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*** The Dears * Valérie Plante * Designer masks * Cities & pandemics * Restaurant industry**

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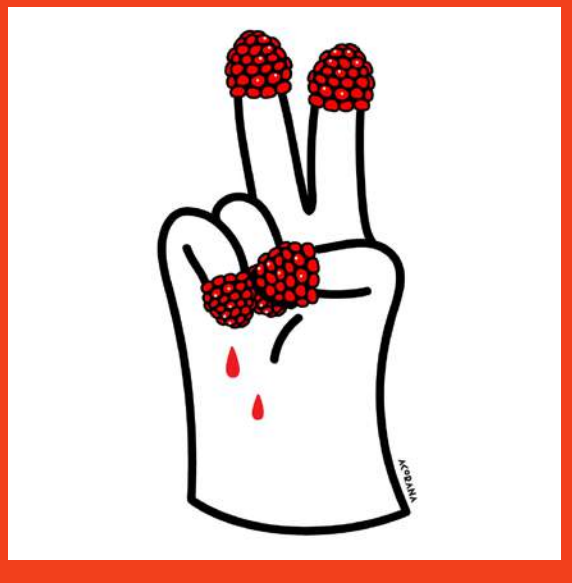

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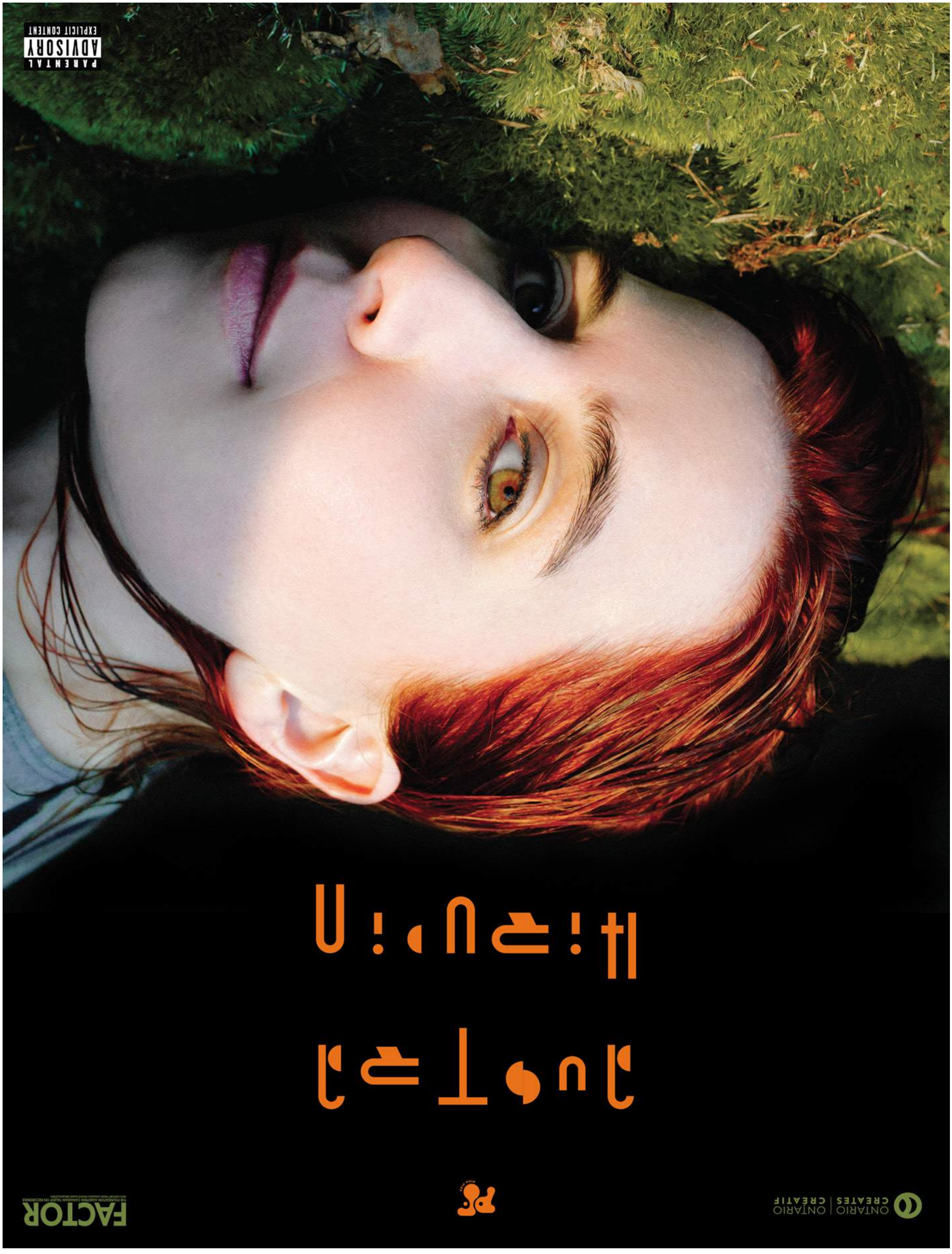
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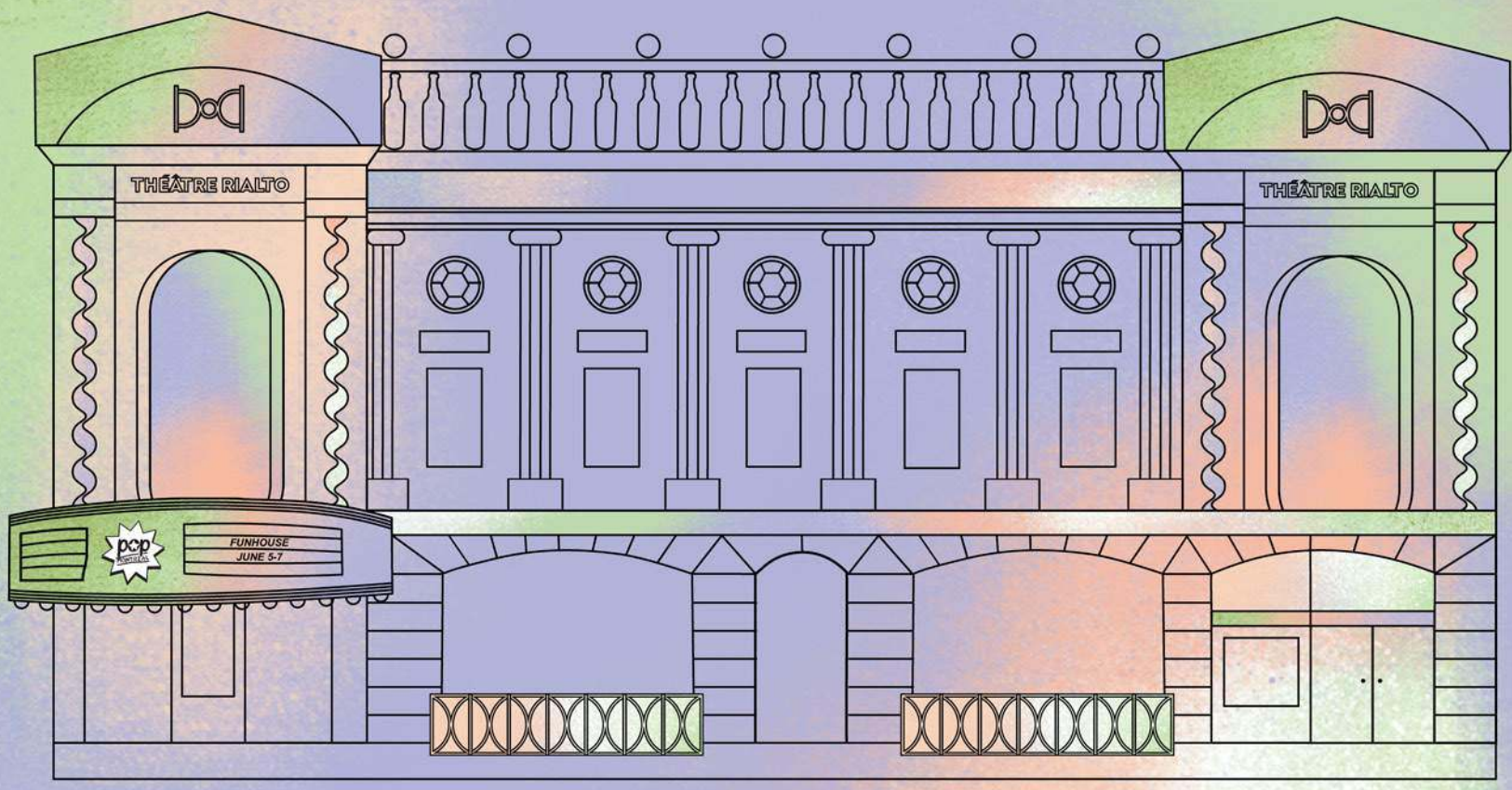

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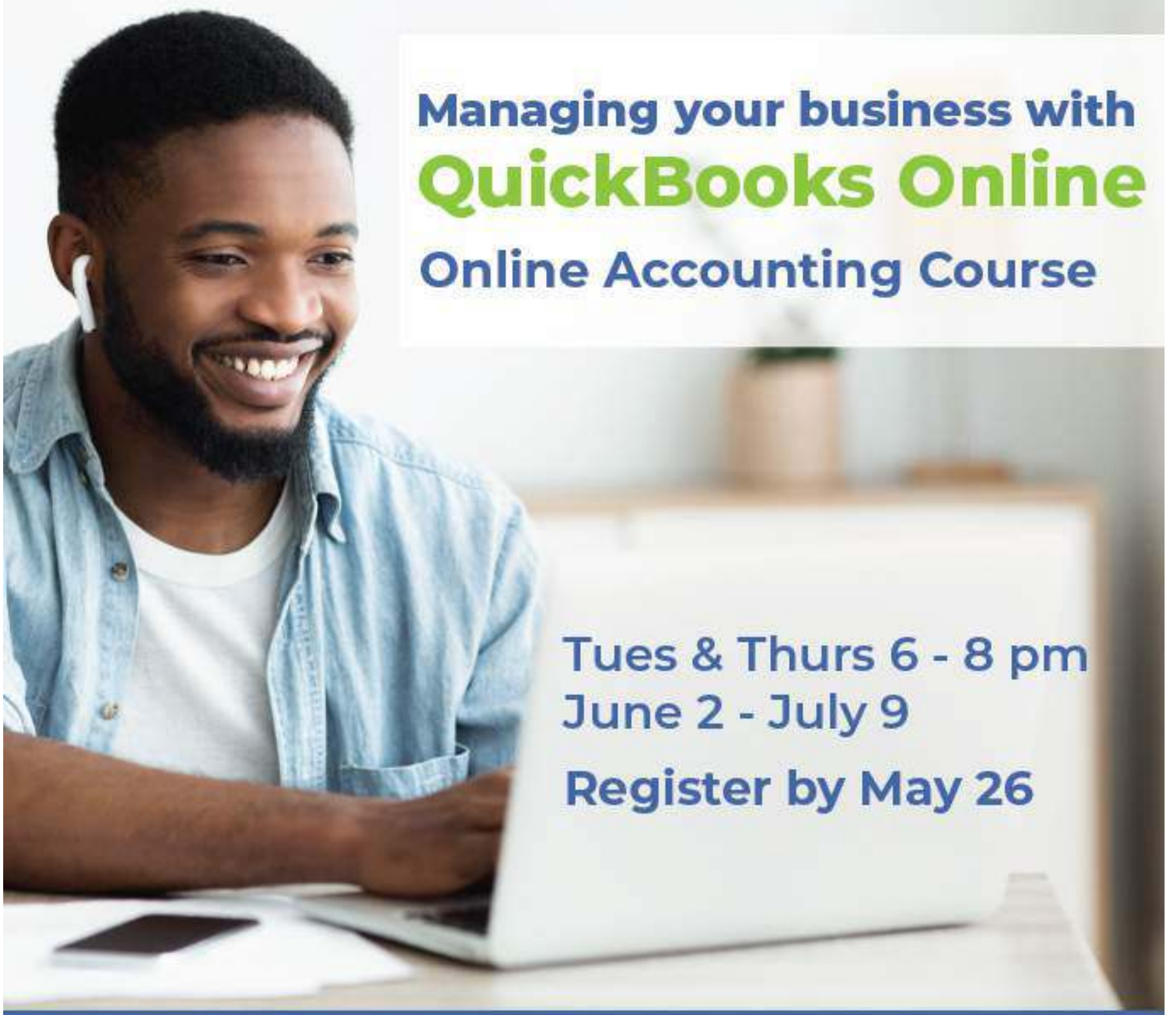

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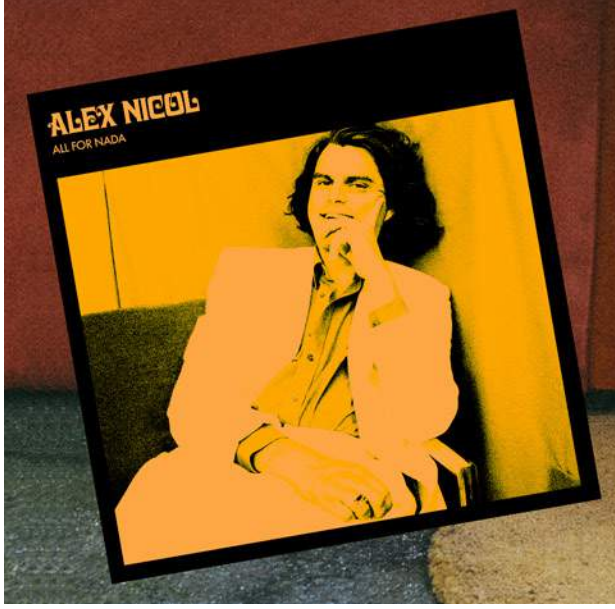

MICHEL RECORDS

ANNIVERSARY

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The exceptional eighth album by Montreal band the Dears, *Lovers Rock*, couldn't have arrived at a better time.

Photo by Richmond Lam

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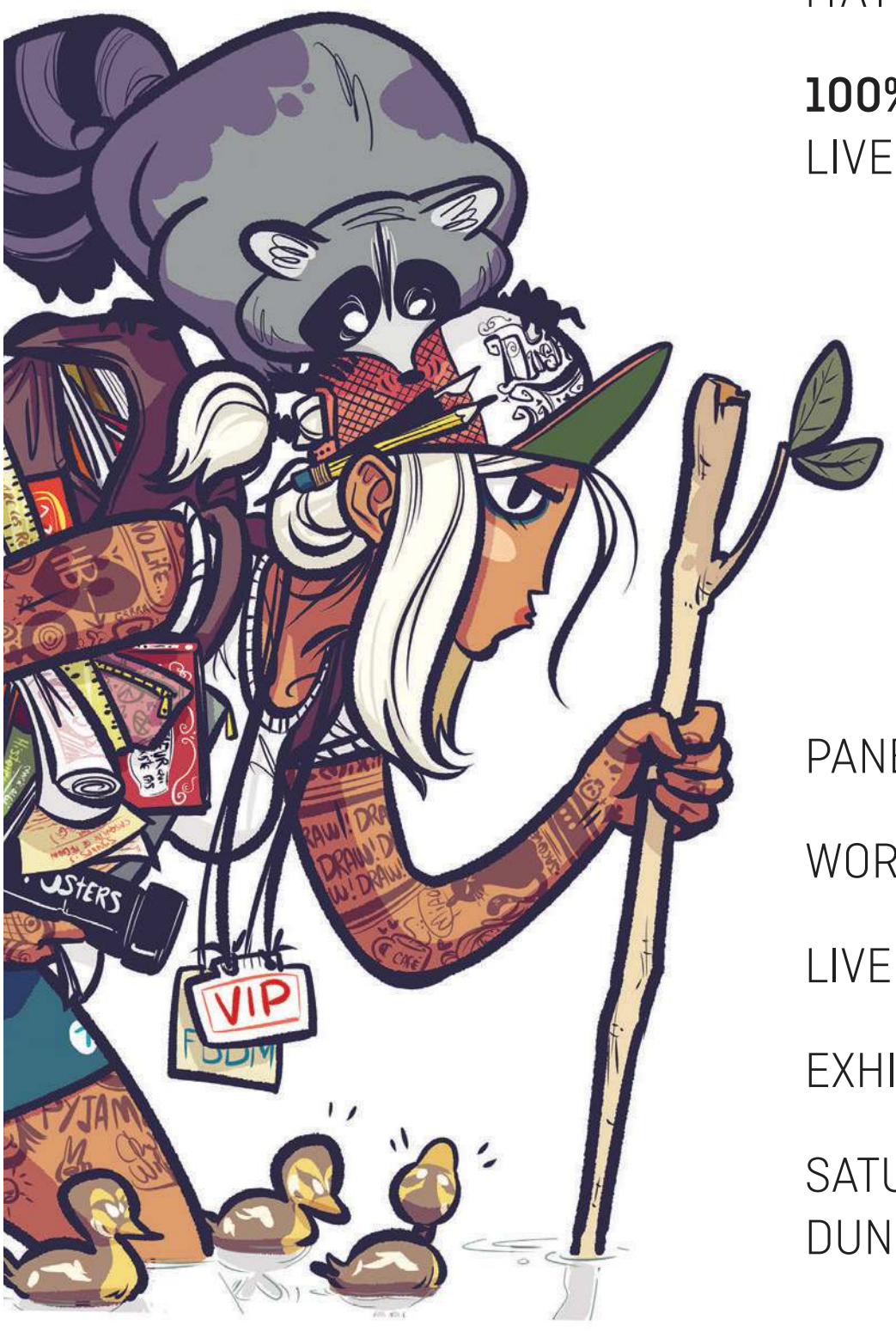

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DUNGEONS, DRAGONS & DRAWINGS

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Letter from the editor

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

May is when we usually publish our Best of MTL issue. Under normal circumstances, voting in the readers poll would have ended in mid-April, the results tabulated the following week, the quotes and photos from some of the winners taken as April drew to a close. Clearly 2020 has not presented us with normal circumstances. Voting in the poll has been extended (till midnight on Sunday, May 10); the special issue postponed.

As with our April issue, this one is online-only, featuring complimentary advertising that we offered to our clients. Up to 90 per cent of our distribution locations remain closed, as do so many of the businesses that will make the Best of MTL Top 5 and Top 10 lists. The whole point of the Best of MTL is to promote the great things about Montreal, which includes its shops, bars, clubs, restaurants, salons, studios, museums, galleries and theatres. And while we now know that retail in Montreal is tentatively set to reopen on May 19, the plan for cultural spaces, restaurants and other service-oriented businesses — hair salons, spas, massage, tattoo etc — is unknown.

While putting out the Best of MTL issue on schedule might have been a welcome distraction for readers in lockdown, we feel that this is not the right time. We decided to save the announcement of the results as fanfare for local businesses in the June issue, after the city's gradual reopening begins.

In the meantime, presenting a "normal" May issue allows us to feature one of Montreal's best bands, the Dears, on the cover for the first time. We're also bringing you a feature interview with Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante, reports about local designers making "isolation garb" as well as the trendy accessory of the moment (masks) and some great think pieces about everything from grief to the restaurant industry to city life and the ramifications of the pandemic in the world of architecture, along with our regular columns.

Stay strong through May, Montreal. We'll see you in print in June.

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Race, class, ideology clash

Ted Rutland

BY LILY SHYKOFF

Ted Rutland is a professor of urban and cultural geography at Concordia University whose work concerns cities and how racism is "woven into the very making of cities." I wanted to speak with Rutland in particular since cities are the places where we're stuck, the places that are COVID-19 epicentres and therefore places of an intense and heightened cultural and political significance.

We discuss the parallels between the urban slums of 1830s Europe and how this relates to our contemporary homeless and prison populations, the unique potential for social change right now and the simultaneous fear that the state (and, in particular, the police) will come out of this crisis yet more empowered than before.

Lily Shykoff**: What are you dwelling on right now? What in particular keeps you up at night?**

Ted Rutland: **For someone who grew up in relative privilege in a first world country, the future has always been relatively predictable. Of course predictions are wrong, but I've lived my life in a way that assumes certain things are going to happen and what actually happens doesn't depart too much from that. I find it to be a big struggle to have so little idea of what things are going to be like a year from now or even three months from now or even tomorrow. I think most of the world's population sort of lives this way all the time but for people who have lived in some sort of comfort this is a shock. It's a partial welcome or rude awakening to the way that most people on the planet live.**

LS: **Absolutely. I've been finding a strange irony among people on the left who are so terrified of their friends or family or neighbours not being sufficiently prudent that we keep saying "listen to the state above all else." I've seen calls to demand more, to ask for more protections for low wage workers, or to call for a rent strike for example, but I'm wondering what you make of this trust in the state or even in city governance during a time of crisis. To what extent do you see that trust bleeding into our post-COVID lives?**

TR: **It's unfortunate that when it comes to things like social distancing a lot of people are trusting the state to establish the framework through which we should live our lives and that we're using the police to enforce it. It's really clear that we need social distancing but a more left perspective on that is that we should all do as much as we can, do the most social distancing that we're able to, but that across-the-board rules don't take into account the social hierarchies that structure our society. It's a little odd to see people so easily accepting the state's definition of what we should be doing.**

At the same time I've been really impressed by all the people you see and people I know who are interpreting what needs to be done right now in a much more strict way than the state is. So tons of people who are very critical of the state are not actually critical of the idea that we need to do something, that we all have a responsibility for this.

There's a tendency in the mainstream of society to see anti-authoritarians or anarchists as being in favour of doing whatever you want at all times, but almost all the anti-authoritarians and anarchists that I know are practising much more strict social distancing than the state is requiring and the people who are doing less than the state requires are doing so under a kind of neoliberal idea of freedom. [...] There are some quite interesting analyses of what we need to be doing right now and some very grassroots and informal ways of holding each other to account in ways that aren't about shame and aren't about state authority and aren't about calling the cops to ensure that we do what we need to do to keep safe.

LS: **What are some of those in concrete terms?**

TR: **I see people being very strict with themselves and sharing a kind of commitment to a strong social distancing among friends. I think there's also a ton of really interesting organizing right now including rent strikes, including the hunger strike at the Laval Immigrant [Holding] Centre. What I'm most focused on that I think is a good thing that could come out of this is the organizing around prisons and detention centres. What I'm thinking about draws from the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, a rad Black feminist abolitionist scholar and activist out of New York who writes a lot about crisis, and we're absolutely living in a time of crisis right now. We're used to going through economic crises that are created by capitalism. This crisis is a little different. It's certainly related to capitalism in lots of ways but it manifests primarily in these health effects rather than an economic downturn as its primary factor. But what she says about crisis is that in these moments where the status quo is no longer possible, new things are possible, that what comes out of it is obviously a social struggle and so there's no guarantee that anything positive will come out of this at all or that the overall result will be positive [...] but clearly we see a bunch of ways in which the status quo can't hold.**

Right now we see for example that it makes zero sense to have people like migrants locked up in immigrant detention centres. People in detention centres cannot practise social distancing, they cannot use the hygienic practises that we're being told to use. Their life becomes a flagrant violation of health protocols that we've all come to accept.

We don't usually condemn migrants to death for having crossed the border but that's what keeping them in a detention centre would mean right now. It's also not good for the rest of us because the walls around a detention centre are porous. People are going in and out of these places so we're creating little death traps where people are going to get infected and are going to die. This will actually affect all of us.

Lots of people are calling for the release of immigrant detainees and prisoners and I believe that some of that will happen. The thing is that when the lockdown is over maybe the fact that we've let a bunch of people out and they haven't gone around murdering everybody means that we don't need to force them to go back and we can actually rethink why we're caging so many people to begin with, because we haven't always done this. There's a number of ways in which things are possible now in the particular conditions of this pandemic that might establish precedents that allow us to keep more just ways of doing things going after the pandemic ends.

LS: **Some people on the left who are being very strict about their isolation are expressing on social media that they're a little perplexed about how to frame that in organizations or communities that are much more politically diverse. How, for instance, do you tell your neighbours that calling the cops is not the most appropriate action and how do you frame that in a way that has the illusion of political neutrality in order for it not to appear as something that falls along these ideological fault lines?**

TR: **This is a great moment to put in practice what a lot of activist intellectuals in the U.S. have been calling everyday abolition. What do we need to do in our everyday**

lives to create a world where we don't need prisons and where we don't need the police? One of the things is that, because we have a specialized police force and we have these cages around, everyday people don't need to have the skills to talk to their neighbours, talk to people they see in the streets and try to get people to behave in ways that are in the interest of everyone. We've basically lost those skills and we also, to be honest, don't react well when people who aren't cops or judges or teachers try to exercise authority over us. We take any questioning of our behaviour or suggestion that we should be doing things otherwise as an exercise of authority, which it isn't necessarily. If you don't have any power over someone, you aren't exercising authority.

This is a time to develop new skills, and we're not going to do that perfectly but we can start doing it. We need to try to pass messages along that are compassionate and that are trying to invite people to become the kind of person that they are. People are, at their core, caring.

LS: **Can you speak about some of the historical precedents to COVID-19 in terms of organizing and in terms of how this is playing out in cities?**

TR: **The history of modern cities is a history that emerges from dealing with epidemics. To me the modern city — the modern way of seeing the city and the modern way of governing the city — is born out of the cholera epidemics of the 1830s that wiped out tens of thousands of people in major cities across Western Europe and North America all in the same year. That's a moment where things like the slums, places that poor people and working poor people were living in dreadful conditions, places that were overcrowded, that didn't have any kind of sanitation facilities, didn't have heating, didn't have bathrooms, didn't have reliable shingles on the roof, these dreadful places that no one seemed to care about all of a sudden became a great preoccupation because if those people get sick, we can all get sick. Cities are massively changed out of a recognition that our lives are all bound together at a microbial level and that we need a minimum standard of living for people if we all want to stay safe and have good lives.**

Is that organizing? For sure the 19th century Communist parties came out of that. Frederick Engels' first big report was a study of working class districts in Manchester and across England that was very much about showing how terrible living conditions were having bad effects on peoples' health and how those living conditions were the result of a lack of state action but also of exploitative landlords and factory owners. It also, like so many social changes, drew on the support of wealthier people who had some kind of philanthropic interests — the Bill Gates of that era — who are not great but can sometimes do something that's useful.

This is a similar situation where the analogy to the urban slums of the 19th century are homeless populations and prison populations, two communities that are extremely vulnerable to COVID at the moment and that we usually don't pay attention to. We're already now seeing some attention to ensuring that their conditions are better because it's a way of ensuring all our conditions are better. That's not necessarily solidarity, or it's a weird kind of solidarity. People on the left will see this as a straightforward social justice issue, while people not on the left are going to think, "Oh I need to get homeless people healthy so that I don't get sick." Despite these differences, I guess you find—I don't know if you want to call it allies—but you get people in the mainstream that will support the things that the left has been fighting for for years, albeit for different reasons.

LS: **Do you have any insights or any feeling about how this will shape Montreal's specific cultural fabric down the road?**

TR: **I don't think it's going to be good overall. I'm interested in what's getting shaken up right now, where new ideas are getting credence and support, where different institutions and people are getting support and public valorization where they weren't before. On the one hand we're really shining the spotlight on medical professionals and I think that's a good thing. We've underspent on healthcare for a really long time and we're seeing all the really important work that healthcare professionals do and we're seeing the ways in which our lack of financing for healthcare has put us in a very bad situation. They are clearly emerging as the heroes of all this and I don't think that's a bad thing. Hopefully we invest more heavily in healthcare in the future.**

Conversely, people believe François Legault is handling this extremely well, and in comparison to Trump and Justin Trudeau, I think that's true. [*Ed.'s note*: This interview took place before Legault announced the reopening of businesses and schools.] I'm glad. I don't like the guy, I don't like his politics, I don't like his party, but I'm glad he's doing a good job. I don't want to see his approval ratings drop for badly handling this because it would mean a lot more people would die, but I don't have a ton of confidence in our ability to withdraw our support from him after the pandemic ends. These things tend to linger with an afterglow in the same way that Rudy Giuliani in New York was a pretty terrible mayor but until recent years, and his public defence of Trump, was seen as a really great mayor because of the leadership that he supposedly showed after 9/11. We should celebrate if Legault is doing a good job, but I think that we also should, when the pandemic's over, go back to criticizing his horrible policies.

Another example is the police in Montreal, who were going through an ideological crisis before the pandemic hit. New data on racial profiling came out and there was a growing movement to impose some kind of external oversight and authority on the police department.

LS: **What was that data?**

TR: **A report came out in [October] that used the police's own files to examine racial profiling and they found that Black and Indigenous Montrealers were stopped at a rate of four times greater than white residents. Arab residents were stopped twice as often as white residents. So there's been a growing push to finally try to change this institution but now everyone's depending on them to enforc e social distancing rules because we can't apparently imagine any other institution playing that role. I can imagine tons of them, but the history of the modern police is the history of them trying to find ways of justifying their existence, and usually in some kind of humanitarian or socially beneficial role so this is not unprecedented. I'm worried about the prestige that they're going to gain through this. There are so many other things that we can worry about and so many other kinds of traditions to draw from but those are the main things I'm thinking about at the moment.**

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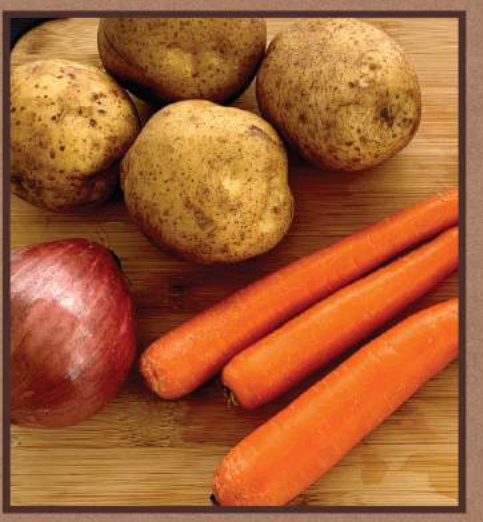

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Grief aftershocks

BY TOULA DRIMONIS

The day my father died I was supposed to see him. But after waking up with a terrible case of vertigo that left me feeling like the entire room was spinning every time that I moved my head, I decided to postpone my visit.

I called my mom, with him while he received the weekly blood transfusions that kept his acute myeloid leukemia in check, and told her I would, instead, be seeing them on Sunday. Hours later, I called back to speak to him, but, exhausted, he had fallen asleep during the tedious, four-hour session.

I never got to visit my dad that Sunday. He died later that evening, as he was leaving the Montreal General Hospital to go home. He started bleeding out right there in the parking lot and was transported back inside, where efforts to save him proved pointless. My brother called me as I was preparing to co-host on CJAD radio that night. He didn't give me any details, but I knew from his voice that something wasn't right.

I arrived at the hospital in a daze and was led to a room with his body. The hospital staff were kind enough to leave us in there for a long time as I slowly absorbed the finality of it all. I was haunted by my missed opportunity to say goodbye to my dad. The guilt from opting to delay my visit weighed on me for years. Even though I had spent the better part of that summer spending quality time with him, even though I had a valid reason for postponing, the remorse of that missed chance to hug him one last time ate at me. Six months later, when I finally mustered up the courage to write about him, I typed every word through a blur of tears. It remains both the most cathartic thing I have ever written — and the hardest.

MAN IS NOT MADE TO DIE ALONE

These past few months, as the pandemic has wreaked havoc, I've found myself reliving some of that excruciating pain through the grief of others. I, sadly, now know far too many people who've been denied the most basic and primal of acts: the much-needed closure of saying goodbye to a loved one.

"L'homme n'est pas fait pour mourir seul," said former Doctors Without Borders president Dr. Johanne Liu on *Tout le monde en parle* recently. I agree. I don't think anything living is made to die alone. But I suspect that closure is equally important — if not more so — for the ones left behind.

Death is already impossibly hard and sometimes senseless to begin with. But this virus and its demands for social distancing, which prevent us from the comfort of rituals and physical touch, the deep, primitive need to honour those who have mattered in our lives, have now conspired to make it so much harder. Grief has been delayed.

Sitting shiva, holding a wake, sharing a meal with fellow family members and friends, laughing at a hastily put-together slideshow of old memories, joyfully dancing at a second line parade in New Orleans, drinking shots of Metaxa brandy in a church basement after a 40-day Greek memorial, all these are ways of mourning together. It's what softens the blow. For so many people right now, COVID-19 has eliminated that possibility, too.

A DAUGHTER'S LOVE

This column was initially going to be about my friend Rachelle Houde and her attempt to get her terminally ill dad Ronald out of Sacré Coeur Hospital. Ronald went into palliative care because he was dying of cancer, but he ended up contracting COVID-19. She couldn't go in, and she couldn't get him out. The cruelty of a terminally ill parent dying, magnified by a thousand — having them die alone; and you, on the other side, helpless.

One late Sunday night an email came in. "My dad died tonight. Thought you should know before you wrote anything. Thank you for caring."

Alone, in my bed, I cried for a daughter losing a father that night, and for everyone who's lost a loved one in this cruel way.

In her grief, Rachelle immediately did what she does best: used her words as a director of strategic planning to appeal to the government to prioritize palliative care. Action was quickly taken and it's to her and her father's honour that within days she was able to get a small 20-bed CHSLD allocated solely for palliative use, so those dying in palliative care didn't have to die alone.

Sometimes you take the senseless and you try to make sense of it. Rachelle, like so many people I know, channelled her grief, her rage and her helplessness into something positive that would make a difference to others.

GRIEF SUSPENDED

I sometimes think that the entire world is living in a state of suspended grief right now. Without being able to mourn together, to gather at a grave site or at a funeral home, it all feels unsettled and unfinished. Daily government briefings pelt us with a barrage of numbers that so often sound like data, not deaths. This many fatalities, this many confirmed cases, this many in hospital, this many in ICU, we jot down on notepads daily… You sometimes need to take a step back and remember that every number is a person, every person had a life and every life had family and friends and highlights and lowlights and wonderful, quirky, unique little details we will never know about. People who, as New Yorker writer Lauren Collins recently wrote, "disappeared through a trapdoor of global disorder."

The immensity of devastation in human lives is so hard to grasp. The stress of the uncertainty that surrounds us barely leaves us able to function, let alone collectively grieve for those now gone. How do you mourn people under quarantine? How do you find solace when you've been stripped of the comfort of bereavement rituals? How do you remember who they were when you can barely recollect how your own life used to be, eights weeks deep into solitude and social distancing?

Grief isn't linear. It hides and stalks you and jumps on you like a jungle cat when you least expect it. When this daily human toll subsides and some semblance of normal comes around again, we'll all have to come to terms with delayed reactions. Patients, families, healthcare and frontline workers will deal with PTSD and late-onset grief as they finally slow down enough to digest and process the pain that they witnessed on such a vast scale. Therapists will see a tsunami of sorrow as people's mental and emotional health will have inevitably suffered.

I know people die every day. I know death is hard, whether you see it coming from a mile away or it yanks someone you love right out of your life unexpectedly. But this mass, global, solitary death… this is unprecedented for our times. And as we attempt to grieve alone, deprived of the people and the rituals that console us the most, we also grieve for a world that has — perhaps, forever — changed and will never reappear quite the same again. I don't think we've even started that process. The aftershock will be something to behold.

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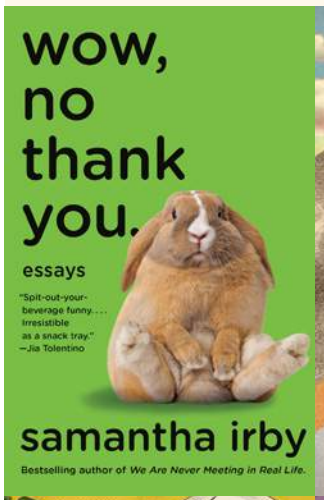

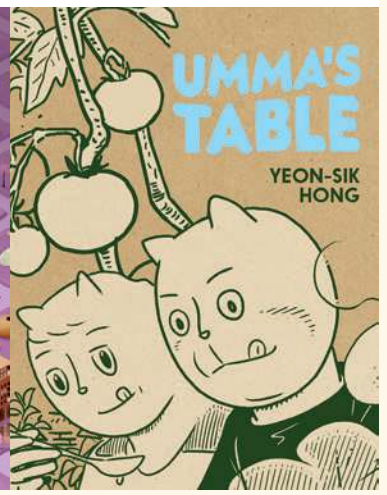

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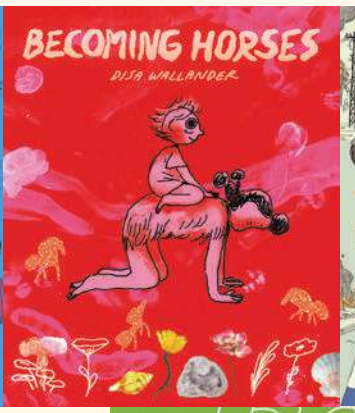

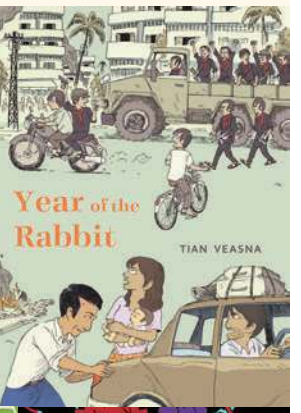

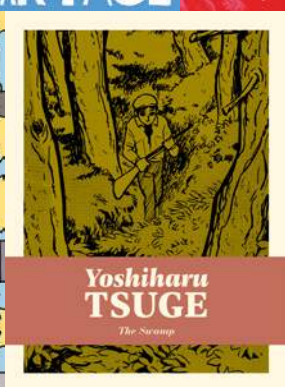

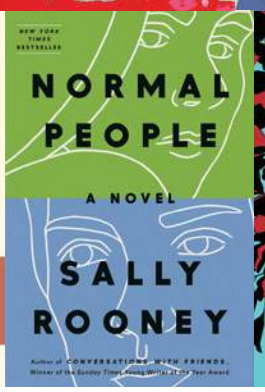

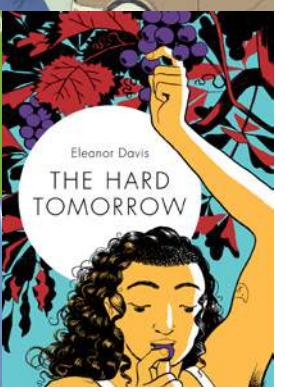

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The online success of 12-step recovery

BY AN ADDICT

Many addicts and alcoholics who have sought and found a new way of life in 12-step recovery speak of "the gift of desperation."

Hope alone won't help a person get clean and sober, it's often said among members of the varying anonymous 12-step groups out there.

The decision to stop drinking and using is most useful to a person's recovery when they see it as a choice they make to give themselves a daily reprieve, and not as the all-or-nothing, insurmountable obstacle the diseases of alcoholism and addiction can often feel like.

The shutting down of physical meetings — non-profit driven groups where members meet regularly to help each other stay abstinent of drugs and alcohol — therefore gave people a new gift of desperation.

Meetings are the lifeline of recovery, and so globally, within mere moments of announced shutdowns, 12-step recovery found new hope online, with existing meetings and new ones alike springing up on web platforms immediately.

"A lot of people are gonna have to get sober whether they like it or not and it won't be pretty," says "John," a Montreal member of a 12-step fellowship with over a year sober who started one such meeting with his mind on helping the newcomer — who is valued in every meeting, everywhere as the most important person in the room as a principle tenet of recovery.

"Right before everything got shut down, I was at this meeting I go to every week and there was a guy with about two or three months of sobriety. He was doing his 90 in 90 and determined to do it. He asked if I'd be down to meet up. The definition of a meeting in (12-step literature) is that two people constitute a meeting. I was super touched and inspired," says John.

"I'm resourceful and I know how to get around the web, so I organized a meeting the night of one of my homegroups. I thought it might take awhile to get it organized so I set up an unsanctioned 12-step meeting online, but I was totally wrong.

"Other groups stepped up and some were even online before the one I started. By the time that started, many of the (real-life) meetings were being hosted online. Now mine is officially recognized by (my fellowship) and there was no red tape, and these groups were online in a heartbeat."

Of course, online meetings are not a new phenomenon and have existed for as long as the web itself, reaching people in remote places where physical meetings simply don't happen.

But members, concerned for their own recovery, that of their fellow members, and the addict and alcoholic seeking recovery for the first time, felt the immediate groundswell to bring the 12-step message that "any (addict or alcoholic) can stop using, lose the desire to use and find a new way of life," to widespread availability online.

"I was thinking about starting (an online meeting) for a few days," says "Jane," a member of another 12-step recovery group. "I realized on a personal level there would be a need (for these) and I wanted to do some service, by helping to make another meeting available."

"I was feeling a bit on the fence and complacent about it to be honest. I was thinking how there are so many online meetings that we can join internationally," she admits. "However, I attended a local online meeting in another language and to be honest that is what finally gave me the push. It wasn't about myself anymore — I really connected how people needed this. Also, it fought the voice in my head that said that there were so many other meetings. Just in terms of English meetings in one fellowship in Montreal, we have multiple meetings every single day. All of the meetings had closed and a couple of them were going online but nowhere near all of them.

Jane had already experienced web-based recovery groups, but has generally had the benefit of real-life meetings, where the friendship, empathy, joy and pain of recovery are all present in equal measure.

While these are indispensable aspects of the new hope 12-step groups avail to members, they are not at all lost in the digital rooms of recovery, as these new platforms are proving around the clock and around the globe.

"I know of (experienced) members who got clean, and stayed clean going to meetings online because there were no physical meetings anywhere near the area in which they lived," she says of her pre-pandemic experience with web-based recovery.

Jane describes the underlying concern that people who need recovery won't find them during this time, or that they might not stick around when they would have in normal circumstances,

"We want everyone, especially newcomers, to get to connect with people. We want them to feel welcome and to maintain an atmosphere of recovery."

"Dave," a newcomer who had only made it to three or four meeting before the pandemic struck, has over two months of total abstinence from mind- and mood-altering substances through a program of 12-step recovery experienced so far almost entirely online.

He says he was, like almost every member, anxious and uncertain about his first real-life meeting in early March of this year.

"When I finally found the nerve to walk up, there was a member smoking a cigarette outside and as I hesitated to turn towards the door he calmly said, 'You're in the right place, door's open!' It was as if he was actually waiting for me there. As I walked in, I was met with smiles and warm greetings. 'You look like a newcomer! Come here and have a seat! Nothing to worry about, you'll figure out how this all works,'" Dave relates.

"I guess it's easier to spot the newcomer in a physical room so you can spend a lot more time under the radar in a video conference with 15+ members," he continues. "As soon as you identify yourself as a newcomer through stating your clean time or from hints in your shares, you see the faces light up and the high-five emojis in the video gallery and that always warms the heart and pushes away any doubts about your place in the fellowship."

Despite the physical distance, Dave, as a newcomer, feels the same love and trust that fuels recovery for the millions of addicts and alcoholics who've found hope in these totally non-religious, spiritual support groups.

"There's no doubt that the daily online meeting I attend is my home group so I absolutely feel a kinship and I have definitely built a bond with its regular members," he says. "I can't wait to see many of them in physical meetings."

Even the old-timers with double-and-triple decades of recovery are onboard and "on the Zoom," as many of them put it with boomer-ish zeal.

"It feels a little weird sharing from my kitchen table," one member said. "But it's good to see so many friendly faces."

Addicts and alcoholics are resourceful by nature, so it's no irony that the gift of desperation has served us yet again. Types and formats of meetings, time zones and countries where meetings are taking place 24 hours a day, every day, offer more variety to people seeking help and recovery now than ever before.

Jane sums it up in simple terms for complicated people.

"We know that having a choice is something powerful."

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For some people this current situation is nothing more than a mild inconvenience. For others, especially those working in the Music Biz it has been a total disaster. Not only for the musicians but for the thousands of workers who support the industry. The bookers, promoters, truck drivers, venue owners, bar staff, audio , lighting, setup and teardown crews just to mention a few. Hot Biscuit urges you to keep the faith and find a way to hang in there. It will come back and perhaps be even more appreciated than ever.
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:rant line™

THIS WEEK: Psychotic joggers, COVID-19 coughs, scary black cop cars!
PLUS: Critical Quebec hash shortage could have been avoided!!

"edited" by AL SOUTH

M **My number one fear with the COVID-19 pandemic? JOGGERS.** [BLEEP]

F **Hello Rant Line™. I was just wondering if anyone else has noticed that the joggers in this city are getting out of hand. Almost, like, PSYCHOTIC. I mean I know it is a pandemic and all, but for most of us the only thing we can do is go outside and take a walk. And I should say, most of the people running are fine — specially the WOMEN JOGGERS — but about one out of 20, or maybe 1 out of 10, of the guys seem sort of DERANGED. They are going top speed and they are not going to move out of the way or to the side, you just have to get out of their way or they look like they will run right over you! I guess these are guys who are like, what, ALPHA MALES? And they don't have any work to go to right now, and people to abuse at work, so they are taking it all out on the jogging path? Except it's not a jogging path, it is where everyone else is going to have a walk. It is not a personal treadmill for you! It used to be bad enough with the cyclists, you know? Make one mistake, step off the curb because you are daydreaming or maybe looking at your PHONE, and BOOM, you get hit by a guy wearing spandex and going way too fast on a bicycle. But now I swear to god, the joggers are worse.** [BLEEP]

M **OK, so I see they've finally declared BIKES as an essential service. Not sure what took them so long but what this means, folks, is that bike paths are meant for bikes! Not for baby strollers, not for electric wheelchairs, not for walking, not for fucking jogging — for essential bike riding. Okay? Got it?** [BLEEP]

M **Hey, well whaddya know, the SQDC is sold out of HASH already. I guess it was hard to see that coming? C'mon, I know hashish takes longer to make than the GARDEN-VARIETY WEED the SQDC sells — or not garden variety, because most of it is not as good as what you could grow in your own garden — but the government had to have known that the hash would fly off the shelves like, I dunno, HOTCAKES. So yeah, we appreciate the 4/20 hash gift but it's sort of a bad gift because by the time you went to get your gift, there was none left!** [BLEEP]

M **The SQDC is so fucking lame! After selling out their 4/20 offering of some NICE HASHISH in a matter of hours the product is still listed as UNAVAILABLE on their website. But if you go look at the Ontario Cannabis Store site, they have a full offering of not only hash but locally produced ROSINS, KIEFS, BUBBLE HASH and SHATTERS. From now on I'm buying my dope online on the Ontario site and getting friends to ship it to me in Montreal. Fuck the SQDC.** [BLEEP]

M **Hey Rant Line™. So yeah, during the pandemic, as we call it, there has been quite a bit of attitude from the SQDC security guards. They're getting all UPPITY when you're in there trying to get your shit and get out — and you're in there in a fucking line-up of COUGHING PEOPLE. A lot of people were getting paranoid in the goddam line-up, and he was being all uppity, so I just decided to COUGH IN HIS FACE. So I just hope this motherfucker gets it, with the attitude he had. People like that — just cough in their faces, man.** [BLEEP]

M **Hey, so is it just me who's freaked out by the recent re-branding of the SPVM cars to black like they were fucking STATE TROOPERS or something? Every time I see one it sends SHIVERS down my spine. Who the fuck authorized this and why the fuck are we paying for this? [BLEEP!]**

M **So I just heard FOODORA was closing down their Canadian operations in the middle of a pandemic boom in demand for online food delivery services. Funny that this comes at the same time their exploited pink-bag bike rider delivery guys are trying to unionize. And then there is the SURVEY. "How was your Foodora experience?" Listen, I'm not going to fill out your fucking survey and I regret ever spending a dime on your service! Please take your exploitative union-busting service out of our city and never come back.** [BLEEP]

F **Hey Montrealers, what's up with y'all waiting in line outside the SAQ and refusing to even FLIP A LOONIE to the poor homeless guy asking for spare change as you stockpile hundreds of dollars worth of booze? Did it ever strike you that these people can't pay cash, can't return empties and are probably the worst hit from this pandemic? If you're so worried about catching the virus from these people, maybe you can just throw some spare change on the ground. I'm sure they'd be happy to pick it up.** [BLEEP]

F **Oh, hi there. I just wanted to talk about something that has been bugging me. I see that now we're supposed to bail out CORPORATIONS like airlines and oil companies who, when times are good, make HUGE PROFITS and only share profits with their shareholders and corporate executives. When times are bad they want us to throw money their way? Hmmm, I have an idea: let's call these STUDENT LOANS and hound them for the rest of their lives until they pay the money back in full. How about that? Thank you.** [BLEEP]

M **Okay, so I don't really need to know in the first 30 seconds of our conversation at a party whether you're TRANS, VEGAN or NON-BINARY — spare me please.** [BLEEP]

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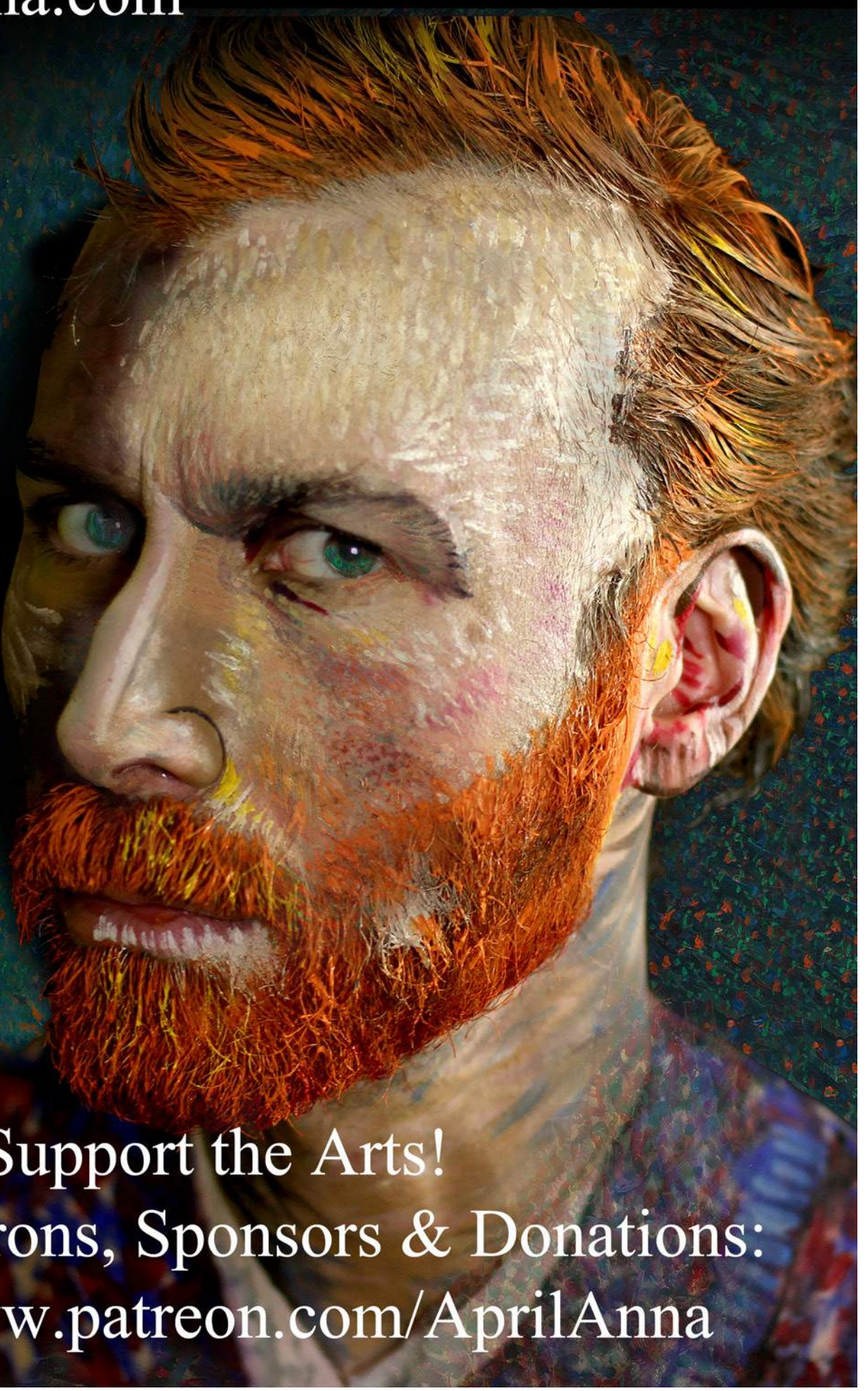

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BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

There is, unfortunately, no comprehensive rulebook for how cities can effectively handle a pandemic quite like COVID-19. Organizations like the WHO and CDC have their guidelines, and as those of us who recently rewatched *Contagion* know, "social distancing" is not a new concept. But the nature of this virus and its impact on society is something that even governments, let alone your average citizen, were not ready for.

We caught up with Montreal Mayor Valérie Plante — for the first time since her 2017 election campaign — to discuss how prepared Montreal was, how the city is reacting to the provincial government's plan to reopen the retail, manufacturing and construction sectors, as well as elementary schools and daycares, on May 19 and how her job and life have changed.

Sylvain Légaré

Valérie Plante

Lorraine Carpenter: **I'm assuming that like every major city post-9/11, Montreal has emergency preparedness measures in place to deal with terrorist attacks, and we're obviously equipped to handle natural disasters like ice storms. Were we at all prepared for a pandemic?**

Valérie Plante: **This virus is something that is so difficult because we don't see it, it's not predictable, we don't know how to cure it. It (also requires) a long-term strategy as opposed to an event that happens and then you react. Now we're finding solutions as they come out, and we have to constantly reorient. I'm so impressed by the work that the emergency coordination centre [a task force composed of first responders and city infrastructure officials etc] is doing. It was easy for us to start the machine and say, "Here we go."**

LC: **Have you been observing or communicating with other cities in Canada or around the world to see how they're doing things well, or badly?**

VP: **We've been talking with the other major cities in Canada since we have similar laws and regulations. It's helpful. I've been talking to my colleague mayors about practices and ways of doing things.**

I'm also part of C40, a circle of cities fighting climate change, and I'm on a specific C40 task force related to COVID-19. I've been talking with the mayors of Milan, Seattle, various cities in Africa. Our focus is always ecological transition — we feel like even during COVID, we have to discuss our plans and look at next steps, at economic recovery. It's very interesting to know how they're dealing with it.

LC: **What level of consultation has there been between the province and mayors, if any, regarding the reopening of schools and businesses? Were you involved in the decision to reopen Montreal a week later than the rest of the province?**

VP: **I talk every day with the regional director of public health in Montreal and we discuss different issues, but it's really the public health authorities that make the decisions. I decided to respect that entirely because (listening to the experts) is the most important thing.**

My hope was actually to not have the Montreal area separated from the rest of the province in terms of reopening a few economic sectors. But having a week delay is fine. It gives us more time to prepare. We're a big city, so right now I'm thinking about everything — the sidewalks, the streets, the public transport, how kids will go to school. The week delay is fine with me. [*Ed.'s note:* Quebec has since delayed the reopening of Montreal retail stores from May 11 to May 19.]

LC: **A lot of people feel that a one-week delay is not enough, that the reopening is happening too soon.**

VP: **It is a tricky one. This is where, for me, it's important to follow the lead of the public health authorities. I see pros and cons, I'll be very honest, but I think it's the right balance right now. It's certain economic activities, not all of them, and starting with schools, the small ones, I see it as a way to evaluate what needs to be done differently in terms of public space, where people will be meeting.**

LC: **You've stressed the importance of Montrealers adopting the mask...**

VP: **I invite Montrealers to have a face covering with them because I want to make sure that if we're doing this — and we are — that we do it right. The masks, the face coverings, are an extra tool for the reopening to be safe. In a big city like this, even if we want to, it's difficult to respect the two-metre distance. It's a way to minimize the risk of catching the virus.**

LC: **In some parts of the world, wearing masks is a cultural norm. Do you see that happening here?**

VP: **In Canada we don't see it very often and when we do it's usually because the person (wearing the mask) is sick. We need to bring people up to speed and imagine themselves wearing a face covering even if they're not sick. I know it's going to take a while before it gets into people's minds, into people's habits. It also depends on how the pandemic evolves, so there's a part of me that thinks maybe at the end of the summer we'll say, "Okay we're done, we don't have to do this anymore." But again, because of the fact that there's so much density in Montreal, I'm hoping that people will consider wearing it.**

LC: **I know it was pretty painful for you to wipe the city's cultural calendar for May and June. Where does that stand now? Do you foresee cultural events happening in the fall, or is it still impossible to say?**

VP: **Right now we're looking at how we can reopen libraries and Maisons de la culture. Maybe some theatres could open up, if that makes sense with social distancing. I'm obsessed with what I can do for Montrealers so they can enjoy their summer in the city, so they feel like they have space to move around while dealing with social distancing. How can they still enjoy some culture and some events in a safe way? That is such a big challenge, but I'm confident that we will be presenting, in the next few weeks, what summer will look like.**

The reopening of a few (business) sectors is going to give us a better understanding of the challenges, the technical considerations, how we can bring people together (while respecting) the two-metre distance and the no-gathering rule. The two combined makes it even more complicated for some venues, so we have to see how the virus evolves. Hopefully it just dies and disappears from our lives.

LC: This is a question for you from Twitter: Do you foresee restrictions being relaxed for restaurant terrasses or drinking in parks?

VP: (laughs) Drinking in parks? I've never heard of it. I'll write it on a Post-it and bring it to my team. (laughs more) Seriously, I've never heard of that one, but we can look into it.

For terrasses, it's kind of the same situation as the restaurants. If public health says that gatherings of 20 people are possible but there has to be two metres between people, that will be clear. From there, we'll be able to talk about making biggers terrasses. In Ville-Marie, before COVID, we already made huge discounts for restaurants and bars to have terrasses because it's cool and it's good for business.

Because we don't have safe-gathering rules established by public health yet, it's a weird dynamic. For example, we want to open the public gardens, and even though that's the (jurisdiction of) the city of Montreal, we have to have the go-ahead from public health. For now, the no-gathering rule still stands.

LC: Someone else asked about rent relief during COVID-19. There has been a rent strike movement, and people have been looking to all levels of government for help. Is that an area where the city can step in?

VP: We can't tell landlords to delay payments, or not to increase the rent. Before the 1st of April, I did ask land owners and landlords to be flexible, but it's an invitation. We did try to set an example — the city of Montreal owns many buildings where there's community organizations and stuff like that, and we made arrangements with them because we wanted to be good landlords. We delayed the property tax payment — that doesn't affect tenants, but for home owners and business owners, that's been delayed for a month.

We wish we could've pushed it even more, but for us it represents $2-million cash flow. We're making efforts to save $125-million because we're already in debt. It's going to be complicated to balance our budget.

We're suggesting that tenants, if they're having trouble to pay for their apartments, look at the federal programs related to (having) lost your job, or for students. That will help to pay your rent.

LC: What do your days look like now, compared to what they used to be?

VP: I did change my life a lot, like everybody else. As mayor, I do a lot of project-building and thinking and decision-making of course, but there is also a big part related to representation, meeting my constituents, meeting organizations, being on the field, and that is all gone, which is really difficult for me because I'm somebody who loves to be close to people and talk to them.

There are a lot of meetings. There's a really small team at city hall and every day I come to work, still, because I need to have my strategic people around me. We have a big room where we all keep our distance but at least we see each other and we take our decisions based on, often, the events of the day. If we know something is coming up, like announcements from public health or the government of Quebec, we need to adjust and see how it will affect the city. We've been working on the economic recovery plan for the city as well — in a big city, it's going to be complicated.

LC: Are you working at home, some of the time, with your kids around? Are your hours longer now?

VP: I have two teenagers and they sleep a lot, so I work from home in the morning. They're not small ones so it's less demanding as a parent. They're more independent, they have their friends on Zoom. I don't know if "busy" is the right word, but they're autonomous and they do their stuff. I just have to make sure they go outside every day for a walk or a bike ride. Other than that, they're good.

I get to city hall around noon and then I spend my day here. I take my bike (to work). I've been doing that almost since the beginning of the crisis, so it gives me the chance to see the city, to feel how it is. I often stop by the Emilie Gamelin Park where there's a "centre de jour" for the homeless people. I like to say hi to the workers and some of the homeless people there. Sometimes I'll talk to police officers at the corner. It's my way at least to be connected because I miss it so much.

The number of hours is shorter in a way but the time that it takes in my head... I'm worried all the time. As mayor, of course, I worry all the time, but now I'm really worried. I want to make sure that we find the right solutions so that no one is left behind.

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ZOM-FAM: the queer and decolonial poetics of Kama La Mackerel's work

Kama La Mackerel is multidisciplinary artist, educator, writer, literary translator, community organizer and a pillar of Montreal queer and trans communities. A firm believer that aesthetic practices have the power to build resilience, to heal and to act as forms of resistance to the status quo, Kama has created many artistic spaces for LGBTQ+ and QTBIPOC communities in Montreal, including GENDER B(L)ENDER, The Self-Love Cabaret, Contemporary Poetics of Trans Women of Colour Artists, Qouleur, Our Bodies Our Stories and many more.

Kama La Mackerel's new interdisciplinary project, *ZOM-FAM*, is a 75-mins solo performance that was supposed to debut at the MAI (Montréal, arts interculturels) in April 2020 but is now rescheduled to a later date due to COVID-19. *ZOM-FAM* is also being published as a collection of lyric poetry from Metonymy Press in September 2020.

In *ZOM-FAM*, Kama La Mackerel mythologizes a queer/trans narrative of and for their home island, Mauritius. Composed of expansive lyric poems, *ZOM-FAM* (meaning "man-woman" or "transgender" in Mauritian Kreol) is a voyage into the coming of age of a gender-creative child growing up in the 80s and 90s on the plantation island, as they seek vocabularies for loving and honouring their queer/trans self amidst the legacy of colonial silences. Multiply voiced and imbued with complex storytelling, *ZOM-FAM* showcases a fluid narrative that summons ancestral voices, femme tongues, broken colonial languages, and a tender queer subjectivity, all of which grapple with the legacy of plantation servitude.

In the words of pioneer queer writer, Amber Dawn, author of *How Poetry Saved My Life*, *Subrosa* and Sodom *Road Exit*: *«These long-form poems offer unique modes of storytelling—most especially the arresting anaphora, breathy rhythms, abundance of sensory imagery, and motifs of Mauritian place making. Both enchanting and exacting, these poems are, indeed, blessed with the femme divine."*

The book will be out in all bookstores on Sept 10, 2020, and you may already pre-order your copy here:
→metonymypress.com/product/zom-fam/

Photo : Laurence Philomene

The future of restaurants

BY CLAYTON SANDHU

The first restaurant I can remember ever really loving was an East Side Mario's in a relatively obscure part of Ottawa called Bells Corners. I would have been about 5 or 6 around the prime of that love affair and the true object of my desire was an enormous sculpture of a cartoonishly ripe tomato — an iconic fixture of the restaurant's facade. That tomato became the defining characteristic of that restaurant to me, so much so that in our family we never called it East Side Mario's, we called it The Big Tomato. If you've never been to an East Side Mario's allow me to describe it: it's a classic chain restaurant, massive, wildly decorated in a wide-reaching motif of "Italianness" which includes everything from the Statue of Liberty to the leaning tower of Pisa to a basket of fluffy breadsticks on a red and white checkered tablecloth. I loved it there.

Clay Sandhu

Lawrence

After the Big Tomato was Mekong, a Pan-Asian (but strongly leaning Vietnamese) restaurant in Ottawa's Chinatown. The restaurant was in an old two-storey house and the owners had converted the attic into a very comfortable second dining room. Everyone knows when you go to Mekong that's where you want to sit.

Later, in high school, one restaurant became a regular part of my life. A good friend of mine had a car and we lived about a 15-minute drive from our favourite pho place in Chinatown. You can probably imagine the look: pretty bare bones aside from the weathered, multi-colour printer paper taped to the wall with the "daily" specials that have been up for years and some dinky plastic tables covered in an easily wipeable plastic table cloth and a menu that after a few visits just becomes ornamental because you know what you're ordering before you even arrive. I loved that place for so many reasons, but chief among them was that it was open from 10 a.m. to 5 a.m. daily and a large bowl of really decent dac biet cost $10 — I used to go about three to five times a week, sometimes more in the summer.

It wasn't until I moved to Montreal when I was 18 that restaurants became a fixation. Ottawa is not a restaurant town. I don't mean to bring down their industry — there are some truly excellent restaurants in Ottawa run by people I respect and admire — but generally speaking Ottawa is a place defined by its cleanliness and stable government jobs and not by its exciting dining-out scene. Montreal, on the other hand, has become a city of international repute almost solely on the back of its culinary reputation. Restaurants are serious business here.

I remember being 19 and eating the Duck-in-a-Can at Au Pied de Cochon and being confronted with the realization that restaurants in this city were different. Restaurants like PDC and Joe Beef were miles ahead of anything I had seen before and they were completely unconcerned with what was happening anywhere else in the world. I was discovering that the city I thought was all about pool-hall hotdogs, smoked meat and poutine was actually a city with a powerful cultural identity deeply rooted in its restaurant scene. But that thing that makes our restaurants exceptional extends to the people of Montreal, too. We are gourmands — I'm not the biggest fan of that term, but what else do you call a skate-wing in brown-butter and hollandaise topped with black truffle, or duck-fat-fried potatoes with cheese curds and duck gravy, topped with a glob of seared foie gras? I got my first cooking job flipping burgers at a shitty late-night burger place on the Main shortly after this.

Over 10 years later, my life, and the lives of many people I know and love, is fundamentally linked to the restaurant biz. It's the way we earn our living, but much more than that, it is our identity. To be a cook — or a bartender, a sommelier, or server — is a craft. It's a gruelling, often thankless job done in the attempt to offer moments of happiness to strangers. Restaurants are meant to restore, to replenish that which is lost. Traditionally that's caloric energy, and while one can make an argument about the basic "restaurants serve food and we need to eat" benefit, what restaurants restore is really much more diverse. Restaurants are more evolved than the simple feeding trough, filling our bellies as they deplete. They are community spaces, the venue of an anniversary, a seat at the bar with a new date. It's a place where one can be moved by a bottle of wine, where the hazy golden hue of a cherished meal in Rome is revisited in a plate of perfect cacio e pepe. There's an emotional restoration, too.

The thread of pessimism pervasive in our industry these days is focused on the future of restaurants. David Chang, in his recent interview in *The New York Times*, signalled an impending shift towards automation and delivery, essentially marking the end of dining out. It feels as though we're living in the beta version of this reality right now and it's hard not to imagine a version of this reality persisting into the future. I, however, am not convinced.

You can't synthesize or re-create the experience of eating at a restaurant. While it's true that in many cases the food and wine of most restaurants can be delivered to your door, the best part of being at a restaurant doesn't fit in the doggy bag. The ethereal way the room feels in the warm candlelit glow of a busy evening service, a dozen conversations humming along in a beautiful harmonious cacophony, only exists in the physical space. In some ways, I'm reminded of the replicators in *Star Trek*: anything the heart desires or the mind can conjure (so long as there is sufficient programming) can be replicated by the machine instantaneously, and while it may taste as good, it's an illusion — it's empty. Just as it's true that we can now order a jar of cornichons, tartare and a bottle of wine from l'Express delivered to our houses, without the warm greeting at the door, the cascading light falling in through the atrium into the dining room, without the austere gaze of the perfectly appointed maître d'hôtel, it's just a replication — l'Express without its soul.

It's hard to think of Montreal without its restaurants. What would it be like? I'm biased in my view of things, there's no doubt, but when I'm serving a customer from abroad and they ask me what they should do while in town, inevitably I will always ask, "Where are you eating?" According to the city's records, there are over 7,000 restaurants in Montreal, and roughly half of those are what are designated as "full service" — what we would consider to be a conventional restaurant instead of a lunch counter or take-out spot. That concentration of restaurants is sort of an informal badge of honour we in the industry wear –– we have more restaurants per capita than New York City. Are we really supposed to believe that the restaurant scene in a city with such a penchant for eateries and where dining out is considered a major pastime will simply cease to exist?

We can expect change, that's for sure. We can also expect a lot of restaurants to close over the course of the next few months. Many of the restaurants that will close may have closed anyway; the industry is unforgiving, and we can't shed a tear for every loss. What we can mourn are our favourite small family-run restaurants — you know, like your favourite cheap Indian spot, or the dumpling house or the spot that does a great kimchi *jjigae*. These are businesses that don't do a lot of alcohol sales. Their margins are tight and so they operate on a system of selling volume. I hope that, for some, delivery has been able to keep them alive. I hope I'm proven wrong and that each one can make it through, but without a constant stream of revenue, I'm not overly optimistic.

As for restaurants as a whole, I don't foresee the end any time soon. Automation has never been the issue — we don't go to restaurants because we can't get the food delivered. Like Helen Mirren said about Netflix when we were all concerned with streaming killing the in-theatre movie experience, "I love Netflix, but fuck Netflix! There's nothing like sitting in the cinema and the lights go down." The same can be said about restaurants. Convenience is great. More than that, businesses shifting their models to online platforms and restaurants and grocery stores offering home delivery has been essential, but it can't replace the feeling of eating a meal at a favourite restaurant. It can only act as a bridge to better times.

Those times are coming. I'm not sure when, but when the dust settles and restaurants open their doors, my reservation will be in the books. Only time will reveal the extent to which this pandemic has affected our beloved restaurant industry. It's quite possible an altogether different reality is what lies ahead, one I can't even imagine. The juxtaposition of time is weird. The days drag on yet the state of the world is in a constant monumental flux day to day. Where we are today is likely very different from where we will be a month from now. It's important to remember that the world has endured great hardships, including pandemics. Humanity has persisted and so, too, have restaurants. Why should this time be any different?

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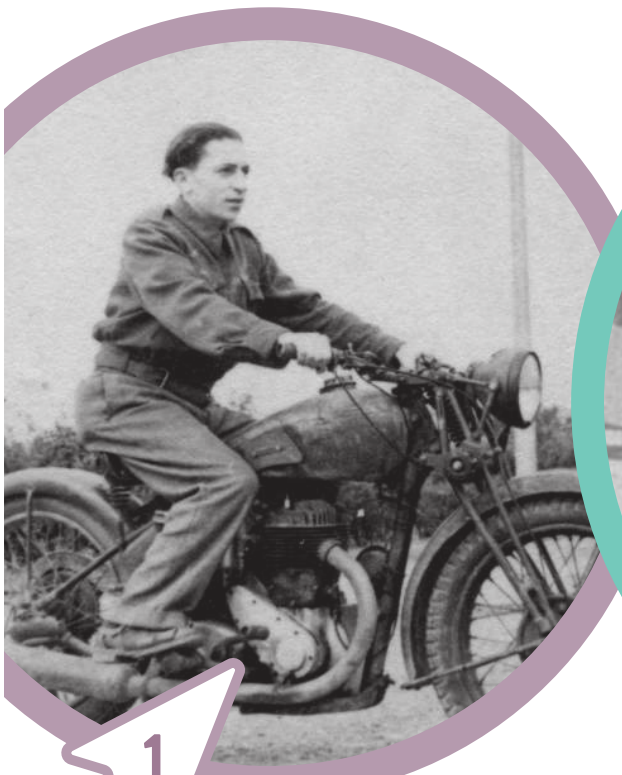

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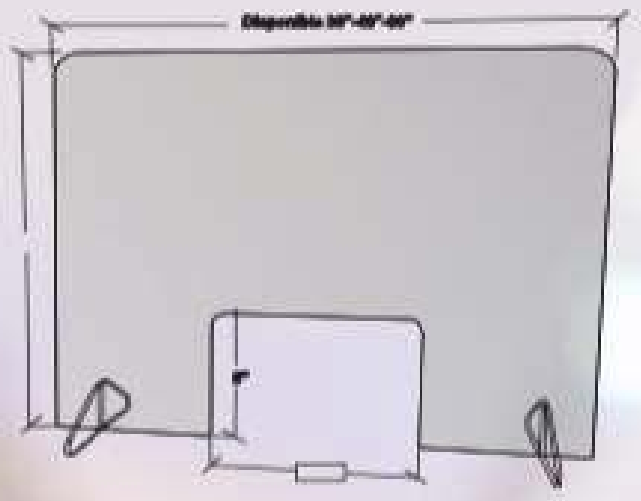

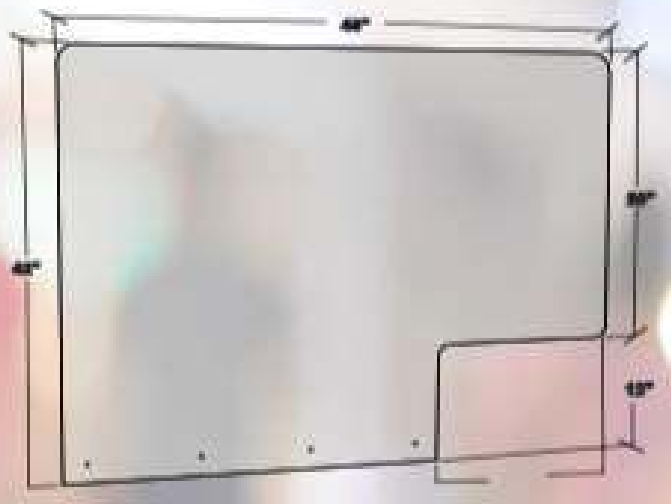

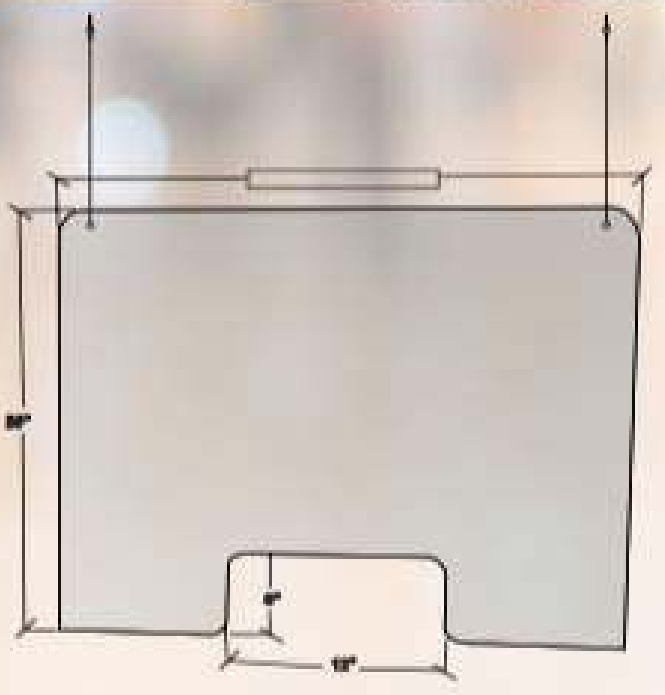

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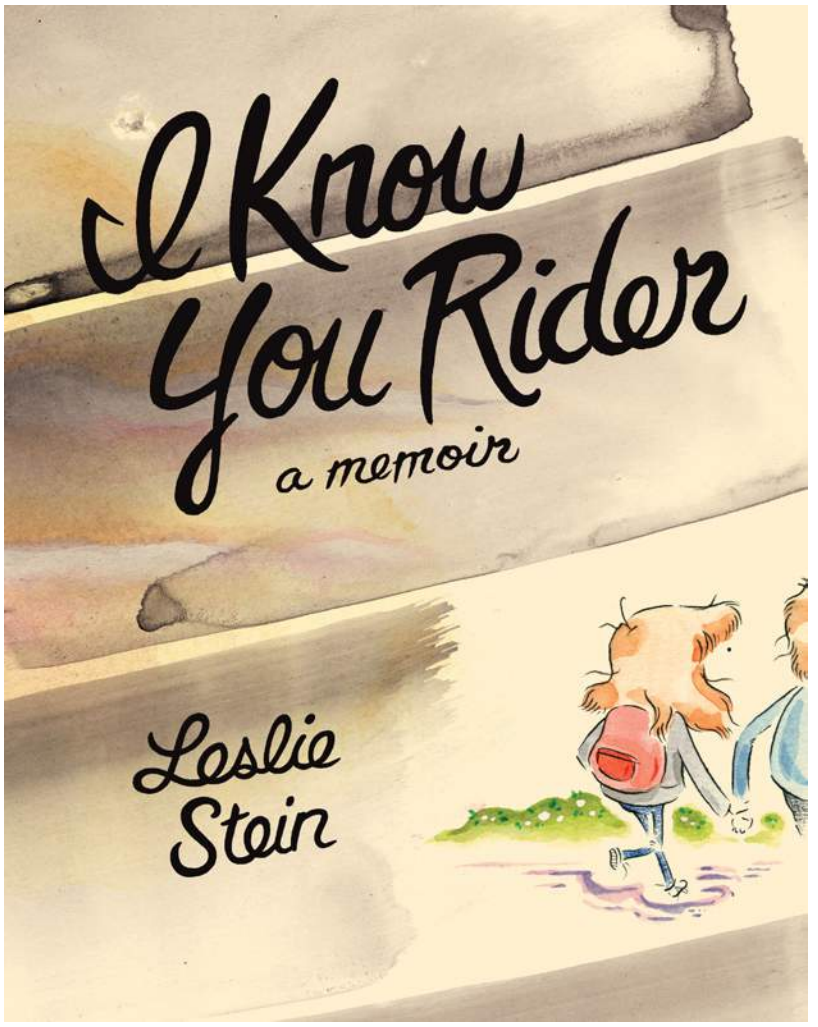

Crystal ballin’

Richomond Lam

The Dears

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

The Dears are releasing their new, eighth album *Lovers Rock* on schedule, and it couldn’t come at a better time.

The Montreal band has always revelled in the dramatic, in highs and lows, with a sound electrified by six-string heaviosy, tense synths, sometimes orchestral richesse, with lyrics steeped in heartbroken despair over teetering romance or a world gone to hell. Though the band’s chief singer, songwriter and lyricist Murray Lightburn insists that they “steer clear of politics — that’s not what we do,” a number of songs on their early albums *No Cities Left* and *Gang of Losers* (not to mention their *Protest* EP) reflected tragic world events like 9/11 and the subsequent “war on terrorism.” COVID-19 is another moment like that, and even though *Lovers Rock* was written well before someone in Wuhan ate a sick bat (or something along those lines), the new songs are eerily prescient.

“Until I really examined the lyrics more, I didn’t realize how (the record) would translate to what’s going on now, but it really does,” says Lightburn, noting that he’s received lots of feedback about the timeliness of the lyrics from fans. “It’s pretty wild. The last song on the album is called ‘We’ll Go Into Hiding.’ That’s what everybody is doing right now.”

While the album title was originally chosen as an allusion to both the Clash song and the reggae subgenre of the same name (newsflash: there’s no reggae on the album, and it doesn’t sound like the Clash), the cover art and some of the lyrical content point to more sci-fi, astronomical layers of meaning. But if COVID wasn’t the lyrical inspiration, what was?

“You could sense that the world has been taken down a dark path,” says Lightburn. He lists the Brexit debacle, Canadian election campaign scandals (and their complete disappearance post-election) and the Trump administration as covered by a certain infamous news network as political realms that have been occupying his mind.

“Over the past year I almost exclusively watched Fox News,” he says. “All day playing in the background while I was working in the studio, it was just kind of on. I know it sounds insane. Like, ‘Why would you do that?’ I don’t watch it much anymore ‘cause I feel like my research is done. What’s even more fascinating (than the network’s content) is the people who choose to embrace this stuff. We’re now seeing stories about people protesting lockdowns — what the hell kind of First World insanity is this?”

Beyond purely political discourse, or perhaps partly as a result of it, the negative ways in which people interact with each other these days is something that inspired Lightburn to write “The Worst in Us,” and to lobby their label Dangerbird to release it as the lead single from *Lovers Rock* (which it was). “I just wanted to make the case to not embrace the dark path in the face of (COVID-19), even though the album was not written with this in mind at all. In times like these, especially when people were panic-buying and turning into assholes just to get toilet paper, you have a choice to make. If you take the dark path, you’re just going to spiral down that dark path, but if you take the bright path, you’re encouraged every step of the way.”

Though *Lovers Rock* will be available digitally on May 15, physical copies won’t be out till Oct. 26. And of course the touring that was supposed to follow the digital release has been postponed. The kind of fans that this Montreal band has attracted over the past 20 years, however, are used to waiting, and they’re not going anywhere.

“We’re lucky to have that kind of world,” says Lightburn. “Dears world. We only get to see them every couple of years, and it’s like getting together and shooting the shit, but from a song-based perspective. ‘Here’s what’s new, and here’s what we always talk about.’

“People need music — they need it now.”

“At this point, touring and album releases are not that intertwined. Nobody wants to hear the new songs anyway! When we go out on tour, they just want the jingle-jangle of ‘Lost in the Plot’ and then they go home (laughs). The set list we had planned was really just dipping our toes in the new record and mostly playing the songs we know they want to hear.”

By the time the fans have let *Lovers Rock* sink in (and people are finally allowed to gather again), it’s possible they’ll be just as psyched to hear some of the new material live as they are to sing along to the greatest hits. It’s an exceptional record, and Lightburn agrees.

“It eclipses the last three records in a way that I can’t even really begin to uncork with you,” he says. “Not that the last three albums are bad to me, but it’s the first record that’s been made mostly in our own studio and I had about three years to get the workflow in the studio to a certain point where the technical side is buttoned down. It really opens things up to be creative when you’re not fumbling with a cable or a signal path.”

Lovers Rock shares a lot of common ground with the Dears’ 2003 album *No Cities Left*, from the sound to the themes to the amount of guitar composition and playing that Lightburn did (leaving him with swollen “Golem fingers”).

“The doominess of *No Cities Left* played out like a sequel on this record. You could jump through *Gang of Losers*, *Missiles* and the other three records and you would think that this was the next record. On a lot of levels, it’s like our *Blade Runner 2049*.

“I don’t want to throw anyone under the bus, but there were components in the Dears orbit that were preventing something like this from coming out. There have been a lot of changes over the past couple of years that have allowed us to find a new comfort zone and a new, very refined place from which our records are gonna come. Natalia (Yanchak, Lightburn’s life and band partner) and I have a really no-bullshit view of everything from the music to the business. There’s no fucking around about the vision of what it is we think the Dears should be and anything that gets in the way of that is gonzo — we don’t tolerate it.

“It’s the music business — you get pulled in a lot of different directions and you can lose your way. We’ve lost our way many times. How could you not lose your way over the course of 20 years? I would say now we’ve definitely found our way back on so many levels, and it’s come out on this record. I think people are gonna feel that, they’re gonna hear that. We’re very confident in how it’s going to be received.

“That being said, there are still people who just choose to not get us (laughs), so we have to deal with that.”

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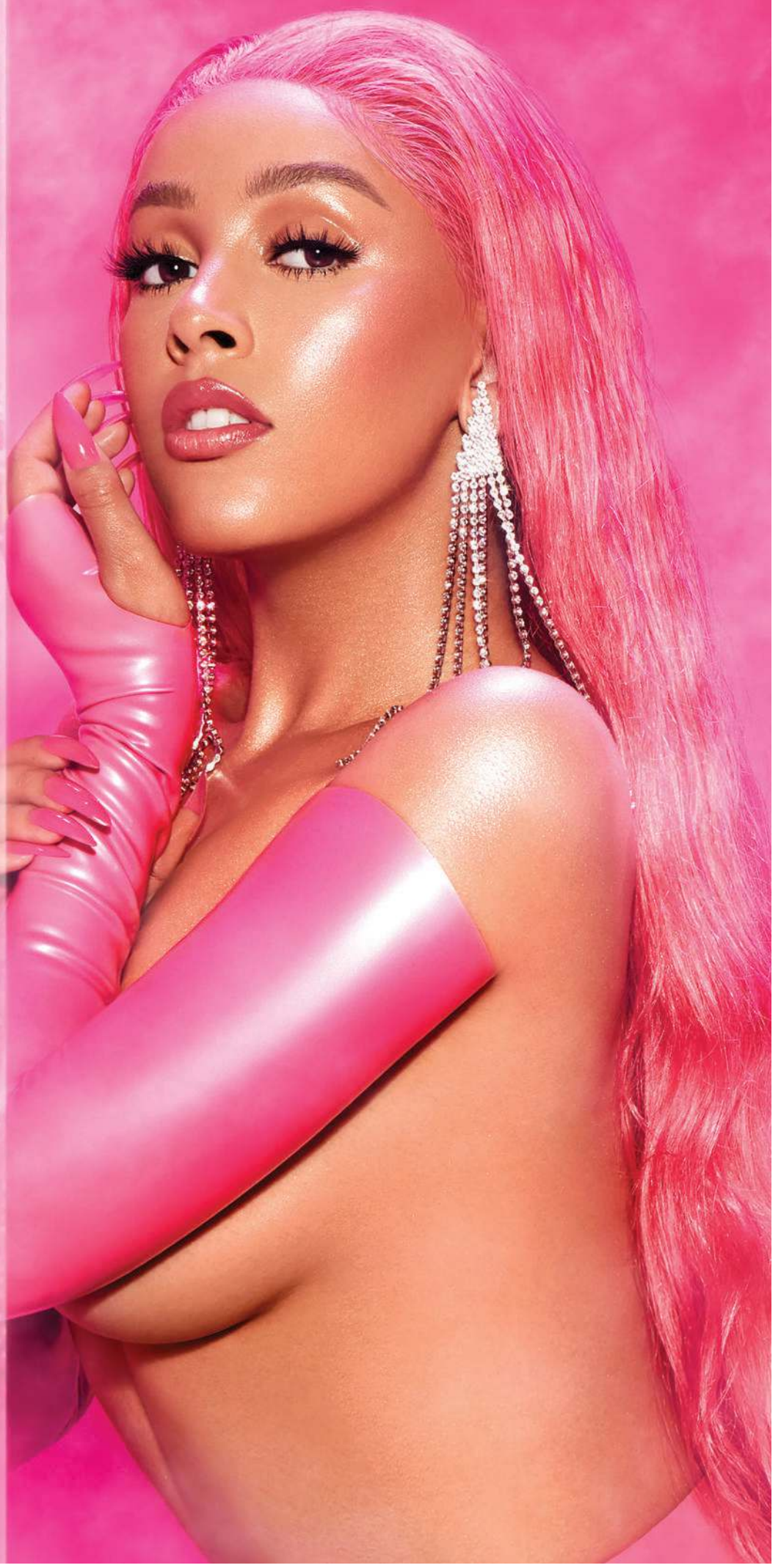

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Punk's not infected

BY DARCY MACDONALD

Speaking from the belly of confinement in Hochelaga a few days prior to launching a new solo record, *Concerta Fantasio*, Mudie, the former frontman for the Sainte Catherines and punk rock man-about-town, is remarkably upbeat for a guy who loves playing shows more than anything.

"I have two kids and we have to keep them busy but that's pretty much standard," Mudie laughs. "We're all okay. I have no problems with this, really, other than I'd like to be able to get out more, go for walks and stuff. But we're fine."

Here's what he had to say about dropping an album during a goddamn pandemic.

Darcy MacDonald**: Can you please tell me a bit about how the album came together and how the current situation affected the release plans?**

Hugo Mudie**: Actually, the label asked me if I wanted to delay the release, but I think that, by contrast, it's a good time to release an album, especially the type of music I make. For one thing, the everyday challenge in the music industry is to be heard. Standing out is harder and there's a lot of good music out there. Getting people to listen is tough because we're bombarded with media.**

At a moment like this, I think people may have more time to pay attention, and also to think about supporting local talent. We can see that happening with online shopping, people looking to buy local. I think that could have a positive effect.

Also, we always need entertainment in life, but even more so now with all this free time, trying to keep our minds on things. It's not enviable, but it may be strangely good timing.

DM**: That's a very positive outlook on all of this. Do you find yourself checking out live streams and stuff like that?**

Mudie**: Not too much, but some. I've done some of my own and I've been checking out Vic Ruggiero from the Slackers, who I think is super talented and whose voice I love. Even if it's low-budget or whatever, I think it works well.**

I'm not a huge media consumer, personally. I make music and art and of course I enjoy other people's work but I don't go to tons of shows or stuff like that.

I actually checked out a couple of Post Malone's (recently streamed) Nirvana covers and that was pretty good and there's other stuff I've checked out out of curiosity and all that stuff is super fun. If you're a young fan it's a cool time because artists are seeking ways to reinvent themselves. But personally, I haven't been super absorbed by the phenomenon, either.

DM**: So *Concerta Fantasio* is a little ironic as an album title, given that we won't be seeing any "concertos" for a while.**

Mudie: **Well, Concerta is my daily attention deficit medication, so it's a play on words with the Tchaikovsky work (*Concerto Fantasia*).**

Not playing live sucks, for sure. I've been doing this for over 20 years and I've never spent more than a month without playing a show so I'm already really feeling the itch to play. When I put out a new album, the fun part is playing it live and chilling with my friends. It's almost like it's coming out but not coming out, but it's a new challenge to find ways to promote it.

Alex Blouin & Jodi Heartz

Hugo Mudie

DM**: I think when shows come back we'll all remember our first post-COVID show!**

Mudie**: I'm not so sure. As it was, people are more into staying home and watching Netflix. At first, people might not feel as safe going out. They may keep staying home. I think it's going to hit hard on small venues and small bands.**

But I personally enjoy that part of life in general anyways, finding ways to stay fresh and inventive. It's a challenge we could have done without, sure, but one whose outcome will be interesting to be a part of.

DM**: So how do you personally keep things fresh with punk rock?**

Mudie**: (For albums) I always change directions, and I've been on over 40 records in my life. If you listen to my previous solo record, it's a lot different from this one. Between various group and solo albums I'm always playing with other artists, and I'm concerned with keeping it interesting for myself. It can confuse an audience or a listener, maybe, but I don't really care. They can like it or not, it's their decision.**

But with this album, I worked with Alex Ortiz from We Are Wolves and Adrian Popovich to produce it and they both have an encyclopedic knowledge of what makes for good sound.

I really dove back into what I listened to when I was young: the Queers and the Muffs and Weezer and Green Day — the easiest ways to make punk rock. I've traditionally always tried to keep it quote-unquote "mature," but with this I wanted to keep things a little *niaiseux*, but touch on serious subjects at the same time. There were never really many great pop-punk bands in that particular style doing it in French, so I wanted to go there with it.

→ Mudie's *Concerta Fantasio* is available now on streaming platforms

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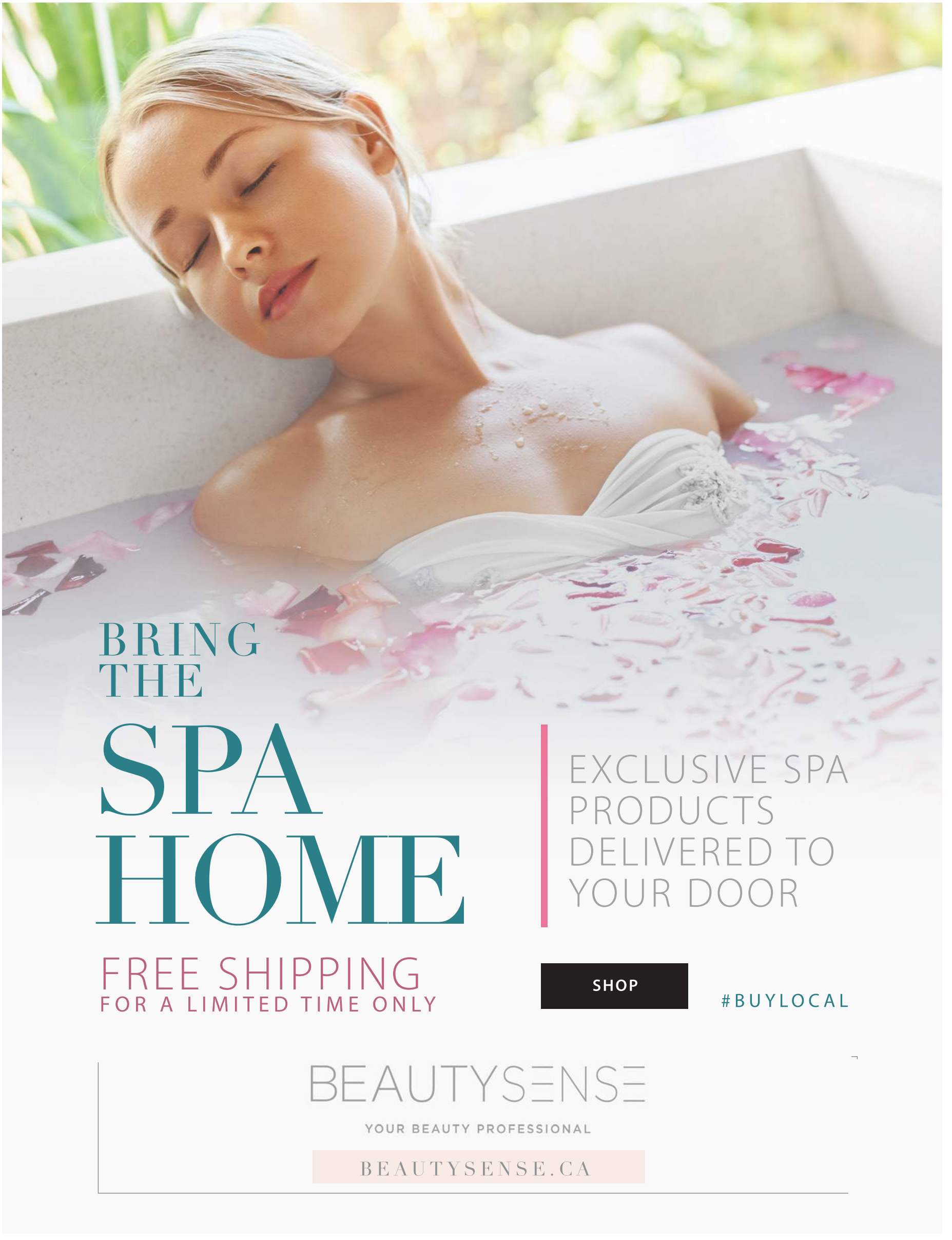
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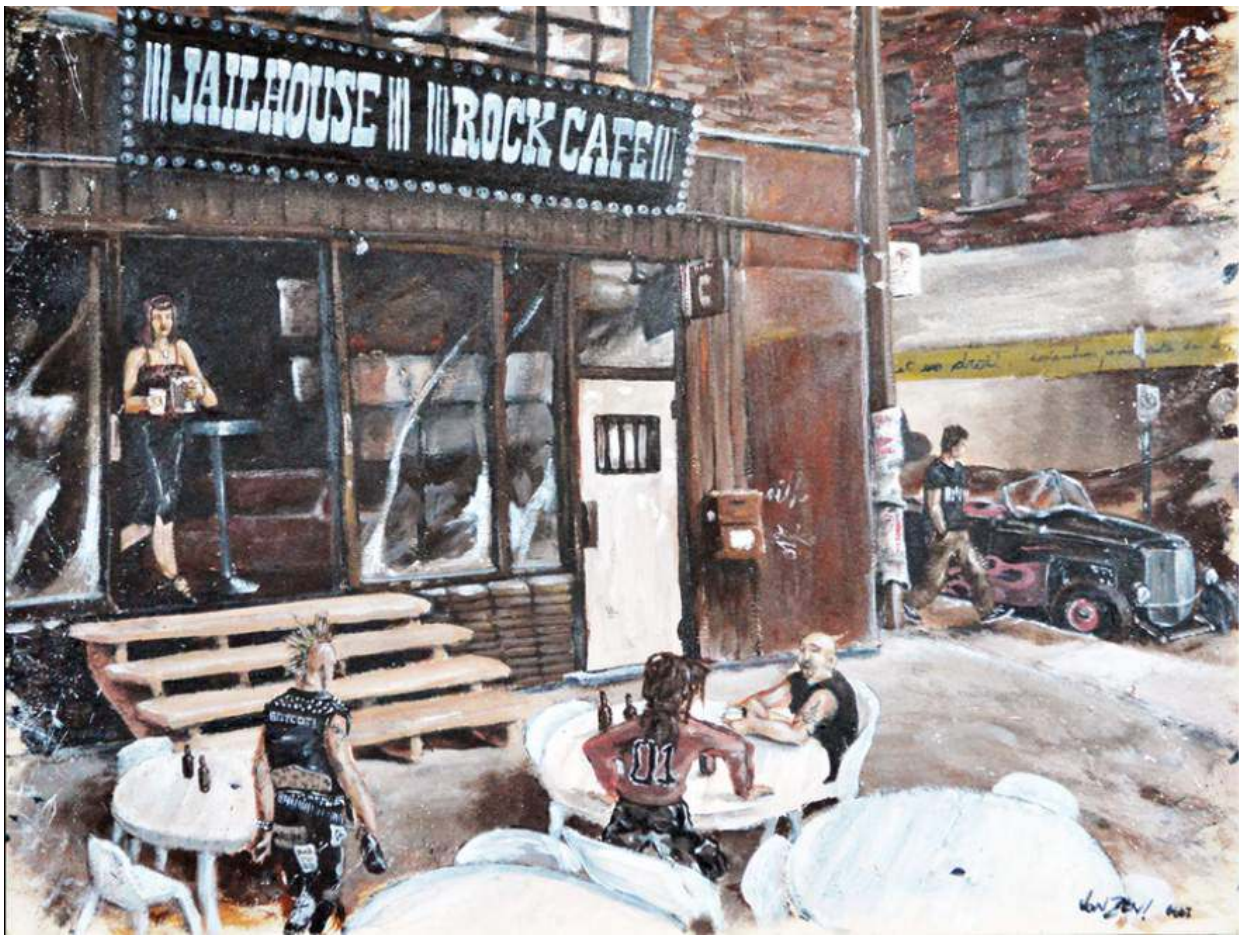
Rock 'n' roll on parole

BY DARCY MACDONALD

If there's beauty to be found in chaos, it was most definitely on full display in the heyday of Montreal's Jailhouse Rock Café.



Tucked just west of the Main on Mont-Royal Avenue, the Jailhouse played host to thousands of live shows during a 13-year run as a go-to performance hall welcoming almost anyone from local bands to foreign guests. What made the space a success, though, were the booze-soaked fans they drew into the small shambles of a rock 'n' roll loveshack, a place its devotees and regulars called home.

A little seedy, a lot loud, kinda ugly but pretty fuckin' hot, the chaos of the Jailhouse has now been captured in time with a forthcoming book of posters and notes from the underground, lovingly arranged over the past half-decade by one-time owner of the club and old-school scene superintendent Domenic Castelli.

And perhaps fittingly, it's the chaos, strangeness and uncertainty of the COVID-19 crisis that finally allowed Castelli to bring *The Jailhouse Rock Café Book of Shows* all the way home and ready for the galleys this spring.

"I really wanted to get it done this year and I wasn't gonna be able to," he says. "Just before the shutdown, I was (stage managing) on the ballet at Place des Arts. I was just about to join an opera for a month and then go to Italy to manage another stage for two months. I was like, 'I'll never get the book done,' basically. And then the whole world stopped! So I can finish this book. I was always doing this between jobs."

So Castelli — who booked and promoted shows in the '90s under the mantle of Chimney Sweep Productions and ran Jailhouse with his brother Dave — is not mad at the Coronavirus.

"I fuckin' love it!" he laughs. "I'm looking forward to travelling again but I've been able to finish all of these classes I've been dying to do, 'cause when there's no work, I do school. And there's so many things I'm catching up with right now, it's amazing. And I finished the book."

Taking time on and off between travelling gigs, circuses, burlesque shows and more formal stage-managing contracts, Castelli learned that sourcing material for a historical document of this nature was one thing, but that getting it all together is another project entirely.

The size and scope of recounting the visual history of one little club was no small feat, and as he collected photos and posters, he also took courses on InDesign and Photoshop, leaning to work with monochrome images and the less nuanced sides of how much of a pain in the ass a scanner can be.

"I could have made a Jailhouse Rock book about the three years my brother and I owned the bar, but that's not history. That's self-imposed history," Castelli says.

"My idea — and I thought it was a simple idea at first — was to just get posters and mark down the date and time and just leave it. But it became a memory of countless people.

"You've got to imagine," he continues, "it was open from 1988 until 2001. Every show had three bands, and every band probably averaged four members. Imagine how many people it affected. So I tried to make it as expansive as possible."

He started out with what he now estimates makes up about 20 per cent of the graphics featured.

"I knew there was more stuff out there, and I was talking with and pleading for people to dig out their old photo albums and flyers and stuff. I knew Jon Spencer was out there somewhere. And I needed stuff that I never even knew existed. Finally, I had enough stuff to just do the book, which is 140 pages of just posters and pictures and very few words."

It's designed to look black and chaotic, Castelli says, because that's how life at Jailhouse was.

"The format of the book is to make you feel like you're in the venue looking at band posters. I tried to make the book capture the beauty under chaos."

He says that although there were several references that inspired his layout choices for the book, one book in particular — *Vintage Aircraft Nose Art,* with its representations of paintings of vintage warbird artwork — informed his aesthetic. While that work is cleaner, he adds, its six-panel per page format helped him see how to organize his vision.

He credits his "fucking mentor of my life" Paul Gott of the Ripcordz for helping him understand design and local historian Kristian Gravenor among those who supported his DIY drive with their experience in storytelling.

"(I stuck to images because) stories veer left and veer right depending on who's telling them and the actual concept gets lost," Castelli explains. "I don't have much education when it comes to writing, so I just street-write, and my concept became, 'Just put the posters on the wall,' and then add to that. Mind you, I'm talking to myself!"

He then filled it out with stories from bands and managers.

"Like, I've got (Evenko VP) Nick Farkas (saying) 'Did you know that we spelled Nickelback wrong?' Nobody at the time knew Nickelback would be a famous band, and that's what's funny about this book. All these bands came and at the time, no one knew."

There are plenty of gems in these pages to keep the avid rock fan, Montrealer or otherwise, wide-eyed with history and nostalgia.

"Finding Jon Spencer was really cool. Finding the metal band Overbass was great," Castelli recalls. "Getting a Grim Skunk picture (from 1990), I was excited. I literally jumped out of my seat when I got that one."

The book, he says, will finally be printed when the dust settles on the pandemic situation, but it's laid out, ready to go, and stunning in scope.

Pre-orders can be made from his website or by finding him on Facebook.

"I already have over 100 pre-orders, and pre-order now just means you tell me you want a copy. I don't wanna be responsible for money."

"The purpose of it all was for this history of Montreal to be kept in a library, which I'm learning to do right now," he says. "I don't care if I sell one book or 1,000. What matters to me is that I'm able to give a copy to every library in Montreal and to the Canadian archives so that we know the history of rock 'n' roll in Montreal at that place."

Castelli is, rightly, "damn proud" of this achievement, but it's the populist pride the project captures that drove him and compels him to share it now.

"With this book, I made it happen, sure, but it was done by the community," he states. "One thing's for sure: Montreal's rock 'n' roll scene is all about each other, and caring for each other, and that's what this book is gonna say.

"Unless you're a fucking douchebag. Then, you're not in the book."

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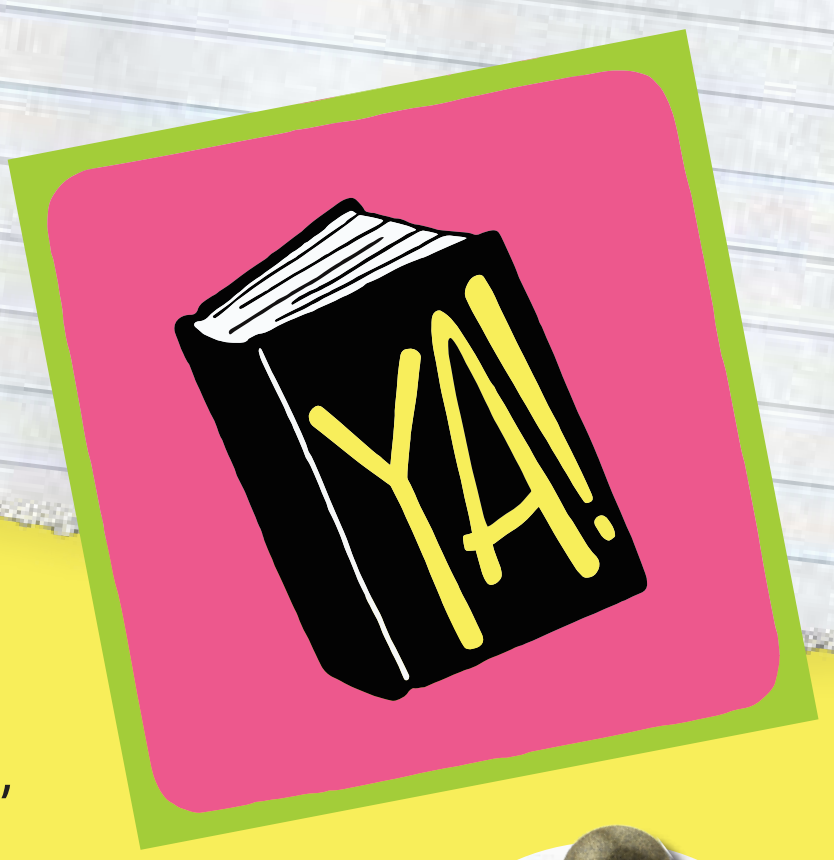

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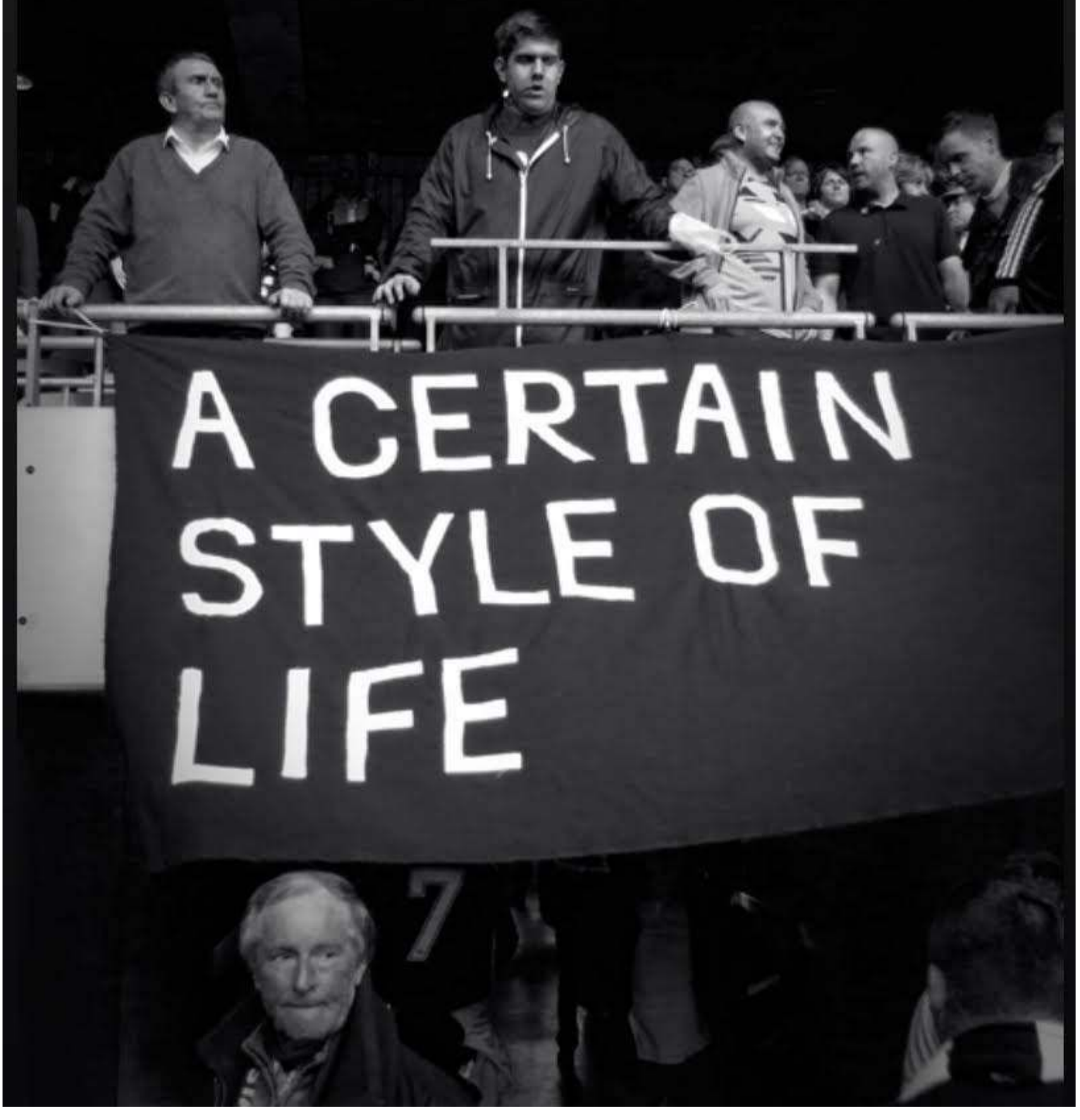

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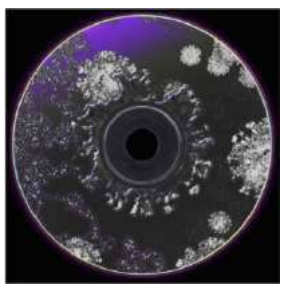
Album reviews

Presented by SUNRISE RECORDS

Tommy and Richie Present, *Billy* **(independent)**
Comin' straight outta San Jose, CA and Sackville, NS, respectively, the duo billing themselves Tommy and Richie are actually more widely recognized as producer Controller 7 and rapper Buck 65. And while I'm not too sure who Billy is, I can assure any fan of classic hip hop mixes and golden-era experimentalism (think Prince Paul's heyday with Stetsanonic and De La Soul) of a payoff for taking this Soundcloud trip, which dropped innocuously on May 1. Richie leaves the beats to Tommy while handling the mic and turntables, freeing him up for a return to his early *Language Arts*-styled roots, leaving behind somewhat misled attempts at grandiosity that his last LP proper, *Neverlove,* pretty much dropped the ball on. I'm no rap conservationist but sometimes what's-old-is-new again is truly fresh, and *Billy*'s gene pool is rejuvenating. 8.5/10 Trial Track: "I Used To**" (Darcy MacDonald)**



Various, *Pandemic Artifact Compilation* **(independent)**
The creative process continues even in isolation, as evidenced by this sprawling local compilation of tracks made since the beginning of our endtimes, curated by Montreal music mixologist Honeydrip. With no shows or residencies on the horizon and everything else cloaked in uncertainty, these 15 experimental, electronic producers run the gamut of emotions in their homecooked art, with afterhours callbacks («Ghouls») to remind us of better days to meditative house («Homesick») to get us through the current ones. This is designed for the here and now, a footnote of how fucked we are. It's pay what you can, so drop some bucks. 8.5/10 Trial Track: "Droplet Cloud**" (Erik Leijon)**

Sunwatchers, *Oh Yeah?* **(Trouble in Mind)**
Jazz has always been one of the stones on which NYC-based skronk-rock outfit Sunwatchers based their sound, but each subsequent release has moved slightly away from off-kilter Sun City Girls-adjacent freak jams and into more spiritual (though still plenty freaky) realms. *Oh Yeah?* still features enough lysergic guitar work and dissonant saxophone to keep the much-reviled concept of jazz-fusion at bay, but it also features wider arrangements and more overt nods to the ecstatic spiritual jazz of Alice Coltrane. Don't let that scare you off, however. For all of their heady influences, Sunwatchers deliver an album that's almost entirely free of pomp — and can even make the space for a quasi-industrial shred session ("The Worm Store") *and* a nearly 20-minute jam. 8/10 Trial Track: "Love Paste" **(Alex Rose)**

Dave Miller, *self-titled* **(Tomkins Square)**
There are several above-the-line qualifiers to Chicago-based guitarist Dave Miller's new album that could be misleading. He's a guitarist who has logged plenty of time in avant-garde and jazz outfits in Chicago, a city that has produced a long line of harsh, microtonal shredders with a penchant for inaccessible experimental music. The promotional notes cite Neil Young and Marc Ribot as influences, which suggests a certain amount of fuzzed out sloppiness. Instead, Miller's self-titled plays like the psychedelic record Booker T and the MGs never made. Filled with loping grooves and tight-as-a-drum melodies, the record is a showcase not just for Miller's garage-bound shredding but also for his more down-the-middle jazzy fretwork. Just when its studied library-music grooves start to feel like they might get repetitive, Miller busts out a new trick. 8/10 Trial Track: "Bison Boom" **(Alex Rose)**

TOPS, *I Feel Alive* **(independent)**
After moving back to Montreal from Los Angeles, TOPS have returned with a refined new sound. Where many of their other records feel like the perfect soundtrack for a sunkissed lazy afternoon in the Plateau, *I Feel Alive* incorporates elements that encapsulate a sense of higher auditory ambitions. Over the course of one album, Jane Penny and company take the leap from quaint indie rock band to charting broader territories, throwing in funk, pop and dad-rock elements across the board. 8/10 Trial Track "Direct Sunlight" **(Mr. Wavvy)**

RJD2, *The Fun Ones* **(RJ's Electrical Connections)**
"Even people on a small scale might not have the popularity to become an icon, but the DNA is the same," says, presumably, Homeboy Sandman on the intro to his guest cut on this new excursion from a veteran underdog in the DJ/production game. RJD2 never goes away but never quite makes the noise he did in the early aughts, and this despite the integrity and consistency of his output. The truth is, fans know what to expect from his signature modulations and hit-it-and-quit drum attacks. If we sometimes forget that RJ's catalogue at this point easily outshines the likes of heavyweight contemporaries like DJ Shadow, it's not so much because he's taken for granted as that he's taken for good, reliably dropping the latest leg of his ongoing dance party on us every couple of years and reminding us that the party only swings if you're there, too. If overlong, rap guests like STS and Aceyalone help break this down to a four-act show that picks back up whenever it risks a lull in continuity. Honestly, this shit just makes me look forward to getting back to a dancefloor. For now, these jams on *The Fun Ones* are what we've got. 7.5/10 Trial Track: "20 Grand Palace" **(Darcy MacDonald)**

Peel Dream Magazine, *Agitprop Alterna* **(Slumberland)**
NYC-based Peel Dream Magazine's first album *Modern Meta Physic* drew immediate comparisons to Stereolab based mainly on its motorik rhythms and breathy, intertwined male-female vocals. Those elements are definitely still very much at play in *Agitprop Alterna*, which nevertheless boasts a more pronounced shoegaze influence on several tracks. The emphasis this time, however, is dreamier and less dependent on the staccato rhythms of Autobahn-friendly drum patterns. Its walls of buzzing guitars, mad-scientist synths and buried sing-songy vocals will be nothing new to anyone who lived through the '90s, but as far as pastiche goes, this is hard to resist. 7/10 Trial Track: "Emotional Devotion Creator" **(Alex Rose)**

Drake, *Dark Lane Demo Tapes* **(Republic)**
With the promise of his sixth official studio album coming this summer, Drake offers a new "mixtape" while we wait. *Dark Lane Demo Tapes* is a compilation of songs that leaked online prematurely throughout the year. If an album is an in-season game, this could be likened to exhibition. No matter what the stakes of the game, the Toronto titan brings top athleticism to every track. With only 14 tracks, *Dark Lane* accomplishes more than other recent Drake outings in less time, displaying Aubrey Graham's well-roundedness on drill, R&B and trap-flavored tunes. 7/10 Trial Track «Chicago Freestyle» (feat. Giveon) **(Mr. Wavvy)**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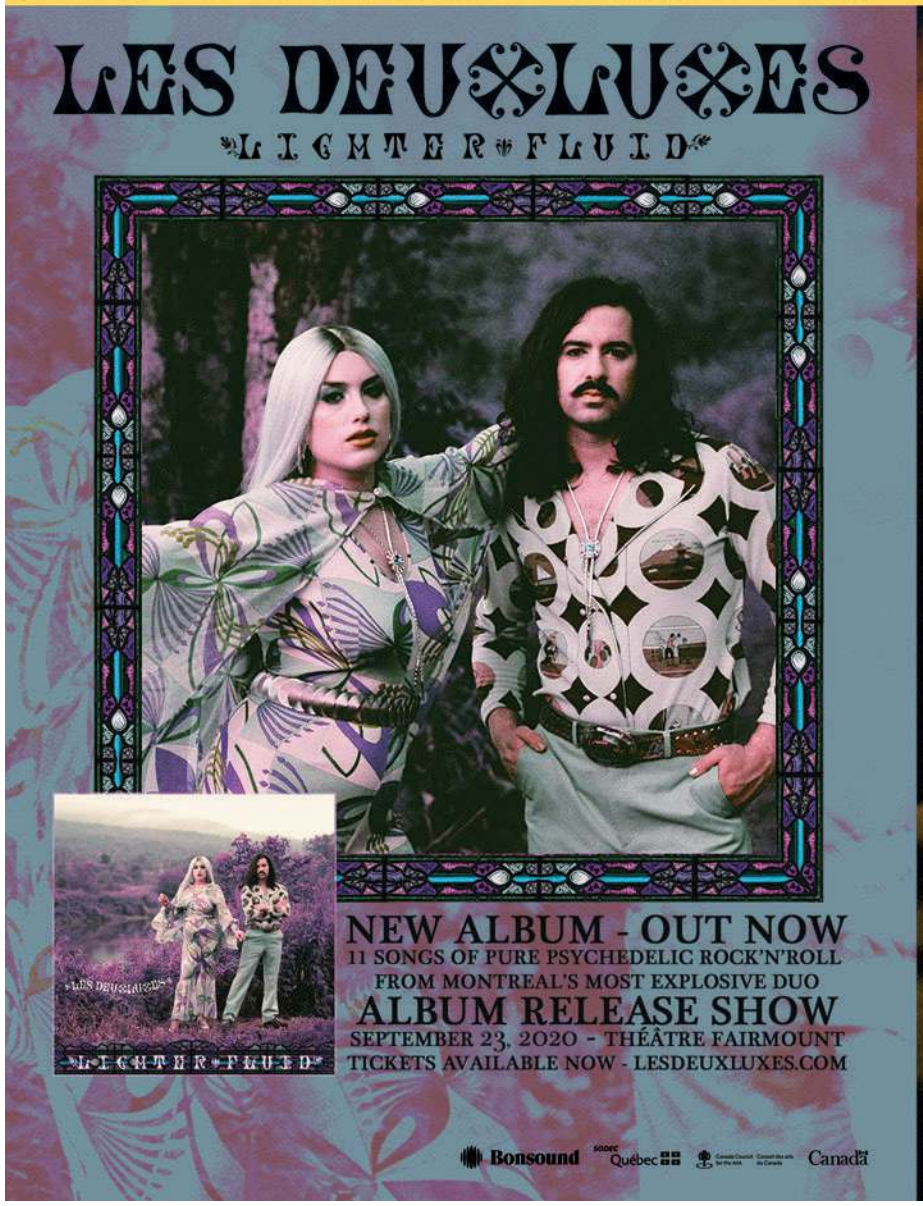
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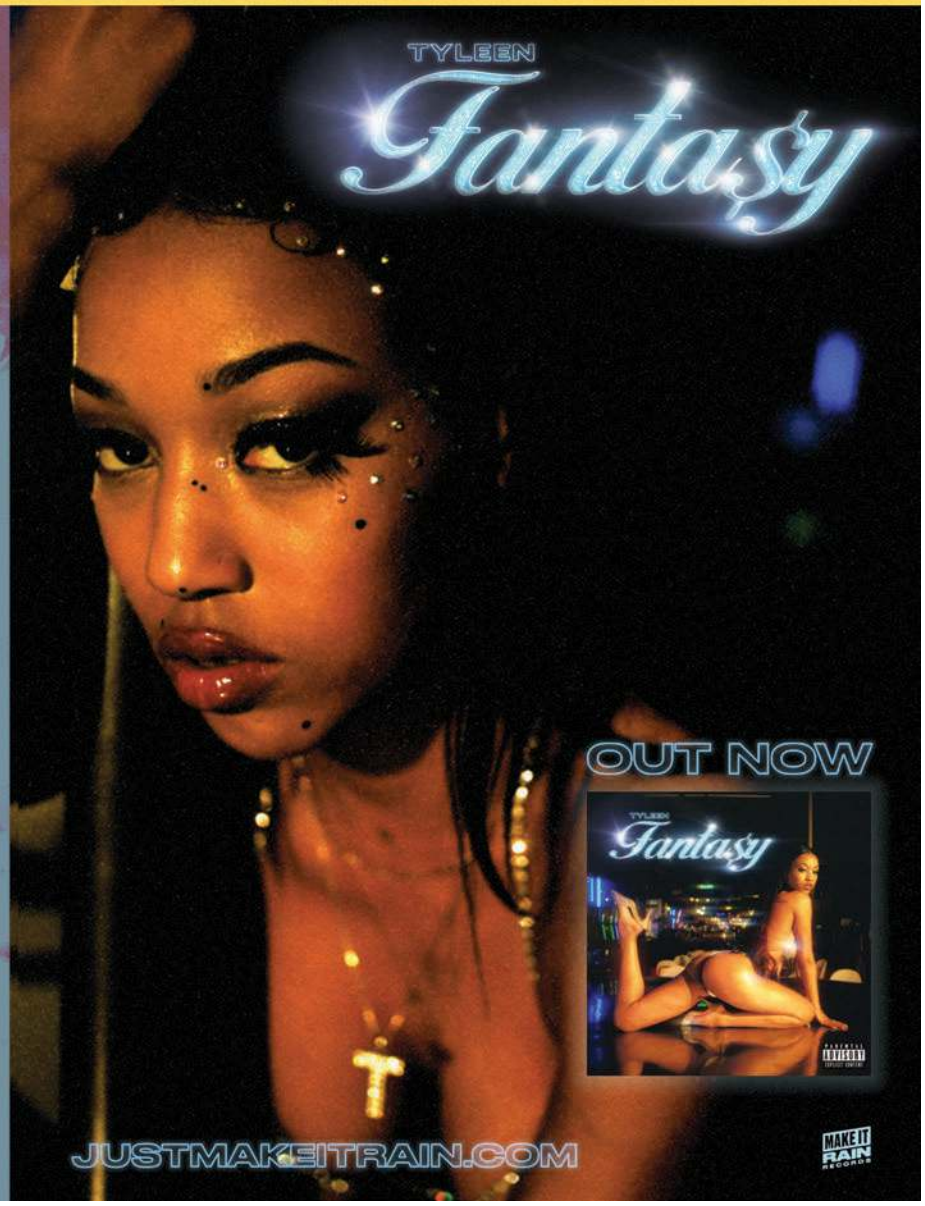
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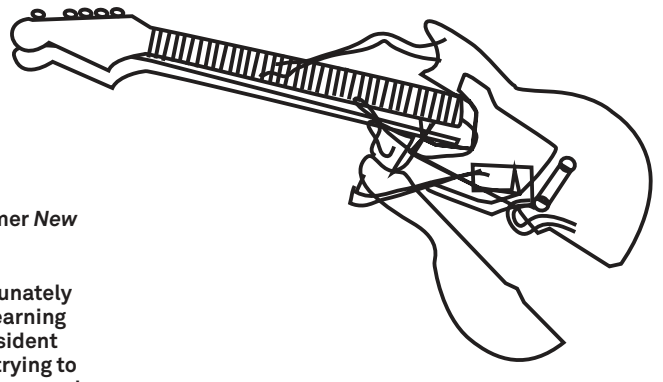

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Now that I'm only hipping you L7's to the hip stuff once a month, I didn't even get to wish you bong-bubblers a happy 4/20.

Truthfully though, wishing you beautiful freaks a happy belated 4/20 two weeks after the fact is probably the most stoner thing I could possibly do. As a gift for your patience and grace, I will turn you on to one of the greatest touchstones of stoner rock that you have never heard of: *Population II* by Randy Holden. Celebrating a brand spanking new reissue and remastering from the buds-with-buds label Riding Easy Records, *Population II* is truly Randy Holden's magnum opus.

Originally distributed in 1970 on micro indie label Hobbit Records, *Population II* would've completely devastated and crushed but was stillborn upon release as you couldn't find this slab o' wax anywhere. Over the years, the record was bootlegged numerous times with compromised fidelity. It was regularly hyped by bearded, bespectacled and bald collectors of heavy psych (uh, basically people like me) who routinely spent a heap o' bandwidth on this "great one that got away" on psych forums read by their bearded, bespectacled and bald brethren.

admit that Holden's contribution on their third jammer *New Improved* is pretty beige.

After one tour with the mighty Cheer, Holden unfortunately felt hemmed in with the creatively bankrupt band, earning no money and as he told *Perfect Sound Forever*'s resident psych uber nerd Richie Unterberger in 2000: "I was trying to accommodate everyone else, at the expense of my own soul and happiness." And by "soul and happiness" he really meant a shit-ton of searing guitar leads that were loud enough to melt the fillings in your teeth.

That's where we hit upon the mighty 1970 riff-stompin' monster *Population II*. While the Cheer may have been louder than God, with his solo record Holden would succumb to a true Spinal-Tap-ism and proudly boast "but this one goes to 11." With the intention of being the loudest band ever, Holden rented an opera house for his pre-production to house his (ahem) 16,200-watt Sunn amplifiers (Geesuz fucking Christ!!!). During the two weeks before wheeling his ridiculous wall of ampage into the studio, he remained inspired, even letting the rhythms of a ceiling fan pen one of his leaden monsters.

In the lead-off track "Guitar Song" (Zimmerman dis ain't), he proclaimed over the din of a doom-laden groove: "I love the sound of a guitar playing." Humble drummer and keyboardist Chris Lockhead can be heard thumping away in the background but is a mere murmur behind Holden's unrelenting roar. Often cited as the first doom record (it's not even close to being the first doom record, and you can take it from me as I am bald, bespectacled and bearded), this is definitely a leaden iron (man?) beast crushing cities in its wake with discordant tri-tones that routinely get knuckle-dragging Iommi and Saint Vitus fans nodding along. The beats lumber along as Holden's riffs and searing leads crush craniums with dark oozing goodness.

If superfluous guitar leads and excessive sections that seem to have no real musical purpose or clear destination make you break out in hives, may I suggest the recent work from wet blankets like Animal Collective. For those of us from the Make a Riff Foundation, this molten slab of proto-metal and heavy psych will put the bacon on your burger.

For the official Riding Easy Records stream, click here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6MUOPUlXuVM

Current Obsession: Captain Beefheart and His Magic Band, *Strictly Personal*

jonathan.cummins@gmail.com

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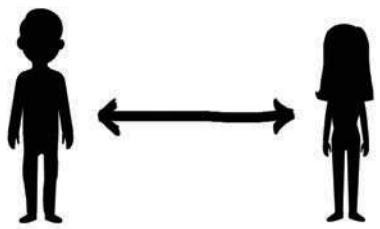

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BY ALEX ROSE

A month ago, it seemed that the COVID-19 pandemic was going to force incredible changes in the way VOD was going to operate going forward. With tons of films now sitting on shelves without theatres in which to release them, it was posited that the very model of the industry would be upended. It happened a little bit in the sense that a few films were either released directly to VOD (*Trolls World Tour*) or had their regular schedule expedited (*Onward, Birds of Prey* and many other films that were already out on screens when confinement began). Most predicted that this would become, in the parlance of our times, the new normal; what it has actually become is, well, not much. Almost all films have had their theatrical release postponed, but almost everything now has a release date either at the end of the summer or deep into 2021. It does not seem, for the time being, that the announced revolution will happen.

One film that *did* have its release bumped directly to VOD is *Capone*, **a biopic of the famed Chicago gangster (Tom Hardy) at the end of his life, as he slowly dies of syphilis. Directed by Josh Trank (who had seemingly finally bounced back after the disastrous *Fantastic Four*), *Capone* certainly looks *weird* enough to draw attention when it drops on May 12.**

Also skipping a theatrical release for COVID-related reasons is *How to Build a Girl*, **based on a novel by Caitlin Moran. Beanie Feldstein (*Booksmart)* stars as a British teenager who becomes a music journalist; Alfie Allen and Paddy Considine co-star.**

This is also what has happened to *Scoob!*, **a new animated reboot of the Scooby-Doo franchise with the voices of Will Forte, Mark Wahlberg and Amanda Seyfried. It will skip theatrical release and drop on VOD May 15.**

Also out on VOD (and it was probably always slated to be exactly that) as of May 5 is *Arkansas*, **a crime comedy that also marks the directorial debut of Clark Duke (*Kick-Ass, Sex Drive*). Duke and Liam Hemsworth star as a couple of low-level drug dealers who get in over their heads with the kingpin (Vince Vaughn). It sounds derivative as all hell, to tell you the truth, but I love me a derivative crime caper.**

Speaking of derivative crime capers, Bruce Willis is back in another generic DTV crime movie starring a not-so-young, once-upon-a-time heartthrob (Chad Michael Murray, this time) in *Survive the Night*, **a movie that is presumably indistinguishable from all of the other movies that Willis has appeared in over the last five years.**

One less common industry strategy has been to shift rights from one distributor to another, which is what happened with the Kumail Nanjiani / Issa Rae comedy *The Lovebirds*, **which was originally slated to premiere at SXSW before its theatrical release. Paramount, who produced the film, instead sold the rights to Netflix, where the film will premiere on May 22. (The complete lack of festivals since mid-March has also put a severe damper on advance buzz, which is why so many of these films remain huge question marks.)**

Netflix's deal with Adam Sandler's production company apparently extends to Sandler's buddies as evidenced by the existence of *The Wrong Missy*, **a comedy in which David Spade plays a guy who accidentally invites a crazy blind date (Lauren Lapkus) to accompany him to a wedding. It sounds like a shitty premise for assured garbage, but as a fan of Lapkus's, I will probably still sacrifice some pandemic vibes to watch it.**

Over at Amazon, catch the streaming premieres of a few Amazon Studios productions. First up is Alma Har'el very good *Honey Boy* **(May 8), an autobiographical tale from Shia Labeouf in which he plays his own father, alongside Noah Jupe as the young Shia. Sci-fi thriller** *The Vast of Night* **was picked up after a very successful festival run last fall. The 1950s-set film centres on two teenagers who investigate the presence of a strange radio frequency.**

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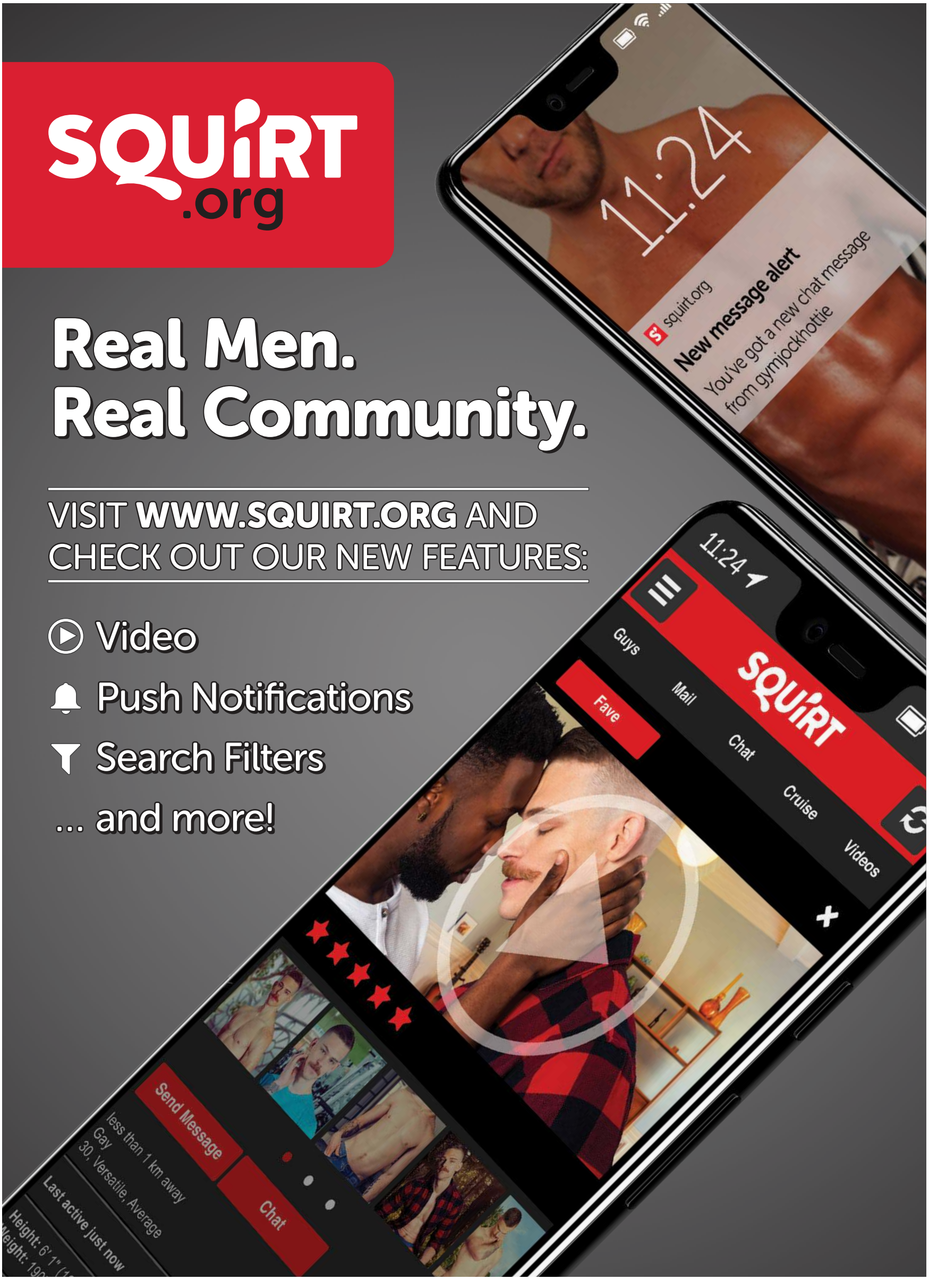

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arts

Isolation fashion

BY LILY SHYKOFF

It is essential in trying times to actually get dressed in the morning. By all means dress in something loungy if it pleases you, but the act of actually putting on clothes to begin your day may well keep you sane.

With warmer weather approaching, perhaps you're even seeking out a few items to drape your body with while sitting soaking in some balcony sun, or while getting to know your neighbours across the way, or for flirting with a grocery clerk while desperately trying to convey a smile through the various barriers of homemade mask and plexiglass.

With that in mind, here are a few thoughts on how to support local clothing designers and vendors while feeling elegant at home and during brief trips out-of-doors.

Citizen Vintage is offering a free mask with every online purchase. They're made from fabric scraps from their usual line of local clothing by pattern-maker Amélie Bryson, who has been working for Citizen Vintage since 2016.

Emily Watts-Luciani, the co-owner of vintage retailer Amie Amie, launched Partners and Babe last month as a way of encouraging the local sale of consignment fashion during our collective isolation. The site allows anyone from experienced vendors to people selling a handful of items to sell through their Instagram.

Dressup Collective, the local fashion project run by Tosca Webb and Annie Brebner, has been hosting a heart-warming and stylish quarantine series on their Instagram, to which anyone can dress up and submit! It may not involve buying anything new, but could make you feel more excited about showcasing the wardrobe you already have.

Hannah Isolde creates made-to-measure garments here in Montreal, and while many of her fabric suppliers are temporarily closed, you can email her at hannah.isolde@gmail.com to inquire about stocks. She is temporarily sold out of the face masks she's been sewing, but follow her Instagram for updates.

If bags are more your speed, Named Loris, the person behind the Instagram account canta.nga.lo is making some mighty intriguing fuzzy bags that they sell through their account.

If, perhaps, you want to decorate your space but not your body, Gerald LaJoie makes hand-dyed fabric and curtains redolent of abstract stained glass. Lajoie has also recently been making masks.

Lastly, every I see a luxuriant silk

Citizen Vintage

What's in mask?

BY LILY SHYKOFF

With shops closed and lines of supply tenuous, many clothing makers in Montreal and in other cities are turning to making masks both to survive during economic uncertainty and to help provide a newly essential resource. We spoke to three Montreal mask-makers about their patterns, their materials, and what they listen to to keep them company during lonely days spent in front of a sewing machine.

Jasmine Wasfy of Boutique Lustre, Lisa Bobrow of Ramonalisa and Jennifer Glasgow of Jennifer Glasgow Design all fell into mask-making through client requests. After Glasgow took a picture of herself wearing a mask and put it on Instagram, "the floodgate opened." Likewise Wasfy received some client requests and started "playing around and doing samples." Now she makes about 50 masks weekly, which, working solo, means about three and a half long days of "cutting, sewing and prepping." She's still making clothes and works six days a week. Bobrow meanwhile had initially intended on making headbands with buttons to help alleviate ear discomfort for those wearing masks all day, and fell into mask production by creating a "modification in the design to solve that problem of ear hurting."

All three of these Montreal designers are using fabric ends from their usual clothing lines, though Boutique Lustre also provides shop towels to use as disposable filters, noting a Business Insider article about their efficacy. (Glasgow and Bobrow's masks also both have a pocket in which people can put their own shop towel filter).

These designers are all devising their own patterns, some modified from the many free mask-sewing patterns floating around social media. As Wasfy points out, "we're a lot of designers in the same boat — we might be making clothes for 20 years but we've only been making masks for three weeks." You may also have heard that elastic has become quite scarce, so some designers are trying out alternate designs. Glasgow for instance is using fabric "spaghetti" (think spaghetti strap material) and notes it might actually be preferable as "it's softer and easier to manipulate." Bobrow incorporated research into average differences between male and female skulls to work on making her masks more comfortable. She "kept seeing people wearing [masks] incorrectly" and realized that "if you can't wear it comfortably, people aren't going to wear it."

Jennifer Glasgow Design

Now, what are these sewers listening to during their many mask assembling hours? Glasgow's a big dancehall fan, and Wasfy favours podcasts and sitcoms to feel a little less lonely. She points out that sewing is actually very noisy, so you need something that doesn't require your full attention. Bobrow's been "missing [her] Sunday night old-time country and bluegrass at Barfly" so among others she's been listening to local musicians Katie Moore, Li'l Andy and Veranda.

A reminder that these designers are all making non-medical grade masks, but public health officials are now recommending their use for the healthy as well as the sick. *The Atlantic* published a compelling account of why you ought to go do your groceries in this type of mask.

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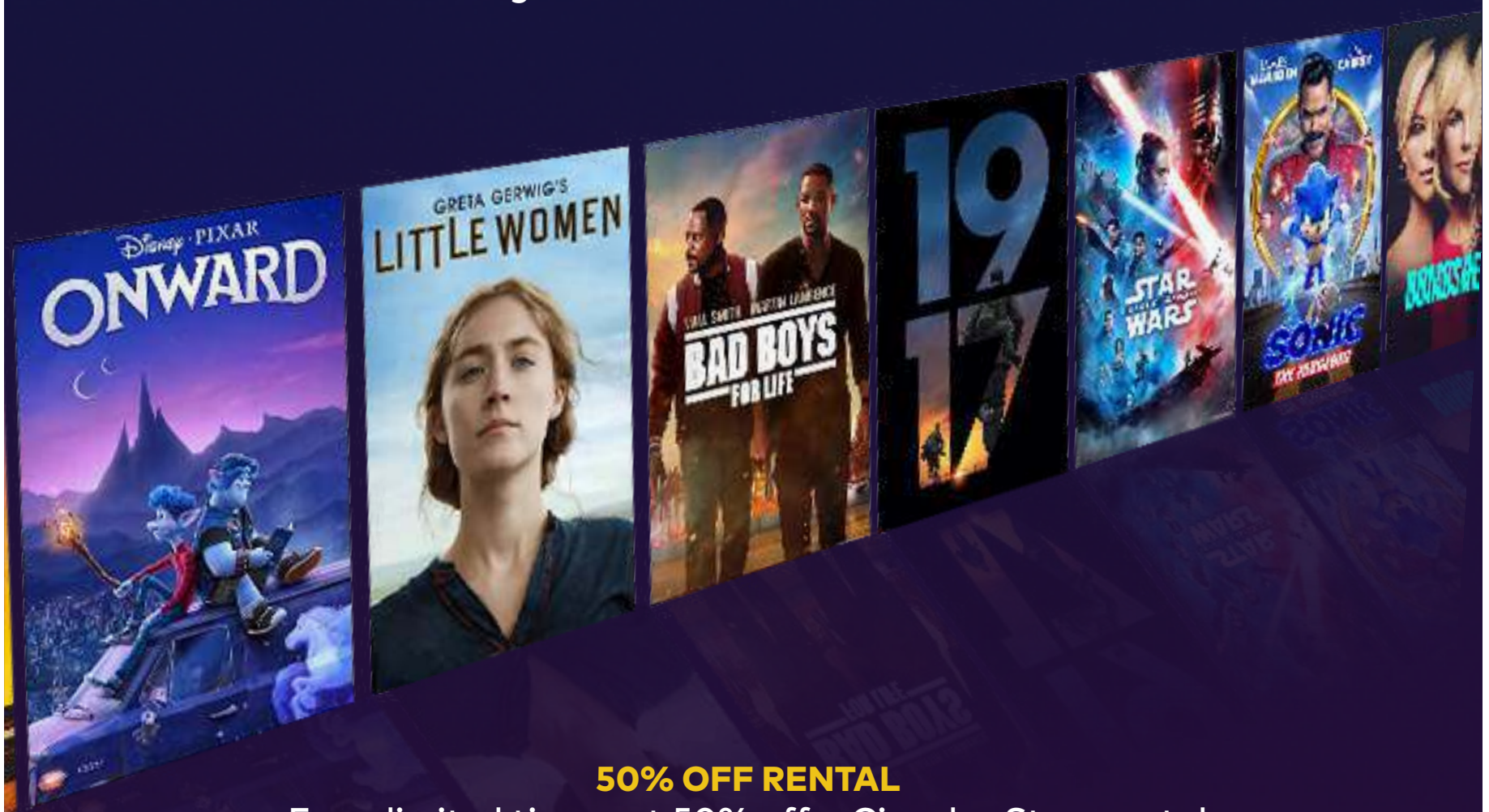

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*CONDITIONS APPLY

21st century cities in pandemic mode

Star Apartments, Los Angeles

BY LILY SHYKOFF

The Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA) is an institution that thrives on research, whose international nature has always been at the forefront of their curatorial vision.

Giovanna Borasi, who first began working with the CCA in 2005 and who took over as its director in January, mentions a curator in Tokyo, another in Buenos Aires, curators and designers scattered worldwide, so that the CCA's diasporic nature "works very much in this new reality all the time."

It shows in their exhibits. 2019's *Our Happy Life* was so textually driven that almost immediately after seeing it, I purchased the catalogue so as to access the research at a later date. Borasi spoke about how she thinks "the exhibition is a very smart tool to summarize and construct your argument" but that that argument can take many forms — online, through video, through books etc. It's one of the reasons why, unlike many cultural institutions, the CCA isn't suddenly vying to move its exhibition content online. That content is already evidenced as articles and documentaries. There are certain aspects of their programming that have required rethinking, however, in particular "a program for schools" that takes place in the CCA and that they're working on redesigning as a curriculum made available online. This endeavour aims to "stretch the qualities that the CCA already had in order not just to cope with this moment of isolation" but also to create "new formats that we will continue to implement after."

At the time of our interview in April (before the country's lockdown was lifted) Borasi was following the Italian news closely, observing how leaving home exclusively for groceries often "means lining up for two hours and in a frantic situation where you are also putting yourself in danger and doing the most boring thing in the world." A walk is no longer just a walk; any *flânerie* is discouraged or forbidden — the mind-clearing leisure associated with so many ideals of urban cityscapes has ground to a halt.

Her point about this admixture of boredom and fear seems particularly essential to understanding the psychological toll of COVID in cities. "In North America, we have entire neighbourhoods designed for a car experience. I'm not saying there aren't sidewalks and people don't take care about their front decks or lawns and so on, but if you only have 10 minutes to walk, often you don't have a very interesting walk." If there's nothing to interest you, nothing to draw you out of yourself, then what do you have to dwell on if not our global crisis, as you try to scuffle two metres apart from passersby, often on sidewalks not even themselves two metres wide? Likewise the notion of sharing has been turned on its head as the allure of shared space, typically something to be aspired to both socially and environmentally, has been (perhaps temporarily) shattered.

With this mental and social shattering, of course, there is also the all-consuming COVID metaphor that infects all thought, that we project onto any and all cultural material in the world. Borasi has been working on an exhibition,

Giovanna Borasi

tentatively titled *New Society*, formerly slated for November 2020 but now likely opening in March 2021, that will address the changing urban family, though of course that title, and what contemporary family means, can't help but now be read as "a reflection on this COVID discussion." So Borasi is working with the material, trying to find a way for the show to inevitably comment on this historical moment while not limiting itself to that reading.

As part of the 2020 online edition of FIFA (the International Festival of Films on Art), the CCA also presented *What It Takes to Make a Home*, a short film conceived by Borasi and directed by Daniel Schwartz. It's the "first in a series of films explor[ing] how architects address conditions redefining 21st-century society." The film follows two architects, Michael Maltzan in Los Angeles and Alexander Hagner in Vienna, both of whom have dedicated themselves to proposing novel housing developments in keeping with the unique circumstances of homelessness in their respective cities. For Hagner, his housing project VinziRast-mittendrin "intentionally blends in" to its neighbourhood in Vienna, whereas Borasi highlights Maltzan's argument "that the architecture for [the homeless] should have a strong visual component" in order to combat the anonymity (to the non-homeless) of homeless people. Certainly his Star Apartments, also featured in the documentary, rise like a white concrete tree out of downtown L.A. — an instantly recognizable part of the built environment.

The rest of the CCA's documentary series will explore the "intersecting conditions — loneliness, migration, segregation and ageing, among others" that shape contemporary urban life, and all of which cannot help but now be viewed differently. Browsing the online content for 2011–2012's *Imperfect Health: The Medicalization of Architecture* (featuring paper sculptures of animal disease vectors by Andy Byers, a collaborator of Isabella Rossellini's) or even returning to *Our Happy Life* with its examination of "emotional capitalism" and the era of the individual, the CCA's research and programming can continue to offer some unique insights into how to navigate both our current seclusion and the task of eventually returning to our cities.


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Harmonies

The Mamas and the Papas

BY RYAN DIDUCK

The Fleetwoods, “Come Softly to Me” (Dolphin Records, 1959)

A friend a few weeks ago opened up the question to Twitter: What are the best-ever harmonies in popular music? Presumably, like many of us, she was feeling nostalgic for a time before last month, when people could still be within two metres of one another, perhaps even harmonize in real life. I thought it over and came up with a short list, another of my “play distant” columns since I cannot bear one more recent podcast or live DJ set from someone’s living room. Whilst life outside in the real world slowed to a crawl during the COVID-19 lockdown, the onslaught of online media leaped into hyperspeed. For once, keeping up didn’t even occur to me.

I sense another retromaniacal era approaching in which many of us, in the media industries at least, temporarily turn away from what we call contemporary culture. The familiar refrain, along with curves and vaccines and new-normal narratives, is that “no one saw this coming.” Well someone did. Someone saw this coming. Just no one who should have known: no one in the White House; none of the Epstein truthers who pivoted to China; none of the drums and Trump that usually accompany announcements of unprecedented import; none on the Avant-Garde, the kind of death figures that typically result from war. Corona came softly, not with a bang.

Mamas & Papas, “Dedicated to the One I Love,” *The Mamas & the Papas Deliver* (1967)

The official number of papas and mamas is a matter of public record. But according to lovable lore and legend, a fifth member, neither mama nor papa, was conjured and made material and moreover sonic — sound-producing, supra-singing — via the complex harmonies and consummate collective clarion spectrum that this group invented around a microphone, live in the studio. Like an angel hanging over them — a horny angel, breaking down walls with its horniness. Surely something libidinal and eternal exists here. Why would Charles Manson, Dennis Hopper, Steve McQueen or Quentin Tarantino have sniffed around otherwise?

The Chips, “Rubber Biscuit” (Josie Records, 1956)

Say friend, have you tried your hand at making sourdough yet? Heritage hipsterism, and its adjacent hucksterism, is back. With the announcement that the city’s community gardens might shutter for the season, a lot of us panic-ordered dirt and seeds and mulch thinking that we might grow our grandmothers’ cucumbers, along with our own grandmothers in a heap of compost on our pristine white bedsheets like some David Lynch student movie.

Maybe just a batch of muffins then. No? Well anyone who’s anyone has apparently been putting some combination of flour and yeast and butter into the oven of late, posting the questionable results across their public and private networks — dough to fill the clout drought. Everyone’s been trying in turn to do their doughnuts, scald their scones, burn their biscuits, just to avoid the dreaded bread line. In quarantine we’ve all become master bakers.

Everly Brothers, “Don’t Blame Me” (Warner Brothers Records, 1961)

The thing that everybody knows but we are not saying about this coronavirus is: if it were for any other reason, we would have taken to the streets. Had it been an act of terrorism, or even all-out war, and our dear leaders had shuffled us away indoors for our own protection, we would have stormed the palaces demanding, “What protection? And by whom?” By any measure, this might have been an excellent year for collective action. Not virtual but collective action. The sort that requires and doesn’t simply prefer the magic of contact. Bodies together. The shame of this is that a young generation will emerge distrusting the proximity of other people. Divided we fall.

But despair not, because your choice wasn’t even counted in all of this. Nobody came around to your house or apartment in a plebiscite or sent you a questionnaire to inquire what you’d do in the unlikely event of a pandemic. We weren’t consulted. So there’s no culpability for us to assume. Nope. Shrug off that weight. Your inherent mediumship is not on trial. Note the rumblings that this virus just trimmed the fat or merely killed off those that nature deemed expendable. Don’t forget that Legault said, on Easter Sunday of all days — the day we collectively discovered that 31 citizens died in a single residence — that Quebec will be “reborn” after this crisis.

Some of us will remember this fondly as the time when we streamed Netflix and didn’t get out of our pajamas except for when we all sang Leonard Cohen on our balconies. Some of us will remember it as the time when tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of people prematurely died.

George Jones And Tammy Wynette, “Near You” (Epic Records, 1976)

It’s time to decide what we want to go back to. Since COVID-19 has disrupted every aspect of life, we really have the ultimate opportunity to make some serious choices. Life choices. Things that will affect the course of our existence together, separately, forever.

What song shall we sing? The first thing that comes to mind.

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