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table of contents



The results of our annual readers poll, the Best of MTL.
Illustration by Dan Buller

<u>best of mtl</u>	6
people & places	8
media	10
nightlife	12
music	16
film & arts	18
goods & services	20
food & drink	22
<u>food</u>	
Resto Wrongs	30

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And the city has spoken.

Over the past four months, *Cult MTL* readers and other citizens invested in civic pride voted for their favourite Montreal things in the annual Best of MTL poll.

When voting began back in early February, we of course didn't foresee the citywide shutdown that was coming in mid-March. The last two months of voting happened while most of us were in lockdown, and given the fact that so many local businesses were closed, and so many local artists were inactive (at least publicly), filling out the survey was a bittersweet. The voting period was extended as this issue was held back by a month so that we could print and distribute it as we normally do. *Cult MTL* produced two consecutive online-only issues, in April and May, and while we're very proud of those issues, which contained exclusively free advertising, it's nice to be back in print. More importantly, with the city gradually reopening — but so much activity still on hold, and so many still in isolation and quarantine — it's imperative to salute the artists, promoters, organizers, reporters, restaurateurs and retailers who keep Montreal's heart beating, even in partial stasis.

As always, the Best of MTL poll is open and democratic, with no editorial influence or interference. We are always glad to see so many people make an event of voting via social media campaigns, and while we can't resist sharing third-party get-out-the-vote tweets, we otherwise remain neutral during the polling period.

Ballot-stuffing is automatically weeded out by our survey software, but we must admit that we appreciate joke votes —

it's nice to get a few laughs in during the painstaking tabulation process. This year there were votes for chef/TV personality/rapper Dino Babydoll Luciano, columnist and social media personality Murphy Cooper and comedian/radio host Julian Bernatchez in way too many categories, along with griping about everything from the length of the poll to the fact that we'd dare suggest that there are politicians who aren't evil (ie. the Best Politician category, which is open to interpretation by the way).

Cult MTL has been running the Best of MTL readers poll for eight years, but it bears mentioning that the survey follows in the decades-old tradition established by the city's defunct but fondly remembered alt-weekly newspaper the *Mirror*. Respect.

Along with the expanded Top 10 lists in every category (coming to cultmtl.com in the coming days), our website will feature a number of Best of MTL articles through the month of June and beyond.

We thank everyone who voted and promoted the poll. Participation continues to grow every year, making the 2020 results more representative of the city than ever.

(Anglos, if you're wondering why you don't recognize some names in these lists, it's because the other 70 per cent of the population is now voting in a bilingual poll. Francos, désolé, les résultats sont unilingue.)

To all the winners in the following 150+ categories: congratulations.

More than ever, we're proud to bring you the Best of MTL

People & Places

With The Daily Trudeau Show on the TV in many households over the past few months, our Prime Minister remains on the minds of many — Justin Trudeau wins Hottest Montrealer yet again, despite (or because of?) the beard, and hair that's looking more and more 19th century every day. Hairdressers, you are missed. (Trudeau is also #5 Tackiest Personality, possibly for reasons beyond the superficial.) A man who's been getting almost as much shine as Trudeau on our website lately, François Legault, wins Slimiest Politician yet again, but also comes in at #2 for Best Politician — in Legault's case, his (brief) post-COVID approval bump may have come into play, or perhaps these two categories are somewhat interchangeable. Congrats to our *maireesse* Valérie Plante for winning Best Politician AND sliding into #2 Hottest Montrealer. She does look pretty cool in a mask (and no, that's not meant to be snide).



Little Italy, Best Neighbourhood #2

Chedy Lopez

Hottest Montrealer

- 1 Justin Trudeau
- 2 Valérie Plante
- 3 Tranna Wintour
- 4 Maripier Morin
- 5 Évelyne Brochu

Best-Dressed Montrealer

- 1 Céline Dion
- 2 Justin Trudeau
- 3 Lily Monroe
- 4 Tranna Wintour
- 5 Murphy Cooper

Best Sports Personality

- 1 Laurent Duvernay-Tardif
- 2 Carey Price
- 3 Brendan Gallagher
- 4 Félix Auger-Aliassime
- 5 Max Domi

Tackiest Personality

- 1 Céline Dion
- 2 Mado Lamotte
- 3 Mose Persico
- 4 Véronique Cloutier
- 5 Justin Trudeau

Best Weirdo

- 1 Natasha Nebula
- 2 Beaver Sheppard
- 3 Murphy Cooper
- 4 Julien Bernatchez
- 5 Uma Gahd

Best Social/Political Cause

- 1 Climate change/climate march
- 2 COVID-19/#cavabienaller/CERB
- 3 Wet'suwet'en/First Nations

rights/reconciliation

- 4 Dans la rue/fighting homelessness
- 5 Gentrification/housing crisis

Best Politician

- 1 Valérie Plante
- 2 François Legault
- 3 Justin Trudeau
- 4 Manon Massé
- 5 Craig Sauv  

Slimiest Politician

- 1 Fran  ois Legault
- 2 Justin Trudeau
- 3 Val  rie Plante
- 4 Denis Coderre
- 5 Jean Charest

Most Heinous Scandal

- 1 CHSLD Herron/COVID-19 response
- 2 Bill 21
- 3 SNC-Lavalin
- 4 Sue Montgomery
- 5 Pipelines



“Many thanks to the readers of Cult MTL. I am delighted to have such fantastic fans who always cheer for me when I play in Montreal or anywhere else in the world, it means a lot to me. I wish all of them much strength and courage in these trying times.”—Felix Auger-Aliassime, Best Sports Personality #4

Best Neighbourhood

- 1 Mile End
- 2 Rosemont Petite-Patrie/
Little Italy
- 3 Plateau
- 4 NDG
- 5 St-Henri
- 6 Verdun
- 7 Hochelaga-Maisonneuve
- 8 Villeray
- 9 Parc Ex
- 10 Centre-Sud/Village

**Best Place to
Have Public Sex**

- 1 Mount Royal
- 2 Parc Lafontaine
- 3 Lachine Canal
- 4 Wiggle Room bathrooms
- 5 Cinéma l'Amour

Best Instagram Spot

- 1 Belvedere on Mount
Royal
- 2 Pastel Rita
- 3 HideSeek pop-up
- 4 Beaver Lake
- 5 Orange Julep



“I can’t deny the fact that you like me! RIGHT NOW! YOU LIKE ME! Bless all the people who vote for me year after year. To those who are too scared to get political, or to engage in deep and crazy ways with our community, this proves that you can do it and still be loved. Get out there, use your voice for the better. #BlackLivesMatter #PrideWasARiot Gahd Bless!”—Uma Gahd, Best Weirdo #5, Best Twitter #3, Best Play #4 (Are You There, Margaret? It’s Me, Gahd)

Thanks for Voting

#1

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Media

As always we thank our readers for voting us into the #1 spot for both Best Newspaper and Best Magazine — we like to think of ourselves as a magazine on newsprint, so we're pretty guilty of blurring the line there. We will take issue with our win in the Best Website category, however — sure our site is great (especially after the redesign we did a year ago), but how could we possibly have beaten Pornhub? Especially during the pandemic, when they're offering their premium content for free (not a sponsored sentence). We assume that a fair number of voters don't know it's a local site. It's the only explanation. On another note, shout-out to FNoMTL for winning Best Instagram and Best Twitter, and to #GeekTastiqCypha (part of the Franklin Armstrong Collective) for rising up into the Top 5 from last year's #9 spot in Best Podcast.

Best Radio Station

- 1 CKUT 90.3FM
- 2 CJLO 1690AM
- 3 CHOM 97.7FM
- 4 CBC 88.5FM/93.5FM
- 5 Virgin 95.5FM

Best Radio Show

- 1 *Underground Sounds* (CKUT 90.3FM)
- 2 *La soirée est encore jeune* (ICI Radio-Canada Première 95.1FM)
- 3 *Country Classics* (CKUT 90.3FM)
- 4 *Terry in the Morning* (CHOM 97.7FM)
- 5 Des si et des rais (CHOQ.ca)

Best Radio Host

- 1 Terry DiMonte
- 2 Mitch Melnick
- 3 Jason Rockman
- 4 Nick Schofield
- 5 Julien Bernatchez

Best TV Station

- 1 CTV
- 2 CBC
- 3 Radio-Canada
- 4 Télé-Québec
- 5 Global

Best Newscaster

- 1 Mutsumi Takahashi
- 2 Céline Galipeau
- 3 Patrice Roy
- 4 Paul Karwatsky
- 5 Pierre Bruneau

Best TV Personality

- 1 Mutsumi Takahashi
- 2 Jay du Temple
- 3 Jean-René Dufort
- 4 Horacio Arruda
- 5 Dino Babydoll Luciano

Best Magazine

- 1 *Cult MTL*
- 2 *Lez Spread the Word*
- 3 *Urbania*
- 4 *Maisonneuve*
- 5 *Fugues*

Best Newspaper

- 1 *Cult MTL*
- 2 *The Gazette*
- 3 *Le Devoir*
- 4 *Métrot*
- 5 *Journal de Montréal*

Best Website

- 1 cultmtl.com
- 2 pornhub.com
- 3 mtlblog.com
- 4 montreal.eater.com
- 5 mtlcityweblog.com

Best Twitter

- 1 @FNoMTL
- 2 @CultMTL
- 3 @UmaGahd
- 4 @Pornhub
- 5 @TrannaWintour



"Any sort of culinary recognition is like a love boost. I'm in love with food, I'm in love with feeding people, so knowing that I have this sort of recognition and people enjoy my food and they love what I do makes me feel really good inside. I came [to Montreal] to study food and to eat at different places, see what people have to offer and I connected with people that way. It's nice to know I've won the hearts of people through their stomachs."—Dino Babydoll Luciano, Best Chef #4, Best TV Personality #5, Best Hip Hop Act #5



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"C'est une consécration de notre statut de gay icon, mais aussi preuve qu'une vie sexuelle avec de multiples partenaires peut paver le chemin vers la gloire." —2Fxs le Matin, Best Podcast #1

Best Instagram

- 1 @fnomtl
- 2 @all_day_breakfast
- 3 @burymeatleritz
- 4 @murphycooper
- 5 @pontomtl

Best Podcast

- 1 2Fxs le Matin
- 2 Chosen Family
- 3 #GeekTastiqCypha
- 4 Mike Ward Sous Écoute
- 5 WellSaid



"Montréal, j'aimerais [CENSORED] partout sur toi, tu gorges mon [CENSORED] d'un plaisir si pur que je dois le partager à tous avant de retourner sur ma planète." —Julien Bernatchez, Best Weirdo #4, Best Radio Host #5

Nightlife

This is the bitter in the bittersweetness of Best of MTL 2020. Homestyle drugs and drinks aside, the entirety of this section is closed or otherwise inactive. Well, with some exceptions. Cinema Política is streaming documentaries online and Burgundy Lion is delivering food, while a few of the performers on the list have had some visibility online. Congrats to Hurley's for increased visibility in the Bar categories, and to Miami Minx (a boylesque artist new to the Best Burlesque Top 5) as well as Charlie Deville and Sisi Superstar, new to the Best Drag Queen/King category. St-Henri's Bar de Courcelle and Mile Ex's Notre Dame des Quilles are as popular as ever with our readers. We're all hoping public health will announce some physical distancing guidelines for all bars with terrasses, at the very least. Until then, we have our memories.

Best Bartender

- 1 Turbo (Hurley's)
- 2 Gern F. Vlcek (Grumpy's)
- 3 Rashta Kruger (Blue Dog)
- 4 Maya Rice (Brutopia)
- 5 Megan Turcotte (Burgundy Lion)

Best Bar

- 1 Turbo Haüs
- 2 Grumpy's
- 3 Notre Dame des Quilles
- 4 Hurley's
- 5 Bar de Courcelle

Best Dive Bar

- 1 Barfly
- 2 Bar de Courcelle
- 3 Grumpy's
- 4 Bifteck
- 5 Brasserie Beaubien



"Didn't see this coming! I've gotta say that I'm missing all my customers and friends and Montreal nightlife. Can't wait to be able to have a pint with you guys at Hurley's." —Turbo, Best Bartender #1 (Hurley's, Best Bar #4)

Best Wine Bar

- 1 Vinvinvin
- 2 Loïc
- 3 Pullman
- 4 Vin Papillon
- 5 Buvette Chez Simone

Best Club

- 1 Datcha
- 2 Stereo
- 3 Bord'Elle
- 4 Sky
- 5 Nesta

Best Club Night

- 1 Glitter Bomb
- 2 Mec Plus Ultra
- 3 Moonshine
- 4 Blush
- 5 LuvHaus

Best Live Music Venue

- 1 M Telus
 - 2 Théâtre Corona Virgin
- Mobile
- 3 Turbo Haüs
 - 4 Casa del Popolo
 - 5 La Sala Rossa

Best Underground Music Venue

- 1 La Plante
- 2 The Bog
- 3 Durocher Lofts
- 4 Fattal Lofts
- 5 Traxide

Best Promoter

- 1 Blue Skies Turn Black
- 2 Evenko
- 3 Greenland

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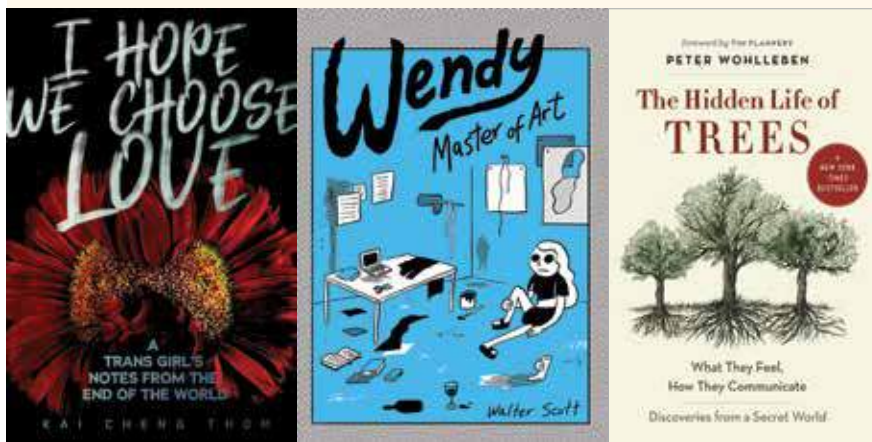
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Or stop by TUESDAY-SUNDAY from 12-5 at either location to talk in-person. We'll be wearing our masks and hope you will too!

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- JUNE 17, WEDNESDAY | 7 PM **GRAPHIC NOVEL**
Umma's Table by Yeon-sik Hong
- JULY 2, THURSDAY | 7 PM **INDIGENOUS LITERATURES**
Wendy, Master of Art by Walter Scott
- JULY 7, TUESDAY | 7 PM **TRUE READS**
The Hidden Life of Trees by Peter Wohlleben
- JULY 19, SUNDAY | 6 PM **COOK BOOK**
Pasta Grannies by Vicky Bennison
- JULY 22, WEDNESDAY | 7 PM **GAY READS**
I Hope We Choose Love by Kai Cheng Thom
- JULY 29, WEDNESDAY | 7 PM **LOCAL READS**
Dominoes at the Crossroads by Kaie Kellough
- AUG 4, TUESDAY | 7 PM **TRUE READS**
Recollections of My Non-Existence by Rebecca Solnit
- AUG 11, TUESDAY | 7 PM **STRANGE FUTURES**
The City We Became by N. K. Jemisin



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"We stand with all our fellow restaurateurs and friends in hospitality and nightlife. We have been amongst the hardest hit and our world is still filled with great uncertainty. However at Bord'Elle we pride ourselves in bringing joy, entertainment and great food to the masses and we are certain that things will get better soon. The human spirit is richer when we are able to share and celebrate special moments in life, and we will be there for you when the time is right."—John Edward Gumbley, John Jay, President Jegantic Group, President Bord'Elle, Best Club #3

- 4 Hot Tramp Management
- 5 Hello Darlin'

Best Strip Club

- 1 Chez Parée
- 2 Café Cléopâtre
- 3 Cabaret Kingdom
- 4 Kamasutra
- 5 Wanda's

Best LGBTQ2+ Bar/Club

- 1 Notre Dame des Quilles
- 2 Sky
- 3 Chez Mado
- 4 Bar le Cocktail
- 5 Le Renard

Best Burlesque Performer

- 1 Lavender May
- 2 Tristan Ginger
- 3 Miami Minx

- 4 Sugar Vixen
- 5 Lou Lou la Duchesse de Rièr

Best Drag Queen or King

- 1 Mado Lamotte
- 2 Uma Gahd
- 3 Charlie Deville
- 4 Rainbow
- 5 Sisi Superstar

Best Pool Hall

- 1 Fats
- 2 Fitzroy
- 3 Forum
- 4 Le Skratch
- 5 Montreal Pool Room

Best Bowling Alley

- 1 Quilles G Plus (including Rose Bowl)
- 2 Notre Dame des Quilles

- 3 Bowling Darling
- 4 Forum
- 5 Laurentian Lanes

Best Film Screening Series

- 1 Cinema Politica
- 2 Trannavision
- 3 cELLEuloid
- 4 Minuit au Parc
- 5 Drunken Cinema

Best Comedy Venue

- 1 Bordel Comédie Club
- 2 Comedy Nest
- 3 Diving Bell Social Club
- 4 Le Terminal
- 5 Art Loft

Best Comedian

- 1 Tranna Wintour
- 2 Mike Ward
- 3 John St. Godard

- 4 Sugar Sammy
- 5 Akeem Hoyte-Charles

Best Comedy Night

- 1 Open Mike (Le Bordel)
- 2 Battle of Wits (Diving Bell Social Club)
- 3 Squad Laughs (La Plante)
- 4 Stand Back (Notre Dame des Quilles)
- 5 There's Something Funny Going On (Blue Dog)

Best Karaoke Bar

- 1 Pang Pang
- 2 Club Date
- 3 3 Minots
- 4 Notre Dames des Quilles
- 5 Bar le Cocktail

Best Drug

- 1 Marijuana
- 2 MDMA /Molly
- 3 Cocaine
- 4 Mushrooms
- 5 Ketamine

Best Drink

- 1 Beer
- 2 Gin & tonic
- 3 Bourbon/whiskey
- 4 Wine
- 5 Old-fashioned

Best Cocktail Bar

- 1 Atwater Cocktail Club
- 2 Coldroom
- 3 Le Mal Nécessaire
- 4 La Distillerie
- 5 Cloakroom



Music

Bud Rice is the king of the Music section this year, topping the Best Solo Act category and appearing in the Best Folk/Country and Best Singer-songwriter categories as well. Glam/pop eccentric Hubert Lenoir continues to thrill our readers, who voted him into the Freakiest Act and Most Pretentious categories — dubious distinctions to some, perhaps, but we love our weirdos here at *Cult MTL*. In terms of continuity, Arcade Fire remain at the top of Best Band (despite the fact that most of them don't live here anymore), Loud tops Best Hip Hop Act, Li'l Andy (recently seen playing live on the rooftop of Ursa with Martha Wainwright as part of POP Montreal's pandemic singalong series) continues his reign as Best Folk/Country Act and Kaytranada, who dropped his critically acclaimed second LP *Bubba* late last year, takes Best Electronic Act.



Solomon Krause-Imlach

"This is an amazing surprise — thanks to everyone who voted! When I used to visit Montreal before moving here, I would always grab the Best of MTL edition and thought all the artists were the coolest... honoured to be a part of it now! This city inspires me and I can't wait to keep releasing new music and videos leading up to my first full-length album in 2021 on Hot Tramp."—Maryze, Best Electronic Act #2

Best Band

- 1 Arcade Fire
- 2 Half Moon Run
- 3 The Damn Truth
- 4 Caveboy
- 5 Corridor

Best Solo Act

- 1 Bud Rice
- 2 Patrick Watson
- 3 Backxwash
- 4 Janette King
- 5 Shane Murphy

Freakiest Act

- 1 Hubert Lenoir
- 2 Screaming Demons
- 3 Big Sissy
- 4 Jean Leloup
- 5 Natasha Nebula

Most Pretentious Act

- 1 Arcade Fire
- 2 Hubert Lenoir
- 3 John Jacob Magistry
- 4 Lakes of Canada
- 5 Céline Dion

Heaviest Act

- 1 The Great Sabbatini
- 2 Mountain Dust
- 3 Godspeed You! Black Emperor
- 4 Voivod
- 5 Big Brave

Best Hip Hop Act

- 1 Loud
- 2 Backxwash
- 3 Alaclair Ensemble
- 4 Urban Science Brass Band
- 5 Dino Babydoll Luciano

Best Club DJ

- 1 Diskommander
- 2 Awwful
- 3 Frankie Teardrop
- 4 DJ Jeffany
- 5 Kaytranada

Best Electronic Act

- 1 Kaytranada
- 2 Maryze
- 3 Milk and Bone
- 4 Awwful
- 5 CRi

Best Folk/Country Act

- 1 Li'l Andy
- 2 Solstice
- 3 Bud Rice
- 4 Katie Moore
- 5 Sin & Swoon

Best Jazz Act

- 1 Dave Gossage Septet
- 2 Kalmunity
- 3 Dominique Fils-Aimé
- 4 Eric Hove
- 5 Urban Science Brass Band

Best Singer-song-writer

- 1 Patrick Watson
- 2 Storry
- 3 Bud Rice
- 4 Charlotte Cardin
- 5 Katie Moore

Best Busker

- 1 Graham Downey (aka bagpipe dude)
- 2 Dog mask violinist
- 3 Jorie
- 4 Spoonman
- 5 Big Daddy

Best Record Label

- 1 Stomp!
- 2 Constellation
- 3 Secret City
- 4 On a Roll
- 5 Dare to Care



"Black Lives Matter."—Backxwash, Best Solo Act #3, Best Hip Hop Act #2



Film & Arts

For those of you unfamiliar with #5 Best Film Hall, the premise is as follows: “When a debilitating sickness spreads across a long hotel hallway, a few scattered victims fight for survival, and try to escape from the dark narrow stretch of isolated carnage.” A little too real for 2020, perhaps, but this horror film by Francesco Giannini was released in early 2019, after all. It’s nice to see a woman in the Best Filmmaker Top 5 (Sophie Deraspe, director of *Antigone*, the #1 Best Film). Welcome to the Best Graffiti Artist/Crew Top 5, Ink Chemistry — you went straight to the top. And to all the festivals in the Top 5, and the Top 10, and all the rest that have been and will be affected by COVID-19: we love you, we miss you, we wish you the best of luck. Note that the Fringe Festival is going online this month, and that POP Montreal is streaming a mini-fest called Funhouse during the first weekend in June — POP’s proper five-day fest is still scheduled for September.



“WOW! I’m fucking honoured!” — Kelly Craig, Best Actor/Actress #4

Best Actor/Actress

- 1 Marc-André Grondin
- 2 Jay Baruchel
- 3 Évelyne Brochu
- 4 Kelly Craig
- 5 Tristan D. Lalla

Best Filmmaker

- 1 Xavier Dolan
- 2 Denis Villeneuve
- 3 Podz

Best Actor/Actress

- 4 Chris Bavota & Lee Paula Springer
- 5 Sophie Deraspe

Best Film of 2019–2020

- 1 *Antigone*
- 2 *Mafia Inc.*
- 3 *Dead Dicks*
- 4 *La femme de mon frère*
- 5 *Hall*

Best Theatre Company

- 1 Centaur
- 2 Black Theatre Workshop
- 3 Segal Centre
- 4 Théâtre du Nouveau Monde
- 5 House of Laureen

Best Play

- 1 *Mythic*
- 2 *J'aime Hydro*

Best Theatre Company

- 3 *Trapped in Elon’s Mansion*
- 4 *Are You There, Margaret?*
- It’s Me, Gahd*
- 5 *Late Company*

Best Dance Company

- 1 Les Grands Ballets Canadiens
- 2 Marie Chouinard
- 3 Les Ballets Jazz de Montréal



“We’re beyond thrilled to have *Dead Dicks* included in this list. It’s incredible when something you create is embraced by your hometown, especially since so many talented Montrealers helped make this weird little movie a reality.” — Chris Bavota and Lee Springer (Best Filmmaker #4), directors of *Dead Dicks* (Best Film #3, pictured)



Best Festivals



all photos by Cindy Lapere

- 4 La La La Human Steps
- 5 Helen Simard

Best Museum

- 1 Museum of Fine Arts
- 2 Musée d’art contemporain
- 3 McCord Museum
- 4 Canadian Centre for Architecture
- 5 Pointe-à-Callière

Best Gallery

- 1 Fondation Phi/Phi Centre
- 2 Arsenal
- 3 Station 16
- 4 Never Apart
- 5 BBAM!

Best Living Author

- 1 Heather O’Neill
- 2 Michelle Franklin
- 3 Sean Michaels
- 4 Dany Laferrière
- 5 David Goudreault

Best Cartoonist/ Comics Artist

- 1 Aislin
- 2 Michel Rabagliati
- 3 Rick Trembles
- 4 Sophie Labelle
- 5 Walter K. Scott

Best Video Game Company

- 1 Ubisoft
- 2 EA
- 3 Eidos

Best Fashion Designer

- 4 Behaviour Interactive
- 1 Jennifer Glasgow
- 2 Markantoine
- 3 Eliza Faulkner
- 4 Denis Gagnon
- 5 Marie Saint-Pierre

Best Graffiti Artist or Crew

- 1 Ink Chemistry

Best Festival

- 2 Miss Me
- 3 A Shop
- 4 K6A
- 5 Waxhead
- 1 Jazz Fest
- 2 Osheaga
- 3 POP Montreal
- 4 Just for Laughs
- 5 Fringe

Goods & Services

Internet Service Providers have fared well in recent months, along with all manner of grocery stores — too bad we don't have pharmacy and dépanneur categories (practically the only other spots we've been allowed to visit lately), but the reasons for their exclusion should be kind of obvious. Luckily retail stores and massage spots have been able to reopen recently, and hairdressers, tattoo artists and spas are coming back (if they choose to do so) this month. This is the first time we've ever included a Best Hotel category — interesting timing — and their reopening date remains unknown, as is the case for gyms. Rather than analyze ups and downs in these categories, this year we'll leave it at this: support local businesses!

Best Clothing Store (New)

- 1 Simons
- 2 Frank & Oak
- 3 Off the Hook
- 4 Zara
- 5 Jeans Jeans Jeans

Best Vintage Clothing Store

- 1 Eva B
- 2 Renaissance
- 3 Empire Exchange
- 4 Citizen Vintage
- 5 Annex Vintage

Best Hair Salon

- 1 Queen of the World
- 2 Freyja
- 3 Two Horses
- 4 Helmet
- 5 Unlisted

Best Barbershop

- 1 Barbier Belmont
- 2 Queen of the World
- 3 La Section
- 4 Freyja
- 5 Helmet

Best Tattoo Parlour

- 1 DFA Tattoos
- 2 Psych Ward
- 3 Two Horses
- 4 Bait & Schlang
- 5 Adrenaline

Best Tattoo Artist

- 1 Morning Gory (DFA Tattoos)
- 2 Kevin Ward (The Psych Ward)
- 3 Randy Nixon
- 4 Helmet
- 5 Unlisted

4 Gil Crocker (DFA Tattoos)

- 5 Angus Byers (DFA Tattoos)

Best Record Store (New)

- 1 Aux 33 Tours
- 2 Phonopolis
- 3 Le Vacarme
- 4 Cheap Thrills
- 5 Sunrise Records

Best Record Store (Used)

- 1 Cheap Thrills
- 2 Aux 33 Tours
- 3 Phonopolis
- 4 Encore Books & Records
- 5 Death of Vinyl

Best Musical Instrument Store

- 1 Steve's Music Store
- 2 Jimi's Music Store
- 3 Moog Audio
- 4 Archambault
- 5 Diplomate Musique

Best Internet Service Provider

- 1 Vidéotron
- 2 TekSavvy
- 3 Bell
- 4 Ebox
- 5 Fizz

Best Electronics Store

- 1 Best Buy
- 2 Addison Electronique
- 3 Moog Audio
- 4 Apple Store

Best Movie Theatre

- 1 Cinéma du Parc
- 2 Cineplex Forum
- 3 Cinéma Moderne
- 4 Dollar Cinema
- 5 Cinémas Guzzo

Best Bicycle Shop

- 1 514 BMX
- 2 C&L Cycles
- 3 Bikurious
- 4 Recycle Cycle
- 5 Bicycles McW (fka McWhinnies)

Best Bookstore (New)

- 1 Drawn & Quarterly
- 2 Indigo
- 3 Librairie Saint-Henri Books
- 5 Chapters

Best Bookstore (Used)

- 1 The Word
- 2 Encore
- 3 Cheap Thrills
- 4 S.W. Welch
- 5 L'Échange

Best Comic Book Store

- 1 Drawn & Quarterly
- 2 Crossover Comics
- 3 Librairie Planète BD
- 4 1,000,000 Comix
- 5 Millenium Comics

Best Smoke Shop

- 1 Prohibition
- 2 Utopia
- 3 Boutique Rock
- 4 Psychonaut
- 5 High Times

Best Gym

- 1 Econofitness
- 2 YMCA

3 Fit for Life

- 4 Gym St-Henri
- 5 B.Cycle

Best Yoga Studio

- 1 Modo (fka Moksha)
- 2 Naada
- 3 Enso
- 4 Yoga Club
- 5 Wanderlust

Best Spa

- 1 Bota Bota
- 2 Scandinave
- 3 Strom
- 4 Espace Nomade
- 5 Finlandais

Best Hotel

- 1 Ritz Carlton
- 2 William Gray
- 3 Fairmount Queen Elizabeth
- 4 Four Seasons
- 5 W

Best Health Food Store

- 1 Rachelle Bery
- 2 Marché Tau
- 3 Branche d'Olivier
- 4 Bio Terre
- 5 Loco

Best Kitsch / Antique Store

- 1 Kitsch à l'os... ou pas

2 Marché Underground

- 3 Kitsch'n Swell
- 4 Eva B
- 5 Marché aux puces St-Michel

Best Jewellery Store

- 1 Tiffany
- 2 Inchoo Bijoux
- 3 Birks
- 4 Freitag
- 5 Joel Mueller Design

Best Florist


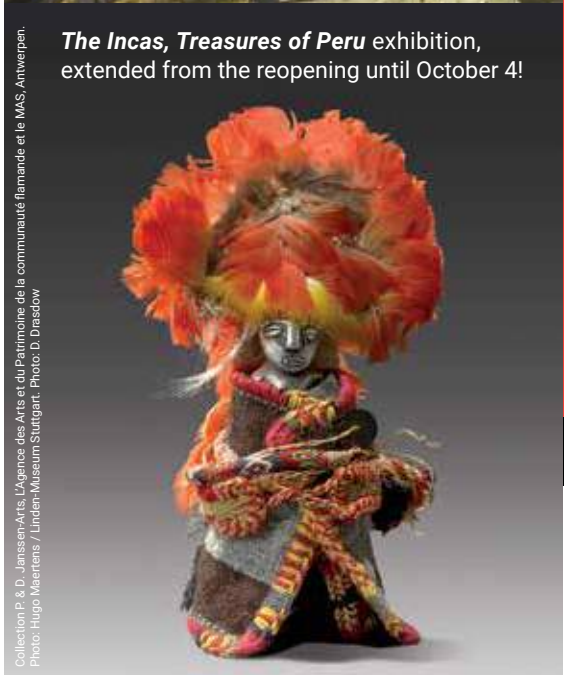



- 1 Dragon Flowers
- 2 Florateria
- 3 Westmount Florist

4 Binette et filles

- 5 Pourquoi Pas...fleurs

Best Massage Spot

- 1 Espace Nomad
- 2 Bota Bota
- 3 Spa Vert
- 4 Ovarium
- 5 Scandinave Spa



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— Eda Holmes, Artistic & Executive Director, Centaur Theatre Company



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Food & Drink

As usual our Food Editor Clayton Sandhu has written about your restaurant picks at the end of this issue, taking a slightly different approach this year: his editorial is titled Resto Rights instead of Resto Wrongs. Normally we wouldn't even include "cooking at home" in the Best Food Trend category, but right now it's more than a trend — it's the new normal. That said, we can all support our favourite restaurants as the pandemic shutdown continues by ordering in, at least once in a while, and/or by donating to crowd-funding campaigns and charitable organizations like Montreal Restaurant Workers Relief Fund and Rally for Restaurants. New to this section this year are Best Hotel Bar/Restaurant, which was topped by Four Seasons hotspot Marcus, and Best Afternoon Tea, which went to the ever-popular Mile End tearoom Cardinal. We cannot wait to eat out again. We D Montreal restaurants.



"What makes Damas a special restaurant is that it refuses to offer a merely 'regional' or a merely 'ethnic' dining experience — terms that still carry a Eurocentric weight and the latent racism that comes with it. Damas does, of course, offer a cuisine from a very specific time, place and tradition. But it does so with uncompromising ingredients, technique, and with a decor, service, and wine list to match. The chef-owner Fuad challenged the North American stereotype that Middle Eastern food = cheap kebabs, a vision that resulted in a singular restaurant revealing the sophistication and beauty of Syrian cuisine. An extravagant tasting menu with a wine pairing no longer belongs to European or a-territorial 'chef-driven' restaurants alone, and the city's food scene is richer, more diverse and representative for it." —Daniel Gillis, sommelier at Damas, Best Middle Eastern #1, Best Pricey Eats #2

Best New Food Trends

- 1 Veganism
- 2 Poke bowls
- 3 Food halls
- 4 Cooking at home
- 5 Ramen

Best Pub Grub

- 1 Burgundy Lion
- 2 Ye Olde Orchard
- 3 McKibbins
- 4 Bishop and Bagg
- 5 Brutopia

Best Hotel Bar or Restaurant

- 1 Marcus (Four Seasons)
- 2 Palm Court/Maison Boulud (Ritz Carlton)
- 3 Bar George (Mount Stephen)
- 4 Bartizen (W)
- 5 Maiolo (Le Meridien)

Best Cheap Eats

- 1 Nilufar
- 2 Boustan
- 3 Patati Patata
- 4 Green Spot
- 5 AA

Best Pricey Eats

- 1 Joe Beef
- 2 Damas
- 3 Montréal Plaza
- 4 Île Flottante
- 5 Le Bremner

Best Late Night Eats

- 1 La Banquise
- 2 Boustan
- 3 Chez Claudette
- 4 AA
- 5 Nouveau Palais

Best Breakfast/Brunch

- 1 Vieux Vélo
- 2 Arthurs Nosh Bar
- 3 L'Avenue
- 4 L'Oeufrier
- 5 Cosmos

Best Afternoon Tea

- 1 Cardinal Tea Room
- 2 Burgundy Lion
- 3 Ritz Carlton
- 4 Gryphon d'Or
- 5 Camellia Sinensis

Best Delivery Service

- 1 Uber Eats
- 2 Foodora (RIP)
- 3 Skip the Dishes
- 4 Golo
- 5 Door Dash

Best Food Truck

- 1 Grumman 78
- 2 Winneburger
- 3 Le Cheese
- 4 Mi Corazon
- 5 La Panthère Verte

Best African

- 1 Le Nil Bleu
- 2 Queen Sheeba
- 3 East Africa
- 4 La Khaima
- 5 Maquis Yasolo

Best Caribbean

- 1 Lloydie's
- 2 Agrikol
- 3 Boom J's
- 4 Caribbean Food Factory
- 5 Jardiin du Cari



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Best Chinese

- 1 Hong Mere
- 2 Maison VIP
- 3 Aunt Dai's
- 4 PM
- 5 Kam Fung

Best Russian /Eastern European

- 1 Euro Deli Batory
- 2 Stash Café
- 3 Café Baba Yaga
- 4 La Caverne Russe
- 5 Budapest Roma

Best French

- 1 L'Express
- 2 Leméac
- 3 Quartier Général
- 4 Taverne sur le Square
- 5 Monarque

Best Greek

- 1 Milos
- 2 Marven's
- 3 Marathon Souvlaki
- 4 Arahova
- 5 Villa du Souvlaki

Best Indian

- 1 Bombay Mahal
- 2 Star of India
- 3 Pushap
- 4 Thali
- 5 Chand Palace

Best Italian

- 1 Elena
- 2 Pasta Casareccia
- 3 Gema
- 4 Impasto
- 5 Bottega

Best Japanese

- 1 Kazu
- 2 Jun I
- 3 Noren
- 4 Nozy
- 5 Otto Yakitori

Best Korean

- 1 GaNaDaRa
- 2 Mon Ami
- 3 Omma
- 4 Chez Bong
- 5 Seoul Chako

Best Latin-American

- 1 Arepera du Plateau
- 2 Bocadillo
- 3 La Chilenita
- 4 El Chalateco
- 5 Los Planes

Best Mexican

- 1 El Rey del Taco
- 2 Tacos Frida
- 3 La Capital Tacos
- 4 Escondite
- 5 Ta Chido

Best Middle Eastern

- 1 Damas
- 2 Boustan
- 3 Alep/Le Petit Alep
- 4 Sumac
- 5 Omnivore

Best Spanish

- 1 Tapeo
- 2 La Sala Rosa
- 3 Iberica
- 4 Club Espagnol
- 5 Alma

Best Thai

- 1 Épicerie Pumpui
- 2 Bangkok
- 3 Thai Express
- 4 Thaïlande
- 5 Chu Chai

Best Portuguese

- 1 Romados
- 2 Ma Poule Mouillée
- 3 Chez Doval
- 4 Piri Piri
- 5 Jano

Best Vietnamese

- 1 Pho Tay Ho
- 2 Pho Bang New York
- 3 Pho Lien
- 4 TRAN Cantine Vietnamienne
- 5 Le Red Tiger

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"I feel completely humbled to be considered one of Montreal's Best Chefs. I am so grateful that people took the time and effort to submit their votes. Truly, thank you, everyone, I am happy to know that my work and my ideas are being appreciated! Each of these chefs worked [tirelessly] to get to where they are and you can see their passion come through in their food. To the chefs who ranked in the top 10 and those who haven't, we recognize you and we thank you for all the hard work you put into the craft. There isn't just one model for making food and being passionate about it, so congratulations to you all."

—Chantry Yen, Best Chef #2



"The restaurant industry is so much work, it's very nerve-racking to go on your own, especially when there are no big backers. It's just me and my brother, in this case, so it's been very fruitful and it's allowed us to become comfortable in our own space. [Winning Best New Restaurant] is a wonderful surprise, honestly. In these times, something like this really makes our year."

—Ari Schor of Beba, Best New Restaurant #1

Best Bagel

- 1 St-Viateur
- 2 Fairmount
- 3 Bagel St-Lo
- 4 Ville-Émard Bagels
- 5 Beaubien Bagels

Best Donuts

- 1 Léch  Desserts
- 2 Krispy Kreme
- 3 Mr Puffs
- 4 Trou de Beigne
- 5 Tim Hortons

Best Fish and Chips

- 1 Brit & Chips
- 2 Comptoir 21
- 3 Burgundy Lion
- 4 Ad Hoc
- 5 Parliament Pub & Parlour

Best Pad Thai

- 1 Pumpui
- 2 Thai Express
- 3 Bangkok
- 4 Tampopo
- 5 Pamika

Best Ribs

- 1 Blackstrap BBQ
- 2 B ton Rouge
- 3 Bar B Barn
- 4 Le Boucan
- 5 Rubs

Best Smoked Meat

- 1 Schwartz's
- 2 The Main
- 3 Smoke Meat Pete
- 4 Snowdon Deli
- 5 Lester's

Best Taco

- 1 Tacos Frida
- 2 La Capital Tacos
- 3 El Rey Del Taco
- 4 Escondite
- 5 Grumman 78

**Best Craft/
Microbrew Beer**

- 1 Dieu du Ciel
- 2 Brutopia
- 3 4 Origines
- 4 Messor m Bracitorium
- 5 Isle de Garde

- 4 Saint-Henri
- 5 Melk

**Best Coffee
(Beverage)**

- 1 Dispatch
- 2 Olimpico
- 3 Myriade
- 4 Saint-Henri
- 5 Melk

- 3 Copette & Co.

- 4 Bleu et persill 

- 5 Qui lait cru?

Best Ice Cream

- 1 Kem Coba
- 2 Dalla Rose
- 3 Ca Lem
- 4 La Diperie
- 5 Ripples

Best Chicken

- 1 Chalet BBQ
- 2 Romados
- 3 Ma Poule Mouill e
- 4 C te-Saint-Luc BBQ
- 5 St-Hubert

Best Dumplings

- 1 Qing Hua
- 2 Har Bin
- 3 Sammy Soup Dumpling
- 4 Mademoiselle Dumpling
- 5 Mei Wei

Best Fries

- 1 Frites Alors
- 2 Patati Patata
- 3 McDonald's
- 4 Lafleur
- 5 La Belle Province

Best Pizza

- 1 Adamo
- 2 Elena
- 3 No. 900
- 4 Pizza Bouquet 31
- 4 Gema 29

Best Sandwich

- 1 Clarke Caf 
- 2 D panneur le Pick-Up
- 3 Santropol
- 4 Schwartz's
- 5 Aux Vivres

Best Steak

- 1 Moishes
- 2 The Keg
- 3 Gibbys
- 4 Joe Beef
- 5 L'Express

Best Ramen

- 1 Kinton Ramen
- 2 Yokato Yokabai
- 3 Tsukuyomi
- 4 Umami Ramen
- 5 Ichifuku

Best Bakery

- 1 Guillaume
- 2 Automne
- 3 Hof Kelsten
- 4 Arhoma
- 5 Sweet Lee's

Best Teahouse

- 1 Cardinal Tea Room
- 2 Camellia Sinensis
- 3 Cha Noir
- 4 Gryphon d'Or
- 5 Rosie-Lanoi

**Best Chocolate /
Sweets**

- 1 Juliette et chocolat
- 2 Chlo 
- 3 Chocolats favoris
- 4 Genevi ve Grandbois
- 5 Lecavalier Petrone

Best Burger

- 1 Uniburger
- 2 Notre-Boeuf-de-Gr ce
- 3 Nouveau Palais
- 4 Burger de Ville
- 5 Chez Tousignant

Best Falafel

- 1 Falafel Yoni
- 2 La Panth re Verte
- 3 Falafel Saint-Jacques
- 4 Nilufar
- 5 Boustan

Best Hot Dog

- 1 Lafleur
- 2 La Belle Province
- 3 Montreal Pool Room
- 4 Dirty Dogs
- 5 Decarie Hot Dog

Best Poutine

- 1 La Banquise
- 2 Poutineville
- 3 Patati Patata
- 4 Chez Claudette
- 5 La Belle Province

Best Shish Taouk

- 1 Boustan
- 2 Amir
- 3 Omnivore
- 4 Sumac
- 5 Basha

Best Sushi

- 1 Sushi Momo
- 2 Park
- 3 Jun I
- 4 Le Kioko
- 5 Saint Sushi

Best Vegetarian

- 1 Aux Vivres
- 2 LOV
- 3 Lola Rosa
- 4 La Panth re Verte
- 5 Sushi Momo

Best Caf  (Place)

- 1 Olimpico
- 2 Dispatch
- 3 Myriade

Best Fromagerie

- 1 Hamel
- 2 Atwater



"Montreal is a unique city, especially when it comes to food. I've been working in the restaurant business since I was a kid so I've seen places come and go, I've seen all the fads, I've seen all the places that cater to the trends. From the beginning, we were on this path to be the most authentic possible. In 1985 we were one of the first to make high-quality pasta in Montreal. We sort of educated the people and now people know what good food is."—Mauro Petraccone of Pasta Casareccia, Best Italian #2

Best Butcher

- 1 Boucherie Lawrence
- 2 Chez Vito
- 3 Pascal le Boucher
- 4 Zinman
- 5 Maître Boucher

Best Vegetable / Fruit Store

- 1 Marché Jean-Talon
- 2 Fruiterie Mile-End
- 3 PA
- 4 Sami Fruits
- 5 Adonis

Best Organic Produce Store

- 1 PA Nature
- 2 Rachelle-Béry
- 3 Tau
- 4 Branche d'Olivier
- 5 Lufa Farms

Best Fishmonger

- 1 La Mer
- 2 Falero
- 3 Shamrock
- 4 Waldman's
- 5 Poissonnerie Atwater



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BY CLAYTON SANDHU

Holy hell, what a year — and I could still be saying that even if COVID-19 never happened.

If 2020 has taught us anything so far, it's to expect the unexpected, especially when the unexpected is an unprecedented catastrophe. As is done every year, I'm going to do my best to comment on the results of this year's Best of MTL Food section in what we like to call the annual Resto Wrongs. This year, however, is a bit tricky, besides the fact that nobody has eaten at a restaurant for the better part of three months, COVID-19 has seriously called into question the continued existence of many of the restaurants in this survey. While it's true that I can be very critical when it comes to talking restaurants, I am first and foremost a staunch supporter of the restaurant industry — I owe so much of what I have in life to working in our restaurant scene. So while I would like nothing more than to take a strip off the tasteless troglodytes who think McDonald's coffee is some of the best in town, the results of this year's survey (barring a few very weird submissions) actually link up with my personal preferences pretty well.

Absence makes the heart grow fonder, as they say. I suppose it only took a world-wide mandatory lockdown to remind Montrealers of the finer things our city has to offer. So with that in mind, I'm going to ditch the nit-picky criticism for this year and focus on what you got right.

Let's start at the top. This year saw Chanthy Yen skyrocket to #2 in the Best Chef category behind the perennial first

placing Danny Smiles. Remember last year's straight-white-male dominated list? Well, the status quo is being shaken up in no small part by Chanthy and chefs like him. The Parliament and Cold Room food director cut his teeth at Fantôme, ran the short-lived but popular restaurant Fieldstone and is currently running a Cambodian take-out operation out of Parliament. Emma Cardarelli also ranked in the Top 10 this year and while more women and more chefs of colour ought to be on this list, it's a noted improvement from last year. Somewhat bizarrely is the #4 ranking of Dino Babydoll Luciano, who for many will be an unfamiliar name. Luciano, a New York City transplant, is freshly arrived in Montreal and his cooking background is almost unilaterally tied to his 2017 MasterChef U.S. win — the only vegan chef to ever do so. Luciano, today, is best known for his Italian inspired vegan pop-ups and works in Montreal as a private chef. His appearance on this list comes as a surprise to me, but hey, you guys voted him in.

Beba was the hands-down favourite to win Best New Restaurant this year and what a well-deserved win it is. After six years of running the kitchen at Liverpool House, Ari Schor parted ways with the Joe Beef team to open a small Argentinian restaurant with his brother. The result has been exceptional and an intimate introduction to the harmonious blend of Italian and Spanish influences of Argentine cooking that has long been overshadowed by the Argentinian Steakhouse. Having been open for less than a year, Beba's rise to the top is about as meteoric as you can get. If you haven't had the chance to taste their food, Ari and his team recently launched a take-out menu alongside some hard to come-by wines.

Damas, which continues its reign as best Middle Eastern restaurant, also jumped up a few spots in the Pricey Eats

(read: fine dining) category falling behind only Montreal's favourite son, Joe Beef. A lot has been said about "ethnic" food and its struggle to find its acceptance in the world of fine dining. In my opinion, Damas has excelled in all aspects of fine dining, from professionalism in service, to finely executed cuisine, to an exceptionally curated wine program (the restaurant employs two full-time sommeliers) for years. Not to mention the ornately decorated room that recalls the opulence of that old-world style of restoration seldom seen these days. It's been up there for me for years, but it seems as though Damas has officially arrived.

St-Viateur Bagels retain their spot on the top and the Uniburger still reigns supreme, and I for one am happy to see some non-Neapolitan pizza places like Adamo and Pizza Bouquet firmly stake a claim for some of the best pizza in town. Perhaps most unlikely of all, considering the amount of Italian (and Italian adjacent) restaurants opened in the last year, is that an old NDG stand-by, Pasta Casareccia, found its way to second place amongst the Best Italian restaurants in the city, reinforcing that age-old Italian logic that the old ways are often the best ways.

While the future of the restaurant scene is wholly unclear, it still feels so nice to reflect on those restaurants that mean the most to us. Many years from now we'll look back on this time and we'll reflect on the importance of some restaurants, the ingenuity of others and the utter trivialness of attempting to rank food and restaurants as if taste were objective. I'm choosing to look at this year's list differently: instead of thinking of it like a ranking system, I'll think of it more like an extremely thorough black book — a take-out directory for the ages.



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