



# THANK YOU

Doctors, nurses and hospital staff

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Homecare and seniors residence workers

Specialized shelter staff, for the homeless,  
victims of conjugal violence etc

Blood bank and transplant staff

Emergency dentists and optometrists

811, 911, suicide prevention and other mental  
health hotline staff

Pharmaceutical and medical equipment  
production staff

Veterinary and animal shelter staff

Emergency childcare staff

Online teachers

Legal aid

Food bank workers and food safety inspectors

Food producers

Grocery store, pharmacy and dépanneur staff

Postal workers and couriers

Chefs and other restaurant staff

Hotel staff

Print and broadcast media staff

SAQ and SQDC staff

Mass transit staff

Airport and port staff

Taxi, Uber and paratransit drivers

Pulp and paper producers

Producers of chemical, medical and health products

Microelectronic manufacturers

Industrial complex and defence sector workers

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Public infrastructure maintenance workers

Energy distribution workers

Priority government service workers

Correctional service and security agency workers

Banking and financial services workers

Emergency construction workers, electricians and  
plumbers

Funeral home, crematoria and cemetery staff

Building maintenance workers

Car and other vehicle mechanics

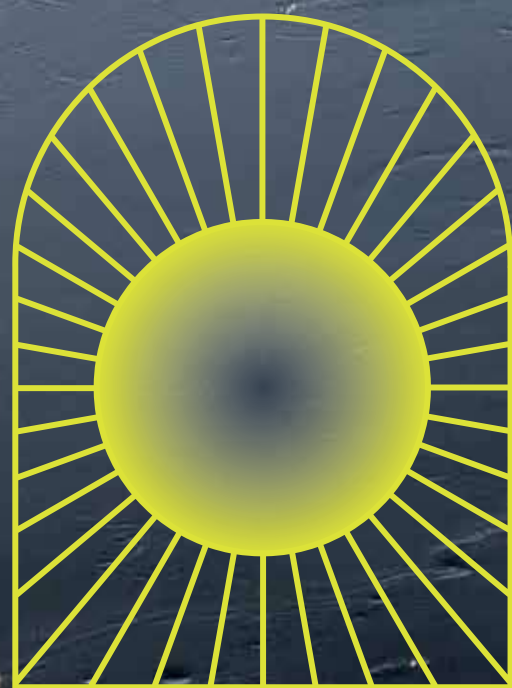
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# PHI

## LIVING TRACES



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### IN THIS MOMENT

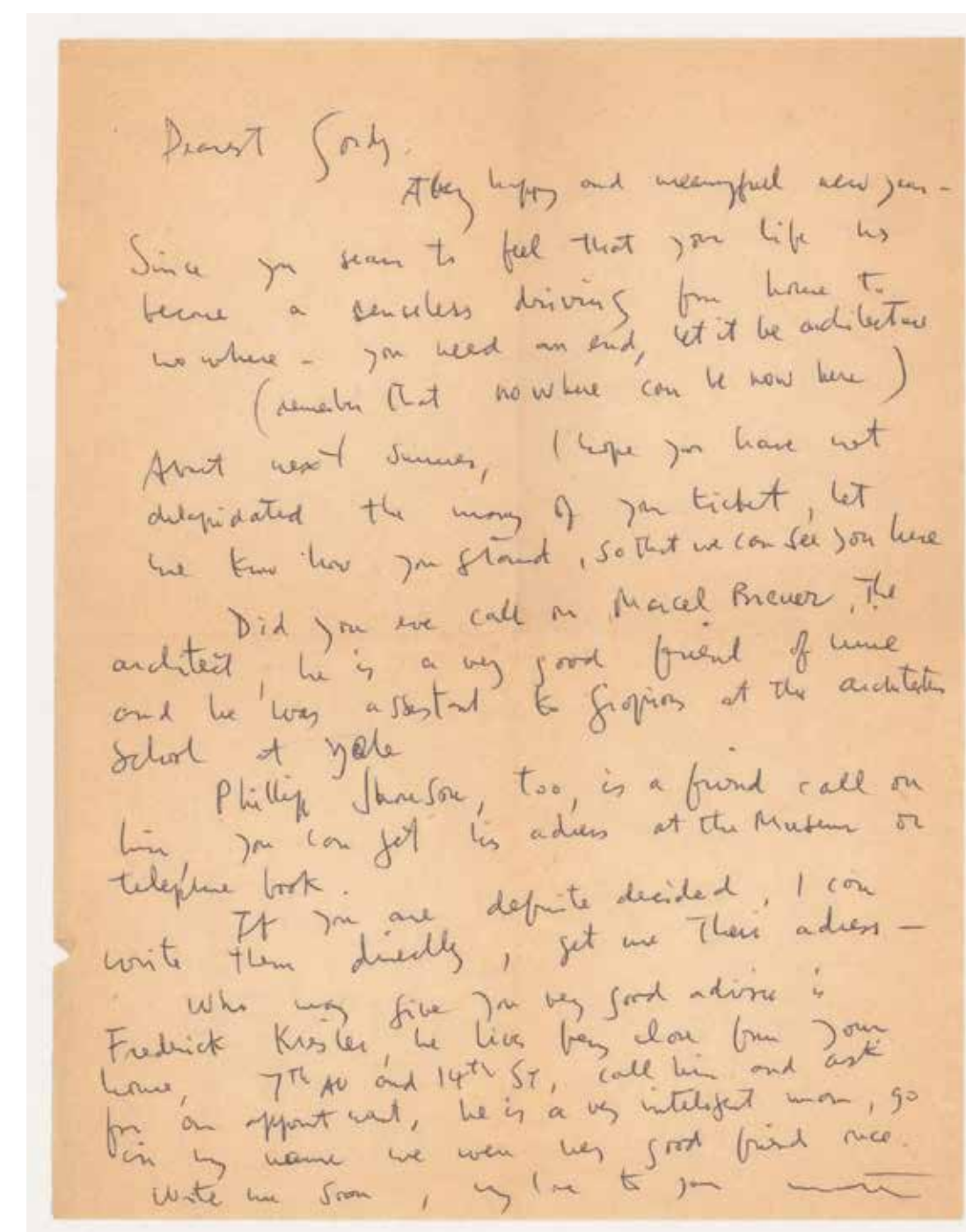
(Re)discover a selection  
of works drawn from our  
repertoire.

Our plans have changed...

For now, and until further notice, we have decided to keep the CCA building closed, including the museum galleries, the bookstore, and the study room. But our website remains accessible as a point of entry into our projects, our collection, our work, and our thinking.

We are currently featuring a letter from Roberto Matta-Echaurren to his son Gordon Matta-Clark, in an effort to continue nurturing a form of communication that we have always been keen on and are especially interested in now.

Explore more at [cca.qc.ca](http://cca.qc.ca)



“Dearest Gordy:  
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feel that your life has  
become a senseless  
driving from here  
to nowhere—  
you need an end,  
let it be architecture  
(remember that  
no where can be  
now here).”



Roberto Matta-Echaurren à Gordon Matta-Echaurren, 9 janvier 1962.  
PHCON2002:0016:016:058, Collection Gordon Matta-Clark, Collection CCA.  
Don de la succession de Gordon Matta-Clark © Succession de Gordon Matta-Clark

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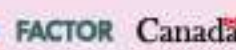
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until April 12

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Monument by George William Hill,  
located in Montreal's  
Mount Royal Park, depicts  
the Goddess of Liberty.

Illustration by Dan Buller

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**cultmtl.com**

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# City

## Letter from the editor



Mackenzie Ltd

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

“May you live in interesting times” is a curse that dates back to the 1930s, a time when Nazi Germany was ramping up for what would become a world war.

Making this curse even more prescient than the fact that we’re essentially experiencing a world war right now, this saying was wrongly identified as a “Chinese curse” by a quasi-political-dynasty of dunces, the Chamberlains. A month ago, Trump and climate change were “interesting” enough, but for so many of us (too many of us), the present and future fallout from those disasters seemed remote. With this pandemic, every single human on Earth is experiencing something interesting firsthand.

This chapter in the COVID-19 pandemic story — by which I mean this week, maybe even today; things are changing so fast — is as grim as it is hopeful. There are signs of recovery in China, while devastation is still unfolding in Europe, as it is more and more in the U.S. But as important as it is to

keep an eye on the global picture, more than ever we have to be concerned with what’s happening locally: in our city, our neighbourhood, with our friends and family, in our own homes. One of the mantras throughout this surreal period has been the impact of the individual on the collective — that taking minor safety measures in your immediate surroundings, everyday actions and transactions can prevent the spread of the virus; that an individual’s slip-ups can make the difference between life and death for dozens, even hundreds of people.

The importance of being mindful extends beyond pandemic precautions. If we want our city to survive this, and get back to some semblance of normalcy, we have to consider the emotional and financial stress that so many artists, restaurants, bars, music venues and other cherished local people, organizations and businesses are under. The way we use our energy and our money right now is vital in protecting the things we love about this city: the art, the music, the nightlife, the food scene, the film scene, the retailers and beyond. Shopping local, buying Montreal-made art, ordering from your favourite small restaurants and donating to the plethora of support funds for laid-off workers will provide a boost that can make the difference

between resurgence and shutdowns for dozens, even hundreds of small businesses.

In recent weeks, we have dedicated our website to local COVID-19 news, cures for quarantine boredom and articles about supporting Montreal musicians, bar and restaurant staff and so on. In this issue of our publication we have aimed to salute the industries that are in trouble, the danger of losing hold of critical thinking in times of crisis and provide guidance for eating well at home. We’ve also included some content that would normally appear in our magazine. It’s a big issue — we had a lot to say, and we offered advertising to our clients for free, in solidarity and sympathy with those who have supported us.

We want to salute the clients and all Montreal endeavours that you won’t see in our pages in the coming months: promoters who aren’t operating, festivals that have had to cancel their 2020 editions, museums that remain closed for who knows how long, restaurants and shops that are shuttered. We’re visualizing your survival, the survival of all of us. Montreal will be back soon, and we’re here to help you see it through.

# PHI

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# Situation critical



Louis-Philippe Hébert

BY TOULA DRIMONIS

I’m deeply grateful for much of the political leadership I’ve seen in Quebec and Canada this past month as a global epidemic has killed more than 40,000 people worldwide and has temporarily — if not irrevocably — altered our lives.

Compared with U.S. President Donald Trump, who’s bragging about being “a ratings hit” with his White House briefings and incapable of even offering condolences for thousands of Americans who have died and will continue to die because of his lagging leadership, most of our political leaders have stepped up to the plate and treated COVID-19 with all the seriousness it deserves.

Granted, it’s not hard looking like a hero next to someone as intellectually and temperamentally unsuited for a crisis such as Trump. But there is something quite unsettling about watching the rally-around-the-flag phenomenon that always spikes during a crisis or war — which in turn reduces criticism of governmental policies — manifesting itself very clearly right now, both here in Quebec and across Canada.

Of course, it’s a natural human inclination to band together and rally around leadership in times of crisis. War terminology is often used in government briefings because that’s exactly what it feels like. And since war makes for strange bedfellows, partisan divisions and minor squabbles seem trivial and lacking in solidarity during difficult times. We’re not supposed to question or be too negative, we’re supposed to lift each other up.

For some reason, this temporary leniency is supposed to extend to journalists whose very job it is to ask hard questions. As a result, I’ve recently seen some members of the media unfairly criticized by the public for being “too tough” or “too sensationalistic” too “eager for dirt” simply

for asking uncomfortable follow-up questions or critically analyzing a government’s game plan. Solidarity should not prevent vigilance and, as journalism professor Colette Brinrecently said on social media, “We may be in a crisis, but we are still in a democracy.” The job of media remains one of being a government watchdog, of reporting the facts — even the uncomfortable ones. Media is not in the business of propaganda or soothing frayed nerves.

The fawning over our leaders during times of crisis is predictable and understandable. I, too, have fallen victim to it. A recent EKOS poll showed that confidence in the federal government is at 75 per cent, the highest score the EKOS has ever received. Several of Canada’s premiers are also “scoring above their usual levels among their respective voters” according to EKOS. I’m watching people say that Rob Ford is “crushing it” on Twitter, while a recent *Toronto Star* op-ed lauded the Ontario premier as “the unlikely leader that his province needs.”

The guy who gutted the Toronto healthcare network and eliminated \$52-million worth of health policy and research? The guy who told Ontario families to “go away and have a good time” during March Break, a day before the federal government was cancelling all non-essential travel? That guy is crushing it?! Suddenly he’s a hero just because he praised Prime Minister Trudeau for his leadership and refused to discuss politics until the crisis is over? Is the bar set that low? Yes, it is.

I’m about to say something that will displease many Quebecers, currently in a state of adulation over our premier. Francois Legault deserves many of the accolades he’s been receiving so far, and probably will continue to receive for the weeks and months to come. He has handled himself well. But he shouldn’t be immune from criticism and we shouldn’t lose sight of the healthy and necessary ability to criticize our decision-makers just because we’re in a state of deep uncertainty and unprecedented danger.

While Legault’s often paternalistic fatherly act has always rubbed me a little the wrong way, and I’m no fan of CAQ legislation like Bill 21 and Bill 9, which marginalized and harmed minorities, I can certainly see his appeal during a time of deep crisis. People need stability and reassurance when they are deeply anxious. They need someone to act like they’ve “got this” and someone has their back.

Legault and his team have been extremely successful in conveying this type of reassuring “we’re in this together” message and getting the tone right so it always hovers somewhere firmly between empathetic but also decisive and firm. It’s no small feat.

During his daily briefings, Legault is routinely flanked by media darling and non-stop meme generator Quebec Chief Medical Officer Horacio Arruda and the always stoic and calm Minister of Health and Social Services Danielle McCann. They are the yin and the yang of his *Père de famille* approach that many Quebecers appreciate — now more than ever.

Even his little “boomer” expressions and habit of saying off-the-cuff remarks that used to get him in trouble are now seen as endearing and charming.

When journalists asked why SAQ outlets would remain open and considered “essential services” during a pandemic, Legault explained that he didn’t want to see chaos in the grocery store and that some people still needed alcohol to cope. He then added, with a twinkle in his eye, that “people should go for walks to reduce stress, but sometimes a glass of wine may also help.”

Of course, his response went immediately viral on social media. Is there anything more relatable, more socially acceptable to many of us than a glass of wine to take the edge off? Particularly when the world seems to be bursting into flames?

According to a Leger Marketing poll published in *Le Devoir* mid-March, a whopping 93 per cent of Quebecers older than 55 approved of Legault. The recent EKOS poll had him at 95 per cent approval. As a friend said, those are dictator numbers.

Another added element that bumped his support even higher was Legault’s decision to directly address anglophones — even if it’s just a prepared three-line paragraph — during

this crisis. It has not gone unnoticed and has been greeted with immense gratitude by Quebec’s English speakers.

But people need to be reassured so desperately that there seems to be this overriding desire not to question those in authority, lest that veneer of confidence wash off. It’s okay, however, to acknowledge that things aren’t perfect. That the government machine has occasionally been slow and way too secretive with official data, often contradictory in the dissemination of information, a little too optimistic in its delivery, considering the rising numbers of COVID-19 cases. We can laud our government for doing its best and still admit that we have many shortcomings to tackle.

Our healthcare system, for example. Legault may keep referring to Quebec nurses as our “guardian angels” but frustration and exhaustion have been plaguing this predominantly female work force that’s been overworked and underpaid for years. Calling nurses “guardian angels” may be nice, but why haven’t these angels been better treated by their government? All I’ve seen are forced overtime, questionable work conditions and collective agreements that always leave them fighting for more. Sure, the Liberals’ budget cuts didn’t help our healthcare system prepare for this crisis, but the CAQ’s fixation on identity politics since coming into power, instead of tackling urgent needs, have done us no favours now either.

Take a quick glance at the “Je dénonce” platform (created as a site for Quebec nurses and other health professionals to report dangerous practices during the COVID-19 crisis) and you’ll see many testimonials related to the lack of protective equipment and safety practices that put them and their patients in danger.

And while it’s perfectly understandable that an unprecedented crisis like this pandemic might require drastic measures, suspending the collective agreement for nurses and granting exceptional powers to healthcare employers — like increasing workdays to 12 hours or suspending the right to strike if conditions are unacceptable — are questionable decisions. Should these nurses not have the right to protect their health and the health of their patients just because there’s a crisis?

Another thing that bothers me: I’ve been patiently watching the government’s daily briefings every day and every day a journalist will ask specific questions about tenants unable to pay rent, and every day Premier Legault has deflected the questions by referring them to the federal government’s aid program.

Legault keeps urging landlords to be “understanding” and “patient” with tenants unable to pay. He’s basically relying on the goodwill of landlords not to harass or demand payment from people who are currently stuck at home isolating — most of whom have lost their jobs and have no income coming in. You can’t ask Quebec to go on a break if you’re not willing to ensure that Quebecers can do that without major detriment to their livelihoods. There’s nothing wrong with continuing to put our federal and provincial governments’ feet to the fire and insist they do more to help us. This is a crisis of unprecedented magnitude and it’s not unpatriotic or petty to ensure that no one gets left behind. Being left to the goodwill of landlords, employers, or — even worse — banks and credit card companies is a recipe for disaster.

As I wrote for a recent Ricochet piece, “In Italy, the government cancelled mortgage payments. Spain nationalized all its hospitals and healthcare providers. In El Salvador, the government cancelled all rent, electricity bills, water, phone, and internet for three months. In France, all taxes, rent and utility bills have been cancelled for certain companies.” More can still be done.

This public fawning over our public officials won’t last long. It’s a temporary and perfectly understandable human emotion in the face of a temporary terror. Once things return to some semblance of normal, the honeymoon will be over, we’ll start to see more criticism of our elected officials and I’m confident that absolutely no one will be “crushing it” in the polls.

But in the meantime, journalists can’t afford to stop asking the tough questions and the public needs to stay informed of the facts — even the ones that scare us. It’s a crisis, but it’s still a democracy.

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# LA CHAPELLE

## SCÈNES CONTEMPORAINES



Illustration: Youlouné

Separately together  
until we gather again

# LA CHAPELLE

## SCÈNES CONTEMPORAINES



Illustrations: Youlouné, inspirée du spectacle Un temps pour tout de Sovann Rochon Prom Tep

Ensemble à distance:  
loin des yeux près du cœur

# Choices to make



BY DAVE JAFFER

I was living in Southern California when Donald Trump was elected. I want to say it was surreal, but it really wasn't. If there is a way to fuck up an extremely consequential thing, America will find it more often than not. It is their great gift.

My ex, an American, was despondent that night. She cried three separate times, big heaving sobs I tried to fix but couldn't. When she was nodding off, I was on the phone with a friend in Montreal. It was past 4 a.m. for him, but neither of us was that interested in sleeping. We both knew the largeness of the moment; we both knew that it portended catastrophe.

Recently, that same friend and I sat a respectable distance from each other in Parc La Fontaine and drank beer while pretending we weren't cold. He hadn't left his house in days; I hadn't talked to a real live human who wasn't a grocery store cashier in days.

I remembered our late night conversation in 2016, and realized, possibly for the first time, that our current moment feels similar. And then I remembered something else: the conversations I had with fellow lefties in the days following the election. Alongside the shock and disappointment was a certain resoluteness that was inspiring and contagious, and so with quiet voices we whispered into each others' ears, "take as much time as

you need to process this, but when you're done roll up your sleeves — it's time to get to fucking work."

We are currently living in the middle of a consequential moment. World Wars aside, people generally don't get to know they're experiencing something truly historical while it's happening, but that's the situation here. As long as there are people, people are going to talk about this. As the old curse goes, "May you live in interesting times."

Accordingly, the way we react to this — as individuals, as communities, as cities, etc — will define more than people think. It may well define the rest of our lives. And, so, we all have a choice to make, a line in the sand to draw if only with respect to how we are going to be people in this world at this time with this thing hanging over us. Everything that grows globally starts locally.

We can choose to be better, or we can choose otherwise.

We can band together (figuratively) and distance ourselves from each other (literally) and, in so doing, we can help stop a pandemic. We can do the right thing for ourselves and for each other. Or we can not.

We can be a comfort to our loved ones in this time of extreme uncertainty and confused panic, or we can not. We can make time and hold space for each other's uncertainties, confusion, and panic, and be better partners, family members, friends, colleagues and citizens, or we can not. We can use this incredibly fucked up period of time to invest in ourselves, our relationships and in our communities. We can be more open, honest and transparent. We can take the time

that has been afforded us (against our will) to finally try that thing, learn that skill, say "I love you" to that person and "I'm sorry" to that other person.

We can choose to be better, or we can choose otherwise. The second choice isn't necessarily a choice to be worse, but it may as well be. Resignation isn't really resignation, it's a half-hearted shrug; apathy isn't really apathy, it's the decision to not care.

Someone recently told me that things always happen as they're supposed to, and that if they could happen a different way, they would. I largely agree, but not in a fatalistic way. I agree because we are the sum total of all of our efforts and decisions. Everyone reading this knows that doing a good thing feels good, and that learning a new thing feels like fucking victory. And, so, I hope that insofar as we can — because unemployment and financial strain and anxiety and illness and dyspraxia are things that exist — we all consciously make the choice to be better or at least try. If only a little bit and if only a little bit more often.

We are indeed living in interesting times, but they're also fucked up six ways from Sunday. No one knows what's coming next, and you can bet your boots that the people who gain from this kind of cataclysm are shrieking with glee. Boy howdy would I like to disappoint them by not giving away the store.

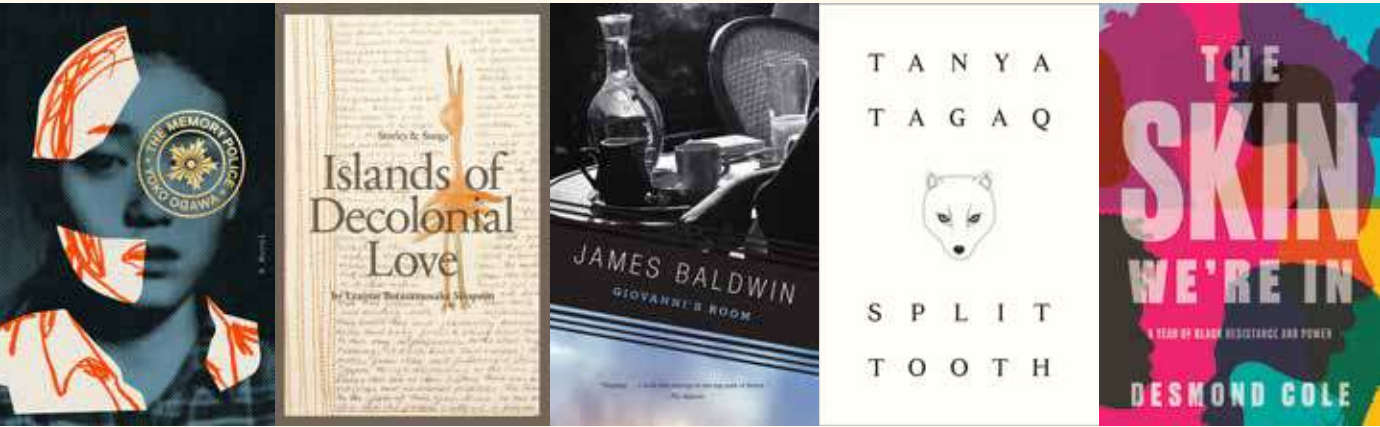
I can't say that any of this is worth the time you've spent reading it, but, since you've gotten this far, I hope you'll join me in taking as much time as you need to process this. It's a lot, so it won't come easily. And, when you're done, I hope you'll roll up your sleeves and try. There's work to do.

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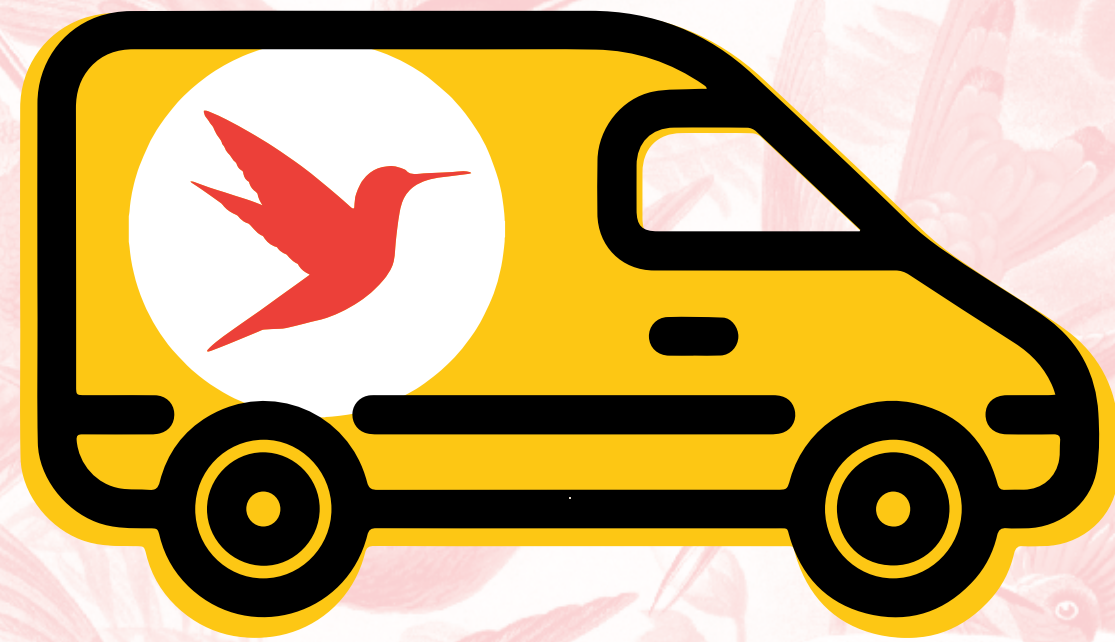
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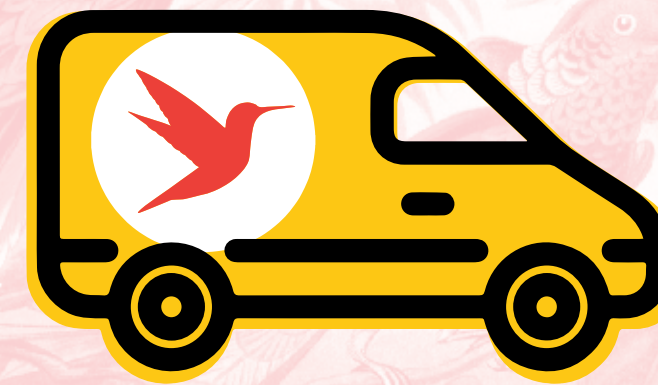
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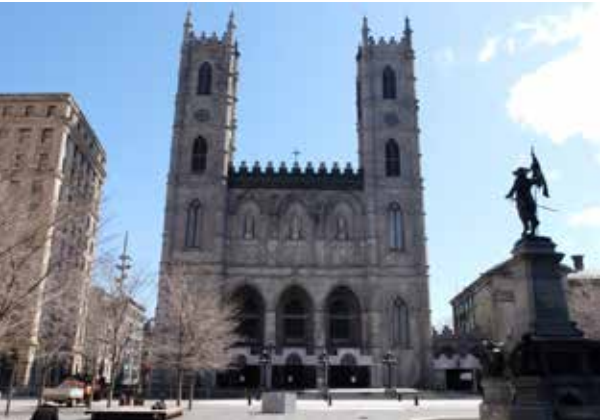
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# MTL lockdown

The streets and sites are empty, but as strange as it looks, right now that's a good thing. And in the windows of businesses and homes, symbols of hope, love and solidarity are there to keep us upbeat.

Photos by Cindy Lopez





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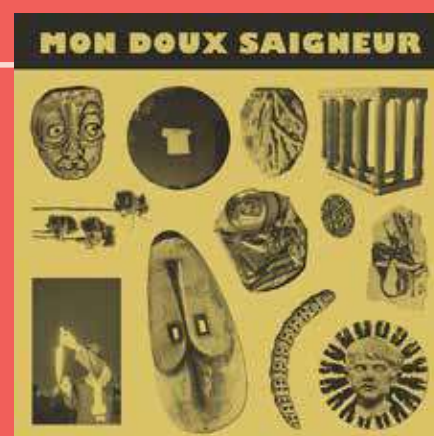
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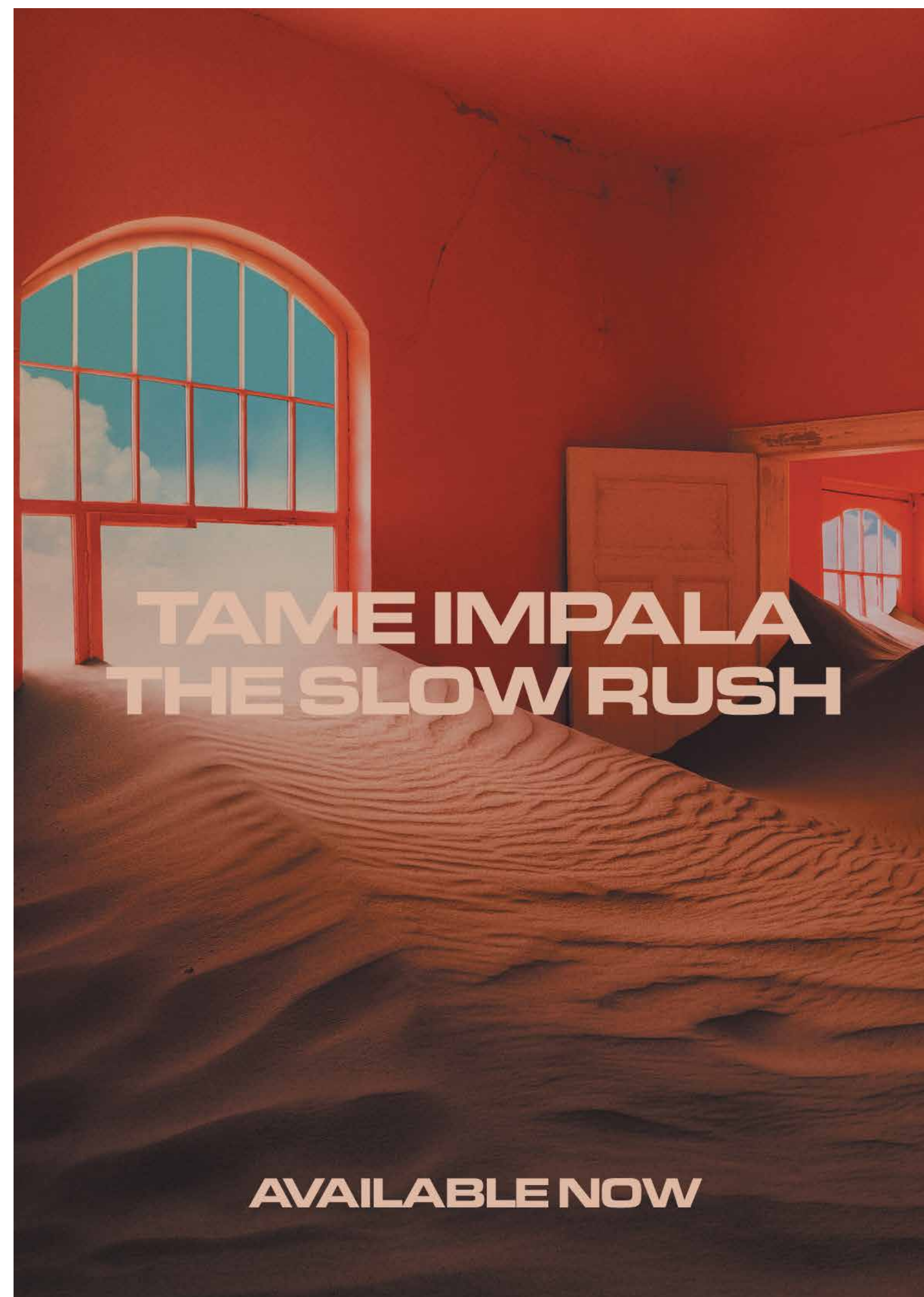
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BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

Did you pay your rent on April 1? A lot of Montrealers didn't. Some couldn't, having been laid off due to COVID-19 closures and lockdown directives; some wouldn't, because they've joined the rent strike movement.

In some European and South American countries, rent, mortgage payments, taxes and utility bills have been cancelled or suspended. In Canada, individuals and businesses are expected to pay up, presumably with some of the emergency funding that people will be receiving (but has yet to arrive). Despite appeals from Premier Legault and Mayor Plante for landlords to be lenient with tenants in a financial crunch, many Montrealers are facing eviction — whether that be after the temporary suspension on eviction hearings at the Régie du logement is lifted, or earlier, making the eviction illegal but no less real for those being forced into the street.

Montreal rent strike advocate Sunny Doyle has been interviewed by local, national and international media from her Hochelaga home. I spoke to her late last week about the local chapter of what has become a global movement:

**Sunny Doyle:** We came together when we realized that a lot of people were falling through the cracks of the federal and provincial emergency help that's being provided and ... that a lot of people around us would be struggling to pay their rent and their mortgages. The whole country is being asked not to work but still has to pay? We find it completely absurd. If there's a hold on the economy, let's do it for real. Everyone needs shelter, and in a public health emergency, anyone who can't access those funds is at risk of contaminating everyone else. We're calling for the cancellation of rents and mortgages so that no one is left behind.

**LC:** Where did the idea of hanging a white sheet from balconies and windows come from?

**SD:** It's one of those poetic ideas that just emerged — a symbol of truce, a symbol of care. We felt that [the sheet] is something that's readily accessible in people's homes. There's something beautiful about it. It's a peaceful symbol — we need a ceasefire. We'd love to see more and more of these just to show how collective this issue is and maybe send a message to those most vulnerable that we're thinking about them.

**LC:** What is your situation? Are you able to work at the moment?

**SD:** I'm a self-employed translator, and work has dried up for sure. I'm also a set and costume designer, and of course

all shows have been cancelled. Cultural workers are also really affected by this. Still, I feel like I have a lot of privilege — the government will be supporting me. I feel it's crucially important for everyone to be in solidarity with those who won't be supported: people who work for tips or have undeclared income for whatever reason; sex workers; anyone who doesn't have citizenship status; the homeless — that's a huge issue. We need measures that are hyper inclusive so we can really deal with this pandemic.

**LC:** I've heard a lot of people counter the rent strike idea out of sympathy for landlords. What do you say to that? How is your landlord taking all this?

**SD:** Montreal is a city with a lot of small landlords. I'm in contact with my landlord — she's a 90-something-year-old woman, she needs support, too. We live in the same building, and she let me hang my white sheet. She agrees that it's an unprecedented situation and it's not fair to be putting people in these individualized fights with their landlords, especially when the power differential between landlords and tenants is really not the same. We welcome the landlords to put pressure on the government, too, and we're with landlords. On one hand it's a government responsibility but also, in many cases, rents are many times over the cost of mortgages. There is a lot of abuse. Landlords will be losing income that is sometimes excessive.

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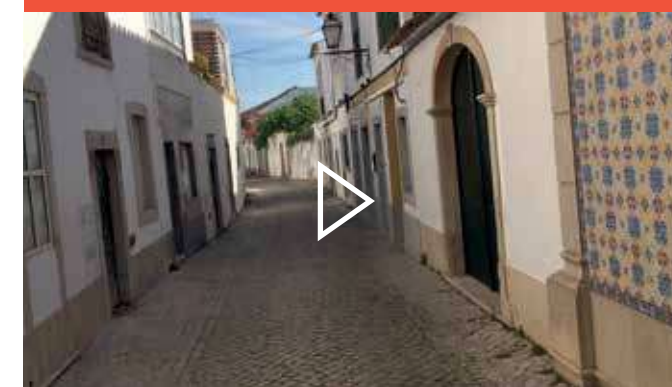
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Marché Bernard

BY THE DEPSET

Since midnight on Tuesday, March 24, all non-essential businesses in Quebec have been closed by provincial mandate. As the larger grocery stores manage line-ups stretched around the block to limit contact and deal with the whims of panic buyers and hoarders, corner dépanneurs have never seemed so essential. In fact, they're on a short list of businesses that are so essential, they're not required to close on Sundays. While a few are open for reduced hours or offering delivery-only service, many, like Marché Bernard at the corner of Esplanade, continue to serve the neighbourhood from the early morning to 11 p.m. as usual.

Yiong Wang of Marché Bernard (201 Bernard W.) was happy to speak with me about running a dep during the ongoing crisis. I tried to keep my two-metres-away interview as brief as possible, to limit contact for both of us. Wang's voice was muffled by two layers of mask, and he spoke from behind a recently erected wall of plexiglass with a plastic flap for cash transactions, but such is communication in times of social distancing.

Unlike convenience stores south of the border, which often have anti-theft glass protecting the cash counter, Montreal deps are usually left open. I asked him about the rather artisanal barrier that now runs from counter to ceiling in Marché Bernard. "We built it last week," he says. "The glass makes you feel safer, but maybe it's only a feeling."

Like many of us, he's had a rough run of it since COVID-19 went pandemic. Normally, this corner dep is run by Wang, his wife and other family members. "I'm working alone now. My wife is staying home. When I get home, I have to wash everything: my clothing, myself, everything. Also, I cannot eat while I'm working. It's really stressful."

Running a dépanneur under normal circumstances is no joke, but doing so alone in these times is truly heroic. "We still have to go out shopping and pay the staff, and we still have to pay the rent."

Despite going out of his way to limit the potential for transmission, Wang offers service that's just as courteous and dutiful to the community as it always is, even if the public doesn't always reciprocate, "Sometimes I think people don't understand how bad the virus is. Most people, they just don't know. Prince Charles of England has caught it! And they still don't realize they have to talk from one metre." As he said that last line, I felt myself involuntarily take another step away from the counter.

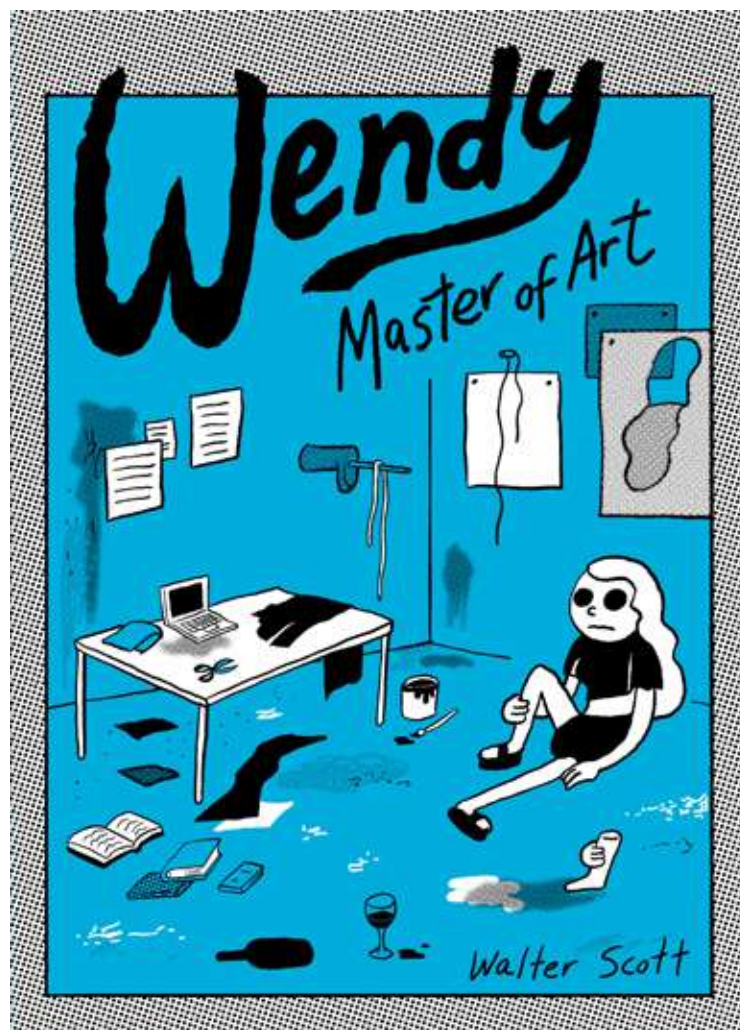
People like Wang are the valiant night-watchmen of this crisis — his post is an often lonely and unforgiving one. It's times like this where the value of Montreal dépanneurs is most evident So next time you have to break quarantine to grab a bag of chips or a case of beer, take a momentary break from COVID agoraphobia to thank the person behind the counter. What would we ever do without them?

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# food & drink

## Be well, eat well

BY CLAYTON SANDHU

During this period of isolation, we’re all struggling to find productive ways to fill our time. Cooking can be a beautiful and peaceful moment of your day where your focus is directed and the resulting product is a plate of nourishing food that tastes delicious. I believe that everyone is capable of cooking well, it’s just a matter of planning, focus and learning a few tricks and tips that make cooking easier and more enjoyable.

I learned to cook in restaurants. From the age of 19 to 27, I worked as a cook in Montreal and during that time I learned a lot of recipes — I hardly remember any of them. What I do remember are the kitchen practices that make for efficient restaurant kitchens. Home cooking and restaurant cooking are different but the more you run and organize your kitchen like a restaurant kitchen, the more equipped you will be to comfortably cook your way through this prolonged quarantine.

I spoke with my friend Kira German, the chef de cuisine at Nora Gray, about how she organizes the kitchen there and how we can all best plan our meals, grocery shop and organize our kitchens to get the most out of them. These are her tips.

### Work smart, not hard

One of the keys to making cooking an enjoyable experience is getting organized. “A big thing is keeping your fridge organized,” says German. This should extend to your pantry and freezer. “You should be able to open your fridge, freezer, pantry and actually see what’s in there and not buy double.” This practice helps you avoid accidentally buying things you don’t really need and it will also help you identify the things that need to be used or consumed, so you don’t have things rotting in the fridge or collecting dust in the pantry. Restaurants do an inventory of their kitchens every day; you should try and do it once a week. Also, there are few kitchen pleasures greater than having a beautiful, organized fridge and pantry. Trust me.

### Pick a day to be productive

Sometimes getting motivated is the first hurdle, even for German. “For me, what I find helpful for cooking at home is finding a day where I’m feeling very productive and doing most of the hard work that day.” Divide and conquer. “Let’s say you bought a bunch of meat — meat and fish go bad the fastest — marinate it right away, or maybe cook some off so that you can use it in different ways.” Restaurant kitchens break their jobs up into different days so that the big jobs that need a lot of attention can get done without sacrificing the important little jobs. Ideally use this day to get as many things accomplished as possible. “If you find a day where you’re like, ‘I’m really up for this, I can do it!’ Then it’s less likely for things to go bad.



Clay Sandhu

### Waste not, want not

“Get everything out of one ingredient.” Maybe that’s roasting a chicken, but you save the bones and make stock, and you pick off the meat you didn’t eat and save it so you can add it to soup or pasta or make sandwiches with it. The idea is not only to eliminate waste but to also stock your fridge with things that are laborious to make, but are useful to have on-hand. By picking the meat and making stock, you’ve turned Sunday’s roast chicken into Monday’s chicken sandwiches, into Wednesday’s risotto. This applies to vegetables, too. Roasting off some veggies ahead of time means you can enjoy them then, but you can also save them to add to a salad or toss them in a soup, stew or curry.

### Get with the plan

“Before grocery shopping, it’s a good idea to make a meal plan for at least four of seven days.” By meal planning really we’re just talking about a bit of premeditation. “It doesn’t have to be like, ‘Monday I’m definitely eating this,’ but if you have [a plan] it can be like, ‘This week I’m going to eat these four things.’” This makes shopping easier and more effective and it means you don’t have to spend any time in the week trying to figure out what you can cook with the things you have. You’re already all set. “If you’re in the grocery store and you buy a bunch of things that don’t make sense together because you don’t have a plan, then you’re more likely to throw things out.”

With the other three days of the week, get creative. You’ll probably have some leftovers, and if you’ve been getting the most from your ingredients, your fridge should be stocked with little bits of delicious things that have no specific purpose. In the restaurant world, those bits typically become staff meals — it’s what we eat the most of and more often than not the meals are delicious.

### Work clean

The least enjoyable part of cooking, for me, is cleaning up. Most people aren’t cooking in spacious, lavishly appointed kitchens, we’re cooking on tabletops and minuscule countertops. Save yourself stress and time, while also maximizing your workspace by working clean. This comes down to a few simple practices that make your life easier. “When you’re done with something, put it back in the fridge.” Keep a garbage bag or compost bag handy so your work station isn’t covered in onion peels and vegetable scraps. Keep some small bowls handy for your mise en place. Working clean also means organizing your jobs so you’re not working on too many things at once. Maybe throw your bird in the oven first before starting on your side dish, remembering to wipe down your station between each new task. Cleaning as you go and organizing your space and time can completely change the experience of cooking. If cooking stresses you out, it’s probably because you’re not organized and working clean.

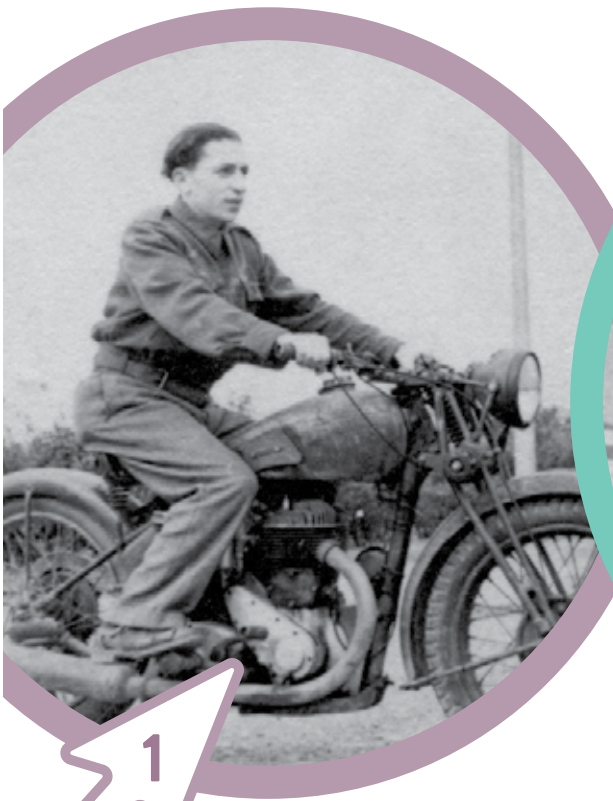
Fundamentally, the keys to good cooking are being organized and planning ahead. “Sit down and think about what you’re doing before you start.” German’s advice could be useful for nearly anything, but in a world where leaving your house — even once a week — for groceries puts your health at risk, being focused and organized might mean the difference between getting by and eating well. While having any food on the table is reassuring, eating a delicious meal that you prepared is comforting and restorative. When done purposefully and thoughtfully, cooking can be meditative, it can be relaxing and it might just be the perfect distraction from these uncertain times. You might not write a novel or renovate your house or learn to speak Italian during this extended quarantine, but you could (and should) learn to cook.



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# music

## The beginning and the end



Rufus Wainwright / Photo copyright 2019, V. Tony Hauser

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

Rufus Wainwright’s ninth album, *Unfollow the Rules*, is an end and a beginning. Produced by Mitchell Froom (Paul McCartney, Bob Dylan, Peter Gabriel) at a succession of legendary Los Angeles studios, it’s his first stab at pop music in 12 years, an emotionally complex and sometimes sonically decadent set of a dozen songs that book-ends his 1998 debut and perhaps points the way forward.

I spoke to Wainwright well before the COVID-19 pandemic came to North America. (He’s since become one of the many musicians streaming live performances from home since mid-March.) It was a snowy day in early February, the morning after he and his sister Martha and other family members performed a tribute to their late mother Kate McGarrigle in their hometown, at Place des Arts...

Rufus Wainwright: I’m enjoying the picture-postcard winter weather. It’s very charming for me ‘cause we live in L.A. now. But I know that’s not the case when you’re in the middle of it. It reminds me that it can be quite beautiful.

Lorraine Carpenter: How was last night’s show?

RW: It was great. It was very heartfelt. There were certainly moments of brilliance, and in McGarrigle fashion, it was incredibly human as well. We’ve never liked things too polished on this side of the family. For the audience, it’s quite disarming in the sense that you’re kind of transported from a concert hall into a living room, with all the ups and downs that that entails.

LC: Outside of the reunion aspect of these events, what do these family shows — like the annual Christmas concerts — achieve for you?

RW: The Christmas shows have a very fundamental purpose in terms of raising money for cancer research and also for the Kate McGarrigle Foundation. We’ve created grants for artists struggling with cancer to record music, so that continues her

legacy. It’s multifaceted, but it certainly feels good having Kate’s repertoire to lean on and her legacy and really the enduring spirit that she left behind that a lot of people still are affected by.

LC: The new album is being presented as a book-end to your debut album — what does that mean exactly?

RW: As you get older, different esoteric subjects creep into your life, and one of them for me, oddly enough, is numerology. I mean I don’t follow it truly, but I do think that there are these anniversaries that pop up and you just notice strange coincidences involving numbers. The 20-year mark has been very effective as a goalpost of where I’ve been and reviewing that and therefore knowing where I wanna go in the future.

While making this album, I also toured my first two albums as a 20th anniversary celebration, so my mindset was properly engaged in this concept of memorializing a period. By the same token, I’m 46 years old, I’m in very good health and I do feel I have this next chapter to inhabit. Part of referring to the past is so that you can kind of discard it and move on to the future, so that’s where we will be after this album cycle. I’d like to do something completely different, completely unexpected, something unusual and surprising, which I intend to come up with (laughs).

It really is a myth that when you start off your career and you’re young and vibrant and attractive and energized, that that’s when the profound things happen; that’s when you’re on fire and you can express this full blown songwriting capability. I’m now feeling that only at this point am I really getting into my stride as a songwriter, and as a singer especially. I’ve really worked hard on my voice over the last 20 years, to refine it, and I think that now I’m at my zenith. Certainly experiences like marriage and having children and death and aging and seeing the world experience hardship — those are the big experiences, that’s what really gives you depth and meaning.

It’s funny, the other day there was the Grammys and I didn’t pay much attention to it only because it’s really not that interesting to me what 22-year-olds are going through. I find it rather dull. I don’t think that was always the case. With my parents’ generation, there was a difference in the sense that they were out demonstrating in the streets — and artists like Joan Baez, Bob Dylan, Joni Mitchell. Even when I was a kid, you had Sinead O’Connor “Black Boys on Mopeds” or Prince doing “Sign O the Times” or even Cyndi Lauper’s “Girls

Just Wanna Have Fun” — it’s an anthem for women’s lib.

In mainstream culture there’s an apathy in the material. Singers aren’t singing about the state of the planet and rappers aren’t rapping about the cops anymore, they’re writing about getting a Mercedes. A lot of the younger generation are engaged in other ways, thanks to people like Greta — but artistically, it’s a little thin. That’s what I’m waiting for.

LC: Especially considering that you’re living in the U.S., do you find that the constant negativity in American politics resonates in your songwriting?

RW: It does. About half a year ago, I released a song called “Sword of Damocles,” which was very much my response to what was going on in the government. It sort of shadowed the impeachment trial. On this album, the song “Hatred” could definitely be translated as a tool and a map for what we have in store, which is a serious war and a clash in society. (The album’s title track) “Unfollow the Rules,” in a lot of ways, is about getting deep into the perceived pathways of existence and really trying to figure out what that means and what it’s for.

LC: I read that the making of *Unfollow the Rules* was also something of a retracing of your steps from the first record.

RW: When I made my first record, I was given the keys to the castle in a lot of ways. I was able to work in these incredible studios for long periods of time with these great musicians and amazing engineers and so forth. And it wasn’t so much that I took it for granted, but I just didn’t know what was going on. That was another era, when record companies were willing to dish out big budgets, but now we live in a very different period. I thought it would be great to revisit a lot of those same places, a lot of those same areas, a lot of those same musicians and some new ones, but with a more economical mindset and a sense of appreciation for the heritage of Los Angeles and its recording history. When we were working at Sound City in the Valley, I mean that’s where *Nevermind* was made, that’s where Fleetwood Mac did *Rumors*. Later I went to OceanWest, where *Pet Sounds* was made. I mean all of that was a bit of a gimmick when it started out 20 years ago, but now it’s actually a profound, iconic, sacred space that I wanted to inhabit. Especially because that generation is going away, and they were amazing.

⇒ *Unfollow the Rules* is out on July 10 (postponed from April 24).



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# Country road

BY DARCY MACDONALD

Hailing from Clare, Nova Scotia, an Acadian community on the shore of Baie-Sainte-Marie, country boy Jonah Guimond’s old-soul sensibility coupled with his young-blooded talent for composing catchy, rhythmic music and comically touching lyrics probably make him something of a fish out of water wherever he goes.

But he makes one thing clear as we sit in the lobby of Montreal venue le National in early March, on a rehearsal break for a since-aired episode of Télé-Québec’s *Belle et bum*: he’s really not into big city life.

“I can’t sleep,” he says. “All I hear is cars and sirens going by. At home, when you hear that, you wonder who you may know that’s in trouble.”

The 24-year-old banjoman’s new album *Greatest Hits Vol. 1*, under his country music moniker P’tit Belliveau, is out now on Bonsound, and an April 1st album launch with his band les Grosses Coques has obviously been put on the backburner.

And while his roots are geographically country, his musical background is not what you may expect from a country/bluegrass musician.

With a sound that’s fit for spring living and an edge sure to lift moods despite the current state of affairs, Guimond’s honest approach to all he undertakes is refreshing and vital to the times. Here’s what he had to tell us about being P’tit Belliveau — and it all began with Girl Talk.

Jonah Guimond: I’ve played music all my life and it’s funny now but what really got me started in producing was actually Girl Talk, who’s kind of a meme now. But I was a kid and I was like, “This is awesome, this is the best thing I’ve ever heard. I wanna do that!” I got the shittiest software I could, I think it was MixCraft, and I was making mashups. At like 12 years old I was like, “This is awesome. I’m a star.” Eventually, more and more I was adding stuff to my set-up to make my own music, but because I was basically used to making sample-based music from taking existing music and fucking it up, eventually I got synths and started getting into midi, so by the end of (that period) I was mostly doing completely original synth stuff.

I wasn’t doing that for very long until my grandfather from Ontario came upon a banjo and he sent it over. Growing up there was a lot of country and bluegrass back home, so I always heard that stuff but never played it. So when I got the banjo I was just kind of like, this makes sense now, I’m just gonna put this in my music.

And it has been awhile that I wanted to write lyrics, so I just kind of did what I was doing with banjo and added lyrics. That’s how I saw it. I listen to it now and it’s completely different music. Like I was making weird, synthy chillwave stuff back then. I was like 14 or something, and until I was 18, I was making mostly just electronic music.

This project has existed for around three or four years, so around 20 I started playing the banjo and started this project. But I still had drum machines and all that kind of stuff, so I feel like with this album I’m really bringing in more of my old producing habits, like the synths and all the midi tracks and drum machines and all of that. I can only imagine I’m gonna have even more fun doing all that in the future. I tell myself that the project is always country at the base, and I keep adding on what interests me on top of it, but still try to keep it country. In my mind it’s a country project. And live it’s definitely more country.

Darcy MacDonald: Jumping back a minute, what did you make of Girl Talk when you were 12? Did you know the music he was sampling?



P'tit Belliveau

Alex Blouin & Jodi Hartz

Guimond: Yeah, I did! The first Girl Talk album I ever heard was *All Day*, with the skeleton on the cover. I don’t remember how I came onto it but I was this little small-town indie kid scouring the internet all day. I knew all the songs because my dad’s a big ’90s-head and my other parents listen to all sorts of different music. I grew up with my mom and step dad so they had an influence and my dad had all the ’90s stuff. A lot of it’s pop music that you kinda just absorb.

Anyway, the opening of all of it is (Black Sabbath’s) “War Pigs” and “Oh No” (aka Ludacris’s “Move Bitch”) and I was like, this is just crazy. I wanna do this. A lot of people looking back hate on (Girl Talk) but I loved him. For me, it’s nostalgic. “Ante Up” with “Party in the USA”? That’s like, a statement. If it wasn’t for Girl Talk, I’d probably be making music, but it wouldn’t be this type of music. I’d probably just be in a rock band.

DM: It’s interesting tht you came from a sample-based background and then graduated to a totally traditional style of modern music.

Guimond: In my mind it’s not that different. Musicians are weird like that. I don’t see it as crazy different. I still have the same influences, it’s just like, I’m giving myself different guidelines. Ultimately it feels pretty much the same to me.

To me, the big difference is that I’m writing lyrics. Before when I was writing music, in my mind it’s about something — “this part means this” — but of course, no one’s gonna get that. It had been nagging at me a while to write lyrics and to me, on this project, that’s the big difference.

DM: You definitely bring a certain sensibility to what you’re saying. It sounds like you give a shit, and I don’t know how true that always is for a lot of artists.

Guimond: To me it’s almost like a story book for a kid. It’s a lighthearted story with a purpose at the end, and you might not even realize it right away. That’s how I try to write songs. I have some sort of philosophical idea or little thing I’m trying to make you think about, but I don’t want to just say it or push it in your face. It’s just a funny, lighthearted slacker journey, and you didn’t notice that you just absorbed the concept along the way.

DM: As you’re preparing to play this new stuff live, do you have a synth element on stage?

Even on the old EPs, there was a synth element but it wasn’t as integral and live it wasn’t necessary, we could get by with five bluegrass instruments. Now there are songs on the album that need a synth, like the main riff is a synth. Our main guitarist is actually a really, really great piano player so he’s gonna have a synth on stage. I’m actually gonna play guitar on a few songs. Of course, it’s always gonna be a little more country, a little more rock when we play live, because I feel a live setting is like, beer in hand, having fun, and I feel

like that type of music lends itself well to a live setting, so I kind of like that it’s more country-rock. And then when you’re listening, that layer or texture of synth is so cool. You’re not gonna notice that as much live, but we do have now a drum pad for the drummer to have electronic sounds, too. So we’re putting a little bit in it but like, let’s say if you’ve already seen us live, it’s not gonna be a shock. We’re adding little sprinkles here and there.

DM: So what do you think the common element has been that you’ve brought from storytelling in sound to words?

Guimond: I don’t know how everyone writes songs, but I’m sure my background influences (how I do it). All day, most of the day, when I’m at home, I’m mostly making instrumentals, any kind of style. Some will fit in this project and I’ll save them in a separate file and listen to them over and over again.

All my songs start as instrumentals and could probably be completed that way, and I’m sure that’s an influence from before. I always think of the music, and how this chord is gonna rise, and resolve to this, and make you want to feel this.

For example, the job of a DJ is all about emotion control, and crowd control, and I feel like when I’m making instrumental I’m always thinking of that. How will this little shift, and this synth sound, and all of these little elements work to service what I’m saying, to make them feel how they need to feel then for the experience to be complete.

DM: So how does that inform what you do now?

For me, when I’m writing a song, I want it to be personal for me to a certain degree but I can’t help but think about the listener’s experience and picture what the listener who isn’t a musician will think. Not all listeners are gonna think, like, “That major seventh chord was nice!” They’ll think about how they feel. I think about that a lot, and how I feel when I listen to music, and try to apply that. I really respect artists that say they only do it for themselves and their art, but I can’t really say that’s what I do. There’s a lot of that. But also, there’s a lot of how I think someone will interpret that.

There can be a lot of lying to yourself and posturing in creative circles. I’ve never been in any scene or anything. I come from a butt-ass small town with 8,000 people. I’ve never learned those tricks and I couldn’t do it if I tried. I’m kind of naive that way. And I think it services me. I’m thankful.

Back home in Nova Scotia, there’s no option but DIY. There’s no infrastructure, no big grants, no associations. When you wanna do anything, you just do it. That’s also just the kind of general philosophy that exists in Clare. If something breaks, you can’t just go to the store and get a new one. You have to fix it. So everyone just sort of has to do everything. Or your neighbour knows how to do it, and he’ll show you. When it comes to music, it’s not different, if you realize your limitations and lean into them.

# Basia Bulat

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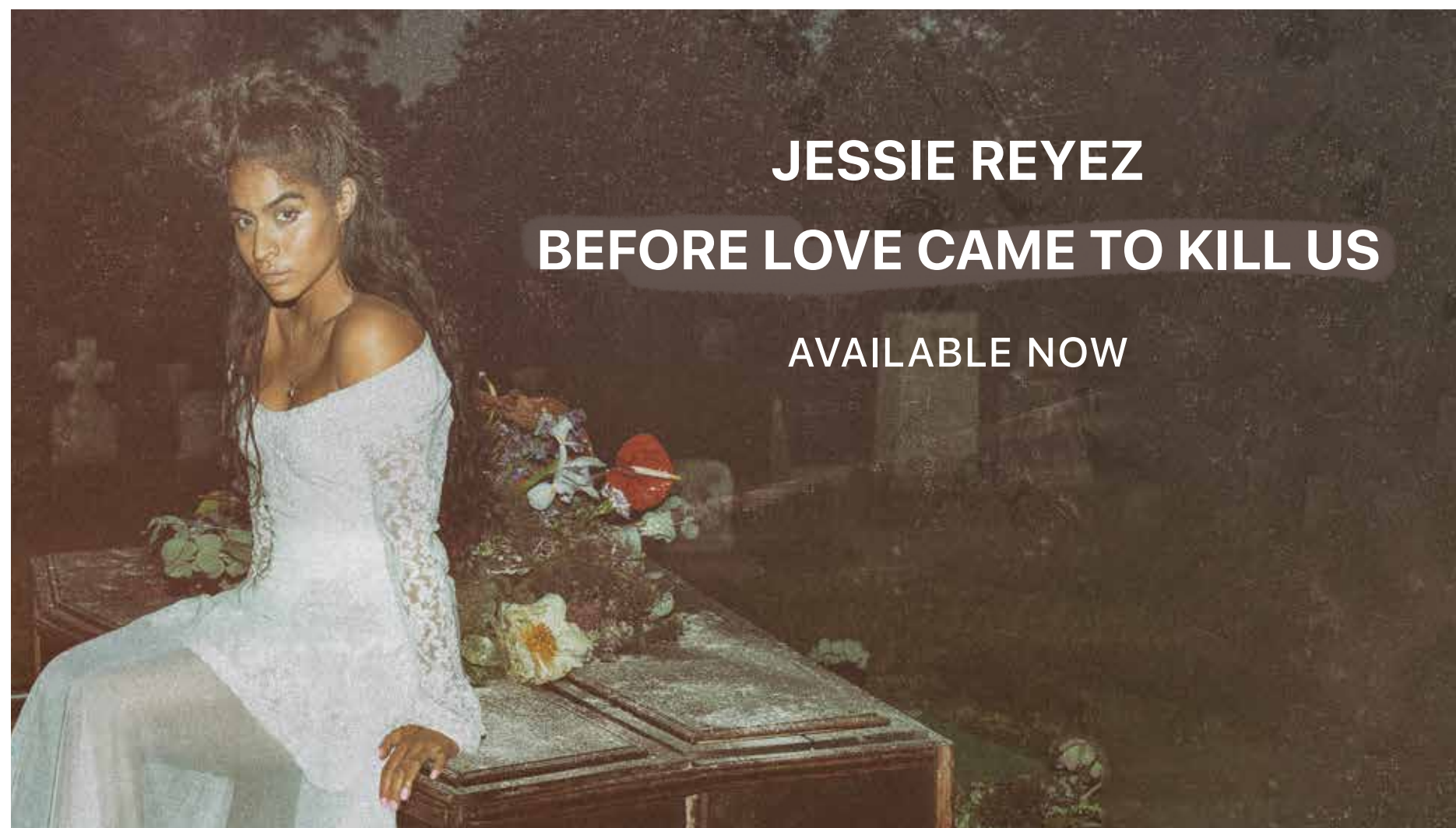


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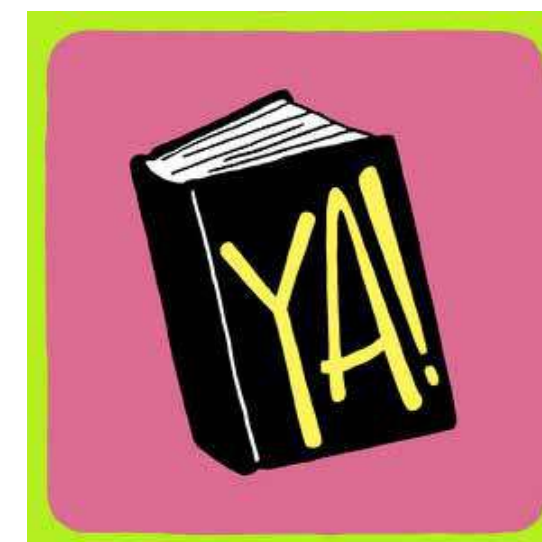
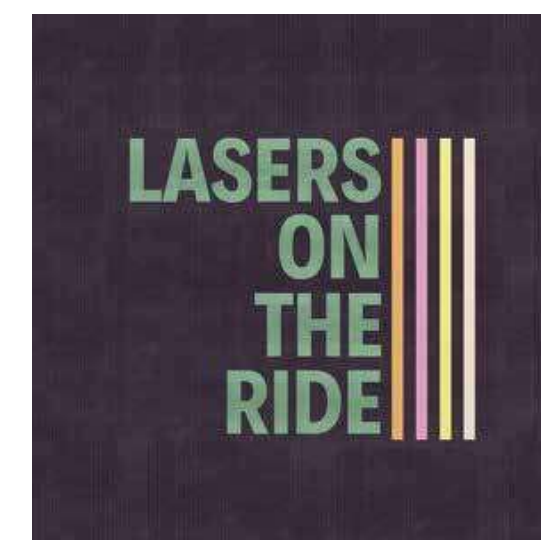
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Dua Lipa, *Future Nostalgia* (Warner)  
What sophomore slump? Every so often, a pop album comes around that rewrites the rules of the genre and it seems only fitting that “New Rules” singer Dua Lipa is the one to rise to the challenge this time around. However, the last thing Lipa does on *Future Nostalgia* is chase the success of her breakthrough eponymous debut that the aforementioned track is featured on. Instead, her second go-around is a celebration of the theme music of her formative years — Spice Girls and Kylie Minogue, to name a couple — and take their blueprints into daring new directions. 9/10 Trial Track: “Love Again” (Mr. Wavvy)



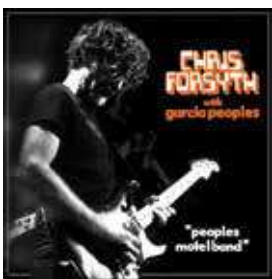
The Weeknd, *After Hours* (Republic)  
Hot on the heels of his first film role in the Safdie Brothers' *Uncut Gems*, the Weeknd returns for album number four, his most sonically focused body of work since his coveted breakthrough mixtape trilogy. Abel Tesfaye is back to his darker days, something working on the high-anxiety movie surely helped inspire. While it does not offer as many potential radio hits as its predecessors, *Beauty Behind the Madness* and *Starboy*, this long anticipated follow-up is without a doubt a strong top-to-bottom listen. Darkness is Tesfaye's best friend and it's delightful to see the two properly reunited. 8/10 Trial Track: “Scared to Live” (Mr. Wavvy)



Basia Bulat, *Are You in Love?* (Secret City)  
Montreal-based singer-songwriter Basia Bulat makes the kind of pop-tinged folk-rock anthems that, like a lot of music in that genre, seem primed to soothe the soul. This is her fifth album, produced once again by My Morning Jacket's Jim James, who also helped out on her last album, 2016's *Good Advice*. Once again Bulat and James find the right instrumentation to support her vocals, and the right resonance to maximize the beauty of that voice. The surface sheen has a vintage quality that really suits this set of songs, making this one as easy on the ears as its predecessor, if not more so. 7.5/10 Trial Track: “Light Years” (Lorraine Carpenter)



Yaeji, *What We Drew* (XL)  
A self-starter who prefers to keep the creative process in house in the Grimes mold, the Korean-Brooklynite opts to venture out of her comfort zone on her debut full-length, dubbed a mixtape due to its uncharacteristically freeform, collaborative nature. It's tough to hit the pure pop highs of previous hits “Raingurl” or “One More,” but the varied productions here are fluttering, refreshing and cosmopolitan. A warm-hearted, satisfying culmination after a steady procession of bangers. 7.5/10 Trial Track: “In the Mirror” (Erik Leijon)



Chris Forsyth with Garcia Peoples, *Peoples Motel Band* (Algorithm Free)  
Philadelphia-based guitar wizard Chris Forsyth is backed by the New Jersey quartet Garcia Peoples in this live set recorded in Forsyth's hometown. Though comparisons to the Grateful Dead are inevitable (and not inaccurate), this isn't a set of aimless live noodling. As indebted to Tom Verlaine of Television and Neil Young as he is to more dexterously dusted guitar heroes, Forsyth brings forth a more muscular, aquiline vision to the idea of '70s-styled instrumental dust-ups. This live set comprised of one medley and one 20-minute track serves as a great sampler for Forsyth's brand of psychotropic shedding; it's just too bad that the equally impressive backing band is mostly doing just that: backing. 7/10 Trial Track: “Dreaming in the Non-Dream” (Alex Rose)



Pearl Jam, *Gigaton* (Republic)  
“Every tomorrow is the same as before,” Eddie Vedder warbles on “Dance of the Clairvoyants.” And, yes, in the case of many a '90s legacy act, that's an often-sad truth. But as a big fan of the band in their heyday as recording artists, and who has barely paid attention to their studio output since *Vitalogy*, I gotta say I don't think I missed much, and I'm glad I'm back for this one. Throwing back to their roots, the once alt-kingpins cum arena rock gods bring it all back together in this first effort in seven years, marrying what they've become to where they began in a fashion that invites listeners back without bashing us over the head with high-end concepts or drastic lane shifts. What could have easily veered into bloated posturing and dismissible FM radio fodder is instead a welcome return to form. While far from being vital or new, Pearl Jam offer intelligent, well-crafted rock music with a level of musicianship and songwriting as satisfying on record as it surely will be in concert. 7/10 Trial Track: “Who Ever Said” (Darcy MacDonald)



Conway the Machine & the Alchemist, *LULU* (EMPIRE)  
Despite over 20 years of experience under his belt, 2020 is shaping up to be a highlight year for the Alchemist. Fresh off the heels of production credits for Jay-Z, Jay Electronica and Eminem (for whom he serves as a tour DJ), the Beverly Hills-born beatmaker keeps the momentum going by teaming up with the irresistibly grimy Conway the Machine for a short but slithering collaborative EP. Drug dealing has never sounded so fun, with enough cocaine references to make Tony Montana blush. The rapper, who hails from the ever-gritty Buffalo, is a beautiful match for Alchemist's boom-bap style. Next up: Conway plans to release his major label debut on Shady Records. 6.5/10 Trial Track: “Gold BBBS'S” (Mr. Wavvy)

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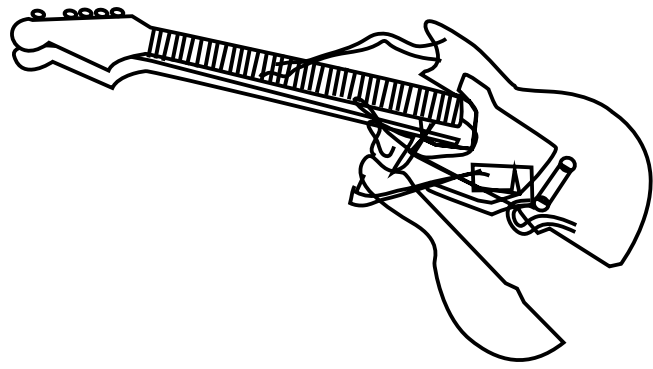
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# :hammer of the mods



BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Just like you, my social media feed is occupied with news of Coronavirus devastation. This should be a given as we board the upper curve of the pandemic that is sure to define our generation. The magnitude is not lost — 9/11 seems like merely a bad opening band compared with this current crisis.

Although I've been clicking on any nugget of COVID-19 info, I was still taken aback with the announcement of the death of Throbbing Gristle/Psychic TV glimmering star Genesis P-Orridge, who passed away on March 14 after a long battle with Leukaemia. The Coronavirus obviously deserves all of the attention it's currently garnering but I can't help but feel that an artist as significant as P-Orridge leaving this mortal coil did not receive the regal trumpet blast they so richly deserve.

I was introduced to Genesis P-Orridge in the '80s when V. Vale's *Re/Search* books filled up the shelves of any hip as fug weirdo who dared to burrow further beyond the pale. P-Orridge was featured alongside William Burroughs and Brion Gysin in *Re/Search #4/5* as well as their real underground tremor, *The Industrial Culture Handbook* (*Re/Search #6/7*) and I was quickly hooked as I was given a glimpse into P-Orridge's netherworld. For a still teeny Johnson weaned on late-night *Brave New Waves* radio on CBC and local Toronto college station CKLN, this was revolutionary writing that beamed bright light into my grey suburban cultural void.

As a young Mancunian, P-Orridge was just reaching teenagerhood during the British Invasion of '64 and like everybody of that age was rather susceptible to the rock 'n' roll bug. Their main infatuation at the time was the Rolling Stones, chiefly Stones guitarist Brian Jones, who would remain a huge influence to P-Orridge right up until his death. As the Stones breezed from Chuck Berry covers to their "bad trip" of *Altamont*, P-Orridge also felt the pull of the darker forces of the late '60s. By the early '70s, P-Orridge would join forces with future Throbbing Gristle bandmates in a performance art collective called COUM Transmissions. COUM Transmissions would directly confront the viewer with graphic sex, serial killers, dadaism, surrealism, occultism and wanton violence in an effort to shake the status quo out of their comfort zone.



Genesis P-Orridge



It was in the years following COUM Transmissions that P-Orridge would really start leaving an impact that is still felt today. Depending on which story you read, P-Orridge is cited as introducing "industrial music" into our lexicon. Whether it was P-Orridge who ushered the genre into the world or not is up for debate but they were definitely at ground zero and would later be rightfully known as the Godfather of industrial music. In the proto-punk year of 1975, Genesis — along with COUM Transmissions co-conspirators Cosey Fanni Tutti, Peter Christopherson and Chris Carter — would launch one of underground music's true pioneers, Throbbing Gristle (slang for an erect penis). Choosing not to have a drummer so as not to fall on beaten paths, they broadened their sound with an early interpretation of the sampler utilizing four Walkmans, found sounds and hammered fists on guitar necks while P-Orridge led the whole charge with rudimentary, rhythm-based bass playing while caterwauling songs like "Haaaaaambuuuuuurgerrrrr Laaaaaadddddyyy" over the din of feedback and other deviant audio squelch. Throbbing Gristle's aural assault on the senses made the punk rock of the day seem completely pedestrian by comparison.

After completely changing the narrative with Throbbing Gristle, P-Orridge would once again be a force for change by building the framework for what would eventually become Acid House. While combining psych music and dance repetition, their

band Psychic TV pilfered from the mainstream while combining dark elements with infectious beats. P-Orridge also practised what they preached in the halcyon days of Acid House, having taken hundreds of Ketamine trips.

P-Orridge became a trailblazer for transgender rights in his later years, receiving corrective surgery to physically take on the form of their wife Lady Jaye. After Lady Jaye's death in 2007, P-Orridge poured himself into his work and became known as one of the best lecturers to hit the circuit.

If you're getting the urge to dig into P-Orridge's many-splendored career, check out their lectures online, then dig into the psych-fuelled jams of Psychic TV. At that point, if you're not feeling faint of heart, you can bounce between the blips and the bleeps and brutal bludgeoning of Throbbing Gristle. If you're already there, then you have to get between the covers of P-Orridge's ultimate tome, *The Psychick Bible* — 540 pages chock full of true transgressive fun.

Thank you Genesis P-Orridge for making the world just that much safer for freaks like us.

Current Obsession: *Nurse With Wound*, *Spiral Insane*  
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# Pandemic viewing



### Towering Inferno

BY MATTHEW HAYS

Given the global lockdown, movies and TV shows have taken on an increasing importance in our lives. Perhaps I shouldn't have been surprised last week that some people took it seriously when I posted on social media that the government should declare Netflix an essential service. I was kidding.

Quite naturally, many are drawn to the idea of good old-fashioned escapism. As the film history books note, the Great Depression was a boon to Hollywood, when studios cut their ticket prices so more poor, miserable people could be lifted out of their grim lives for a couple of hours. Cinemas, that near perfect symbol of modernity, now sit empty. Thank the gods for telly.

But some have argued we should in fact watch films about pandemics in the time of a pandemic, as such films hold important lessons in dealing with reality. Others have argued apocalit will help us to find a way once this fog has lifted.

It sounds weird, but I actually find looking at the '70s cycle of Disaster Movies comforting. Full of cornball dialogue, star-studded casts and ludicrous scenarios, they were a short-lived sensation during my childhood, and perhaps that's why I find them pleasing: I can still recall my parents taking me to them. We watched in awe as a huge number of stars showed remarkable bravery while many less-famous co-stars didn't. The special effects, which often look quaint by today's CGI standards, were strikingly good at the time.

Looking at the films through a sociological genre-studies lens, they appealed to audiences because the catastrophes they depicted served as allegories for the disasters American audiences were having to endure at the time, [something I argued](#) when the *Poseidon Adventure* remake came out in 2006. The all-star casts would lead us to feel like we were watching people we knew — the cult of celebrity's greatest



### *The Poseidon Adventure*

trick — as they faced down being burned, drowned, mutilated or worse. For all of their destructive shaking up of the status quo, the genre was essentially a conservative one: the Disaster Hero (played by various stars including Paul Newman, Steve McQueen, Gene Hackman and Charlton Heston) was notably always male, and had the kind of square-jawed confidence that was clearly intended as a reminder of the good old days, when the patriarchy got things done and there would be a morning after.

Looking back, it's clear to me now that this particular cycle of films wasn't just about America in peril, but about Hollywood's own collapse and reinvention. After all, since the sexual violence and bank-robbing anti-heroes *Bonnie and Clyde* had captured the public's imagination, the traditional Hollywood studio system was being undermined by the original brat pack, a gaggle of directors (including Spielberg, Lucas, Scorsese, Coppola and De Palma) who were rewriting the rules and by doing so were making conventional formulas look dull and old-school. New Hollywood had arrived and it was making Old Hollywood look *ancient*. Disaster movies often featured upstart lefties (like Newman, McQueen and Faye Dunaway) next to ornery iconic conservatives (William Holden, Fred Astaire) in their loaded casting. The tremors in *Earthquake* actually begin as Victoria Principal is trying to escape her rather grim life in a Los Angeles cinema.

I've long regarded these films as glorious kitsch. There is nothing better, to point to one scene in particular, than watching Heston battle it out with Ava Gardner in the opening scene in *Earthquake*. Both stars, past their prime, clearly didn't have to reach far into their method-acting emotional baggage to play bitter as hell people who felt trapped by social circumstances. It's like a master class in operatic misery.

But for all of their silliness, they can burn when they get too close to reality. *The Towering Inferno* was based on two books, both of which were inspired by their respective authors looking at the building of the Twin Towers in Manhattan, and wondered, "What would happen if there was a fire in that building? How would people get out?" That question, of course, was no longer fiction when 9/11 happened. I began watching *The Towering Inferno* in the months

following that disaster and had to turn it off. The imagination of disaster was no longer so fictional.

If the films seem unsettling in this moment, it's because of one of the basic traits that runs through them all: the audience is left to wonder, *who will make it to the end?* [Spoilers ahead.] This was the essential suspense, and screenwriters had learned well from Hitchcock, who had famously knocked off protagonist Janet Leigh in the first third of *Psycho* in 1960, making it clear to the audience that no one — no matter how big their mansion or contract — was safe. Thus even the most lovable characters played by the most lovable actors would get knocked off, from Shelley Winters in *The Poseidon Adventure* to Jennifer Jones in *Inferno*. Heston even insisted his character die at the end of *Earthquake*; the original script called for him to survive, presumably to spend the rest of his life with the woman he'd been having an extramarital affair with, played by Geneviève Bujold. But Heston argued it would be more poetic and poignant if his character was flushed down the L.A. sewer with Gardner. They re-wrote the script for the Oscar winner.

And that's why I'm finding these films less reassuring than I have in the past. The virus has set in, and given its incubation period, many if not most of us may well already be infected. The future could look like Italy or Spain in a matter of a week. My network of family and friends includes seniors, cancer survivors and people with auto-immune disorders, as well as front-line healthcare workers. I'm petrified for all of them.

Disaster movies were over in a couple of hours. If this pandemic has a more contemporary cultural comparison, it feels like one of those TV series that goes on for several seasons too long. Screenwriters and their critics already have a term for it: stretching. It's when something that could have been movie-length is expanded so a binge-ready TV series could be created. This feels too long: the anticipation, the constant drone of decreasingly reassuring headlines, the knowledge that the body count is just beginning, the President who sounds just like the mayor in *Jaws* — it's all too familiar.

**The waiting is the most terrifying part. I want this movie over.**

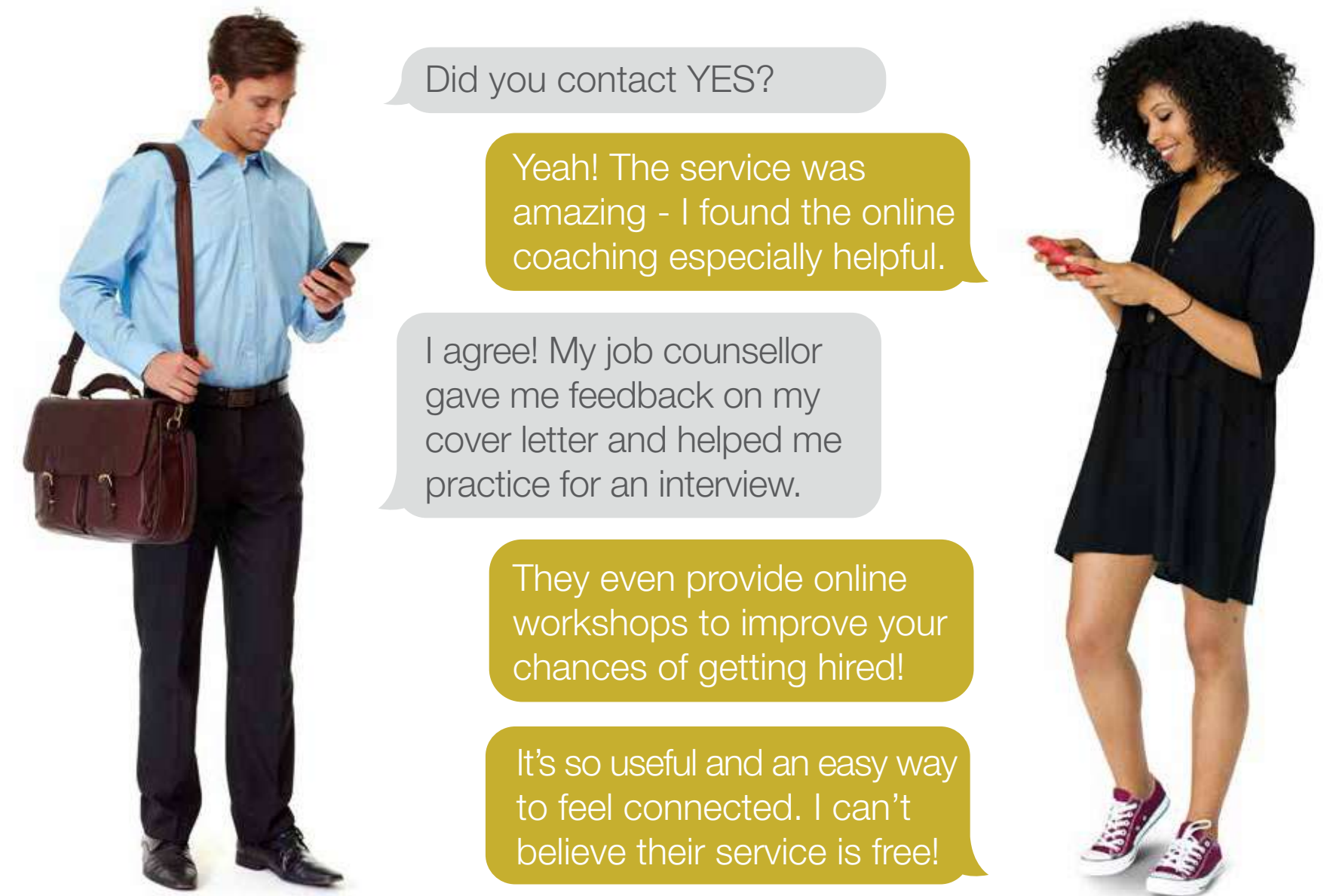


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# Industry anti-climax



Shanna Roberts Salée

BY ALEX ROSE

As the vast majority of us hunker down and pound through whatever is offered on streaming services, the industry that creates that very content finds itself at a standstill. As one of the many non-essential industries, film has more or less ground to a halt.

*Cult MTL* reached out to several people who work in different areas of the industry to take the pulse of exactly where they find themselves in the midst of COVID-19.

ARE YOU STILL ABLE TO DO YOUR WORK? IF NOT, ARE THERE PROCEDURES IN PLACE TO HELP WHILE YOU CAN'T WORK?

Eric K. Boulianne, screenwriter  
(*Les barbares de la Malbaie, Avant qu'on explose*)

EKB: As a screenwriter, I'm still getting ahead on the projects that I had gotten going before all this. The only difference — and it's a big one — is that my two-year-old does not go to daycare. My partner is an editor and she also has deadlines... so we have to alternate our work periods. This necessarily means I've got less time to move forward in my projects. It's not exactly the most "productive" period... and that's not counting the major downer that is the current situation. Nevertheless, I consider myself extremely privileged in my situation since I've got contracts.

Mélanie Mingotaud and Dominic Sénécal, publicists (Mingotwo Communications)

MM/DS: The whole team works remotely from 9 to 5. We use Messenger Video for virtual meetings twice a day: once at the beginning and once at the end. We also have many virtual meetings with our clients and use the different existing apps (Zoom, Whereby, etc.) to conduct them.

Mitch Davis, director of international programming and festival co-director (Fantasia Film Festival)

I'm extremely fortunate in that a good bulk of my programming work has always been done from home (via secure screeners, emails, phone, FaceTime/Skype etc), so the adjustment hasn't been as difficult for me as it's been for many of my friends.

That said, while I'm still able to do my work, I've been having



Teejay Bhalla

immense challenges with being able to do it properly. I'm just not engaging with creative works the way I normally do, because it's impossible to stop thinking of the fact that everyone onscreen is in danger and may have their lives devastated in the immediate days to come. It's completely doing my head in and I'm constantly getting hit with sudden waves of worry and grief when I watch submissions. That and the fact that everything feels eerily dated now, no longer speaking to today's reality, but that's a much easier thing to get past. I'm just so fucking scared for people right now.

Shanna Roberts Salée, assistant director

SRS: I am actually not able to work right now. Our industry has been at a standstill since businesses have closed. As film and television sets are often small and restrained spaces, with a considerable density of humans sharing air, buffet-style food, equipment, doors, toilets... it's a very precarious situation to be in in this current climate. There are procedures in place to help: emergency funds for freelance workers, a security fund for film technicians who are struggling financially and, of course, Employment Insurance. We are very well protected by our union.

Teejay Bhalla, cinema manager and associate programmer (Cinéma Moderne)

TB: The short answer is no. We work directly with the public, so our focus is always to do what is in their best interest. As much as we wanted to be there for our supporters and cinema lovers in Montreal, we made the decision to temporarily close. Many of our primary tasks, including ticket sales, online promotion, communications and projections, we simply can't do.

Our directors had the impossible job of providing us with answers and options when there was no definitive direction. They helped all of us get set up with EI and did a great job of reassuring the team about our future.

Pascal Plante, director  
(*Les faux tatouages, the forthcoming Nadia, Butterfly*)

Thankfully, before the epidemic hit Montreal and paralysed all of our resources, we were able to completely finalize our upcoming film, *Nadia, Butterfly*. In that sense, a huge part of my work was done in *extremis* just before, and I was about to enter a phase of research and writing on a new project; that part of the work, solitary by definition, isn't affected by the present situation... In fact, in some strange way, confinement and the lack of exterior distractions is a net benefit in this step of creation!



Pascal Plante

HAVE PANDEMIC CONDITIONS DIRECTLY AFFECTED FUTURE PROJECTS OR PROJECTS CURRENTLY IN PRODUCTION?

EKB: As I see it, those who had shoots coming up in the summer months aren't quite sure what the future holds, but are still getting prepared — inasmuch as you can even prepare a shoot that could be cancelled at any moment. In my case, I'm writing, no shoots planned, so that's that. There's a big deposit period in August at SODEC... I was probably going to deposit two or three projects. We're still waiting to see. It's almost certain that the calendar will be shifted down, but we don't know how yet. If all the shoots are pushed to the fall, will they still finance a dozen projects for winter shoots? I don't know. There'll be a shakeup somewhere down the line. I'm lucky. If projects are shot now or later... well, there's nothing there to stop me from writing them. It's just that, these days, everything I write doesn't really seem to make sense... Everything seems "vain." It's as if I'm always telling myself, "Yeah, but who gives a shit about that, really?" But I still hold out a little bit of hope that people will want to take their mind off things when the pandemic is over, and they won't necessarily want to binge 12 movies about pandemics and the end of the world. So... you know... a nice little comedy, why not?

I also have a very modest career as an actor. I had a big project coming at the end of the summer... but now, I have no idea what's happening with the shoot. So I'd say that's probably my only project that's directly affected.

MM/DS: Hugely so. The majority of projects that we had been hired for are event-based and centred around a meeting of some sort, be it in a museum, a public place, a cinema etc. More than half of our events have been pushed back or cancelled.

Paradoxically, we're still very busy. We have had to speak for every client, on social media as well as traditional.

We're also lucky to have clients that are very polyvalent such as television networks or film distributors who adapted their distribution methods quickly, through the use of VOD, for example.

MD: Big time. We're still working with our July dates — though we've got an August contingency plan in case the city asks us to postpone — but there's so much uncertainty as to what will actually be possible this summer. It looks like we'll be able to do the festival in July, but will international travel be safe by then? If not, we've been negotiating all kinds of world premieres — even more than usual due to the terrible wave of cancellations that walloped the fest circuit — and filmmaker commitments have been key to a number of them, as always. If it turns out that we can still do the fest in July, but won't be able to bring in filmmakers — or international



Mitch Davis

press, which is also hugely important — it will drastically change what we can play and the overall scale of what we put on. So all the planning work is incredibly surreal at the moment.

SRS: Yes, definitely. Right now all productions are on an indefinite hold. Some productions have elected to cancel days or entire shooting blocks. And like for everything else, there is no telling when they might start up again. Especially American productions, which represent a significant percentage of revenue for thousands of film workers.

TB: We had to hold off on a month's worth of programming, which means cancelling with distributors and events with invited guests. On the flipside, we have taken the opportunity to work on things that we never had time to focus on, such as launching our tote bags and reliving some of our best memories from the cinema with our "Coups de cœur" series on social media. We have even found new ways to share our program. We teamed up with distributors to bring three films (*Rojo, Le lac aux oies sauvages* and *Corpus Christi*) online, and more are on the way. By renting them, you're directly supporting the Cinéma Moderne!

PP: Like all completed films waiting for a commercial release, uncertainty surrounds our distribution strategy. We're still hoping to come out in 2020, but a film like ours is also dependent on eventual festival selections, and most of these have either been cancelled or delayed. In the event that the traditional summer/fall festival season doesn't happen, it'll have a huge impact on the way we had planned the release. Only time will tell. It's difficult to plan anything at the moment, and we think it's smart to delay the release of promotional elements (teaser, poster, etc.) to a later date.

What's strange, in our very specific case, is the very subject of the film: *Nadia, Butterfly* is a feature that deals with retirement in sports, set during the Tokyo Olympics, and we were hoping to line up its release with the real Olympic Games which were slated to happen in July and August of 2020, but that we now know have been pushed to 2021. The film showcases real high-level swimmers in the lead roles, including two-time olympian Katherine Savard, who was intending to try her hand for the third time this year before finally retiring. The least we can say is that her plans have been shook up. Does she still have a full year of swimming ahead of her? I don't know... but I hope for her sake that she finishes her career without bitterness, on the best note possible, in spite of circumstances.

HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE "RETURN TO NORMAL"? IS SUCH A THING EVEN POSSIBLE, OR WILL THE CRISIS INEVITABLY CHANGE SOME ASPECTS OF YOUR WORK AND THE INDUSTRY PERMANENTLY?

EKB: I'm very pessimistic, personally. Then again, if you read



Eric K. Boulianne

about it, most experts seem to agree that the confinement measures are going to be relaxed in the next two to three months, but that the so-called "return to normal" won't happen until they develop a vaccine, which could take up to a year and a half. So even if we'll be able to see each other in small groups in the next few months, go to a restaurant but keep a table's worth of distance between each customer... The fact remains that large groups will not be encouraged and that measures might be tightened up again if there is a spike in cases. In any case, on a film shoot there can be as many as 60 to 70 people, sometimes in very cramped spaces. I have a lot of trouble imagining the authorities giving our industry the go-ahead before we figure out a solution to the propagation, be it a vaccine or medication. Maybe small shoots will be allowed. But how do you manage that? And even then, so many things will change in our social rapports. I don't think anyone really knows how it's going to be "after." Y'know, I'm writing a very intimate movie where the actors would be kissing and fucking for most of the movie. Right now, we watch a movie on TV where two people shake hands and our instinct is "GUYS, WHAT THE FUCK, DON'T DO THAT." I can't imagine how we'll get to a point where we're ready to just say "fuck it" and act the way we did "before" on film shoots. And all that is just details. I'm not even touching on the economic consequences of the crisis and how it's going to decimate all the creative programs. Are we an essential service? I don't know. Not in the minds of many... and, slowly, not in my mind either. But that's the depressed guy talking. I prefer being pessimistic now and being surprised afterwards. In any case, I can never say it enough: I'm fucking privileged right now. I have projects and I can think about the future without being at someone's bedside in intensive care. So, in some way, I should shut up.

MM/DS: The crisis will inevitably change the way we live our lives. People will be more wary of going out, of coming in contact with others. It'll be awhile before we see the same kind of crowds at cultural events. Before we see any quantifiably effective solution thanks to scientific advancements, people will remain cautious. For us, that means an inevitable traffic jam of projects in the fall and of much smaller budgets, in an industry that's already hurting financially.

SRS: At this point, it's incredibly hard to say. I'm sure some common-sense measures will be implemented: hand sanitizer, wipes, masks etc. which were in any case already readily available on film sets before the pandemic. But there's no telling how it will affect, for instance, shooting a scene that requires 800 extras in a crowd. Or whether limits of people on set will be implemented. Or whether foreign productions will elect/be forced to shoot in the U.S., which would create a huge deficit for our industry in Montreal. Travelling talent and above the line workers (producers, directors, directors of photography etc.) might prove to be an impossible task in the months to come, or the next year. In the meantime, all we can do is sit tight and wait... like everyone else!



Dominic Sénécal and Mélanie Mingotaud

TB: I don't think that a return to normal should be the end goal. I believe that this is an important time to make those changes to our businesses and industries that we didn't think were possible. We are living through an unprecedented time which proves how quickly we can adapt when everything goes out of the window. For the cinema industry, I am curious to see what social distancing looks like in a theatre setting. Will cinemas open with limited seating? How will the public perceive public locations post-COVID-19? Will there be more technological innovation to bring our program directly to our audience's home? I am curious to find these answers in time, but more importantly, I am looking forward to opening our doors again.

MD: Once we get past this, I'm optimistic about most things returning to something close to normal sooner than later. I mean, we're all going to have some aspect of PTSD for a while, but we're also going to be so, so happy to be able to hang out with each other and go places again. Cinemas, concerts, sporting events and the like will almost certainly be among the groups that will take the longest time to recover because there's going to be a period where we're all just going to be instinctively queasy about the idea of being in large, crowded spaces, but provided that things are safe, we'll collectively get past that over time. We're seeing a lot of the independent cinemas struggling and there's big worry that many will be lost, which would be an absolute tragedy. Streaming's inevitably going to become even stronger after being sanity-savers for months of captive audiences across the world and theatrical windows are clearly going to shrink as well — they always were, but it's all on superspeed now. Still, people like us who love the theatrical experience will invariably keep the big screen alive. Powerful, shared experiences are the very soul of cinema's being.

PP: From a societal point of view, I think the return to normal has to be done with a huge examination of conscience, and that it's time for us to start really talking about scaling down the economy on a global scale if we want to even have a planet for future generations. But, well... from the extremely niche point-of-view we're concerned with today, all the spring and summer movies that were pushed back are going to create an incredible traffic jam in theatres later this year. In a market that was already approaching saturation, it's hard to imagine the chaos that will follow. All I know is that when movie theatres re-open, we'll have to patronize them! On a more positive note, the present crisis pushes cinephiles to discover new viewing platforms in order to watch movies, and distributors have been very proactive and creative in response to that! I think that there's a creativity and spirit of solidarity growing out of all this darkness, and it's truly beautiful.

# On Screen



Coffee & Kareem



The Main Event



Sergio



Tigertail

BY ALEX ROSE

Insane how fast things change.

I just went back and read my last On Screen, which I wrote in the last week of February. Back then, I could not have predicted that half of the movies I mentioned wouldn't open at all — and that a good quarter of them wouldn't last a week before all theatres shut down. The challenge, as April looms, is in fact sort of the opposite. Aside from what was already scheduled to come out on various streaming platforms, the calendar of VOD releases is very fluid and ever-changing. It's hard to look ahead and have a clear picture of what's coming soon.

Dropping on Netflix April 3, *Coffee & Kareem* is an action-comedy starring Ed Helms as a disgraced police officer who's forced to team up with his girlfriend's foul-mouthed 12-year-old son to stop some dangerous criminals. Directed by Michael Dowse (*Stuber*, *Goon*), it seems distressingly like a gritty reboot of *Cop and a Half*, starring Burt Reynolds — which is something no one ever asked for, but who knows. Amazon Prime releases *Selah and the Spades*, the first film by Tayarisha Poe, on April 17. Lovie Simone (*Greenleaf*) and Jharrel Jerome (*Moonlight*) star as a couple of students

at a boarding school who run a successful drug-dealing ring. Alan Yang (*Parks and Recreation*, *Master of None*) makes his directorial debut with *Tigertail* (April 17 on Netflix), a somewhat autobiographical tale of a Taiwanese man (Tzi Ma) who moves to America and his relationship with his second-generation daughter (Christine Ko).

WWE Studios is still alive and kicking. Their next effort is *The Main Event* (April 10 on Netflix), a wrestling comedy starring Tichina Arnold (*Everybody Hates Chris*), Ken Marino and a solid smattering of WWE superstars, including the Miz. On the same day, Netflix is also releasing *Love. Wedding. Repeat*, a romantic comedy starring Olivia Munn and Sam Claflin which appears to be more or less along the lines of every other romantic comedy that Netflix is pumping out. Purchased by HBO after its TIFF run, *Bad Education* lands on Crave on April 28. Hugh Jackman stars as the superintendent of a high-profile Long Island school district who winds up at the centre of a fraud scandal; Ray Romano and Allison Janney co-star. Wagner Moura (*Narcos*) stars as the titular *Sergio* (April 17 on Netflix), a UN diplomat from Brazil who was killed in a 2003 hotel bombing in Iraq; Ana de Armas and Garret Dillahunt co-star in the film, a Sundance pick-up for the streaming giant.

Chris Hemsworth stars in *Extraction* (April 24 on Netflix), an action thriller written and produced by *Avengers* helmers Anthony and Joe Russo in which Hemsworth plays a mercenary tasked with rescuing the kidnapped son of an international drug kingpin. It sounds generic as all hell, but movies like this aren't really being made much these days, so perhaps it has a hook not apparent from the marketing materials. Apple TV+ only has one new movie out this month, but I have to admit that it's such a doozy it's making me consider getting a subscription: *Beastie Boys Story* (April 24) is a Spike Jonze-directed documentary about the titular Boys, based in part on their career-spanning autobiography released in 2018. Over at Disney+ you can catch the accelerated premiere of Pixar's *Onward* on April 3, mere weeks after its theatrical release was cut short by the pandemic.

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# arts

## Local culture lives

BY NORA ROSENTHAL

Well, life seems simultaneously very dull and the least dull it could possibly be. What a surreal moment we all get to inhabit together. Good thing our local culture lives on in force.

Here are just a few institutions and artists doing their best to keep us all going.

Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery

It may no longer be possible to visit the gallery, but you can still read their prescient series *Apocalyptic Manifesto*, a series of texts by Rodney Saint-Éloi in conjunction with the exhibit *In the No Longer Not Yet*.

<http://ellengallery.concordia.ca/evenement/apocalyptic-manifesto/?lang=en>

Librairie Drawn & Quarterly

Their locations may be closed, but you can still purchase online and pick up securely at their children's store (176



Martha Wainwright

Bernard W.). Not to mention they've still got online book clubs up and running!

<http://mtl.drawnandquarterly.com/upcoming-events>

Phi Centre

The Phi has begun a podcast, *The Aura*, in which curator and managing director Cheryl Sim will “spea[k] one-on-one with members of the international art community.” Additionally, you can virtually visit the Eva & Franco Mattes exhibit

in the form of a short documentary: <https://vimeo.com/397432482>

POP Montreal

I'd strongly recommend signing up to POP Montreal's newsletter to keep abreast of developments in the indie music scene as COVID-19 progresses. The newsletters have an abundance of resources both for artists and to help support them, not to mention hosting events like Tuesday balcony sing-a-longs. Tess Roby, a local artist who spoke to several musicians for POP Montreal's recent article about the sprawling impacts of the pandemic on their lives, will also be live-streaming from Instagram (@tessroby) on April 11 at 8 p.m. She is certainly not alone! Instagram is awash with lovely personal live streams right now in which you can take a tiny peek inside the apartments of your favourite local artists.

<https://popmontreal.com/en/mag/detail/close-up-how-covid-19-is-changing-the-lives-of-montreal-based-artists/>

Pornhub

Let's not forget that Pornhub is “local” too! The porn site was launched in Montreal in 2007. A dubious claim to fame considering Pornhub's reputation for taking far too long to remove non-consensual content, but Pornhub hosts a broad spectrum of videos, and as Maureen O'Connor elucidated in her article in *The Cut*, “the streaming sex empire may have done more to expand the sexual dreamscape than Helen Gurley Brown, Masters and Johnson or Sigmund Freud.” Well, expand your dreams away, 'cause Pornhub Premium, as you probably already know, is now free worldwide in the corporate hope that people will remain entertained at home. You know the URL.

Also interesting is that Pornhub is donating 50,000 surgical masks to New York City medics and first responders. What on earth they're doing with all those masks is another story.

If you're organizing a virtual event in the coming weeks, please write to me at [nora.rosenthal@culmontreal.com](mailto:nora.rosenthal@culmontreal.com)



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Safety shot

BY RYAN DIDUCK

Bullion, "We Had a Good Time," *We Had a Good Time* (DEEK Recordings)

This year, I tried a Dry January, which ended up stretching through most of February, too. I was so disciplined, and it felt good, my body having a little break. No booze also meant less dining out, and less overall expenditure. But once March rolled around, I started treating myself again.

The Thursday before all this happened, perhaps in grim anticipation, I did a Bang Bang. That's when you eat a meal in one restaurant, and then head straight to another one for a second serving. Chez Sophie was my choice for lunch. I love that place. It's so tasteful. Everyone who works there is the right combination of friendly and professional — after all, serving food is serious business, as we've come to understand more and more. The menu is always simple, delicate, fresh and delicious. And the clientele is a bit on the mature side, which has the added bonus of making me feel young whenever I go there. Not like those hip new brunch places with a line-up of 19-year-olds waiting in the cold. For omelettes.

That afternoon, I got suckered into a \$50 glass of Pinot Noir, and it was worth it. So worth it that I went to the SAQ directly afterwards and bought a bottle of it and poured it down my stupid throat. Then I went to Tuck Shop for dinner. I sat at the bar while the barkeep, Jeremy, plied me with more wines of his choosing. I ordered the bavette and fries, my usual whenever I go there, because they do it so impeccably every time. And I ate while watching a smarmy rich couple feeding each other oysters and smacking their lips lasciviously on a chilled Sancerre. I'd never done a Bang Bang before. It was luxurious, decadent, and I hope to do it again someday.

Orson Welles had a funny line: "My doctor tells me that I must stop having dinners for four, unless I invite three other people."

Katherine Ashenburg, *The Dirt on Clean: An Unsanitized History* (Knopf Canada, 2007)

While under voluntary lockdown, I've been dusting off some old books. And hand sanitizing them. One such tome is Katherine Ashenburg's 2007 *The Dirt on Clean*, an excellent history of our western understanding of cleanliness, and perfect pandemic reading. Ashenburg cites the "straightforward, low-tech" council of ER doctor and Giller Prize-winning author Vincent Lam:

"Get a flu shot by all means, exercise caution with live birds and cook turkey and chicken well. But during a pandemic or even a normal



flu outbreak, wash your hands often and properly, cover your face when sneezing or coughing and keep a distance of at least one metre from sick people. If you're taking care of a sick person, wear gloves and a mask. And keep some rubber gloves and containers of hand sanitizer with your emergency supplies." Had the world only heeded this simple advice.

Bob Mortimer featuring Matt Berry, "Train Guy, Geoff Linton virtual F2F" (Twitter)

The only thing that has elicited genuine belly laughs of late has been the British comedian Bob Mortimer's "Train Guy" creation. In a string of increasingly absurd self-shot shorts posted since January to Twitter, Mortimer takes the piss out of a typical upbeat office drone having a loudmouthed jargon-filled video powwow with an unseen co-worker called Carl. Mortimer's train guy frequently makes reference to Geoff Linton, who had remained an imaginary, offscreen character. Until March 17, that is, when he made an hilarious cameo, playing an in-the-office but out-of-touch supervisor boasting of scoring meet-and-greet Phil Collins tickets. You may recognize "The Lintonator" as none other than the fabulous banana man Matt Berry, Douglas Reynholm from *The IT Crowd* and *The Mighty Boosh*'s Dixon Bainbridge.

As always, I am a lonely heron.

Ronnie O'Sullivan vs. Ding Junhui, U.K. Snooker Championship, Round 4, York Barbican, York, England, Dec. 8, 2019

If you're like me (and I hope to God you're not), you've been looking for something to calm your frayed nerves, something non-committal, something that you can play in the background, paying half-attention while you're opening another can of tuna fish. I'm pleased to report that I have found just the thing: the most calming, soothing stuff to stream on the internet. And no, it's not guided meditation, nor ASMR, nor the chanting of Tibetan monks. What it is, rather, is two blokes playing snooker on the BBC.

Since I'm not a sportsball guy, I figured it would be in that realm. I tried watching golf (too boring) and bowling (actually obnoxious) but snooker is ideal. It's classy, but also unpretentious, somehow. Oftentimes, two world champions will be playing a frame while

there's another game going on right next to them.

Snooker matches can last for hours and hours. There are long stretches of silence sometimes punctuated by a cough from the audience, a noise that has taken on heavier resonance these days. Shouting and cheering are discouraged. There is no unnecessary commentary. One of the presenters, a retired player called Alan McManus, has the most delightful, rolling Glaswegian lilt. There is something so peaceful about the steady clack of the balls, something so satisfying about the slow-motion replays that slow down the sound, too. (I can't think of another sport that does this, and it tickles my inner Kittler.)

Snooker is a beautiful game of strategy, skill and chance, and I went in one week from knowing almost nothing about it to being obsessed and resolute to learn. It will be the ultimate sport for social distancing, too, if and when we can ever go to a pool hall again.

Squarepusher, "Midi Sans Frontières (Avec Batterie)," *Lamental* (Warp Records)

Lately I've been giving a lot of thought to borders. I never imagined I would live to see the day of their mass closure. Many in the U.S. who vocally opposed Trump's Mexican border wall are now clamouring for the complete shutdown of all international human traffic. Which means that this novel strain of Coronavirus has achieved what so many fascists never could.

We will not overcome this crisis with the prevailing binary you-me, inside-outside, my country-your country, subject-object, human-non-human brand of thinking, though. The virus isn't alive in any regular sense, but it obviously exerts outsize agency.

The political theorist Jane Bennett in her 2010 book *Vibrant Matter* offers a useful way to think through and beyond these imaginary distinctions: "It is futile to seek a pure nature unpolluted by humanity," Bennett argues, "and it is foolish to define the self as something purely human."

We must learn to decentre ourselves from our own view of the world, and realize that viruses don't respect borders, be they national or personal. It's going to take practice.

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# NATHANIEL RATELIF

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