

# CULT MTL



FOOD ISSUE

FEBRUARY 2021 • Vol. 9 No. 5 • CULTMTL.COM

FREE

\* Restaurant guide \* Claire Saffitz \* Best buds \* Besnard Lakes \* Slowthai \* MTL Courtside



# Take self-isolation seriously

**In the fight against the spread  
of COVID-19, we must self-isolate:**

- in case of symptoms
  - after testing
- if the test is positive
- after returning from a trip
- after being in contact with someone  
who's tested positive

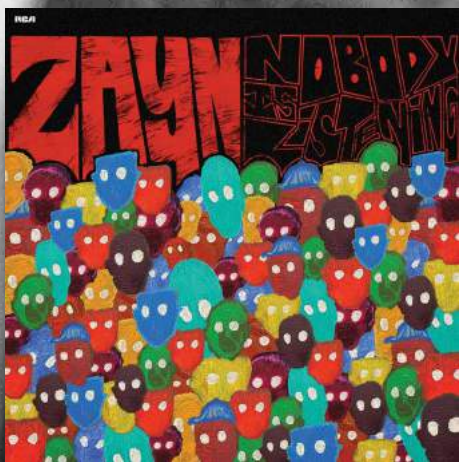
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# **ZAYN**

## **NOBODY IS LISTENING**



**DISPONIBLE MAINTENANT**

 Écouter sur  
**Apple Music**

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# Cult Mtl is...



Our restaurant scene is dramatically different from what it was in 2019, but it remains vibrant, innovative and, ultimately, delicious. We hope this year's guide introduces you to a few new spots or reminds you to order from neighbourhood classics.

Cover photo by JG & Shi

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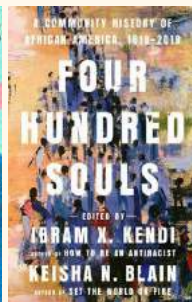
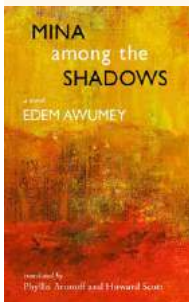
SHIPPING CANADA-WIDE

DELIVERIES BY BIKE IN MONTREAL

OPEN FOR CURBSIDE PICKUP

## VIRTUAL READINGS AND BOOK LAUNCHES

## VIRTUAL BOOK CLUBS



FEB 6, SATURDAY | 3 PM  
Shanice Nicole and Kezna Dalz  
launch *Dear Black Girls*

FEB 18, THURSDAY | 7 PM  
Tawhida Tanya Evanson  
launches *Book of Wings*

FEB 24, WEDNESDAY | 7 PM  
Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain  
launch *Four Hundred Souls*

FEB 25, THURSDAY | 7 PM  
Edem Awumey launches  
*Mina Among the Shadows*



FEB 2, TUESDAY | 8 PM **TRUE READS**  
*Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer



FEB 9, TUESDAY | 8 PM **GAY READS**  
*Memorial* by Bryan Washington



FEB 19, FRIDAY | 6 PM **YOUNG READERS**  
*When Stars Are Scattered*  
by Omar Mohamed and Victoria Jamieson



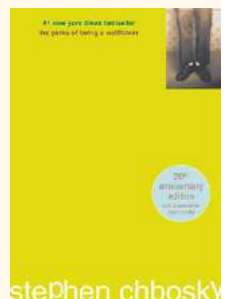
FEB 21, SUNDAY | 6 PM **COOKBOOK**  
*Flavor* by Yotam Ottolenghi



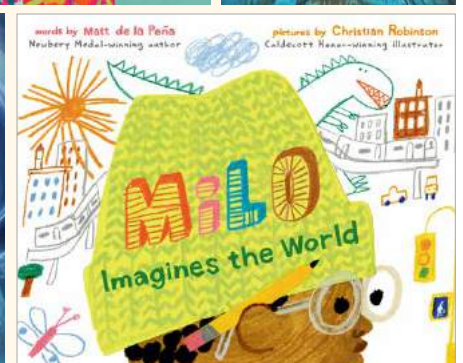
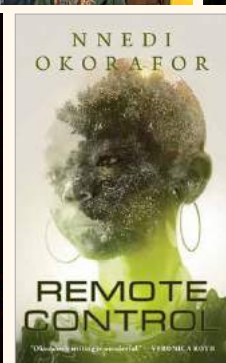
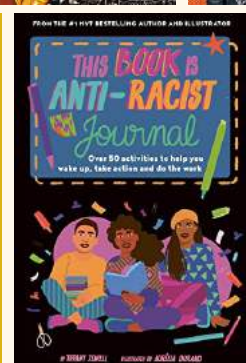
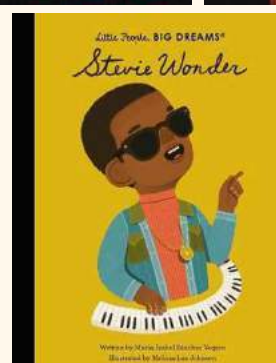
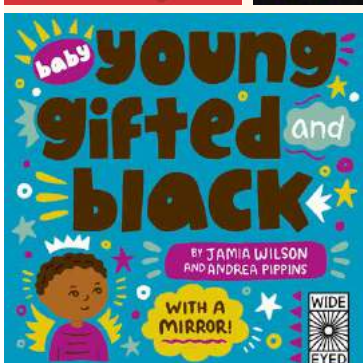
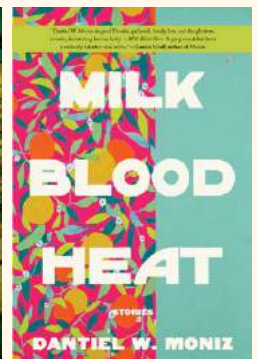
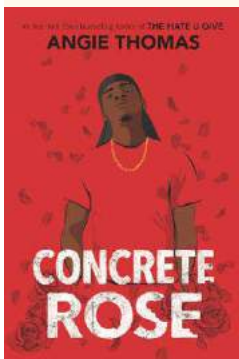
FEB 23, TUESDAY | 8 PM **GRAPHIC NOVEL**  
*Sports Is Hell* by Ben Passmore



FEB 26, FRIDAY | 6 PM **TEEN BOOK**  
*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*  
by Stephen Chbosky



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# :MTL courtside



BY MR. WAVVY

The NBA 2020-21 season is in full swing and the games are just as unpredictable as the times we're living in.

Last year's playoff finalists the Miami Heat are struggling substantially. Once-MVP contender Luka Doncic has experienced a remarkable fall from grace. To top it all off, the New York Knicks are now....good?

Whoever you're rooting for, there is certain plenty to discuss on every front. Let's dive into some of the latest:

Can Chris Boucher bring home two NBA awards?

In the wake of a gaping hole left by Serge Ibaka and Marc Gasol's departures from the Toronto Raptors, none other than Montreal's own Chris Boucher has stepped up to fill the gap. The late-blooming 28-year-old has been having a career-best season, averaging 13.5 points, 6.3 rebounds and 2.1 blocks this season, coming off the bench.

*Vegas Insider* currently ranks Boucher for second pick as Sixth Man of the Year (+500) odds and fourth pick for Most Improved Player (+1100). If he could pull it off, he would be the first player to win both awards since Darrell Armstrong in the 1998-99 NBA season. A lanky 6'9", Boucher certainly does not have the typical build of a Center. Nonetheless, it is simply delightful to see the young baller thrive in his heightened role on the team. He serves as a beacon of light in an otherwise dismal season start.

The Bulls need veterans

To no one's surprise, the Chicago Bulls are off to yet another rocky start. Since acquiring star-in-the-making Zach Lavine back in late 2017, the team has yet to make the playoffs. The team of young talent face the same problem year in, year out: They are bursting with energy in first halves but konk out when it's crunch time. Coach Billy Donovan supported such a notion, stating that his players "want to win," but "they don't know how to."

With nothing left to lose, the Bulls should consider bringing back some returning talent. Some of the league's most dignified elderstatesmen got their career starts with the team. Both Tyson Chandler and Jamal Crawford are free agents who could serve as great mentors. These two

might be well past their glory days in terms of posting impressive stats but their basketball IQ and leadership skills offer great locker room potential to these directionless Bulls.

Retire Gianna Bryant's number

It's been over a year since the helicopter crash that took the lives of Kobe Bryant, his daughter Gianna and seven others. Upon the tragedy, Lakers guard and lifelong franchise fan Quinn Cook took it upon himself to change his jersey #2 in honour of the younger Bryant, who sported the same number. This season, however, Cook is back in #2, while the #28 that he temporarily adopted was passed to Lakers newcomer Alfonso McKinnie.

The Lakers have 11 retired numbers. With the death of Gigi Bryant, it's time for them to add a 12th. Although Cook seemingly wears #2 to honour his late father, reverting back to the number feels awkward, to say the least. He transitioned to #28 as a combination of Gigi's jersey and Kobe's early #8 look. Gifting McKinnie the number is a commendable move for the veteran player. After all, Jared Dudley had done the same for him. Perhaps Cook could transition to #00, a metaphor for Kobe and Gianna lasting forever in our hearts.

# LONGING FOR NEW CINEMATIC SENSATIONS?

# PHI

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# PHI



# : best buds



BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Ever since Canada legalized weed nationally in late 2018, the SQDC (Société québécoise du cannabis) hasn't necessarily been embraced by pot purists in Quebec.

"The buds are way too dry! They aren't potent enough! They taste like shit! The lines are too long! They're out of stock too often!" This kind of criticism about the government-owned SQDC products is not new, but still fairly common. In fact, Kaytranada recently called it "dry-ass weed" in an interview with QCULTUR on YouTube, comparing it unfavourably to the legal cannabis offered in Denver, Portland and Seattle, and that the oversized packaging contributes to its dryness. Another QCULTUR video from 2019 showed rap kebab artist Tizzo describing SQDC's products as "pourri" (rotten).

With this in mind, this is the first edition of a monthly Cult MTL column where we review a different set of SQDC products (dried flowers, capsules, edibles, etc.) and discuss our experience with each. I've decided to open this series by smoking pre-rolled joints: one sativa, one indica and one hybrid strain. Let's see if these criticisms hold weight, or if their product is better than some give it credit for.

## SATIVA: Marley Natural: Marley Gold Sativa

My first pre-roll comes from a company using the most obvious strategy to capitalize on a deceased reggae icon's legacy: Marley Natural. Obviously, that kind of branding doesn't even remotely guarantee

quality—in fact, it's a bit of a red flag. But with the 20% THC, I can say that Marley Gold Sativa was an interesting experience... on both sides of the coin.

This strain is energizing and puts you in a more positive state of mind, as any half-decent sativa should. It's also a very cerebral experience, which can be either a great or upsetting experience depending on your state of mind. I also felt very, very hungry. On the other hand, it also knocked me out cold for almost an hour when I smoked too much at once. In any case, I stopped with this one and buffalo soldiered on to the more calming smoking experience below. 7/10

## INDICA: Namaste Sensi Star

This is definitely on the other end of the cannabis spectrum: a more relaxing, less uplifting type of high and one more ideal for nighttime consumption. But it's not particularly potent. In fact, it's only 10% THC — about half the Marley Gold's percentage. As if that weren't enough, the packaging almost looks like a tampon case.

Of course, I decided to smoke it, listen to *Dark Side of the Moon* and then watch *Trailer Park Boys* (as one does while smoking God's green grass) and see what happened. Did it do its job? Sure. The show was funnier and the album was more intoxicating to listen to. The high was pleasant and calming, even though its lukewarm potency meant that I'd go through the joints pretty quickly. Was it enough for me to buy it again? Ehhh... nah. 6/10

## HYBRID: 514 Saint-Henri Kush

Now, for some homegrown content. This hybrid strain from NDG's cool sibling is my favourite out of this bunch. Although it doesn't list the THC percentage on the packaging, I discovered it was 16.4% after doing the math. In other words, a sweet spot somewhere between the other two strains. (That being said, why are two smallish joints placed in such

a disproportionately big package?! Kaytranada wasn't joking...)

These Sud-Ouest buds can pack a punch, but won't really knock you out cold, either. I began smoking it and put on some Khruangbin — the stoner band du jour these days. Later, I'd get sent down a deep enough YouTube rabbit hole that I forgot about the boiling pot of water in my kitchen. Yes, I got so ripped off this strain that I forgot I was about to make pasta. Well... at least it wasn't a fire? 8/10





# :the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

A month into 2021 and Donald Trump is on the golf course awaiting a second impeachment trial after trying to incite a civil war, uncle Joe Biden is in the White House, the world is in COVID lockdown and the transfer window is in full swing in Europe.

Kylian Mbappé is supposedly leaving PSG while Jessie Lingards is off to WestHam. Other players were all set to move over during the final days in January (in the most frantic fashion ever) and my beloved Frank Lampard was hung out to dry and fired at ChelseaFC, while his replacement was on a jet to London that very evening.

Big happenings: Top British player Harry Kane snapped both his ankles in the same match, and 300 Marseille supporters «violently attacked» officers at the training centre — there were 25 arrests, and 7 police officers were injured. There have been a number of protests in recent weeks by Marseille fans about the way the club is being run, on and off the pitch. We found out that Leo Messi will make around \$862-million (Canadian) by the end of his four-year contract with Barca ending this June.

There are 18 games left to play in the Premier League with Manchester United and Manchester City (who didn't lose one match last month) fighting it out for first and second place (at press time).

Yep it's February!

Meanwhile, the MLS 2021 season kickoff is just around the corner, beginning on April 3, 2021. We'll have 34 matches for each of the league's 27 clubs. The regular season, barring any more world catastrophes, will end on Nov. 7. The MLS Playoffs will start on Nov. 19 and the MLS CUP will be played on Dec. 11, 2021. Not to forget, with all the regular games, there will be an All Star Game, Canadian Championship and Concacaf Champions League tournaments as well. Clubs will be starting pre-season training as of Feb. 22.

"In accordance with MLS health and safety protocols, players will be required to quarantine and conduct individual trainings upon reporting back to their clubs."—MLS

This 26th season will feature the debut of the league's 27th club, Austin FC. The Smoothster himself, Matthew McConaughey, is going to be all over football.... Alright, Alright, Alright! The League will also see the opening of two new soccer stadiums in Ohio this season for FC Cincinnati and Columbus Crew SC, where Montreal's other favourite net-minder, Mr. Evan Bush, will be playing this year.

Speaking of the MLS, Montreal had quite the January. The Montreal Impact transformed into le Club de Foot Montreal — new name, new logo and new beginnings. There is enough press on the matter to keep you reading all night long. Let's just say the change did not go over well with fans but in the

end, if the team wins, plays well this season and takes the time to properly integrate into the community — all over the city and province, even more than it has in the past — then I am sure all will be forgiven. Or maybe not, and if that's the case, well you can always change again! Life is full of options.

Staying on the subject of Tiohtià:ke (Montreal,) in all this madness, don't forget we are still waiting to hear when and whether Montreal can host some of the 2026 World Cup games coming to this side of the world. 2021 is the year that all gets sorted out. Will the province reverse course and commit the \$100 million+ to this right now without the public turning on them? Who knows? Toronto & Edmonton are the other two cities in the running.

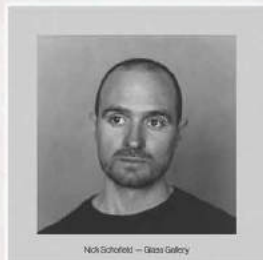
Music and football have always co-existed in parallel. Part of the purpose of The 1<sup>st</sup> Half is to keep exposing this partnership and other great relationships between all things culture and the beautiful game. A perfect example of this style of relationship is with punk legend Lars Frederiksen, the guitarist from Rancid. He's such a fan of the San Jose Earthquakes that he actually wrote the team's anthem "Never Say Die." His love of the game and music is apparent in all that he is. The lion on his guitar is homage to Millwall FC, a pro-club in Bermondsey, South East London, England, founded in 1885. Millwall compete in the EFL Championship, the second tier of English football, and are known for having some very solid, excitable, loud fans (to say it in PC fashion.)

Long live this beautiful mix: music on the pitch to match music to your ears!

Here's hoping that February is a bit smoother than January and that we will have shaken off most of 2020's heaviness.

"Enthusiasm is everything. It must be taut and vibrating like a guitar string." —PELE

## NICK SCHOFIELD GLASS GALLERY



"GORGEOUS" - KEXP

"THE PERFECT MID-WINTER LISTEN" - CBC MUSIC



## GIANNA LAUREN VANITY METRICS

"UNSTOPPABLE" - NEW YORK TIMES

"PURPOSEFUL" - CONSEQUENCE OF SOUND



## MICHAEL FEUERSTACK HARMONIZE THE MOON



"GENTLE AND REFLECTIVE" - AMERICANA UK

"ACHINGLY INTIMATE" - EXCLAIM!



## JOSHUA VAN TASSEL DANCE MUSIC VOL. II MORE SONGS FOR SLOW MOTION

"DES PENSÉES PLUS MESURÉES, DES ACTIONS PLUS RÉFLÉCHIES, DES LIENS PLUS PROFONDS" - ROCK DECIBELS

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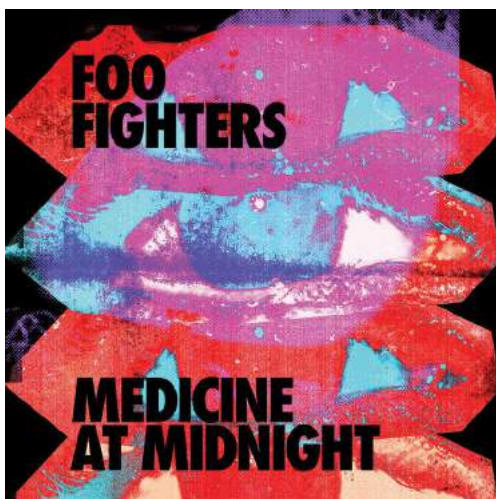
FACTOR

NOVA SCOTIA Canada



# FOO FIGHTERS

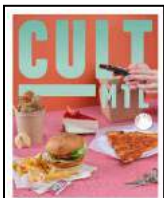
**MEDICINE AT MIDNIGHT**



**DISPONIBLE LE 5 / 2 / 2021**

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# Restaurant Guide



Kwizinn

BY CLAYTON SANDHU

It's that time of year again where we round up our favourite restaurants to share with you, our beloved readers.

It's something we look forward to because it gives us a chance to highlight places and people that have cooked us exceptional meals throughout the year. This year, we thought a lot about how to present our guide. This has been and continues to be an incredibly tough time for restaurants — ranking restaurants, even in a way that we see as uplifting, feels weird. At the same time, we thought this could be

an opportunity to highlight places, old and new, that have persevered through 2020, businesses that have adapted to the times and that have provided us with one of life's purest enjoyments: a well-cooked meal.

This guide isn't definitive — it doesn't even scratch the surface of all the wonderful restaurants in this city. It's simply a list of places we like and we think you'll like, too. Don't see your favourite spot? Tell us about it, tell your friends and most importantly — keep supporting it!

An unexpected product of 2020 was the creation of different types of restaurant formats. For the first time ever, high-end spots like Joe Beef and Jun I are offering delivery, making their

food the most accessible it's ever been. We've also seen a whole new business model spring up, what we're calling one-stop-shops. These businesses blur the lines between épicerie and restaurant, offering fresh produce, preserves and other sundries in addition to ready-to-eat or ready-to-make meals.

For all its bleakness, 2020 has revealed the resiliency of restaurants and has totally redefined what take-out food can be. Our restaurant scene is dramatically different from what it was in 2019, but it remains vibrant, innovative and, ultimately, delicious. So with that said, we hope this year's guide introduces you to a few new spots or reminds you to order from neighbourhood classics. Either way, we hope you enjoy a good meal. Bon appétit!



# Neighbourhood joints

BY CLAYTON SANDHU

Dedicated to our go-to neighbourhood spots. The ones that keep us well-fed day-in and day-out. These restaurants are significant, they're a large part of what we love about our neighbourhoods and we urge you to support them whenever possible.

## MILE END / OUTREMONT

### Thammada

Specializing in Northern-Thai street food, Thammada serves some of the city's finest Southeast Asian fare. Chef Chita Phonmavongxay's food evokes the casual conviviality of Thai street food while packing heaps of vibrancy and tradition into each dish. (Chkplz)

### Beau Temps

In the former Maïs space, Maïs co-owner William Cody along with business partners William Saulnier (ex. Hoogan and Beaufort) and Peter Popovic (Magpie, Sparrow) opened this casual sandwicherie that offers refined riffs on classic sangers, like a celeriac-cheesesteak. Saulnier has put together a list of fresh and quaffable wines fitting with Beau Temps's lively spirit. (Chkplz, Uber Eats)

### Larrys+

The Mile End staple updated and packaged for take-away (or delivery). Larrys utilitarian menu is now available out of the former Lawrence space — calling itself Larrys+ (with the + signifying the addition of the addictively good Lawrence burger). Alongside the extensive menu is a diverse wine list put together by sommelier Keaton Ritchie. (Chkplz)

### Pizza Toni

Building off the success of neighbouring Falafel Yoni, Pizza Toni is a fast-casual pizza joint that brings the NYC slice to Mile End. Using only the finest pepperoni (the kind that cups and pools) and Bianco DiNapoli tomatoes, Toni's serves immaculate pizza by the slice or by the pie. (Chkplz, SkipTheDishes)



Beau Temps

Yves Thibaut

Arthur’s Nosh Bar

The wildly popular Jewish-deli/brunch spot in St-Henri has adapted its model to deliver breakfast, lunch and other “noshes” — much to the delight of the residents of St-Henri. Pro tip: Batches of Arthur’s infamous ricotta pancake batter are available should you want to whip up a batch at home!

(Skip, DoorDash, Uber Eats, Chkplz)

Gentile Pizza Parlour

From the owners of the iconic Café Gentile comes this New York-style pizza parlour. While the swanky, Zébulon Perron-designed space is off-limits for now, the rigorously (like, seriously painstakingly researched) pies are flying out of the oven!

(DoorDash)

Kwizinn

Michael Lafaille and Claudia Fiorilli’s Haitian restaurant Kwizinn (which now has locations on the Plaza St-Hubert and in Verdun) serves some of the best Caribbean food in Montreal. Haitian classics like djon-djon rice and griot are done justice but Kwizinn is perhaps best known for its fried plantain burger.

(UEAT, Uber Eats)



Arthur's Nosh Bar





Mon Nan

## DOWNTOWN / CHINATOWN

### Thali

A staple for Concordia students on a budget, Thali is one of the most consistent and satisfying Indian restaurants in town. From a family with more than 30 years of experience running restaurants in the city, their thalis (priced as low as \$9.99) are some of the best deals in town.

(Uber Eats, DoorDash)

### Dobe & Andy

Run by second generation BBQ masters the Ku brothers, this Chinatown *Cha Chaan Teng* (Hong Kong-style diner) has secured a cult following. The BBQ is excellent but don't sleep on the daily specials — especially the braised beef stew.

(Chkplz, Uber Eats, DoorDash)

### Mon Nan

A Chinatown staple since the 1980's. Operated by second generation owner Joe Lee, Mon Nan is perhaps best known as a late-night hangout. Insiders opt for their delicious seafood dishes or their famously good Peking Duck.

(SkipTheDishes, DoorDash, Uber Eats)



Edmund, Edward and Eric Ku of Dobe & Andy

Mickael A. Bandassak



PLATEAU / PETITE-PATRIE

Darna Bistroquet

The Petite-Patrie mini-bistro serves refined dishes that cleverly marry the warm and fragrant flavours of North Africa with the comfort of a good French bistro. A neighbourhood joint if there ever was one.  
(Chkplz, UEAT)

Tri Express

Chef Tri Du's famously inventive sushi bar in Petit-Laurier continues to offer some of the neighbourhood's best rolls. Known for their bold makis and "new-style" sashimi, Tri Express is a consistent delight. Pick-up only.  
(514-528-5641, triexpressrestaurant.com)

CÔTE-DES-NEIGES / NDG

Dak Hing

This under the radar Cantonese BBQ joint in Côte-des-Neiges serves some of the most authentic Chinese BBQ in the city. While the classics (char siu, roast pork and roast duck) are sublime, Dak Hing deserves a special mention for their roasted chicken wings and delicious *Zhongzi* (sticky rice stuffed with peanuts or mung beans).  
(DoorDash, Uber Eats)



Darna

Gia Ba

This NDG Szechuan and Taiwanese spot has amassed a cult following over the years for its fiery flavours and hard to find regional specialties. The mapo tofu is a staple but don't miss the poached fish, loaded with chillies and peppercorns, for a true Szechuan experience.



Menu Extra





# Thanks for drinking local



Montreal's very own.



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ONE-STOP SHOPS

This section is dedicated to a new category of “groce-  
taurant” — a hybrid restaurant-épicerie. These businesses  
not only offer ready-made meals but also serve as specialty  
grocers stocked with hard-to-find, restaurant-quality  
products.

Bistro la Franquette

The first brick and mortar project from Pastel and Fantôme  
alumni Louie Deligianis, Renée Deschenes and Blake  
Hickerson. A through and through French Bistro serving  
classic French fare along with delicious sandwiches,  
homemade charcuterie (shout-out to the pâté en croûte) and  
some of the finest produce in all of Canada.

(DoorDash, 438-380-4545)

Salle Climatisée

A new project from Maison Publique Alumni. Salle Climatisée  
is a one-stop shop for all things good food. Need a snack?  
Grab a sausage-roll, looking for dinner — why not order a  
stuffed-trout for two? Planning for the rest of the week pick-  
up a ready-to-bake Tourte Verte. Pick-up only.

(salleclimatisee.com, 514-277-5504)

Beau Mont

Signé Toqué. The casual-fine dining sibling of Normand  
Laprise’s flagship Toqué is now operating as both an upscale  
take-out counter and specialty grocer. In their pantry you’ll  
find a range of homemade preserves, imported hazelnuts  
and whole black truffles among other things. A rare  
opportunity to stock your pantry with products from one of  
Canada’s best restaurants. Pick-up only.

(signe-toque.com, 514-270-8882)

Mise En Place

Perennial best-chef-list topper Danny Smiles launched his  
own meal-service company mid-pandemic. Mise en Place’s  
best feature, however, is it’s chef’s market section which  
offers a range of amazing products from fresh pasta to  
Iberian Bellota Jamón and ready-made dishes from the city’s  
best restaurants (hello McKiernan’s deep ‘n’ delicious cake).

(mymep.ca)

Conserva

Truly a one-stop-shop. Conserva stocks everything you  
might need and more. From pantry staples to fresh produce,  
meat, homemade charcuterie and plenty more, you’ll want  
for nothing. In addition to the grocery section, Conserva also  
serves a selection of sandwiches and ready-to-eat tarts.

(epicerie-conserva.business.site, 514-274-4777)



Beau Mont





Franquette

### Hélicoptère/Hélico

Hochelaga darling Hélicoptère (and sister café Hélico) offer a lavish all-day take-out menu that includes breakfast staples like yogurt and granola and heartier dishes like lamb gnocchi for two. Recently, they've added an épicerie section that stocks homemade pasta, dumplings, farm-fresh eggs and homemade bread among other things. Pick-up only. ([helicopteremtl.com](http://helicopteremtl.com), 514-543-4255)

### Tinc Set

Alma's Catalan roast chicken pivot is now officially a stand-alone business (located right next door). In addition to their wonderful roast chicken, Tinc Set also serves a range of sandwiches and Alma's famous churros. In their épicerie section, you'll find high-quality fresh produce (like mesclun from the Jardin Des Funambules), homemade butter and olive oil from Cellar Frisach, which was made exclusively for Alma and Tinc Set. (UEAT)



Mise En Place



# More delivery go-tos

## Pasta Casareccia 5843 Sherbrooke W.

This NDG institution has been serving Italians and non-Italians alike some of the best homemade pasta this side of nonna's kitchen since 1985. Even for those without deep Italian roots, Pasta Casareccia (which translates to “homemade pasta”) recreates that warm hug feeling of a hearty pasta bowl made with love. The comfort food standards like lasagna and spaghetti bolognese are there, but the counter is full of necessary goodies, too, so don't forget to pick up the meat-stuffed olives ascolana and pre-packaged cold cuts and cheeses. If you're in a real hurry, you can even grab microwave-friendly single-portion dishes to go. They even have wine, desserts and garlic bread to complete the night. If you're longing for a home-cooked meal, consider this the next best thing. Call for home delivery.

(DoorDash, Uber Eats, À la Carte Express, 514-483-1588) Erik Leijon

## Connie's Pizza 801 Charlevoix

Serving up fresh, quality comfort foods from the heart of Pointe St-Charles to the South West hoods of the city for over 50 years, Connie's serves up the type of Quebec diner fare that actually tastes as good as it looks on the menu. Even if pan pizza fell out of favour with your family after the brief (but delicious) '80s craze, Connie's deep dish hits all the right notes, and any pizza fanatic would be remiss not to try out the “Connie's Special” version — all dressed, with homemade meat sauce — at least once, regardless of any longstanding thin-crust bias held. Speaking of that meat sauce, Connie's spaghetti is a neighbourhood favourite, and their subs and clubs are on par with any self-respecting corner greasy spoon on the island. While I'd leave poutine to their neighbour, Paul Patate, the combos, pitas and pies at Connie's are sure to please. (514-932-2045) Darcy MacDonald

## Classic India 6914 Querbes

This Parc Ex hole in the wall, a few minutes south of the Jean-Talon restaurant strip by foot, has been serving some of the best Indian fare in the city since late 2018, building a strong word of mouth game before and during the pandemic. Rich, hearty, high-quality and vegetarian-friendly (albeit with a lot of meat dishes including pretty killer butter chicken and fish curry), the food never fails to satisfy. One dish I discovered at Classic India (and have since tried at other restaurants, only to be disappointed) is paneer bhurji, made with Indian cottage cheese, peppers and a tomato onion masala gravy — it's incredible. Put this on fries and you've got the ultimate Indian poutine. They also flavour their biryanis with a touch of dried fruit, adding a nice fructose kick to a generous starchy dish. Word to the mild, medium and spicy: When ordering, whether by phone or website for pick-up or via DoorDash, don't forget to choose your spice level.

(DoorDash, 438-387-7733) Lorraine Carpenter



Salle Climatisée

## HIGH-END TAKE-OUT

### Joe Beef à la maison

The name says it all. Montreal's most coveted table is now offering meals for two imbued with their signature bon vivant style. Opt for dishes like the chicken marsala or the rustic veal meatballs with *pommes Normande*. Of course you can't go wrong with the lobster spaghetti — a Joe Beef classic. While you're splurging, why not peruse the wines to go, a curated selection from one of the city's finest cellars.

joebeefshop.com

### Beba

The Verdun restaurant that is changing the game. Ari and Pablo Schor's restaurant is Argentinian but celebrates the Medditerranean current that has been a major influence in Argentine food. Rustic, homey dishes like the “beans and greens” or Puchero (a pot-au-feu you can eat with a spoon) will cure the winter blues, but Beba's incredible empanadas are what everyone is talking about.

(UEAT, SkipTheDishes)

### Menu Extra

From Top Chef Canada winner François Blais and *Les Chefs!* winner Camilo Lapointe Nascimento comes Menu Extra. While not a restaurant, per se, these two cooks create an evolving fixed menu of refined, often old-world restaurant classics delivered to your door. Currently on the menu, *caille en sarcophage* — a deboned quail, stuffed with duck and wrapped in puff-pastry. See what we mean?

(menuextra.ca, 514-378-7338)

### Jun I

Montreal's finest sushi restaurant — to go. Look, we know take-out sushi is nothing new, but chef Junichi Ikematsu's approach to sourcing fish is singular in Montreal. In addition to offering the best sushi in the city for delivery, Jun I also has made available a selection of privately imported sake. (UEAT)



# WARNING TASTY



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Uber Eats



# Beloved baker

BY CLAY SANDHU

Claire Saffitz is the internet’s baking crush. The YouTube sensation is a graduate of Harvard University, attended culinary school at École Grégoire-Ferrandi in Paris and holds a Master’s degree from McGill. These accolades aside, Claire is best known for her work as a recipe tester in *Bon Appétit*’s test kitchen. Specifically, she’s known for hosting the immensely popular segment *Gourmet Makes*, wherein she is tasked with replicating and improving upon junk-food classics (Twinkies, Pop-Tarts, Gushers, etc.).

More than just for her baking skills, Claire is adored for her public persona — equal parts best-friend-energy and the neurotic perfectionism of a mad genius. She’s endearing, inspiring and incredibly relatable but, overshadowed by her *Gourmet Makes* fame, is Claire Saffitz the culinary academic.

Saffitz is extremely knowledgeable, methodical and understands at a deep level what makes food good. She is also the author of a fantastic cookbook entitled *Dessert Person*, which was released in October 2020 by Clarkson Potter.

I wanted to know more about what the world’s most beloved baker thought about our city and our food culture and to hear her reflect on her time spent in Montreal. Earlier this week I caught up with Claire — we talked about *Dessert Person* and Canada’s Harvard and attempted to put an end to the Fairmount vs. St. Viateur debate.

**Clay Sandhu:** Obviously, when you were writing *Dessert Person*, you never could have imagined it being released at a time like this. Are there any unexpected silver linings of a pandemic book launch?

**Claire Saffitz:** Having the book come out when it did was a nice way to end the year, which was overall — for many reasons — very challenging. It also was good timing because it coincided with the weather getting colder and people not having a whole lot to do except stay home and bake. It was a happy event for a lot of reasons, and it’s been great to see people bake from it!

**Sandhu:** Cookbooks, in general, are having a bit of a renaissance, but a lot of cookbooks are really cooking-and-lifestyle or cooking-and-travel books. *Dessert Person* is really a true-to-form cookbook.

**Saffitz:** It’s super teaching-focused. The subtitle is “recipes and guidance for baking with confidence.” I really wanted it to be a book that gave home bakers every advantage that it could. One of the messages implied in the book is that baking is hard. I think it’s a little disingenuous when so-called experts talk about how easy and effortless it is — it’s actually really hard. You have to work really hard at it to be even remotely good. The book is a lot about knowledge-sharing, setting people up for success and also managing expectations. If people aren’t baking from it, it’s like, what was the point of writing it?

**Sandhu:** Your book manages to achieve an incredible thing: capturing the joy of baking through recipes. What’s something you bake solely for the enjoyment of making and eating it?



Claire Saffitz

**Saffitz:** The most baking for pleasure that I do is sourdough baking and bread baking — and that’s because I like to eat it. Unlike a lot of my recipe tests, which are desserts or sweets, I’m tasting but not really consuming it. Bread baking is a practice I find both therapeutic and is something that is nourishing and that I really do like to eat. There’s something very restorative and soothing about putting my hands in flour.

**Sandhu:** There’s a common bias in the food world that says cooks don’t bake. In my experience, there’s some truth to that but there are a few categories of baking that all cooks seem to rally around: sourdough bread, anything en croûte and puff pastry. Why do you think these get a pass?

**Saffitz:** I suppose because these are the things that have the most savoury applications within the pastry or bread world. Baking is a science but it can also be a practice of sorts and it can also be improvisational and creative. That’s the argument the book is making, but you have to follow a certain set of rules. I understand why people have this concept that baking and cooking are separate disciplines and don’t really meet, but of course there’s a ton of overlap. I wish that more cooks embraced pastry techniques and just saw it as an extension of what they’re already doing.

**Sandhu:** You lived in Montreal for a year while completing a Master’s degree in French Culinary History at McGill. As a Harvard graduate, do you think McGill’s reputation as the Harvard of Canada holds up?

**Saffitz:** (Laughs) It’s really hard to say! An undergraduate experience is so different from a graduate experience. So... no comment, because I don’t really have any idea. I loved McGill! I thought that there was a real combination of rigour but also openness. I chose that program for a few reasons

but one major reason was because of professor Brian Cowan. I admired his work and found it fascinating. Working with him, I was able to do the *most* fun projects and read incredible texts — like cookbooks from the early modern era. It was definitely my most satisfying and rich academic experience.

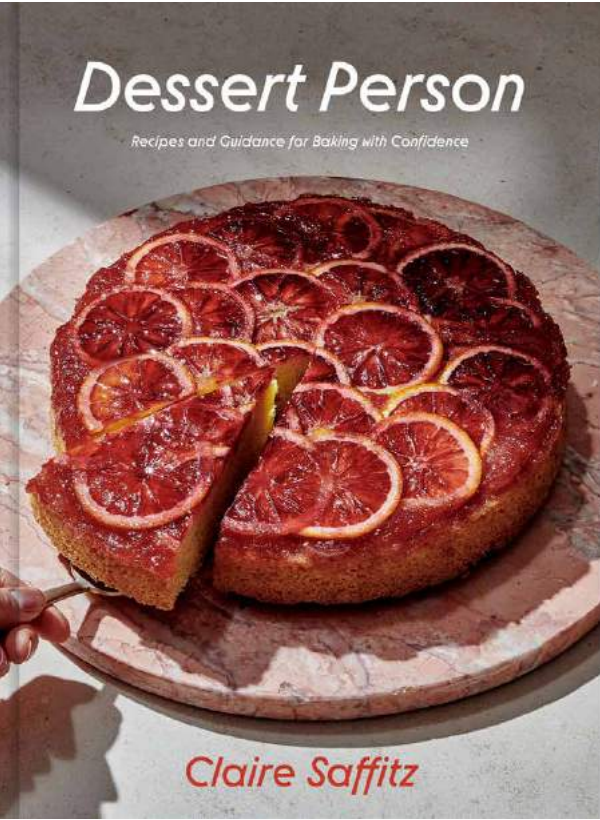
**Sandhu:** What’s a memory from your time in Montreal that stands out?

**Saffitz:** (Laughs) Well — one thing that stands out in my memory was a week where it didn’t get above -27 C for the entire week. I had to stop wearing eye makeup. I would be walking to class, which took maybe 15 minutes, and my eyes would water and the tears would freeze on my eyelashes and then as soon as I went into a hot building, it would melt and run down my face. It was just something I’d never experienced before. I did a lot of travelling around the city — mostly visiting markets and butcher shops — I cooked a *ton* that year. I basically made three meals a day for myself. Visiting Jean-Talon Market at least once a week, having a coffee in Little Italy on my way there. It became clear to me from the very beginning that Montreal is a city that takes food, and particularly ingredients, very seriously. For me, it was a really nice transition back to North America when I finished culinary school in Paris. I moved from New York to Paris and then Paris to Montreal — and then Montreal back to New York. It was a fantastic experience all around.

**Sandhu:** There’s this inside joke we have in Montreal about how often New Yorkers (Americans in general, really) compare Montreal to Paris — or at least comment on it having a certain European feel. As someone who has lived in all three cities, what’s your opinion?

**Saffitz:** I mean, I wonder if that’s because people are





spending time, first and foremost, in Old Montreal, which has that look. I don't think of it that way. Going from Europe to Montreal, it's very much its own place. At least to me. (Montreal) is unique, culturally, from anywhere that I've been. To me they're all very different food towns. Paris, it goes without saying, is in many ways unrivalled, but it's a town that is very assured of its own supremacy when it comes to food and is not terribly adventurous. In culinary school, we had a wine instructor named Agnès who loved to talk about how the French carried tradition around like a ball

and chain. I think there's a lot of truth to that — it's a place very beholden to its traditions and food history. New York is, in so many ways, the opposite. It's a place of innovation and experimentation and incredible diversity. I love living in New York and it's my city of choice for many reasons — one of them is because it's incredible to have so many different types of cuisines that are so accessible. Montreal, I think, is somewhere in between and is a really interesting fusion of different cultures and cuisines. I love Montreal because it felt very approachable and friendly and welcoming. And also very proud of its food traditions and past but not in a way that they're so limited by it.

**Sandhu:** There's another pastry chef and baker making waves in New York — a friend of yours, Natasha Pickowicz, who also has roots in Montreal. Natasha, of course, started her baking career at Lawrence. Do you think it's merely a coincidence that two of New York's most celebrated pastry chefs spent time in Montreal?

**Saffitz:** Natasha and I have spoken about it. I think there's probably something there (laughs) — I don't exactly know what to say about it. She and I are going to have to talk about it further maybe. One thing I love about Montreal cuisine is that it's very unapologetic — there's such a sense of pleasure around food. I think being in Montreal helps develop that.

**Sandhu:** Are there any places — bakeries or restaurants — that are significant to your time in Montreal?

**Saffitz:** I would go to Beauty's a lot — which was so dear and I loved so much. I was sad to hear about the owner. I felt so at home at that place. I had a couple of extremely memorable meals at Joe Beef, one with a very good friend of mine — we were in culinary school together in Paris. She had stayed in Paris for quite a while after culinary school and I had already moved to Montreal. She was moving back to L.A. and came to visit me on her way back to the West Coast and her chef in Paris was friends with the Joe Beef guys and told them we were coming. That was the first time I had ever really been blown-out at a restaurant. I could not believe how much

we ate as two people. It was summer and we were sitting outside at one of the picnic tables. I had never experienced anything like that. I think that was also one of my first times drinking natural wine, which I got into in Montreal.

**Sandhu:** I'm not going to ask you to compare Montreal and New York bagels but I would like you to weigh in on a long-standing debate: Fairmount or St. Viateur?

**Saffitz:** I am afraid that I'm going to give an extremely unsatisfactory answer to this question. I think generally, my answer was Fairmount — but I didn't really care. I just went to the one that had the shortest line. Because you know what? To me, the singular pleasure of a Montreal bagel is that every time I went there, it was warm. There is no more delicious baked good than a warm baked good — no matter what it is. Even if that baked good, when it cools off, is terrible. So, I have to say, I wasn't approaching it with a level of connoisseurship, I was just approaching it like, "Oh my God, I get to eat this warm bagel with cream cheese." So I'm afraid the nuances of what separates them were lost on me.

**Sandhu:** I've noticed that, in many contemporary restaurants, dessert is often the first corner cut. A lot of times you either see some over-intellectualized vegetables-as-dessert thing or just a puddle of custard with some crispy bits on top. Do you think we're poised to see a return to classic desserts?

**Saffitz:** I get disappointed and frustrated often by those kinds of dishes because rarely do I find something so intellectual to be as delicious as something like a piece of lemon tart — or even a brownie. First and foremost, something has to be delicious. I don't think it has to be a return to nostalgic desserts or only layer-cakes and pies, but I think that the pendulum is always going to swing back to deliciousness.

→ Dessert Person is available locally at Appetite for Books (388 Victoria). To watch Claire make New York-style bagels, check out her first [video](#) in the brand-new New York Times Test Kitchen.

**FRANCHEMENT**

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# music

## A matter of life and death



Besnard Lakes

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

To borrow a metaphor from one of the band's previous album titles, the Besnard Lakes are the dark horse of Montreal's maximalist rock scene.

In the aughts, they existed on the periphery of the local scene explosion, closer in sound and spirit to the city's post-rock set, not to mention the shoegaze revival that was just starting to emerge. In the 2010s they continued to release critically revered epics and play shows of even more mammoth sonic and experiential proportions, earning a faithful cult following.

Near the end of the last decade, they felt they'd lost their way creatively, largely due to outside pressure. But now the Besnard Lakes — currently made up of principals Jace Lasek and Olga Goreas alongside Kevin Laing, Sheenah Ko, Robbie MacArthur and Richard White — have found new life with a record inspired by death.

Their sixth album, *Are the Last of the Great Thunderstorm Warnings*, was released at the end of January. Its beginnings took root in 2016, and its concept presented itself with the terminal illness and death of Lasek's father. It was a profound and confusing experience that naturally prompted thoughts of Lasek's own mortality and that of his partner Goreas, who had lost her own father in 2013.

"I almost feel like talking about it in interviews is good therapy," Lasek says when asked whether it's tough to revisit grief while promoting and performing an album. "People go through their whole lives and never talk about the death of their father and I'm yammering on about it to anyone who'll listen.

"It felt like a psychedelic experience watching this person die. He had cancer, he died slowly — it took like a year and a half. He was a proud guy, and he didn't talk much about his feelings so I would just be staring at him wondering what was going through his head."

"Now I'm talking to people, like, 'Oh, this really touched me because my father died of COVID.' It doesn't make it any

better but I feel like if some people are saying that it's helped them a little bit, it's really touching. We're honoured.

"I ended up writing 'Dark Side of Paradise,' which is a love song to Olga, basically asking, 'What are we going to do when we get old? What happens then, and how come nobody's told us what to do?' There should be a Death 101 where people get to learn how to deal with these things because nobody really knows.

"There are some cultures that celebrate death — people are still grieving but it's looked at a little bit differently. It would've made things a lot easier for my family if it were more like a celebration that this person has had a good life and gone on to something else. The grieving process can be so insane if you aren't prepared for it. But in the end I feel like I've come out pretty strong through the whole thing."

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As a band, being dropped by their label Jagjaguwar gave them time for some existential reflection. What they realized was that they were free. "We love Jagjaguwar," Lasek says. "It was our first and only label, and Darius, who runs the label, is kind of like a father figure to us, but in the end we knew it was for the best.

"Aside from the 17-minute-long drone at the end (of the album), there's probably about 10 minutes of ambient drone littered throughout, and I don't think we would've had the guts to do that if we were on Jag. I feel like those moments on the record were absolutely necessary in order to make the whole piece coherent.

"We initially had the record mastered as one track and we were just gonna put it on Apple Music for \$3 and be like, 'Fuck you, here's an hour and 17 minutes of music, and you have to listen to the whole thing from front to back,' which we know nobody will. But (our management) started sending the record out to some labels and Flemish Eye in Canada, Fat Cat in America and Full-time Hobby in the U.K. jumped on board. We were like, 'Holy shit!' We went from nothing to suddenly having three labels that were super excited about the record."

Not only did the labels agree to back the album, they're

supporting the prohibitively expensive manufacturing of a double vinyl LP with a gatefold sleeve.

"They were like 'Sure, just do it,' and we were like, 'Really? But we're old, like we're not relevant anymore, nobody gives a shit!' We thought for sure that we would finish the record and put it out on our own and then maybe do some touring. But people are still interested, and we just feel blessed. It's amazing, the fact that we can still do this after 13 years. We don't make a living doing it but we still have tons of fun, and it keeps us sane."

Lasek feels equally blessed to pay the bills by making other people's music. His work mixing and producing records has only increased as COVID has driven Montreal musicians into creative mode. "I'm just as busy as I've ever been. It's also cool because I still get to see what the young kids are up to, and the young kids still call me, which is awesome."

Seeing Besnard Lakes live is one of the pleasures that Montreal music fans have to look forward to after COVID. As Lasek put it: "Everybody's just gonna be like, 'Oh yeah, I'll go to that show, I don't care. I'll be out every night!' The first six months, people are going to go nuts!"

In the meantime, despite the difficulty musicians with day jobs are facing as they try to rehearse with a curfew in place, the band is going all out with three ticketed streaming shows, one in February, one in March, one in April.

"When we decided we were going to do this, the plan was to rehearse our faces off and try to be in a position like we've been on tour for three weeks already. We're super tight and ready to rumble. We're going to have our goofy lights and strobes and lasers and fogs. We don't want to be like, 'Oh, we're just jamming in our jam space, come have a beer with us.' It's like here's a show, this is going to be full-on."

→ To buy tickets for the Besnard Lakes streaming shows on Feb. 5, March 6 and/or April 3, please visit [noonchorus.com/the-besnard-lakes](https://noonchorus.com/the-besnard-lakes). The price is \$13 per show, with a 48-hour re-broadcast, or \$30 for all three.



# THE PRETTY RECKLESS




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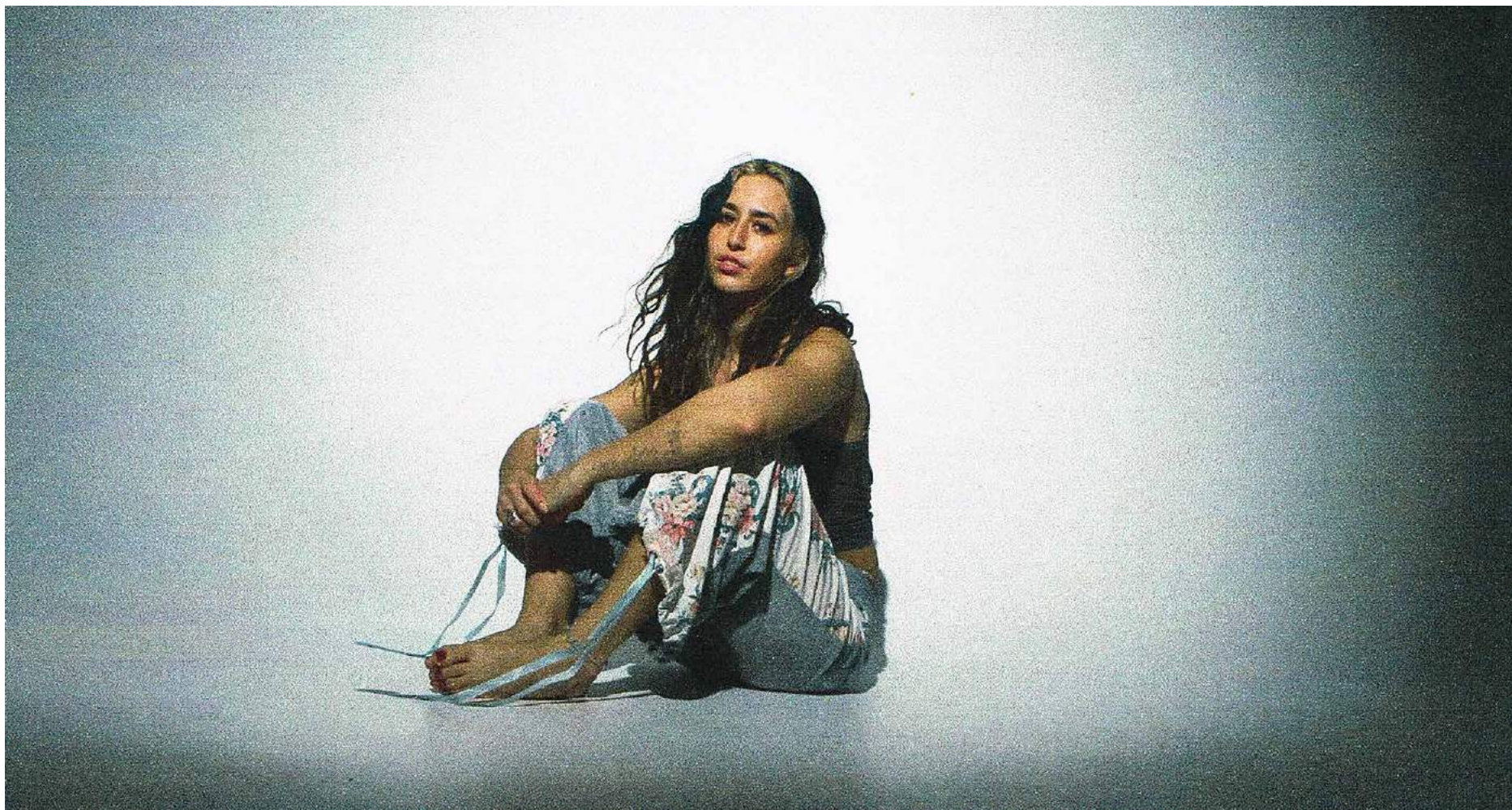
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# Deeper shade of solo



Emma Beko

BY DARCY MACDONALD

Emma Beko has grown to learn that growing up was hard to do.

At 29, the lyricist, singer, rapper and songwriter previously best recognized as one half of vocal duo Heartstreets, reconciles the trauma of growing up with the anxiety of actually becoming herself on her debut solo project *BLUE*, which dropped on the final Friday of January.

“Originally, I thought it was gonna be about heartbreak and love, because I was going through heartbreak when I first started thinking about it. And there’s actually not a single song on the project that’s about that,” Beko said.

“Maybe four or five years ago, I knew I was gonna make this. I knew I would make a solo project and it would be called *BLUE*. I was thinking about it a lot and I slowly started writing. Even the first few songs I wrote ended up becoming Heartstreets songs because I wasn’t ready to go on my own.”

As she grew closer with Montreal producer Beau Geste (with whom Heartstreets collaborated on 2019’s *Why Make Sense*), Beko found creative kinship in shared anxieties as they worked together in her home studio.

“When I started doing the sessions two years ago and working on *BLUE* more concretely, I was putting all of my anxiety into my songs. I have really intense anxiety. And JP does, as well. So it was fun because we could definitely bond that way. Even our musical references, like, we listened to a lot of XXXTentacion and Lil Peep, and like, emo, dark, trappy rap.”

She recalls creating one song, “Party,” a collaboration with her friend, Quebec hip hop mainstay Rymz, in the wake of the XXX’s 2018 murder.

“Rymz had shown me XXXTentacion’s music at a SOCAN writing camp. When I heard he died, I was so upset because I’d only known his music for about three months. It makes me so sad that all these people I really enjoy are dying. For X it was violence, others it’s overdoses. It’s fucked up, because ultimately a lot of it is about mental health.”

The songs that make up *BLUE*, Beko explained, help her understand what the actual process of growing up is really all about once people achieve the maturity we commonly take for granted as a natural evolution to adulthood.

“Coming from adolescence, you’re kind of like, what the fuck am I supposed to be? JP is a bit younger than me and was consuming a lot of music from younger people, which helped bring me back in that mindset.

“So *BLUE* is really about me growing up and then realizing all these things, and coping with them the ways I could in those moments and then realizing those maybe weren’t the healthiest ways. But also acknowledging that we get through things the way we do, and that we’re resilient.”

*BLUE*, Beko explains, is not an album or an EP or any of the semantics-based categories that she hates ascribing to music. She reasons instead that these are nine songs that simply exist together in the harmony by which they were conceived.

And that’s true. While Heartstreets fans will hardly be

disappointed, *BLUE* is fundamentally disparate from Beko’s previous duo work with bandmate Gab Godon (who has also been releasing solo material this year as Laroie).

It’s tempting to call the collection of tracks here dark or moody, but it’s more accurate to say they ring with honesty and a sense of joy that is not cynical, despite the themes Beko explores. The sensibilities of a woman and rap fan who came of age in the *good kid*, *m.A.A.d city* era are obvious.

“It’s the first time I’ve put out music that’s 100% me, that I feel that I’m really presenting myself raw and honest to the world in what I like to do. It’s really liberating,” Beko revealed.

“I create intuitively. I don’t really know what I do when I’m doing it. Sometimes with Beau Geste there will be just a sound, and the sound feels nostalgic to me. It brings me back somewhere and words come out. And then after I’m, like, shit. I had this to say.

“When I talk about anxiety in my songs, most of my anxiety stems from fear. When people hear it, I feel like we’ll be united in fear. But by being united, we’ll feel stronger,” Beko said.

“We shouldn’t live in fear. But it is omnipresent, and we can’t deny that. I feel a certain goodness when I’m with Beau Geste and I’m talking about a song or a line and he’s like, ‘That really resonates with me.’

“I’ll be like, ‘You feel that way, too?’”

“That feels good. That makes me less scared. Because I was already scared of being scared.”



# Deconfined mind

BY DARCY MACDONALD

No one will ever accuse Kid Koala of being boring.

Whether he's DJing for robots, MCing for dancing marionettes, creating auditory atmospheres for artists to invent in, making records, co-producing certified hip hop classics, animating books and cartoons, scoring films or developing his ever-expanding repertoire of turntable orchestration stage spectacles, the Kid has stayed in the picture, at home in Montreal and around the globe, for decades.

And while you'd have to ask his wife and two young daughters if they'd agree, one speculates that he couldn't be a more interesting dude to be confined with during a pandemic.

"Spending time at home (this year) definitely has a silver lining for me because I haven't spent this much time at home in easily 20 years, not for a spell this long," Koala said by phone on the evening of the U.S. presidential inauguration. "My wife is American and she was tearing up today. There does seem to be a lightness to the Force.

"But yeah, hanging out with the family and starting to work on projects here that are kind of the slow-cookers — the ones that require a lot of time, like animation, or developing a board game or something that requires a lot of play testing and redesigning — has been great. That stuff is harder to get into a groove on if you're leaving every weekend on tour."

Serendipitously enough, Koala jumped off a Patreon channel just two weeks before shutdowns began last March. There, he's able to share creations and foster community, notably with his near-monthly Music to Draw to sessions, a popular Montreal nightlife event now manifesting itself as an online hangout for graphic artists and fans worldwide.

"It was originally gonna be eight weeks!" he laughed. "Now, it's like *Cheers*, people coming in and saying hi to each other and checking in as they work. At first my wife and I weren't sure if we should keep the chat on, but it's been a good tool for connection with people who otherwise aren't able to socialize much, for obvious reasons."

Coming up next on his busy at-home agenda, Kid Koala partners with Place des Arts and the National Arts Centre's BIG BANG Festival for Robot House Party. Happening on Feb. 14, it's a web-based version of the popular family-oriented activity that he and his team has regularly hosted on tour stops.

And the concept is exactly as-advertised: make a robot outfit with whatever you have around the house and dance.

"I think the first (live) one we did was here, at POP Montreal, and then we brought it to different cities around the world, to places like Abu Dhabi, New Orleans and Chapel Hill. It was meant as a fun weekend event to get families out. Robots of all ages, actually! And for this one, you can use all your mail order boxes," Koala added.

Koala and his team have gone to great lengths to ensure this isn't just another boring Zoom.

"R&D on our side aimed to kinda figure out how we'd get that group dancefloor feeling at home," he explained. "We hacked our own streaming system to where we actually have cameras pointing at screens, because we were trying to work with the latency. Normally, we'd have dancers animating the event in person, so we had to figure out how to get them on screen, in sync with the music. The idea is to not just feel like a broadcast but to get the feeling of a bunch of people partying together. We got it as good as we can get it so people aren't just looking at, like, what kind of light fixture you have, or whatever."



Kid Koala

Corinn Merrell

Kids and families who participated in a previous, Abu Dhabi-based edition seemed to enjoy the overall effect.

"It's kind of like going to a sports event and seeing your face on the Jumbotron," Koala offered.

Surrounded as they are by constant creativity (his wife, Corrine, works as a set designer), Kid Koala reckons his children will outpace their parents artistically before long.

"The kids are gonna design circles around us. They're gonna have so much visual information and stuff that we just didn't have. I think about it like, even when I was learning how to scratch as a kid, there was no YouTube, there were no turntable teachers. That wasn't part of the conservatory or anything. I remember finding a battle video in London, in Camden. We were there with the family and (I realized) this was where they held the DMCs. I got the video and it was in (U.K. standard) PAL format. I bought it anyway because I'd never seen the battle videos in Canada, so I brought them back, and of course it didn't play on VHS. So then I had to pay again to have it transferred. And I just watched it and watched it and watched it and watched it, looking at that same thing — the references. How are they making those

sounds, and how's he doing that technique? Now, as long as you know where to look, you can pretty much find a really specific tutorial."

Indeed, the therapeutic value of creating for imagination's own sake has always been the driving force behind Kid Koala's ever-ticking, perhaps-a-little-insane membrane.

"In a way, art has always been like a coping exercise for me. Something that I would do even from a young age. And my earliest memories of that, I remember drawing as a way for me to escape into the demented world of my creation and just enjoy the process of having an adventure. Even if it's just an imaginary one that you draw on a piece of paper with a pencil," Koala mused.

"I think you just kinda scroll through your Rolodex of experiences in your brain, or things you're just kind of interested in, and those get fused into your work somehow."

→ Kid Koala's Robot House Party takes place on Sunday, Feb. 14, 1 p.m., free. Registration is required: [nac-cna.ca](http://nac-cna.ca)



# Split personality

BY MR. WAVVY

Slowthai is making the best of a bad situation.

He sits in a room surrounded by shelves filled with Nike shoeboxes. “I’m in a war bunker!” he jokes. In reality, he’s holed up in his residence in the town of Northampton, England, knocking out press for his forthcoming second studio album *TYRON* (his first name).

Putting together an album was a strange situation for the rapper, to say the least. “It’s definitely weird, man,” he explains. “But considering making music tends to be isolating anyways, it’s like, I’m kind of used to being stuck inside.”

Slowthai was fortunate enough to put together much of the project before pandemic restrictions came into place, securing collaborations with the likes of James Blake, Skepta and A\$AP Rocky.

This will be the first album he releases via AWGE, Rocky’s label. “Rocky had come to a show in L.A. I was like, ‘How the fuck is he here?’ He was in the green room and came over and was like, ‘Yo bro, your album’s hard.’ I was high as shit! I was so high, I couldn’t believe it.”

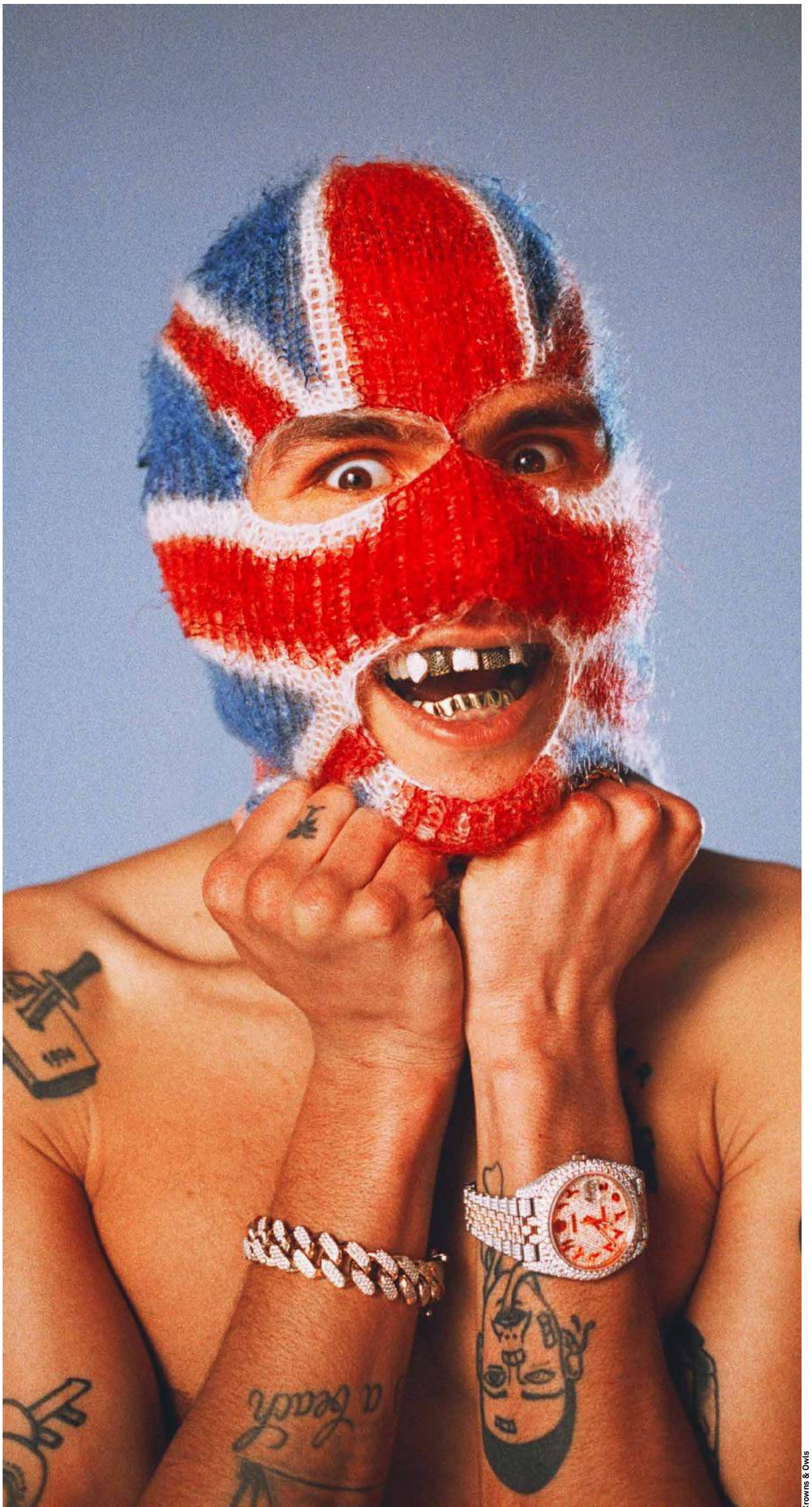
*TYRON* is carefully crafted into two halves, its track list split between all caps and all lower case titles. “The first half is all in your face, that’s the Slowthai that everybody knows. Or the one they want, who they think I am continuously. The second half, it’s more me, stripped back, not that obnoxious, aggressive, loud motherfucker. I’m more chilled.”

It took a long time for the rapper to get to this chill state of mind. Slowthai began the pandemic on a vacation in Thailand and returned to find himself in a very dark place.

“I was going through what I was going through. I was tripping off of the shrooms, and that enhances all that, your insecurities and negative things. I was thinking, ‘Fuck everybody.’ At the beginning, I was in a lower place.”

Thankfully, his creative process and some self-reflection helped him lift himself from a near-suicidal state. “I think through doing this project, it helped me get things out that I would have kept to myself. It’s definitely pulled me out of that dark fucking spot and opened my eyes, reinstalled the lust for life because at one point, I was thinking, ‘Fuck all this shit.’ I just wanted it to be done.”

The rapper reveals that Skepta was among one of the most helpful people in getting him the help he needed. “Man just grabbed me by the collar of my shirt and pulled me up...He was like, ‘Yo bro, this is your defining moment.’ And then we made ‘CANCELLED’; then and there. It was fun making that song. It was bouncing back and forth, not too much writing or sitting down. Just visualizing it and then just recording it — easy.”



Slowthai

Crowns & Owls



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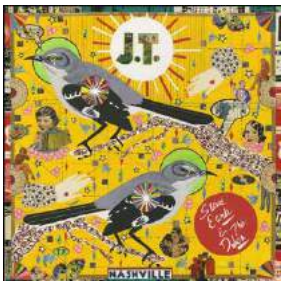
# Album reviews

Presented by **SUNRISE**  
RECORDS



Guillaume Bordel, *Mini Album* (independent)  
The term folk-rock has more or less been robbed of meaning by the everlasting spectre of the Eagles and their peaceful, easy feeling, but it's hard to describe the sound of Guillaume Bordel's latest EP as anything

but, even if there's not much crossover between Topanga Canyon hippies and Bordel. Ragged, garage-y production (by simpatico "folk-rock" Dany Placard) bolster his wordy, introspective songwriting. The EP stretches out into more overtly psychedelic zones (such as the spacey ballad "Chat"), touches on Nirvana-style hooks with "Au soleil" and even makes space for a grandiose stoner break at the midpoint of "Ça va ben," but it's Bordel's dense songwriting that takes the wheel here. 8/10 Trial Track: "Au soleil" (Alex Rose)



Steve Earle and the Dukes, *J.T.* (New West)  
When musician Justin Townes Earle died of a suspected overdose last summer, it wasn't too long before his father announced that he would release a tribute album as he had for his two late pals Townes Van Zandt and Guy

Clark. There's, of course, an unfathomable sadness to paying tribute to the songs of your own son when he has succumbed to the demons that also plagued you for decades, and in that respect, *J.T.* is a rough experience for any fan of either (or, in my case, both) of the Earles. Earle Sr. favours straight-ahead bluegrass-adjacent readings for many of the versions, stripping away some of his son's experimentations with Memphis soul in order to let the songs speak for themselves. It's a rough, emotional listen — though never more than on the album's last song and sole original, "Last Words." It is exactly what it sounds like, and I have not been able to listen to the whole thing yet. 8/10 Trial Track: "Lone Pine Hill" (Alex Rose)



Asiahn, *The Interlude* (Motown)  
Ever since her breakthrough appearance on Dr. Dre's 2015 *Compton* album, R&B sensation Asiahn has been silently making moves. On her Motown debut, the singer once known as Asia Bryant affirms herself as a soon-to-be monumental force in

baby-making music, her sultry voice providing the perfect soundtrack to any bedroom getaway. Asiahn is stripped down both vocally and lyrically, letting out all of her deepest vulnerabilities on wax for our listening pleasure. 7.5/10 Trial Track: "Messed Up" (Mr. Wavvy)

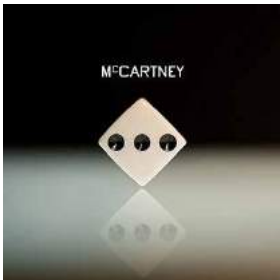
Alex Burger, *Sweet Montérégie* (Big in the Garden)

Lots of comparisons have been drawn between Alex Burger and the titans of Quebec chanson: Faulkner, Charlebois et al. But like the work of Bon Enfant (the outfit in which Burger



handles bass duties), it's hard to call this any kind of specific pastiche, or dub him "the millennial Charlebois." Straddling the oft-invisible lines between country, garage rock, funky pop and introspective singer-songwriter material, Burger channels the general spirit of the '70s without presenting

an overt bit of nostalgic worship. If the album defies easy definition, its easy-going summer vibes are certainly welcome in the coldest part of the most despairing winter in memory. 7/10 Trial Track: "La randonnée" (Alex Rose)



Paul McCartney, *McCartney III* (Capitol)  
Okay, whether or not you believe in a god of creation, just imagine there is one for a second. Then picture what it would be like if it just kept inventing new stuff. Most of it would probably be like, "Oh, gee, uh, green feathers

on cats? Okay!" But once in a while, it would really knock one out the park and you'd be like, "Damn, God! Good lookin'!" No one will argue Sir Paul's rock deity status. But neither will anyone imagine that this — his third entirely solo album in a numbered, eponymous series that began 50 years ago, right after the Beatles broke up — is likely to be his finest work. That said, as far as rock albums recorded by isolated 79-year-olds during a pandemic, it's totally the best. Aside from one song about male models that would best have been left in the "unfinished '80s coke bender" pile, few of the other 10 songs here are a miss, and at least two of them hit Fab Four greatness. There's a little too much low-note voice tampering on some tracks, but that's really only noticeably unfortunate if compared to some of the songs here that feature vintage, airy, playful Macca vocal heights of yore. Above all, *III* showcases a master at play, clearly enjoying himself as the outside world burned. Who cares if it's dad rock? It's McCartney. 7/10 Trial Track: "Seize the Day" (Darcy MacDonald)



Misc, *Partager l'ambulance* (Bonsound)  
The local act fka Trio Jérôme Beaulieu is channelling the intensity of our current collective predicament into something incendiary, but instead of stark boots-on-the-ground storytelling, the absurdity of our brush with

the end-times calls for clever experimentation and wild playing over a steady groove. There's a preacher sample from the jump that's a bit too hellfire and brimstone, but the rest rides confidently on a rollercoaster of despair and disbelief. The high water freakout from William Côté, Simon Pagé and Jérôme Beaulieu is a reimagined-yet-somehow faithful cover of Suuns' "X-ALT," now an unhinged metro ride through a crumbling psyche. 7/10 Trial Track: "X-ALT" (Erik Leijon)



Weezer, *OK Human* (Atlantic)  
Every few albums, Weezer put a pause on their insufferable trolling to release an unironically good album. Luckily for fans, *OK Human* is one of the good ones. The album was created entirely through analogue and uses a 38-piece orchestra. A

beautiful string section helps bring Cuomo's signature savvy songwriting to a brand new dimension. Simply put, this is nothing like the band has ever released before. Look out for Weezer's return to trolling this May with *Van Weezer*, a Halen-inspired album built around cool guitar solos. 7/10 Trial Track: "Aloo Gobi" (Mr. Wavvy)



Arlo Parks, *Collapsed in Sunbeams* (Transgressive)  
At only 20 years of age, musician/poet Arlo Parks boasts a sound that would take other artists years to fully pin down. Her unique twist on indie rock, bedroom pop and spoken-word poetry is on full display on this highly

anticipated debut LP. The young Brit weaves influences from genres like funk, soul, folk, trip hop and jazz. Traces of artists as diverse as Portishead, the Cure, Lily Allen, Erykah Badu and Nujabes (even name-dropping the late Japanese beatmaker on "For Violet"), can also be heard throughout. Parks showcases her knack for catchy melodies and frank storytelling, with a voice that's essentially a Billie Eilish/Martina Topley-Bird hybrid. Tracks like the previously released "Black Dog" and "Green Eyes," as well as the excellent album closer "Portra 400," tackle subject matter like depression, same-sex relationships and drug use in visceral, intimate detail. Parks would be an even better artist if she would let loose and experiment a bit more, but *Collapsed in Sunbeams* is a strong statement of intent from this young West Londoner. 8/10 Trial Track: "Black Dog" (Dave MacIntyre)



Pharoahe Monch/th1rt3en, *A Magnificent Day for an Exorcism* (Fat Beats)  
Let's start with a few positive points here before we get down to brass tacks. Pharoahe Monch is, without hyperbole, a hip hop legend. He has as enviable a rap resumé as an artist could assemble. His lyrical prowess

is undeniable. His catalogue has hitherto been nearly flawless and contains at least one universally acknowledged, certified classic LP. He's an underground pioneer with a reclusive side that generally lends an exciting edge to his approximately twice-per-decade reemergences. In the wake of MF DOOM's passing, there might not be another fan favourite MC quite like Monch alive today. So one really, really has to question why, as far into the 21st century as we are, he would elect to come back with a rap-rock album. Admittedly, Monch has always had an aggressive edge to his post-Organized Konfusion output, but never one that has necessitated this answer to a "what if?" scenario that literally nobody has pondered since, generously speaking, the year 2000. A song or two? Sure. A whole album, complete with a guest appearance by Cypress Hill, who can really ruin an otherwise bad idea of this caliber quite well on their own? It's unfortunate. There are some good songs here. Sadly, they get dragged down by the sluggish self-indulgence of the big picture. 5/10 Trial Track: "Goats Head" (Darcy MacDonald)



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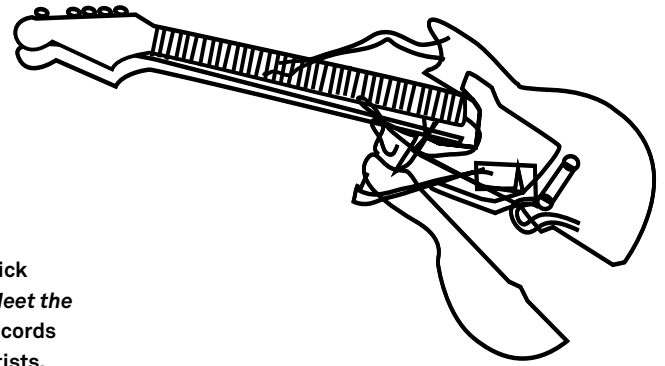
BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

I was on the phone with a friend recently when he stopped me in mid-sentence and queried about the music I was playing in the background. I told him the synth drive and screaming Texan drawl that was greeting his ear was none other than musical miscreants the Residents, specifically their new panoramic box set, Cube-E Box. He quickly fired back, “Oh, the eyeball band.”

While the image of wearing giant eyeballs on their shoulders has indeed bubbled up into the corners of mainstream culture, not many can point to the giant leaps they’ve made for underground music and art. Since their inception in the early ’70s, this “eyeball band” have thumbed their noses at celebrity culture throughout their lengthy career by operating in the shadows of anonymity while trailblazing avant-garde music with cutting edge

theatre. Their label Ralph Records remains a maverick among artist-run indie labels since they released *Meet the Residents* in 1972 and have now released over 30 records from the Residents and many other avant-garde artists. While remaining ahead of the curve with technology — mounting numerous themed tours with daring and cutting edge production — the Residents have documented both their early and recent film experiments as well as live shows with nine DVDs.

What we get with their most recent release, *Cube-E Box*, is a seven-CD set with exhaustive notes documenting their 1989/1990 live shows, along with plenty of extras. The centrepiece of the set is the three-act play that they performed on the tour starting with the deconstructed country of *Buckaroo Blues* into the bluesy tourist pamphlet from Dementia 13 titled *Black Barry* before closing things out with the brilliant third act that would tell the tale of the man who would be king, Elvis Presley, with the epic *The Baby King*. These three acts make up the first three CDs with a ton of extras, CDs four and five pick up with the San Francisco live recordings of the three pieces while their take on the Elvis canon, *The King & Eye*, takes up CD six, before closing things off with all of the demos of the *The King & Eye* (previously only available to fan club members) which seriously gives the final version a good run for its money.



If you aren’t a dyed in the wool Residents fan — and although there aren’t many, those who tend to take a shine to them are often quite fanatical — this might not be a good fall-in point. Having said that, though, the three-act play is undeniably amazing. In fact, this live presentation of *The Baby King* could be considered one of their most inspired pieces of work, up there with *Eskimo*, *Meet the Residents*, *Duck Stab* and the stunning and epic *The Mole Trilogy*.

I absolutely love giving stuff away in this column and this month’s contest prize is the biggest yet. The fine people at MVD Audio have agreed to let one of these box sets go to the first person who can put “I have explosive diarrhea” in the email subject heading and tell me the year that the Residents last played Montreal. The first person who can email me the correct answer will be scooping this seven-CD box set-up. Good luck, weirdos.

jonathan.cummins@gmail.com

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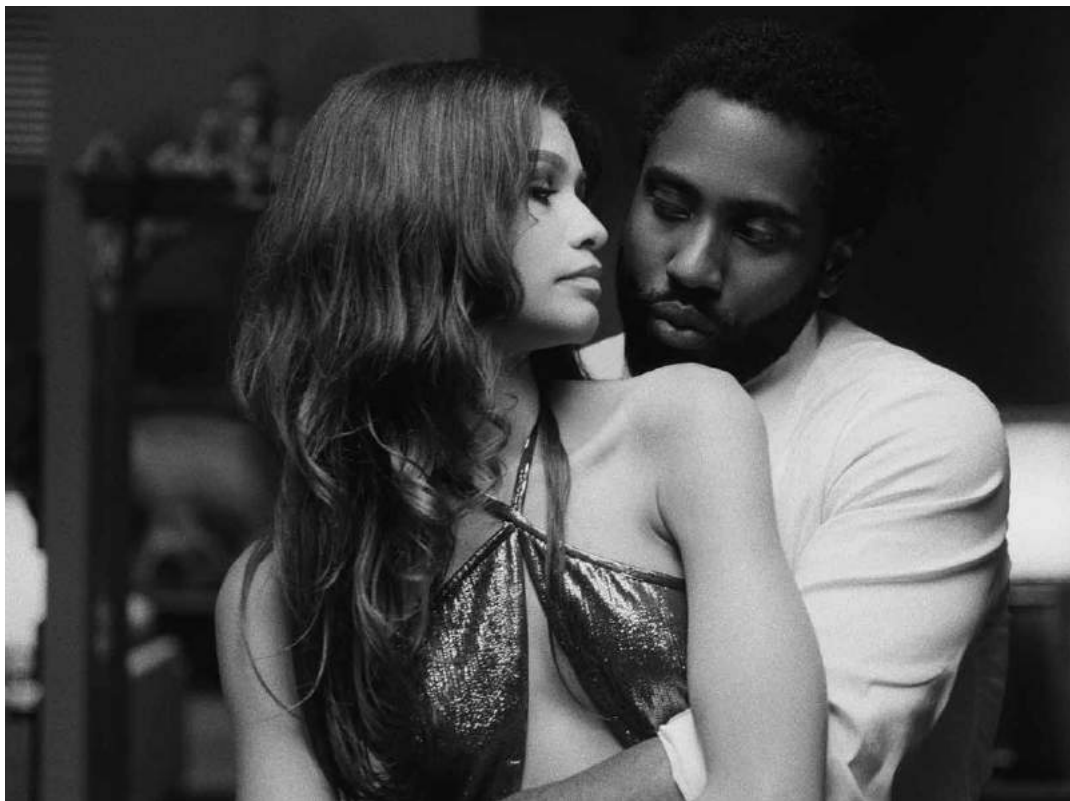


# film

## On Screen



Judas and the Black Messiah



Malcolm & Marie



Barb and Star Go to Vista del Mar



BLISS

BY ALEX ROSE

The story of February at the movies is awfully similar to that of the last few months: Theatres remain closed in Montreal, but open in other parts of North America (including the six Quebec regions that will see a reopening on Feb. 8), which complicates releases somewhat. In some cases, films are being held until reopening; in others, films are going through with their regular release and leaving their Quebec release up in the air. Suffice to say that any info contained herein that doesn't pertain to a major streaming service could very well become irrelevant in the next few days.

Netflix ponied up a whopping \$30-million to acquire the rights to *Malcolm & Marie* (Feb. 5), a drama by Sam Levinson (*Euphoria*) that was shot on the sly during the pandemic. John David Washington stars as a filmmaker who forgets to thank his girlfriend (Zendaya) during an awards acceptance speech; the film focuses on the ensuing blowout. Early reviews have been savage, though it must be said that the film is certainly picking its battles by reportedly focusing much of its ire on film critics

themselves. Other Netflix highlights this month include the Korean space opera (billed as the first of its kind) *Space Sweepers* and *To All The Boys: Always and Forever*, the third and final chapter in the extremely popular teen rom-com series starring Lana Condor and Noah Centineo.

Owen Wilson and Salma Hayek star in *Bliss* (Feb. 5), a new sci-fi film from Mike Cahill (*I, Origins, Another Earth*) in which Wilson plays a man who meets a woman (Hayek) who tries to convince him he's living in a simulation. The week after that, Amazon presents *The Map of Tiny Perfect Things*, a time-travelling rom-com that sounds exactly like last year's *Palm Springs*; Kathryn Newton (*Freaky*) stars. One of the many casualties of Warner's decision to bring all of their 2021 releases to HBOMax, *Judas and the Black Messiah* (Feb. 12) is the story of Black Panther Fred Hampton (Daniel Kaluuya) and William O'Neal (Lakeith Stanfield), an FBI informant who infiltrated the ranks of the Black Panthers. HBOMax being unavailable in Canada, the film will be available for VOD rental on the day of release.

Another film to go directly to HBOMax is *Tom and Jerry* (Feb. 26), the live-action/animation hybrid starring Chloë Grace Moretz. Unlike *Judas and the Black Messiah*, however, it is unclear whether the film will be available on VOD or go directly to Crave, which is usually the case with HBOMax originals. Kristen Wiig and Annie Mumolo reteam 10 years after the breakout hit of *Bridesmaids* with *Barb and Star Go to Vista del Mar* (Feb. 12 on VOD), a comedy they co-wrote and co-star in. Steven Yeun (*The Walking Dead*) stars in *Minari* (Feb. 26 on VOD), a highly acclaimed drama about a family of South Korean immigrants who move to America in the 1980s with the intention of building

a farm. *Flora & Ulysses* is a family comedy about a young girl who adopts a squirrel with supernatural powers. Alyson Hannigan and Ben Schwartz star in the film, which hits Disney Plus on Feb. 19.

Viggo Mortensen makes his directorial debut with *Falling* (Feb. 5 on VOD), a drama in which he stars as a gay man who recalls his complicated relationship with his brash, homophobic father (Lance Henriksen) when he comes to California with a potential move in mind. *Supernova* (Feb. 16 on VOD) has broadly similar thematic concerns, telling the story of a highly accomplished gay couple (Stanley Tucci and Colin Firth) who go on one last road trip when they learn that Tucci's character has early-onset dementia. Claes Bang (*The Square*), Vicky Krieps (*Phantom Thread*) and Guy Pearce star in *The Last Vermeer* (Feb. 23 on VOD), a historical thriller about an art forger who swindles the Nazis with fake paintings.

There are also several highly anticipated movies being released this month, though it's unclear whether or not the current release dates apply to Canada and/or Quebec. These include Lee Daniels' Montreal-shot Billie Holiday biopic *The United States vs. Billie Holiday*, the Anthony Hopkins-starring dementia drama *The Father*, Chloë Zhao's award-winning *Nomadland* starring Frances McDormand, Robin Wright's directorial debut *Land* and *French Exit*, a Montreal-shot dramedy starring Michelle Pfeiffer as an heiress who has squandered her fortune and attempts to live the rest of her life in a borrowed apartment in Paris with her grown son (Lucas Hedges). Suffice to say that there's a very high chance these movies will be available to us sooner rather than later — it's only a question of *when*.



# arts

## A meeting place between cultures



BY SAVANNAH STEWART

After several pandemic-related postponements, Quebec's first Indigenous artist-run centre will finally be able to open its doors this spring.

With a storefront in Rosemont at 5842 St-Hubert rented and waiting until non-commercial galleries can open, daphne will be an exhibition space showcasing Indigenous art as well as a meeting place for events and thoughtful discussions between people of all backgrounds.

"We talk often about being an Indigenous gallery, but we want it to be a space in which really interesting conversations take place," says Lori Beavis, the centre's director. "A place [where] Indigenous people and allies are all there together and start to talk to each other, talk about the art, talk about these art practices, and to learn more."

daphne's inaugural season will include four solo exhibitions that showcase emerging and established artists working in Quebec, namely: Teharihulen Michel Savard, a multidisciplinary artist of the Huron-Wendat nation from Wendake; Catherine Boivin, an Atikamekw artist from Wemotaci; Innu artist Sonia Robertson from Mashteuiatsh; and Mohawk artist Kaia'tanó:ron Dumoulin Bush from Kahnawake.

"It's really important that people get to tell their own story in a way that is true to themselves and true to the life that they lead as a person of this time," says Beavis of the importance of such a space for First Nations artists. "They have been looked at, and everything about them has been told by white Euro-Americans, from the perspective of the other."

It was a conscious choice to book only solo exhibitions since they are an accolade too often denied Indigenous artists. "It's still far too often that artists of colour and women artists are not given solo exhibitions," says Beavis.

Beavis explains that daphne seeks to break down the hierarchies of the art world by having the artists participate in the planning of the exhibition, which doesn't always happen. She says that often, though an artist will be granted a solo exhibition, they don't necessarily have the power to influence the way their art is approached or displayed.

"I want them to be okay, I want them to be absolutely certain that everything I've written about them is correct and from their perspective and from the perspective of their culture," she says. "I think that we just need to bring it down and pass more responsibility to the artist so they actually have an experience that they want to have."

"[We] are committed to creating a space in which we will all be working from a similar place/ideology," says daphne co-founder Hannah Claus. "We're coming from the same *point de départ*, which then makes for a more fluid relationship with the artists. It is more about the idea of supporting the artist's vision so that the exhibition and experience of exhibiting is what they want it to be."

Though they can't say for sure when they will open since they're waiting for provincial restrictions to ease up, the creators of daphne hope that they'll be able to hold their long-awaited first exhibition by May. But, that doesn't mean they're simply waiting idly until then.

In their eagerness to get their programming started, the centre has been hosting a weekly virtual beading session called daphne beads: perler/parler, which is open to all. Every Thursday at 7 p.m., participants can tune in to the event and work on beading projects with the guidance of guests teaching different techniques, while discussing with or listening to an artist talk about their process. Weekly event pages on their Facebook page provide those interested with instructions to access the Zoom link. So far, Beavis says the beading sessions have been a success.

"People keep talking about it and posting photos of the

projects that they've finished on Facebook and saying, 'This is so addictive, I'm so glad to have learned this technique,' so it feels really nice to have people learn how to do something that has been on the periphery of their knowledge," says Beavis.

The beading sessions are a reflection of the origin of daphne. Co-founders Skawennati, Nadia Myre and Hannah Claus, all established visual artists, came up with the idea during informal gatherings in which they would bead together and discuss the work of Indigenous artists. The centre was officially founded in April 2019 and they began working towards opening a physical space. By then, the three artists had recruited Algonquin filmmaker Caroline Monnet who came on as the fourth co-founder.

After receiving funding from the Canada Council for the Arts and the Conseil des arts de Montréal, Beavis was hired as the director in 2020. This money was also put towards opening the space and creating the programming and exhibitions. To furnish and supply the space, daphne's creators launched a successful GoFundMe campaign.

"We rented ourselves a very accessible storefront in a part of town where it's close to the metro," says Beavis. "That proximity, and being so close to the sidewalk and being open and accessible, it's so that people can break that barrier. We know how people are nervous about coming into a gallery space and so we really wanted to be a storefront so that it would be easy for people to come in and be welcomed."

As for programming besides the exhibitions, the weekly beading sessions will remain a feature of daphne's schedule, along with artists' talks, feasts and video screenings. daphne's creators want to incorporate Indigenous customs and traditions into their events and gatherings, and foster less formalized exchanges between the artists and the audience.

"We're trying to do things slightly differently," says Beavis.



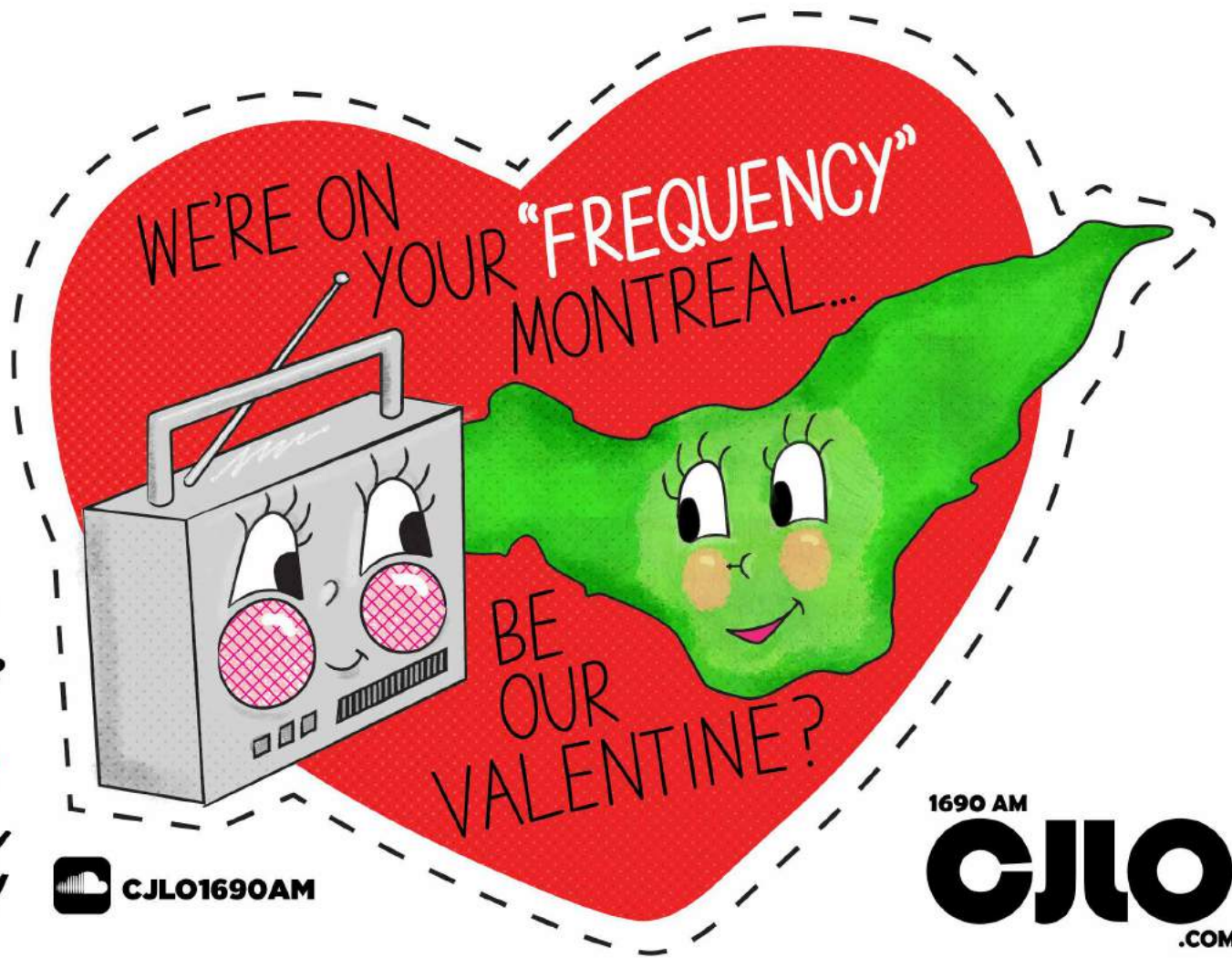


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## Formless longform



Dawn to Dawn

Jordan Weitzman

BY RYAN DIDUCK

Xuri, “J’avance” ft. Lueurs Nocturnes, *Bedlam of Salt* (Janushoved)

The glut of live-streaming culture in the wake of COVID quarantine has engendered a new form of FOMO — let’s call it FOMOO, or Fear Of Missing Out Online. With theatres, festivals and venues for live performance closed, everyone is taking their show on the road, so to speak — the “road” in question being the information superhighway. And now, these events come untethered from meatspace geographies, unmoored from the ports of reality, ported in through a different sort of port, arguably the most important port: the data port.

We no longer have to be in New York, or London, or Tokyo, to attend events in those cities. Everything crosses freely at the data port. There are no temperature checks, PCR tests or weeks of self-isolation to endure. No passports. Just seamless circulation. Which means that we now have to be extra careful with our audiovisual marketplace choices. Because there are only so many hours in the day in which to mainline the second, third and possibly fourth waves of isolated broadcast media.

Minimal Violence, “Dreams 4 Sale,” *DESTROY ---* [physical] *REALITY [psychic]* <--- *TRUST – Phase Two* (Tresor Records)

Lately, I’ve been passing the time by watching *M\*A\*S\*H*. It’s an apropos show for our current moment. The COVID crisis isn’t a war, per se, but it feels like wartime with all the metaphors of front lines, battlegrounds, common enemies, casualties. The problem, though, is that the virus isn’t restricted to any geographical location, and so the front lines, the battlegrounds, the enemies and the casualties are everywhere to be found. At least *M\*A\*S\*H* is proof (just look at Lynette Mettrey!) that you can still be hot while wearing a surgical mask.

In the 11th episode of season 2, which originally aired on CBS on Nov. 24, 1972, the entire 4077 comes down with an epidemic of the flu. First, Trapper John McIntyre and Colonel Blake are stricken; then Major Burns succumbs to the virus, leaving Hawkeye as the sole surgeon to operate on the mounting number of wounded soldiers arriving at the unit. Major Margaret Houlihan and Father Mulcahy are enlisted to perform extra duties, but wave after wave of wounded soon overwhelm the O.R. Finally, some flu vaccine arrives, and Hot Lips and Hawkeye agree to inoculate each other. But the vaccine has unintended effects, infecting Pierce, leaving him to work whilst increasingly under the weather. (I don’t imagine the show’s writers in 1972 were particularly “anti-vax” — that was just the plot of the episode.)

One thing that *M\*A\*S\*H* did for an entire generation of western TV audiences who lived through Vietnam, the Soviet-Afghan war, the Lebanese Civil war and the Arab-Israeli war, among others, was to standardize war itself. Even though the Korean conflict, within which the series was set, lasted only three years, the series ran for 11 seasons, from 1972 to its storied finale in 1983. *M\*A\*S\*H* made war permanent through the media, normalized a perpetual state of war, made war palatable for a mass audience, aestheticized, glamourized, raced, classed and gendered war. The show’s tone oscillates from harmless goof-off antics to heartfelt moments of sincerity, at once revealing war’s horrors and sanitizing them for regular consumption. “War isn’t hell,” Hawkeye once remarked: “War is war, and hell is hell. And of the two, war is a lot worse.”

Nick Schofield, “Mirror Image,” *Glass Gallery* (Forward Music)

The challenge with describing reality at this moment is that everyone is experiencing some system of unreality the entire globe over. We are each deprived of the rights to do more or less basic things. Routine tasks have become more or less heroic feats. Quotidian communication is now more or less fraught than before, burdened with technical on top of interpersonal tribulations. Every one of us has more or less to do in spite of more or less restrictive, more or less variable, regionally contingent rules and regulations. It is not

enough to grouse about personal hardships, even when part of your job requires grouching, more or less.

Clarice Jensen, “Winter,” *Ainu Mosir* (130701)

Of course, robots should staff Amazon fulfillment warehouses! That’s a boring job for a human to do. All these boring jobs should be automated. I would automate dentistry if I could. I’d automate pharmacy. Why should an otherwise intelligent person stand behind a counter counting pills all day when a perfectly competent robot could do it? Humans should be free of this menial labour to cultivate our highest pursuits. That’s what hybrid cyborg technology should be about: truly freeing humanity. For that, we need another system of value.

“To confront the interface between human and machine,” wrote Jaimie Smith-Windsor in her 2005 essay entitled “The Cyborg Mother,” “is to confront cyborg consciousness as it fragments the human experience into a lexicon of incomprehensibility.” There is no pro-creation here, only re-creation.

Dawn to Dawn, “Meridian” (independent)

Generally, I try not to talk too much about the thing — that is, the object of inquiry — itself. I prefer to over-stand it, dance around it, write through it as one sees through glass. But every now and then, something bubbles up that is too precious to obscure, too clear to smear. Dawn to Dawn’s first single is such a thing of precious clarity. It possesses all the smooth texture and mature timbres of Harold Faltermeyer’s production on Pet Shop Boys’ 1990 studio album *Behaviour*, with just enough Enya to reel in this New Age refugee. It’s futuristically retro, retrofuturist, an auspicious beginning and a tantalizing teaser to a new musical collaboration that promises perpetual dawn for the 2020s.



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