldn't sleep much for a while and went online to chat. I wound up meeting this great guy who lives across the country. He's a sexy leather daddy, and I've traveled to stay with him on two occasions and had some of the hottest sex I've ever had. Plus, I really like him! He's funny, smart, deep. Here's my dilemma: He's married to another man, and I also have feelings for the husband. I plan to move there soon to see where this goes and start the next chapter of my life. (I will be getting my own apartment, at least at first.) It's still early, but I feel like I could fall in love with both these men. How do I pursue this and start over somewhere new while making this all understandable to the straights in my life? Is there a way to explain this to my mom and the rest of my family without freaking them out? I know it shouldn't matter, and I'll follow my heart either way, but I'd hate to lose this close connection with my family if they get weirded out by my dating life. —**NO MORE MR. HETERNORMATIVE**

**A:** I'm so sorry for your loss, NMMH, and I'm so glad you were able to find the support you needed online—and it's nice to be reminded that people don't just go online to share conspiracy theories and post revenge porn. People find connection online, they find support, and sometimes they find new love in the form of a sexy leather daddy.

As for what to tell your family about your relationship . . .

For now, NMMH, nothing. Just like you're getting your own apartment after you move because you want to

wait and see where this relationship goes before moving in with these guys, you're going to want to see where this relationship goes before you tell your family about these guys. This isn't about hiding things from your family, NMMH, but about waiting to roll out your new relationship if and/or when it gets serious. You most likely didn't introduce Mom to your late husband after your second date; similarly, there's no need to introduce Mom to these guys after seeing them on only two occasions.

And in my experience—in my own highly personal and highly relevant experience—it's often easier for the families of gay men to accept that we're open or poly than it is for the families of straight people. Our families have some practice letting go of expectations and prejudices. And while it's possible your family's made it clear their acceptance was conditioned upon you marrying and settling down and behaving "heteronormatively," it's also possible you're projecting. You want them to think you're "one of the good ones," i.e., one of the monogamous ones, while they couldn't care less. But even if they do care and would prefer to see you monogamously married again, they will embrace your new relationship if you make it clear you will accept nothing less from them.

**For the Record:** Fuck Greg Abbot for what he's doing to trans kids and their families in Texas, fuck every last Republican in Florida for what they're doing to LGBTQ+ kids in schools, and fuck Vladimir Putin for what he's doing to all of the innocent people in Ukraine. 🏳️‍🌈

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**The Northern Trust Company seeks a Lead, Software Engineering** to design, build, and test software applications and solutions. Define technical system requirements for complex data processing and software development projects. Collaborate with cross-functional users to analyze business needs, create prototypes, and develop user-friendly software applications. Test and maintain computer programs, including designing, coding, and debugging. Conduct feasibility studies and design system requirements for complex data processing projects. Perform strategic planning and long-range direction for technology usage and enhancements across the business units. Position requires a Bachelor's degree in Computer Science, Electronic Engineering, Information Systems, or a related STEM field, followed by 8 years of progressively responsible experience with software design, development, testing, and implementation. Experience must include a minimum of: 5 years of experience with coding and debugging software applications; 5 years of experience with capturing business requirements and transforming requirements into technical specifications in the financial services industry; 5 years of experience with conducting feasibility studies for complex data processing projects and preparing project phase reports; 5 years of experience with SQL, Markit EDM, and relational databases such as SQL Server, Oracle, or DB2; 3 years of experience with messaging solutions such as MQ/Solace/Kafka; 3 years of experience with analytics automation tools such as Alteryx; 3 years of experience with automation and release management including experience with upgrade/lifecycle projects; 3 years of experience with application certification management; 3 years of experience with Agile methodologies including JIRA; and 3 years of experience with derivatives (OTC & ETD) and capital markets. Job location: Chicago, IL. To apply, please visit <https://careers.northerntrust.com> and enter job requisition number 22016 when prompted. Alternatively, please send your resume, cover letter, and a copy of the ad to: K. Clemens, 50 South LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60603.

**The Northern Trust Company seeks a Specialist, CS Invest Ops** to drive measurable improvements in customer satisfaction, client service quality, operational productivity, organic growth, and employee satisfaction. Liaise with the Asset Servicing organization to resolve issues and improve efficiency and productivity. Identify opportunities for improvement within existing technology applications and ensure appropriate operational controls. Support all back and middle office functions for new client implementations. Oversee overall project planning and manage service reviews within each of the key product areas. Position requires a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Finance, or a related field, followed by 5 years of progressively responsible experience with financial industry operations, asset management, or investment operations. Experience must include a minimum of: 5 years of experience with back and middle office support; 5 years of experience with developing and enhancing written procedures for operations processes; 5 years of experience with business analysis and project management; 5 years of experience with reconciling client accounts; 5 years of experience with new client implementation for investment operations; and 5 years of experience with Fundmaster, TLM, and the Microsoft suite of products. Job location: Chicago, IL. To apply, please visit <https://careers.northerntrust.com> and enter job requisition number 22014 when prompted. Alternatively, please send your resume, cover letter, and a copy of the ad to: K. Clemens, 50 South LaSalle Street, Chicago, IL 60603.

**Solution Systems, Inc has openings for Microsoft Developer** with a Master's degree in CS, Engg (any), Tech./ rld to analyze, evaluate, & design buss. processes around major transactional areas such as finance/sales/supply chain mgmnt etc. Customize, support, & test NAV C/AL on C/SIDE and AL code in Visual Studio. Dsgn tech rqmnts, handle support tickets & improv sys performance. Wrk location is Rolling Meadows, IL with reqd travel to client locations throughout the USA. Please mail resumes to 3201 Tollview Drive, Rolling Meadows, IL 60008 (OR) email: [susan@solsyst.com](mailto:susan@solsyst.com)

**Sr. Operations & Engineering Analyst - Chicago** - Prepare cost estimates, budgets, reports. Plan equip. layout, workflow. Develop proposals for new/revised methods, prod. processes, ops. Analyze technical data to solve complex problems. Master's Indust. Eng./related. Mail res., cov. let. to Diane Korach, Edsal, 4400 S. Packers Ave., Chicago, IL 60609

**TransUnion, LLC seeks Specialists** for various & unanticipated worksites throughout the U.S. (HQ: Chicago, IL) to dev, implement, integrate & deploy sw apps. Bachelor's in Comp Sci/Tech Mgmt/related field +1yr exp req'd. Req'd Skills: Apache, OpenStack, Linux, Kubernetes, Docker, Ansible, GIT, Chef, Terraform, Splunk, Grafana, Appdynamics, AWS, PowerShell, Bash. 100% telecommuting permitted. Send resume to: A. Goodpasture, REF: VKN, 555 W Adams St., Chicago, IL 60661.

**TransUnion, LLC seeks Sr. Analysts for Chicago, IL location** to apply analytics to traditional & alternative credit, insurance & marketing data. Master's in Stats/related field +1yr exp req'd. Req'd Skills: Python, R, SAS, SAS Macro, Hive, SQL, Git, Spark Hadoop, C++, Shell Script, Parallel Computing, Generalized Linear Models w/ Constraint Shape Optimization (CGLM), Tree Models (Random Forest, Gradient Boosted trees), Gradient Boosted Machines, Retrospective analysis, Database Eng, Optimization, Text Mining, Research & Stat Study Design. Send resume to: A. Goodpasture, REF: JL, 555 W Adams St, Chicago, IL 60661.

**TransUnion, LLC seeks Sr. Analysts for Chicago, IL location** to participate in various phases of testing, designing, & developing complex enterprise apps, including automation test dev. Master's in Comp Sci/Mgmt Info Systems/related field +2yrs exp OR Bachelor's in Comp Sci/Mgmt Info Systems/related field +5yrs exp req'd. Skills Req'd: Java, JavaScript, API, Automation, Protractor, Docker, Containerization, CI/CD pipelines, Python, HTML, CSS, JUnit/TestNG, C#, RestSharp, Specflow, Selenium. 40% telecommuting permitted. Send resume to: A. Goodpasture, REF: SKK, 555 W Adams St, Chicago, IL 60661.

**TransUnion, LLC seeks IT Sr. Project Managers for Chicago, IL location** to lead IT projects involving Agile team. Master's in Comp Sci/Comp Eng/Comp Apps/Info Sys or related field +2yrs exp or Bachelor's in Comp Sci/Comp Eng/Comp Apps/Info Sys or related field +5yrs exp req'd. Req'd Skills: exp leading & coaching Agile release trains at enterprise scale; leading Agile teams in accordance w/ the scaled Agile framework (SAFe) by facilitating SAFe events & processes, communicating w/ stakeholders, managing risks & driving relentless improvement; Scrum/Agile methodologies (PMI-ACP, CSM, CSP, SA, SASM), Agile central, business & tech process flow documentation using MS Visio & business & data analysis using SQL & SSMS; Abinitio, Java, SQL Database, Splunk, AWS (Cloud, Azure), MAPR, Hadoop, Big Data, Buildforge, Angular, JMS, Protractor, SOAP UI, Jenkins, Sonarqube, .NET, Kubernetes. 20% telecommuting permitted. Send resume to: A. Goodpasture, REF: MJK, 555 W Adams St, Chicago, IL 60661.

**TransUnion, LLC seeks Sr. Developers for Chicago, IL location** to lead the design, implementation & maintenance of sw apps & IT infrastructure. Master's in Comp Sci/Comp Sys Eng/related field +2yrs exp or Bachelor's in Comp Sci/Comp Sys Eng/related field +5yrs exp req'd. Req'd skills: Spark, Hive, ETL, Hadoop, Ab Initio, Shell Scripting, Python, Amazon Web Services (S3, EC2, EMR, Lambda, Glue & Athena), Agile (Scrum), Relational Database design, SQL query optimization, data modeling, Linux, CI/CD, Waterfall. Send resume to: A. Goodpasture, REF: ASR, 555 W Adams St, Chicago, IL 60661.

**Senior Designer:** Childs-Dreyfus Group in Chicago seeks Sr. Designer to work in all design proj. stages & supervise 1-3 subords on all projects. Req: Bach deg. in Interior Design, Architecture or related design field & 3 yrs exp. incl. Revit 3D, Adobe Photoshop, Autocad, PowerPoint & MS Office + 1 year exp. w/ Studio Designer. Must have completed or be currently enrolled in NCIDQ Certification and must pass employer-administered test of listed skills. Send res. and cover letter to [rpabon@childs-dreyfus.com](mailto:rpabon@childs-dreyfus.com), "Sr. Designer" in subj. line. EOE.

**Technical Recruiter (Chicago, IL & may work from home)** Perform full lifecycle recruiting within the Financial Technology space which includes requisition and candidate selection, offer process, onboarding, and data management analytics. Bachelor Degree or equivalent in Finance or closely related field and 2 years of exp. required. Above experience must include recruiting engineers with coding expertise in the languages of either Java, C#, or Ruby. Mail resume to Refactor II, Inc., Attn: HR, 4838 W Wellington Ave, Chicago, IL 60641.

**Account Associate @ Stripe** (Chicago, IL and various unanticipated locations) The Account Associate team is a highly consultative and analytical group that manages relationships with and is responsible for the growth and retention of Stripe's largest and fastest growing Startup and SMB customers; Manage critical client relationships on behalf of Stripe. Job req's Bachelor's degree in Econ, Business, or a rtd fld w 3 yrs of client facing exp in a tech role. To be considered, applicants must send resume to [ad-reply@stripe.com](mailto:ad-reply@stripe.com) ref job code 3532201.

**TECHNOLOGY** ServiceNow Inc is accepting resumes for the following positions in Chicago, IL: Data Scientist (6702): Design experiments to evaluate and benchmark machine learning algorithms' effectiveness and performance on different types of data. Mail resume to ServiceNow Inc, Attn: Global Mobility, 2225 Lawson Lane, Santa Clara, CA 95054. Resume must include job title, job ref. #6702, full name, email & mailing address. No phone calls. Must be legally authorized to work in U.S. without sponsorship. EOE.

**TECHNOLOGY** ServiceNow Inc is accepting resumes for the following position in Chicago, IL: Senior Software Quality Engineer (5183): Participate in scrum teams to define and refine unit, integration testing and performance benchmarking/testing. Telecommuting permitted. Mail resume to ServiceNow Inc, Attn: Global Mobility, 2225 Lawson Lane, Santa Clara, CA 95054. Resume must include job title, job ref. #5183, full name, email & mailing address. No phone calls. Must be legally authorized to work in U.S. without sponsorship. EOE.

**Horizon Therapeutics USA, Inc. seeking a Principal Statistician for Deerfield, IL.** Dev. or apply math or statistical theory & methods to collect, org., interp., & summarize, & analyze data to prov. usable info. Apply at: [www.horizontherapeutics.com](http://www.horizontherapeutics.com).

**Landscape Designer - Chicago, IL 60601:** Work on a variety of project types & be involved in all phases of the landscape architecture design process for these projects. Position reqs occasional travel to project sites or other Confluence Offices. Send resume to: Confluence, Inc., 525 17th St., Des Moines, IA 50309, Attn: Lori Miller

**Loyola University Chicago is seeking an Assistant Professor of Philosophy in Chicago, IL** to publish peer reviewed & invited articles in critical philosophy of race, continental philosophy, & LGBT & queer theories & participate in academic conferences. Please send resume to [mwaymac@luc.edu](mailto:mwaymac@luc.edu) & reference job 120292.

**ES&A Consulting Manager, Huron Consulting Services LLC, Chicago, IL:** Enable transform. & perform. imprvmt of enterprise or its parts, w/respect to people & process, by providing relevant capabilities, assets (human & non-human), processes & tools (from a functional aspect). Structure, analyze, & visualize enterprise's current state. Execute enterprise resource planning (ERP), app mgmt, or custom software development (CSD). Must have Bachelor's (or foreign equivalent) in Business Admin., Mgmt Info. Systems, Comp Eng, Electronic Eng, or rel & 5 years of exp. w/:

- Project implement. of cloud apps, incl. cloud ERP, enterprise perform. mgmt (EPM), & customer relationship mgmt (CRM) offerings;
- Acting as a functional app. specialist;
- Contributing on mult. projects of differing scale & duration;
- Providing tech. & functional assistance in identifying, evaluating, & develop. systems & procedures that meet user-defined reqmnts. Exp. may be gained concurrently. 80% travel to unanticipated worksites throughout NA. Telecommuting allowed when not traveling. Individuals may reside anywhere in the US. To apply, send resume to: [apply@hcg.com](mailto:apply@hcg.com).

**ES&A Consulting Manager, Huron Consulting Services, Chicago, IL:** Plan, shape & deliver tech. solutions that deliver results & seamlessly align w/ client goals, visions & missions. Build long-standing partnerships w/ clients, while collab. w/ colleagues to solve enterprise software challenges. Work w/ Huron team members throughout entire implementation lifecycle, incl. plan, configure, design, build, test, train, change mgmt, go live & post-production support. Must have Bach in Comp. Sci., Comp. Eng'g, or related field & 5 yrs exp. w/:

- Interpret client bus. needs & translate to app & operational reqmnts;
- Rec. overall structure of implement. models & decomp. of sys., incl. layers of software, pkgs & components;
- Consult on data integration & data reporting consider;
- Provide tech. & functional assist. in identifying, evaluating & dvlping sys. & procedures that meet user-defined reqmnts;
- Dvlp long term roadmaps & facilitate evolution of sys.;
- Deliver successful implement., data design & data validation;
- Perform sys. cutover involving migration of software app.;
- Lead workshops w/ users for conf. room pilots, UAT & user training sessions; &
- Agile & EPBCS, Hyperion Planning & Essbase. Of exp. req'd, must have 3 yrs exp. w/ project implement. of cloud apps, incl. EPM & CRM offerings. Exp. may be gained concurrently. 80% travel to unanticipated worksites throughout N. America. Telecommuting allowed when not traveling. Individuals may reside anywhere in U.S. To apply, send resume to: [apply@hcg.com](mailto:apply@hcg.com).

**ES&A Consulting Director, Huron Consulting Services LLC, Chicago, IL:** Independently lead delivery of proj. or workstream & ensure overall work prod. quality & engagement success (our people, financials & client). Implement ERP system using Oracle Cloud Fin. & assoc. modules. Translate complex bus. rqmnts into practical sol. using Oracle ERP. Design & build interfaces between legacy sys. & Oracle using Oracle data transformation prod. such data mgmt to extract data from source sys. & transform it & load it to target Oracle apps. Integrate Oracle EPBCS w/ Oracle Cloud Fin. to extract metadata & data from Oracle ERP & load to Oracle EPBCS. Dvlp web based fin. reports using Oracle Fin. Reports Studio & Excel based reports using SmartView. Ensure that those responsible for implementing a strategic

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- (i) Cloud app. implement.;
- (ii) Proj. implement. in at least 1 of the following areas: cloud ERP, EPM, or CRM offerings; (iii) Act as a functional app. specialist; (iv) Train & participate in prof. dvlpmnt of subordinates of both proj. mgmt & tech. dimensions; (v) Contribute on mult. implement. proj. of differing scale & duration; & (vi) Translate tech. info from mtgs into tech. docs. Exp. may be gained concurrently. 80% travel to unanticipated worksites throughout N. America. Telecommuting allowed when not traveling. Individuals may reside anywhere in U.S. To apply, send resume to: apply@hcg.com

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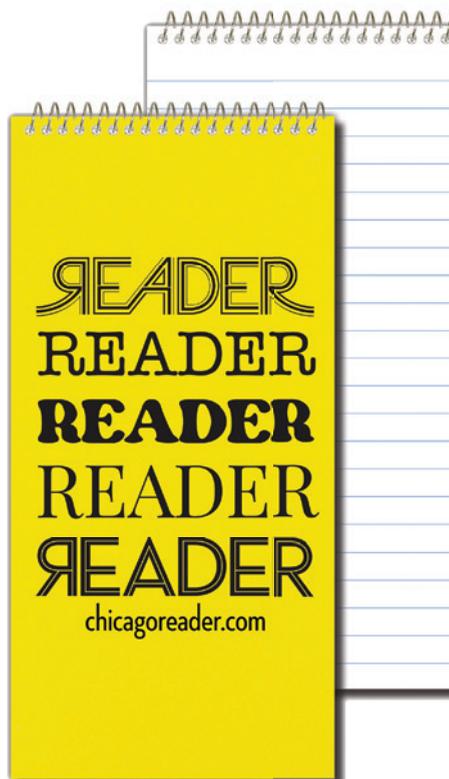
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### RESEARCH

**Have you had an unwanted sexual experience since age 18?** Did you tell someone in your life about it who is also willing to participate? Women ages 18+ who have someone else in their life they told about their experience also willing to participate will be paid to complete a confidential online research survey for the Women's Dyadic Support Study. Contact Dr. Sarah Ullman of the University of Illinois at Chicago, Criminology, Law, & Justice Department at ForWomen@uic.edu, 312-996-5508. Protocol #2021-0019.

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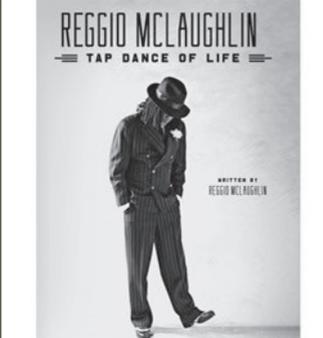


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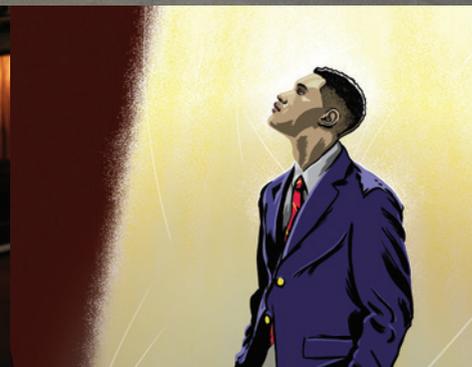


## THE OLD MAN AND THE POOL

Written and performed by **Mike Birbiglia**

Directed by **Seth Barrish**

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By ensemble member **Tarell Alvin McCraney**

Directed by **Kent Gash**

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