



NOVEMBER 2020 • Vol. 9 No. 3 • CULTMTL.COM

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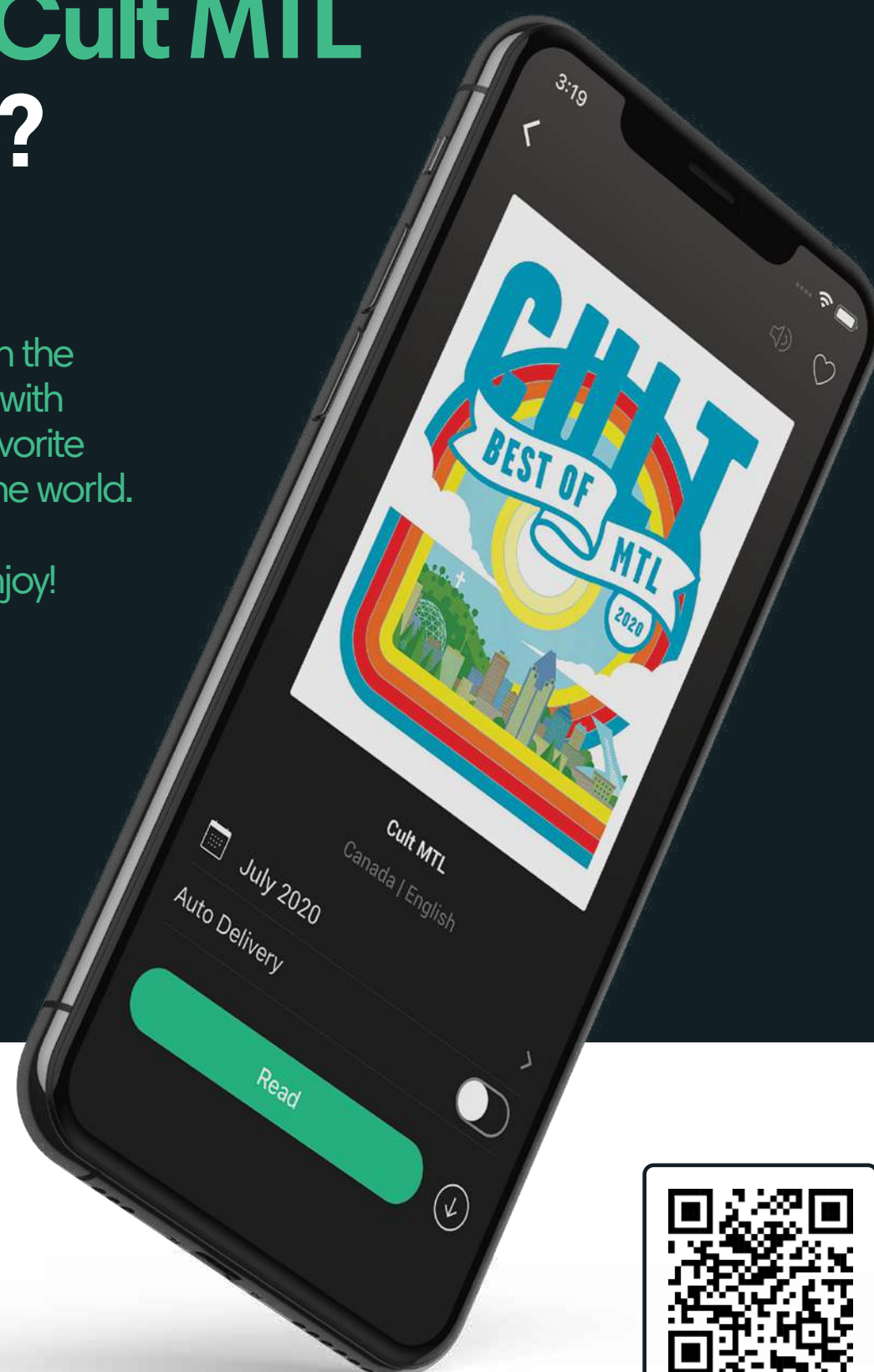
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Fuck you Trump.
Illustration by Dan Buller

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city

A win and a failure

BY TOULA DRIMONIS

I am writing this column while all signs are pointing to Joe Biden winning the 2020 U.S. election. The Dems have won Michigan, some media outlets have called Arizona for Biden as well and it appears quite likely that Nevada will follow.

Unlike 2016, I am extremely stoic this time around. Admittedly nervous, but resigned to letting democracy — as convoluted, messy, and often disappointing as it has been lately — take its course. How stoic? When I realized on election night that it was impossible they would call it that evening, I went to bed at 11 p.m. and slept like a baby.

I woke up at 6 a.m. and immediately reached for my phone, hoping for something definite. Donald Trump was already “declaring” victory, even though votes hadn’t been counted in key states and mail-in-ballots (favouring the Democrats) could be counted well into Friday. Again, I remained calm. I went about my business and I urged others to do so as well.

When Trump issued irresponsible statements, implying that mail-in ballots now being counted (ironically, because Republicans blocked laws that would have allowed the counting to begin earlier) was “fraud” and “stealing the election,” I reminded my friends that counting all the votes is *literally* how democracy works. I shared playwright Tom Stoppard’s line: “It’s not the voting that’s democracy, it’s the counting.” I let them count. And they did, and the more ballots they counted, the more Biden’s numbers went up.

Eventually, those initial numbers in favour of Trump made room for more numbers in favour of Biden to start trickling in. It was close, but not that close anymore. Despite Trump’s fallacious tweets (so many that CNN reporter Daniel Dale, who’s been relentlessly fact-checking Trump for years, had to resort to tweeting out a resigned, “Almost everything the President is saying is wrong”), the writing was slowly appearing on the wall. Biden had received the most votes for a presidential candidate in U.S. history and a clear majority in the popular vote by a significant margin.

2016 TRAUMATIZED ME

I’m still traumatized by the 2016 election. As a women’s rights advocate and an ardent feminist, I had pinned so many of my hopes on watching a female president finally be sworn in. I wanted to see history be made. I also couldn’t fathom that such an unintelligent, unrefined and incompetent man, a man with so much questionable history and conduct, a man with such visible disdain for minorities, immigrants and women, a man prone to tantrums and narcissism, who acted like a thug on the podium and showed none of the grace and the tact of his predecessor, could even come close to the presidency.

I remember staying up late, desperately hoping that Hillary Clinton would manage to pull a late-night upset, only to wake up in disbelief to a world where the U.S. had voted for a misogynist, racist, possible rapist, a grifter of the



Aaron Kittingridge

highest order who cared little about decorum and even less about values. It was a brutal wake-up call. I knew women’s reproductive rights, human rights, the civil rights of immigrants, migrants and BIPOC Americans were in danger. I knew he would inflame racial tension, class warfare and bigotry. I knew that, backed by ultra-religious Mike Pence, he would attempt to decimate access to abortion and discriminate against the LGBTQ community.

A DEEPLY POLARIZING FIGURE

Nothing that has transpired in the past four years has made me change my mind about Donald Trump and his presidency. He has proven to be exactly who I feared him to be. A dangerous man who has polarized and divided a country. A man consistently against raising the minimum wage, expanding health care for low-income families, protecting the Affordable Care Act and any attempts at environmental legislation. An unempathetic man who supported deporting undocumented children, separating migrant families and keeping kids in cages.

Then COVID-19 struck, and I couldn’t think of a worse leader at the helm of a country because this unprecedented crisis required both compassion and competence, two things he was in short supply of. Close to a quarter of a million Americans have now perished because of Trump’s inability to handle a deadly pandemic the way it needed to be handled. Cases soared while he denied its existence, then downplayed its severity, then tried to discredit scientists, and finally blamed everyone but him for his abject failures. His popularity started to plummet.

SOME GOOD NEWS AND SOME BAD NEWS

First the good news. Never in the history of the U.S. have so many Americans voted in an election. That’s good for democracy. Democracy requires participation to work effectively. More than 75 million Americans cast a vote against an incumbent president. Even with COVID-19, even with the Trump machine’s misinformation and attempts to discredit the media reporting and the electoral process itself, and even with a Democratic candidate many didn’t consider up for the job, they came out, they lined up (sometimes for hours) and they voted. Biden broke the record for the most votes ever received by a presidential candidate. That’s significant.

Now the bad news. After four years of Trump, the fact that a resounding and clear majority of Americans didn’t outright reject him and his policies and achieve a clear win

for Biden is, itself, dispiriting. The fact that this race has been *this* close, *this* much of a nail-biter, *this* much of a coin-toss, *this* much of an unknown is a colossal failure of its own. A failure of epic proportions that will require some serious soul-searching from the Democratic party about the chances they are willing to take and who they consider to be electable. As for the Republicans, this time around, those who voted for Trump knew exactly who they voted for. And they voted for him anyway. They boarded up business storefronts and stocked up on guns and ammunition and cast a vote for four more years of chaos. That’s a legacy they will have to reckon with.

A SYMPTOM, NOT THE PROBLEM

Like Buzzfeed’s Scaachi Koul wrote, “What does it mean that more than 68 million Americans voted to keep the status quo of the last four years?” What does it mean that millions of Americans looked at what this man has done and said and decided they wanted four more years of that? I’m not sure. But I know it reveals a lot of things about the United States, of which Trump is only a symptom.

White supremacy, racism, American exceptionalism, individualism, homophobia, misogyny... None of those will disappear just because Biden will take over the White House. There is, however, something terribly depressing about the knowledge that Trump has unleashed onto the country, or perhaps allowed to manifest, the kind of hate, petty selfishness and self-absorbed narcissism that define him as an individual. He’s normalized what should have never ever been acceptable.

How does one retract that kind of ugliness? How does one put the toothpaste of Trumpism back in the tube when it’s already squeezed out all over the place and made a terrible mess of things? How does the next candidate conduct themselves with decorum and dignity when Trump has shown them that, not only do thuggery and outright lies not get punished, not get repudiated, but sometimes they help win the race?

I don’t know what the next few months hold. The Trump campaign has already requested a recount in Wisconsin, and everything points to Trump not leaving the White House without a fight. And knowing him, it will be a dirty one.

But for now, I am breathing a sigh of relief. Upon learning that he won Michigan, Biden’s first order of business was to give a speech where he stated that the presidency, itself, “is not a partisan institution,” but “the one office in the nation that represents everyone and it demands a duty of care for all Americans.” That already feels like a huge improvement.

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NOV 24, TUESDAY | 7 PM **NEW READS**

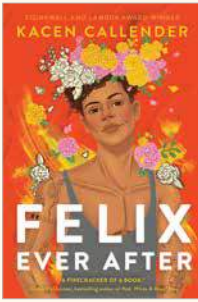
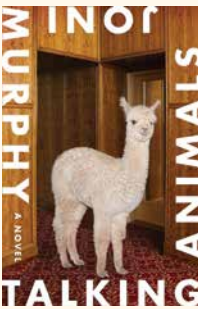
Talking Animals by Joni Murphy

NOV 25, WEDNESDAY | 7 PM **GRAPHIC NOVEL**

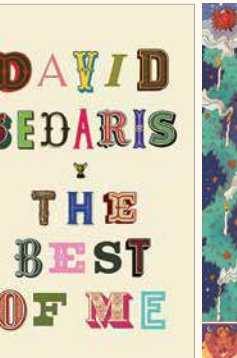
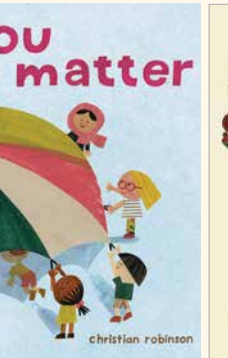
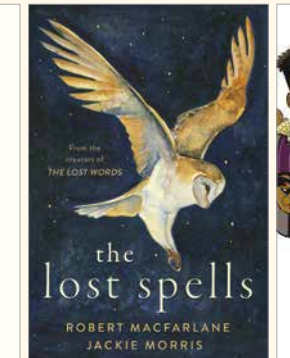
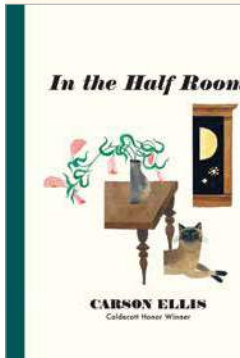
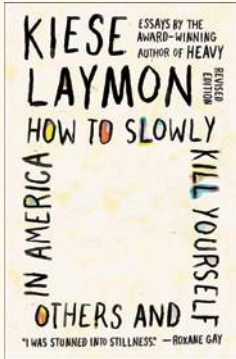
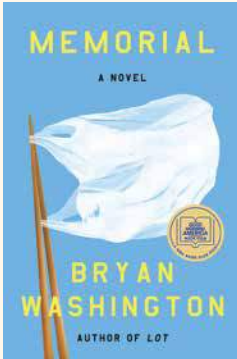
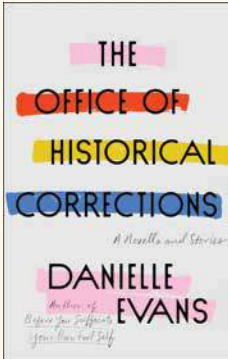
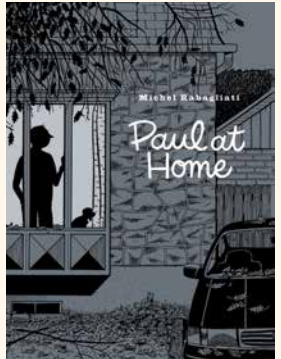
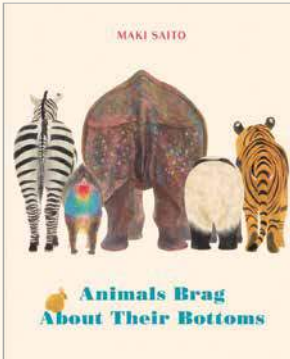
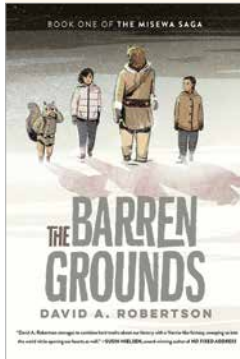
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NOV 27, FRIDAY | 6 PM **TEEN BOOK**

Felix Ever After by Kacen Callender



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Keep calm and get along



When you can't go anywhere

BY DR. RAMI NIJJAR AND ERIN MACLEOD

We are moving into a typical Montreal winter, but this year the cold weather and the dark can't be combated by connecting with each other at cozy gatherings, whether at home or out and about. Many folks dread the winter at the best of times, but this year can't help but be different.

As we enter yet another month of second-wave lockdown and it starts getting so much darker so much earlier, it's hard not to get worried about how we are all going to cope — especially when the springtime is so much further off than it was the first time around.

With no COVID vaccine in sight and cases spiking around the world, social distancing is most likely going to be the way it is for the coming months, and this raises some mental health concerns. As everyone's Netflix queue starts getting a little short, it's hard not to get a little down. Seasonal affective disorder is a real thing, and that's when we aren't dealing with the coronavirus. But there are things that we can do beyond hope for the next *Tiger King*.

Dealing with the types of worries and anxieties that people experience outside of pandemics, psychology is something that helps us understand how our minds respond to external stimuli and why we feel the way we do. Psychology also helps us to figure out what to do about it. And understanding what we *can* do is important when it seems that there is so much that we can't.

As inherently social creatures, when we are isolated, the stress levels in our bodies rise. In biological terms, the stress (aka fight or flight) hormone cortisol shoots up. Essentially, our nervous system responds as if we are in direct threat of something horrible happening — even if that is not actually the case — and when our nervous system is consistently activated like this, we end up feeling anxious and depressed, not to mention lowering our immune function. But there is good news: if we can recognize that we are stressed and prioritize nurturing ourselves and loved ones, we can mitigate the impact of social isolation.

What often helps us are things that soothe our nervous system and increase the “tend and befriend” hormone called oxytocin. Often oxytocin is released in moments where we feel present, connected and cared for — either by ourselves or by others.

When we are by ourselves, it can be hard to stay present (i.e. out of our heads) and grounded; and it is the same when we are around those we are closest to (our families/partners), because they are so familiar to us that we habituate (get used to) them being around and forget to actually put in the work to be present with one another and reduce stress in our relationships.

Thinking about things in this biological way helps us to understand why it's so hard to be apart from our friends and loved ones right now, and why the simple act of being



When you've watched everything

around other people is something that helps to manage stress.

But different people have different issues. Whether it is dealing with single life and living alone, managing friendships, navigating being a couple or negotiating family issues, the pandemic has and continues to wreak havoc on us. So we need to consider what we might do to reduce that stress, up that magic oxytocin and deal with what's to come as the temperature drops.

Whether we are alone, or in a household with family or significant others, it is important to have a plan to keep grounded, calm and secure through isolation and uncertainty. By integrating a few important habits, we can build resilience in our relationships with ourselves and with others.

And there are specific things that help to reduce stress: routine and consistency, touch, feeling seen and heard, and something called “co-regulating.” This is relevant to people in relationships, be they together or apart. A definition of “regulation” is something that helps bring our stress levels down to the point that we don't go to dark places in our minds or engage in unhealthy behaviours. The anxiety, helplessness, insecurity and anger that seems omnipresent right now is what can be termed an experience of dysregulation.

When one person in a couple or a family experiences this, the other person or people can work to express calm — to assist in regulation. If you are alone and you become dysregulated, you can try to find a place in your body that feels calm and put attention there until your nervous system can find a balance.

Another thing that can assist in dealing with the stress of social distancing is, of course, a dose of oxytocin — and this is possible alone or together. Some things that increase oxytocin include the following:

- Touching (hugs, cuddles, self massage)
- Sex (with self or other)
- Singing
- Engaging in creative outlets
- Gentle movement (yoga/dance)
- Warm, soothing vocalizations (calm, present, nurturing conversations)
- Expressing affection verbally or with gestures
- Listening to music
- Doing things as a group (trivia, online classes, meditation groups, etc.)
- Meditating — loving kindness meditation in particular
- Active listening
- Mindful eating/cooking together
- Pet your dog/cat



When you've done your hair for the 100th time

- Doing something nice for someone

- Hot baths

Whether couples, single or part of a family with children, you can use these tips to help build a plan for how you're going to stay healthy and sane throughout the winter. Delve into a creative project, have singalongs with your children, prioritize sex, or at least skin on skin touching, express gratitude towards your personal traits and those of folks around you, call up your bff and have a date to stretch together on video chat in the mornings, join a Mindful Self Compassion group or a meditation group that practises loving kindness. These are simple things, but they make the world of difference when it comes to our mental and physical health and wellbeing.

One way to manage stress in the household is to know what everyone's signs and symptoms of stress are and to make a plan for how to regulate when these states arise (either self-regulate or co-regulate). Based on upbringing and life experience, when our stress levels rise to a certain height, we will engage in negative thought patterns (i.e. mistrust of others, dwelling on the past, feeling of anxiety/anger, engaging in stress behaviors such as eating, substance use, smoking, cleaning, picking fights). It is so helpful for us and those around us to know how to tell when we are going into “dark places” so that we can up the nurturing behaviours and bring ourselves back.

It is important to note that problem-solving will not work when stress levels are high, as it's using logic to approach something that is inherently emotional. It's not surprising that you're unlikely to solve problems when experiencing high levels of emotion. It simply will not work. On the contrary, it will likely worsen the emotional state. Instead, we need to do things that calm the nervous system — soothing touch, warm vocalizations, getting calm and relaxed and just listening. It is valuable to think of it less as an issue to be fixed and rather as a stress wave that you're riding out.

Think of it this way: we comfort a child when they have the flu not because it will make them feel better but because they feel bad. This is what is key: we need to enhance nurturing and caring behaviour during a hard time, and that hard time is RIGHT NOW. This isn't because our actions will make the hard time stop — make the pandemic go away or magically make it possible for us to go out and hug everyone we've ever loved — but because this is necessary. It will help us live through this stress and build a degree of resilience.

It seems difficult to think that the pandemic will eventually end, but it will, and these techniques will still be useful. And we'll be darned well practiced.

Dr. Rami Nijjar is a psychologist, sex and relationship expert and director of the Resilience Psychotherapy clinic who has used these tips to keep her and her loved ones sane through the pandemic.

Erin MacLeod is a writer and teacher who is trying to follow Rami's fantastic advice while struggling to make CEGEP education work online.

For more tips on creating resilience in your relationships, you can download Rami's manual here resiliencepsychotherapy.com/couplesmanual or connect to resiliencepsychotherapy.com.

:the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

The month of October saw a true professional and brilliant athlete depart to Vancouver. Montreal Impact's keeper Evan Bush was traded to the Vancouver Whitecaps in exchange for a third-round pick in the 2021 MLS SuperDraft.

Bush joins fellow Impact alumni Marc Dos Santos, currently the Whitecaps head coach, who coached the Impact from 2009 to 2011. Evan, a GOAL Initiatives Foundation ambassador, was an original member of the Montreal franchise. The 34-year-old American made 176 starts for the club from 2012 through 2019. He posted a 64–78–34 record with 40 shutouts and 562 saves.

On the topic of Vancouver, the end of October also saw Mr. Canadian Soccer himself Alphonso Davies suffer a serious right ankle injury, taking him out of action for six to eight weeks.

AD19 was in tears as he was helped off the pitch. Everyone around the world was sending him well wishes for a speedy recovery. He responded,

“Thanks to everyone for the kind messages. I will be back stronger, just a bump in the road.” Full class!

Queensboro FC (QBFC) is the first-ever professional men's soccer team in Queens, New York. International football superstar David Villa, who played in NYC, is part of the ownership group. The club will start playing in the 2022 season of the USL Championship. The club will use a USL Academy team in the 2021 season to establish their footing and set some foundations for the 2022 season. The club says Queens is often called the “diversity capital of the world,” and is home to over two million residents, 150 nationalities and 130 languages across more than 90 distinct neighbourhoods and 100 square miles. (Sounds a lot like Montreal to me!) Queensboro FC will have a unique stadium of their own. From the club's website: “Queensboro FC stands for more than sports, it is a movement for unifying people across the world.”

The English Premier League, which has seen six or so games played, sees Everton at the top of the standings and Manchester United is 16th out of 20 teams. This is just the start, but as of Nov. 1, the season is very entertaining!

The transfer window closed in October, with a few big names moving into England, including Manchester United acquiring Edinson Cavani, the Uruguayan legend arriving as a free agent after leaving French giants PSG. Chelsea FC spent a small fortune bringing in some big players, including: Timo Werner from RB Leipzig, Kai

Havertz from Bayer Leverkusen, Hakim Ziyech from Ajax, Ben Chilwell from Leicester and Thiago Silva from PSG.

Other moves from last year's champions Liverpool saw them adding Ki-Jana Hoever from Wolves and Dejan Lovren from Zenit, St. Petersburg, to name a few. The league is stacked and continues its stranglehold on the title of being the best football league on the planet.

From the side of culture, the game has never been stronger. A perfect example is what Humanrace creative director Adidas artist and collaborator Pharrell Williams just did with the launch of a new footie jersey collection with some of the world's top football clubs under the Adidas brand. From Adidas: “Humanrace FC brings together the clubs for the first time in a shared celebration of the human spirit. Pharrell and the Adidas design team's joint ambition was to demonstrate football is for everyone and the human race at its best — uniting together while celebrating our differences.” This is exactly what the beautiful game is all about!

NB: As of press time, Montreal has a spot in the MLS playoffs but it's not secured with two games left to play. Oh yeah! And arguably the biggest sports star in the world, CR7 himself, contracted COVID and had to miss out on a big champion's league match against arguably the other biggest sports star in the world, Leo Messi and his club FC Barcelona.

(FOOTY SAYING)

“Talent without working hard is nothing.”
— Cristiano Ronaldo

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SOUNDBITES

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:rant line™

THIS WEEK: Language police, QAnon!

PLUS: Bobby Orr, St-Denis and COVID failures!!

“edited” by AL SOUTH

M Bobby Orr. Bobby fucking Orr. Bobby fucking Bobby Orr. [BLEEP!]

M All right, so the RINKS are going to be open. Great! Oh but wait, there will not be any HOCKEY allowed. On the hockey rink! Okay, is there a big difference between skating around in circles in free skating and playing hockey on an outdoor rink? I don't think so. Most of the people playing outdoor hockey are just skating around in circles anyway! I don't see the difference in terms of contact. And also, how are they going to do this? Will there be guards there to stop you from bringing your hockey stick onto the hockey rink? Or will you be allowed to bring your stick onto the rink just as long as you don't get into a game? Just as long as you just skate around in circles—like you would probably be doing in a game anyway! You see what I mean? I don't think they thought this through. [BLEEP!]

F Hi, well I just heard that the Legault government is going to put \$5-million into the Office de la Langue Française so that they can run around town looking for BAD WORDS like ESPRESSO. Oh my God, are they out of their minds? Is there nothing better that they can think of to do with \$5-million? Anyway, this guy MARTIN says it better than I can, check it out on YouTube. It's called, “Are You Serious, OQLF!?” [BLEEP!]

F Hey, so Canada's plan to ban SINGLE-USE PLASTICS — you must be kidding me! Their BOLD PLAN is to ban straws, forks and six-pack rings by the end of NEXT YEAR? What about all the other unrecyclable plastic packaging and bottles that fill our stores? [BLEEP!]

M Hello Rant Line™. I just want to say that I tried to download the COVID APP as suggested by the government. I happen to have a relatively recent iPhone, but it tells me the app's not compatible with my phone's IOS. What the fuck? For my mother, it's worse — she does not have a recent iPhone, she has an iPhone 6 — and the app will not work at all on the iPhone 6. It won't take the IOS. Our family got her this phone, it's all she needs, it works perfectly well for her — but the app won't work. And you know, she can't be the only older person in this city who has an older phone. Couldn't they have thought of this when they were coming up with the app? [BLEEP!]

M RIP EDDIE. [BLEEP!]

F I just got an Amazon delivery, or I should probably say an Amazon product THROWN on the front porch, and the guy was driving a beat-up van from like the '90s and it looked like his other job was SUR LE B.S. No wonder they're making record profits. [BLEEP!]

M Hello, this is about these people demonstrating because they don't want to wear MASKS. They don't want to social-distance, they think it is all a HOAX. They were out there today, there were thousands of them. They think it is all a conspiracy, they think it is all bullshit. Look, I know Quebec is SPECIAL, but I did not know we had that many conspiracy theorists. Is this QAnon? Is this where they are getting it? Is this what they are seeing on Facebook and Twitter?

I heard that there are radio stations or podcasts that are also feeding them this bullshit but I have never heard of these stations or listened to them. For sure there is nothing I see or hear that would make me get out and scream that my rights are being STOMPED on or that it is all a big PLOT. But one thing, I did see a lot of Quebec flags out there waving around — maybe these are NATIONALISTS looking for something to do? I don't know, would somebody please ENLIGHTEN me? [BLEEP!]

M Yeah hi, this is a rant responding to the previous rant saying that ST-DENIS STREET is DEAD and that's why there's a fucking bike lane now. Listen, the bike lane, it's fine, no objections to that. But St-Denis is dead because Project fucking Montréal KILLED it. Ferrandez was in charge of Economic Development blah blah-blah, quote unquote — which is a joke coming from anybody who works for Project Montréal. And then near the end of his term, it's like, “Oh yeah shit, things are pretty bad, we need a bike lane.” They're asleep at the wheel — Project Montréal causes more problems than they solve. A bike lane is fine, but they STRANGLED this city. They strangled it with too much zoning, and not allowing (developers) to build HIGH ENOUGH. It's putting make-up on a pig. All their solutions are cosmetic, it addresses none of the structural problems. You need to model this shit after Queen Street West in Toronto, King Street, Grand Allée in Quebec City. You need to build higher, you need to fucking develop this shit. Okay that's my rant. Project Montreal killed Saint Denis Street. No problem with the bike lane but you got to make other changes. [BLEEP!]

M What's up Rant Line™? I've been watching those POLICE INTERROGATION videos as of late on YouTube and it's really fucked up. These pig cops are just not your FRIENDS at all. Their job is basically to TRICK YOU and find anything you're doing wrong so that they can either jail you or throw a ticket in your face. And then you have to pay and all that shit, which is hard when you have a very low or near-poverty income. I mean, I've had a couple of tickets myself and the cop who gave one of them to me was a ZEALOUS piece of shit who got overrun by the SUPREME COURT over a ticket he was trying to do when he MANHANDLED a woman. Yeah, so pretty much all cops, their job is to trick you. So if you're interrogated, never say shit. I repeat, never say shit. Just record it visually and with audio. Record it and shut the fuck up and wait for your lawyer. [BLEEP!]

M Just wanted to say hey to the cute Asian girl I keep seeing around the Plateau carving the waves on her ELECTRIC LONGBOARD at about 30K with her headphones on and no helmet. You rock, girl! [BLEEP!]

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Chinatown in crisis



Jason Lee

BY CLAY SANDHU

Montreal's Chinatown is at a crossroads.

The neighbourhood, demarcated by four *paifangs* (Chinese archways) aligned with the four cardinal directions, was founded in the last quarter of the 19th century. From the day a small community of Chinese labourers established a cluster of residences and laundromats, Chinatown has been fighting for its survival. Over the course of more than a century, the residents of Chinatown would suffer through the great hardships of world history while also suffering the crippling injustices of anti-Asian racism — a sentiment that remains a hurdle today. The neighbourhood as we know it now is less than half of its former size, having been reduced and corralled into its highway-adjacent four-block radius in the 1950s. In the past decade, Chinatown has seen a steep decline — the once-bustling centre of Chinese culture in the city has been reduced to a mere tourist attraction steeped in a western image of “the Orient.”

The residents of Chinatown, mostly elderly, are no longer able to contribute to the neighbourhood's economy and the waves of Chinese immigrants who moved from Hong Kong to Montreal in the '80s mostly skipped Chinatown, opting to take root in Brossard — installing a sort of off-island Chinatown. Around Concordia, “Chinatown 2” has been well underway for years thanks to an influx of Chinese-born students attending the adjacent university. Chinese culture in Montreal may be alive and well, but its historic centre is at risk of becoming defunct.

The newest existential threat to the neighbourhood is, of course, COVID-19. A hospital-less Chinatown survived the 1918 Spanish Flu, so dealing with a pandemic is essentially par for the course. The difference this time is that *this* virus came from China. “Not a lot of people are down to take over a business here in Chinatown, especially as we're at a disadvantage,” says Eric Ku, a second generation restaurant owner who took over his father's BBQ Duck shop Dobe & Andy.

One of a rare few new restaurant owners in the neighbourhood, he and his two brothers are struggling to maintain business through the pandemic. “Other businesses have a great community — the locals are into supporting the restaurant scene,” Ku says. “Over here, locals are old people — they're not leaving their houses. So we lose big-time already just on locals, plus take away the tourists, plus take



Edmund Ku, Edward Ku, and Eric Ku of Dobe & Andy

away all the office workers — what are we left with?”

The answer: very little. Since the beginning of the pandemic, an anti-Asian sentiment has hung over Chinatowns across the world. The virus, blamed in part on poor sanitary conditions and “questionable dietary preferences” of Chinese people, caused many former clients to abandon Chinese restaurants completely. “I definitely feel that, in Chinatown, we've struggled the most. From the beginning of the pandemic — when the news came out that [COVID-19] came from China, immediately people completely turned their backs on us.”

More than just turning their backs, they are actively attacking landmarks of Asian culture in the city. In early March, predating any of the lockdown measures, Buddhist temple Chua Quan Am in Côte-des-Neiges was the victim of race-related vandalism in which statues and religious symbols were destroyed by an assailant with a sledgehammer. Around the same time, the lion statues set in front of St-Laurent's southern *paifang* were also defaced. Eight months later, the vandalism continued with six businesses in the Place du Quartier building on St-Urbain having their windows smashed in.

For the restaurant industry across Montreal, times have certainly been dire, but restaurants in Chinatown are facing the same restrictions combined with blatant racism — the cards are stacked against them. Jason Lee, who runs the popular blog Shut Up and Eat, has been coming to Chinatown his whole life. Lee is a staunch supporter of the neighbourhood but he admits the future of Chinatown is at stake. “As much as I love Chinatown and I stand up for it and defend it as much as I can, I feel like our backs are against the wall,” he says. The world has changed and once again the residents and businesses of Chinatown are struggling to survive.

For Lee, the restrictions facing restaurants are just another example of the government trying to limit Chinese-Montrealers' access to prosperity. “As much as we try to give ourselves the best chance, there's always another hurdle, whether that's COVID, the restrictions or the red tape in terms of politics.”

The fight to keep Chinatown alive can often feel like a losing battle. Historically, businesses in Chinatown were handed down from parents to their children (or nieces and nephews).

But the newer generations of Canadian-born Chinese aren't following in their parents' footsteps. “A lot of the culture, a lot of the food is stuck in the '70s and early '80s because there isn't new blood coming in from Hong Kong or Beijing — and if there is, it's not going to Chinatown,” reflects Lee.

With an ageing population behind so many of Chinatown's businesses, the restrictions imposed on restaurants mean that either the fragile owners can't operate their businesses or it simply no longer makes financial sense. Ku knows that action needs to be taken. “If there was money put into [Chinatown], I'd definitely do a lot more events. Looking at the night market last year — man, the whole weekend every restaurant was packed — that's old-school Chinatown. would love to do that once a month or every couple of months just to liven the place up.”



Clay Sandhu

As Ku points out, an injection of cash could really stimulate Chinatown's recovery. Outside of new investment, however, there's also a desperate need for young chefs wanting to take over restaurants in Chinatown — with a new generation of owners comes a new generation of clientele. For Ku and Lee, Chinatown has many great institutions, but fundamentally the food is a bit dated, and it's primarily Cantonese.

“I think people are a little more understanding of food now,” says Ku, and comparing Montreal's dining culture in the '70s to today, he's right. “They want to try new food. It would be cool if there was more regional stuff, I think that would wake [the neighbourhood] up. It's like, 'C'mon we don't need five duck shops in Chinatown.’”

With the restrictions regarding in-restaurant dining extended another month, the future is grim for Chinatown. That is, of course, unless there is an intervention on the part of the government and the local (city-wide) community. Ku is actively seeking out funding: “We're trying to get a million dollars from the government to help us invest in the community,” says Ku. But that money isn't for bailing out restaurants and other businesses — it's to offer resources for the neighbourhood to promote itself with events and to rejuvenate the area as well. Even if the money were to come in, winter during a pandemic is hardly the time to organize big community events.

With the darkest days of the pandemic still ahead of us,



Kim Fung

it's gravely important that, as consumers, we keep in mind how and where we spend our money. By now we all know how integral take-out business is to the continued survival of the restaurant industry, but for Chinatown, it's one of the last lifelines available for a historic neighbourhood on the brink of disappearing. So with that in mind, Jason Lee shared with us a few of his favourite restaurants in Chinatown and dishes (on and off-menu) worth taking home:

BEIJING: A Chinatown staple on the western end of de la Gauchetière. It's a place that exists as a duality — including two separate menus. The menu for westerners is filled with adapted Cantonese classics, while the other, for the Chinese locals, features home-style comfort food.

Lee recommends ordering the *Jeh Jeh Gai Bo*, an off-menu dish of chicken hearts, gizzards and wings with sweet soy



Sai Gwan

sauce served in the still-sizzling clay vessel in which the dish is cooked.

MON NAN: Second-generation owner Joe Lee now runs his father's iconic restaurant. Originally opened in 1982, Mon Nan now has a location in the upscale dining hall le Cathcart.

For Jason, the go-to dish at Mon Nan is the Peking Duck with Chinese pancakes (which are more akin to a flatbread). Lee also recommends the restaurant's seafood dishes which he considers to be among the best in Chinatown.

DOBE & ANDY: Another second-generation run restaurant, Dobe & Andy is owned and operated by the Ku family (Eric, Edmund and Edward) as well as Web Galman. This restaurant is a *Cha Chaan Teng* — a typical Hong Kong-style diner. Long established as a Chinese BBQ institution, the new generation



St-Laurent and de la Gauchetière

of owners is a bit more playful with their creations.

Order a combination of BBQ meats (*char siu*, roast pork, roast duck and soy chicken) and whatever the special of the day is.

KIM FUNG: The legendary restaurant in the Place du Quartier building is probably best known for its weekend Dim Sum service. One of the few remaining Dim Sum restaurants with cart service, this once bustling (and massive) dining room now sits empty.

Jason recommends bringing dim sum home, but he adds that on weekends Kim Fung offers “steamed rice dinners.” This off-menu dish has no English name, but is essentially a big steamer basket lined with lotus leaves, sticky rice and big pieces of chicken, pork and seafood. The dish is a close relative of the dim sum staple *lo mai gai* — only way bigger.



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music

M for music



Mac DeMarco

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

The M for Montreal music festival is on this year (Nov. 18–20), making good on its mandate to showcase (mostly) local bands for music industry delegates around the world while entertaining local audiences at the same time.

The festival's 15th edition will be a streaming event, scaled down to focus on about a dozen artists, a line-up count similar to its second or third edition according to affable M programming director Mikey Rishwain Bernard. But M for Montreal is more focused than ever and, Bernard says, more relevant than ever, promoting this edition as nothing less than “a springboard for the relaunching of the music industry.”

“M is looked at as a festival and we drew it out like a festival just to make it look fun, to bring a vibe, but in reality, and as many people know, there’s a lot more happening behind the scenes,” Bernard explains. “The mission has always been to help artists get seen by the right people, and we can still see these people, for much cheaper now. A lot of professionals now don’t have to fly all the way out here, take five days off and take time off their family, so off the bat, they’re like, ‘Yeah, I’ll participate, of course!’ Now more than ever, in a virtual world, there’s a lot more people who can tune in.

“Our international friends and partners love M. Through M we created so many friendships as well as business relationships — Simon Raymonde of Cocteau Twins met his wife at M. In L.A., I swear to God this happened more than once, people who literally have offices across the street from each other and never once saw or spoke to each other met in Montreal, built a relationship and brought it back to L.A., and M was their bond.



Flore Laurentienne

“But of course M is not only valuable for professionals. It’s going to bring our artists from Montreal a platform to keep going into the fucking twilight zone. There’s a lot of ways we can help artists. We’ve always been really active in music supervision for film, TV and ads. We brought out some of the best, like the guys who did *Breaking Bad* and the guys who did *Weeds*, they’re all coming back. I’m cranking up the music supervision angle because that’s still very current. With all the series popping up, there’s more sync to be done than ever, and that’s where the money is in the music industry. We’ve got ourselves one hell of a delegation, and with the systems we have set up, people will give direct feedback, it’ll make it easier for people to connect and develop new relationships and hopefully more business for these artists.”

THE ARTISTS

“I love them all,” Bernard says. “These are all people who deserve a chance to either continue what they’ve been doing or to get out there into the world for the first time. I went for a lot of R&B and soul this year, because that Spotify generation is cranking up. Shay Lia, she’s a queen, she’s a Diana Ross of our times, and Janette King is also under the radar. We’ve got a lot of under the radar shit in Montreal that needs to be heard, a lot of cool young artists who are doing shit in their bedroom but they’re not really getting the credit they deserve. We want to put those people in the spotlight.

“Flore Laurentienne brings me to an interesting place. (The album) is a beautiful fucking piece of work, and there’s something remarkably soothing about their sound in this time. It’s very Montreal, it evokes the Godspeed You! Black Emperor scene — they’re also an instrumental group. Then there’s Paul Jacobs of Pottery, I’m really into that. And Population II, they were a shocker. Where did this come from? This is a big fucking deal. They’re like a Montreal version of King Gizzard, but they’re a three-piece and King Gizzard has 15 to 20 people in their band.

“Alex Nicol, we had booked him at SXSW,” Bernard adds, referring to the famous Austin festival that was cancelled this year due to COVID. “I really felt that that was going to be his moment, and he missed his opportunity there, and that’s why I really want to give him a little bit of love.

“Laurence-Anne piqued a lot of interest with a few American labels at M last year, and when American labels come to you for a French act, it’s always exciting,” Bernard says, recalling witnessing the discovery of Corridor by Sub Pop, who subsequently signed the local band. “That gave me an amazing feeling, same thing with Laurence-Anne. As soon as she was done with her set, I had Americans come to me, ‘Who is she?’ ‘What’s her deal?’ ‘Can I meet her?’ She’s got it, definitely.”

M is also presenting a marquee show by one of the artists who made it big at the festival years ago: Mac DeMarco.

“He showed up in 2011 and everyone was laughing at me. People in my own office thought he was a fucking weirdo. Win Butler was at that show and he walked out after one Mac DeMarco song. He was a joke, he was burping and farting, people were looking at me like I was crazy. But from the corner of my eye, I saw every delegate in that room programming him and starting to figure him out so they could work with him the following year, and that’s exactly what happened. His manager, to this day, uses M as a point of reference because that’s kind of where it broke off. The buzz was building, but then he got to play in front of everybody at M and Mac never seemed to have a day off after that. So it’s important to bring that back. Mac hasn’t played one performance in eight or nine months, and now he’s doing this because we asked him but also because he’s cognizant of what we’ve done for him, not only here in Montreal but we took him on many on-the-road activities all over the world. It was so natural — we love him, he loves us, he’s part of our story and we are part of his.”

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A poster for the Blaze Velhuto Collection. It features a person in a costume with a large, bright yellow sunburst or starburst pattern radiating from their head. The person is wearing a mask and has their arms outstretched. The background is a solid blue color.

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Gord Downie, *Away Is Mine* (Arts & Crafts)
Released to coincide with the third anniversary of his untimely passing, the Hip frontman's final musically creative hours, collected here in 10 songs recorded over three months in mid-2017, serve as a farewell to fans and friends from a person at peace with his impending transition to whatever lies beyond. It comes as no surprise that the man who once said courage "couldn't come at a worse time" sounds as certain of himself on these recordings as he ever did. But Downie, in his poetic comfort zone, often seemed to draw purpose from the notion that acceptance of not knowing can be more powerful than a studious drive for perfect understanding. It's what made him almost mythical in life and on stage. Here, it makes him as human as he's ever sounded, and the inclusion of acoustic-only takes of all 10 tracks brings that humanity home. 8.5/10 Trial Track: "The Least Impossible" (Darcy MacDonald)



Black Thought, *Streams of Thought Vol.3: Cane & Able* (Human Re Sources)
After delays and a death in the Roots family with the passing of affiliate MC Malik B late this summer, the voice of the hardest working band in hip hop finally delivers on the promise of a third solo foray.

Buoyed by the single-producer format that helped centre previous instalments by 9th Wonder and Salaam Remi this time out beat vet Sean C handles the beats that Black Thought once again laces with game and gravitas. With the Roots, Thought is as integral as each instrument to the whole of a track and the sum of an album. Solo, he proves once again that his GOAT-level lyrics, delivery and presence stand out and stand on their own in an altogether different arena, doubling down the rep he's boasted without interlude since at least '96 and his band's sophomore. While a rare creative moment lulls here or there, Black Thought himself never wastes a word, a rhyme, or a breath, and guests from Killer Mike to Portugal, The Man help make volume three the strongest in the series so far. 8/10 Trial Track: "Nature of the Beast" (Darcy MacDonald)



Karyke, *Haitian Dracula* (LFTSO)
Kompa is neither exclusively nor singularly a Montreal sound, but the Haitian dance pop genre's undeniable influence can be felt in the city's collective hips, and thanks to local acts like Rosalvo and Karyke, there's room for a youthful Montreal spin that's uniquely ours. The latter is a 24-year-old soft-spoken trilingual force, calmly and coolly gliding over woozy and wet productions with steady rhythms. And really, if you weren't eating spicy pikliz this summer, what were you doing? 8/10 Trial Track: "Pikliz" (Erik Leijon)



Busta Rhymes, *Extinction Level Event 2: The Wrath of God* (EMPIRE)
Nearly a decade in the making, Busta Rhymes returns with a follow-up to his 1998 apocalyptic classic. Sequel albums with long gaps between them more often than not tend to fumble. However, the Brooklyn bred emcee absolutely sticks the landing with nothing but grace. Rhymes churns out tasteful nostalgia (the album's intro was a leftover beat from the original E.L.E.), while also broadening his lyrical palette with some of his most vulnerable raps to date. If you are a Busta fan of any measure, this album is nothing short of satisfying. 7.5/10 Trial Track: «E.L.E. 2 Intro» (featuring Chris Rock, Rakim & Pete Rock) (Mr. Wavvy)



Ty Dolla \$ign, *Featuring Ty Dolla \$ign* (Atlantic)
A god of the guest spot, Ty Dolla \$ign changed the name of his third album from *Dream House* to match his sublime stature. Previously, the California crooner's projects always suffered from the same problem: He knew how to make hits but not a well-rounded body of work. Five years removed from his *Free TC* debut, the circle has been broken. With a little help from his friends (Kanye West, Big Sean, Skrillex, Post Malone and Nicki Minaj, to name a few), Dolla \$ign delivers his strongest album. 8/10 Trial Track: «Ego Death» (featuring Kanye West, FKA Twigs and Skrillex) (Mr. Wavvy)

:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Alrighty!!! What we have here is a massive box set that tips its dusty cowboy hat to one of the greatest records ever made, 1980's shining jewel *Ace of Spades* by the almighty Motör fucking Head.

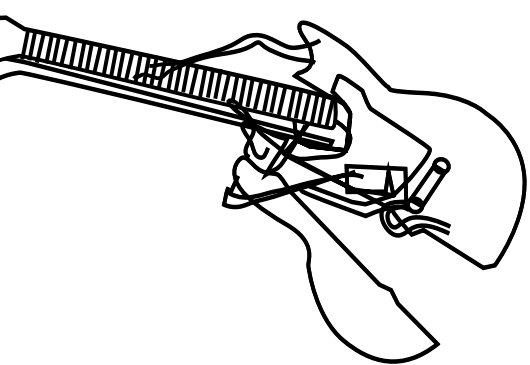
It's true that these speed freaks went on to release more solid jammers before Lemmy's untimely demise in 2015, but sadly they never touched the brute force, spit, rage and sheer velocity pressed into these vinyl grooves again.

The real question remains, though, for those of us who have already bought this record at least twice (I for one am guilty): Do you really need this pricey artifact taking up valuable real estate on your record shelf? Of course you do! I can say without question that this 40th anniversary is probably the nicest box set in my collection. If you were nimble and picked up the 40th anniversary edition of Motörhead's 1979 box set (released last year, natch), you know the love that went into the design of the box and the sheer amount of goodies on

display — and dare I say *Ace of Spades* actually expands and offers up even more.

Weighing in at an impressive 6.85 pounds (yep, I weighed it, what of it?!), this is packed to the gills with all the good shit that will get any ardent fan of punk or metal drooling. Let's start off with the fun stuff that's reserved for the real geeks. Once you get past the bullet-belt wrap and lift the lid of the box, you're greeted with an envelope that holds a period-correct reprint of the Motörhead fan club comic book, a reprint of the 1980 *Ace Up Your Sleeve* tour program and a 40-page book bound in faux leather telling the story of the making of the record. Most importantly is the 10" vinyl of instrumental demos stuffed in a manila envelope. It's jaw-droppingly good.

After that, this box really delivers the goods with a double record gatefold containing songs that are only now seeing the light of day as well as more rare and unreleased demos of the songs leading up to *Ace of Spades*. These demos are still in embryonic form so comparing with the finished versions is a great glimpse of their songwriting process. The newly half speed mastered version of the original record boasts far more bass thump and a detailed brightness that never fatigues. And to bring it all home is two double gatefold live sets from Belfast and Orleans in 1981 and a DVD that includes a new 5.1 mix of the record as well as live shows from '80 and '81 and period-correct TV appearances and interviews.



Considering this is now 40 years old, it's amazing how much wallop this can still deliver while truly remaining timeless. The sobering fact that, much like the original line-up of the Ramones, the three outlaws that made this record are no longer with us is staggering. Even if you already own an original copy, this deep dive into this important record will have you just as thrilled as you were the first time you heard it. For those of you who have never drunkenly screamed out "You know I'm born to lose and gambling's for fools/But that's the way I like it I don't want to live forever" in a crowded bar, may I suggest you crack a can of Special Brew, chop up a line of some cheap crank, find this on your music platform of choice and never look back.

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film

True stories



No Ordinary Man

BY ALEX ROSE

There have, essentially, been two ways to conduct a film festival online since the pandemic began. The first, favoured by Montreal's Fantasia Film Festival, has a “day-and-date” concept, in which films are screened at a specific time. The other, used by the city's Festival du Nouveau Cinéma last month, takes a broader rental-style approach, offering films that can be rented on-demand at any time during the festival.

The Rencontres internationales du documentaire de Montréal (RIDM) has sort of split the difference on both approaches by dividing their schedule into eight distinct thematic sections that will each be made available for a seven-day stretch. The festival runs for three weeks, which means that some of the sections will run parallel for that week-long stretch.

Disrupting History (Nov 12–18) features films that reshape and analyze various historical notions. Highlights include *Ouvertures*, which follows a Haitian art troupe as they work on a new multimedia project about the revolutionary general Toussaint l'Ouverture, while Michelle Latimer's *L'indien malcommode* seeks to expose darkened and little explored corners of colonialism's history by adapting the book of the

same name by Thomas King. Ariel Nasr's *L'histoire interdite* looks at the troubled history of Afghanistan's film heritage, one that has more or less been erased by war. Photographer Gilles Caron, who died prematurely some 50 years ago, is the central figure in *Histoire d'un regard*.

The Exploring Nature (Nov. 12–18) program is a little heavier on the shorts. Feature highlights include *Cenote*, in which a Japanese filmmaker explores the cenotes (which are the surface-level connections between underwater bodies of water) of the Yucatan and Elizabeth Lo's *Stray*, which follows the stray dogs of Istanbul. *Piedra Sola* is the tale of an Argentinian llama rancher who must deal with, as the festival notes put it, a marauding puma. I don't know about you, but the words “marauding puma” are just about all I need to be sold on this particular idea.

Highlights of the Seeking Communities program include *City Hall*, the latest supersized opus from legendary documentarian Frederick Wiseman. This time, Wiseman turns his attention and fly-on-the-wall approach to Boston's city government. Nicolas Lévesque's *Les livres* focuses on a sawmill that employs ex-convicts, while Lynne Sachs' *Film About a Father Who* gathers 35 years of footage of the filmmaker's father.

Contemplating Dystopia (Nov. 19–25) highlights include *Me and the Cult Leader*, which centres on a road trip between a survivor of the Tokyo sarin gas attacks and the cult leader that ordered the attacks (!). *A Shape of Things to Come* contrasts the life of a hermit living in the desert with predictions about what our lives will be like as the climate crisis worsens. *The Foundation Pit* is a collage film that puts together pleas to Vladimir Putin from Russians to create a

vision of the perilous position that Russia finds itself in.

Wintopia, screening as part of the Becoming Oneself section (Nov. 19–25), is a biographical look at the work of late documentary filmmaker Peter Wintonick, culled entirely from VHS archives assembled by his daughter Mira Burt-Wintonick. Aisling Chin-Yee and Chase Joynt share directing credits on *No Ordinary Man*, a biography of trans jazz pianist Billy Tipton that mixes traditional documentary methods with footage of trans actors auditioning for the part of Tipton. Sébastien Lifshitz's *Petite fille* explores similar themes in its depiction of seven-year-old Sasha, who was born a boy.

RIDM regular Dieudo Hamadi returns with *En route vers le milliard*, about survivors of the Six-Day War who travel to Kinshasa seeking reparation. It screens in the Challenging Power section alongside *Landfall*, about Puerto Rico's status post-hurricane, and *Softie*, about a Kenyan activist who finds himself torn between his personal and political lives.

The Redefining Intimacy section features two films about CHSLDs — one a feature from Danic Champoux, the other a short from François Delisle (*Chorus, Ca\$h Nexu\$*) — as well as Claire Simon's *Le fils de l'épicière, le maire, le village et le monde*, which chronicles the creation of the documentary streaming platform Ténk, and David Teboul's *Mon amour*, in which the filmmaker, suffering from grief, decides to find the meaning of love in Siberia.

The festival's final section is Surviving Violence, which mainly focuses on films about the repercussions of war. François Jacob's *Sous un même soleil* explores the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, while *Errance sans retour* looks at Rohingya people in a refugee camp in Bangladesh.

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On Screen



Jingle-Jangle: A Christmas Journey



Uncle Frank



Operation Christmas Drop



Hillbilly Elegy

BY ALEX ROSE

Though it looked for a millisecond like theatres might open up again at the end of October, the other shoe has dropped.

That means no movie theatres for the next month, and thus no theatrical releases. It's possible that some scheduled titles will make their way to VOD, but as of press time, most of the films scheduled for theatrical release in Quebec in November are simply being put on hold. This is doubly complicated by the fact that theatres remain open in other parts of the country, which inevitably delays the local VOD release of some titles.

Keeping this in mind, it seems the only mildly anticipated title to *definitely* make its way to VOD this month is *Jiu Jitsu*, a sci-fi supernatural martial arts flick starring VOD action lifer Frank Grillo and... Nicolas Cage! (Nov. 20)

Reactions to the trailer for Ron Howard's *Hillbilly Elegy* (Nov. 20 on Netflix) were very mixed when it hit the internet last month. This adaptation of a controversial biography by a venture capitalist (!), features extremely deglammed

"hillbilly" performances by Glenn Close and Amy Adams, which many described as seeming like an overt parody of miserabilist Oscar bait. Having seen the trailer, I can't disagree with that, but Ron Howard is at the very least a sure-handed director.

Alan Ball, creator of *Six Feet Under* and *True Blood*, hasn't had much of a film career outside of writing *American Beauty* and directing the little-seen *Towelhead*. He follows that debut film up some 13 years later with *Uncle Frank* (Nov. 25 on Prime), a road movie starring Paul Bettany as a gay man who confronts his past and his family. The film won the Public Prize at Deauville earlier this year.

It's a heavily Christmassy month over at Netflix, with no less than four Christmas films being released in November. In order of interest, I'd list them in the following order: the Dolly-Parton-as-angel fantasy *Christmas on the Square* (Nov. 22); *The Christmas Chronicles 2* (Nov. 25), which greatly upgrades the Kurt Russell-starring original by adding Goldie Hawn and Chris Columbus in the director's chair; *Jingle-Jangle: A Christmas Journey*, which has the worst title of the four but also stars Forest Whitaker and Keegan-Michael Key; and finally *Operation Christmas*

Drop, which does not appear to be a Yuletide-themed remake of the improbable elephant-based war comedy *Operation Dumbo Drop*.

Riz Ahmed stars in *Sound of Metal*, in which he plays a metal drummer who suddenly damages his hearing in an irreparable way, which forces him to relearn just about everything he ever knew. Much of the film focuses on his coping with sudden hearing loss through inventive sound design, and the film was made with ASL speakers in mind. *Life in a Year* is a teen drama starring Cara Delavigne as a dying teen whose boyfriend (Jaden Smith) decides to make her final year on Earth worth it. If those actors sound a little old to be teens, you're not wrong — the film has been sitting on the shelf for nearly three years, a fact that has certainly not been helped by the presence of noted creep and sexual predator Chris d'Elia in the cast.

On DisneyPlus you can stream a new adaptation of *Black Beauty* from director Ashley Avis. Mackenzie Foy (*Interstellar*) and Kate Winslet star in the film, which is available to stream on Nov. 27. It's an altogether bottom-heavy month as streaming services prepare suitable content for American Thanksgiving.

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arts

The future of performing arts

BY SAVANNAH STEWART

We’re having a tough year. The pandemic has turned our old reality on its head, and we are all dealing with the repercussions of that to some degree. But few sectors have been forced to as grinding a halt or been shrouded with more uncertainty than the performing arts.

“I kind of had this identity crisis, because acrobatics and arts are all I have known,” says Lauren Joy Herley, a rope artist and circus performer.

Before March 2020, Herley was at the height of a successful career performing with Cirque du Soleil. When the arts sector partially reopened this summer, she was able to resume her work with some outdoor shows, but now that the temperature is dropping, the outdoor shows have come to an end for this year.

In the initial months of lockdown, Andrea Peña, artistic director and choreographer at Andrea Peña & Artists, says some of her dancers considered quitting. “They’re professional, they’re 33, 34, which means they’re at a peak in their careers — very strong, very mature interpreters — and I had one of them say ‘Andrea, I’m really considering my retirement.’”

In August came the reopening of studios and AP&A was pleased to finally be able to work together again, even with the new restrictions: a two-metre distance, no contact unless they wear a mask and goggles.

Staying apart in an art form that so relies on touch has been a challenge. “We’ve realized after a month of working how good they are at keeping the two metres because they’re very spacially aware, but how difficult it was on the emotional and artistic side to have to be so distanced from their peers and not have that contact.”

Dance companies were hit hard, and many lost funding or residencies, meaning lost space to rehearse. Freelance dancers, without the support of a company, struggle to find space.

Catherine Wilson, a freelancer, says she’s lucky her apartment has enough room to do some basic training, and in the spring she started practising outside. “I’ve really had to change my mindset of what it means to move, and learn that I don’t need to have a studio.” Her first time back in the studio in August to attend a class was emotional. “I had an out of body experience — I wanted to cry.”

Rental studios can only be booked for three-hour timeslots to allow for cleaning, meaning only two timeslots are available per day. And for freelancers, who used to book the odd times between company rentals at a discount, that option doesn’t exist anymore.

With the difficulty of putting on live performances, digital shows are common, and some artists branched out into other mediums. Wilson had been working for two years on a production called *ELLES*, choreographed by Peña, with four other dancers, and they were set to perform it during this year’s Festival Quartier Danses in September before the



Lauren Herley

festival decided to go virtual. They didn’t think their project translated as well into a video format, and so instead they created soundscapes that their audience could tune in to by phone.

Peña calls the experience of finding a way to carry the intention of a project into another medium an empowering one, but she says that performers have struggled with the need to go digital or branch out. “I’m also an industrial designer, so I’m comfortable diving into other media and stepping outside of the box,” she says. “Not everybody has another practice.”

Some performers are also exploring new careers. Herley says that though this red zone confinement is less strict, it is just as heavy for her because she is realizing how long we might be stuck dealing with the virus.

“I have spent my whole life mastering this art form — circus, acrobatics — and I was really hungry to learn something new and kind of take advantage of this unfortunate situation.” She started a postgraduate program in medical administration in October.

She says that it has been rewarding getting another degree, and it has made her more disciplined in finding time to train. “I’ll always be an artist and I want to fight for our industry, but right now I just really needed a way to work towards my future.”

Peña and her company have been able to keep busy enough as they explore new methods to perform. They headed to Ottawa for a live stream of a solo, *Untitled I*, performed by François Richard and put on by the National Arts Centre as part of their #DanceForth series. It will take place on Nov. 5 at 7 p.m., and it’s free to tune in.

Peña also has a choreography on tour in Quebec, outside of red zones where congregating is still permitted. *La question des fleurs* is a duet performance showcasing the work of four choreographers, and tickets are on sale for performances in November and December.

But above all, performers are in a period of rethinking.

Herley says that in her practice, since she no longer does several shows a week and can’t recreate the impact that that schedule has on her body, she has become more mindful about using details to convey meaning. “I used to kind of be a bit more of a show-off and do all these big tricks,” she says. “I’ve become stronger at creating images and creating sequences that are captivating regardless of the acrobatic skill that’s going into it.”

Wilson is working with other dancers on creating training for people like her who don’t have the support of a company when they can no longer rely on drop-in classes. Zoom classes are helpful, but Wilson believes that passively relying on others to offer training won’t cut it if the pandemic lasts. “I’m trying to figure out with other dancers how we can train ourselves. I’m trying to make sure we are not dependent,” she says.

She’s also interested in revolutionizing the concept of performance, away from the old model of an audience sitting in front of a stage, towards a more participative model that allows the viewer to move through space, keeping their distance, and be able to watch a performance from different angles.

«We’re talking warehouses, we’re talking about the old-school post-communism era in Berlin, like how can you re-use and reappropriate spaces, especially because there’s a lot of these spaces that are emptying.”

At AP&A, these conversations about rethinking performance are ongoing. Peña says that though there is an interest in livestream shows, she doesn’t believe our old notions of performance translate well to digital. There might be a better way to use that medium, instead of performing a finished piece.

“I feel like we’re in a place where we’re going to start performing research, performing trial and error, performing a creative process rather than a final idea. I think in performing the creative process, there’s space for dialogue.”



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La Contemplation du mystère

BY RYAN DIDUCK

Echo Collective, "Inflection Point," *The See Within* (!K7 Music/Mutesong)

Looking back at the 2020 iCal, I notice that I have not had a haircut since March 10. It's gone through several phases, my unruly hair. First was the Alan Alda in *M*A*S*H*, also known as the Korean wartime cut. Then came the Chevy-Chase-on-coke do. After that it looked like I was auditioning to be a droog in *A Clockwork Orange*. Next it slid into Tom Snyder (no, it didn't go grey, not entirely, but it might as well have, like Leland Palmer's overnight whiteout). Then came the Nobody Home Obligatory Hendrix Perm. Finally, the Neil Diamond circa 1972 — staring at the cover of *Hot August Night* is like gazing into a mirror, minus the masturbatory ecstatic stance. By Christmas, it will either be Relic from *The Beachcombers* or the full-on Johann Johansson dome: shave it off and start all over again.

Elif Yalvaç, "Broken Spectre," *Mountains Become Stepping Stones* (NNA Tapes)

The federal government announced in October an ambitious plan to bring nearly 1.3 million newcomers to Canada over the next three years. That's a city the size of Calgary. In 2015, when newly elected golden boy Prime Minister Justin Trudeau proclaimed "refugees welcome" and opened the national doors to 25,000 Syrian refugees, I applauded the resolution. These were vulnerable people who had experienced immense hardship and violence — survived a war. But this year has been like a war for every nation under God. Thus, now I'm not so sure.

According to Statistics Canada, 12.1 per cent of the education and a whopping 19 per cent of health care and social assistance sectors in Canada laid off 100 per cent of their staff in 2020 due to the Coronavirus crisis. 11.2 per cent of immigrant-owned businesses also went bust. So, pray tell, where are all these proud new Canadians going to go to school? How are they going to get access to the much-needed but COVID-battered health care system they will doubtless

require immediately upon arrival? And what sort of economy are they going to inherit?

1.8 million Canadians filed for unemployment in this country in September. The Neskantaga First Nation in northern Ontario and a dozen others don't have a reliable source for potable water. Dear Justin Trudeau, it's 2020. As the old common-sense airplane adage goes: "In the event of a sudden loss of cabin pressure, put your own mask on first, then assist others."

Ane Brun, "After the Great Storm," *After the Great Storm* (Balloon Ranger Recordings/UMG)

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I've had enough of reading things

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All I want is the truth

Just give me some truth

—John Lennon

Jesu, "Alone," *Terminus* (Avalanche Recordings)

Health Canada at the beginning of October approved a rapid COVID-19 test produced by Abbott Laboratories, the very same test that the U.S. White House relied upon — unsuccessfully — to determine whether or not staff in close contact with Donald Trump were infected with the virus. The New York Times on the very same day published an article lambasting the Abbott Laboratories test: "The products are less accurate than laboratory tests that use a technique called polymerase chain reaction, or P.C.R.," said The Times, "and they more

frequently miss infections or mistakenly designate healthy people as infected." Which is why asymptomatic testing is more frequently being discouraged: the Alberta Health authority, for instance, announced plans to stop testing asymptomatic individuals as of Nov. 4, citing the statistic that fewer than one per cent of those without a variety of symptoms or known close contact with a COVID-positive person also tested positive.

So, which is it? Do asymptomatic people actually pose a "super-spreader" threat or not? And do the rapid tests that we just purchased work with asymptomatic people or not? While we're trying to decipher these obviously mixed messages, your Canadian government has bequeathed untold millions of fruitless dollars upon a U.S. pharmaceutical giant with an annual operating income of \$4.532-billion.

La Contemplation du mystère, dir. Albéric Aurtenèche, score by Roger Tellier-Craig, (Les Cinémas Ciné Entreprise)

Regular readers of this column will know that I usually do my utmost to not talk about the thing I'm supposed to be talking about, or to talk about it in the most roundabout of ways — all symbolically, like. This, though, deserves proper attention: a new motion picture by director Albéric Aurtenèche, with a twisted-sounding score by Montreal music scene legend Roger Tellier-Craig of Fly Pan Am fame, as well as fame derived from le Révélateur and his own bad self. This looks creepy.

Unfortunately, the premiere of *La Contemplation du mystère* was waylaid by a fresh round of lockdowns courtesy of the Legault government and rising coronavirus case numbers. Nonetheless, I want to see — and hear — this film, and so should you. Aurtenèche won a Jutra award for *M'ouvrir*, the gut-wrenching 2010 short film on the delicate subject of self-harm starring Ariane Trépanier, Pierre-Luc Lafontaine and Denis Bernard. Not to mention that Tellier-Craig seems to have leaned into the lonely pandemic regulations. He and the band are currently putting the finishing touches upon the forthcoming Fly Pan Am-scored *Frontera* dance piece produced last year, out on Constellation Records in 2021. And he's got a brand-new album in the works: "It's kind of a mix between 'Études' and 'C'est ça'", Tellier-Craig tells me, via email. I cannot wait for that mix.

CHRISTIAN DIOR



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