

READER

Welcome to the **SKATE PARK**

OnWord Skate Collective embraces skaters of all ages and abilities, prioritizing women, trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people.

By TARYN ALLEN 36



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ON THE COVER: PHOTO BY DUWAYNE PADILLA.

NOTE FROM AN EDITOR

THE CHICAGO COMEDIAN and writer Dwayne Kennedy has a pretty raw joke about summer being "shooting season" in Chicago that I've heard him perform a few times on stage. Kennedy says, "I don't know what it is about the warm weather in Chicago that just brings everyone out. 'Hey, it's 79 degrees!'" and then makes shooting noises. "I haven't seen you all winter, dawg! [pow, pow, pow] How's your aunt?" You can hear him do a version over on Bandcamp on his album *Who The Hell is Dwayne Kennedy?* and if you listen to the track, you'll hear the same response I've heard at Zanies to Kennedy's joke—nervous but sustained laughter at a problem that seems to have no end. As we went to press this week, we were still reeling from the tragic mass shooting that happened in Highland Park that left seven dead. Some of us can still feel the pangs of memory from a mass shooting that happened in Englewood last June which resulted in five deaths. Different circumstances, both horrible. And with some distance, we find ourselves asking what is the solution to all of this? How do

we make the city and our world "safe"?

Cities like ours often get "eradicating crime so everyone can enjoy themselves in peace" mixed up with "controlling the people that we think are committing the crimes so that everyone can enjoy themselves in peace—well, not everyone. Not *y'all*." And it's easy to see how BIPOC in Chicago have disproportionately been on the receiving end of a variety of mayors and police superintendents' attempts to keep their jobs—thinly veiled in the form of mandates, blustery speeches, and, let's face it, changing the curfew for teenagers for one specific city/private (oh, it's public land all right—but tell that to the security guards) park that frankly they'd rather have only the white kids you used to see on 00s episodes of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* show up at. White teenagers from rural Montana or somewhere, who love Jesus and judiciously use the word "sick." Yes, those kids are welcome in my city. But not any more welcome than teenagers who already live and work here, who need open spaces to catch up with their friends after school and jobs, who need to experience the city in the ways that we all did growing up—a crazy, busy place where

there was ample room for adventure and discovery, and not the constant burden of living in fear of being prosecuted for walking while Black teen.

In this issue, Justin Agrelo, in a feature originally written for the nonprofit newsroom The Trace, shares with us the perspective of three Chicago young people who already work and live here, who are *from here* in the way that you and I are from here, who deserve everything the city has to offer. It's always a long summer in Chicago, and the city needs to do better by our young people so they can spend the season and beyond enjoying themselves. And learning. And training to be adults. And let's come back to joy—what will it take before all of us make a commitment to living together in not just peace but *joy*? —SALEM COLLO-JULIN, MANAGING EDITOR

CORRECTION: An article published in the June 23 issue of the *Reader*, "Stark differences," said that India passed the Citizenship Amendment Act in 2014; it was passed in 2019. The same article misstated the amount of PPP loans Vishwa Hindu Parishad of America received; the correct figure is \$171,000.



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

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MANAGING EDITOR SALEM COLLO-JULIN
PRODUCTION MANAGER KIRK WILLIAMSON
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER AMBER HUFF
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ADVERTISING

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 CLASSIFIEDS: CLASSIFIED-ADS@CHICAGOREADER.COM

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STREET VIEW

Recovering goth

An ancestral witch and priestess gives bright colors a chance.

By ISA GIALLORENZO

“I kinda got it on a whim,” says Alexis P. Morgan, 30, about the dazzling two-piece ensemble she purchased at Boohoo. “I normally don’t get super colorful things but I’ve been branching out. [This set] had such a fun vibe to it and everybody was like, ‘You look amazing!’ I just decided to color it up—you know, [colors are] the spice of life.”

“I’ve been experimenting with fashion and enjoying things, especially as a plus-size person who doesn’t get to see really tasteful bright fun clothes,” she adds. Her outfit was perfect for the “Create Your Own Tarot Cards” book-signing event she’d just attended at Ponnopozz, the Ravenswood boutique known for their lively prints.

Though she is still figuring out what her style is, Morgan usually makes more neutral sartorial choices. “I’m a recovering former emo-goth child. Now I’m somewhere between soft and classical glamour and this more fun-for-all tropical aesthetic. I was raised in Florida, so I just wanted a little bit of that warmth,” she says.

To enhance the high-femme aesthetic she was going for, Morgan sported a pair of heart earrings she reluctantly bought from SHEIN (“I’m not super proud about [that], but they’re so cute!”). To compensate for her fast-fashion pick, she wore customized talismanic bracelets made by her friend Joey Atreides.

The bracelets also reflect Morgan’s spir-

itual leanings. Besides being an artist, she works as an ancestral witch and priestess who helps her clients “fulfill and explore their wants, needs, and desires through the lens of their relationships with community and through examining their relationships with their ancestors.” “My goal is to help people ground their lives in what matters to them, rather than the expectations set upon them by outdated political, economic, and social values that don’t respond to or consider our current challenges and opportunities to evolve as a collective society,” she says. Morgan’s radiant outfit might inspire people to do just that. 

 @chicagolooks



Alexis P. Morgan  ISA GIALLORENZO



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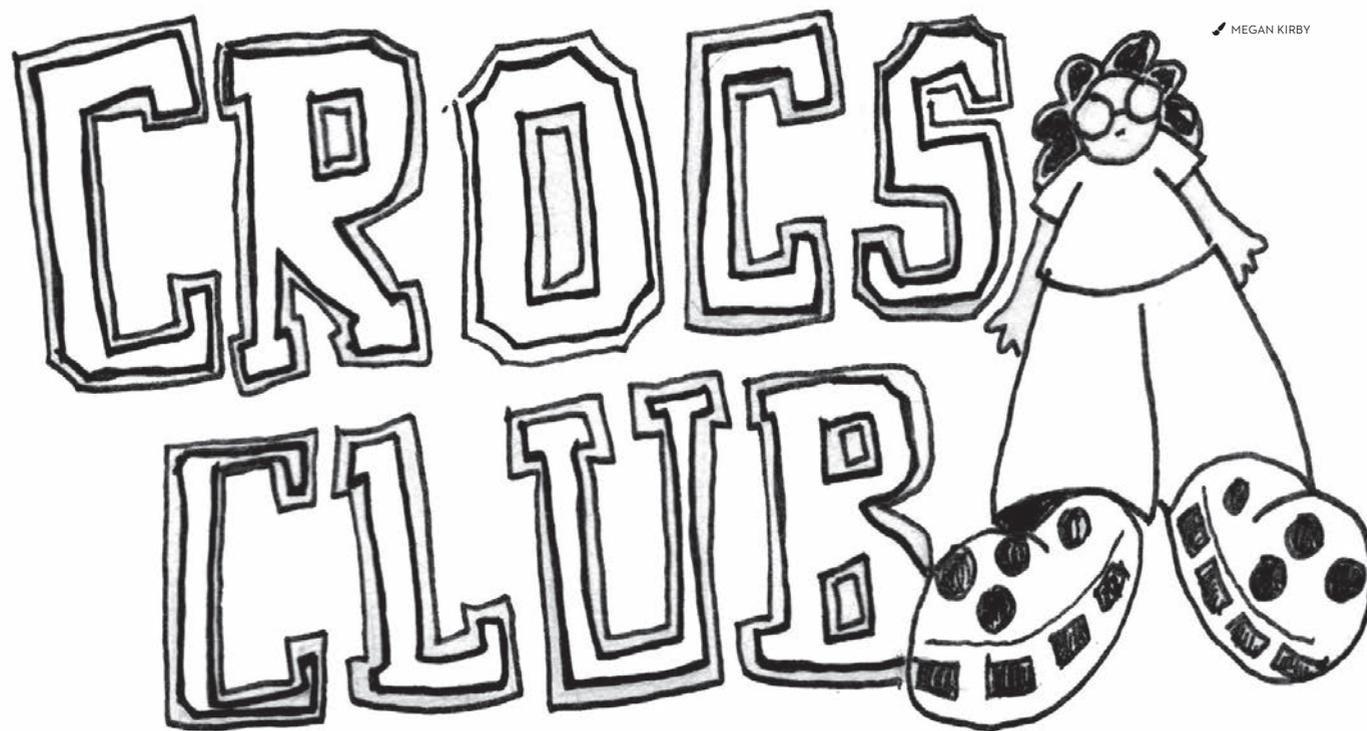


INKLING

Riding the wave of the Crocs

Being on trend, when the trend is objectively ugly footwear

By MEGAN KIRBY



The first time I tried on a pair of Crocs, I was in study hall. This kid named Marlin slid them off and told me I had to give them a go. Marlin wasn't known for his sartorial choices. He liked to wear thick white socks with flip-flops; the thong wedged into the cotton between his toes. But curiosity got the best of me, so I slid the Crocs on. The sweat left over from Marlin's bare feet lubricated the plastic against my own skin, and I felt nothing but repulsion. It was a no for me. But it turns out Marlin was just ahead of the times.

Now, more than ten years after I graduated from high school, I think Crocs are the coolest. I have multiple pairs, and I pine for more. And I am not alone in this. These days Crocs show up in paparazzi photos of Post Malone and on Balenciaga runways. Since the genesis of Crocs in 2001, the wearers of these clunky plastic clogs have shifted from clueless vacation dads to TikTok fashion girlies. What used to be corny is cool—and what's cool to people is always arbitrary. All I want right now are big comfy shoes that look like cartoons.

Once, I had a friend with a Wrangler explain the "Jeep wave" to me—a two-finger salute that Jeep drivers share when they pass each other by. My buddy was embarrassed by Jeep culture, and pretended to never see the bros gesturing through their wide front windows. I've found a similar camaraderie

among Crocs wearers, but I am not ashamed at all. When I am wearing Crocs, and I compliment a stranger who is wearing Crocs, we simply have the time of our lives. We talk about the pairs we have, the pairs we want, the sort of innate goofiness that accompanies wearing shoes that are objectively pretty ugly.

It's funny how owning certain things promotes this sense of community. Do PT Cruiser pilots have an arcane handshake? Do Converse wearers share secret glances? (I'll never know—my feet are too wide for Converse.) To me, it seems like joining the Crocs club comes with a special kind of energy. Conversations with fellow Crocs freaks take place in the narrow valley between being in on the joke and not making a joke at all.

And if our conversation lasts long enough, I get to ask if they've been to the Crocs shop on State Street: a smorgasbord of options, in every color you could ever name. The single storefront contains enough plastic to ensure the death of our planet, and my god, I need that lime green pair in the window. They also offer an obscene amount of Jibbitz (which are the charms that one can plug into a Crocs's holes). Weed leaves and Diet Coke cans and a little propeller cap where the propeller actually spins—you name it, they've got a Jibbitz version of it. Whenever I hear someone say

"Jibbitz" out loud, I feel like I should call the police.

I am not breaking brave new ground by declaring that Crocs are cool. They've been en vogue for a while, and I'm just riding that wave. But I feel inspired by their evolution, because the shoe itself never actually changed. It's like the Ugly Duckling stayed homely but got way better at personal branding. It makes me think about the rapid movement of the trend cycles. One minute, you're at the top, and the next, you're in the gutter. Seeing the shift in public response to this one pair of absurd plastic clogs makes me see how pointless it is to try and keep up anyway. Better to focus on your own style, and cherry-pick the trends when they fit.

When I was in my 20s, I liked to try to be the coolest girl in the room. I don't regret doing this. Sure, it could feel a little shallow, but it was very fun. It was also a ton of work to keep track of what other people thought was fashionable, and measure myself against those judgments. Now that I'm firmly in my 30s, I can see that being cool doesn't have to be a competition. Lately, it feels more like a little game I play by myself. Crocs are in right now. Maybe in a few years, they'll be on the outs. But I don't feel trapped by these cycles anymore. I'd rather pick the fashions that fit my body and my style, and trust that if I think

they're hip, others can be convinced.

I just bought a pair of giant, white, orthopedic New Balances. They are decidedly corny, but I am at a point in my life where it's necessary to launch arch support into the trend cycle. The other day, a man in his mid-60s got on the bus wearing the exact same shoes as me. We didn't exchange any secret handshakes or covert nods, but I think we both knew: we're just ahead of the zeitgeist. 📺

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TEEN SCENE

Summer in the city: youth edition

How to enjoy Chicago when you're a teen with a budget and a curfew

By **KIRSTEN LAMBERT**

Ah, summer vacation: the time of year when Chicago's youth are free from the confines of school—but aren't allowed to be in Millennium Park after six at night on weekends (or anywhere in public after 10 PM) without an adult present. What's a teen to do during the lazy hazy days of summer?

Do You Know Where Your Children Are? (aka the new curfew policy)

As of May, anyone under 18 must be with a “responsible adult” over age 21 to visit Millennium Park after 6 PM Thursdays through Sundays. An adult who is at least 21 years old can accompany no more than four people under 18, according to the policy—although there are exceptions for ticketed events (such as concerts or sporting events). Park visitors should be ready to present government-issued identification cards upon request. The complete rules are readable at the City's website (chicago.gov).

The city also recently changed its general curfew policy, making the curfew for children aged 12–17 one hour earlier: 10 PM daily. The curfew for minors under 12 stays the same: 8:30 PM Sunday through Thursday and 9 PM Friday through Saturday.

Free Time: some ways to cure those summertime blues.

Pools

The Chicago Park District has opened some public pools (but not all) this summer, so check chicagoparkdistrict.com before you head out.

Beaches

Chicago's lakefront beaches are officially open through Labor Day (Sept. 5). Lifeguards are on duty from 11 AM to 7 PM daily. Pro tip: Check to make sure the beach is open, before you go: chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/beaches. Some favorites:

Oak Street Beach

1000 N. DuSable Lake Shore Drive

Known for: the view of the skyline

Rainbow Beach

2873 E. 75th

Known for: its dunes and community gardens

Kathy Osterman Beach (aka Ardmore Beach or Hollywood Beach)

5800 N. DuSable Lake Shore Drive

Known for: being LGBTQ+ friendly

Skate Parks

Chicago Park District skate parks offer options for both new and advanced skateboarders. Check out chicagoparkdistrict.com for more information.

Burnham 31st Street Skate Park

Just south of 31st at DuSable Lake Shore Drive

Daily 6 AM–11 PM

Grant Skate Park

Ninth Street and Columbus Drive

Daily 6 AM–9 PM

Wilson Skate Park

Wilson and DuSable Lake Shore Drive

Daily 6 AM–11 PM

Biking

Here are some scenic options, whether you just want to take a quick ride or are in the mood for an all-day trek.

Bloomington Trail (aka the 606)

1600 to 3700 W. Bloomington

This 2.7-mile elevated trail runs along Bloomington from Ashland to Ridgeway.

Pro tip: The 606 is open to both cyclists and walkers, so take a ride early in the morning if you want to avoid foot traffic.

Lakefront Trail

Runs from 71st on the south to Hollywood on the north

Pro tip: The South Shore portion is usually less crowded.

Major Taylor Trail

Starts at Dan Ryan Woods near 81st and goes south through West Pullman, Beverly, and Morgan Park, ending near 134th and Halsted in the Whistler Woods Forest Preserve, just across the Little Calumet River

Pro tip: The portion between 95th and 105th are on the street (and not a separate off-street path).

The Garden Dirt Jumps

cambr.org/the_garden_dirt_jumps.php

3400 N. Rockwell, in (Richard) Clark Park

Daily 6 AM–11 PM

If you've got a BMX or mountain bike, this set of dirt jumps offers terrain for all ages and skill levels. Pro tip: You can get to the dirt jumps



This summer, you can take a class at the library to learn how to use your DSLR camera and stare at that instead of your cell phone. BEN HERSHEY/
UNSPASH

Street and Music Festivals

Sure, there's Lolla. But did you know there are also multiple street festivals every weekend, all across the city—and they're free? (They might ask you for an entrance fee, but it's often a suggested donation. If you can't spare a buck or two, you can still walk in.)

Square Roots

squareroots.org

Lincoln between Montrose and Wilson

Fri 7/8, 5-10 PM; Sat 7/9, noon-10 PM; Sun

7/10, noon-9 PM

This festival usually includes interactive activities such as dance workshops and a chance to try out different instruments. But make no mistake: music is the main draw, and there's something for everyone.

Sundays on State

loopchicago.com/events/sundays-on-state/
190 N. State

7/24, 8/7, 8/21, 9/4, 11 AM-6 PM

Last summer the city banned vehicle traffic on State Street on select Sundays to encourage people to come downtown on the weekend. This year Sundays on State returns, promising more art, music, and entertainment.

Chinatown Summer Fair

ccc-foundation.org/summer-fair/

Wentworth from Cermak to 24th

Sat 7/30, noon-10 PM; Sun 7/31, 10 AM-7 PM

The fair opens with a lion dance procession and kung fu demonstrations. It also features a K-pop dance competition, a breakdance battle, and a headlining performance by hip-hop artist Kween Widda K.

Northalsted Market Days

northalsted.com/marketdays/

Halsted between Belmont and Addison

8/6-8/7, 11 AM-10 PM

This year marks the 40th annual Market Days festival, where you can find DJs, dancing, live music, arts, and crafts in what organizers call “America's first gay village.”

LatiNxt Music Festival

navypier.org

600 E. Grand: Lake Stage and Beer Garden

Sat 8/6, 5:30-11:30 PM; Sun 8/7, 2-11:30 PM

Navy Pier's fourth annual music festival showcases artists from Latin America as well as the emerging Chicago Latine music scene.

from the south or north by using the bike trail along the western edge of Clark Park, on the east side of the Chicago River.

Millennium Park

201 E. Randolph

millenniumpark.org

Even though the city has imposed a curfew at Millennium Park, there's plenty to do before nightfall. You can splash in the Crown Fountains or visit the Lurie Garden, the Boeing Galleries, the Jay Pritzker Pavilion, and of course Cloud Gate (aka the Bean). The park also offers summer workouts and concerts. Pro tip: Millennium Park added security checkpoints and metal detectors in May.

Chicago Riverwalk

chicagoriverwalk.us and artonthemart.com

Along the Chicago River and Wacker, between Lake and DuSable Lake Shore Drive

Daily 6 AM-11 PM

The riverwalk offers great people watching as well as art and live music. You can peep Art on theMART on Wacker between Wells and Franklin each night at 7:30 and 8 PM. It's the largest permanent digital art projection in the world.

Sandbox Symphony

chicagoparkdistrict.com/events

Oakwood Beach at 41st

Sat 8/13, 2-10 PM

An interactive festival including live music, art exhibitions, yoga, meditation, movement, and dance

Chalk Howard Street

howardstreetchicago.com

East of the Howard Red Line between Paulina and Ashland

Sat 8/27, 11 AM-8 PM

This festival is dedicated to all things chalk: 2D and 3D chalk artists, interactive art, and colorful street art.

Fiesta Boricua

prcc-chgo.org

Division and California

9/3-9/4

This annual Puerto Rican festival offers performances, artisan and food vendors, and a carnival, and showcases a different municipality of Puerto Rico each year.

Bulls Fest

nba.com/bulls/bullsfest

In the parking lots around the United Center (1901 W. Madison), and along Madison between Wood and Damen

9/3-9/4

This two-day event will include free music and activities, as well as a basketball tournament for ages eight and up that requires participants to pay and preregister.

After Dark**Night Out in the Parks**

chicagoparkdistrict.com/events/night-out-in-the-parks

The Chicago Park District hosts evening events across the city; some end before sunset.

Africa in the Caribbean

Kedvale Park, 4134 W. Hirsch

Tue 7/12, 7-8 PM

Music, dance, and stories about the influence of African culture on the island of Puerto Rico

The Chicago Full Moon Jam at Foster Beach

fullmoonjam.org

Foster Beach, 5100 N. Simonds

Wed 7/13; Thu 8/11; Thu 9/8, 7-10 PM

Fire performers and drummers under a full moon

Kombilesa Mi with Azania Drum Core

Hamilton Park, 513 W. 72nd

Thu 7/14, 7-8:30 PM

The Old Town School of Folk Music's Chicago Future Folk Project includes performances

from Afro-Colombian hip-hop artist Kombilesa Mi and Chicago-based djembe orchestra Azania Drum Core.

Open Mic in the Park

wickerpark.org

Wicker Park, 1425 N. Damen

Fri 7/15, and Fri 8/19, 6-9 PM (sign-up starts at 5:45 PM)

Musicians, comedians, poets, and actors can sign up to perform at this open mike.

School of Rock Chicago

Merrimac Park, 6343 W. Irving Park

Thu 8/4, 6-7:30 PM

School of Rock's performers range in age from eight to 18.

We Are Hip Hop Festival

Dvorak Park, 1119 W. Cullerton

Sat Aug. 6, 2-6 PM

This festival showcases hip-hop culture while highlighting Chicago MCs, street artists, and breakers.

Outdoor Movies

You can find free movies all across the city on pretty much any day of the week. Some are geared toward little kids, but you can also find some rated PG-13. Movies start at sunset, so an adult will need to accompany anyone under 18 after 10 PM.

Movies in the Parks

chicagoparkdistrict.com/index.php/movies-parks

Tue 7/12

Drumline

Daniel Burnham Park, north of Oakwood Beach at 39th and the lake

Fri 7/22

King Richard

Austin Town Hall Park, 5610 W. Lake

Thu 8/18

La La Land

Wicker Park, 1425 N. Damen

Gallagher Way

3635 N. Clark (just outside Wrigley Field), Gallagher Way hosts free movies every other Wednesday night, in conjunction with the Music Box Theatre.

Wed 7/20

School of Rock

Wed 7/27

Pitch Perfect

Wed 8/3

Grease

Wed 8/17

Encanto

Wed 8/31

Almost Famous

Wed 9/14

Selena

Wed 9/21

Bohemian Rhapsody

Mini Golf**Maggie Daley Park**

maggiedaley.com

337 W. Randolph

General admission: \$12

Mon-Thu and Sun 10 AM-8 PM, Fri-Sat 10 AM-9 PM

Note: If you're under 18, you have to be accompanied by an adult 21 years old or over after 6 PM, Thu-Sun. While you're there, check out the 60-foot hopscotch drawing.

Jobs and Other Paid Gigs**My CHI. My Future.**

mychimifuture.org

The city is promoting an app (also a website) to help Chicagoans ages 13 to 19 find jobs, activities, and classes. You can filter by interest, type of activity, and location. Here are just a few of the paying gigs you can find via MCMF.

After School Matters

afterschoolmatters.org/teens/apply

The After School Matters program allows teens to apply for internships, apprenticeships, and classes. After School Matters summer programs run through August 13 and take place at locations across the city, with some remote options. Chicago teens who are 14 or 15 can apply for programs that offer a stipend. Chicago teens who are 16 or older can choose between an advanced apprenticeship or an internship, both of which pay \$15 per hour.

Chicago Housing Authority

youth.thecha.org

The CHA is offering paid summer work opportunities for ages 13 and up.

Chicago Park District

chicagoparkdistrict.com

At last glance, the Chicago Park District was still looking for lifeguards—and they're offering a signing bonus. The park district is also hiring for other seasonal jobs, such as recreation leaders.

Code + Create 2022 Paid Summer Programming Series

eccChicago.org

Through 8/12

Everyone Can Code Chicago is offering teens age 16 and up a six-week program in which participants can earn \$15 per hour.

Yollocalli Arts Reach

yollocalli.org/classes

Through 8/12

This youth initiative from the National Museum of Mexican Art allows teens to take a class or participate in an internship while earning a stipend.

Free Camps/Activities**CTE Summer Camps 2022**

cps.edu

The Chicago Public Schools are offering career and technical education (CTE) camps across the city at various high schools. You can sign up for one or multiple camps. Here are just a few:

7/6-7/22

Architecture

Simeon Career Academy, 8147 S. Vincennes

7/11-7/29

Broadcast Technology

Clemente Community Academy, 1147 N. Western

7/18-7/29

Culinary Arts

Benito Juarez Community Academy, 1450 W. Cermak

Chicago Public Library Activities

You can find something to do at a library almost any day of the week, including classes in using a vinyl cutter to make stickers, the basics of DSLR cameras, acting, and more. Go to chipublib.org for more.

New Life Centers Summer Youth Program

newlifecenters.org/hpmentoring

New Life Centers is offering a free program for students from 7th grade through high school for residents of Austin, Humboldt Park, and Garfield Park.

Free Meals**LunchStop Summer Meals Program**

Through 8/12: Mon-Fri, 10 AM-noon

schoolinfo.cps.edu/mealistributionsites

Chicago Public Schools are providing free breakfast and lunch to any Chicago children between one and 18 years old at any school where summer programs take place. ID is not required to pick up meals. Go to the CPS website above to see a full list of all LunchStop pickup sites.

More ideas at chicagoreader.com. 

 @KirstenSLambert

COMMENTARY



ON POLITICS

A flexible position on free speech

Looks like Elon Musk believes in free speech for everyone except his SpaceX employees.

By **BEN JORAVSKY**

In the category of things that I didn't see coming...

My preliminary favorite for this year's biggest "do as I say, not as I do" hypocrite is Elon Musk. Yes, the world's richest man and self-proclaimed champion of free speech. It turns out the dude with the "I don't give a shit, say what you wanna say about me, I'll smoke a joint on the Joe Rogan show" attitude is sort of a snowflake.

And a culture canceler, as he apparently fired several employees from his SpaceX corporation on the grounds that he didn't like what they wrote. Proving again that when MAGA—or its heroes, like Musk—say they believe in free speech, they generally mean free speech for themselves. Not their critics.

OK, let's break it down. For the last few months, Musk has pledged a chunk of his fortune, most of it from Tesla stock, to buy Twitter.

Or, as he might put it, he's looking to liberate Twitter from the gang of the left-leaning chickenshits who have shackled it and stifled free speech.

Apparently, Musk wants to allow pretty much any tweet, no matter how inflammatory, inaccurate or toxic it may be.

He's won the hearts of MAGA by promising to undo the ban Twitter placed on Donald Trump, who was kicked off in the aftermath of the January 6 insurrection. Even Twitter realized they could no longer allow a president to use their platform to rile up MAGA to steal back an election that had never been stolen from them in the first place.

Musk has called himself a "free speech absolutist." He once tweeted that "free speech is essential to a functioning democracy."

Over the years, Musk has used Twitter to taunt and tease his rivals (like Jeff Bezos), lefties, and Vijaya Gadde, Twitter's top lawyer.

Maybe one day all these people will live in outer space so the rest of us can eat cereal in peace. 🍩

OFFICIAL SPACEX PHOTOS VIA FLICKR CC BY-NC 2.0

Musk and other right-wingers have accused Gadde of having a "left wing bias." Which is laughably ironic, considering that Donald Trump used Twitter to help launch his right-wing revolution.

A taunting tweet from Musk generally brings in his fanboys. Gadde and Brianna Wu, the game developer and journalist, have said they have been subjected to harassment, taunting, and threats from the billionaire's Twitter disciples.

"Elon Musk fans are honestly some of the worst harassers I've ever encountered on the Internet," Wu said in an interview with the *Washington Post*. "So the argument isn't that you're wrong about this and this is why. It's that you're a fraud and a terrible person, and you have no right to exist."

In general, Musk's response to these accusations had been cold indifference. "Twitter is a war zone," he told *60 Minutes*. "If somebody's going jump in a war zone, it's like 'OK, you're in the arena, let's go.'"

And then this month, Ryan Mac, a reporter for the *New York Times*, broke the story that Musk had fired several SpaceX employees for the high crime of disseminating a letter the company did not like. "SpaceX, the private rocket company, on Thursday fired employees who helped write and distribute an open letter criticizing the behavior of its chief executive, Elon Musk, said three employees with knowledge of the situation," Mac wrote.

Mac continues, "Some SpaceX employees began circulating the letter, which denounced Mr. Musk's activity on Twitter, on Wednesday. The letter called the billionaire's public behavior and tweeting 'a frequent source of distraction and embarrassment' and asked the company to rein him in..."

"By Thursday afternoon, SpaceX had fired some of the letter's organizers, according to the three employees and an email from Gwynne Shotwell, SpaceX's president and chief operating officer. In her email, which was obtained by the *New York Times*, she said the company had investigated and 'terminated a number of employees involved' with the letter." In short, he canceled their culture.

Shotwell's explanation for the firings was al-

most as hypocritical as the firings themselves. "The letter, solicitations and general process made employees feel uncomfortable, intimidated and bullied, and/or angry because the letter pressured them to sign onto something that did not reflect their views," Ms. Shotwell wrote in an email that Mac obtained. "We have too much critical work to accomplish and no need for this kind of overreaching activism."

So, let's get this straight. In the world according to Musk, it's permissible for Trump to use Twitter as a platform to spread lies about election fraud that fire up MAGA zealots to storm the Capitol, wave Trump flags, and threaten to kill Vice President Mike Pence and house speaker Nancy Pelosi.

That's protected free speech. And it's apparently OK to taunt, curse, and threaten Wu, Gadde, and other Musk critics.

But it's a fireable offense to disseminate a letter critical of Musk that makes employees feel "uncomfortable, intimidated and bullied?"

Oh, my god—what snowflakes. What happened to the free exchange of ideas in the war zone?

Well, I can't say I'm really all that surprised by the blatant hypocrisy. Just another example of the flexible position MAGA takes on free speech issues. They don't believe in free speech as a universal principle that applies to everyone. No, they think it only applies to them. So they can say nasty things about Wu or Gadde, while reserving the right to stifle the speech of people who offend them. Like teachers who can't mention the word "gay" to students, because that might offend some MAGA parents. Or teachers who can't teach critical race theory because that might offend some white kid. And now SpaceX employees who are not free to criticize Musk because that might offend, well, Musk.

Once again, there are no principles in the MAGA cause. They're only tactics in a larger fight to rile up their base and gaslight hapless liberals who tend to believe the worst things MAGA says about them. The sooner we learn this, the better off we will be. 🍩

🐦 @bennyjshow

POETRY CORNER

an excerpt from "The One"

By OG Stevo

*It felt like I had me a 100k to split 100 ways
Every hitta In my gang I was getting them paid
Some laughed behind my back
But still was smiling in my face
All this dirt they throwing on my name
Could never stain it
I'm really one of them ones
Ma said her son was a king
Who could do anything
And I did it
Ma look at your son!
They think the grass is really green
But it's not what it seems
Heavy is the head when they say "you the one"*

Poem curated by femdot. Rapper femdot. has continued to grow in his hometown of Chicago. His most recent projects Not For Sale and 94 Camry Music led to partnerships with brands like Toyota, lululemon, and the Chicago Bears along with two nationwide tours with Tobi Lou and SABA. He also started the 501c3 non-profit org Delacreme Scholars, which supplied free grocery delivery services, toy and coat drives, and college scholarships throughout the city.

OG Stevo is a Nigerian - American artist from Chicago's north-side. Though an independent artist, he has scored placements from Lyrical Lemonade, Revolt TV, Vocalo Radio, created a non profit "OG Cares" in which they've orchestrated a toy and coat drive for the past two years.

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Downtown Highland Park on the evening of July 4
 4 DEANNA ISAACS

ON CULTURE

A bloody Independence Day in Highland Park

“In the end this is about money and greed driving the public safety discussion.”

By **DEANNA ISAACS**

Nothing was said about it on the July 4 television interviews I saw, but among the security experts interviewed during coverage of the Highland Park parade shooting, one face and name had resonance. Crisis management expert and former FBI agent Phil Andrew survived another mass shooting in Chicago’s North Shore suburbs, more than three decades ago.

On May 20, 1988, Laurie Dann—who’d been under care for psychiatric problems—delivered poison-laced snacks to acquaintances, attempted to burn down a Highland Park school, set a house on fire with the family (for whom she’d babysat) inside, and shot six children at Winnetka’s Hubbard Woods elementary school, killing one. Fleeing that scene, she barged into the Andrew home, where she eventually shot Phil, then a 20-year-old college student, and killed herself.

I wondered what Phil Andrew, who went on to become a violence prevention advocate, would say about the fact that, 34 years later, mass shootings have become relatively com-

monplace. Surely he’d agree with me that no 21st-century civilian needs a gun? As it turns out, not exactly. Here’s an edited version of our conversation.

Deanna Isaacs: What about this latest incident?

Phil Andrew: This is similar to the attacks we’ve seen throughout the country: somebody who has demonstrated dangerous behavior and accessed a dangerous weapon has perpetrated an unspeakable attack. The moment a dangerous person gets hold of the dangerous weaponry that we continue to make easily available, it’s already worst-case scenario.

We now have an estimated 400 million guns in our country. What we need is for us as communities to insist that guns that are kept in private possession be locked up and stowed away from young people and dangerous people.

And we need to ban assault weapons. That is the weapon of choice now for mass violence.

So you’re not saying that we should ban all guns?

No, we should ban the high-capacity military-style assault weapons and we should have universal background checks that dig into youth and mental health records. And we should have red-flag laws to take guns away from dangerous people.

But the Winnetka school shooter used handguns?

Yes, she bought three handguns legally at a nearby store where the store owner knew it was unusual and actually alerted law enforcement. But at the time Illinois didn’t have a red-flag law; they couldn’t take the guns from her. And that’s where all the injury came from. If you remember that day—she attacked the community with a cyanide gas device, she attacked a family with a fire, she sent poisons around the North Shore. But the only thing that caused death and serious injury were the

firearms.

And that continues to be the case in the United States, where firearm violence is the leading cause of death among children. It continues to take about 16 veterans a day due to suicide, and mass violence is driving our consciousness and our fear in public places.

We’re the only industrialized country that tolerates this, allowing an industry to sort of self-regulate, an industry that makes guns to have disproportionate influence. In the end this is about money and greed driving the public safety discussion.

By self-regulating, you mean through influence?

Yes. The NRA before the 1970s actually sponsored a lot of firearm violence prevention legislation, recognizing that they were really there to promote safety and conservation. But in the mid-70s, the NRA was taken over by the gun industry. And ever since then the leadership has had an extremist agenda, promoting easy access to firearms despite its public safety threat.

Wasn’t there a federal ban on assault weapons at one point?

There was a federal ban, and it proved very effective. And then it sunset, under the second Bush administration, and that’s when we started seeing greater use of assault weapons in these mass violence scenarios.

But I think we’re seeing a turning point. It’s not just a few people—the polling data, the election cycles are showing that this is an important issue to the American people, that we need to deal with gun violence.

But it seems that shootings are only increasing.

We had a pandemic. We had about 20 million more firearms infused into the system over these last two years, and we had a number of restrictions pulled back. And, unfortunately, we’ve got a Supreme Court that’s out of step with the jurisprudence, public opinion, and public safety. ■

🐦 @DeannaIsaacs



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Young people dream up a safer summer in Chicago

This story was originally published by The Trace, a nonprofit newsroom covering gun violence in America.

Every Chicago summer follows a familiar pattern: Gun violence begins to spike around Memorial Day, sending municipal leaders into a fit over how to keep young people safe while community members offer up ideas and push back against efforts they doubt will help. This year, Mayor Lori Lightfoot’s response has centered on modifying the city’s decades-old curfew.

After 16-year-old Seandell Holliday was shot and killed in Millennium Park in mid-May, Lightfoot issued an executive order that changed the curfew from 11 PM to 10 PM and expanded its scope from those under 16 to include 17-year-olds. She also banned minors who don’t have an adult with them from entering the park after 6 PM between Thursday and Sunday, and added checkpoints and metal detectors at the entrance of the iconic park.

Despite local pushback and evidence that curfews may actually increase crime, the Chicago City Council codified the changes in late May. And the decision to ban young people from being outside late at night came as the city struggled with access to another type of public space: A lifeguard shortage threatened the reopening of public pools.

When she learned about the new rules, Indya Pinkard, 19, felt frustrated. A youth organizer with the grassroots racial justice organization Communities United, she questioned whether forcing young people inside was the best solution to the city’s ongoing gun violence crisis. If older folks get to be outside enjoying the long-awaited Chicago summer, she wondered, why shouldn’t young people?

For 18-year-old Markell Green, the curfew

changes were warranted. Green participates in Chicago CRED, an anti-violence organization. He said the city needed to address the growing trend of large crowds of young people gathering downtown, and in his mind, keeping teens indoors was a valid way to do that.

“They was dancing on top of cars, hitting police cars,” Green said. “It was like a riot. No one was there to tell them to stop.”

While gun violence takes a significant toll on the city’s youth, kids and teens under 19 were the third-most-impacted age group: They are 23 percent of the city’s population and 17 percent of the city’s shooting victims, according to police data analyzed by the University of Chicago Crime Lab. The people most represented in the data were between 20 and 29 years old, who made up about 39 percent of the city’s total shooting victims last year.

But Chicago youth often feel left out of the policy decisions that affect them. So we set out to ask young people like Pinkard—teens from neighborhoods like Austin and Roseland that are most affected by gun violence—what would actually make them feel safer this summer.

Each person we spoke with shared the more subtle ways Chicago’s gun violence crisis has altered their relationship with the city, causing them to be hyperaware of their surroundings or leaving them wondering if they shouldn’t be outside at all. Some offered suggestions for the large-scale changes they’d need to better navigate this crisis, including curbing accessibility to guns. They also pointed to some less-obvious solutions, like expanding the public transit system so that buses and trains reach more communities and run more consistently—because in some areas, long wait times make them feel unsafe. These interviews have been edited and condensed for clarity.

After Mayor Lightfoot expanded the citywide curfew, teenagers spoke about Chicago’s gun violence crisis and their relationships with the city.

By JUSTIN AGRELO, THE TRACE



INDYA PINKARD, 19, FROM AUSTIN

What really got me started with Communities United was I had lost my little cousin due to gun violence. She took her own life on her 18th birthday. This helps me try to get as many young people to just consider a different route.

My first reaction to the curfew changes was frustrated. I was angry. Honestly, it don’t matter if the youth is on the streets or not, our community is still going to have violence. Whether it’s young people or old, we’re still going to have violence. So what’s another way

around this than just this curfew? We should have more activities, after-school programs, more mental health resources and hospitals.

In our generation, we’re used to older people not listening to us or hearing what we have to say. We have voices, too. What if they had curfews? They would feel the same way as the youth. Not all young people are criminals. Not all young people are bad. There’s some very intelligent, good youth out here that are being punished because of the acts of a few. We only have one life. Let us live it to the fullest.



OLIVIA OBINEME

DEANNA ROBINSON, 17, FROM GREATER GRAND CROSSING

The youth in Chicago need more respect from adults. When it comes to young people's opinions, we can't really get our points across and it's frustrating and exhausting. I feel like people in power abuse their power. They feel like everything should be under their control. But we all live in this world, so we all should have a say-so in what's going on. Anybody can have a gun. You can't just say the youth is causing all these crimes. It's just people, period.

I would say the curfew is beneficial because 10 is kind of late to be outside. But at the same time, it's limiting what you can do. It's limiting summer fun. Personally, I like being outside. But I might be at the beach at 10:31 and a police officer sees I'm outside, they'll be like, 'What are you doing?' And I don't like interacting with police. I feel like they be trying to get down on people so I just keep my distance.

DAVIONE JACKSON, 17, FROM SOUTH SHORE

I had a friend that passed away to gun violence a year and a couple months ago. We were close and getting closer, so to see him on a T-shirt was like, it's really true. He's really gone. I'm not getting my friend back. I feel like this isn't leading youth in the right direction because all they're going to know is gun violence, gun violence, gun violence. They're not going to know about what it is to be a child. What it is about growing up. They're just going to know my uncle got shot. My brother got shot.

The amount of bodies dropping daily is just outrageous. It makes me be more cautious. I can't walk two steps without looking behind me. Any car that comes up too slow, I get to second-guessing it. Should I run? Should I stay here and just finish walking? I don't really go nowhere unless I know I'm going to be with five people or more. I [leave the house to] do TikTok as well, but other than that, I just stay home.

I didn't even know we had a curfew still, so I wouldn't say it made me feel safer. You can't really control what people want to do with their free time. Some young people work every single day with no breaks just to feed and support their families, so they want to go outside and have fun. I'm pretty sure they're

still going to go outside.

Being young in Chicago is crazy. There's not a lot of things that you can do. The city needs more free things for the youth. Everything here you have to pay for. More open basketball courts. A trampoline park. Just let the kids have fun and enjoy their childhood more because that's not something they can go back to.

If adults are not going to hear the voice of the youth, how are you going to protect them? If we're constantly screaming out what we need and how we want to improve our neighborhoods, then how are you going to improve it? You need to be able to hear our side of the story in order to make adjustments.

I went to a [Latino] school and the area over there is good. But I don't want people to think you shouldn't be around Black people or you should only be around the [Latino] neighborhoods because it's safer. Violence can happen anywhere. There's certain parts of the south side, east side, west side where you can actually enjoy and be yourself. I really would want that negative thing of like, "I won't go to Chicago. I know it's bad. I know it's a lot of shooting, a lot of killing and violence." I really want people to get that out of their mind. Chicago is a beautiful city. 📍

🐦 @jstnagrl0



OLIVIA OBINEME



Mayor Lori Lightfoot rides on a float at the 2019 Pride Parade.  KAT FITZGERALD (MYSTICIMAGESPHOTOGRAPHY.COM)

POLITICS

Mixed reviews

LGBTQ+ Chicagoans discuss Mayor Lori Lightfoot's record.

By **AARON GETTINGER**

Robert Fojtik is openly gay and grew up in the southwest suburbs. He spent years in Washington, D.C., before returning to Chicago, where he was working as Aon's public affairs manager when he had a chance meeting with Lori Lightfoot, then-chair of the Police Accountability Task Force, at a political fundraiser held around the time of the June 2016 Pulse nightclub massacre in Orlando, Florida.

The scandal over the police murder of Laquan McDonald was unfolding at that time, and Fojtik said Lightfoot had "gravitas."

"It was a meeting of various folks from

within the community here in Chicago," Fojtik said. "When this kind of small-statured person at the end of the table started speaking, all of the chatter stopped, and people listened."

Two years later, he was working as the chief of staff for Lightfoot's mayoral campaign. He cited popular discontent with then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel's "disinvestments" in public education and mental health as reasons he joined the campaign.

"Lori Lightfoot not only wanted to address those fundamental inequities, but also she brought the perspective as a prosecutor,"

Fojtik said. "In a city where we had multiple council members under indictment at any given moment, it's refreshing to have somebody who says that they are going to come in and make the city an organization that works for the residents and not just 'the clouted few' or the special interests."

And they got along, as two gay people working together. He recalled a visit to donate socks to homeless LGBTQ+ youth in the winter of 2018 and a moment outside afterwards when they cried and both called their mothers.

"You don't always get an elected official

who shared that experience, that very, very real experience," Fojtik said. "And that is but one of the very, very complex things that Lori Lightfoot has experienced in her life. So you can disagree with how she does things or think policies could be different, but at the end of the day, I don't know a lot of people who have empathy as one of their driving forces."

On National Coming Out Day 2018, during her first campaign for mayor, Lightfoot unveiled the LGBTQ+ policy framework she planned to enact if the voters elected her. She has enacted or made progress on much

of it. But LGBTQ+ Chicagoans from across the city related serious misgivings about her job performance that augur difficulties for her reelection campaign.

Rick Garcia, who founded Equality Illinois and has been involved in LGBTQ+ activism since the 1980s, said, “It is very good and great to have an openly lesbian mayor in one of the greatest cities in the world,” because it’s always good to have a seat at the table. It’s less work for activists, he said, because “she naturally will do the right thing for our community.”

He noted that mayors have had openly gay staff since Richard J. Daley. Harold Washington established advisory councils for the city’s Black and Brown residents, women, and gays and lesbians. Richard M. Daley strengthened the city’s Human Rights Commission. Garcia said “It all went to hell” under Emanuel, but that Lightfoot has rebuilt structures on what was already a strong foundation.

When put on the spot, Garcia had difficulty naming specific policies and LGBTQ+ initiatives Lightfoot has pursued. He noted the city’s strong hate crimes and anti-discrimination ordinances. “This is all part of the city. She inherits this rich tradition of LGBTQ people being part of the fabric of city government,” he said. “The table was set before she got here. So what else?”

Garcia says he’s seriously dissatisfied with so many other aspects of Lightfoot’s administration.

“Symbolically, it’s great to have a mayor who’s openly lesbian. But what we need is a mayor who knows how to mitigate violence, who knows how to respect people, respect unions, to make sure that our city is safe and to bring economic development here,” he said. “It’s great to have a lesbian mayor, but I would much prefer to have an effective mayor.”

“In public safety she gets an ‘F,’” Garcia said. “LGBTQ people, especially people of color, are very open to violence in our city. And the city and this mayor do not have control of the violence.”

Garcia complained about Lightfoot canceling police officers’ time off and vacations because he said putting more police on the streets is not going to solve problems. He said she has alienated alderpersons and constituencies to the degree that it’s hard for her to get momentum behind her to accomplish anything.

“It doesn’t seem like she has any concept or any plan of how to mitigate the violence

that the whole city is experiencing now,” he said. “It isn’t just the LGBTQ community, it’s the whole city. In years past, LGBTQ activists could focus on LGBTQ rights and hate crimes, but now all of our communities have to be concerned about public safety.”

North-side lakefront neighborhoods with large LGBTQ+ populations gave Lightfoot some of her strongest support in the first round of the 2019 mayoral campaign. Malek Tayara and Scott West, homeowners in Andersonville for four years, both voted for Lightfoot in 2019. Neither are happy with her job performance as mayor.

“You can’t control the pandemic, of course, or the racial stuff we had two summers ago, but I think her reaction to that put more attention on the city than it helped,” West said.

Tayara said he and West are concerned

every neighborhood, that her administration “keeps beating the drum of holding violent, dangerous people accountable, and that we use the tools at our disposal, technology being a part of that, to make sure that we are doing our job.”

Lightfoot’s 2018 campaign LGBTQ+ framework said she would “set high standards for how police officers treat members of the trans community,” improve police training, institute safeguards to ensure proper investigations of hate crime reports and incidents, and create a task force on the murders of two transwomen of color.

Four transgender women were murdered in Chicago last year, and another woman, Tatiana Labelle, was found dead in a ruled-homicide in March. A spokesperson did not respond to an inquiry about whether

to ensure police “are as diligent in solving crimes against members of our community as they are against members of any other community.”

The *Reader* reported in February that the CPD’s chief LGBTQ+ liaison officer left his post and that the office was understaffed. Four liaison officers are currently listed on the CPD website, with their services listed as victim advocacy, points of contact on LGBTQ+ issues, court advocacy for those wishing to press charges on an offender or seek a protection order, and partnership with community organizations.

Lightfoot’s 2018 campaign framework said she would launch an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum for the Chicago Public Schools. This became mandatory across Illinois when Governor J.B. Pritzker signed HB 246 into law

“There’s more to leadership than checking boxes of demographic information. Representation is important for sure, but representation itself doesn’t push the needle forward on material issues.”

—Brendan Power

about safety and think the situation is getting worse. West said Lightfoot doesn’t work well with others and that police superintendent David Brown “sits on the sidelines.”

At a campaign event last month at Sidetrack in Lakeview East, Lightfoot acknowledged that north-siders are concerned about safety.

“I wanted to speak directly to that issue,” she said. “If the answers to public safety were simple, we would have already solved them.”

She urged north-siders to be part of the solution, and to go to the CPD Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy precinct and beat meetings and ask “critical” questions. The mayor—who has sparred repeatedly with the Cook County state’s attorney and courts—added, “We’ve got to challenge each and every part of the criminal justice ecosystem to protect us, to keep our neighborhood safe.”

Lightfoot said her part in that effort is keeping the CPD “fully supported,” present in

the task force the mayor promised has been established.

At a June 1 roundtable with LGBTQ+ reporters, Lightfoot pointed to the city’s 2021 strategic plan for combating gender-based violence, which acknowledges the disproportionate impact violence has on trans people. Its goals are to be rolled out in 2023.

She said one of the biggest challenges she has heard, particularly from trans women, is that when something bad happens, police don’t take it seriously. She wants the police to treat homicide investigations involving trans women the way they would straight people and to not write off the incidents as being due to “dangerous lifestyles” or other excuses. Police should put in the resources and intentionality other cases would get, she said.

In an era when “no cops at Pride” is an annual rallying cry, Lightfoot acknowledged that the police are not going to make everyone comfortable, but she said there is a need

in 2019, requiring the state’s public schools teach LGBTQ+ history.

CPS has implemented other pro-LGBTQ+ policies during Lightfoot’s administration. CPS adopted a new anti-bullying policy last June that recognizes LGBTQ+ students’ vulnerability and has safeguards against activities such as the principal of a bullied student outing that student to their parents.

CPS launched anti-cyberbullying training for staff last year. The CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness has professional development programs around curriculum guidance, school safety, LGBTQ+ support, support for trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming students, and a Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA) summit. And the district’s five-year vision has a goal for every school to have a GSA by 2024.

The Chicago Department of Public Health published its last study of LGBTQ+ Chicagoans’ health outcomes in March 2018. Lightfoot

continued from 17

promised that year that a new one would come out under her administration. A spokesperson said CDPH does not currently have plans to update its data book, adding that most of the data from the 2018 edition is updated annually on the Chicago Health Atlas, an online database of the city's health indicators.

Another goal was to eliminate new HIV infections by 2027. Pritzker's plan, Getting to Zero Illinois, sets that as a statewide goal for 2030. Infection rates in Chicago continue to decline. A spokesperson said STD screening, treatment, and expedited-partner therapy are fully integrated into many CDPH community-based HIV programs to reduce STD rates in the LGBTQ+ community. CDPH also has three brick-and-mortar STD clinics. They are open by appointment only, with two in Lakeview and Austin open every weekday and one in Roseland open on Mondays and Thursdays.

Lightfoot promised new training for city staff and vendors who provide service to LGBTQ+ seniors alongside outreach and training at senior care facilities about anti-discrimination regulations.

She also wanted to create more affordable housing options for LGBTQ+ seniors with citywide community groups. One project, the Town Hall Apartments in Lakeview East, 3600 N. Halsted, opened in 2014 with a \$5 million loan from the Department of Planning and Development and \$16.3 million tax credit equity.

There were plans in 2010 to build a combined senior living facility and artists' workspace on Ashland Avenue in Rogers Park, but that project tanked under questions about the developer's connections to shoddily run nursing homes, its lack of experience working with LGBTQ+ people, and alderperson Maria Hadden's (49th) argument that family-sized affordable housing was a more pressing need, Block Club reported.

Lightfoot also said she would reestablish the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) and task it to provide "culturally appropriate services and accurate information," namely about benefits, social support programs, legal resources, and mental health counseling. She also said she would work with Chicago's legal community to help those who were discharged under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (DADT) to get their paperwork upgraded. Should the DVA be reestablished, it would aim to work with organizations like Illinois Joining Forces and the University of Chicago Office for Military-Affiliated Communities on

issues like DADT discharges.

The department still does not exist, though Lightfoot's spokesperson said she still wants to reestablish it. The spokesperson said a proposal is under review to support expanded veterans' programming with several city departments and partnerships with state and county veterans' agencies.

The spokesperson did not respond to questions about Lightfoot's promise to work to establish 24-hour drop-in centers for LGBTQ+ youth to have places to sleep, lockers to store their things, and access to social services, or about a promise to hire LGBTQ+ liaisons to work with the north-, south-, and west-side LGBTQ+ communities and to "hold regular meetings with community members and LGBTQ+ groups in their neighborhoods and coordinate with city departments," including the CPD and the CDPH.

There is a similar existing program: the series of advisory councils for Black and Brown residents, women, and LGBTQ+ people that began with Mayor Harold Washington. Lightfoot has appointed council members and Butch Trusty, a partner at The Bridgespan Group, a nonprofit consultancy, to lead it. No records from the council's meetings are present on its website. Trusty referred questions about the council's work to the mayor's office.

Lightfoot opened applications for membership on the advisory councils in February 2020; as of press time, the online application is still open, though it was due to have closed on February 22 of that year. At a June 22 press conference, Lightfoot called the advisory council "active and robust."

A week after the Supreme Court's draft decision that would overturn *Roe v. Wade* came out, Lightfoot's administration invested \$500,000 into the DPH's maternal and reproductive health work, which her administration says will support out-of-staters coming to the city for abortions.

At the reporters' roundtable in June, Lightfoot said the most top-of-mind thing to her with regards to the LGBTQ+ community are the implications of the Supreme Court's leaked decision in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*, which would overturn the national right to have an abortion.

"A lot of the rights that have flowed—not just to marry, but to be able to have children, to be able to pass property down from spouse to spouse—these things that the straight community takes for granted, these are new

rights embraced by us," Lightfoot said. "And anybody who is my age, which is almost 60, grew up at a time when we never thought that we'd be able to have those recognitions."

She said she wants to ensure that Chicago "remains a city where there truly is justice for all."

"I think there's no question whatsoever *Roe* is gone," she said. "The implications for the rest of us are so profound, we've got to continue making sure that we educate people and that we are prepared as a city to address what are going to be some very significant consequences that flow from it."

North-side state representative Kelly Cassidy (D-14th), who is openly lesbian, praised Lightfoot for this support specifically at Sidetrack on June 8.

"We don't just have an openly gay mayor," she said. "We have an incredibly badass openly gay mayor, setting the tone on so many issues. And I just get sort of silly and proud when I watch you. And the ways that she loves this city, and the ways that she loves this community come out every day."

Sidetrack owner Art Johnston similarly sang Lightfoot's praises: "It will never stop amazing me and moving me to see Mayor Lightfoot to stand loud and authentic as our city's out proud gay mayor."

He recalled the time decades ago that a policeman arrested him outside his business while calling him "a fucking fag."

"That's not the way I am treated today, but sad to say, other members of our community are still not treated as well as we want them to be," Johnston said. "But we are all working on this."

Madeline Ziolk, walking up Halsted Street with her girlfriend after the event, recalled the time in August 2020 when the CPD cleared sunbathers off of Montrose Beach. Lightfoot tweeted a picture of the crowd, saying their "reckless behavior . . . is what will cause us to shut down the parks and lakefront." Ziolk, who had been among the sunbathers, said a policeman threatened them with arrest.

Ziolk is trans. She said there have been positive "waves" in the city recently, noting the CPD policy for officers to address people with their names and pronouns appropriate to their gender identity—including they/them—though she did not know if she could ascribe that to the mayor. (The draft policy came out in 2021.)

She voted for Lightfoot in 2019; she said she probably will not next year. "I want some-

body who's more progressive than she is, because it seems like she's trying to toe the line of conveying that she's progressive, but if you look at her policies and her history, she hasn't done anything that I've seen to push the envelope forward."

Marcus Allen moved to Chicago from Austin, Texas, in the summer of 2020. With Hollywood Beach closed, his friends asked him to go to Montrose Beach that day in August instead. He said people were spread out in groups of ten to 15.

Hours after the police cleared Montrose Beach, Allen's friends started texting him Lightfoot's tweet. In the public sphere, people interpreted the incident as the mayor cracking down on white party gays ignoring social distancing guidelines.

Allen is a Latinx man. He already had COVID-19, and, in a new city, he said he was desperately trying to make friends in a pandemic as safely as possible.

"We decided we were going to go to the Montrose grass," he said. "And there were people at Belmont grass, there were people at Belmont steps, there were people at all the other grass and steps. Why come to Montrose? And it really did feel like [Lightfoot] was picking on the gays."

Spencer Doyle, who lives in Lakeview East, was with Allen that day. He had also already had COVID-19. He noted that Lightfoot tweeted that she personally had gone to see that the situation was being "addressed" and that he was wearing a Speedo.

"I didn't get why people congregating at the beach deserved attention over everything else that was going on," he said. "It almost felt like she was hunting down easy, low-hanging political fruit."

"Gays have been persecuted a long time for doing something wrong. Especially when it comes to health and disease, I think there's a lot of stigma associated with the gay community over the years," he said.

"And I think to know the history of that, especially in her position, and to willingly go out and take a picture of people who you know are gay, they're in a Speedo—you know gay culture, you can recognize the gays—and to almost put them on blast in the middle of a pandemic, knowing the history and emotions that are associated behind it with people who might not be so familiar with it today, I felt like 'How could you not know where this backlash was going to wind up?'"

Doyle said he won't vote for Lightfoot again. Neither will Brendan Power, treasurer

of the Young Democrats of Chicago and an Uptown resident, who was excited to support Lightfoot in 2019 because of her policy proposals, especially her support for an elected Chicago school board.

“I noticed that basically right away after getting elected, she had completely reversed course on that issue,” he said. “That immediately set off some alarm bells.”

He said he was “thrilled” at the time to have a Black lesbian mayor. He wanted to like Lightfoot “so badly, but there’s more to leadership than checking boxes of demographic information,” he said. “Representation is important for sure, but representation itself doesn’t push the needle forward on material issues.”

He’s more skeptical of candidates now, and he wishes he would have listened to activists who warned “she would bring this really punitive, carceral approach to criminal justice.”

Power noted that Lightfoot campaigned as a police reformer, adding that Pride originated out of protests against “police terrorizing and brutalizing the LGBT community,” and said that Lightfoot covered up the improper police raid on Anjanette Young’s home.

“How great is Lori Lightfoot on LGBT issues for the Black trans women who are harassed by the cops and file a lawsuit against the city?” he asked. “I would say there’s a lot wrong there.”

And while no organization speaks for all members of any community, leaders of the Brave Space Alliance, a Black trans-led LGBTQ+ community center, caustically protested Lightfoot in Daley Plaza on Trans Day of Visibility in April.

Jordan Wimby and Patrice King are engaged and live in Rogers Park; both are from Chicago and moved back after the 2019 election. Wimby, a Beverly native, was “rooting for (Lightfoot), because I’m like ‘This is a great opportunity for us to also be involved in Chicago,’ but she kind of let me down,” specifically around interactions with the Chicago Teachers Union and police policies.

“Especially in a city with a high number of marginalized people, and you also fit into those categories—it doesn’t really feel like she is advocating for people who look like her or have similar experiences because of who they are in the world,” she said.

Nicole Johnson, who ran for alderperson of the Woodlawn-based 20th Ward in 2019 and is now engaged to another woman, noted during her campaign that Lightfoot was coming to small community events and



Activists hold report cards for Mayor Lightfoot and Sheriff Tom Dart at a March 31 Trans Day of Visibility rally at Daley Plaza. **AARON GETTINGER | HYDE PARK HERALD**

could build support among people “who the traditional machine didn’t pay attention to,” but she said the mayor has left engagement behind.

“When we think about LGBTQ rights, what is prominent is accessibility,” Johnson said. “There are some things that Lori has done in the past two years that have made the city not as accessible to all people. And as a person in the community, you know what it means for things to not be accessible to you.”

Johnson praised Lightfoot’s Invest South/West program, which is aiming to revive commercial corridors on the south and west sides through public-private investment, though she complained about the unfulfilled campaign promise to reopen the mental health clinics that Emanuel closed. Lightfoot, at the reporters’ roundtable, said those clinics were serving 2,500 people and that through investments in her budget, 50,000 people are getting mental health care now. Her framework promises to fund services at 50 existing providers.

Said Johnson, “I want to see her see Black people and see the humanity in us, especially the children, and for her to participate in the various activities that make the news.”

The Lightfoot administration’s response to the raid on Young’s house—no money offered at first, an attempt to block the airing of the police officers’ body camera footage, a slow-walking of the eventual settlement until last December—showed Johnson “what (Lightfoot) was about, because when she got word of it a year before the video went public, she could have gotten in front of it, and when it went public, she lied. And then she said,

‘OK, I can’t get out of this.’ And then even last June, the former general counsel made a motion to get it kicked out of court.”

Lightfoot did not back the Anjanette Young Ordinance, backed by five Black progressive alderwomen, which would codify rule changes to CPD’s police raid policy. Johnson also noted that the CPD is behind on its reforms mandated under its consent decree and pointed out that Lightfoot publicly spars with State’s Attorney Kim Foxx.

“Lori raises bridges. She doesn’t build them,” Johnson said. “Literally thinking about the riots post-George Floyd’s murder. I want to look to her as being the first Black woman mayor. I want to look to her as someone who makes me proud. She is getting our books in order, and she is making amends to make more investment in areas that need it, but I need to see—and this is from mayor on up to president—I need to see how you are responding to acute Black issues.”

Lightfoot came into office as Chicago’s first openly gay and first Black woman mayor with an overwhelming 73.7 percent of the second-round vote. King, from Rogers Park, is disappointed that Lightfoot isn’t more relatable, and she said the mayor is not a role model. Wimby, her fiancée, noted queer people’s typical open-mindedness, from having to approach life differently than most people and overcome challenges most people do not encounter.

“When you add Blackness to that, you’re adding a whole other level of challenges to that,” she said. “It’s just really strange that she’s so stuck in such a racial-heteronormative way of thinking.”

“I grew up in a household of mostly women, and they’re all Chicago Public Schools teachers, and they were really rooting for Lori in the sense that we have someone who is going to be able to advocate for our needs because she understands our experience. But that is not what the reality is,” Wimby said. “And you would think, when you are a marginalized person who’s in a community of oppressed people that experiences the same type of systemic trauma, you would think, ‘OK, we’re on the same page, and you understand what we need in the Black community.’”

Nevertheless, Lightfoot still maintains reserves of support in the Black and queer communities for many reasons.

Angela Barnes of South Shore, a corporate attorney who co-owns the celebrated Andersonville queer cocktail bar Nobody’s Darling, has known Lightfoot since they worked together at the Mayer Brown law firm more than 20 years ago.

“She’s one of the most intelligent women I’ve ever met, and I have advocated long and hard in this city to have intelligent, business-minded people run for public office,” Barnes said after Lightfoot’s June 7 campaign stop in Lakeview East. “I think it really, really makes a difference.”

She likes that Lightfoot has touted Nobody’s Darling as a Black, gay, women-owned business and in so doing highlighted the difficulties Black Chicago entrepreneurs face. “We have a business on the north side, but I live on the south side. And I definitely have seen how much investment is going into the south and west sides to actually try to bring some equity to the neighborhoods of Chicago,” Barnes said.

Johnnie Gogins grew up in Hyde Park and lives in Lakeview East now. He voted for Lightfoot in 2019 and thinks she’s doing the best she can.

“It’s good to see somebody in our community who’s running the city and doing everything they can to keep the crime down and try to get Chicago back to how it used to be, back in the day,” he said. “A lot of people try to give her a hard time, but she’s only one person. There’s only so much you can do. So it’s like, just give her a chance.”

He said how proud he is to have a Black gay mayor. “It’s like, finally we’re heard and people believe in us and are giving us the chance to do things for our community,” he said. He plans on voting for her next year. **A**

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ARTS & CULTURE



A view of *Freedom Wall* through the construction fencing. KERRY CARDOZA

PUBLIC ART

28 years of freedom on the wall

A public art piece is being encroached upon by new construction.

By **KERRY CARDOZA**

What do Cesar Chavez, Ayn Rand, and Harold Washington have in common? They are among the 69 people featured in Adam Brooks's public art project *Freedom Wall*, which has been installed on the building at 325 W. Huron since 1994. The text-based installation, which is viewable from the Brown Line's Chicago stop, has undoubtedly been viewed by many thousands of people over the years—but not for much longer. The

parking lot in front of the wall is being developed, which means the project will soon be hidden by another building.

In the lead up to the 1992 U.S. presidential election, Brooks, a longtime professor at Columbia College Chicago and one-half of the collaborative conceptual art duo Industry of the Ordinary, began thinking about putting together a project around the idea of freedom. "Obviously in America in particular, it's the

land of the free," he says. "The word 'freedom' gets bandied around so much, you know, who's going to be against freedom? But the idea of what freedom was was really interesting to me, because obviously there are as many interpretations of that as there are people."

He was inspired by the work of conceptual artists like Barbara Kruger and Jenny Holzer, who often make text-based, public works. He was especially drawn to the way Holzer's use of text seemed to have multiple voices. "I was interested in that notion of not taking one particular stance, but actually opening up a project to multiple participants with multiple viewpoints," he says.

The presentation of the work is in tune with the straightforward text pieces of both Kruger and Holzer. The names appear in list form, in white enamel letters on a massive black vinyl sheet—72 feet high by 15 feet 6 inches wide—all capitalized in the simple sans-serif font Helvetica. The lettering was done by hand by painter Bob Morales of the Indiana company Billboards Inc. There's no artist signature or title or explanation—there was once a description at the base but it's long since disappeared. If a viewer is interested in learning more about the work, they have to Google or otherwise research it.

To come up with the names, Brooks surveyed a politically broad range of people, asking them to provide the names of up to three people, from throughout history, that they felt embodied the idea of freedom. He asked friends and colleagues, solicited responses at Rhona Hoffman Gallery (where he showed at the time) and used the then-burgeoning Internet. He got connected to middle and high school students across the country through the Electric Schoolhouse, a network of teachers who were early adopters of the Web, and messaged random strangers through America Online, where users had public profiles that listed their political affiliation.

"I felt that it was critically important for the project to be viewed as not just another piece of liberal activism, to include as many voices from across the political spectrum as possible," he says. "It may not be fair and balanced, but it certainly was broad enough and eclectic enough ultimately, in order to ask some important questions about what freedom is, what it means to be free, who decides how we

define that."

That's how the list ended up with names like Rush Limbaugh—whose radio show was widely popular at the time, juxtaposed against Anita Hill. Or photographer Robert Mapplethorpe following Ronald Reagan. Some names make the project hyperspecific to that moment in time. If it were made today, it's unlikely that there would be many nominations for comedian Lenny Bruce or Czech politician and dissident writer Václav Havel or Dr. Death himself, Jack Kevorkian. The names appear in the order of how many votes they received, with one blank line representing those who couldn't choose, and potentially allowing viewers to insert their own choice.

The site of the project, in River North, was around the corner from Hoffman's gallery at the time; she helped facilitate securing the spot, which was then owned by developer and philanthropist David Ruttenberg. (It is now owned by RiverNorth Capital Management.)

I took the el to the site on a recent Sunday. It's still viewable from the Chicago Brown Line platform, though the lot in front is fenced off and filled with huge blue cranes and other construction equipment. It's harder to see from street level, though you can spy the work through gaps in the fencing. Brooks isn't entirely sure when construction of the new building will begin, though it seems imminent. "I love the idea of it slowly disappearing rather than being removed," he says. The work, still in excellent condition after 28 years, will technically remain on the wall. And if the new developer leaves a gap between the buildings, it's possible that motivated viewers will still be able to catch a glimpse of it with a flashlight.

That potential future is exciting to Brooks—who has always liked that the project takes a little bit of work to understand. "It's about asking questions, not answering," he says. "Certainly, with my work with Industry of the Ordinary for the last couple of decades, that's always been our approach: to leave things open-ended, to ask questions, to not insult the intelligence of the audience by spoon-feeding them, to ask the audience to do some work on their own. That for me has always been critically important and I think this piece has always functioned in that way."

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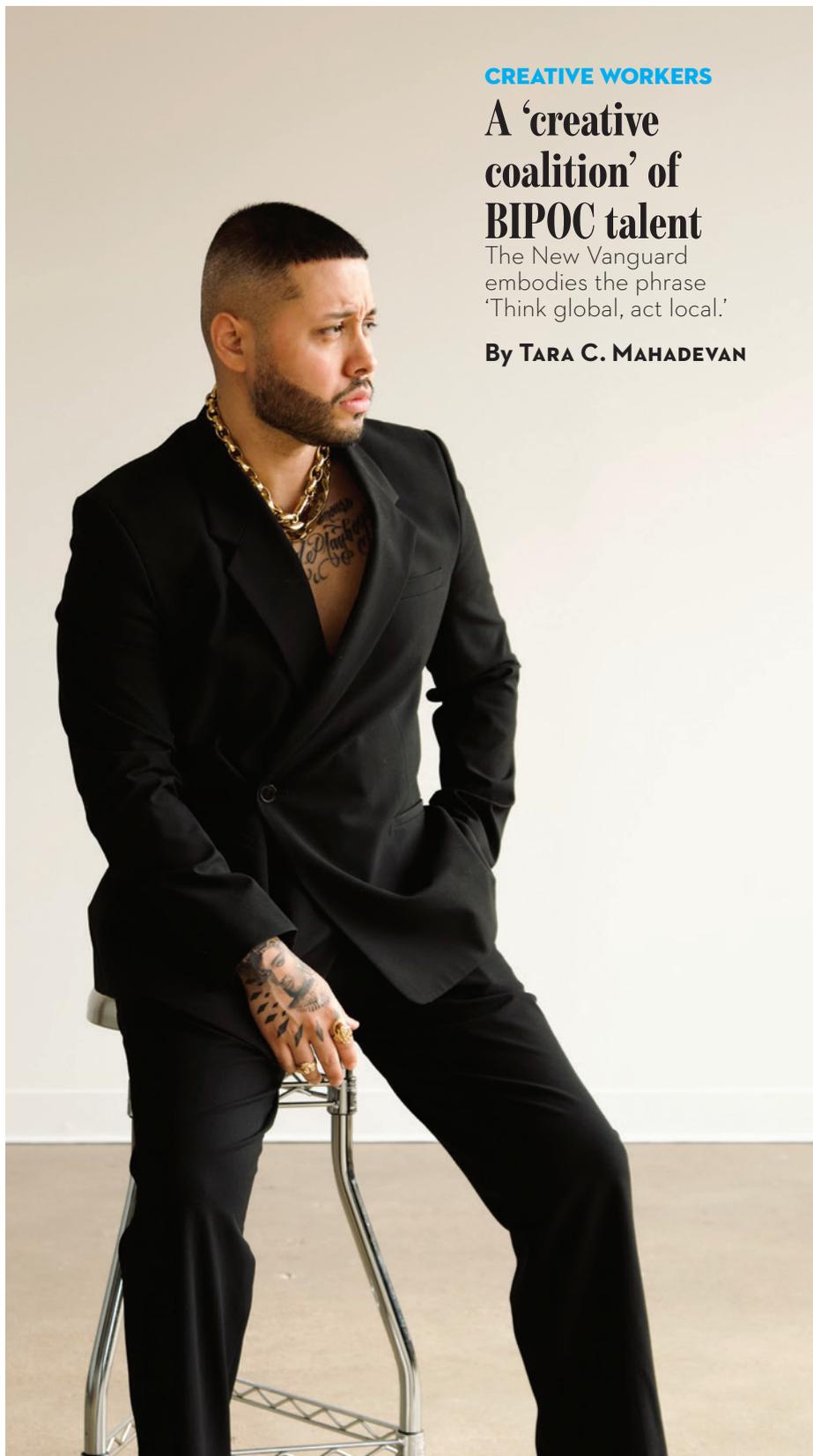


CREATIVE WORKERS

A 'creative coalition' of BIPOC talent

The New Vanguard embodies the phrase 'Think global, act local.'

By **TARA C. MAHADEVAN**



Eric "Phero" Lopez © ERIC ORTIZ

The New Vanguard is a creative coalition that seeks to unite Black and other POC creatives who currently work as separate entities under one banner. The coalition was recently launched by Eric "Phero" Lopez, who acts as chief creative officer, and his co-founders—chief of legal counsel, Eddie Sanders; chief of strategy and operations, Pilar McQuirter; and chief of new business, Juan Sanchez.

The quartet's aim is to amplify creatives' work by supplying resources and access, while also landing them equitable pay. They're storytellers and world-builders whose drive is to take Chicago's artists and mold them into ambassadors for the city—ones who can take their narratives "beyond the walls and streets of their neighborhoods," Lopez says.

Though only formed at the beginning of 2022, the New Vanguard's roster boasts 14 people whose talents run the gamut of entertainment, sports, music, fashion, and visual art: artists Brandon Breaux, Nikko Washington, Julian "Logik" Gilliam, Tubs, Armani Howard, Adrian Octavius Walker, and Crowzeilla; fashion designers Sheila Rashid and Alex Carter; plant studio Semillas; musicians Joey Purp and Elton "L10" Cheung; and athletes Jayden Reed and Malik Elzy.

In that little time, the creative coalition has landed partnership deals for its roster with Google, Adidas, Bacardi, Showtime, Facebook, Lululemon, Samsung, Arcteryx, Lifewtr, Nifty Gateway, WNBA, McDonald's, and the White Sox.

Prior to launching the New Vanguard, Lopez worked as an art and creative director at ad agencies Havas and the Annex, where he gained experience, and then started his production house, Cold Chillen. He saw both as learning from two different schools; while Havas gave him experience in corporate settings, Cold Chillen allowed his entrepreneurial side to flourish. Both helped him see the deficiency in Black and POC representation in the agency, nightlife, entertainment, and art worlds.

It's not only important for the creative coalition to be as inclusive and diverse as possible but to also remain in Chicago. This conception becomes all the more impactful with the group's nonprofit arm, the New Vanguard

Foundation, which plans to be an educational resource for emerging creatives—and their hope to open a permanent space in the city. "This is something that we feel is lacking," Lopez says. "It's something that we wanted to start here in Chicago and we're super excited to keep it here in Chicago."

The *Reader* spoke with Lopez about the nuts and bolts of his organization, what a creative coalition means to him, and the community work that the New Vanguard hopes to accomplish.

Tara C. Mahadevan: What prompted you to start the New Vanguard?

Eric "Phero" Lopez: The higher I climbed up in corporate America, the less I saw people who look like me. The higher I climbed, the more I realized that we have the capabilities to do this ourselves. It's not rocket science at the end of the day. It's really understanding what the scope of work is—understanding the brief—and it doesn't take a team of 100 people in a five-million-dollar building to actually create this work. Nowadays, with technology, some really great ideas, and a really strong work ethic, it means that we can do it too with a team of ten.

I also realized that we're taking advantage of this talent—agencies take on the fuller budget scale of the scope of work, yet the artist only gets a small fee. Why is that? Why don't artists own their LLC, why don't artists own their publishing? Why don't they own their distribution? Why can't artists have their own scope when it comes to the content team? If each artist were to run as a brand versus doing whatever to get paid for their craft—if we were to be a little more organized and have more of an entrepreneurial spirit, then the budget goes a lot further.

I think that was the biggest strong point for us when we started the New Vanguard—saying, "We need this creative coalition in Chicago." There is just a lack of not only representation as you climbed up, but there was a lack of ownership and resources and tools in Chicago. We had to go to either New York or LA or Miami to have some of these resources.

We never properly got the resources or the tools that we deserve. That's why it's so im-

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ARTS & CULTURE

continued from 22

portant for us to do it here—to start with our own people to have that proper representation. We're talking about a fully diverse team from Chicago, who are actually creating new change and telling stories better than some of these agencies are. And that's the real purpose of why I started this whole thing.

What does a creative coalition mean to you?

We call the New Vanguard a creative coalition because we see it like a union. We're not an agency, we're not a record label, we're not a company. We are a unity between different business owners who are coming together as a village to create not only resources and tools, but a fair act of how we get paid out as well. The word union is a vintage word. Of course, we respect them because we are a working-class city—we're honoring that. For us, it's the idea of having unified arts and people of color coming together and saying, "Hey, we stand together. We're going to share these resources and we're going to keep this momentum and money within us to make sure that we all drive to success."

Does each artist operate as their own brand under the New Vanguard?

Absolutely. Each artist owns their own business and has individual teams underneath their own umbrella. We come in and help out with giving them that structure. It's a creative audit. It's really understanding the sense of

where they're at as businesses and as owners.

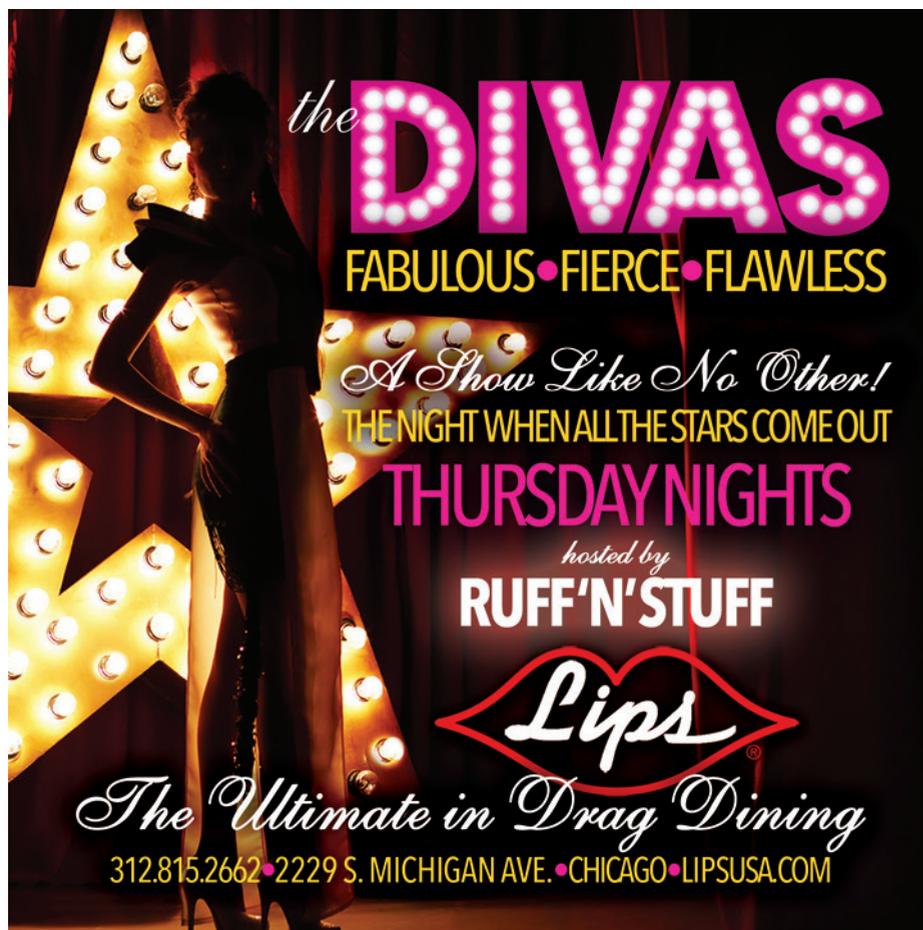
How have you been selecting the talent you want to work with?

We really look for work ethic. We're very particular in making sure that the talent we're looking at has an undeniable work ethic and is looking to scale, but at the same time has a beautiful story and a perspective that's beyond Chicago. We want to make sure that our talent is thinking beyond the walls and streets of their neighborhoods. How do you represent your neighborhood and put your city on the map while having a say in the industry?

What are you doing that's focused on community and the city?

We're super excited to announce that the New Vanguard has a nonprofit called the New Vanguard Foundation. We'll be creating workshops and panels, and teaching the next generation of diverse creatives how to properly run a business and how to actually create the resources and tools to teach them how to be artists themselves. It's about education. We see a lot of people who are really creative or really great at their craft, but don't properly understand how to make it into a living. Biggest thing for us is to teach you how to create a legacy and make sure you get to do what you love. But at the same time, you should get the proper payment as well. 

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ARTS & CULTURE

RR NINETEEN RESERVOIRS: ON THEIR CREATION AND THE
PROMISE OF WATER FOR NEW YORK CITY BY LUCY SANTE
The Experiment, hardcover (coming out 8/9), 208 pp., \$24.95,
theexperimentpublishing.com

BOOK REVIEW

The ghosts of the drowned villages

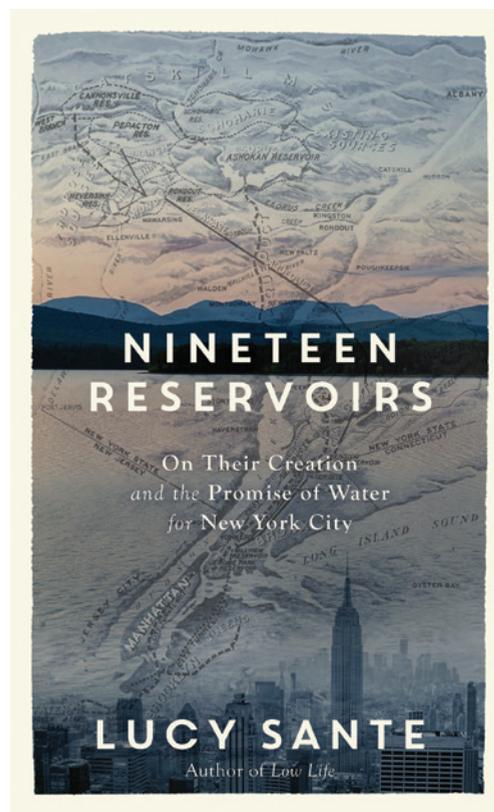
Lucy Sante's new book studies
the reservoirs of New York.

By **DMITRY SAMAROV**

“Water, water everywhere, Nor any drop to drink,” Coleridge’s sailor complains in the famous 1798 poem “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” The mariner is talking about the plight on his ship, but he may as well be describing the city of New York. That year, a yellow fever epidemic led to an outcry over the city’s drinking water shortage. Foul water was believed at the time to cause not only that outbreak but a host of other diseases. While this didn’t turn out to be so, there was no denying that a municipality whose population was growing exponentially needed a sustainable source.

Lucy Sante’s diverting new book details the scorched-earth efforts of governmental and business entities to solve the problem while lining their pockets all along the line. Was the cure worse than the illness? Is it right to submerge towns and villages so that a city may rise?

Manhattan is surrounded on all sides by bodies of water, none of it potable. The East and Harlem rivers go directly to the sea and the Hudson combines sea and salt water for many miles approaching the city. Settlers tapped ponds and streams as a solution, but that became untenable as New York was becoming an international harbor. Before the



Lucy Sante is a longtime New Yorker who wrote 1991’s *Low Life: Lures and Snares of Old New York*. COURTESY THE EXPERIMENT

exploding population. But how could those needs even be quantified? Water was considered for centuries a bottomless resource and akin to a human right. But the costs of building dams and hundreds of miles of pipes, tunnels, and aqueducts were exorbitant. Fights between local and state institutions over what to charge for water delivery were legion and overrun by graft down to the least measurable drop. Meters, for instance, were manufactured by cronies of this or that official, then sold to property owners at exorbitant rates.

Just the idea that water usage should be monitored was used by political parties of every stripe. Liberals might argue that charging poor people for their water was an undue burden, but without measuring or conservation, the city was wasting millions of gallons a day. Astoundingly, Sante cites the fact that in 1999 around 65 percent of apartment buildings in the city were still unmetered.

Meanwhile, upstate, “the ghosts of the drowned villages continue to haunt the public imagination via roadside markers and twice-told tales,” Sante writes.

As with every piece of Sante’s writing I’ve read, the prose is crystalline and the pages are richly illuminated with maps, adverts, and period photography—often from her own extensive collection of vernacular materials and ephemera. The visual matter serves to further accentuate the intractable issue at the heart of this book: how to help an urban population without utterly destroying a rural one.

Sante doesn’t have a solution. As a writer, historian, and dweller of the area in question, her part is to observe and describe. She’s aided in her task by photographer Tim Davis, who spent the summer of 2020 documenting the landscapes and inhabitants in and around these man-made bodies of water. Davis’s evocative pictures fill the ten-page epilogue to the book, prompting Sante to wonder, “Is it because we know the reservoirs are artificial that their very beauty can appear confected?”

What’s utterly real is that 300 years later, New York City’s crisis is familiar to the majority of the planet’s inhabitants. Our trolley is hurtling towards a crash. The question is how many we take out before coming to a complete stop. **FR**

first reservoir system in Croton was even completed in 1842, widespread fires and a cholera outbreak proved it to be inadequate to the region’s needs. The population of 300,000 would triple over the next 20 years. The answer was to go further and further out of town, into the Hudson River Valley. But as Sante writes, “from an upstate perspective, the reservoir system represents at best an imposition and at worst an imperial pillage of the landscape.”

Sante is a longtime resident of Ulster County, 80 miles up river from NYC. The Dutch settled the area in the 1600s, establishing little towns around dairy farms and other small industries. The sparse population was used by the city as a primary point in justifying the sacrifice necessary to meet desperate municipal requirements. Sante compares it to the trolley problem—a thought experiment in which a car is about to collide with a number of people and the operator can divert to a different track sparing the group, but definitely killing one person. Is it better to do nothing with a clean conscience and accept catastrophe or cause certain harm for the greater good?

Water, as they say, seeks its own level. The six major regional reservoirs, built between 1907 and 1967, were in a constant, desperate race to meet the unquenchable needs of an

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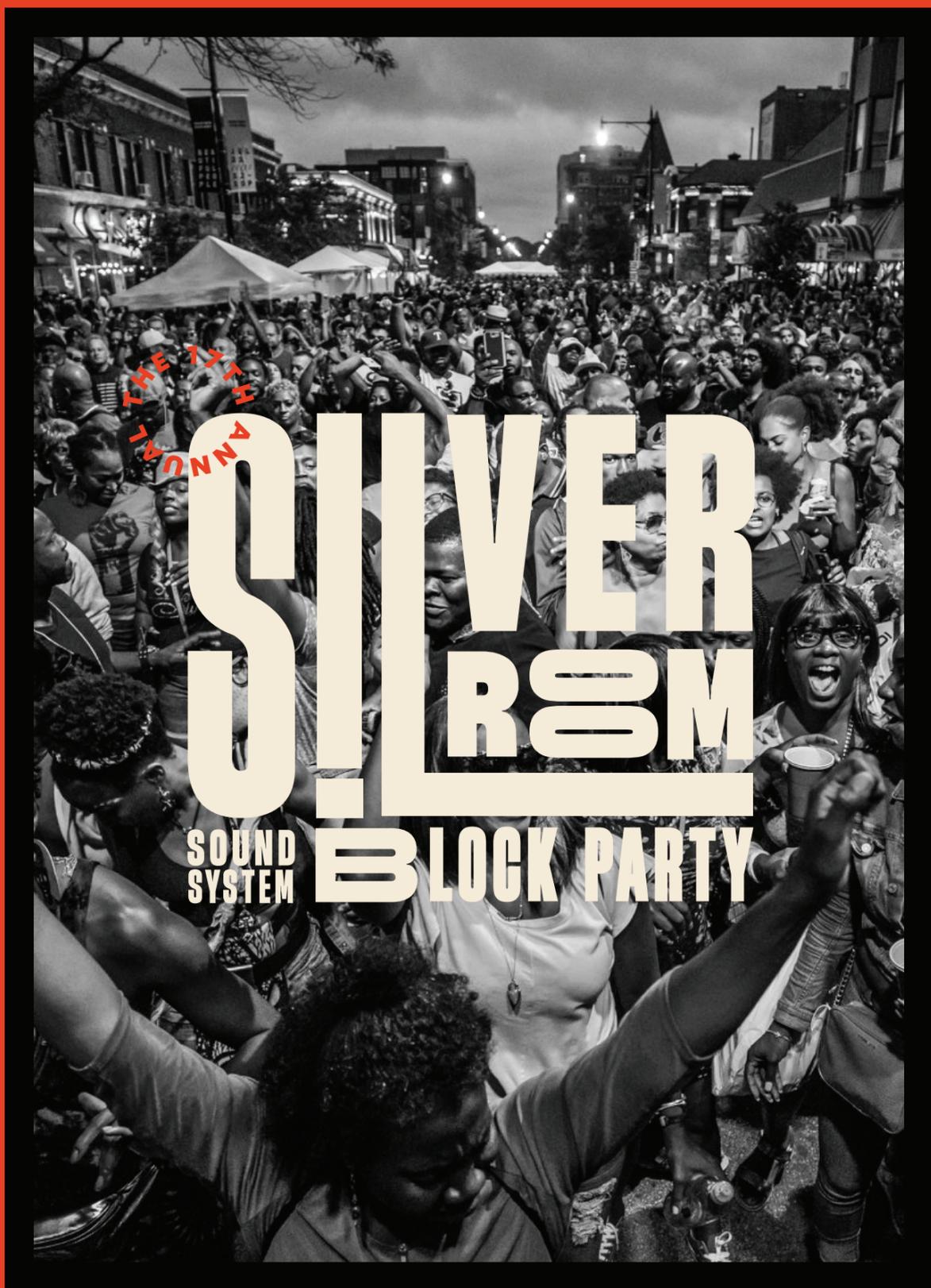
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Fame, Creativity, and Mental Health

Spark'
THE CONVERSATION ABOUT
MENTAL HEALTH



Alex Ebert may be best known as the lead singer and songwriter of Grammy Award-winning indie-rock band Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros, the frontman of art-rock group Ima Robot, and a composer who won a Golden Globe for his score for the 2013 film *All is Lost* but his interests and creative endeavors extend far beyond his bands; he's also a fledgling philosopher, app creator, author, and philanthropist. Nature's Grace and Wellness Coordinator and Field Market Associate Alia Reichert recently had the privilege to Spark the Conversation with Ebert to learn more about his perspective on cannabis, fame, creativity, and mental health.



Alia Reichert: Where do you get your song ideas? Does your songwriting act as a kind of therapy for you?

Alex Ebert: If we're talking about music and melody it can come from anywhere at any time. If we're talking about lyrics, which are more personal, they usually come when I'm going through something.

AR: Is cannabis part of your creative process? If so, how does it help?

AE: For sure, it's easily the most musical substance I've ever encountered. Nothing like it. It works with all of the arts, but music especially, in my experience—it begs music out of me.

AR: What is your go to method for consumption?

AE: Pax Vaporizer.

AR: Is there a specific strain that you find helps the most, with either creativity or your mental health?

AE: No, it really depends. The most important part is just that it's clean and well grown.

AR: How does being considered famous impact your overall sense of well-being and mental health?

AE: Terribly. It erodes trust. You simply will never know to what extent your fame is playing a role in attracting friendship or lovers, nor even the degree to which your family puts up with you for it. No aspect of my relationships have been untouched by it.

AR: How do you combat the negative aspects of fame and life in general?

AE: I think. I analyze society, and what makes us tick. I write. Then I think more and write more. I make music. I channel it all into something.

Read the rest of this interview online at chicagoreader.com/alexebert

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GROWING FOR GOOD with Green Thumb

Englewood-based urban farming organization Growing Home Inc. wins grant to provide job training and fresh food access in Chicago

Featuring Zenobia Williams, Director for Employment Training

Please share some background about Growing Home and your work in Chicago.

Growing Home's mission is to operate, promote, and demonstrate the use of organic urban agriculture as a vehicle for job training, employment, and community development. Since 2006, we have focused our work on Chicago's South Side in the Greater Englewood community. Our USDA-certified organic farms serve as the foundation for our innovative workforce development programs.

We produce 35,000+ pounds of vegetables and herbs annually, including more than 200 varieties of vegetables, which we sell at affordable prices at our weekly Wood Street Farm Stand and other local markets.

We believe that farming is a unique and powerful vehicle to teach hard, transferable job skills, while also providing a therapeutic experience to individuals looking for personal growth and connection.

Our 12-week paid workforce development program aims to increase employment opportunities for individuals with extreme barriers to employment.

To date, we have empowered over 500 individuals with the tools, connections, and confidence they need to find and keep stable jobs and find paths toward self-sufficiency. We also have an appren-



GROWING HOME

...

ticeship program and a neighborhood computer resource center.

How does your work connect to the cannabis movement?

A majority of the participants in our 12-week paid employment training program are justice-involved and are returning citizens—many who have been impacted by the war on drugs. Our program provides wraparound services including record sealing and expungement. Graduates learn a wide array of horticultural and transferable skills — and some have graduated to work in the cannabis industry. In 2022, we partnered with Olive-Harvey College's pilot scholarship program Still I Rise, which is designed to provide wraparound services and free cannabis education certificates to individuals with violence involvement and who have cannabis records. Through this additional apprenticeship and partnership program, we provide Still I Rise scholarship recipients with hands-on farm



training, including planting, harvesting, and marketing skills.

What can a new participant or volunteer expect when they get involved with Growing Home?

Participants in our 12-week paid program can expect to spend their mornings training on the farm, and classwork in the afternoon, up to 25 hours of paid work. Classes include environmental science, emotional resilience, and job readiness/job placement. We also have wraparound services, including free legal aid for record sealing and expungement, housing referrals, assistance with gaining a GED, continuing education, professional certifications, and more. We have two dedicated employment training and retention specialists who support each participant in creating individu-

alized career paths based on their interests, skills, and passions. We currently partner with more than 100 employment agencies, and we're adding to that list every day.

After graduation, we provide 30-60-90 day follow-ups and paid incentives for those who stay on the job once placed. We also have an alumni program where we provide additional services and assistance as needed. Our goal is for our participants not only to find jobs but to maintain stable employment for themselves, their family, and their community.

Volunteers are invited to help on the farm alongside our training cohort, assist with events or within our classrooms, or provide administrative support with creative, tech, or data-entry projects.

READ THE REST OF THIS ARTICLE AT
[CHICAGOREADER.COM/
GROWINGHOME](http://CHICAGOREADER.COM/GROWINGHOME)

Growing Home Inc. is a USDA-Certified Organic urban farm, workforce development center and non-profit social enterprise based in Englewood. They produce more than 35,000 pounds of produce annually, while serving more than 3,500 people through their food access program and providing job training and assistance services for 100 Chicagoans. Growing Home was recently awarded a \$60,000 grant from Gree Thumb Industries to continue their work.



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POETRY IN MOTION

A Venn diagram for performance

The Physical Theater Festival explores aesthetic intersections.

By **NORA PAUL**

Global displacement comes to the stage with Theatre Lumina's *Song of Home*, one of many acts of the 2022 Physical Theater Festival Chicago that invites a shared humanity within the immediacy of live performance. Throughout the week, organizations will present a range of acts including theater, music, juggling, clowning, and more. Marc Frost and Alice da Cunha, the festival's co-founding couple, curate the participation of international physical theater organizations with such a spread in mind.

Physical theater lives in the articulations of movement and acting, physicality and theatricality. Da Cunha and Frost met studying theater in London and experienced the vibrant and broad theatrical world of the city and the festivals it offered. Attending live entertainment was rather common, and

da Cunha would bring friends to the London International Mime Festival. Growing up in Brazil and Portugal, she attended festivals where she was invigorated by the atmosphere and busyness of multiple performances happening simultaneously, the audience moving about and witnessing as well as being a part of live theater's irreproducibility. She worked at theater festivals while attending school. Just prior to moving to Chicago, she worked at the Casa Festival in London.

When speaking with the couple, I imagine a Venn diagram in which physical theater nestles in the conjunction of various performance arts, including theater, dance, and more. When I tell her that, da Cunha says, "I think studying in Europe gave us a certain perspective on what physical theater might be and what those Venn diagrams might be." She and Frost

can define and redefine the bounds of physical theater each year in curating the festival, which is now in its ninth edition.

The Physical Theater Festival features different theatrical organizations each year. 2022's festival will welcome a circus company, clown performers, and groups that fuse drama, song, dance, and ritual. The festival uses an open call to seek submissions from organizations worldwide. Da Cunha and Frost reach out to friends and contacts to submit. They also read reviews of theater festivals such as the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, pursuing groups that were favored well.

Says da Cunha, "The artists and the shows make us connect to different communities every year depending on the country where they come from or the subject of the show and that's awesome. . . . We hope to keep everyone that we've gathered. And then we have other opportunities to reach out." She continues, "I know that there are people that are very connected to their own communities and make suggestions."

They are supportive of popular groups from Chicago communities as well. Past festivals have featured the city's own the Era footwork crew, which performed their original piece *The Testament*. This year, Company To X For, a Chicago-based grassroots contemporary circus company founded by artists Liam Bradley

in 2020 (many of whom were viewing from another country) to return. For example, that year included *The Woman Who Dreamed* by Cia de Teatro Manual, a company based in Brazil. The piece was constructed for a virtual audience, responding to the pandemic's shifting demands on theater performance. Da Cunha hopes that communities of her native Brazil will be among those the festival has gathered as returning audience members.

The festival in 2020, she reflects, "was the first time that I could have a Brazilian audience in a physical festival. Because it was virtual, and it was a Brazilian company. So, I had people from the city where I was born, which was Rio de Janeiro, attending the festival at the same time as some people that have always come to Physical [Theater Festival] . . . And it was what was possible, but it was good to market in some way and to learn those lessons right off the bat and the good that came from that."

The festival will open on July 16 with family-friendly shows in Nichols Park, such as a magic show by Alexander the Amazing (aka Alexander M. Knapp), an African drumming performance by Kuumba Nia Arts from Oxford, England, and hip-hop and street dance by the Chicago outfit BraveSoul Movement. The kickoff is part of the city's Night Out in the Parks program.

The festival then moves to the Den Theatre in Wicker Park for ticketed workshops and performances, including *Song of Home* (7/19-7/20). Performed in Spanish and English, it follows the lived experiences of three displaced women coming to the United States. Chicago-based Theatre Lumina, led by artistic director Monica Payne, fosters cross-cultural collaboration and international exchange by drawing from diverse artists, subject matter, and influences. This production will be sharing the stages of the Den Theatre with companies from the UK and Argentina, as well as local artists. Kuumba Nia and their fellow UK artists, Unlock the Chains Collective, collaborate on the piece *Sold* (7/21-7/23), about Mary Prince, a Bermuda-born enslaved woman who became an abolitionist and the author of a narrative about her life (the first such narrative published in the UK).

Physical Theater Festival Chicago

Sat 7/16, 2-8 PM, Nichols Park, 1355 E. 53rd, free; then 7/18-7/24, Den Theatre, 1331 N. Milwaukee; see physicalfestival.com for complete schedule and ticketing information.

and David Chervony, will be performing *Surface Tension*, which explores queer friendship through juggling, weight sharing, acrobatics, and dance.

As the festival has seen unconventional presentation formats in the last few years, the couple approaches this year's iteration with a program that responds and anticipates. Combining virtual, outdoor, and formal indoor theater performances allows opportunities for unprecedented accessibility, and for the audiences who viewed the festival virtually

THEATER

Virtual events, including two international panels and a performance, will be accessible for free on the festival website and the panels will be available on the Facebook page. Frost describes how virtual performance makes for a different relationship among audience members compared to live performance: "It's not a natural audience interaction. So they're so present and vulnerable with one another in a way that we're not necessarily asked to be in a dark theater."

"The State of the Performing Arts 3.0.," a conversation among theater producers, actors, and directors on the ever-changing performing arts world, will be on July 17 at 10 AM. At noon, da Cunha and Frost will moderate a panel discussion titled "Teaching Physical Theater." A preview excerpt of Spain- and Israel-based company La Percha Teatro's

performance of *Marrano, A Tale From the Inquisition* is available for free on the website at any time during the festival.

This year, past adaptations and iterations of the festival's different formats will play out in real time. Frost explains how the pandemic has influenced him and da Cunha to organize the festival in a calmer way, as they have learned "not how to work harder, but to work a little smarter and just more intentionally."

"And I think we were enriched. I'm not saying I thought of all this at the time, but in retrospect, I can really see how great it was to have a ten-day festival and do a virtual ten days indoors and do an outdoor fest. And so, everything is sort of finding its way into this latticework for the ninth edition." 

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REVIEW

Choice debates

The Billboard looks at abortion rights from the perspective of Black feminists.

By KELLY KLEIMAN

Natalie Y. Moore's play *The Billboard*, now in a world premiere with 16th Street Theater, is subtitled "A Play About Abortion." In the spirit of Chicago improv, allow me to say: Yes, and.

The setup is as simple as it is powerful: a neighborhood gadfly puts up a billboard near the [fictional] Black Women's Health Initiative clinic in Englewood with a photo of a Black baby and the legend "Abortion is Genocide." This puts clinic director Dr. Tanya Gray, her staff, and her board right on the spot: respond or not? If so, how? For whom are they speaking, and to whom? And because the gadfly is running against an incumbent alderwoman, how will the clinic's response be used, and by whom?

So Moore's play is about abortion, yes, and also about how "social issues" (aka women's health care) get caught up in local

politics—and also about how Chicago politics is inseparable from issues of race. Candidate Demetrius Drew argues that abortion is just another facet of neighborhood depopulation engineered by white developers to prepare the way for Englewood's gentrification. No matter that the assertion isn't factually correct—the area's population is not shrinking because its women residents have abortions—because it's emotionally resonant. And that, in turn, introduces another theme: the differences between Black feminism and its white counterpart.

There's a lot to chew on here, and Moore's strong suit is her sense of the complexities surrounding the situation. She offers us an early debate between Tanya (played with an appealing mix of tenderness and bravado by LaQuis Harkins) and her board president Dawn Williamson (Margo Gadsden-Harper). When Tanya proposes an answering billboard

describing abortion as self-care with the hashtag #TrustBlackWomen, Dawn objects: "The men who say Black mothers are dangerous will weaponize our message. . . . I can hear the eugenics chatter now from people who are on our side." To which Tanya responds heatedly, "We are not Planned Parenthood!" Given that pro-choice white women like me regard Planned Parenthood as a champion—almost a savior—this is a complicating and challenging response.

Sure, we know that founder Margaret Sanger held racist eugenicist views, but compared to the good she did . . . and besides, that was a long time ago.

But here's the point, and I'm grateful to Moore for helping me see it: "That was a long time ago" turns out to be a convenient phrase for white people to apply to nearly every aspect of the Black experience that flows from the original sin of slavery. Consider the just-discovered arrest warrant issued but never served on Carolyn Bryant, the woman who accused Emmett Till of looking at her crosswise. The people who found it want to have it served now as a way of securing some justice for Till, but they're facing resistance having to do with the woman's age. "She's over 80 now—it was all such a long time ago." Moore knows, as did Eugene O'Neill, that the past is never really past.

So *The Billboard* is about abortion, yes, and politics, yes, and racism, of course, and the intersectional strains within feminism; but its meta-theme is when and how to speak up versus when and how to keep silent in the name of advancing some greater cause. For women of any color, being silenced is a constant problem, but as Moore shows vividly, for Black women particularly, speaking up has its own special pitfalls.

With this many themes operating, it's no wonder the play is constructed as a series of debates between Tanya and everyone around her. But that structure interferes with the show's momentum, pulling our attention off Tanya's development from mission-driven leader through publicity-besotted symbol to chastened player of a political game in which she and the clinic are pawns. Her arc is the one

we care about; she's the one we're rooting for. And it's hard for playwright and actors alike to bring something fresh to the climactic scene, a debate between aldermanic candidates, when most of the arguments have already been presented in point-counterpoint style.

Director TaRon Patton secures strongly anchored character performances from the entire ensemble: Milan Falls as Tanya's fearless young feminist aide (and there's another yes, and: generational differences about what's private and what can be said out loud); Veronda G. Carey and Frederick Williams as the equally if differently smarmy politicians squeezing the clinic between them; and even the "Stage Hands" (Nicholas Allen and Kayla Satcher) who act as chorus, commenting in multiple voices on the contest of ideas.

But the play's physical staging in a small auditorium at Northwestern's law school downtown does it no favors. The space has a high ceiling with no acoustical tiles. This, coupled with a box set perched on the proscenium stage, renders much non-debate dialogue inaudible, though things improve whenever the action moves to the floor-level apron. And on opening night—delayed several times due to COVID outbreaks among the cast—none of the actors was word-perfect, with line stumbles that fit oddly with the rhetorical fluency of their characters.

No play could be more timely, of course, than one about abortion in the days after the overturning of *Roe vs. Wade*. And it's refreshing to encounter a piece approaching every side of the issue with respect and rigor. At the same time, watching it felt a bit nostalgic: this was what things were like when abortion was still protected by the U.S. Constitution. It's one thing to argue about the legitimacy of a woman's decision when she gets to make one—something else entirely to consider what it's like when that option is taken away. Near the end, Tanya once again separates her concerns from those of white feminists when she says, "My work is about justice, not choice." Without the latter, though, there's no possibility of the former. That's where we are now. **✎**



OPENING

RR Out of this world fun
Chicago Shakes shows us a good way to feel alienated.

Last year, Chicago Shakespeare offered *We Are Out There*, a digital sneak peek of Joe Kinosian and Kellen Blair's goofy musical adaptation of the 1953 Universal Pictures sci-fi film, *It Came From Outer Space*, which was itself based on an original story by Ray Bradbury. Now it's finally onstage at Chicago Shakes's cozy upstairs studio space in a production that's loaded with groan-worthy jokes (including a long setup to a Bradbury shout-out), cheesy effects, and everything else you need for the live theatrical equivalent of a retro night at a drive-in. (Well, no popcorn inside the theater.)

The story follows John Putnam (Christopher Kale Jones), a wannabe "astronomer-astrologer" who is convinced that aliens have landed near tiny Sand Rock, Arizona (a town whose main attraction is a sand museum). Because John is an annoying know-it-all, no one believes him, except for his schoolteacher girlfriend, Ellen (Jaye Ladymore), who is also the object of affection of the surly and not-so-bright Sheriff Matt (Alex Goodrich). But then the townspeople start acting really weird.

With a spritely score, clever direction by Laura Braza, cunning sets, lights, costumes, and sound design (by Scott Davis, Heather Sparling, Mieka van der Ploeg, and Nicholas Pope, respectively), and a skosh of social commentary (we fear the "other" before we really try to understand them), it's an absolute toothsome delight start to finish. The entire ensemble (most of whom play multiple roles) is pitch-perfect, including Jonathan Butler-Duplessis as everything from a verbose telephone lineman to Coral, the barfly/confidante for Ellen who

blows the roof off during "I Can't Figure Out Men"; Sharriese Y. Hamilton as the energetic local muckraker; and Ann Delaney as a daffy old woman and as one of the aliens, who achieves maximum expressiveness with her tentacle appendages. —**KERRY REID** *IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE* Through 7/24: Wed-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 2 and 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; open captions Wed 7/20, ASL interpretation Fri 7/22, audio description Sun 7/24; Chicago Shakespeare Theater, 800 E. Grand, 312-595-5600, chicagoshakes.com, \$50-\$60.

RR You say you want a revolution?
Marie Antoinette and the Magical Negroes considers the costs of rising up.

On one wall of the set for Terry Guest's *Marie Antoinette and the Magical Negroes*, now in a local premiere with Story Theatre under Guest's direction, a large sign tells us "THIS IS NOT HISTORY." True: what Guest's skillful sardonic comedy offers is a funhouse view (with not always so much fun, given the subject matter) of how oppression leads to resistance, and resistance can lead to bloodshed, and bloodshed can lead to freedom. Which in turn can only be maintained with constant vigilance and balancing of countervailing forces, lest the oppressed become the oppressors.

The main attraction in this carnival of carnage is, as the title indicates, the French Revolution. But the time-traveling band of Black players in Guest's story (who are identified in the program with names indicative of racist stereotyping—Jim Crow, Mammy, Sapphire, Sambo, and Savage—also take us to the JFK assassination, the 1992 LA rebellion, and the Haitian revolution, which took place simultaneously with the unrest in France.

Brenna DiStasio's Marie laments over her gilded-cage Versailles life that renders her what Maya

Vinice Prentiss's lady-in-waiting Charlotte (who soon joins the revolutionaries) calls "a symbol of a woman, more than a woman." David Stobbe's in-over-his-soon-to-be-removed-head Louis XVI reminisces about the glory days of his father's reign. The servants and courtiers plot, negotiate, and turn on each other as well as the monarchs. A guest appearance by Ida B. Wells (Amber Washington) advocates the power of the pen to fight white supremacy, while Toussaint Louverture (Danyelle Monson) relishes describing the vengeance wreaked on colonizing slavers in Haiti.

It's a smart, dizzying show that feels particularly urgent now. Guest and his ensemble (which also includes Keith Illidge and Nathaniel Andrew) negotiate the hairpin turns in tone from high farce to hushed sorrowful tragedy. Guest isn't the first to write about the unintended perils of uprisings, but he and Story Theatre have found a fresh and compelling way to revisit the evergreen topic. —**KERRY REID** *MARIE ANTOINETTE AND THE MAGICAL NEGROES* Through 7/17: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM; Raven Theatre, 6157 N. Clark, 773-338-2177, thestorytheatre.org, \$20 (\$10 students, active military, and veterans).

RR Fields of glory
A Chicago legend plumbs the blues and her own history in a new show.

In *Pearl's Rollin' With the Blues*, Felicia P. Fields gets a showcase for her indomitable vocals. The Tony nominee (for *The Color Purple*) is a bona fide star in the land of musical theater, her voice an irresistible mix of low-down growling blues and clarion-clear belt. As the titular chanteuse in Writers Theatre's world premiere (directed by Ron OJ Parson), she's backed by a five-piece band led by Chic Street Man, a star in his own right whose steel-pan guitar can wail and moan in a thousand shades of indigo.

It Came From Outer Space **LIZ LAUREN**

Together, they offer an informal concert heavy on audience interaction, storytelling, and instrumental solos.

Fields brings the heat and the sizzle to numbers including "Rough and Ready Man," but the most powerful parts of the production arrive when Fields tells a deeply personal story about growing up on the south side and being bussed to a high school on the north side—a trek that had her leaving her home while it was still dark in order to make the two buses/one train commute. Getting to school was nothing compared to dealing with the racism she encountered when visiting a white friend's home after school. The blues plumb the deepest sorrows and illuminate the most sensual aspects of life. Fields puts the entire spectrum into her voice. She's spent the past 30-plus years showing audiences precisely why she's a star. When she makes her entrance in *Rollin' With the Blues*, you know you're in the presence of greatness, and fortunate to be there indeed. —**CATEY SULLIVAN** *PEARL'S ROLLIN' WITH THE BLUES: A NIGHT WITH FELICIA P. FIELDS* Through 7/24: Wed 3 and 7:30 PM, Thu-Fri 7:30 PM, Sat 3 and 7:30 PM, Sun 2 and 6 PM; Writers Theatre, 325 Tudor Ct., Glencoe, 847-242-6000, writers-theatre.org, \$35-\$90.

RR Southern gothic heat
Violet Sky Theatre debuts with *Summer and Smoke*.

For their inaugural production, Violet Sky Theatre company has chosen Tennessee Williams's *Summer and Smoke* from 1948.

As is expected with any of Williams's canonical works, *Summer and Smoke* is a portrait of the delicious agony of unrequited love. Alma Winemiller, the minister's daughter, has been in love with John Buchanan, the boy next door, for her entire life. When John returns to their small Mississippi hometown after finishing medical school out east, Alma's feelings return with the vigor of the Gulf winds that the townspeople pray for during their insufferably hot summers.

Alma is anxious, and Lindsey Zanatta gracefully and authentically carries that burden in her performance. She is quick-witted but reserved, beholden to the expectations of her religious upbringing and the belief that if she is the perfect lady, love will come. As John, Joshua J. Volkers embodies the swagger of a man who can have anything he wants, and he wants it all—sex, booze, parties, and maybe Alma—right now. Where Alma stutters, John stalks. Together, they invoke collective, trepidatious joy in the moments where their power dynamic flips, when Alma manages to catch John off his guard.

Summer and Smoke is a spiritual, sexual romantic drama, and Kevin Rolfs's scenic design nails the southern gothic aesthetic that carries this inherent dichotomy. Where there's smoke, there's fire, and in this performance, it's stoked by the constant friction between Alma's beliefs and John's instincts, the heat when they hold hands. —**KAYLEN RALPH** *SUMMER AND SMOKE* Through 7/31: Thu-Sat 7:30 PM, Sun 3 PM, Reginald Vaughn Theater, 1105 W. Thorndale, violetskytheatre.com, \$27. **FI**



Welcome to the SKATE PARK

OnWord skaters at La Villita Skate Park ■ DUWAYNE
PADILLA FOR CHICAGO READER

OnWord Skate Collective embraces skaters of all ages and abilities, prioritizing women, trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people.

By **TARYN ALLEN**

“When we go to a skate park, we take up space, and then all of a sudden you don’t see a bunch of guys trying to tell you to move out the way, ‘cause we’re the majority now,” says Lid Madrid. “And we’re taking up space, and just changing the way that skate parks traditionally look. Because when our community comes in, you have BIPOC skaters, you have trans skaters, you have gender-nonconforming skaters. It’s, like, unreal.”

Madrid is one of the cofounders of OnWord Skate Collective, a local skate crew that welcomes skaters of all ages and all abilities, prioritizing women, trans, nonbinary, and gender-nonconforming people, and anyone else who identifies as LGBTQ+.

When OnWord hosts a meetup, they start with introductions, pronouns, and positive affirmations. Skaters go around the circle and say things like, “I am enough.” “I’m a badass.” “I will bring authenticity and love into everything that I do.” It creates a sense of safety and community for those not typically welcome at skate parks.

OnWord was founded in January 2021. In typical pandemic fashion, it began over Zoom, with big ideas spoken through screens and a thrilling sense of potential. Madrid and cofounders Bridget Johnson, T Smith, Cath

Hodge, and Deb Hwang received a grant from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago (SAIC) to build a DIY skate park. Madrid, then an architecture student, took the lead on designing individual elements like custom beginner-friendly ramps and rails, and then fabricated the parts in SAIC’s wood shop. OnWord participants swapped power-tool tips as well as skate tricks, and they constructed their own skate park.

They called the project OnSite, and it was the perfect outlet to experiment with skateboarding, inclusive design, and community-building. The first day they built it, and the second day they skated it. Filmmaker Johnson documented the experience on camera, saving Zoom recordings and conducting in-person interviews along the way for a short film.

OnSite was a success, and so was the short that came out of it. The original *Breaking the Barrier* is full of interviews and action shots of OnWord skaters building the park and skating together; there are young skaters in elbow pads and knee pads, pronoun stickers and top-surgery scars, and an overwhelming amount of queer joy. After a sold-out showing at the Martin, an artist-first event space in West Town, the movie won best documentary short at the Music Box Theatre as part of Premiere, DePaul’s film festival.

But the OnWord crew were far from fin-

ished. OnSite and the short film seamlessly paved the way for more changes in the skating world—and for a much bigger film.

“This [SAIC] grant really just allowed us to turn one singular project and one singular event into an entire collective,” Madrid says. They skate together, sure, but in Madrid’s own words, OnWord is first and foremost a community. “It’s a space for skaters—the community of skaters that we have—to share resources, to learn from each other, and also to just hang out and have a good time, and feel included in a skate park.”

It’s often difficult for nontraditional skaters—anyone who isn’t a white, cisgender, straight man—to find role models and feel welcome in skateboarding. Like some of the OnWord founders, I picked up skating during the pandemic. I live in Uptown near Wilson Skate Park, but I’ve only ventured over a handful of times, and only at non-peak hours. As a queer female and a beginner, I find myself sticking to the adjacent parking lot instead of braving the park itself, feeling a strong sense of unworthiness. And I’ve been lucky—most of the Wilson skaters seem to ignore me, but some women experience direct harassment or inappropriate behavior surrounded by so much toxic masculinity.

That harassment and the accompanying senses of isolation and unworthiness are exactly what the founders of OnWord want to eliminate.

The OnWord crew host skate meetups and teach lessons; they utilize Madrid’s skills in architecture to teach skate park building and construction; they’re big on skill-swaps, where roller skaters and skateboarders switch wheels and help each other learn; and they

Carly Gehm  DUWAYNE
PADILLA FOR CHICAGO READER



also organize events like clothing drives, social hangouts, and town hall conversations.

This work and the relationship-building with OnWord skaters helped Johnson realize that there was potential to turn *Breaking the Barrier* into a full-length film. It will be the first feature film to come out of her company Dare to Dream Productions, which seeks to tell authentic and positive queer stories with inclusive practices. Like the short film, the documentary will explore identity, equality, and community through interviews with OnWord founders and participants.

Johnson speaks with such admiration for the OnWord members turned interviewees. “I love just seeing the joy in people’s lives that OnWord has brought to them,” she says. “How they look forward to our meetups on the weekends, and how we’ve kind of become like a family that’s not just about skateboarding.”

Breaking the Barrier will also highlight accessibility, with a broad focus on the south and west sides.

“I think something that we like to keep in mind is that the type of spaces that we wanna create don’t have all that much impact if the people we’re tryna reach can’t get to it,” says Smith, one of the founders. “So it’s been super important for us to be mobile, especially in a place like Chicago where it’s super segregated, where a lot of people don’t even necessarily feel comfortable going to certain areas just because it’s unfamiliar to them, or they don’t have a car to get there, or they might have to leave the event at night.”

Chicago has plenty of LGBTQ+ community resources, but they’re disproportionately on the north side. “Then, everybody else is kinda just left out,” says Smith. “Even if you can get there, in terms of transportation, I think having something centered on the north side sends a certain type of message to various communities.”

And they’re correct—the city doesn’t have any skate parks south of 31st Street, and most of the well-known skate shops like Uprise or Wilson Yards, for example, are on the north side, which means that huge portions of Chicago don’t have access to skating resources and spaces. Burnham Skate Park on 31st is one of the only parks not located up north. “Burnham was not even built or designed by skaters,” Madrid says. “The people who made that were, like, a sidewalk company. So there are ginormous holes in the skate park where your

wheels can get caught. And that’s so unfair, you know what I mean?”

OnWord wants to get funding for a truck, large enough that they can transport their mobile skate park anywhere. (For now, it lives in Madrid’s garage.) They also want to transport their film. After the festival circuit, OnWord wants to bring *Breaking the Barrier* to Chicago public schools and local LGBTQ+ groups. They plan to screen the film and offer Q&A sessions, host interactive skate workshops, and create safe, open spaces for young queer people to talk about identity and belonging.

It will also be a full-circle moment for Johnson as a filmmaker. “Creating my first feature film has always been my dream since I was 12,” says Johnson. “I’ve met some beautiful souls during this journey so far, and I’m looking forward to meeting more, especially getting the opportunity to showcase the film at schools. I can’t wait to go back to my old elementary school and see my old teachers who encouraged me to follow my dreams.”

On paper, *Breaking the Barrier*’s target audience generally includes teenagers to 30-somethings, the skateboarding community, and Chicagoans, given its rootedness in the city’s people and physical spaces. However, that’s another barrier the filmmakers want to break.

“We’re hoping to connect to a bigger audience,” Johnson notes. “Because it’s not just about skateboarding, but finding a safe space and what community means to a variety of different people in Chicago.” “I want everybody to see it,” Smith adds. “I want everybody to hear it.”

They continue, “When I talk about OnWord

and what we do and why we exist, I always say: If you were to have a conversation with someone and ask them to picture a skater, they’re probably not gonna picture most of the people that show up to our events. So we wanna challenge that, we wanna go beyond that norm, we wanna break that stereotype of having a certain image when you think of a skater. Literally anybody can skate! And anybody does skate, right?”

And that’s the deal—anybody is welcome at OnWord. *Breaking the Barrier* will be a reflection of that inclusivity, and an example of the power of films made by queer people, of queer people, for queer people.

When Johnson was first discovering her sexuality, she leaned on her love of film. Like many people, however, she felt overwhelmed with queer media depicting tragic endings, breakups, and often death. Johnson knew that *Breaking the Barrier* should be feel-good and inspiring instead.

“Maybe skateboarding is not for everyone, but there’s always something that you’ve always wanted to do, and hopefully this film empowers people to wanna actually pursue that,” she says. “We want to be the representation and role models we never had growing up.”

While audiences will eventually see the accomplishments of OnWord in front of the camera, the filmmakers also want to ensure that they’re approaching the work behind the scenes with similar intention. The film industry is known for grueling hours, low pay, and even hazardous working conditions, but OnWord’s collaborative DIY approach and commitment to working with diverse local

filmmakers will combat this.

“It’s very toxic, how some film crews are run, and how you’re working 14-16 hours without very many breaks,” Johnson says. “And so what we’re trying to do is work less hours and also have more positivity on set.”

Through a mix of school connections and social media, OnWord has created a film crew made up of women and LGBTQ+ Chicagoans, most of whom are also skaters and share a passion for OnWord’s mission in the skate community.

OnWord’s last barrier? The funding. Lucia Agajanian is currently signed on as a producer for *Breaking the Barrier*. The team has an Indiegogo campaign set up to raise money for production, and they’ve been applying for grants and pitching the idea to get other producers on board. They’re hoping to carry the momentum of the short film and make some headway on funding this summer, all while keeping up with their usual programming.

OnWord will host OnSite 2.0 on August 6, 7, and 8, and have a chance not only to build a new DIY skate park, but also to conduct more interviews and really flesh out the documentary. The finished *Breaking the Barrier* will go all the way back to those early Zoom calls between the cofounders, ending with this product of their tremendous efforts.

“The film will really start with the origins of OnWord, and then [go] to wherever we end up,” Johnson says. “Like I think that’s the beauty of it—we’re kinda just following our skaters and seeing where life takes them.” 

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The Black Phone

The Black Phone is based on a story by Joe Hill, Stephen King's son. It would be nice if the filial connection were not the most pertinent fact about the movie adaptation, but it is what it is. This is practically a King pastiche. There are ominous kids' balloons and a child in a yellow raincoat from *It*. There's a house imprisonment that recalls *Misery*. There are psychic powers, parental abuse, and an obsession with bullying from . . . well, every Stephen King novel. It's even set in the 70s. (There is the occasional lift from other sources, like the ambiguously helpful dead kids from *The Sixth Sense*.)

King usually has something slightly odd to say in even his worst novels. Alas, that's where Hill's mimicking of his inherited source material ends. The plot has a lot of whistles and bells—literally, in the case of the titular phone which lets you talk to ghosts. But at bottom it's just a basic empowerment fantasy. Our hero, Finney Shaw (Mason Thames), is sweet but not manly enough to defend himself like a man does. He needs to get kidnapped in order to cast off his nerdy wimpiness and embrace his inner adult tough guy.

Ethan Hawke as the designated stranger danger chews scenery in the accepted horror film maniac way. Madeleine McGraw gives her all to the spunky little sister part; she especially seems to relish the profanity. Director Scott Derrickson throws in some self-conscious stylistic twists from the horror movie jump scare grab bag. The effort is appreciated as far as it goes. But it doesn't matter how enthusiastically you dial if you end up with a bore on the other end of the line. —**NOAH BERLATSKY** *R*, 103 min. *Wide release in theaters*

RR *Lost Illusions*

Turns out "fake news" was a problem long before a former reality television star rose to political power. In a different kind of rise (but with just as much drama along the way), Lucien (Benjamin Voisin), an aspiring poet, gets tangled in a web of lies, sex, and greed that is the 19th-century Paris journalism industry. This is a world where critics can be paid to trash a good book, where audiences can be paid to applaud (or boo), and where money—not truth—conquers all. Lucien has real talent, but he sees a shortcut to success and takes it, especially after a wealthy, married lover whisks him away from his provincial life to the city, then abandons him when he fails to fit in with the who's who of Parisian

society. We're warned early on that this is a tragic, cautionary tale, and those familiar with Honoré de Balzac's original work will know that things won't end well for Lucien. But the journey is so much fun! Xavier Giannoli's film is hilarious and always moving with vivid colors and rapid-fire narration that in another movie might feel heavy-handed but here is a guiding force that gives a fascinating quasi-history lesson. At times, the movie can be overwhelming; there are several plotlines and it's tough to follow them all. But ultimately, it's a fun ride, and *Lost Illusions* delivers as a unique and still-relevant period piece. In French with English subtitles. —**NOËLLE D. LILLEY** *149 min. Gene Siskel Film Center*

RR *Minions: The Rise of Gru*

I've seen the phrase "aggressive adorability" used in relation to the Minions, the incoherent, yellow, denim-clad creatures who first appeared as Gru's henchmen in the 2010 computer-animated film *Despicable Me*. They emerged as not just the film's true stars but a cultural phenomenon, now semi-infamous for their representation in low-resolution memes shared by your aunt on Facebook and adorning every kind of merchandise available to purchase. I maintain that the Minions thrive in spite of such capitalistic opportunism, their guileless appeal enduring even into this sequel to their standalone 2015 film and the fifth film in the overall *Despicable Me* franchise. Where the first Minions presented the journey leading up to their union with aspiring super-villain Gru, this 70s-set follow-up chronicles the crew's first big adventure as preteen Gru (voiced again by Steve Carell) endeavors to join a cadre of his supervillain heroes (voiced by Taraji P. Henson, Jean-Claude Van Damme, and Danny Trejo, among others) in pursuit of a powerful ancient stone. Gru's favorite villain and now-exiled member of the aforementioned gang, Wild Knuckles (Alan Arkin), gets thrown into the mix, and so do a friendly biker (RZA) and a martial arts expert (Michelle Yeoh), who help the Minions save Gru after he's kidnapped. Pierre Coffin continues to display superior voice-acting skills as all the Minions, outperforming even the shiniest stars on the cast list. Is this in any way, shape, or form defensible as meaningful art? Certainly not. Is it really cute? Yup. Aggressively so? Sure, but in our current political hellscape, there are certainly worse things to be affronted by. It's also mercifully short. —**KATHLEEN SACHS** *PG*, 87 min. *Wide release in theaters*

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The 'new normal'



hangs over another summer of live music

As the pandemic grinds on, so do Chicago's many music festivals. The *Reader* collects 16 of the biggest and best—though as usual, there's little correlation between “biggest” and “best.”

By LEOR GALIL

It's music festival season again, and of course we're still in the middle of a pandemic. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 222.3 million U.S. residents are fully vaccinated against COVID-19—roughly 67 percent of the population. Vaccination is a great safeguard against serious illness or death, but it's less effective against infection by newer variants and can't control the spread of COVID all by itself—and there

are still extremely compelling reasons to want to avoid the virus, even if you're pretty sure it won't kill you.

For one thing, we're still learning about the disease's long shadow. According to new data collected in June and analyzed by the CDC's National Center for Health Statistics, nearly one in five of U.S. adults who's been infected with COVID-19 is still reporting chronic post-COVID symptoms, or what's called “long COVID.” Some of those symptoms are dis-

abling, and we don't know if they'll be permanent. Meanwhile, basic preventative measures have been abandoned all over the country. The CTA dropped its mask mandate in April, and in May the highly conservative official count of U.S. COVID deaths topped one million.

Even as officials urge us to be vigilant, they link COVID mitigations to hospitalization rates, not to case numbers. The Chicago Department of Health deemed local COVID risk “high” for 21 days across May and June, but because the virus is rampaging without making as many people extremely sick, mandates haven't returned. If you're still trying to avoid COVID, even a quick trip to the grocery store can feel like a surreal ordeal. It's as though the rest of society has just sidestepped into a different reality. To the pandemic cautious, everybody else looks like they're playing chicken blindfolded.

Last year Chicago's festival season resumed, albeit in late summer to give enough of the population time to get vaccinated. This year it's more or less returned to its normal schedule. I'm highlighting 16 local festivals in this preview roundup, and as far as I can tell only Evanston's Out of Space still requires attendees to show proof of vaccination or a negative COVID-19 test. Nine of these festivals don't make any reference to COVID-19 that I could find on their websites. Riot Fest and the Windy City Smokeout both plan to update ticket holders on COVID precautions closer to showtime, and the Pitchfork Music Festival's site includes a few basic COVID safety recommendations. Lollapalooza's curt COVID warning appears in the “Help Center” on its website: “By attending Lollapalooza, you voluntarily assume all risks related to exposure to COVID-19. Help keep each other healthy.” Leaving collective safety in the hands of 100,000 individuals is doomed to fail, of course—the whole problem with infectious disease, as Americans seem very slow to learn, is that other people's choices affect you and your choices affect other people.

“Music festivals historically have been events that have been associated with outbreaks of disease—not frequently, but predictably,” says Mark Dworkin, associate director of epidemiology at the University of Illinois Chicago's School of Public Health. “For example, you have crowding; you have often poor sanitation, relatively; you have people who are speaking loudly or singing or yelling; and you have large numbers of people. It's the opportunity for some people who are infectious to be present in significant enough numbers

to spread disease.” Dworkin says that shigellosis, the main symptom of which is diarrhea, sometimes causes outbreaks at festivals; in 1988, more than 3,000 people who attended the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival fell ill with the disease.

Omicron subvariant BA.2.12.1 is currently being replaced as the country's dominant strain by BA.4 and BA.5, and they're all much more contagious than the strains circulating last summer. “Even though there's this perception that COVID is over, we have more transmission now than we did during the Delta wave back in the fall,” says Katrine Wallace, epidemiologist at UIC's School of Public Health. Gathering outdoors still presents less risk than indoors, even with the new variants, but it's higher than it would've been under identical circumstances a year ago. “The issue is when you're all kind of crowded together by the front of the stage or something, when there's people everywhere breathing on you—that's where it's a little bit less safe,” Wallace says. The advice for what to do in crowded spaces remains the same: wear a mask. If that doesn't make you feel better, head for the edge of the crowd, where you can keep your distance.

Wallace and Dworkin also recommend getting booster shots. Until the pandemic ends, assuming it can end, large groups (including outdoor music festivals) won't be completely safe. “They're certainly not alone in terms of being opportunities for large numbers of people to congregate together and for respiratory disease to spread,” Dworkin says. “They are part of normal human behavior that has a positive and negative impact. Positive impact is we're entertained, it's good for our morale. The negative impact is that these kinds of settings promote spread of disease, especially respiratory disease. It's a trade-off.”

Personally, I don't care to risk infection to see Porno for Pyros from a quarter mile away on a corporate-sponsored stage in Grant Park. I'm also increasingly uncomfortable with the idea of for-profit music festivals taking over neighborhood parks—Douglass Park, for example, hosts three major festivals this summer, so that residents will lose access to that green space for about a month and a half in total. Of course, I realize not everybody looks at this the same way. Lots of people, after two years of pandemic life, feel more comfortable seeing music at outdoor festivals than anywhere else. But I still believe it's my duty to let you know the risks of attending a festival, whether those risks are to your health or to

your soul.

In any case, here are those 16 upcoming festivals. This roundup isn't comprehensive, obviously, and not every mention is a recommendation. I've skipped two major festivals at SeatGeek Stadium in Bridgeview (**NORTH COAST** and **SACRED ROSE**), several notable street fests (**PASSPORT VIBES**, **WICKER PARK FEST**, and **SQUARE ROOTS**, though the last is covered in our concert previews this week), and some big DCASE events whose lineups have yet to be finalized (the **JAZZ FESTIVAL**, the **WORLD MUSIC FESTIVAL**). Nonetheless I hope I can provide some insight into the landscape of Chicago's sprawling festival season. Get tested before you go, and stay home if you test positive.

Mas Flow

CALUMET PARK BEACH, FRI 7/15-SUN 7/17

This new reggaeton fest is the work of local promoters Grass Root Events, who also put on June's Michelada Fest and August's My House Music Fest. Mas Flow's three headliners, **ZION & LENNOX**, **DON OMAR**, and **TEGO CALDERÓN**, each have two decades of experience under their belts; Omar got his start in the mid-90s (though he took a two-year retirement in the late 2010s), and Calderón dropped his hit debut, *El Abayarde*, 20 years ago this November. They're all from Puerto Rico, as are most of the festival's 12 other prominently billed artists—after all, Puerto Rico birthed the form of reggaeton that would go on to storm the international pop charts. Queens duo **NINA SKY** (of the 2004 hit “Move Ya Body”) and Miami boy band **CNCO** are among the exceptions, alongside a few of the 25 acts on the festival's undercard acts—including local DJ **KARENNOID** of Milwaukee-based collective Agua de Rosas and Bronx DJ duo **DOS FLAKOS**.

Pitchfork Music Festival

UNION PARK, FRI 7/15-SUN 7/17

It feels like just yesterday that **PARQUET COURTS** played Pitchfork—probably because this is the fourth time the New York indie rockers have appeared at the fest. Pitchfork stakes its reputation on challenging or even shifting the pop zeitgeist, and though in its 16th year it has several repeaters on its 42-act bill (including headliners **MITSKI** and the **NATION-AL**), it has also booked plenty of first-timers who could open the ears of even longtime attendees. They include pop alchemist **L'RAIN**,

hardcore platoon the **ARMED**, avant-pop auteur **YEULE**, Latin-fusion virtuoso **XENIA RUBINOS**, and jazzy posthardcore adventurers **KARATE**—I'm particularly thrilled about that last one, but I should mention that the Numero Group hired me to write promo copy when it reissued the band's catalog. Unfortunately, this year's lineup has only four Chicagoans on it—far fewer than average—and two of them, **JEFF PARKER** and **NONAME**, are now based in Los Angeles.

Heatwave Music Festival

DOUGLASS PARK, SAT 7/16-SUN 7/17

Heatwave debuts as the third major for-profit festival to occupy Douglass Park, which has become a battleground in the war over such temporary privatization. Heatwave is a dance-focused affair, marketed to an older crowd who like their electronic music sleek and arena size (and who might feel like they've outgrown Spring Awakening, which has postponed its tenth-anniversary blowout till 2023). Highlights include Dutch dance-pop duo **YELLOW CLAW**, Canadian EDM crossover artist **EKALI**, Dutch trance veteran **TIËSTO**, Canadian remix masters **ZEDS DEAD**, and artsy Los Angeles stylist **RL GRIME** of the WeDidIt label and collective. Heatwave suffers from a dearth of Chicago acts—I'm sure of only two—which feels like a grievous oversight for a festival based in a city with such a storied place in the history of dance music.

Silver Room Block Party

OAKWOOD BEACH, SAT 7/16-SUN 7/17

In 2002, Silver Room owner Eric Williams threw his first block party in an alley next to his shop's old Wicker Park location, running extension cords out of his apartment to power Ron Trent's DJ set. Williams had no permits and didn't advertise the party, but it brought in a few hundred people by word of mouth. The Silver Room Block Party grew to attract thousands each year before Williams moved his shop to Hyde Park in 2015, at which point the free one-day festival exploded in size—in 2018 it attracted 40,000 people to 53rd Street. After a two-year pandemic hiatus, the Silver Room Block Party has returned as a traditional ticketed festival, spanning two days at Oakwood Beach. Organizers used to wait till the last minute to announce the lineup, but with tickets to sell this time, they announced more than 50 acts in June. As usual, the bookings highlight Black Chicagoans from across gener-

ations and genres, among them reunited 1990s Chicago hip-hop duo **ABSTRACT MINDSTATE**, cosmic jazz unit **ISAIAH COLLIER & THE CHOSEN FEW**, longtime Chicago house producer **KALEXI SHELBY**, and elegant R&B artist **LOONA DAE**. Some of the city's best DJs will spin too—you can see **DUANE POWELL**, **BONITA APPLEBLUNT**, **JESSE DE LA PEÑA**, and **DJ CA\$H ERA** all in one weekend. And of course it wouldn't be a Silver Room Block Party without a set by deep-house maestro **RON TRENT**.



Fiesta del Sol

CERMAK BETWEEN MORGAN AND ASHLAND, THU 7/28-SUN 7/31

Fiesta del Sol celebrates its 50th anniversary this year. Its organizers call it “the largest Latino festival of its kind,” and it's also the largest Chicago festival this weekend—Fiesta del Sol claims a million attendees over four days, more than twice as many as Lollapalooza. It helps that Fiesta del Sol is free to enter, and even its four-day Mega Pass—which covers as many carnival rides as you can stand—costs just \$65, less than a single day at some music festivals. The music is all free, and all the acts that have been announced in advance are house music. The lineup for the 16th annual House of Sol reflects the breadth of this homegrown genre, with sets from Teklife co-founder **DJ SPINN**, Beat Thesis label owner **T. MIXWELL**, “Minister of Sound” **RON CARROLL**, 5 magazine publisher **CZBOOGIE**, and long-grinding veteran **GENE HUNT**.

Lollapalooza

GRANT PARK, THU 7/28-SUN 7/31

According to CNN, the top ten Live Nation stockholders as of July 1 include Goldman Sachs Asset Management LP, BlackRock Fund Advisors, and the Vanguard Group. Live Nation, parent company of Lollapalooza promoter C3 Presents, is obligated to consider the interests of these finance-sector giants above those of the musicians and stagehands who work its shows; live-music audiences, who have fewer and fewer opportunities to see concerts that Live Nation doesn't control, seem to factor into the company's plans mainly as a source of revenue. Most music festivals are trying to make money, of course, but the *Tribune* has explicitly celebrated Lollapalooza for its extraordinary ability to pry open young peoples' wallets. The people who profit from Lolla shape the festival as surely as the performers—this year's lineup, nearly 200 acts strong, includes Goldman Sachs CEO **DAVID SOLOMON**, who DJs on Friday. These big-money players are part of why C3 and Live Nation can so brazenly bend municipal rules and regulations to maximize returns. A November *Tribune* investigation discovered that Lollapalooza warned city officials that it wouldn't inspect vaccine cards closely, and the festival also got permission to loosen its COVID testing standard to within 72 hours—a protocol the city had only applied to smaller events. Contract tracers were ultimately able to link Lollapalooza to fewer than 400 cases, but even assuming that isn't a huge undercount, it still says a lot that a festival with Lolla's resources would work so hard to do as little as possible to protect public health. The lineup just isn't good enough to persuade me to overlook all this stuff, but if you must go, carve out time for pop star **CHARLI XCX**, crossover hardcore favorites **TURNSTILE**, and Chicago drill icon **LIL DURK**, who's one of fewer than ten locals appearing.

Windy City Smokeout

UNITED CENTER, THU 8/4-SUN 8/7

The Windy City Smokeout bills itself as a celebration of country and barbecue. I'll admit, I haven't been, but if the food is as good as the lineup, the fest deserves a Michelin star. All four headliners are such high-powered stars that they can even impress a country greenhorn like me: **WILLIE NELSON & FAMILY** on Thursday, **TIM MCGRAW** on Friday, **SAM HUNT** on Saturday, and **MIRANDA LAMBERT** on Sunday. The undercard includes some great music too—on Friday, Alabama native **TIERA**

MUSIC

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KENNEDY plays at 4:10 PM, with a vivacious voice and an ear for pop- and R&B-flavored crossover hooks that ought to earn her a headlining spot down the road.

Northalsted Market Days

HALSTED BETWEEN BELMONT AND ADDISON, THU 8/4-SUN 8/7

This weekend-long celebration in Chicago's landmark LGBTQ+ enclave turns 40 this year, and its musical lineup zigzags from urbane to campy with a priority on joy. Want something indie? Psych-dappled rockers **FLEECE** play on Saturday evening. How about a *Drag Race* alum who juggles cheeky pop and country? **GINGER MINJ** performs Sunday afternoon. Looking for sprightly, jazz-inflected coffee-house singer-songwriter material? **SAMMY RAE & THE FRIENDS** close out Saturday. And brassy-voiced Sunday headliner **ANASTACIA** has a bounty of buoyant club hits. Perennial street-fest cover band **SIXTEEN CANDLES** also appear Sunday evening, for everybody who needs a dose of the 80s.

Out of Space

CANAL SHORES GOLF COURSE, THU 8/4-SUN 8/7
TEMPERANCE BEER CO., THU 9/1-SUN 9/4

Launched by Evanston's SPACE in 2018, the Out of Space fest sticks to that concert venue's aesthetic but goes big and moves outdoors. Canal Shores Golf Course hosts the first four nights, which skew rootsy with alt-rockers **JENNY LEWIS** (coheadlining with **TRAMPLED BY TURTLES**), veteran punk singer-songwriter **ELVIS COSTELLO**, country royalty **LUCINDA WILLIAMS** (coheadlining with indie-rock darling **WAXAHATCHEE**), and blues legend **BUDDY GUY**. Out of Space takes over the lot outside Temperance Beer Co. in September with bluesy alternative band **HOUNDMOUTH** (and Chicago rapper **RIC WILSON**), indie rockers **CAR SEAT HEADREST**, alt-country champion **NEKO CASE**, and venerable British reggae act **STEEL PULSE** (coheadlining with New York rapper **KRS-ONE**, one of the foundational consciences of hip-hop).

My House Music Festival

HARRISON PARK, SAT 8/13-SUN 8/14

The lean lineup of this moderately priced two-day house festival—general admission tickets cost \$30 per day, \$50 for both—is all muscle.

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DJ SNEAK, a key player in Chicago house's popular second wave, headlines Saturday; pioneering house artist **FARLEY "JACKMASTER" FUNK** closes out Sunday. You can also catch sets from second-wave veteran **DJ HEATHER**, juke powerhouse **GANT-MAN**, Hot Mix 5 co-founder **RALPHI ROSARIO**, and Chosen Few member **TERRY HUNTER**.

Thirsty Ears Festival

WILSON BETWEEN HERMITAGE AND RAVENSWOOD, SAT 8/13-SUN 8/14

Classical music might seem like the least likely programming for a street festival, but Thirsty Ears (presented by Access Contemporary Music) bucks that expectation with two days of classical ensembles performing centuries-old compositions and brand-new works. The seventh Thirsty Ears features nearly 20 soloists and ensembles—performers on the the main Wilson Avenue stage include violist **ROSE WOLLMAN**, cello-and-piano pairing the **WURTZ-BERGER DUO**, and **5TH WAVE COLLECTIVE**, a fluid ensemble dedicated to music by women and gender-nonconforming composers. Sunday closes with a preview of ACM's video series "**SONGS ABOUT BUILDINGS AND MOODS**," for which composers write music inspired by an architectural site where it will be performed.

Ruido Fest

UNION PARK, FRI 8/19-SUN 8/21

Ruido Fest prides itself on showcasing the depth and breadth of Latine alternative music, and this year's lineup stays the course: the big names include bedroom-pop phenom **CUCO**, rock en español pioneers **MALDITA VECINDAD**, indie-pop sensation and three-time Latin Grammy winner **CARLA MORRISON**, and 1990s hip-hop hitmakers **CYPRESS**

HILL. The Ruido undercard relies heavily on young artists, among them downtempo producer and vocalist **PAHUA** (Mexico City), surf rockers **BEACH GOONS** (San Diego), and "sad sierrero" trio **LOS APTOS** (Fort Wayne, Indiana). It also features some great local musicians—I'd recommend showing up early Sunday to catch modern-funk artist **GEORGE ARTHUR CALENDAR** and rapper **A.M. EARLY MORNING**.

Beatdown House Litnic

DOLTON PARK, SAT 8/20

At the time of publication, Chicago dance producer **DJ CLENT** had yet to finalize the schedule for the annual daylong picnic celebrating his Beatdown House label, now in its 25th year. Clent has a long, deep history in ghetto house, juke, and footwork, and whoever he books will know how to get dancers on their feet. His reputation in the scene will no doubt help him sign on fellow veteran DJs who've helped sculpt these aggressive house subgenres.

Riot Fest

DOUGLASS PARK, FRI 9/16-SUN 9/18

It's not unusual for a music festival to book the same act more than once, but none caters to nostalgia as thoroughly as Riot Fest—its lineups, packed with punk and alt-rock relics, often seem to be encouraging nostalgia for previous Riot Fest lineups. And that goes for more than the annual appearances by intergalactic scumdogs **GWAR**: Riot Fest brought the **ORIGINAL MISFITS** back from the dead in 2016, and this year Glenn Danzig, Doyle Wolfgang von Frankenstein, and Jerry Only return to perform the entirety of the Misfits' 1982 debut album, *Walk Among Us*. Sooner or later we'll run out of classic bands that could possibly reunite, but so far Riot Fest has consistently found new ones, or at the very least artists who haven't played the festival before—this year they include goth icons **BAUHAUS**, emo Halley's Comet **SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE**, and 2000s alt-rock titans the **YEAH YEAH YEAHS**. Riot Fest has a reputation as a haven for aging punks, but at least a few acts have a younger draw, most notably peoples' champ **JEFF ROSENSTOCK**.

ARC Music Festival

UNION PARK, FRI 9/2-SUN 9/4

The second ARC Music Festival has a doozy of a lineup, on par with the city's other great dance-oriented fests—and what they have in common is they draw on Chicago's deep well of talent. Among the great local artists on the

bill are second-wave house veteran **DJ LADY D**, Mushroom Jazz creator **MARK FARINA**, underground techno star **DJ HYPERACTIVE**, Chicago house pioneer **CHIP E.**, and scene pillar **DERRICK CARTER**. Though **HONEY DIJON**, who performs on Saturday, left Chicago for New York in the 1990s, she's still part of our rich house legacy—and she's rumored to have produced a couple songs on the new Beyoncé album. With more than 50 artists on its three-day lineup—including minimal-techno power player **RICARDO VILLALOBOS**, British dance veteran **CARL COX**, and big-beat crossover hero **FATBOY SLIM**—ARC can satisfy longtime heads as well as draw in the curious.

Hyde Park Jazz Festival

MIDWAY PLAISANCE AND MULTIPLE OTHER HYDE PARK VENUES, SAT 9/24-SUN 9/25

This free festival, just shy of two decades old, is already an institution, celebrating jazz as part of the dazzling continuum of Black music and culture on the south side. Its adventurous bookings frequently demonstrate jazz's porous borders; this year they include blues veteran **BILLY BRANCH** and DJ **SADIE WOODS**. When it comes to giving fans a feel for the shape and variety of jazz, the Hyde Park Jazz Festival is hard to beat, with a lineup featuring Trinidad-born trumpeter **ETIENNE CHARLES** and his group **CREOLE SOUL**, the **CHICAGO SOUL JAZZ COLLECTIVE** with singer **DEE ALEXANDER**, saxophonist **ERNEST DAWKINS** performing with his quartet, drummer **MIKE REED** with woodwind player **HUNTER DIAMOND**, and a version of the trio **HEAR IN NOW**—cellist Tomeka Reid, violinist Mazz Swift, and bassist Silvia Bolognesi—augmented by Ethiopian quintet **QWANQWA**. 📍

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CHICAGOANS OF NOTE

Sam Thousand, Chicago soul Renaissance man

“I understand that there is a higher calling in my life, to do what I do, and only I can do it the way I do it.”

As told to LEOR GALIL

Multi-instrumentalist, producer, and vocalist Sam Thousand moved to Chicago from Texas in 2009, and within a year he'd joined hip-hop fusion outfit Sidewalk Chalk. He's since become deeply embedded in several overlapping arts communities, gaining increased visibility under his previous stage name, Sam Trump—I first saw him perform solo in 2018, during a cross-genre Steppenwolf show presented by Growing Concerns Poetry Collective. He does work as a hired gun for musicians who want a soulful trumpet player on their recordings, and in 2016 his experience booking shows around town helped him cofound ChiBrations, a live performance series and advocacy group that elevates local soul musicians. Thousand also wrote the score for Unapologetic, a 2020 Kartemquin documentary about Black millen-

nial abolitionists directed by Ashley O'Shay and coproduced by TRiBE cofounder Morgan Elise Johnson.

Through the pandemic, I transitioned to fully performing solo. I started this online show called *The Midnight Hour*. I was making live beats with my looping station and my synthesizer and playing the ukulele and playing trumpet and singing. I was performing original songs; there's some covers. It was a great way to interact with the audience and engage with my fans—we needed each other.

Now that the city's back open, I want to say June is probably the apex of my business. Leading up to this moment I was doing more performances, but a lot of them remain small.

I was like, “Hey, I can just come and perform solo.” I have a lot of different iterations of my performing, so it just works out to be able to have so much variety while I'm stimulating the same market within Chicago.

I have a duo with this gentleman named Justin Dillard, who plays the Hammond keyboard. We have a standing residency at Pilsen Yards, which is every last Thursday. I also have a trio—we started at Soho House; we were playing there once a month.

I also have two sextets. One is an acoustic group, Acoustic Audile. Another one is a more dance, funk, soul, and R&B group—it's called the Soul Vortex, and we've been doing a whole lot lately. Prior to the pandemic we recorded a live album—I recently was pushing it a lot. We did a listening party for that album, because

I've been holding onto it during the pandemic. Once things started opening up, we finished it up, did all the editing and mixing. I actually reached back to everyone who was at the show and invited them back to the Promontory—where we recorded it—to hear it in the space. We mixed the whole album and did a reception and played the album for them.

I do all my own booking; I do all my managing. I'm getting busy, especially in this last month. I'd been a booking manager for a couple different venues throughout Chicago. For about four and a half to five years now, I've been a booking manager for Untitled Supper Club, which is a speakeasy restaurant—it's in River North. I was playing there—they offered me a residency back in the day, when I was performing. Then there was an opportunity to do some curating, and I was moving toward that space anyway, of just wanting to do more with my platform.

I'm a founder of an organization called ChiBrations, which is shedding light and bringing more awareness to soul music in Chicago. We've got a Jazz Fest, we've got a Blues Fest, but prior to us starting ChiBrations there was no Soul Fest. Now there's the Chi-Soul Fest at Navy Pier, and that kind of happened around the same time. Two years before the pandemic, ChiBrations partnered with the Chi-Soul Fest, and they let us have a block of time in the festival—to actually curate a whole three- to four-hour block of time.

What ChiBrations was originally, it was bringing in an artist and their band to come into our studio—wherever we had a space. We partnered with the Den Theatre, so they just gave us a room to work out of. We would build it out, and then we would record two songs with them. Every month we would highlight an artist that we recorded; we would put out a video for one week, then wait two weeks and put out another. For that whole month it would be highlighting an artist, promoting these shows they've got. This is another way to give back, so I'm always trying to find ways to connect but also use my platform to really lift up others.

Throughout the three years that we did

things before the pandemic, we would highlight about eight to ten artists at the end of each year. We would do an anniversary show—which happened usually in November, October—where we would bring all of those artists, and we would put them all onstage for one night. I'd be the one coordinating all these things and curating all the artists and all that. We're looking to do more with ChiBrations, because ChiBrations needs to expand beyond soul music.

There's so much of the underground scene that really gets no love, and a lot of them are people of color. If you look at the festivals—I even tried to get my band at some festivals on the north side. There's maybe a couple Latin bands, but I personally feel like it should be representing more of what Chicago is and its diversity, and even its political stance.

I started playing trumpet when I was seven. I was in a magnet school, kind of like a fine arts elementary. My brother started playing the trombone when he was in third grade—he was a year older. Once you get to third grade, you're able to actually get into an elective program, and so I was inspired by him to get into music. I wanted to play drums, but drums were inundated by the time I was making my choice, so I had to choose another instrument, and the trumpet resonated. It was a wonderful program, very competitive, and kept me busy—kept me out of a lot of trouble. And it kept me challenged.

I like community; I'm an extrovert. [That school music program] allowed me to be around a lot of people, and taught me how to be a team player, taught me about individuality as well, and responsibility—because you've gotta learn your part, but for a bigger picture, right? I think that upbringing really prepared me for a lot of things I do now. I understand, as an individual, I need to make an impact, but there's also the broader picture to look at, and how I operate within the scene in Chicago. How I operate as a Black male in America. How I operate as a teacher and a mentor. How I operate as a trumpet player, even, or singer.

I got offered a scholarship to come out here and play in the big band at Columbia College. I did an audition through YouTube, and they accepted me. I came out to Columbia College, was a full-time student, playing trumpet. Although I was a singer and a songwriter, I wasn't really pushing that in school, I was really just trying to do my job during the day. By night, if I wasn't working my night job, I was out on the scene, hitting open mikes, just

really getting my name out.

I first made my name as an artist at an open mike—specifically a poetry open mike. The scene is super vibrant—it was back then as well—and I just really started to meld into what was going on in the scene, joining bands. I joined a band called Sidewalk Chalk. We toured for five years in the past, independently. I joined that band literally three months after I came to Chicago.

I got here in 2009. In 2013 is when I decided to go full-time, and when Sidewalk Chalk decided to actually start touring *for real* for real. Once we got off that first tour—after we all quit our jobs, we got that first tour—I was like, "I gotta find a way to make money." That's when I started hitting the scene as an artist, fully. I started really becoming more of a staple on the scene in Chicago, to where even people who were new fans at the time, they just assumed that I was from Chicago.

It wasn't until 2017, 2018 where I would start getting some real, real love and affirmation—confirmation—from people that I respect so much that are from the city. They're like, "Hey man, you're Chicago." So to hear it from the right people—the people that I love and respect so much—I really felt the love, and felt like this was home. And then what really cemented it for me was getting the 3Arts Award in 2019, and that really made me truly feel that I was accepted here.

It was so fulfilling to get that call. My last ChiBrations shoot for the 2019 season—I was shooting this artist named Wyatt Waddell, who's super dope. We had just wrapped up his session, and I got the call from [executive director] Esther [Grisham Grimm] at 3Arts, and she was like, "Hey, just wanted to reach out, are you sitting down?" I was like, "No, should I?"

She broke the news that I won. She was saying how her and the judges, they were really impressed with the things I was doing, especially for the community. I was like, "It's so cool that I get this call while I'm doing this ChiBrations shoot." ChiBrations, we weren't getting paid for that—that was just a passion project—so it felt really good to get that confirmation. That's how they describe the 3Arts Awards: they're thank-you awards.

Unapologetic was another affirmation for me; getting into film is like a whole 'nother realm of music. And for them to reach out and say, "Hey, we want you to do the score," I felt so honored. For such an amazing and powerful story line, with some amazing characters—I knew [activist, rapper, and writer] Bella

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[Bahhs] really well, because we had actually been doing music together prior to them reaching out.

There was always a demand, there was always something coming up, I was always planning on something. It's in my blood, man. My whole family on my father's side, they're workhorses; they're always doing something, they're always doing multiple things at once, so it's really never a dull moment. Up until the pandemic, I'd been in Chicago for ten years and hadn't owned a TV, just because I had no interest in sitting down and not doing much with my time. I could be practicing, I could be finishing up some idea, I could be putting a proposal together. There are so many things to be doing.

I just always wanted to keep hitting people with stuff. When I would do a show, there'd be so much great feedback. People always be posting on Instagram, and I just be like, "Man,

all right, well, come to the next one." My social media—like, my Instagram and Facebook—all of that, like, tens of thousands of followers, and all of that is organic. It just comes from years of being consistent.

I think it's also an act of service too. I understand that there is a higher calling in my life, to do what I do, and only I can do it the way I do it. I think that's what many artists—all artists, really, we have these very specific talents and skills and experiences that really make us who we are as creatives. And as long as we're walking in it fully, we're gonna be super impactful in a way that no one else can do it. And I feel like I just discovered that, because I was looking for it. When you're in that space, there's this purpose and drive, and there's definitely a reason to get out of bed and operate with integrity. 

 @imLeor

PICK OF THE WEEK

DakhaBrakha create eclectic folk music for an antifascist Ukraine



ANDY PETRYNA

DAKHA BRAKHA, CHICAGO IMMIGRANT ORCHESTRA
 Mon 7/18, 6:30 PM, Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph. **ALL FREE**

IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO LISTEN to DakhaBrakha right now outside a political context; they're a Ukrainian folk band based in Kyiv. After Russia launched its full-scale war on their country in February, the band published an impassioned anti-Putin post on their website. But long before that explicit statement of solidarity, the four-piece group were using their music to offer a vision of an antifascist, cosmopolitan, vibrant, and independent Ukraine. "DakhaBrakha" is a blend of the old Ukrainian words for "give" and "take," and the band treat traditional music like a smorgasbord, not a straitjacket. Their stage outfits and towering fuzzy hats are influenced by Ukrainian folk costume and the band's roots in avant-garde theater, and members Marko Halanevych, Olena Tsybulska, Iryna Kovalenko, and Nina Garenetska play a bewildering array of instruments originating from India, Russia, Australia, the Middle East, and Africa. Likewise, DakhaBrakha's compositions soar and twirl with nods to genres from around the globe while remaining rooted in their homeland. The stunning "Dostochka," from the self-released 2020 album *Alambari*, weaves blues and gospel into Ukrainian themes and rhythms, creating a slow, haunting lament that slides between English and Ukrainian lyrics, with piercing solo keening by male and female singers and sweetly urgent vocal harmonies, jazzy piano, and drone instruments. "Lado," from the same album, is an up-tempo barn burner that sounds like bluegrass that's taken a ton of amphetamines and stolen a motorbike. DakhaBrakha's approach is open, passionate, and joyous—listening to them, you feel like you know what their country is fighting for. —**NOAH BERLATSKY**

CONCERT PREVIEW

FRIDAY 8

SQUARE ROOTS This is day one of the festival; see also Sat 7/9 and Sun 7/10. **Bob Mould** headlines; *Deep Sea Diver*, *Ésso*, and *the Reminders* open. 5-10 PM, Lincoln between Montrose and Wilson, suggested donation \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids and seniors, \$20 for families. **ALL**

If you're as allergic to crowds as I am, Chicago's many neighborhood music festivals can be a mixed bag. But one event I unequivocally associate with a certain kind of chill is the Square Roots festival in Lincoln Square. And that low-stress atmosphere seems likely to be by design. Launched in 1998, the weekend-long festival, which benefits the Lincoln Square Ravenswood Chamber of Commerce and the Old Town School of Folk Music, features a mix of local restaurants and business vendors, more than half a dozen (and counting) local breweries, and four stages of live music whose bookings are organized—albeit loosely—around roots and traditional music from around the world. As of this writing, the full schedule wasn't yet available, but whatever additional acts are announced before the festival weekend will be a bonus given the already strong bill. The fun starts Friday evening with a bill headlined by DIY legend Bob Mould that also features Seattle pop-rockers Deep Sea Diver and high-energy local multicultural funk collective Ésso. Saturday's lineup kicks off with unhurried electronic-inflected hip-hop and pop from Chicago act Ness Heads (Vanessa Ortiz) and sun-kissed psychedelic folk from Milwaukee-based Sleepy Gaucho (Andy Goitia), then weaves between styles all day en route to a rousing evening with California dance-rock cult favorites !!!, local indie-pop mainstays Dehd, and prolific Ohio indie-rock greats Guided by Voices. All three groups released a new album this spring, with the exception of GBV—they've released two, so far. Later that same night, the Old Town School hosts an indoor set from reggae and dancehall great King Yellowman with vocalist K'reema (Yellowman's daughter) and the Sagittarius Band. Sunday's bill is equally diverse, with a notable preponderance of country and Americana thanks to East Nashville singer-songwriter Lily Hiatt, Texas country-folk singer Hayes Carll, and Chicago honky-tonk crew the Lawrence Peters Outfit—plus other local acts such as moody indie rockers Bnny and soulful stalwarts the O'Mys. Come for a couple hours or for the whole weekend, and you're bound to leave a little more refreshed than when you walked in. —**JAMIE LUDWIG**

SATURDAY 9

MISTER GOBLIN, BLACK SEINFELD *Mister Goblin* headlines; *Black Seinfeld* and *Flowurz* open. 9 PM, Sleeping Village, 3734 W. Belmont, \$14, \$12 in advance. 21+

After D.C.-area rock group Two Inch Astronaut went on hiatus in 2018, Sam Goblin decamped for the midwest and began making music as **Mister**

Goblin. He's settled in Indiana, but to assemble his backing band he's drawn from the deep pool of talent in Chicago: the three-piece lineup on the April album *Bunny* (Exploding in Sound) includes drummer Seth Engel of power-pop project Options (among several other bands) and bassist Aaron O'Neill of post-grunge trio Cumbie. Mister Goblin's previous "full band" sound felt loose and light, but Engel and O'Neill help beef it up—you can hear their influence right from the first song, "Military Discount," which launches Goblin's hoarse shout with a burst of whiplash-inducing thrashing. Engel and O'Neill also underline the sweetness in Goblin's heart-on-sleeve singing by casting it in sharp relief, and he helps their mid-song freakout in "Over the Moon" go down easy with his honeyed vocal hook. Opens **Black Seinfeld** are a new hip-hop duo made up of two local MCs who've been active solo: rapper-producer Malci and rapper Fluidi-G. On their March debut, *Season 1* (Why? Records), both deliver performances that add polish to Malci's riotous production—Fluidi-G's half-sung verses in particular make the noisy turns feel peaceful. —LEOR GALIL

SQUARE ROOTS *This is day two of the festival; see Fri 7/8. Guided by Voices headline; Dehd, !!! (Chk Chk Chk), Aeon Station, the Cactus Blossoms, Family of Geniuses, Tobacco City, Gerald McClendon, Sleepy Gaucho, and Ness Heads open. Noon-10 PM, Lincoln between Montrose and Wilson, suggested donation \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids and seniors, \$20 for families.* 🎫

SUNDAY10

SQUARE ROOTS *This is day three of the festival; see Fri 7/8. Hayes Carll headlines; the O'My's, Lilly Hiatt, Wild Pink, Bnny, the Altons,*

the Lawrence Peters Outfit, Quique Escamilla, Minor Moon, and Uncovered: John Prine open. Noon-9 PM, Lincoln between Montrose and Wilson, suggested donation \$10 for adults, \$5 for kids and seniors, \$20 for families. 🎫

FRIDAY15

HULDER *Devil Master, Skeleton, and Lurid open. 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 235 N. Ashland, \$25. 17+*

Named for a type of eerie forest spirit from Scandinavian folklore, Hulder is the project of multi-instrumentalist Marz Riesterer (aka Marliese Beeuwsaert, formerly of Bleeder, where she was known as "the Inquisitor"). Born in Belgium and based in the Pacific Northwest, this one-woman force of nature commanded attention for last year's full-length debut, *Godslastering: Hymns of a Forlorn Peasantry* (Iron Bonehead), and rightly so: polished and gnarly at once, its classic sound is dense and elegant. While Hulder skews toward black metal, she eschews some of the exaggeration typical of the style in favor of an emotional base that fans of traditional metal can also recognize (right down to her retro logo). It's accessible in the best sense of the word.

Riesterer's new record, *The Eternal Fanfare* (20 Buck Spin, out July 1 on digital and CD, then July 29 on vinyl), is well-paced, melancholy black metal that packs a lot of complexity into a compact package (the run time is less than half an hour). The funereal, ethereal opening track, "Curse From Beyond," is a siren's lure into the onslaught that's to follow. Marz often trades off vocal styles; she can flip from pure and ghostly to growling and declamatory—and she does on "Burden of Flesh and Bone," a riff monster with a majestic classic-horror keyboard interlude and plangent, wailing guitar solo by Phil Tougas of the Stygian Oath collective.

"*Sylvan Awakening*" leans hard into Hulder's melodic sensibilities, which come from her interest in folk balladry—you can almost see the ale skins swinging in unison as Riesterer sings along with herself. Album closer "A Perilous Journey" has a somber groove to it, a ritualistic chant implied in its filigree riffs. After a couple solo appearances in 2021, earlier this year Hulder ventured out on a short tour with a full band for the first time, hitting the east and west coasts. The realities of the pandemic might pose more obstacles than usual to the challenge of transitioning from a studio project to a live band, but the videos I've seen on YouTube prove that Riesterer has managed it admirably. This Cobra Lounge show is Hulder's Chicago debut. —MONICA KENDRICK

LYNN *The Armed headline. 11 PM, Schubas, 3159 N. Southport, sold out. 18+*

Conor Mackey plays guitar in postrock group Monobody, which is how you know he has unpredictable energy—any musician tasked with creating rogue jazz flourishes and postmetal freakouts while Nnamdi Ogbonnaya plays his high-wire drums is definitely operating on another level. Mackey studied music theory and composition at St. Olaf College in Minnesota, and since graduating in 2013 he's had a hand in several styles of music, including contemporary classical—in 2018, the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra named him one of three finalists in its first annual composer-in-residence competition. Even with all that in mind, though, I wasn't prepared for the electronic music Mackey makes as Lynn. He debuted his IDM-inspired persona last fall, when he produced all of the Nnamdi EP *Are You Happy*—an auspicious beginning, considering that up till then Ogbonnaya had made his outre art-pop entirely solo. Lynn's new debut album, *Lexicon* (Sooper), slaloms through stylistic switcheroos, exuding a crazed restlessness without

dissolving into entropy. On "Amund Vise," Mackey sprinkles distant-sounding vocal samples atop a battery of busy percussion that adds texture and sparkle to a placid synth melody. By constantly toying with all those elements throughout the track, he builds a landscape that seems to stretch to infinity. —LEOR GALIL

MONDAY18

DAKHABRAKHA *See Pick of the Week at left. The Chicago Immigrant Orchestra opens. 6:30 PM, Millennium Park, 201 E. Randolph.* 🎫 FREE

TUESDAY19

SIMON JOYNER *Jessica Risker opens. 9:30 PM, Hideout, 1354 W. Wabansia, \$12. 21+*

If things look bleak to you, Omaha-based singer-songwriter Simon Joyner won't contradict you, but he might complicate your understanding of the darkness. The narrator of "Caroline's Got a Secret," the first cut on his new LP, *Songs From a Stolen Guitar* (Grapefruit), seems blind to the fact that the confidence he's breaking involves Caroline's suicidal depression. He recounts her plans and justifications without comment, leaving it to the listener to register the tragedy that Caroline is too anhedonic to appreciate the beauties and potentialities of the life she wants to leave.

The album's closing epic, "In the Morning Light," relates a series of past mistakes and extinction-size impending calamities linked by a common thread of bad human judgment, but it also allows that renewal is just a sunrise away. Joyner, who's been making records for 30 years, tells his tales with enviable craftsmanship, and there's a crack in his well-



Marz Riesterer of Hulder © LIANA RAKIJIAN



Lynn, aka Conor Mackey of Monobody © DENNIS ELLIOTT



Simon Joyner © COURTESY THE ARTIST

continued from 47

worn voice that makes you feel for all his characters—even the ones you wouldn't leave untended around your stuff. This month Joyner returns to Chicago with his latest group, the Echoes, which includes bassist and violist Meghan Siebe, guitarist and bassist Sean Pratt, and drummer and keyboardist Mychal Marasco. Their multi-instrumental capacities should do ample justice to the sparse, mostly acoustic arrangements that Joyner has favored on his past couple records. Local singer Jessica Risker opens. —BILL MEYER

ALBUM REVIEWS

FAMOUS LAUGHS, TOTAL ICON

Lake Paradise
famouslaughs.bandcamp.com/album/total-icon

For more than a decade, Chicago multi-instrumentalist and engineer Jake Acosta has been a key player in a loose federation of subversive musicians. He's done a lot of crucial work running record labels too: beginning in 2011, he's released a heap of cassettes via Teen River, and then in 2012 he launched Lake Paradise, which has focused on vinyl. Acosta's labels have ushered music into the world by some of my favorite Chicago indie artists of the past decade, among them rambunctious psych-pop unit Mines, gentle singer-songwriter Julie Byrne, and mellow rocker J Fernandez. Until this month, the most recent Lake Paradise release was a 2018 EP from ambitious local rock group Fran, but Acosta has ended his label's dry spell with a trippy album from his group Famous Laughs. On the new *Total Icon*, Acosta wraps up plinking synths and spry percussion in his cracking, weathered guitars. His engrossing six-string landscapes submerge you gradually, as though you're acclimating your body to a pool by walking toward the deep end inch by inch. Acosta makes wild melodic twists and turns,

but he does it gingerly enough that you can luxuriate in them—and the carefulness of his playing doesn't let his energy leak away. On "Blues of a Kind," his dry baritone singing plays off lighter guest vocals from Fran's Maria Jacobson, anchoring the song as shaggy guitars burn through feral fits of anger and circle around an evanescent calm—the song's sudden moves will keep you hooked, and they might even surprise you into a laugh. —LEOR GALIL

LONG ODDS, FINE THREAD

Self-released
long-odds.bandcamp.com/album/fine-thread

Of all the bands to emerge from the mid- to late-aughts "shitgaze" explosion in Columbus, Ohio, I loved Times New Viking the best. Despite breaking up a decade ago, they still get plenty of rotation on my home stereo. This lo-fi, no-frills trio's records are hyperactive, sloppy, and noisy as hell—at times they're unintelligible, but somehow their melodic pop genius shines through the cacophony. When Times New Viking called it a day, the members took on other projects, often detouring far from their prior band's sound: guitarist Jared Philips formed challenging experimental indie duo Counter Intuities with Columbus punk legend Ron House, while lead singer and drummer Adam Elliot linked up with his brother Kevin to form the catchy yet conventional indie-pop outfit Connections.

Adam's latest project as a vocalist is Long Odds, and on their new full-length, *Fine Thread* (released May 31 on Bandcamp), he gets back in touch with the obtuse, damaged catchiness of Times New Viking. Long Odds aren't as shambolic or as reckless-sounding as TNV, and they flesh out their sonic palette with pianos, dual guitars, and a thoughtful production style that contrasts dramatically with TNV's blown-out, lo-fi aesthetic. But much like their home-state heroes Guided by Voices, Long Odds make songs that are raw, honest, sad,



Jake Acosta of Famous Laughs © ASHLEY GUERRERO



Moor Mother © SAMANTHA ISASIAN

desperate, simple, and beautiful. Even with a more reined-in and subdued approach, Elliot can still capture his untouchable hooks through a fractured lens. —LUCA CIMARUSTI

MOOR MOTHER, JAZZ CODES

Anti-
moormother.bandcamp.com/album/jazz-codes

Camae Ayewa, aka Moor Mother, has always been one to cite her sources. In addition to performing as a member of Philly-based free-jazz collective Irreversible Entanglements, the contralto wordsmith has frequently paid homage to the jazz, blues, and gospel canons in her solo work, beginning with her 2016 debut, *Fetish Bones*, and continuing through last year's *Black Encyclopedia of the Air*. Ayewa described those canons in a 2021 interview with Pitchfork: "Not only is it Black American classical music, but it's also a liberation technology."

Moor Mother's new album, *Jazz Codes* (Anti-), is a collage-style tribute to Ayewa's musical forebears. She conceived it as a companion piece to *Black Encyclopedia*, and *Jazz Codes* is undoubtedly the

clumsier sibling. While it's a solid record for Moor Mother novices, and there are plenty of bangers throughout, Ayewa's verses lack the freshness they have on previous releases—missing are the white-hot fervor and spontaneity of *Fetish Bones* and the volleying wit she showcased on *Brass*, her 2020 collaboration with rapper Billy Woods of Armand Hammer.

Too often, *Jazz Codes* is blatantly, underwhelmingly on the nose, with heavy-handed samples and stilted lines such as "Be sharp / So sharp. . . . See sharp / Be natural" (from "Ode to Mary," a nod to jazz pianist Mary Lou Williams). "Meditation Rag" is a particularly sore thumb; its verses Spark-Note a century of jazz history with a wink and a nudge. That's not to besmirch the sonic make-up of *Jazz Codes*, though. Ayewa has assembled remarkable collaborators: harpist Mary Lattimore, pianist Jason Moran, flutist Nicole Mitchell, and her Irreversible Entanglements compatriots, to name a few. But as far as Ayewa's love letters to Black American music go, it doesn't get better than the *Brass* track "The Blues Remembers Everything This Country Forgot." That one still gets truer too. —HANNAH EDGAR ☒

THALIA

WED 8•3
CAT POWER
ARSUN



THU 8•11
ART DONT SLEEP PRESENTS
EBO TAYLOR



FRI 9•9
CASS
McCOMBS



COMING SOON TO THALIA HALL

8•2 **BOY PABLO**
TUE MAZIE

8•4 **WAVVES**
THU KING OF THE BEACH TOUR
BOYO • SMUTT

8•13 **MURDER BY DEATH &
8•14 AMIGO THE DEVIL**
SAMANTHA CRAIN

8•16 **TV GIRL**
8•17 SIDNEY GISH

8•18 **BUILT TO SPILL**
8•19 PRISM BITCH • PAPAS

8•31 **SHAME**
WED THEY HATE CHANGE

9•6 **MDOU MOCTAR**
TUE URANIUM CLUB

9•12 **WILD RIVERS**
MON

9•14 **GIRLPOOL**
WED

9•16 **OHSEES**
9•17 BRONZE

9•20 **MADISON CUNNINGHAM**
TUE BENDIGO FLETCHER

9•22 **RY X**
THU

9•25 **IBEYI**
SUN SPELL 31 TOUR
MADISON MCFERRIN



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Nick Lowe In Maurer Hall

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CHICAGO SHOWS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT IN THE WEEKS TO COME

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Calum Scott © TOM COCKRAM

NEW

Armand Hammer, Chris Crack

7/22, 10 PM, Subterranean, 17+

Ashnikko, Fraxiom 7/27,

7:30 PM, House of Blues

Astrobrute, Venus Club, Rose

Lake 7/29, 8 PM, Burlington

Babe Report, Two Houses,

Cobra Pit, Grool Brothers

7/29, 8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

Banks 7/30, 11 PM, House of

Blues, 17+

Bridey, La Bonte, Cam Mahai

7/21, 8 PM, Golden Dagger

Cam 8/12, 8 PM, House of

Blues, 17+

Cave In, Author & Punisher,

Djunah 7/27, 8 PM, Sleeping

Village

Charlie Reed, Fran, Minor

Moon (solo) 7/22, 9:30 PM,

Hideout

Cosmic Country Cookout fea-

turing **Toadvine, Sarah Wed-**

dle, Tobacco City, Andrew

Sa, Lavender Country,

Boulevards, Dougie Poole

7/24, 2 PM, Judson & Moore

Distillery

Crawlies, Constant Headache,

Home Entertainment, Speed

Babes 7/24, 8 PM, Burlington

Crowbar, Spirit Adrift, Speed-

freak, Gamma Goat, Fer

de Lance 7/30, 7 PM, Cobra

Lounge, 17+

Death Bells, Serfs 8/9, 8 PM,

Subterranean, 17+

Dope Lemon 10/15, 7:30 PM,

Park West

Eliza Edens, Thompson

Springs, Niika 7/25, 8 PM,

Hideout

Kevan Eftekhari 7/23, 9 PM;

7/30, 9 PM, Tack Room

Eichlers, Dynastic, Dang!t,

Rude Echoes 7/25, 6:30 PM,

Cobra Lounge

Enter Shikari, Aviva 9/24,

6:30 PM, Concord Music

Hall

Floral, Snooze, Parachute Day,

Elaine the Singer 7/23, 8 PM,

Burlington

Florist, Marc Merza 8/2,

8:30 PM, Sleeping Village

Footlight District, Oregon

Space Trail of Doom, Roof

Dogs, Kozmick Kicks 7/22,

8 PM, Cobra Lounge, 17+

French Police, Secret Attrac-

tion, Tragic Figures, Blood

Club 7/23, 9 PM, Chop Shop,

18+

Gloria Trevi 9/10, 8 PM, All-

state Arena, Rosemont

Grumpy, Harvey Waters, Cusp,

North Lodge 7/28, 8 PM, Beat

Kitchen, 17+

Angelo Hart, Dave Rempis,

and Avreeayl Ra 7/22,

8:30 PM, Constellation, 18+

Herbsaint 7/22, 9 PM, Hungry

Brain

Holy Fuck 8/2, 8 PM, Schubas,

18+

Ilda y Vuelta 7/30, 9 PM, Hun-

gry Brain

In This Moment, Nothing

More, Sleep Token, Cherry

Bombs 10/21, 5:30 PM, Radius

Chicago, 17+

Charly Jordan 7/30, 10 PM,

Prysm Nightclub

Rochelle Jordan, Shaun J.

Wright 7/23, 9 PM, Sleeping

Village

Kerala Dust 10/19, 9 PM, Mar-

tyrs', 18+

Klypi, Buddy Crime, Christmas

Bride 7/26, 9:30 PM, Hideout

Kopps, Boy Jr., Jack West 7/21,

9:30 PM, Hideout

Kuinka, Nathan Graham 8/11,

8:30 PM, FitzGerald's

Leonora, Chicken Happen,

Fury 8/1, 9 PM, Sleeping

Village

Levin Brothers 9/16, 8:30 PM,

Bananna's Comedy Shack at

Reggies

Lollapalooza day one featuring

Metallica, Lil Baby, Jazmine

Sullivan, Billy Strings, Zhu,

100 Geecs, Still Woozy,

Ashnikko, Black Coffee, Man-

chester Orchestra, Tove Lo,

Caroline Polachek, MK, Remi

Wolf, and more 7/28, noon,

Grant Park

Lollapalooza day two featuring

Dua Lipa, Machine Gun Kelly,

Glass Animals, Don Toliver,

Rezz, King Princess, Girl in

Red, Liquid Stranger, Clozee,

Royal Blood, Cordae, Bob

Moses, Coi Leray, Tinashe,

Muna, Wet Leg, and more

7/29, noon, Grant Park

Lollapalooza day three featur-

ing **J. Cole, Kygo, Big Sean,**

Kaskadee, Idles, Turnstile,

Wallows, Tomorrow X

Together, Lil Durk, YG, Blxst,

Duke Dumont, Willow, Chel-

sea Cutler, Coin, and more

7/30, noon, Grant Park

Lollapalooza day four featur-

ing **J. Cole, Kygo, Big Sean,**

Porno for Pyros, the Kid

Laroi, Charli XCX, Dominic

Fike, Denzel Curry, Polo &

Pan, Måneskin, Local

Natives, the Marias, John

Summit, Banks, Gordo,

Beach Bunny, Pinkpanther-

ess, Goth Babe, and more

7/31, noon, Grant Park

Marci 10/13, 8 PM, Schubas, 18+

Metro and Smart Bar 40th

Anniversary Celebration

night one featuring the

Blessed Madonna, Shaun J.

Wright, Harry Cross, Phillip

Stone, and more 7/22, 9 PM,

Metro

Metro and Smart Bar 40th

Anniversary Celebration

night two featuring **Derrick**

Carter, Mark Farina, DJ

Heather, Ariel Zetina, Justin

Aulis Long, Jeff Derringer,

and Sevron 7/23, 9 PM, Metro

Monolink 10/14, 10 PM, Cermak

Hall at Radius Chicago, 18+

Chris Moore, Edward Wilker-

son, Tatsu Aoki, and Adam

Shead 7/23, 8:30 PM, Constel-

lation, 18+

One OK Rock, You Me at Six,

Fame on Fire 10/8, 6:30 PM,

Concord Music Hall

Opiuo, Maddy O'Neal, A Hun-

dred Drums 10/1, 9 PM, Park

West, 18+

Maisie Peters 11/8, 7:30 PM,

the Vic

Pierre Bourne, Redveil 7/27,

7:30 PM, Lincoln Hall

Punk Rock Factory 11/8, 7 PM,

Bottom Lounge

Quaker City Night Hawks 10/6,

8 PM, Golden Dagger

Quasi 7/22, 9 PM, Sleeping

Village

Reggae Summerfest featuring

DJ Ringo One Blood 7/23,

10 PM, the Promontory

Ruido Fest day one featuring

Cuco, Babasonicos, Éi Mató

a un Policia Motorizado, Ed

Maverick, C-Kan, Nortec

Collective DJs, Bruses,

Los Aptos, Estereomance,

J Güero, Carmen DeLeon,

Kinginesse, Mr. Bobby, La

Colocha, Angelfuk 8/19,

3 PM, Union Park

Ruido Fest day two featuring

Los Fabulosos Cadillacs,

Carla Morrison, Siddhartha,

Kevin Kaarl, Porter, Silverio,

Beach Goons, Aczino, Elis

Paprika, Mengers, Making

Movies, Immasoul, Doris

Anahi, Eschicano, Manú 8/20,

1 PM, Union Park

Ruido Fest day three featur-

ing **Cypress Hill, Maldita**

Vecindad, Goyo, Ely Guerra,

Hello Seahorse!, Lng/Sht, El

Dusty, Cardiel, Gabyloña,

Sgt. Papers, Pahuá, Browns

Crew, Bonnz, Mila La More-

na, Código Verde, George

Arthur Calendar, A.M. Early

Morning 8/21, 1 PM, Union

Park

Rvnt, Exit Wounds 7/23, 7 PM,

Subterranean, 17+

Sanctified Grumblers 7/21,

6 PM, Hideout

Saved by the 90s featuring

DJ L-Styles, DJ Kev Jones,

DJ Kool Ant, DJ Dark Knight

8/6, 10 PM, the Promontory

Calum Scott 8/31, 7 PM, House

of Blues

Sian, Kill Script, Charles D



GOSSIP WOLF

A furry ear to the ground of the local music scene

GOSSIP WOLF HAS BEEN on the record as a fan of **Lollygagger** since the local glam-punk goofballs dropped their debut EP, *Life on Terminus*, in 2018. The band followed it in 2020 with the hilarious sketch-comedy-style video album *The Lollygagger Family Fun Variety Hour*, but lately this wolf has hungered for something to slap on the ol' turntable. Last month, Lollygagger obliged with **Total Party Kill**, released via **What's for Breakfast?** and **Molerat Records**. It collects nine rippers on vinyl, and throughout this slab of urine-yellow wax, guitarist **Matthew Muffin**, bassist **Kinsey Ring**, and drummer **Michael Sunnycide** stay in piss-and-vinegar mode—they tear into rotten employers on “My Boss Is a Dick” and raise a fiery, revolutionary ruckus on “Sick Semper.” On Sunday, July 10, Lollygagger play the second day of the tenth and final **DZ Fest** at the DZ Records space at 8548 S. 85th Ct. in Hickory Hills. Tickets are \$20 per day and available at the door.

The current free concert series presented by Theaster Gates's **Rebuild Foundation** at **Kenwood Gardens** in Greater Grand Crossing began last month with a monumental show by spiritual-jazz master **Isaiah Collier**. Gossip Wolf loves outdoor shows generally, given the distressing prevalence of COVID this summer, but this series is especially noteworthy because the rest of this season's schedule is stacked too! On Saturday, July 9, the gardens host a concert by Black chamber-music collective **D-Composed**; artists slated to perform over the next couple months include jazz bassist **Emma Dayhuff** and the **Chicago Sinfonietta**.

In late June, teen indie rockers **Post Office Winter** dropped their tender, charming second album, **Music Box**. On Wednesday, July 13, they celebrate by headlining the **Beat Kitchen** with support from some friends from the Hallogallo scene: **Free Range**, **Sublime Jupiter Snake Duo**, and **Donkey Basketball**. —**J.R. NELSON AND LEOR GALIL**

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

WOLF BY KEITH HERZIK

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Time to worry about monkeypox

The best edible for weed and more quickies

By DAN SAVAGE

Q: Gay dude here. What the fuck is up with monkeypox? Do I need to be worried?

A: Yes, you do. I tried to raise the alarm about monkeypox on the May 24, 2022, episode of the *Savage Lovecast*, back when there were 100 cases in 15 countries, all of them among gay and bi men. Now there are more than 5,000 cases all over the world, and almost all of them—more than 99 percent of cases—are among gay and bi men.

“Right now, it’s behaving very much like an STI—and almost all of the cases have been among men who have sex with men,” said Dr. Ina Park, a professor at the University of California San Francisco School of Medicine and medical consultant at the Centers for Disease Control Division of STD Prevention.

Monkeypox, Dr. Park explains, is the milder, gentler cousin to smallpox, and is spread by skin-to-skin contact or through respiratory droplets.

“But anyone who comes into close contact with someone who has monkeypox could catch it,” said Dr. Park. “And unlike other STIs which don’t live for very long outside the body, monkeypox can live for weeks on infected clothing, bedding, and other surfaces—think dildos, slings, fetish gear—and barriers such as condoms worn over the penis or inside the rectum will protect those areas, but they don’t prevent transmission

to other exposed parts of the body. If you notice red painful bumps anywhere on you or your partner’s body—especially the genital/anal area—or if you are exposed to monkeypox, get checked out right away. The sooner you get vaccinated, the better.” (And follow Dr. Park on Twitter @InaParkMd.)

Q: How soon is too soon to say “I love you” for the first time?

A: On your first date, right after a stranger from an app shows up at your door, during your first threesome with that hot couple you just met at a bar—too soon. Even if you’re already feeling it, even if you’re crazy enough to think they might be feeling it already too, you should wait at least six months to say it. But you know what? Once you’ve said it—once you’ve said “I love you” for the first time—feel free to backdate that shit. Go ahead and say, “I wanted to say it before the entrée even came on our first date,” or, “I wanted to say it when you showed up looking better than your pics,” or, “I wanted to say it when you both came inside me simultaneously.”

Q: Is it an overreaction for me, a cis woman who lives in Wisconsin and doesn’t want kids, to not want to have sex with my fiancé since the ruling on abortion? I’ve tried to explain to him that it’s a

lot to come to terms with.

A: Each of us grieves in our own way, and at our own pace. If you’re not feeling sexy right now because of the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*—if the chance of an unplanned pregnancy in Wisconsin, where a law from 1849 banning abortion can now be enforced, dries you up—that’s totally understandable. And if your fiancé is anxious to get back to penetrative sex, well, pegging counts.

Q: A submissive guy reached out to me via my pretty tame Instagram and wants to send me money and wants nothing in return. Should I say no to this?

A: In this economy?

Q: New to weed. Best edible for sex?

A: Ass.

Q: What is it called when a guy jacks off into his own mouth while he’s upside down? Is there a term for that?

A: I don’t think that has a name. Any suggestions, class?

The full version of *Savage Love* is now exclusively available on Dan’s website *Savage.Love*. To read this week’s column, go to savage.love/savage.love. @fakedansavage

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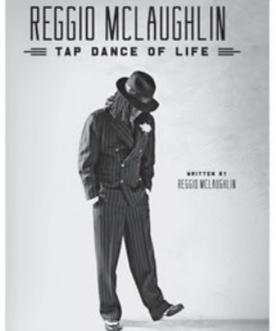
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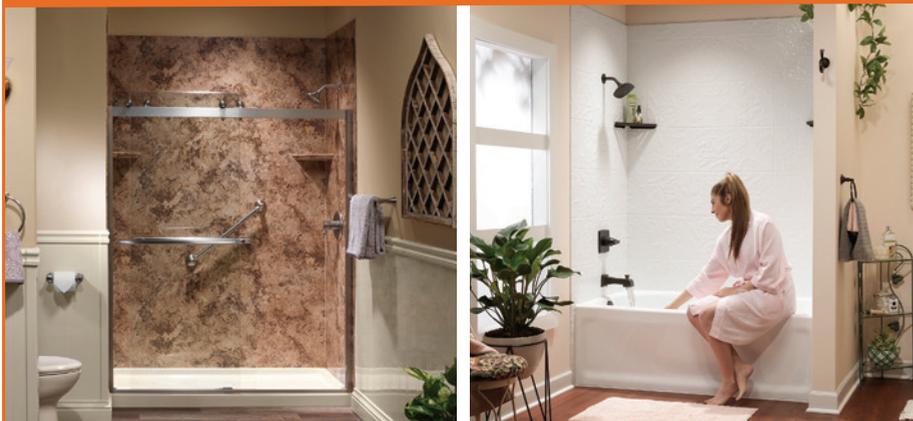
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