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table of contents



Adam Byczkowski, Jane Penny and Sean Nicholas Savage, collaborators on the upcoming musical production Please Thrill Me.

Photo by

to-do list	4	Year-end music lists :hammer of the mods	16 20
city	6	film	22
Mattress reviews	6	Waves	22
:rant line™	8	On Screen	24
:inspectah dep	10	arts	26
food & drink	11	Please Thrill Me	26
Paloma	11	The Nutcracker	28
music	12	:play recent	30
Maky Lavender	12		
Alejandro Escovedo	14		

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Jan.
22 > 25

**D'OS ET
D'ÉCORGE**

Roger Sinha

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to-do list

For the daily To-Do List, visit cultmtl.com

To Dec. 29

Peep some winter fashion and holiday rituals from the 19th century at the Champagne Charlotte and Crinoline event at the Sir George Étienne Cartier National Historic Site every weekend (and on Dec. 26 and 27). There will be a costumed presentation, champagne-tasting, hot drinks, a card-making workshop, photo zone and more.

→ 458 Notre-Dame E., 4 p.m. in French, 4:30 p.m. in English, \$7.80/\$7.30 seniors/\$3.90

Dec. 6

Montreal Calling! marks the 40th anniversary of the Clash's landmark album *London Calling*, featuring international talent Alejandro Escovedo (see our interview with him on p. 14), Tommy Stinson (the Replacements, Guns N Roses) and the Asexuals along with a whack of local talent like Dan Boeckner (Wolf Parade, Operators), Tim Kingsbury (Arcade Fire), Paul Cargnello, Tommy Youngsteen and many more.

→ Corona Theatre (2490 Notre-Dame W.), 7:30 p.m., \$72

Dec. 6–15

The holiday edition of POP Montreal's artisan fair Puces POP features two different sets of vendors over two weekends at Église St-Denis. Expect clothing, accessories, jewellery, housewares, food, art and more.

→ 5075 Rivard, 3–8 p.m. Fridays, 11 a.m.–6 p.m. Saturdays, 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Sundays, free entry

Dec. 11–14

Titans of the local music scene will be performing unplugged as part of la Chapelle's Salons Acoustiques, namely Brad

Barr, Elizabeth Powell, Radwan Ghazi Moumneh, Alexei Perry Cox, Jesse Mac Cormack and Rosie Valland.

→ 3700 St-Dominique, 8 p.m. nightly

Dec. 28

Before Katakombes closes its doors at the end of December, Montreal metal heroes Voivod will grace the venue with their presence one last time, with openers Metalian, Reanimator and Painbow.

→ 1635 St-Laurent, 8 p.m., \$27

Jan. 10

See some of the rising stars of Montreal's music scene in the Class of 2020 concert at Bar le Ritz PDB, care of Exclaim and Dan Burke/NeXT Shows. The line-up features Petra Glynt, Dish Pit, Hanorah, Sorry Girls and Sasha Cay.

→ 179 Jean-Talon W., 9 p.m., \$10.50 advance

Jan. 16–Feb. 8

Piknik Électronik goes into winter mode with Igloofest, a series of three-day-weekend parties that'll pack their outdoor Old Port space with dancing masses and a roster of local and international DJs including the Blaze, Anjuna Beats, Charlotte de Witte and Rufus du Söl as well as a special live set by local hip hop phenom Loud.

→ Jacques Cartier Quay (Place Jacques Cartier & de la Commune E.), 7:30–11 p.m. (till 12:30 a.m. Saturdays), \$25/\$89 VIP

Jan. 21–25

One Kind Favor is a dance performance that promises to be a trip, choreographed by George Stamos with collaboration from dancer Karla Etienne and musician Radwan Ghazi Moumneh.

→ MAI (3680 Jeanne Mance), 8 p.m., \$28/\$22/\$16

Jan. 22–25

Roger Sinha Dance presents D'écorce at Agora de la Danse.

→ 1435 Bleury

Jan. 22–26

The third annual Lux Magna festival of music, visual art, spoken word, dance, workshops and all ages activities is happening at various venues, care of a team that includes Casa del Popolo cofounder Kiva Stimac and Elle Barbara. This year's line-up includes Big Brave, Tranna Wintour, YlangYlang, Backxwash, Big Sissy and many more.

Jan. 30–Feb 1

Though the line-up had not yet been released at press time, the Taverne Tour is always a blast, with great local bands playing small venues on Mont-Royal Avenue and nearby on St-Denis and St-Laurent.

Feb. 4–5

The Jay and Silent Bob Reboot Roadshow gives Kevin Smith fans the opportunity to watch his new movie with the filmmaker in the room. This is happening over two consecutive nights at two different Montreal venues.

→ Théâtre Corona (2490 Notre-Dame W.) and MTelus (59 Ste-Catherine E.)

Feb. 5

Rufus and Martha Wainwright, Anna McGarrigle, Jane McGarrigle, Sylvan and Lily Lancken and Vinnie Dow and Kathleen Weldon will share the stage for a special Wainwrights and McGarrigles concert at Place des Arts's Théâtre Maisonneuve. They'll be performing *Complainte pour Catherine: Songs of Kate McGarrigle* (Rufus and Martha's late mother).

→ 175 Ste-Catherine W., 8 p.m., \$82.15/\$71.75/\$54.65

Feb. 5–9

The Geordie Theatre Fest showcases works in Theatre for Young Audiences with staged readings in partnership with the National Theatre School of Canada and 2Play touring shows (*The Water Chronicles* and *Fear of Missing Out*) on a mainstage platform.

Should we



Credit: Robert Burley. Implosions of Buildings 65 & 69, Kodak Park, Rochester, New York, 6 October 2007. ©Robert Burley

worry?

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*This is one of the questions we continue to raise at the Canadian Centre for Architecture since our founding in 1979. We persist with this questioning as the myriad of issues still to be addressed call for new ways to increase public awareness of the role of architecture in society.

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Do box mattresses bounce?

BY AMY GERMAN

Box mattresses have become trendy because of their easy delivery and promises of extended trial periods. While Canadian celebrities like Jan Arden and Tanya Kim supposedly swear by Endy mattresses, comfort and sleep quality is all that really gets talked about when it comes to this foam revolution. What they never get into is whether this very essential piece of furniture is actually going to improve your sex life or just outright kill it.

While this latest generation of foam mattresses really do mold to your body, providing support all over, some of them can feel like sinking into a giant marshmallow, which is not exactly conducive to recreational activity that requires a

little spring-back.

Cult MTL was able to obtain four mattresses from different Canadian retailers — Jump Bed, Endy, Silk and Snow and Hamuq — to test them out and judge whether or not they're ideal for fucking. After months of careful research and rigorous test-driving, here are our findings:

Made by Quebec's own Matelas Bonheur, the Jump Bed is the local mattress company's entry into the mattress-in-a-box field. What really stood out about it was the ooey-ghoosy "Jump-Air" foam feeling. Jump uses their own type of foam for these mattresses as a cooler alternative to memory foam, and it absolutely does leave you feeling less sweaty. It also had a removable, washable top, which is handy.

But while the Jump Bed was really cozy and had absolutely no motion transfer — for those of you who like the idea of keeping a wine glass on the mattress while you do other things without it spilling — the sinking was a bit too much. Truthfully it felt like trying to fuck in one of those foam pits that kids jump into at trampoline parks: the more you weigh, the harder you have to work to fight your way out. So, any bouncing or pelvic action felt like twice the work and, at the end of the experiment, made for sore knees.

Endy, the national brand endorsed by so many celebs, is another memory foam mattress, and had a similar feel to the Jump Bed. The Endy hype is somewhat justified — you really, really do sleep well and it's perfect if you're looking at mattresses with better sleep as a prime objective. It also comes with a zip-off top that you can throw in the wash. When it came to binge-watching TV on my laptop with the cat, Endy really provided for the best cuddling experience, but not so much for sex.

We again had a similar problem with Endy that we had with Jump: because you're sinking into slowly retracting foam, it made fun-time a lot more tiring than it had to be. I mean, it

totally depends on what you do in the sack, right? If you're only going to go for a few minutes and everybody is happy, who gives a fuck? The extra workout will make for a good sleep afterwards. But if you want to go for a while or get into anything adventurous, while Endy does provide for good stability, it also made every thrust more work.

Looking for an altogether different type of mattress in a box, we were able to obtain two foam/coil hybrids. The first we tried out was Silk and Snow. Silk and Snow is like a traditional coil mattress but with a memory foam top, similar to a pillow top but cushier. This mattress was very comfortable and had a certain amount of firmness to it but it also featured a decent spring-back. My three-year-old snuck into my room and jumped on this one with absolute glee.

More importantly, Silk and Snow's combination of cushy and springy made it absolutely perfect for really athletic sex. It had all of the softness of the memory foam beds, but this one in particular was the firmest and bounciest. If you're planning a party in your bed, this is the one to go with.

The Hamuq Mattress is similar to Silk and Snow, with exceptional bounce and a memory foam top for extra comfort. This boxed mattress is the heaviest of the bunch and is absolutely ideal for anyone who wants to get busy and stay busy. It essentially has the same springy retraction as a standard coil mattress. What we really loved about it was that it was springy and felt really, really durable while also being very soft.

As you lie on the Hamuq, you feel like you're falling into a giant puffy cloud, but one you could use as a trampoline in a pinch. This one was my personal favourite, the best marriage of the boxed mattress concept and a traditional mattress. For someone who likes a deep sleep but also has an active sex life, this is the top pick.

Happy cuffing season!



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:rant line™

THIS WEEK: Wanderers, Satanists, Christians, cops!

PLUS: What is the best type of glue for gluing your hand to a window, woman wonders!!

"edited" by AL SOUTH

M Hello STM users. It's bitterly cold today and the police are in our metro station kicking our WANDERERS out into the cold. If you can't stand to see it, go and buy them a TICKET for three hours inside and go give it to them. [BLEEP!]

M Yeah, so I heard about this \$4.50 a gram pot at the SQDC. So I tried some and I have to tell you man: it's crap! Stick with your DEALER if you want the real shit. [BLEEP!]

F Hi, I just wanted to say good for those teenagers — MINORS it said on the news — who protested by GLUING their hands to the store windows. Good for them. It really is going to take young people to get things done, to make a difference. And you know, I would have liked to be out there, too, but I think it would look a bit silly, you know, being a fully grown MOTHER of two. But my kids, when they get old enough, I would not stop them from taking part — I'm not sure if I would actively encourage them, because, of course, you worry, but I would not stop them. I just hope, I don't know, I'm sure they thought of this, but I just hope they used the right type of glue? You know, not SUPER GLUE or something like that, that would hurt their hands? I'm sure they thought of that. I hope it was just, like, ELMER'S glue or SCHOOL GLUE. Although I don't know if that would stick to a window? Anyway, I didn't hear about any of them getting hurt, so it must have been okay. But some of them did get arrested, which I guess I wouldn't really want my kids to be, you know, arrested — although I don't think they would have been put in jail? Probably not. But you know, still, good for them. Somebody has to do something. Okay thanks, bye. [BLEEP!]

F I wish Luc Ferrandez and Lionel Perez would shut the fuck up about Valérie Plante. [BLEEP!]

M Fuck Bernier, fuck his ideals, I'm so fucking happy he is OUT. He's a fucking huge racist, and I fucking hate him. That's all I really have to say. I'm so glad he lost his fucking riding. Bye. [BLEEP!]

M Yeah, been noticing this. I gotta ask the people of the Rant Line™: have you seen COPS TEXTING a lot? I just walked by a cop, sitting in his car, and maybe he's doing some work, maybe it's something official, but to me, it just looked an awful lot like he was texting his BUDDY or something. I've seen it especially with police working the traffic lights, sort of playing on their phone. Again, maybe it's official, but it seems to me they use radios. I'm barely allowed to take my phone out to check the time at my job, and the cop I just walked by, he kinda looked at me like I caught him doing something. We all know that LOOK. My boss knows that look when she catches me doing something. And the way I see it, I'm that cop's boss. And you're that cop's boss. We're all these fucking cops' bosses. Never forget who pays whose salary. So maybe it's time we start asking: what we're not regularly allowed to do, in our positions of responsibility, maybe the cops shouldn't be doing! Start with something small — like playing with

your fucking phone when you're on the job. If I can stop myself from doing that, I think Montreal's finest can probably follow suit. [BLEEP!]

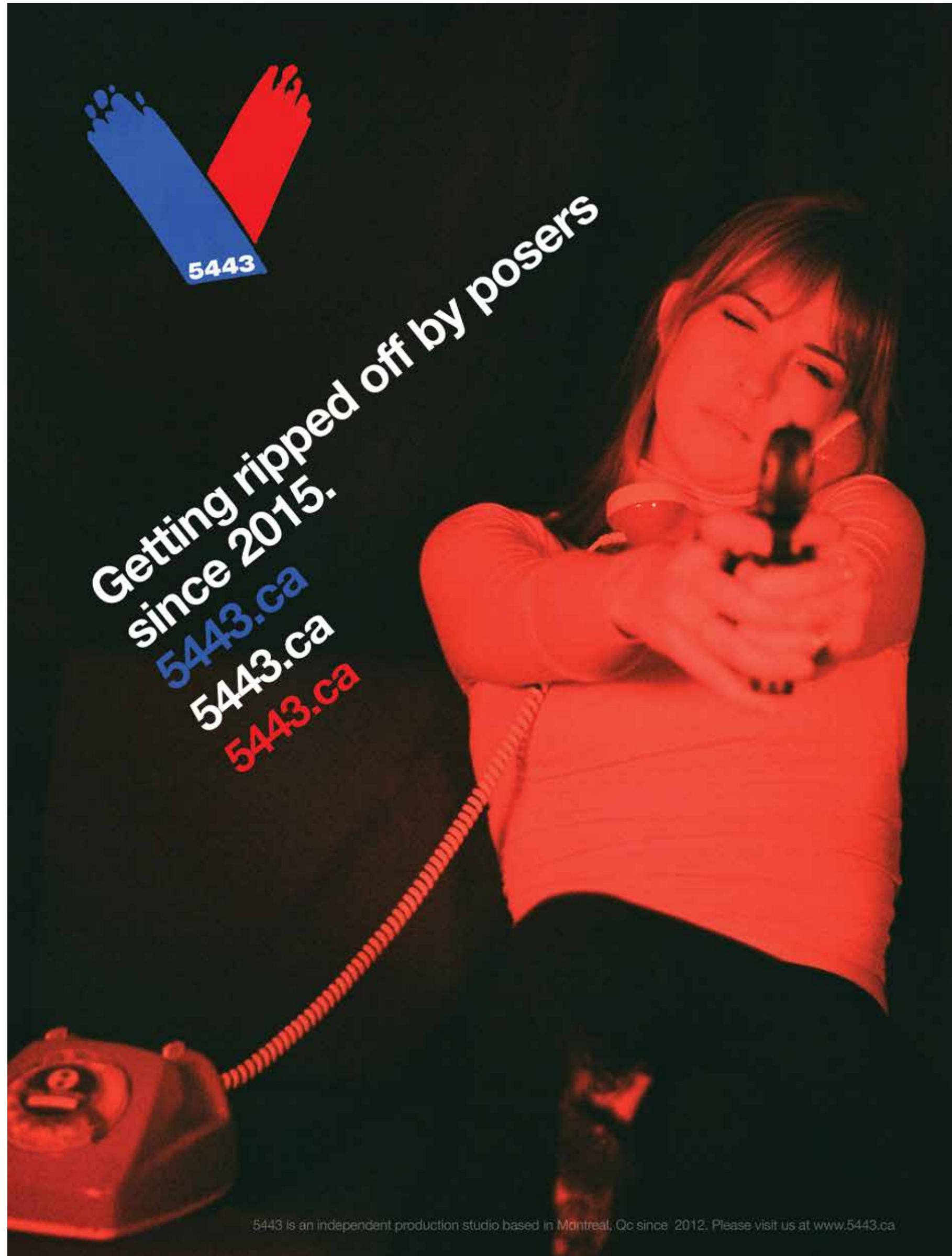
M This is related to the decision by the CAQ party to force the removal of all religious symbols. Why don't we also abolish Christmas? I can't walk down the street with a Jewish star of David or a BURQA? Like if I fucking wanna? What the fuck? If I want to wear fucking 17th century ESPADRILLES, I'll fucking wear those. What are you going to do, legislate that one, too? Why not abolish Christmas and Easter and let's abolish HOCKEY above all, because that's the biggest religion. Anyway, I'm being somewhat hyperbolic about this, but I find it too forced, pushing people around like that. Although I do applaud the eradication of Christmas, for sure. Nobody likes Christmas, because it's only for the rich and famous, right? [BLEEP!]

M Hi fellow ranters, Rockin' Rob here. This is about Bob Larson, CHRISTIAN EXORCIST. I've got to tell the truth. Somebody has to, it may as well be me. I'm an open Christian metalhead but I don't preach to people. I sing metal for Christ, yes, and I love my metal bands, but it's about loving people. Bob Larson has done more to popularize the cause of the DEVIL than the devil himself. And all for money, all for profit. It's all a fake, it's all choreographed. And there are many people who are lonely and desperate and hurting who go to him because they want their pain gone and he capitalizes on them, telling them they are demons. No, they don't have demons. They're hurting and lonely and many have mental issues. It's a crime. That's not what Christ is about, Christ never went around doing that. And charging people on top of it. It's total evil! That's what I call SATANISM, what Bob Larson is doing. Now Satanism, in the true sense of the word, in fairness to my Satanist friends — they just have a philosophy of liberty. I hang out with my Satanist buddies, and I rock with them, but they know I'm for Christ and they respect me for that, because I don't give them a hard time. Christ is about love, not about hate. Bob Larson — it's pure evil, he's popularizing the devil in the most negative sense. He's the devil's PR man if ever there was one! And I'm here to say it's wrong, it's a crime! He's a profiteer. That's not exorcism, it's all a fake. And he doesn't even believe in what he's doing. But there are many people who are desperate who go to him and others like him and get ripped off. So there you go, Rockin' Rob here, metalhead for Jesus Christ. Love is the answer. Don't buy into those charlatans. God bless you all. [BLEEP!]

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BY THE DEPSET

Dépanneur Alescio is located on the stately Outremont stretch of Van Horne, at the foot of the hill leading up to Côte-des-Neiges. The store is in the heart of the main drag of Lower Outremont at the corner of Davaar, a neighbourhood with a mix of four-storey walk-ups and tree-lined side streets with the more spacious variety of Montreal duplex.

Walk through the door at 1607 Van Horne and you will likely hear a lively conversation in Italian coming from behind the counter. When we visited, Michel, Maria and Rosalba Alescio were happy to talk about their family business. They have been in Montreal for over four decades and have owned the building for much of that time. In 2003, they opened the dépanneur. Last year, they doubled the floor space, and have filled the extra square feet with Italian-inspired snacks and fresh food that could rival a full-fledged grocery.

The clean, clutter-free establishment is yet another example of a dépanneur that goes beyond the basics. There is a large fridge with a mix of Italian cold cuts and



cured meats, as well as organic ground pork and beef and artisanal sausages from Quebec. A freezer section contains the more top-shelf varieties of frozen sausages, seafood, veggies and prepared meals. In the centre of this clean, well-lit and clutter-free space is an open fridge with fruits, vegetables and a selection of cheeses from Quebec, France and Italy. Word to the wise: \$5 tax in will net you a ciabatta sandwich with capocollo, provolone, tomato and lettuce, homemade with the products sold in the store. Dry stores

include fancy imported European cookies and a stack of elegantly wrapped panettone on a back shelf, among many other fineries. For beer, they have a substantial selection of local craft products as well as imports.

Next time you're on the blue line, the 161 bus or cutting through by car from East to West, stop by Dépanneur Alescio. You'll find a lunch worthy of many Italian cafés and restaurants waiting for you, and friendly service to boot.

food & drink

Get Nice



Paloma

BY CLAYTON SANDHU

Paloma is a Niçoise restaurant with Italian touches in the same way that chef-owner Armand Forcherio is, having been born in Nice to Italian parents.

The restaurant's name is borrowed from a beach in Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat, a town adjacent to where Forcherio was born, and a beach where he and his family shared many good meals and good memories. This is particularly important given that Armand's partner in the business is his daughter Rosalie Forcherio, who manages the front of house and has spent time as a sommelier at le Filet, Montreal Plaza and some time abroad serving at the legendary Saturne in Paris.

I have to say, walking along the industrial-feeling stretch of St-Laurent, I kept thinking that this was a bad location for this restaurant. Paloma is charming, tasteful, well-appointed and it's named after a beach on the French Riviera, all characteristics which lie in stark contrast to its highway-adjacent location. However, walking through the doors of Paloma, you almost immediately forget the outside world. The room is airy and sunlight pours in through the front window, casting a soft glow on the pale wooden tabletops and the bistro chairs painted grey in the hue of a rocky Mediterranean beach. Aside from the royal blue bar, at which there are three seats, there's nothing flashy, nothing statement-making, just a comfortable and calm room that draws its colours from sea, sky, stone and sand — it's all very natural-feeling.

I'm greeted by my server, smartly dressed in his waiter's vest, who escorts me to my seat at the bar. Also on the floor this afternoon is Rosalie Forcherio who works the room calmly and purposefully, her pressed white blouse and apron recalling a certain sophistication that is becoming rarer and rarer in the restaurant industry. Paloma balances an air of old-world restaurant sensibility (which certainly comes from Armand) and modern elegance. It works very well. Simultaneously one feels like they are seated in the seaside home of an old friend and in the very capable hands of restaurant professionals.

Both the wine list and menu are short and sweet. Rosalie's choices for wine, despite being a touch limited, are focused and deliberate. The list is centred around natural producers who work in a timeless and elegant style, meaning that no one is likely to be throwing around the words funky or weird in regards to the wine. Prominent producers like De Fermo, Hervé Villemade and Alberto Carretti of Podere Pradarolo feature, which demonstrates to me that even on a constrained budget Rosalie is able to put together a serious wine list. If you're looking for something a bit more "haute-gamme" one simply needs to ask for the reserve familiale, a secret secondary wine list with a special selection of bottles for the most discerning of palates.

As for the menu, it is divided into four main categories: Apéro, entrées, plats and dessert. Each section is home to a small but poignant set of options. Tapenade, or charcuterie (care of Aliments Viens) for l'apéro, tripe or pasta as an entrée, and a few choices of fish, meat and seafood as a main.

I chose squash mezzalune to begin, followed by the fish of the day, billed as *poisson mystère* on the menu. I left the choice of wine in the very capable hands of Rosalie who, for my first course, poured a macerated catarato from the infamous Sicilian producer Barraco. "It's perfect with the squash filling," I'm assured as my glass is filled with the copper-hued wine. The mezzalune, which translates to half-moons, arrive in a small bowl — I count roughly six to eight dollar-sized mezzalune in a buttery sauce and topped with a chiffonade of fresh sage. The pairing is excellent, and the pasta is adequate, but nothing to write home about. The pasta was well prepared, and the flavours were, for the most part, well balanced. I just found the dish to be a bit underwhelming. Perhaps a bit more depth in the squash filling would have been better, and certainly gently frying the sage instead of simply garnishing with fresh leaves, would have added some textural contrast, as well as slightly mellowing the intensity of the flavour, which overpowered the subtle squash filling. It wasn't a bad dish, but it wasn't great either.

That particular day, the *poisson mystère* was a poached red snapper, served with stewed tomatoes, capers, Niçoise olives and basil. It was a knock-out. The dish as it was served looked fairly quotidian, and the flavours are obvious, but this is the kind of dish that due to its simplicity and

obvious flavour combinations can be boring so easily. This was not the case. The fish was perfectly cooked, tender and flaky without a hint of dryness, the sweetness of the tomatoes so gracefully balanced by the nutty deep flavour of Niçoise olives, and the vibrant pop of a salty, briny caper. This is Niçoise food — it's joyful and rustic in the most Mediterranean of ways. One can so easily imagine oneself on a terrace overlooking the Ligurian sea, with this very dish in front of them, and if they're as lucky as I, a delicious glass of Pecorino D'Aburzo, from Ausonia, whose delicate floral notes, gentle acidity, a golden colour, recalls the Machaon — the butterfly after which the cuvée is named.

One let-down, however, was dessert. Le gâteau de Ouistiti, after a small amount of research, turned out not to be a regionally specific cake, but instead a reference to a popular French children's book *Le Gâteau de Ouistiti* in which a young monkey attempts to cook like his father and bake a cake all on his own. It's cute, and in a setting where the father (a life-long chef) partners with his daughter to open a restaurant, the symbolism is not lost, but the cake was mediocre at best. Essentially the dish, as I can best describe it, seemed to be a short layer cake of chocolate and hazelnut ganaches supported by layers of dacquoise cake. The ganaches were quite good, but the cake was too dry.

Overall, the restaurant is really quite charming. A mentor of mine once said, "A good evening at a restaurant should feel like being at a really great dinner party." In some ways, I believe that to be true. Restauration is meant to be nourishing, but also entertaining. At its best it's restorative while being transformative, giving guests the sense of being somewhere special enjoying a memorable experience, one that could only be had, in that place, at that time. Paloma is all those things. Despite what I would say are a few imperfections, the experience of eating at Paloma is amongst one of the better restaurant experiences I've had in recent memory, and as the winter's icy grip takes hold of our city, it's nice to spend some time in Nice.

→ 8521 St-Laurent
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music

Lavender fields forever

BY MR. WAVVY

"This shit stinks," exclaims Maky Lavender upon whiffing a square of le Vieux Pané cheese. Its gooey texture is also a huge turnoff for him — the West Island-bred rapper is more of an American cheese type of guy. "I like the garbage cheeses, the ones for melting...mozzarella and cheddar." He rates the camembert at a soft "5.9 out of 10."

The two of us sit in a food court in downtown Westmount, munching on the divisive snack alongside some crackers to celebrate the release of his new track, "Cheese," which serves as the lead single off of Maky's forthcoming debut album. The song, featuring JT Soul, has been dubbed by Lavender as the "#1 rap song in Montreal." It oozes with this same confidence his description bears, with both artists shit-talking at elite levels.

As Maky reaches for the plastic butter knife to cut another piece of cheese, I notice a newly finished tattoo lies on his hand. It's a superimposed photo of his parents from an old photoshoot. The design also serves as the rapper's album cover. Maky's mother and father have been a well of inspiration for him, both in and out of music.

"My dad is like, the nicest man in the world. He helps everybody out. My parents are fucking cute! They still love each other, and they started dating in high school."

The album, which is set for release in early 2020, includes additional guest spots from the likes of Fouki, Speng Squire and Zach Zoya. Lavender shares that he used the album as an opportunity to unite all sectors of Montreal.

"I want to be a bridge between both sides [of the city]. Both sides often just don't understand each other because nobody speaks to each other. I want to put it all together. I put people from the East End, the West, English, French, let's all do a song together. Let's all collab, let's all care about this shit."

Maky's musical execution is comparable to Future: his album's songs are fun and playful on the surface, yet the lyrics unveil certain levels of pain that come with too much partying.

"I used to get fucked up heavy," he explains. "I haven't gotten drunk in months now. I think you have to go through understanding what the fuck is up with you. I was single, I was wildin'...I think I needed that time to reflect. You learn who you are but you have to learn through experience."

Maky cites self-reflection as a reason for his recent level-headedness. "I ain't no saint," he clarifies. "I still get fucked up here and there!" After all, the rapper has also been known to go by the alias of "Tanqueray Timmy," though these days, he sticks to a light "gin and lychee juice" instead of sipping straight from the bottle.

Maky Lavender's album helped him rebuild after self-destructing. Though extremely personal, Lavender also strived to keep the project light-hearted in its sonic essence.



Maky Lavender

"When I started making music, it was more expressing myself on some angsty-teenager, 'Fuck this shit, hey, I hate everything!' vibe. Dancing has always been a part of my family. My mom really likes what I do, she supports everything. She wants to listen to the music and I do not want my mom to be listening to songs where I'm talking some crazy shit."

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Alejandro Escovedo

Nancy Rankin Escovedo

BY PAUL SPENCE

Sometime in the 2000s I was in the back of GMC Safari driving through L.A. The sweet smoulder of a four-week tour had cauterized my wounds and drawn a gauzy haze around me as I gazed blankly out the window. We were stopped at a light when I saw a girl in patent leather shorts, torn fishnets, battered 14-hole docs, a black bra, leather jacket, spiked hair and pierced all to hell. She was pushing a similarly clad girl in a shopping cart, the two of them cackling like they'd just set fire to the establishment. That was punk. And while that's probably the most recognizable aspect of the genre (let's call it the Malcom McLaren/Sex Pistols model), punk encompasses so much more than that. Which brings us to the amazing Alejandro Escovedo.

Born into a deeply Catholic Mexican American family, Escovedo was there right from the start, when the New York scene was just coming together in the '70s with Lou Reed, Patti Smith and the Ramones, to name a few. According to Escovedo, sometimes he and the Stooges were the only people in the crowd. He joined a band early on playing guitar in the Nuns, part of the first wave of snarly San Francisco punk, but it was when he moved to Austin in the '80s and introduced roots rock into his music that he started to develop what would become his signature sound. He's toured relentlessly, and while his albums have changed stylistically,

his reputation as a firebrand performer gained him legendary status. He's been a mainstay on the rock 'n' roll touring circuit for four decades, gets a ton of respect as a songwriter, but most of all he's beloved for being a great human being.

In 2003, life on the road had taken a toll and he suffered a serious illness that put him in the hospital. Convinced that music was the cause of the sickness, he despaired, lost faith and grew so weak that his life hung in the balance. As he was fading away, he got a track from the Velvet Underground's John Cale, who'd recorded a song of Escovedo's as part of a two-disc tribute album. Artists from across the country were recording his songs to raise funds for him, to show how much he was loved and appreciated. Along with Cale's track there were songs from his idols Ian McLagan (Small Faces), Ian Hunter (Mott the Hoople), Charlie Sexton (Bob Dylan) and a host of others. Hearing his songs recorded by musicians he adored was a turning point in his illness. Escovedo talks about that moment.

"To get these songs back, that they were done with so much love and respect and beautiful caring for the song, it was so powerful that I said, 'I cannot let this get me, I gotta get better.' And the music was the medicine that got me better."

Back in the early embers of my youth, I had a very narrow definition of what kind of music was cool. It had to be loud, it had to cut like a rusty knife and the singer had to rip your heart out at the show. The first time I saw Escovedo in 1999, he was exactly that. So naturally after the show I hurled my money at the merch table and literally sprinted home to listen to the record. I was jumping up and down with excitement, doing high kicks, expecting a punk anthem like the ones I'd heard all night at the concert. And yet the music coming out of my speakers was just a guy and his acoustic guitar. Bitterly disappointed, I was about to skip the song when the lyrics jumped out at me, "I was summoned by the angels, to be hung beside your picture, not allowed to feel," and I kind of froze, wanting to know what the hell that meant, and then slowly the song picks up, drums ratcheting up the

tension, strings coming on in waves, the rhythm hitting a fever pitch and I start nodding my head, the vibe from the live show returning. I remember saying to no one in particular, "I don't know what the hell this is, but I fucking like it!"

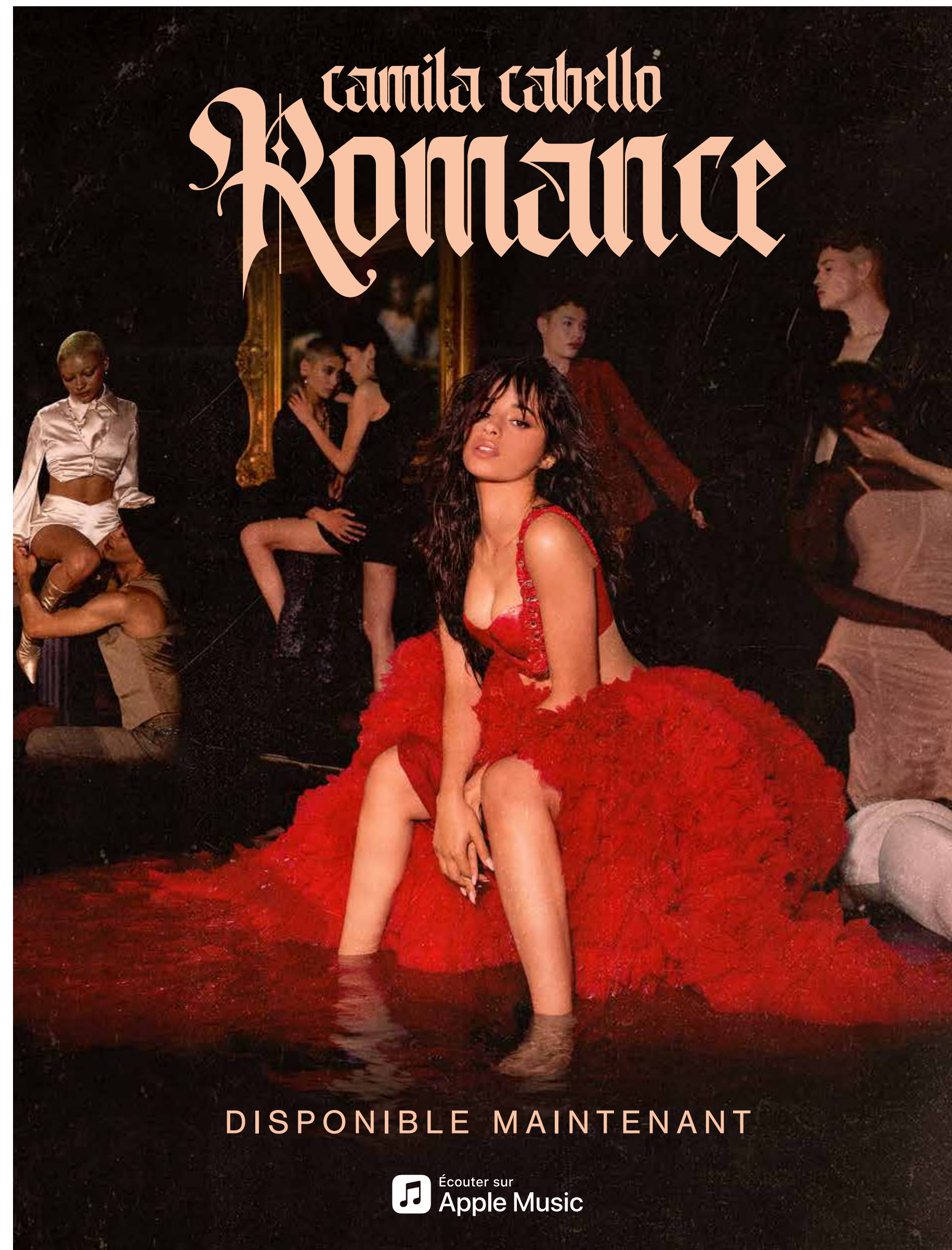
And that's what makes Escovedo's music so great. It's hard to pin down, with tracks on his albums jumping from barnburners to angelic pleas for mercy, but the constant is that there is poetry magic infused into every one. When asked about the main pillars of punk, he said that the thing he loved most about the Stooges was that they embodied everything that was liberating. And that's how I felt listening to Escovedo that night in my living room in '99, and so many nights since. Free. But beyond the music, what makes Escovedo such a beloved and unique person from the scene is how he looked at punk all those years ago, and how he describes what it is today.

"It's a sea of possibility, being endless. Punk rock is really about being a good person in the community and not allowing injustice to take hold. To create good in the world."

When punk first crawled out of the gutters of NYC, it was about kicking against norms, spitting in the eye of the masses and saying, "There's another way to do things." And in this fractured era of warring tribes, rife with those casting enmity and meanness into the world just for the sake of it, the notion of creating good just for the hell of it does seem like a pretty punk rock thing to do.

There aren't that many legends left, and I implore you not to miss this one. Escovedo will be performing as part of an incredible line-up of musicians gathered to pay tribute to the 40th anniversary of the Clash's *London Calling*. Over 30 musicians will roam the stage for a raucous night of punk and post-punk anthems covering the songs featured on the English's band's landmark album, and so much more.

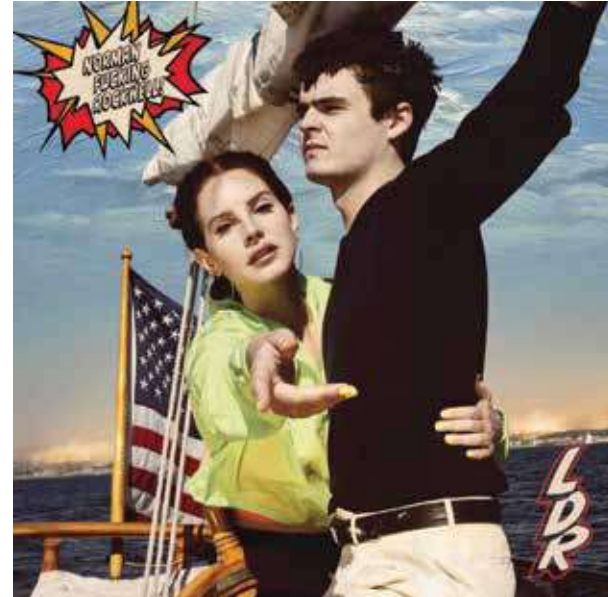
→ Montreal Calling! is happening at the Corona Theatre (2490 Notre-Dame W.) on Friday, Dec. 6, 7:30 p.m., \$72



DISPONIBLE MAINTENANT

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Best albums of 2019



BY MUSIC TEAM

Whether you're looking for suggested listening or want to compare notes, check out these Top 10 Albums lists, as well as favourite concerts and biggest musical disappointments of the year, by six music writers at *Cult MTL*.

JACOB CAREY

Alex Cameron, *Miami Memory* (Secretly Canadian)
 BROCKHAMPTON, *GINGER* (Question Everything/RCA)
 Young Thug, *So Much Fun* (Atlantic)
 YBN Cordae, *The Lost Boy* (Atlantic)
 Vampire Weekend, *Father of the Bride* (Spring Snow)
 Daniel Caesar, *CASE STUDY 01* (Golden Child)
 Post Malone, *Hollywood's Bleeding* (Republic)
 Tyla Yaweh, *Heart Full of Rage* (Independent)
 DaBaby, *KIRK* (Interscope)
 Dreamville, *Revenge of the Dreamers III* (Interscope)

Biggest Disappointment: Khalid, *Free Spirit*

Best Show: Childish Gambino, Osheaga Festival, Aug. 4

Childish Gambino's performance at Osheaga was the definition of "saving best for last." His stage set-up was minimalistic and all eyes were on the shirtless Gambino prancing around in white pants. The whole performance felt like an extension of the "This Is America" music video as Gambino never took his view away from the camera that projected back to thousands in attendance. He showed off his dance moves and continued to prove that he's a jack of all trades. The choir, Gambino's beautiful falsetto and the summer's heart made hearing "Redbone" live one of the most satisfying concert experiences I've ever witnessed.

RYAN DIDUCK

Daniel O'Sullivan, *Folly* (O Genesis)
 Speaker Music, *of desire, longing* (Planet Mu)

Caterina Barbieri, *Ecstatic Computation* (Editions Mego)
 Chemical Brothers, *No Geography* (Virgin EMI/Astralwerks)
 Thom Yorke, *ANIMA* (XL)
 Underworld, *Drift Series 1* (Caroline International)
 Fly Pan Am, *C'est ça* (Constellation)
 These New Puritans, *Inside the Rose* (Infectious)
 Various Artists, *Once Upon a Time ... in Hollywood Original Motion Picture Soundtrack* (Columbia)
 Various Artists, *Bandcloud Presents Missives* (Independent)

Best Show: Hildur Guðadóttir performs Chernobyl, Telkom-Telos, Unsound Festival, Krakow, Poland, Oct. 13

Biggest Disappointment: RIP Keith Flint, Sept 17, 1969–March 4, 2019.

One of the best things that happened to me this decade was getting involved with the Krakow-based Unsound Festival. It allowed me to travel to Eastern Europe for the first time, a stone's throw away from where my ancestors lived, just across the border in Ukraine. The Chernobyl nuclear disaster is a dark moment in an already horrifying Ukrainian national history. *Chernobyl*, the HBO drama, is among the few times I've ever heard mention in popular culture of the Ukrainian famine genocide, which starved and killed somewhere between 7 and 12 million people in the early 1930s. For me, it took a slow and somber score performed in a disused Polish factory in 2019 to finally lay these ghosts to rest.

BRANDON KAUFMAN

Lana Del Rey, *Norman Fucking Rockwell!* (Polydor)
 (Sandy) Alex G, *House of Sugar* (Domino)
 Purple Mountains, *Purple Mountains* (Drag City)
 DaBaby, *Kirk* (Inters-clope/Billion Dollar Baby)
 Jai Paul, *Leak 04-13* (Bait Ones) (XL)
 Jenny Hval, *The Practice of Love* (Sacred Bones)
 Cate Le Bon, *Reward* (Mexican Summer)
 Ice Cream, *FED UP* (Independent)
 O Terno, *«atrás/além»* (Tratore)
 Kim Gordon, *No Home Record* (Matador)

Biggest Disappointment: The realization that, for the first time, I wasn't excited or curious about the release of a

Kanye West album.

Best Show: Stereolab, Corona Theatre, Oct. 1

The Stereolab reunion tour's stop in town was not a nostalgic affair; there were no pronouncements on the unlikelihood of their playing together that night. Instead, the band relentlessly blew through a set which, characteristically, swung from intellectual muzak to ear-splitting raucousness. Lætitia Sadier conversed with the crowd in French, but when it came time to introduce the songs just dryly declared the title, waited for four clicks of the drumsticks and caught the far-out wave of noise unleashed behind her.

ERIK LEJON

Vampire Weekend, *Father of the Bride* (Columbia/Sony)
 Whitney, *Forever Turned Around* (Secretly Canadian)
 Bad Bunny, *X 100pre* (Rimas)
 PNL, *Deux frères* (QLF)
 Loud, *Tout ça pour ça* (Joy Ride)
 CFCF, *Liquid Colours* (BGM)
 Corridor, *Junior* (Bonsound)
 Young Thug, *So Much Fun* (300/Atlantic)
 Bleu Jeans Bleu, *Perfecto* (Chalet Musique)
 Weyes Blood, *Titanic Rising* (Sub Pop)

Best Show: Vampire Weekend, MTELus, Sept. 8

Biggest Disappointment: Mac DeMarco, *Here Comes the Cowboy*

I got married this year, so sue me: Vampire Weekend and Chance the Rapper dropped wedding albums in 2019 that were right in my wheelhouse. If you had asked me at the start of the decade if I thought a rapper de chez nous would be headlining the Bell Centre by the end of the 2010s, I wouldn't have been totally shocked, but the fact that it was Loud? His progression from LLA to leading man is a testament to having a steely resolve. Here's hoping he broke down some doors for others. Since leaving our fair city, Grimes and Mac DeMarco have admittedly achieved greater levels of worldwide fame/infamy, but at what cost? Since riding off in the cybertruck, Grimes' music has gone a little industrial but remains interesting. Mac, on the other hand, just sounds tired.

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DARCY MACDONALD

- King Princess, *Cheap Queen* (Zelig)
- Danny Brown, *unknowwhatimsayin* (Warp)
- Juice WRLD, *Death Race for Love* (Interscope)
- Anderson .Paak, *Ventura* (12 Tone/Aftermath)
- Nems, *Gorilla Monsoon* (Lyfer Gang)
- Tyler, the Creator, *Igor* (Columbia)
- JPEGMAFIA, *All My Heroes Are Cornballs* (EQT)
- Loud, *Tout Ça Pour Ça* (Joyride)
- Rapsody, *Eve* (Jamla)
- Benny the Butcher, *The Plugs 1 Met* (Black Soprano)

Best Show: Tyler, the Creator, Place Bell, Sept. 11

Biggest Disappointment: Kanye West, *Jesus Is King*

Jesus merely crawls on this mercifully short, well-conceived but wrong-headedly executed foray into praise music from my all-around favourite artist of the 21st century, so far. "You're my Chic-Fil-A" has gotta be one of the worst lines in the history of pop music, with any potential of being

remotely quotable already well past the 24-hour-news-cycle shelf life that this project was otherwise quite audibly created to pander to. While a few joints stand and deliver (notably the Drtwrk-produced "Use This Gospel," which not only welcomes back a reunited and in-shape Clipse, but also features Kenny G), *JIK* landed like a movie where you could tell they'd shown you all the most salvageable scenes in the trailer, but then did well at the box-office on opening weekend anyway. Spare us the director's cut — and for that matter, the recently teased, Dr.Dre-connected sequel — get outta the pulpit and back in the lab, Yeezus. God has better things to do and so do you.

MR. WAVVY

- James Blake, *Assume Form* (Polydor)
- The Comet Is Coming, *Trust in the Lightforce of the Deep* (Impulse)
- Anderson .Paak, *Ventura* (Aftermath)
- Shay Lia, *Dangerous* (Independent)
- FKA Twigs, *MAGDALENE* (Young Turks)

- Tuxedo, *Tuxedo III* (Funk on Sight)
- Billie Eilish, *WHEN WE ALL FALL ASLEEP, WHERE DO WE GO* (Darkroom)
- Flume, *Hi, This Is Flume* (Future Classic)
- SiR, *Chasing Summer* (TDE)
- Danny Brown, *unknowwhatimsayin* (Warp)

Best Show: Hubert Lenoir, Red Bull Music Festival, Sept. 23

Biggest Disappointment: Chance the Rapper, *The Big Day* (Independent)

What does the term "album" even mean anymore? After a trifecta of out of the park mixtapes between 2012–2016, Chance the Rapper at long last let loose his formal debut album, *The Big Day*. Unfortunately, the project was also a big stinker, with the best of intentions meeting the worst execution. It's a double-edged sword of an artist who seems happier, yet less creatively inspired than his once-melancholy past. Were there worse albums in 2019? Sure. But with Chance having grown to become one of hip hop's most cherished musicians, the word "disappointment" does not apply more fittingly to any other project of the past year.

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:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

On Dec. 6, our fair burg is celebrating the 40th anniversary of one of the greatest records of the '70s. That jammer would be *London Calling* by "the only band that matters," the Clash. Numerous locals as well as the Replacements' Tommy Stinson and one of my favourite singer-songwriters Alejandro Escovedo (see an interview with him on p. ?) will be doing their best Joe Strummer stomp on Corona's pines while performing the double record in its entirety.

The year 1979 was certainly a watermark one. Last month, this very column looked at the 40th anniversaries of my favourite punk record ever, the Ramones' absolute corker *It's Alive* and the absolutely gorgeous Motörhead 1979 vinyl box set. I'll keep things rolling this month with three more records getting the box set treatment for their 40th anniversaries along with a classic record that is actually reaching its 50th birthday.

Gary Numan, *Replicas; The First Recordings* (Beggars Banquet)

Gary Numan, *The Pleasure Principle: The First Recordings* (Beggars Banquet)

First up is electronic music pioneer Gary Numan, who squeezed in two key releases in '79: *Replicas* and *The Pleasure Principle*. These two separate releases are hitting shelves as a double vinyl/CD set and instead of just giving us remastered versions of songs we already have, the fine people at Beggars Banquet have dug deep and excavated all of the raw demos and BBC recordings of these two seminal cold wave classics. Numan is in complete control right from the beginning here, perched in the producer chair with his vision unwavering but seeing his editing prowess as he chisels to the final versions that are now stamped into our DNA is a thrill. With over 20 tracks on each release there is a lot to take in. Do you really need four versions of "Cars"? Of course you do!

The Pop Group, *Y* (Mute)

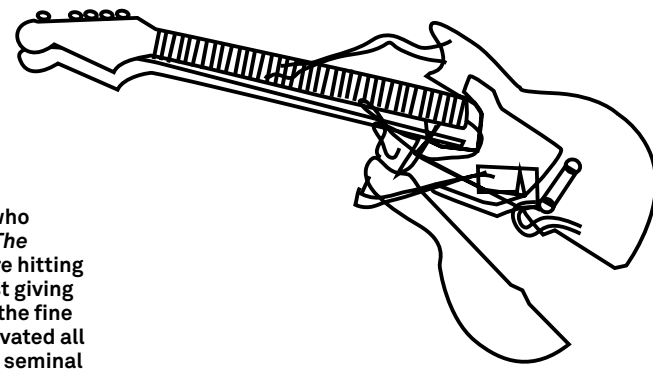
With the Pistols putting the nail into the first wave of punk in the first month of '78 on the last date of their disastrous tour, 1979 was rife with post-punk angularity and spirit and nothing embodied that more than the Pop Group's dubtastic post-punk debut *Y*. The Pop Group was in good company in '79 with P.L.L. releasing their second record (and *Y* kindred spirit) *Metal Box*. Any self-styled punker expecting New York Dolls-esque smashing and bashing or the Ramones' lines about Burger King and DDT would be fugged here as songs clanged and banged with serious dub groove while singer Mark Stewart caterwauled over top with political barbs like "We Are All Prostitutes" that can still draw blood 40 years later. If you are wondering what record every single current-

day post-punk band is ripping off, it's this one.

The Kinks, *Arthur (or The Decline and Fall of the British Empire)* (Sanctuary/BMG)

The Kinks third greatest record (first being *Village Green..* and second being *Something Else*) gets the royal box set treatment and it's nothing short of stunning. I got the more affordable double CD version, which includes the original release now glistening with a new remastering job, new bonus tracks and a second CD of the long lost Dave Davies solo record (featuring the Kinks as backing band and Ray Davies as chief songwriter). The CDs and booklet are in a hardcover package and would make the perfect stocking stuffer for that anglophile in your life — it's probably the most British record ever released. If you can't sink yer gums into "Victoria," "Australia" or "Shangri-La," you probably have concrete poured into yer ear canals.

Current Obsession: Gene Clark, *No Other* box set
jonathan.cummins@gmail.com



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Outer world



Waves

BY JUSTINE SMITH

With *Waves*, his newest film, director Trey Edward Shults sets foot outside.

His two previous films, *Krishna* and *It Comes at Night*, rarely leave the confines of his character's home. Their houses defined their world, closed off and paranoid. *Waves*, on the other hand, celebrates the outdoors and the unlimited possibility of the road. It's a film about a black suburban family navigating life and how they deal with tensions, transformations and love. It's also a film about space, the expanses of the Florida landscape, how our inner world comes to define our relationship with our environment. As the full world seems to lay open at the feet of the film's two adolescent characters, it can be as stifling as it is liberating.

Shults spoke to me about the film's changing moods, and the importance of space plays. *Waves* stars Kelvin Harrison Jr. and Taylor Russell as a brother and sister duo, and the film is structured in two parts taking on each sibling's subjective point of view as they go through the highs and lows of adolescence. The environment and how it's shot plays a considerable role in the experience of the film. "How we use space," he says, "it can feel wide and big and then suffocating and claustrophobic. We were trying to make an honest experience about how the characters live in their worlds."

Florida plays a significant role in this vision; it's the state Shults now considers home. The organic and lived-in sense of space likely emerges from his relationship with the environment. He shot the film in places his girlfriend grew up in, and his conversations with her helped shape the film's Florida experience. From there, it becomes a more organic process, as he explains: "Just thinking and living here for years and letting places build up," says Shults. "Let that organically work its way into the story."

The landscape itself becomes transformed through the subjective experience of his characters. "Every kind of movement echoes where their emotional headspace is at a given time," he says. "That can be spinning through a car because that's what their love and relationship feels like." The camera's movement, at times free and roaming, at other times stagnant evokes the emotional experience of each scene.

Shults has worked with cinematographer Drew Daniels (who has also worked on *Euphoria*) on all his films. Together they would look at the script and break down each scene by focusing on what Tyler and Emily are experiencing emotionally. From there, they would work to create the mood and emotional direction of each scene.

Most of the film's visually evocative scenes take place in cars. In several sequences, Tyler and his friends drive down the highway, singing and laughing. The camera moves 360 degrees to inspire a sense of full liberation and emotional bliss. Once Daniels and Shults decided that was what they wanted to do for the scene, they had to go about figuring out how to do it logistically. For Shults, achieving this effect was essential as the visual "encapsulates thematically," the entire film. The only frame of reference they had for this kind of scene was from *Children of Men*, and they knew they did not have the kind of money to build the rig used to achieve a similar effect in Alfonso Cuarón's masterpiece.

What they did was remove the centre console of the car, put in a slider (a revolving horizontal piece of equipment) from the front seat to the back and break down an Alexa-mini as small as it would go and place it on a remote head. There is a dolly grip crunched down behind the driver's seat who can move the slider, Shults is crouched behind the passenger seat with a walkie-talkie and Daniels is in another car operating the camera remotely. After figuring out the practicalities of it, they started to play.

"Once we did that, we hoped the kids would just forget about the camera and we could just dance with them," Shults says, "let them dictate what we're doing. It was a blast." The technical work becomes the backbone to what is ultimately a spontaneous and improvisational film. "I would call it playing jazz," Shults explains of the on-set atmosphere. The script became a living document. There was a lot of talking about scenes and working things out. It was playful and fun, always searching for a new way to see a scene and making it better.

Like many films about youth, music plays a vital role in the atmosphere of *Waves*. Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross composed the score, and the film has a soundtrack that includes music from artists like Animal Collective, Kendrick Lamar, Radiohead and Frank Ocean. The movie's sound, as much as its visuals, informs the ebbs and flow of the story. Shults says that almost all soundtrack choices emerge on the level of the writing, and the music onscreen is "probably 85 to 90 per cent of what was in the original script."

A film about growing up, *Waves* seeks to capture the shifting emotions of youth through a place, movement and music. It's a film that takes risks structurally and formally, searching for new ways to express the chaos of adolescence. For Shults, this is his biggest movie yet, but it's been brewing for a long time.

"I had this epiphany one day: I wanted to make a movie about the highs and lows of life and love and everything in between, the good and the bad of being a human being, the sloppy messy grey matter that connects those dichotomies and that we all connect to."

→ *Waves* opens in theatres on Friday, Dec. 6

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On Screen



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Merci Pour Tout



The Two Popes

BY ALEX ROSE

For the last few years, December has been synonymous with *Star Wars* movies. Only *Solo* diverged from that schedule, and we all saw how that went.

That all comes to a head with *Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker* (Dec. 20), which closes off the most recent trilogy and paves the way, ultimately, for an endless unspooling of Disney+ series. JJ Abrams is back in the director's chair following the controversial Rian Johnson chapter of the series, but everything else is still up in the air.

Greta Gerwig's anticipated follow-up to *Lady Bird* turns out to be an adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (Dec. 25) starring Saoirse Ronan, Emma Watson, Florence Pugh and Meryl Streep. Reviews have been overwhelmingly positive, with many stating that the film overcomes the dustier, more dated aspects of the novel.

The trailer's release was a real laughingstock of ironic delight, but it seems like that has given way to some form of real anticipation for the "live-action" adaptation of the musical *Cats* (Dec. 20). With a frankly inscrutable mix of CGI and real actors (including Taylor Swift, Jason DeRulo and Idris Elba), it's going to make a good deal of money on curiosity alone, but most of the box office take will be based on the fact that it's an adaption of one of the most popular musicals of all time.

The Rock, Jack Black, Karen Gillan and Kevin Hart return in *Jumanji: The Next Level* (Dec. 13), a seemingly more-of-the-same sequel to the smash hit reboot from 2017 — it was

surprisingly well-reviewed on top of being an enormous hit, so there's hope yet for the Jake Kasdan-directed film.

The ever-efficient Clint Eastwood snuck off another one this year: *Richard Jewell* (Dec. 13) tells the story of the security guard who was hailed as a hero during the 1996 Olympic Games terrorist attacks before being considered a suspect by authorities. Paul Walter Hauser (*I, Tonya*, *BlackKkklansman*) stars as the titular Jewell alongside Jon Hamm, Sam Rockwell and Olivia Wilde. Jonathan Pryce and Anthony Hopkins star as Popes Francis and Benedict, respectively, in *The Two Popes* (Dec. 6, in theatres, Dec. 20 on Netflix), an ecclesiastical two-hander from Fernando Meirelles (*City of God*, *The Constant Gardener*) that focuses on a series of meetings between the sitting pope and his potential successor as the ailing Benedict considers vacating his role.

It's been a full decade since Sam Mendes has directed a non-Bond film and, like many a British filmmaker of his generation, he's chosen a world war as his topic. As the title suggests, *1917* (Dec. 25) is a war epic set during WWI — Mendes's gimmick is that the film is to appear as one continuous take.

Set just a few decades later, François Girard's *The Song of Names* (Dec. 25) is a drama about two friends (Tim Roth and Clive Owen) whose lives were forever altered by WWII. Girard has not quite recaptured the international success of *Le violon rouge* even if his English-language efforts have been quite well-regarded. The relative lack of buzz surrounding this title suggests that *The Song of Names* is not going to break that streak.

Speaking of war epics, Dec. 13 marks the release of Terence Malick's *A Hidden Life*, his first film in nearly a decade that

can be described as something other than sad celebrities moping about in abstract narrative constructions. August Diehl plays Franz Jägerstätter, an Austrian conscientious objector during WWII who is jailed and eventually tried for his refusal to fight. The film won two prizes at Cannes earlier this year. Zoe Kazan, Bill Nighy and Jay Baruchel star in *The Kindness of Strangers* (Dec. 6), a drama with the very uninspiring premise of showing the intertwining lives of several strangers in New York City. Director Lone Scherfig has had both hits (*An Education*) and misses (*The Riot Club*), but early buzz on this one suggests it's in the latter category.

Bob Clark's Yuletide slasher *Black Christmas* was already remade once — rather shoddily — in 2006, but it didn't quite have the clout that this Blumhouse-funded, Sophia Takal-directed version has. Imogen Poots stars in the new *Black Christmas* (Dec. 13), which Takal co-wrote with film critic April Wolfe. Jay Roach's controlled shift from comedy vehicles to politically charged, ripped-from-the-headlines dramas continues unabated with *Bombshell*, which looks at the Roger Ailes (played by John Lithgow) scandal at Fox News. Charlize Theron, Nicole Kidman and Margot Robbie play Megyn Kelly, Gretchen Carlson and a fictional producer, respectively.

There are also two local productions opening this month. First up is *Réservoir* (Dec. 6), a minimalist drama directed by Kim St-Pierre about two brothers (Jean-Simon Leduc and Maxime Dumontier) who sail out onto the Gouin Reservoir to spread their father's ashes. That's sort of a familiar refrain in *Merci pour tout* (Dec. 25), Louise Archambault's second film of the year after the extremely well-received *Il pleuvait des oiseaux*. That movie is also about two siblings (Magalie Lépine-Blondeau and Julie Perreault) who reconnect following the death of their father — but the tone seems slightly more upbeat here.

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Sophie Cadieux



Jane Penny, Sean Nicholas Savage (foreground) and Adam Byczkowski

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BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

For the generation raised on music videos, sound and vision are inextricably tied. Add a dose of vintage movie musicals to the formative mix and daydreaming about choreography and backdrops while listening to music comes easily.

When it's your own music, even more so.

Sean Nicholas Savage talks about letting his imagination paint pictures to his music from an early age, when he was "singing in the bathtub and dreaming on the bus." The prolific genre-mashing singer-songwriter who came of age in Edmonton but moved to Montreal about a decade ago (and sometimes lives in Berlin), has written a musical that's being produced in spectacular fashion by Ballet Opéra Pantomime (BOP), to be performed in February at la Chapelle Scènes Contemporaines.

Please Thrill Me features the music of Sean Nicholas Savage, who also plays the lead role in the piece with a supporting cast of fellow musician-actors: Jane Penny of TOPS, Rollie Pemberton (aka Cadence Weapon), Lulu Hughes and Adam Byczkowski (aka Better Person). There will be a narrative — a coming of age road trip fable about finding yourself, making instant friends and seeking "a life without limits" — as well as singing, dancing and live musicians on stage, making it the biggest production that a lot of its players have ever been involved in.

For Savage, an iconoclast of the local scene who's kept a low profile lately, the project began with a serendipitous meeting

with BOP's Hubert Tanguay-Labrosse, who assisted in giving Savage's music the orchestral treatment with the Joliette and Sherbrooke youth orchestras.

"My latest released works are a cassette trilogy I spent many years working on, and when I finally completed them, I was totally lost and in desperate need of a change," Savage says. "Just then, Hubert asked if I was interested in working on a musical. It was an honour."

Directing the piece is Sophie Cadieux, whose extensive acting credits and experience directing theatre and collaborating on live theatrical elements for musicians like Pierre Lapointe have prepped her for helming this ambitious project.

"A song is like a scene in a play — you can make it exist on another level if you put it in a big space, if you put a certain light on it. The context in which you listen to music influences the way the music gets to you. I have this fascination with brining to every song a certain emotion, a trip, a quest. I'm going to try to bring that sensibility into Sean Nicholas Savage's world, where everything is contained in the dreamy, rainy, epic pop that he does."

With all the personalities involved gathered on one stage, *Please Thrill Me* promises a flavour that's distinct from both the concert experience (however elaborate) and the type of stage production we may be accustomed to. But fans of Savage and co. as well as connoisseurs of classic musicals will have plenty of reasons to come together.

"We wanna have fun with classic *West Side Story*-style dance — we're not going to lose that, it's not a dark intellectual piece — but with people who aren't necessarily

dancers and have their distinct personal expressions," says Cadieux. "Sean Nicholas Savage is dancing all the time but he has his own system of dance with his body. We're gonna do some numbers with comedy, too — dancing on the tables of the restaurant, falling off the table, that kind of thing. But the world that the music lives in is dreamy and atmospheric and the world that he describes is very strange, where there's no boundaries between people. What he would like is that people get together and form a new kind of family."

Like his character in *Please Thrill Me* (whose name is Jazz), Savage is open to collectivism — not necessarily an obvious trait for a solo artist — certainly when it comes to this project.

"I am merely a tablecloth and all the world is raining tomatoes," he says. "It's lucky that I happen to be working with several brilliant artists. Everyone is going off an audio demo of the musical that I recorded. Beyond that, it's up to their own imaginations."

The final pieces of *Please Thrill Me* are coming together in the next couple of months, and the excitement and anticipation shared by Savage and Cadieux were obvious when I spoke to them in November. "I'm thrilled," Savage says, rather appropriately. "I really can't wait to sing those songs from the inside out, to enter the world of the music."

→ *Please Thrill Me* will be performed at la Chapelle Scènes Contemporaines (3700 St-Dominique) from Feb. 17–March 1, various times, \$33.50/\$28.50 students, seniors, under 30, art pros and neighbourhood residents/\$23.50 performing arts students/\$18.50 12 and under. Note that there are three dates with French surtitles.

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Why The Nutcracker?

BY NORA ROSENTHAL

The Nutcracker, even for people who don't go to the ballet or go see any kind of dance during the regular season, is entrenched in North American holiday traditions.

Most of you are probably familiar with the story of one middle class white family whose cozy Christmas celebrations spin off into their daughter's fantastical involvement with an army of mice, a danced ode to the dazzling edible gifts of globalization (coffee, chocolate, marzipan, etc.) and of course the mended nutcracker toy who is transformed into a charming prince. Productions, including that of Montreal's Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, typically involve scores of children running around in cute costumes.

It's easy to write off *The Nutcracker* as sparkly philistine fair designed to fill seats, as *The Washington Post's* dance critic Sarah Kaufman did to scathing effect when she called "the deathless *Nutcracker*" the "ballet equivalent of meatloaf," yet the show is undeniably popular, and as Kaufman and others have also observed, the financial health of many ballet companies depends on the old Christmas stalwart to fund more interesting programming for the rest of the year.

So, what is there that continues to make it enthralling for so many? What makes it so that people so eagerly anticipate *The Nutcracker* — a tradition with perhaps more gravitas than a joyous yearly screening of *Trailer Park Boys: Xmas Special*. Stephen Satterfield, a dancer who's been with Les Grands Ballets Canadiens since 2011 — and who, between the ages of 5 and 33 has only spent a total of three or four years *not* doing *The Nutcracker* — has some thoughts on how performers are able to keep the piece alive, both for themselves and for the audience.



Veronic Vachon

Satterfield is no stranger to a certain cynical line of self-inquiry with regards *The Nutcracker*, asking, "Why do we keep doing this?" Yet even if the repetition is wearing, he's also keenly aware that *The Nutcracker* is often someone's first exposure to a large theatrical production, and that the presence of all those kids curtsying amongst the pros both lends energy and excitement to the adult dancers while being a rare treat for children in the audience as well: "Even if that's just their initiation into something that moves them or that creates an artistic reaction within them, that's really important."

He also notes the enduring, ear-worm allure of Tchaikovsky's score. If there's any one way that choreographers find newness in the piece, Satterfield thinks it's in the musicality. "In every different version [of *The Nutcracker*] you have a clear reference as to what that choreographer was attracted to or considering musically... it's such a great score. It's old and it still has so much life. That's why choreographers continue to make new *Nutcrackers*."

Indeed, even as someone with a limited stomach for lighthearted prancing, the score is inescapably winning and lively — even the numbing children's entertainment quality of the "Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy" is elevated by the plucky optimism of that notorious celesta. Does Satterfield hum the music in his home? In stores? Oh yes. Is there any recourse? Satterfield laughs. "There's no way to get away from it. It's better to just accept."

The Nutcracker may have limited drama, but its kitsch sheen lures you in. The candies, the snowflakes, the gingerbread soldiers, dolls and flowers — they are undoubtedly whimsical. Yet, the variants of *The Nutcracker* so many of us are familiar with still drag us down the same old magical journey again and again, which — surprise — renders that less magical for anyone not a doe-eyed babe high on their first hit of professional art.

Mark Morris's *The Hard Nut* is one of the weirder versions of *The Nutcracker*, with costumes recalling a sort of a mellowed-out work by Michael Clark, but it plays with the original short story — *The Nutcracker and the Mouse King* by E.T.A. Hoffman — in novel ways. *The Hard Nut* does other interesting things like actually address the idea of race within the libretto (beyond the tokenizing scenes in the Land of Sweets that are fortunately increasingly subject to scrutiny). Not to mention, the atypically sexy *Hard Nut* was very well received. In other words, the very fact of *The Nutcracker's* popularity makes it ripe for braver reworkings. Satterfield points out that *The Nutcracker* can "represent[t] magic, the magic of that enduring story — of your ability to transcend whatever your situation is during the holidays." That's a powerful thing, but magic and wonderment are not static ideals, especially not for children.

→ *The Nutcracker* is on at Place des Arts – Sale Wilfrid-Pelletier (175 Ste-Catherine W), from Dec. 12–30, 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., \$79–\$149, \$50–\$93 17 & under

:play recent



Nothing's Alrite in Our Life...



Rebecca Foon

By Ryan Diduck

Godspeed You! Black Emperor, Cabaret la Tulipe, Nov. 4

One of the greatest fortunes of living in Montreal is to have Godspeed as our community house band, a band that trudges out on a lonely Monday, the night after daylight savings time fucks with time itself, two nights into a three-night stint, and summons up their spirit with muster. Godspeed you, Godspeed.

Lucia di Lammermoor, Opera de Montréal, Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier, Nov. 9

The mood after Lucia di Lammermoor on a cold November night was grim. An opera that ends with everyone getting stabbed could really use some uplifting walkout music, like Harry Nilsson's "Coconut" after *Reservoir Dogs*.

The Irishman, dir. Martin Scorsese, 2019 (Netflix)

Martin Scorsese rocked the motion-pictures boat earlier this year when he contended that comic book and superhero films aren't cinema. To Scorsese, these movies veer far from John Ford's sweeping vistas or Alfred Hitchcock's cerebral thrillers and toward theme park territory, exploiting all manner of expensive special effects for simple, cheap thrills. Personally, I agree. I would rather watch a pink print of any third-rate Spaghetti Western any day than suffer through *Avengers: Endgame* in the theatre. I get that people enjoy these movies. I don't judge them, just as I wouldn't judge anyone for preferring a certain kind of food or drink. Taste is personal. Nevertheless, Marvel movies are not cinema like *Raging Bull* is cinema.

I have some bad news for Scorsese, though. His latest picture, *The Irishman*, which premiered in a very limited theatrical run and now streams on Netflix, isn't cinema either. It is ... television. It may be exquisite television — possibly some of the best television ever made. It is certainly lavish, high production value television. I liked it. At times, I loved

it. But it's not cinema in the sense that Scorsese himself defines and defends it.

The filmmaker has pulled off some amazing feats here, rustling every conceivable actor, not only from his trademark gangster stable (De Niro, Pesci, Welker White), but also raiding *The Sopranos* (Kathrine Narducci, Robert Funaro) and his own underrated HBO series, *Vinyl* (Ray Romano, Bobby Cannavale). Scorsese directs Al Pacino for the first time, and it's a natural match. Indeed, the movie is composed of flawless performances. The acting, cinematography, montage and music all snap together perfectly, as if waved into place by a Scorsese-brand magic wand. But even on the big screen, the film has little of the risk-taking and rollicking energy that made *Goodfellas* or *Casino* or *Bringing out the Dead* so exhilarating to watch.

There is nothing here that hasn't already been successfully road tested elsewhere, either by Scorsese himself or in other productions, like *The Sopranos*, that emulate his style. Just as with the Marvel movies, there is no room for experimentation. It's algorithmically formulaic, like a greatest hits (pun intended) of mob movies. Every scene, every shot, is precisely pitched and delivers exactly the necessary amount of information; nothing less, nothing more. It's dramatic, but not spectacular. In the film's most unexpected moments, still there isn't anything genuinely unexpected. Particularly the movie's pivotal scene plays out like a sanitized, Ikea version of Joe Pesci's demise in *Goodfellas*, something we've been waiting for two hours and 30 years to see again. Scorsese scoops together all the ingredients we've come to expect from the gangster genre but serves it up like a tray of prison food. It satisfies, but it doesn't excite the appetite.

The Irishman's much discussed de-aging effects aren't cinematic either. In days gone by, what a director might have done when portraying characters in their younger years is to cast young actors of remarkable physical similarity and talent — someone like, say, Robert De Niro playing a youthful Marlon Brando in *The Godfather Part II*. Surely there are younger actors who could have played Frank Sheeran at 35, rather than deploying distracting digital masks for De Niro and company. It's not lasers and spaceships, but it's still special effects-heavy, and that ain't cinema.

The way that Netflix withheld *The Irishman* from a regular theatrical run is decidedly uncinematic, too. I wanted to see

this film in a big room at the Forum on opening night, and again a week later, and again in 17 weeks. But that won't happen because Netflix wants a measure of exclusivity, and for \$160-million, rightly so. Netflix would like us to see *The Irishman* — on our own screens. Martin Scorsese is one of America's greatest living filmmakers. But he's now directing made-for-TV movies. I'm more than a little concerned that it is where it's gotten.

Underworld & Ø [Phase], "Border Country," *Drift Series 1* (Caroline International)

`<iframe width=»560» height=»315» src=»https://www.youtube.com/embed/TwFkp1-R0DA» frameborder=»0» allow=»accelerometer; autoplay; encrypted-media; gyroscope; picture-in-picture» allowfullscreen></iframe>`

One of the most delightful surprises of the decade has been Underworld's indestructibility. Their 2016 album *Barbara Barbara, We Face a Shining Future* was one of my favourite albums of the 2010s and hinted that Karl Hyde and Rick Smith's best work might still be ahead of them. *Drift Series 1*, the year-long project for which they created a weekly track, might be it — a techno-situationist epic and a testament to the art of perseverance.

Rebecca Foon, "Dreams to be Born," *Waxing Moon* (Constellation Records)

I've been keeping a dream diary since 2015 and have written down nearly 1,000 dreams so far. My dreams tend to cycle through places and themes and people. I'm often living somewhere that is not my home, somewhere that I've never been to in waking life, but nonetheless feels familiar. I used to have recurring dreams of finding a secret room that I never knew was there, the feeling of discovery and liberation and relief washing over me as I slept. Lately, though, I've been having recurrent panic dreams that involve moving through smaller and smaller spaces until I'm trapped and can't move. Usually I'm late in these dreams, too, and madly rushing around to do something for which I'm unprepared. I wish I could find that big secret room again; my subconscious could use the space.

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