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We spoke with Quebec filmmaker Denis Villeneuve about how his whole career has been leading up to his epic adaptation of Frank Herbert's sci-fi classic *Dune*.

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros Pictures Canada.

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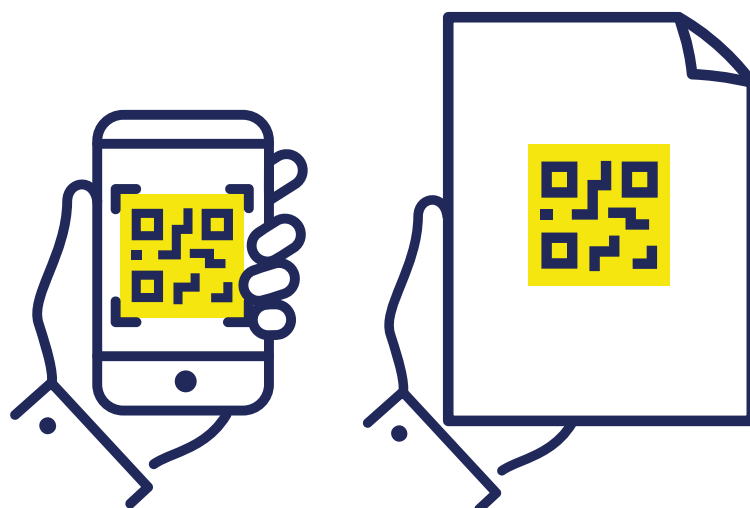
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New season, who dis?



BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Within four months, the Montreal Canadiens have gone from a thrilling run to the Stanley Cup Final to a nausea-inducing rollercoaster of an offseason.

Now, we’re about to find out how much the changes affect them for the better when the 2020–21 regular season kicks off on Oct. 12. The Habs open the season in Toronto the next day to take on the Toronto Maple Leafs at Scotiabank Arena. Our home opener at the Bell Centre goes down Oct. 16, heralding the return of full capacity crowds at the arena. Back when only 7,500 fans could attend (35% capacity), Cult MTL (myself included) went to the first preseason home game against the Leafs, with the Habs pulling out an exciting 5–2 victory, thanks to huge performances by Jonathan Drouin, Josh Anderson, AHLer Michael Pezzetta, and new boy Christian Dvorak.

Whether or not they can find and sustain a winning formula is still to be determined, as the Habs tend to be notorious for starting hot in October before plateauing when the weather gets cold. But of course, hope always springs eternal in this city, and how things shape up for the Tricolore during the NHL’s first 82-game season since 2019 will be interesting to say the least. Here are some significant narratives surrounding the Habs going into this season.

A SEA OF ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Who’d have thought the Habs would be the team that would experience such drastic turnover after last season’s final, and not the salary cap-flouting Tampa Bay Lightning? After

GM Marc Bergevin won his gamble of exposing Carey Price to the Seattle Kraken to avoid them selecting Jake Allen, things went just a little topsy turvy. First, he sparked a vicious backlash in Montreal and around the league after drafting a convicted sex offender who didn’t even want to be selected this year. He followed this up by watching Philip Danault and Corey Perry — two major pieces of the Habs’ Cup run — leave in free agency to Los Angeles and Tampa Bay, respectively. Tomas Tatar would also leave for the New Jersey Devils; Bergevin replaced him with Mike Hoffman.

David Savard, Cédric Paquette, Mathieu Perreault, Sami Niku and Chris Wideman would also join the Habs as free agents, with goalie Samuel Montembeault later claimed off waivers. However, Bergevin surprised everyone by not matching Carolina’s \$6.1-million offer sheet for Jesperi Kotkaniemi — a move seemingly done by the Hurricanes in retaliation for Bergevin’s 2019 offer sheet for Sebastian Aho, complete with a \$20 signing bonus (#20 is Aho’s jersey number). After taking the compensation of a 1st and 3rd round pick, Bergevin flipped both picks — the 1st rounder being top 10-protected — to Arizona for Christian Dvorak. That’s a looooooot of ins and outs.

COMPETING IN A STACKED ATLANTIC DIVISION

Although head coach Dominique Ducharme will be entering his first full year as the Habs’ bench boss (and first with the interim tag removed), the pressure will be on him and the Canadiens to replicate their success in this year’s postseason. On top of that, he’ll have to compete in a tough-as-nails Atlantic Division, rather than the comparatively weaker one-off North Division. Both Florida teams, the Panthers and Lightning, look like favourites on paper to win the division, with Boston and Toronto likely to go toe-to-toe with them.

Though the Detroit Red Wings and Buffalo Sabres both appear to still be in full rebuild mode, the Ottawa Senators — assuming they sign Brady Tkachuk soon, which is never a guarantee when your owner is Eugene Melnyk — are full of burgeoning young talent, and will unquestionably be a team to watch this season. At least we can’t say the Habs won’t be battle-tested.

POSSIBLE BREAKTHROUGHS FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

Although Price, Hoffman and Wideman are all injured to start the season, none of them are expected to be out long-term. However, captain Shea Weber is expected to miss the entire 2021–22 season with a left foot and ankle injury that has caused him injury headaches in the past— and retirement is a very real possibility for him as a result. As such, the Habs will have multiple assistant captains (reportedly including Brendan Gallagher and Nick Suzuki), rather than naming an interim replacement for Weber. Paul Byron, who’s suffering from a hip injury, is also expected to be out until the new year.

Not only does this allow for some of our newer faces to establish themselves in front of the Bell Centre faithful, it also presents opportunities for young players to make their mark. Ryan Poehling is expected to be right in that mix following an impressive season with the AHL Laval Rocket, racking up 25 points in 28 games. Other names to watch for possible call-ups include Jesse Ylönén, the aforementioned Pezzetta, Josh Brook (after he recovers from a knee injury), Mattias Norlinder (if he doesn’t go back to Sweden) and Quebecers Joël Teasdale and Rafael Harvey-Pinard. Oh, and this will be the first full NHL season for goal-scoring dynamo Cole Caufield, one that could very well land him the Calder Memorial Trophy for rookie of the year. Not too shabby.

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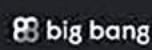
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:MTL courtside



BY MR. WAVVY

The 2021 NBA Playoffs ended less than miraculously for the Philadelphia 76ers. Following an unexpected second round exit, all eyes were on two-time NBA All-Star Ben Simmons. Expectations have been high for the 2018 Rookie of the Year and fans have been patiently waiting to see him flourish.

Instead of stepping up to the plate when he was needed the most, Simmons could not hit key shots, later choosing to avoid shooting altogether.

According to sources familiar with the situation, Ben Simmons never wants to step on the court as a Philadelphia 76er ever again. This could be due to several factors. Has the well run dry for his chemistry with the team, or is he simply too embarrassed to return to the City of Brotherly Love after squandering their return to the Eastern Conference Finals?

Where should he go?

There have been many trades speculated for the young point guard, including Minnesota, Golden State and Portland.

San Antonio has been one of the less-discussed cities with the most trading potential. Coach

Gregg Popovich is not getting any younger. During his 25 seasons with the Spurs, the team has only missed the playoffs three times. Two of those were the past two seasons.

Simmons is the type of player who could reinvigorate an ageing Popovich and fill many of the gaps in San Antonio's roster and Pops is the type of coach who could help Simmons get to where he needs to be.

Over the summer, former Spurs player Bruce Bowen said that the team "would trade anyone on the Spurs roster for Ben Simmons.» San Antonio has tons of young players and draft picks, so they should not think twice before trading away these assets. In return, Philadelphia could foster more young talent, or trade away these pieces for a "win-now" player who could help Joel Embiid and company make a stronger push towards a championship.

Is Simmons worth the risk?

Is Ben Simmons really worth the gamble? His recent childish behaviour, including refusing to meet with 76ers teammates who were hoping to reconcile, displays a lack of cooperation. Despite an incomplete playing style, the Aussie-born baller continues to put himself before the common good.

While the idea of a great coach working to build Simmons' potential is indeed enticing, the romanticization falls flat when his antics are on full display. Working with a player who could be one of the next greats may be too tough a gamble if he is also a locker room pariah. Just look at Kyrie Irving's short tenure with the Boston Celtics.

The one who LeBron James dubbed a "young king" is instead acting like a royal brat. In order to overcome this now-daunting adversity, he must look inward to improve on both his shooting and communicative abilities.

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BY DAVE MACINTYRE

With shorts season effectively dead and gone, these strains should still provide you with plenty of comfort, warmth, and giggling. With the weather getting increasingly dreary and damp, lord knows we need that warmth right now. Here's what I thought of those pre-rolled joints.

SATIVA: 7ACRES JACK HAZE

One of the more fruity-tasting strains I've tried for this column yet, this sativa from Kincardine, ON — Lake Huron weed, to be exact — becomes my strain of choice when I decide to go for an alleyway walk. Mind you, this was when it was still nice enough to wear shorts and a t-shirt while getting lost in the Plateau's ruelles. As my luck, or lack thereof, would have it, it

started raining the first time I did that walk while smoking this. I also burn through those joints rather quickly... which is either the sign of a good time, or a somewhat dissatisfying THC quotient (this one is usually anywhere between 17 and 23%). It's uplifting, but also heightens your emotions, particularly when my heart jumps out of my chest after suddenly encountering a dead squirrel during my walk. So it's a double-edged sword, albeit a very enjoyable one. 8.5/10

INDICA: TRIBAL GELATO MINT

Packing a punch at 22.1% THC, this is a pretty relaxing indica — and a pretty strong one, at that. Or at least it's the type of indica that's enjoyable whilst going down YouTube rabbit holes. More specifically, it sends me to a series of BuzzFeed videos about how people accidentally became memes and saw their lives altered because of it. Remember Tay Zonday? Or Disaster Girl? Or Success Kid? Or Bad Luck Brian (someone I've been told I look like)? Yep, the gang's all there to look back on their 15 minutes of cyber-infamy. Even John Cena is interviewed about the "You Can't See John Cena" meme. It's a trip, and I'm glad I had a relaxing indica to take along for the ride. Even if it mellows you out pretty hard, it's a nice kind of mellow. 8/10

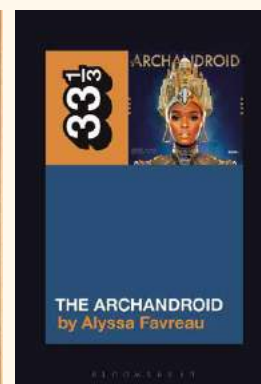
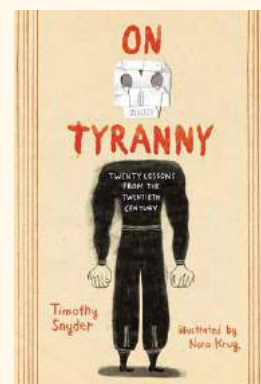
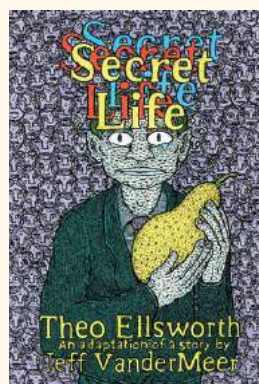
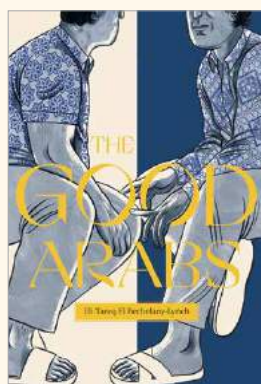
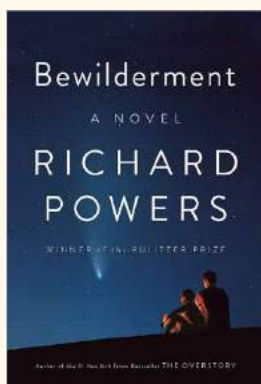
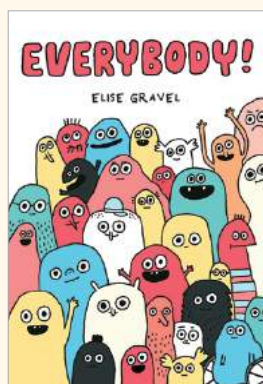
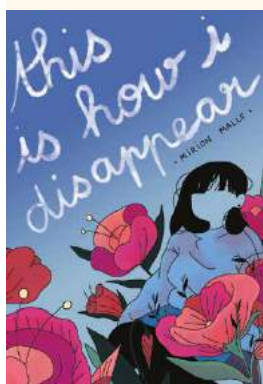
HYBRID: SUGAR LEAF ROLLED JEAN GUY

Ah oui, une variété de cannabis distinctement québécoise. It's also one that hit me deceptively hard: a couple hits and I feel pretty blazed, despite its middling THC percentage — about 13% for the prerolls I bought. Of course, that initial rush comes with a small cost, as the high tends to die out a bit quicker than the strains reviewed above. Unfortunately for me, I smoked this during the week when the entire city was on edge after Jesperi Kotkaniemi's offer sheet by Carolina (one that was ultimately successful for the Hurricanes). Even if it didn't take my mind off of a total lose-lose situation for the Habs, it dulled the pain and anxiety to a certain extent. I still miss KK horribly, though. Fuck you, Tom Dundon. 8.5/10

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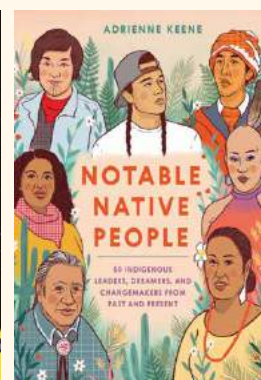
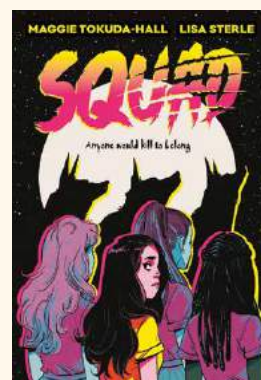
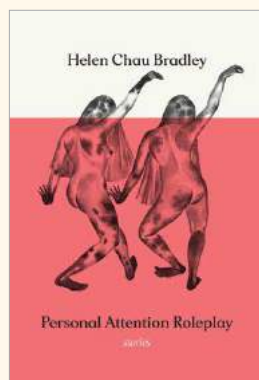
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Forward vs. backwards



BY TAYLOR C. NOAKES

The new and improved Denis “Le Menace” Coderre shows his old face now and again on the campaign trail. For the most part he’s managed to not be too jarring a presence, but from time to time the Boss Tweed living inside him crawls out and steals the show. Like when he promised to rip up a bike lane, as he once did to a community postal box, or when he pleads for a reasonable, rational compromise to his unwavering, developer-friendly commitment to unilaterally eliminate the city’s building height limitations.

We’re getting a taste of what ‘woke’ Denis looks like this time around and it’s... confusing. On the day Canadians were supposed to take a minute to reflect on our nation’s attempted genocide of the Indigenous, Coderre felt this was a great time and opportunity to tell one and all he’d reinstall the statue of that genocide’s chief architect back in its position of prominence in Place du Canada. He’s backtracked somewhat of late, saying that he wouldn’t put the statue back up on its baldachin (aka a pedestal), but presumably somewhere else in the plaza. He also said there’d be descriptive panels, brought up Louis Riel and then said he’d rename the plaza “Place de la Réconciliation.”

A reconciliation plaza isn’t a half bad idea, but I don’t think a statue of John A. Macdonald belongs there. There’s a great French saying for this kind of haphazard city planning: *n’importe quoi*.

Phyllis Lambert put it best: Denis Coderre is indeed a mayor from the 1960s. It’s not just the ‘bigger is better’ and car-focused policies he doggedly pursues, it’s also the fact that a self-described man of ideas doesn’t seem to realize his foundation in urban planning is over 50 years out of date. His inflexible belief that the city’s building height limitations are impeding growth and sapping the city centre of its vitality hits at the heart of the problem with mayoral aspirants like Coderre: the premise is false and the solution is equally wrong. Coderre 2.0 says he’s now interested in listening to people yet refuses to concede Montrealers may have actually preferred the vision put forward by Mairesse Plante and Projet Montréal in 2017. He uses the word compromise a lot, but similarly

doesn’t realize his insistence on eliminating building height restrictions and bike lanes means he’s demanding the public compromise on its desire for the best possible city they could live in.

You can’t really compromise with decades of evolving urban planning theory and practice, all of which is currently telling us to promote all available alternatives to the automobile and which is further warning against handing the reins of city planning over to real-estate developers. Whatever Montreal is and is to become, Manhattan, Toronto and Hong Kong isn’t it.

Coderre has stated his belief that relaxing building height limitations will help “relaunch” the city centre, almost as though he’s forgotten we’re still in the midst of one of the worst public health crises of all time. It’s worth remembering as well that the city’s economy did just fine under Mairesse Plante, and that adding new skyscrapers in a city filled with half-empty office towers isn’t anyone’s idea of sensible planning.

That said, this is a mayoral candidate who thinks it’s perfectly reasonable for a city with an unused baseball stadium to use public money to build another baseball stadium for a team we’d only get to have on a part-time basis.

As to the Mairesse, I don’t have too many criticisms other than that at the time of this writing (Oct. 5), and with about a month to go before we head to the polls, Projet Montréal still hasn’t released its campaign platform. Even upstart party Mouvement Montréal has issued a public platform, so this is a bit disappointing. Much of the campaign so far has been Denis Coderre kvetching about problems both real and imagined, which makes Plante and Projet’s lack of a platform — even a brief resume of a platform — something of a missed opportunity. Plante and her team could have easily come up with a list of concrete ideas that expand on the successes they already have under their belt, and have started the campaign off by telling people precisely how they intend to continue moving forward rather than simply making that statement without any details. Keep in mind, this is the woman and party who got elected largely because they drew a pink line on a map (knowing full well the province of Quebec literally will not permit the city to embark on any metro construction project without their express written approval); not coming out of the gate with a list of new ideas has given Coderre an early advantage to criticize and present his own ideas. Even if they are retrograde, he’s brought something to the table and Projet could have easily outperformed him here.

What might be Plante and Projet’s greatest accomplishment is the Grand Parc de l’Ouest, which, while still in its planning stages, is nonetheless a major step forward in containing sprawl and prioritizing nature not merely for its aesthetic, but also its functional values. Repeating this, as the party intends to do, in the East End is something Projet should be promoting — especially given how we’ve all come to realize how exceptionally valuable green space is during a pandemic. Where Projet needs to be a bit more explicit is explaining the benefit of green spaces (and why Montreal should be creating as much new green space as possible) in economic and environmental terms. Where Denis Coderre promises that every street in Montreal is to be tree-lined,

Projet needs to crunch the numbers to tell people how much CO₂ an acre of protected forest will suck out of the atmosphere. Projet’s voter base would appreciate that level of detail, and it will only further demonstrate the generation gap between the two primary candidates.

Plante’s ‘patronage’ appointment of Louise Harel to the position of municipal language tsar is a peculiar choice given that the city doesn’t have an executive in charge of fighting the climate crisis, and that right now the single greatest existential threat to the French language in Montreal is the heat-stroke related deaths of francophones, not the occasional unilingual anglophone haberdasher’s exclamation of “Bonjour-Hi” at a gaggle of American tourists looking for authentic Montreal threads at the Eaton Centre’s Old Navy. I’m not sure the language hawk vote is so essential that it requires appointing Harel to a paid job at City Hall, but I guess all the free advertising some legacy Montreal anglo media has handed Denis Coderre over the years has perhaps made him seem to be the ‘anglo candidate’ and thus Projet had to set itself up in opposition.

I digress.

Of all the campaign promises made without first considering the relevant research (nor adequately measuring the public’s pulse), both Coderre and Plante have essentially adopted the same position when it comes to the police — namely to outdo one another in throwing money at the problem until it eventually goes away. Coderre, never one to shy away from using blatant scare tactics on the campaign trail, has actually said that Plante and Projet don’t care about safety and security. Plante has in fact decided to shovel an additional \$5.5-million at police and has apparently dropped an earlier pledge to consider disarming some police. Meanwhile, experts like Concordia’s outspoken Ted Rutland (and nearly everyone else who studies the police and effective solutions to gang and gun violence) are routinely ignored by politicians who just can’t seem to wrap their heads around solutions that don’t result in more people with guns walking the streets.

It’s the problem with incumbents — they often feel like they’re owed the job. This is what ended Coderre’s term as mayor, and it could easily end Plante’s as well. On the whole, while I think Plante has done an adequately good job as mayor (and that Projet Montréal, as a party, has done well for the citizens of Montreal), there have been times in which the party seems to be moving towards the centre, as though they’ve forgotten that being the leftwing, progressive, social democratic party was what got them elected in the first place. If I could say one thing directly to Valérie Plante it is this: You didn’t win in 2017 because people stopped liking Denis Coderre, it’s because you and the party offered something refreshingly new.

It’s frustrating that it now seems like Plante is fighting Coderre on his home turf. Four years ago they weren’t even playing the same game and Montrealers loved her for it.

I’ll close by saying this: neither of the main candidates have inspired me much, though there is a party I’d prefer to see in power because they’ve been doing consistently well for a long time, and Montreal needs evolving political parties much more than candidate-driven ones.

That said, there is a challenge to Plante and Coderre coming from the left that has put out a platform, has some very interesting and compelling ideas, is perhaps the most diverse slate of candidates currently running for office, has recently merged with another minor party and has so far been all but ignored by local media. It should come as no surprise that this is a party both led by and with a slate full of people of colour, as these are the Montrealers and Québécois who are unfortunately still not really considered full participants in our society. Look at their platform, look at their candidates, and then consider how and why their policies and priorities might differ substantially from either those of Projet Montréal or Denis Coderre. The Montreal of tomorrow, in some respects, will not look like the Montreal of years and decades passed.

And whoever you choose to vote for, vote for the person you choose. Don’t be bullied into this nonsense of strategic voting. The mayoral candidates and their parties have a responsibility to meet your needs, and if they fall short and don’t earn your vote, that’s on them, not you.

Caucasus et vin



Clay Sandhu

BY CLAY SANDHU

In the natural wine world, going back a few years, Georgian wines in all their rustic and uncompromised glory had become this revelatory discovery. The claim to fame for Georgia — by which I mean the small Eastern European country bordered by Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkey, and not the Peach State — was that the country is widely considered to be the birthplace of wine.

Wine has been a staple of Georgian culture for roughly 8,000 years and yet, in the Western world, its wines remain relatively obscure. Part of the Southern Caucasus, Georgia and the neighbouring countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and (just a bit further south) Iran are among the oldest civilizations on Earth and like the wines of Georgia (and their earthenware subterranean fermentation vessels known as *Qvervi*), their food cultures, traditions and techniques have been vastly influential the world over.

Just south of Little Italy's northern gate, on the west side of St-Laurent is a restaurant called Joon, Farsi for "soul," which serves the food of the Southern Caucasus. As far as I know, it is the first of its kind here in Montreal. It's hard for me to say whether or not there is or has ever been a great Georgian or Azerbaijani restaurant in Montreal, but if there has been then it has been a well-kept secret. Joon however, has been getting buzz ever since chef-owner Erin Mahoney (formerly of *Bête à Pain*, *Impasto* and *le St-Urbain*) started doing Georgian and Persian pop-ups a few years back. Joined by her husband Ilya Daftari and backed by *Impasto* principles Michele Forgione and Stefano Faita, Joon has the perfect balance of passion and clout needed to be a hit in the city.

Let me save you the trouble here and say that Joon is exactly that — a hit. The inviting space, designed by Ménard Dworkind, is open and warmly lit and I was lucky enough to be seated at one of the two gorgeously upholstered banquettes that take up the prime real estate by the front windows. The menu is fairly succinct: 15 dishes in all including three desserts and the idea is to share dishes in the way a meal would be shared around a family table. It's a cliché to a certain extent; there's no shortage of small-plate, order-the-whole-menu-and-leave-hungry places in town, but Joon is different. The Joon experience is familiar on paper and yet altogether new and exciting.

Take for example something as simple as a bowl of warmed olives. What could be more quotidian, especially in Little Italy? And yet Joon's is sensational. Mahoney serves a varied mix of olives bathed in fruity olive oil, flecked with bits of torn coriander and finished with delicate teardrop-shaped angelica seeds (known as *Golpar* in Iran) which taste like caraway, rose and rooibos tea. Instantly, a humble bowl of olives is enlivened and intriguing in a way I've not experienced in a long time. It reminds me of the first Georgian wine I ever tasted — a 2015 *Rkasiteli* from *Our Wine*. Deep amber in colour, completely unfiltered and cloudy with sediment, the wine was astringent with notes of dill, quince and apricot — it too was unlike anything I'd ever tasted.

Another simple but extraordinary bite was a leavened flatbread called *Barbari*, which is topped with sesame and nigella seeds. There's no long romantic description for this one, it's just a magnificent piece of warm bread, which is plenty romantic in itself.

Other dishes, like the grilled sucrine (a sweet and buttery variety of little gem lettuce) served with yogurt and a *Sekanjabin* glaze — a sweet and sour reduction of honey and vinegar with a touch of mint — is phenomenally delicious, seamlessly flowing between bright and acidic and that specific kind of nutty caramelization that comes from grilled lettuce. I could eat heaps of that dish.

Though it was one of the more expected dishes, the kebab was also delightful. Fairly standard in terms of form and presentation, the kebabs themselves were miles above the average kebab shop offerings and landed, for me, somewhere between Balkan Cevapi and Turkish Köfte. Served with homemade lavash (a soft, ultra-thin flatbread from the South Caucasus), it is a meal unto itself. The *Lahmajoun* (or *Lahmacun* in Turkey), which somewhat reductively gets called Armenian/Turkish pizza is, again, of a particularly high standard at Joon. Topped with a mix of fresh herbs and pickled veg, it's not to be missed.

I think for me, however, the most thought-provoking dish of the night was, surprisingly, the cornish hen. A half-hen is braised in a saffron and rosewater sauce and contains almonds, lime and pickled barberry. Upon tasting the dish, I'm immediately transported to a version of cornish hen dish I once ate at Nora Gray — the specifics are hard to remember but it was a grilled hen severed with an agrodolce. Joon's braised hen is vibrant, colourful and full of emblematic Persian flavours and somehow my mind is drawn to Italy. But then again, it was during the Muslim conquest of Sicily that agrodolce is purported to have been introduced to the regional cooking practices.

Just like the recent rediscovery of Georgian wines, the discovery of the influence this region has had on many of the most revered cuisines in the world is just evidence of how narrow our understanding of food culture is. How can we claim to discover something that's been there, in plain sight, for thousands of years? Joon does the thing that I love most about food — it shows the natural interconnectivity between food, culture and history. It offers a better understanding of the world, served in a comestible and utterly delicious package. In 2021, my dinner at Joon has been my most enjoyed meal to date — I can't recommend it more highly.

→ Joon (7130 St-Laurent) is open Thursday to Sunday, 5:30–10:00 p.m.
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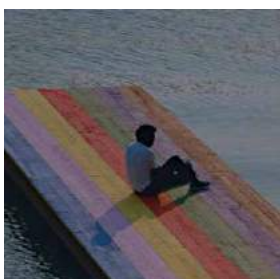
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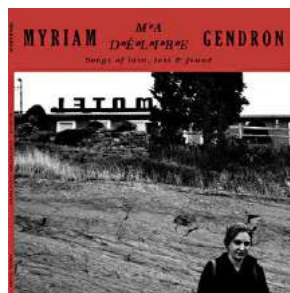
BADBADNOTGOOD, *Talk Memory* (XL Recordings/Innovative Leisure)

BBNG are back after five years for a fifth full-length outing that finds the Toronto group pursuing their own dialect of miscellaneous influence spoken in the “jazz language,” as drummer Alex Sowinski puts it. *Talk Memory*

expresses itself with the drama and purpose of a great film score, leaving it to the listener to imagine the story arc to our own audio experience. At times sprawling and chaotic, at other moments sparse and pensive, it's perhaps best described as a beautiful collection of broken ideas pieced back together with kinetic instinct. Brazilian bossa nova legend Arthur Verocai features prominently on several songs, along with guests Karriem Riggins and Terrace Martin. BadBadNotGood will never be mistaken for easy listening, but this may be their most accessible offering yet. 8/10 Trial Track: “City Of Mirrors” ft. Arthur Verocai (Darcy MacDonald) BadBadNotGood perform at MTelus on Friday, Dec. 1



time of his life alongside his family member. His protégé may not have the same sharp lyrical tongue as his cousin but Keem is setting himself up for years of success to come. 8/10 Trial Track: “Range Brothers” (Mr. Wavvy)



Myriam Gendron, *Ma délire* – Songs of love, lost & found (independent)

Gendron's 2014 album based on Dorothy Parker poems, *Not So Deep as a Well*, is already the stuff of legend, a long-lost crackling classic recorded before our eyes. In between work and kids, the Montreal folk

artist completed this bilingual double album with a band, based on traditional tunes from her home province, France and the U.S., with some originals sprinkled in (including a wordless tribute to late Sala Rossa bartender Richard Deschênes). Gendron handles her words and the words of others with great care, understanding the love, pain and death rooted in the canon. Coupled with her own lived-in vocals and guitar work, there's deliberate, gentle force dedicated to every note. It's music worth waiting for and spending time with. 8/10 Trial Track: “C'est dans les vieux pays” (Erik Leijon)



The Lyonz, *Change in Colour* (E.47)

A young, arty Montreal hip hop duo is seeking new sonic horizons in France at the moment. Ten of the 16 tracks on their second long-player already came out as virtual two-sided singles in 2021, but the final

statement continues the progression with an expansive hour of the liminal space between downtempo jazz and rap, a rhythmic set of nocturnal left turns with a freeform narrator. The quiet-storm grooves and supple arrangements are irresistible and run counter to most current hip hop trends, but it's pretty clear the Lyonz have forged their own path, and it's great to hear the pair define their own sound with confidence right from the jump. 8/10 Trial Track: “Strangers in the Endless” (Erik Leijon)



Lil Wayne & Rich the Kid, *Trust Fund Babies* (Young Money)

Lil Wayne has announced a staggering number of collaborative albums over the years. While efforts with Juelz Santana and Drake have somehow never materialized, the Young Money head honcho

somehow linked up with Rich the Kid for a new mixtape. There is nothing here worth relistening to more than a couple of times, yet nothing offensively bad. Wayne is a legend in his own right and deserves to have some fun. *Trust Fund Babies* is an outing with little thought and much bravado, which isn't always a bad thing. 6/10 Trial Track: “Big Boss” (Mr. Wavvy)

Baby Keem, *The Melodic Blue* (pgLang)

Baby Keem's debut album is a family affair. As the first signee to his cousin Kendrick Lamar's new record label, pgLang, *The Melodic Blue* ushers in a bold new era of West Coast hip hop. The Nevada-born rapper shares his cousin's creative sensibility through Playboi Carti-like mumble flows. Lamar, who appears on three standout tracks, is having the

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:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

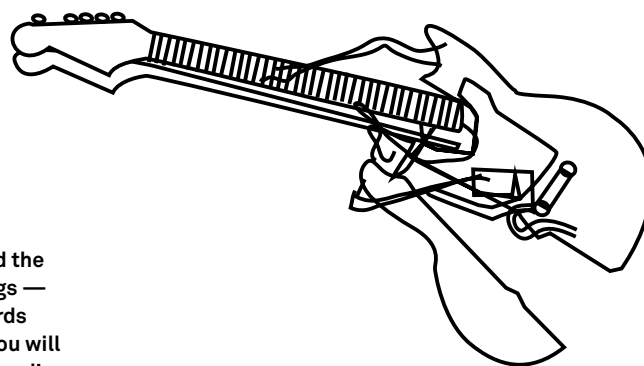
Along with killer slabs like Black Flag's *Nervous Breakdown* EP, Circle Jerks' *Group Sex* and Fear's *The Record*, Germs' *GI* record is easily one of the cornerstones if not ground zero for the burgeoning Southern California hardcore scene of the early '80s.

Like many budding young punkers, I hardly cottoned to Germs' classic 1979 debut LP *GI*. Darby Crash's atonal wail, filled with venom, bile and nihilism, was a bit too much for my tender teenage ears. I was just barely out of my Sex Pistols and Ramones phase and songs like "Communist Eyes" and "We Must Bleed" just held no reference points for me to hang onto. In fact, it would take years before this razor-filled blaster would permanently burn and burrow its way into my frontal lobes and finally become one of my most cherished records.

If you were lucky enough to scoop up an original copy of *GI* or the *What We Do Is Secret* EP on the

Slash label during the early '80s — or you can afford the crazy prices that the original copies go for on Discogs — then bully for you, but the recent Porterhouse Records release *The Complete Anthology*, is the only place you will get the *GI* full length, *What We Do Is Secret* EP, the band's debut single "Forming" (!!!) and their contributions to the *Cruising* soundtrack, all lovingly strewn over four vinyl sides. Previously only available on CD, the good folks at Porterhouse (X, Circle Jerks) — which is headed up by ex-Montrealer and My Dog Popper drummer Steve Kravac — gives this flawed gem the proper vinyl treatment it deserves. All of the Germs' recorded output is stretched out over two 180g LPs here and sounds completely gorgeous. I know, the original record was hardly audiophile quality but compared with my played to death bootleg copy, this is like hearing it again for the first time. For all of you trainspotters, this is indeed taken from the original stereo masters and was remastered by Ryan Smith at Sterling Sound. Pat Smear's (yep, the Foo Fighters guy) Rickenbacker guitar has extra smash and bash while Don Bolles's cymbals have more sizzle on the top end as his wandering kick drum gains a new sense of slam. It's in the mid-range though where the biggest difference lies as Darby's vocals sound utterly untethered now, with extra growl and more room to roam and pounce.

Most of you who routinely check this dark corner of *Cult MTL* will obviously have become well acquainted with this classic, but for those of you who would like to see where that



darned hardcore thing came from, this is it. It becomes abundantly clear that this is hardly a bunch of drug-infested beach bums mindlessly bashing away. In this case, the included lyric sheet reveals that there is a genius poet at work here. True, Darby's vocals are the real pill/thrill here, but his mouth is full of marbles throughout. Reading along to lines like "I came into this world like a puzzled panther" in "Manimal" cuts to the bone. The band was easily waaaay ahead of their time musically and were clearly forging new roads in 1979 as Black Flag were just revving up. But it really is Darby's barbs and utter abandonment in performance that would ignite the hardcore movement as well as continue to influence bands today that dare to remain and proliferate outside of the margins.

Current Obsession: *GI*
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Spice opera



Dune

BY ALEX ROSE

Ever since he was announced as the director of the newest version of Frank Herbert's *Dune*, Denis Villeneuve has not been shy about saying that adapting the classic sci-fi novel has been a pet project for years, if not decades. This is never clearer than when you actually watch the film, which seems very synchronous with the themes and visuals of Villeneuve's previous films. Sand billows ominously; family relationships are tested by unimaginable forces and evil is difficult to snuff out using only good intentions. If no one really thought Villeneuve wasn't a good fit for the material, it's perhaps difficult to imagine anyone else's career seeming so naturally poised for *Dune*.

"I discovered the book very young, as a teenager, and therefore it's a book that stayed with me all these years," says Villeneuve. "It's a book that was always in the echo chamber, in the sense that it had such an influence that it almost certainly coloured some of my other films. There has to be some thematic and aesthetic connection, 10 movies later — I'm the same person, so there are those kinds of links between the films. I'm the accumulation of my work, and to be asked that question is a compliment. When I make films, I think I can do my job well if I'm 1000% invested and if I feel at home in the story. I want to describe a universe that's mine and develop a great deal of intimacy with the story I'm telling. It's one of my most personal films — if not *the* most personal — because some of the themes and aspects are a big part of who I am."

A complex space opera with young Paul Atreides (Timothée Chalamet) at the centre, *Dune* is one of the most read and discussed science-fiction novels in history — and even that means most people haven't read it. A foundational text of genre literature, it more or less splits audiences into two

categories: those who know, love and understand the source material, and those to whom Villeneuve's film (or, perhaps, the 1984 version directed by David Lynch) will be the first foray into the world of spice, sandworms and the grotesque Baron Harkonnen.

"On one hand, *Dune* is the most read science-fiction novel in history," says Villeneuve, when asked about the potentially hermetic nature of adapting a work so beloved and yet so specific. "But on the other hand, you're absolutely right. There's an important core of fans that exists, but it's not something that many people have as part of their general culture. I approached this adaptation with the idea that no one watching the movie had read the book. I'm fairly certain that the majority of the audience who'll see the movie won't have read the book. It was important to me, therefore, to transpose as much of the richness and complexity of the novel to the film without making neophytes feel like there was something missing. That was the biggest challenge, because I also wanted fans of the novel to find the ideas, the colours, the flavours and the feel of the novel in the film I had made. When

you adapt a novel, there has to be a transformation. But the challenge is to find the balance between those two poles of the audience.”

Finding the balance means, in this case, keeping as much of the rich lore as possible, but also tweaking some of the elements. Chief among the changes that Villeneuve has made to the script revolves around the character of Baron Harkonnen, played by Stellan Skarsgård. Descriptions of the character (and the depiction of the Baron in the Lynch film) illustrate a grotesque, larger-than-life character; a massively obese, pedophilic villain with a pustule-laden skin. Villeneuve’s version of Harkonnen is scaled-down to more human proportions — just as nasty, but more Captain Kurtz than Jabba the Hutt.

“There are lots of elements of the book that I think have aged dangerously well,” he explains. “There are things that are as powerful and modern today as they ever were. One of the elements that I felt was weaker and had not aged as gracefully was the depiction of the Baron. In the novel, he’s a bit of a moustache-twirling villain who talks and talks and talks to the point where he becomes something of a caricature. It was a more delicate matter when it came to putting that character on-screen. He was written in the ’60s, and there were things that were synonymous with villany at that time that would seem totally out of step today.

“I wanted to give that character a little love, in the sense that I wanted to make him dangerous and malevolent but taciturn — someone who is immobile, but not grotesque. He’s a mass of muscles, filled with danger and potential violence. I wanted him to create fear. I thought the scarier the Baron was, the stronger the film would be. It was a lot of work to find his silhouette, because the Baron needs to have an important corporal mass, and it’s canon that he needs a transportation device in order to float around. What we found out at this step is that he could very easily look like a giant floating baby! I wanted him to look like a gorilla.”

In more recent years, the cultural cachet of *Dune* has revolved mainly around the documentary *Jodorowsky’s Dune*, which depicts the long and ultimately unsuccessful attempt by cult Mexican filmmaker Alejandro Jodorowsky to adapt the film into a wildly ambitious and psychedelic opus that would have starred Salvador Dali and boasted a score by Pink Floyd. Between this and the psychedelic, Hipgnosis-inspired artwork that reprints of the book were given through the ’70s and ’80s, one might expect *Dune* to be a headtrip — but apart from the booming score by Hans Zimmer (which includes a significant amount of what I can only call “lysergic bagpipes”), Villeneuve’s vision isn’t so trippy.

“I’d say that when Frank Herbert wrote the novel in the ’60s, he was very much inspired by the world around him and all of the social upheaval of the period,” he says. “It’s a portrait of the 20th century that makes some projections about the future, and many of those projections turned out to be accurate. I think the novel is even more relevant now than it was at the time. It’s painfully pertinent, these days; it predicted the future and some ideas that it put across have only become crystalized by time. I do agree that there’s a psychedelic influence to it, and we had a lot of fun with that aspect of the book during the making of this film. I think the sound of the film — and the music, particularly — is very psychedelic. When I approached Hans Zimmer about the soundtrack, I told him it had to sound like prog rock from the beginning of the ’70s, with these great operatic swells. We were inspired by those sounds — I’d say the film is coloured by it, but it’s a modern film by every standard.”

→ *Dune* opens in theatres on Friday, Oct. 22



Chiabella James



Chiabella James

Caught between cultures



Bootlegger

BY ALEX ROSE

In multidisciplinary artist and filmmaker Caroline Monnet's feature debut *Bootlegger*, Devery Jacobs plays Mani, a 20-something First Nations woman and aspiring lawyer who returns to her small community after many years spent in the city studying. Mani returns home to find a community ravaged by alcohol even though the sale of alcohol is theoretically forbidden in the remote community. All signs point to Laura (Pascale Bussières), a white woman who runs a corner store in town and runs a booze racket with the protection of her First Nations partner Raymond (Jacques Newashish), who still holds Mani accountable for a shared tragedy in their past. Mani takes it upon herself to try and change things by holding a referendum about the legalization of alcohol sales, presenting it with the idea that if people are going to drink anyway, profits should be spread throughout the community.

When I phoned up Monnet to talk about the movie, I briefly blanked — completely unsure of what language to use in our interview. Monnet, who is Algonquin herself, was born in the Northwest Territories but raised between Outaouais and

France. Those themes of being uprooted or caught between two cultures are ever-present in the film, starting with the fact that the film moves freely between French, English and Algonquin. (If you're curious, our conversation wound up being in French.)

"It also represents the region of Maniwaki, where I shot the film," says Monnet. "We live in that reality, where people switch back and forth between French, English and Algonquin. I liked the idea that the main character doesn't necessarily speak the language of her community, which only adds to her feeling uprooted. The barrier of language was there from the beginning.

"When you leave your community for a long time and you come back, we feel a little detached," she continues. "That's true for everyone, but it's especially true when it comes to Algonquin culture. We lose our anchors very quickly. I wanted to talk about the reality of small communities, close communities like this one, in which everyone knows each other and has each other's back. It's also about the exodus towards the city. When you go towards the city, as an Indigenous person, at least, it's as if there were a hierarchy. The 'true' First Nations people are the ones who speak their language every day, who never left their community and who keep their traditions going. When you go to the city, your spirit is occupied by other things."

These themes are also explored by Innu poet Joséphine Bacon in the documentary *Je m'appelle humain* — and, as luck would have it, Bacon also appears in *Bootlegger* as Mani's grandmother. It's a rare acting appearance for one of the most important and celebrated figures in Indigenous arts and letters.

"We shot the film in 2019, which was definitely before the documentary came out, though I don't really know when they shot it," says Monnet. "When I wrote the character of the

grandmother, I immediately thought of Joséphine Bacon: her luminous face, her beautiful blue eyes. There's a sweetness, a softness to her that I thought was perfect for the role. She was my first choice."

A recurring reality of making films set in Indigenous communities in Quebec is the relative lack of trained, professional actors from those communities, nevermind whether or not those actors are right for a film's particular characters. This leads many filmmakers to cast non-professional actors, which more often than not gives those films a rough-hewn, *cinéma vérité* style that's nowhere to be found in *Bootlegger*.

"I didn't want that tone at all," says Monnet. "I didn't want something hyper-realistic like a Dardenne Brothers movie. I wanted something that was slicker visually, where I would do a lot of work on colours and visuals. I come from visual arts, so visual aesthetics are very important to me, down to the camerawork or the symbolism in some of the images. I didn't want it to be realistic — it's fiction, on a fictional reservation."

In that sense, *Bootlegger* exists alongside genre-bending efforts by Indigenous filmmakers like Jeff Barnaby's *Blood Quantum*, Danis Goulet's *Night Raiders* or Tracey Deer's *Beans* — films that depict Indigenous lives through the lens of genre film or, at the very least, a heightened aesthetic.

"I want it to stand out," she continues. "I don't want to see that in movies anymore. I want to see things that stand out — horror, science fiction, comedies. I don't want all the movies about Indigenous people to be hyper-realistic. (...) It's about going past preconceived notions and exploring what cinema can do. It's about having fun, too. We're allowed to have fun!"

→ *Bootlegger* is the opening film of the Festival du Nouveau Cinéma on Oct. 6 and opens in Montreal theatres on Oct. 8.



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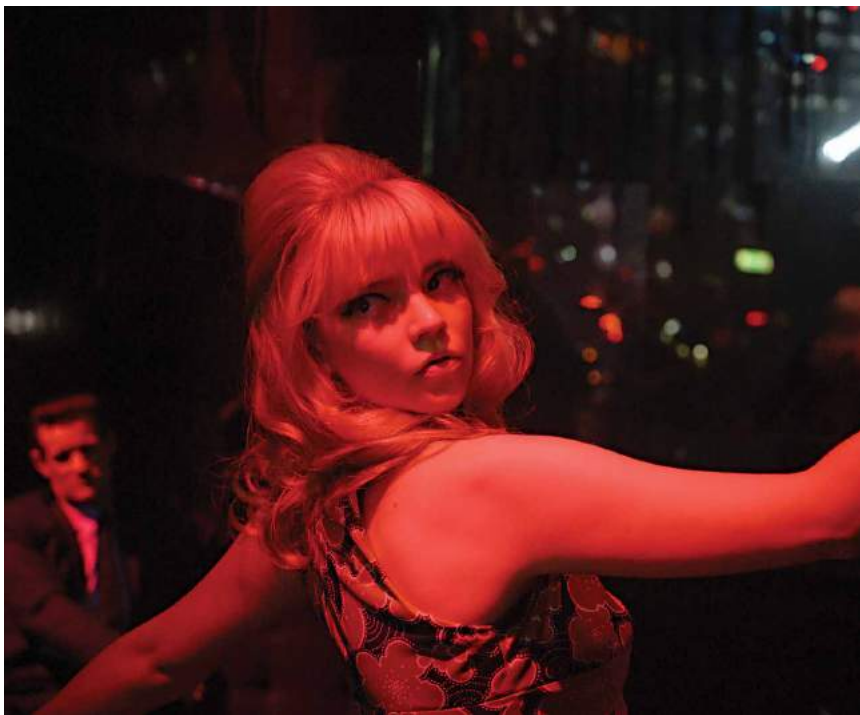
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Last Night in Soho



No Time to Die



The Last Duel



The French Dispatch

BY ALEX ROSE

The film release schedule is practically back to normal, now that movies delayed by the pandemic are finally starting to come out.

The biggest casualty of the pandemic has to be *No Time to Die*, the latest James Bond movie (and final installment to star Daniel Craig), which was originally slated for release in early April 2020 only to be kicked back several times since. *No Time to Die* (Oct. 8) sees Bond facing a vengeful terrorist (Rami Malek) and is directed by *True Detective*'s Cary Joji Fukunaga. Denis Villeneuve's *Dune* is another highly anticipated blockbuster that saw its release moved several times during the pandemic; Villeneuve's star-studded adaptation of the cult sci-fi novel by Frank Herbert was originally intended for release in Nov. 2020 but will now hit theatres on Oct. 22.

Ridley Scott is never one to sit on his laurels too long. Despite being in his mid-80s, Scott has two large-scale movies coming out this year. The first is *The Last Duel*, a

medieval drama written by and starring Ben Affleck and Matt Damon. Damon plays Jean de Carrouges, a knight who faces his best friend Jacques le Gris (Adam Driver) in a duel after it is revealed that le Gris may have sexually assaulted his wife. Affleck takes a supporting role in the film that also stars Jodie Comer. Wes Anderson has gathered a ridiculously stacked cast (which includes Timothée Chalamet, Frances McDormand, Benicio del Toro, Elisabeth Moss, Léa Seydoux and Anderson mainstays like Bill Murray, Owen Wilson, Willem Dafoe and Jason Schwartzman) for *The French Dispatch* (Oct. 29), an anthology film split into three stories as told by the French outpost of an American newspaper in the '60s.

October also inevitably means horror, and there are three pretty big contenders stepping up to the ring this month. First out of the gate on Oct. 15 is *Halloween Kills*, the latest in the current David Gordon Green-directed version of the horror franchise. Early festival word on *Halloween Kills* is that it isn't quite a worthwhile follow-up to the 2018 installment, though some have been pretty impressed with where Gordon Green is taking the franchise. Edgar Wright returns with his first fiction film since 2017, *Last Night in Soho* (Oct. 29), a horror film starring Anya Taylor-Joy and

Thomasin McKenzie set in 1960s London, which is said to take much inspiration from British horror films of that same time period. Finally, the local zombie movie *Brain Freeze* (which premiered at Fantasia earlier this year) makes its way to screens on Oct. 29 as well; Roy Dupuis, Iani Bédard and Marianne Fortier star in the horror comedy from director Julian Knafo.

Multidisciplinary artist and filmmaker Caroline Monnet makes her feature debut with *Bootlegger* (Oct. 8), a drama set in a remote First Nations community that erupts in conflict over the potential legalization of alcohol sales on their territory; Pascale Bussi  res, Devery Jacobs and poet Jos  phine Bacon star. In other homegrown releases, you can see Ivan Grbovic's *Les oiseaux ivres* (Canada's selection for the International Feature Oscar this year) as of Oct. 15; H  l  ne Florent, Claude Legault and *Roma*'s Jorge Antonio Guerrero star in this tale of a Mexican man who gets a job at a Quebec farm in order to track down his lover, who is hiding out from cartels in Montreal. Vicky Krieps and Tim Roth star in *Bergman Island* (Oct. 15 at Cin  ma du Parc), the newest from Mia Hansen-L  ve, in which two filmmakers travel to F  r   island, where Ingmar Bergman shot many of his most famous works.



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Something like a phenomenon



Marie Davidson et l'Oeil nu



D. Kimm

Rolline Laporte

BY SAVANNAH STEWART

Festival Phénomène is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year with an eclectic lineup of performances embodying the experimentalism its audience has come to expect.

After the unfortunate but necessary switch to an online-only format last year, artistic director D. Kimm says she's excited to be bringing the festival back in its true form in time for this milestone year.

"For me, to do it all online last year was very sad," says D. Kimm. "It was not the DNA of the festival."

But doing things in person this year, as the pandemic continues to drag on and impose various, changing public health guidelines, is no walk in the park. D. Kimm says that they are closely monitoring the recommendations and adapting to the changes, and offering shows both indoors and outdoors.

"I want to be sure that we can meet the people," she says. "We are just very happy to do it for real, with real people on a real stage."

D. Kimm's highlights of the festival's schedule include a free outdoor dancing event choreographed by Hélène Langevin on Oct. 9, for which participants are encouraged to get decked out in extravagant attire and learn a fun, simple choreography. The indispensable DADA Cabaret, an interdisciplinary collection of avant-garde performances that is a signature of the festival, will have two showings, on Oct. 14 and 15. And for the English-speaking crowd, D. Kimm proposes a comedic puppet show by Jon Lachlan Stewart, *The King Stinks*.

Another show D. Kimm is looking forward to is that of her daughter, the musician Marie Davidson, with her band l'Oeil

nu. Davidson is returning to Montreal's live music scene for the first time in just over two years, with new material to perform for her fans.

Though she's been making music with the band since last year, she is very excited about their performing debut in her hometown, happening as part of Phenomena at la Tulipe on Oct. 8.

"This is not a new project anymore, but it was supposed to be a new thing when we put out a record last year," Davidson says with a laugh. "And after the pandemic, it makes it extra special."

Davidson and her band will be playing their 2020 album *Renegade Breakdown*, which is a bit of a different sound from Davidson's solo days making dance music.

"We're trying to have fun with the medium, and most of all, it's just a celebration of music, playing live, musicianship," she explains. "We still make electronic music but we also do rock, we use guitars. I don't want to spoil the thing but there will also be danceable moments."

Another event D. Kimm is looking forward to is *L'Oeil éveillé*, a performance put on by six artists who are deaf or hard of hearing. Presented in Quebec Sign Language with French translation, the show blends poetry, theatre, video and signed music. D. Kimm describes it as an event meant to bring together the hearing and non-hearing communities, and showcase the talent of these artists to a public that might not have come across them otherwise.

"I'm very proud that the deaf public can come to Santa Rosa to see a show with artists from their community," she explains. "This is what I like: put people together, give them the chance to know more."

Including this show is also a reflection of a larger effort to increase the diversity of the artists participating in the festival. This is the first year a diversity commissioner was hired with the mandate of seeking out talent with varied backgrounds and identities.

"The position I hold today proves that Festival Phénomène wants to be an agent of change," writes diversity commissioner Claudia Chan Tak in her message to festival-goers. "I am proud of my role. Immensely proud. But quite honestly, I hope its days are numbered."

"I hope that soon, we will no longer speak of diversity as an imbalance, an absence to correct, but rather as a richness and pride we will no longer need to demand but instead celebrate — without having to identify or label it."

"I think what is important about the festival is the fact that it reaches a very large scale of people, different generations, different types of people, and everybody feels welcome," says D. Kimm about why she hired a diversity commissioner this year.

"It's very inclusive, I agree with that. It's not niche, it's not elitist, it's not snob at all, which is something I really respect," says Davidson, agreeing with D. Kimm.

Davidson would know — she got her start performing in the Festival Voix d'Amériques, the precursor to Festival Phénomène, at just 14.

As the festival celebrates its 10 years, the company headed by D. Kimm that produces it, Les Filles électriques, is also celebrating its 20th anniversary. To mark these occasions, a photography exhibit showcasing the work of official festival photographer Caroline Hayeur will be on display free of charge at Maison de la culture du Plateau-Mont-Royal. The exhibit documents the highlights of both Festival Phénomène and Festival Voix d'Amériques before it.

After a two-year break from an in-person festival, D. Kimm finished with an invitation to get dressed up and enjoy live performance again, all together.

"Come on people, get out of your sweatpants, come out to a real show!"

→ Festival Phénomène runs from Oct. 7–22



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New flame



K. Trevor Wilson

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

If your type of comedy involves devastating burns and sharp-tongued insults, this is the show for you.

Roast Battle Canada will be making its series premiere on the CTV Comedy Channel on Oct. 11, with episodes airing Mondays at 10:30 p.m. ET. Adapted from its American counterpart *Jeff Ross Presents Roast Battle*, and hosted by actor Ennis Esmer, the Roast show will feature an array of Canadian comics duking it out to see who can deliver the most blistering putdowns.

Over eight episodes with two battles each, contestants will be judged by Canadian comedic royalty: Russell Peters, K. Trevor Wilson and Sabrina Jalees. *Cult MTL* got the opportunity to chat with Wilson and Jalees to find out more about the show, the types of humour to expect and how comedy can thrive in the “cancel culture” era.

Dave MacIntyre: How did your involvement with *Roast Battle Canada* as a judge come about?

K. Trevor Wilson: My history with Roast Battle goes all the way back to when they were testing it out to see if it would work as a TV show. I was in the first Jeff Ross Roastmasters Invitational tournament at Just for Laughs a few years ago. That was the dry run for taking the Roast Battle format out of the Comedy Store in L.A., and then travelling with it. Jeff Ross, Brian (Moses), and the Roast Battle gang put on a week-long tournament in Montreal during the festival. Jimmy Carr won the inaugural edition. I came in third or fourth. I lost to the guy who ultimately lost to Jimmy. The following year, they televised the first season of (the American) Roast Battle on Comedy Central. I got invited



Sabrina Jalees

back to compete again based on how well I had done the year before, and how familiar I was with the format, and also because I got along with all the Roast guys.

Sabrina Jalees: I’ve been doing shows at Just for Laughs for almost as long as I’ve been doing comedy, so two decades. Just for Laughs put this show together, and my manager called and said that they were interested in having me on as a judge. Honestly, the idea of being a judge made me so horny for the power. You spend so much time as a comic earning people’s respect. The idea of being able to roll up behind that table with my pants undone, flip-flops on and be in the position to wield power of my own was very sexy to me.

DM: What do you think makes a good comedy roast?

KTW: The best roasts are done by people who truly respect and enjoy the people that they’re roasting. If you’re battling out of hate or spite, it’s not going to be funny. It’s going to come across as awful. But if you actually like the person you’re battling, then it’s going to be funny. Not to say that their jokes aren’t going to be mean and that there’s not going to be bite to them, but no one knows you better than your friends — and no one can take you down better than your friends. What you want to see is both parties enjoying themselves. I think that’s what we have a lot of on the show.

SJ: A good comedy roast, just like a good joke, is built on some dark, dark truths. If you get past the first glance of someone, there’s the first layer of a roast, which is like, «This chick looks like Michelle Rodriguez meets Kelly Clarkson!» Someone might say that about me. But the deeper you go into the onion, the more research you do on the person, and the more clever and dark the joke is, I think that’s where you’re scoring major points.

DM: Since it’s on CTV, how raunchy or dark can we expect the humour to get?

KTW: If you’re expecting stuff that you can’t see on television, you’re going to be disappointed, because it’s a television show. But we push the envelope a couple times. I think people are going to be pleasantly surprised with how mean and vicious these Canadians can get.

SJ: I’m shocked at what they were able to leave in the dish that you’ll be eating. It’s pretty dark — not something I would watch with my son. When he turns seven, maybe! (Laughs) You can bleep language, but the places that some of these comics go with their roasts shocked me, and I think it’ll shock the nation.

DM: What do you think is the current state of standup comedy in Canada, particularly with “cancel culture” being a perceived threat in today’s climate?

KTW: I’ve never been afraid of being cancelled. Throughout my career. I’ve heard people ring the death knell of comedy more than a dozen times, over a plethora of stupid issues. If you’re a good comedian, a solid writer, you know how to perform, and you know what you’re doing, you’re never in fear of losing your job. You’re never in fear of losing your place, because you can adapt. If someone’s telling you that you can’t pick on certain groups with your comedy, and that ruins your career, you were probably a pretty garbage comic to begin with. I have no concern about cancel culture coming for me, ever in my life — and that’s because I’m not a moron.

SJ: I’m sick of comics complaining about cancel culture. Literally everybody is on blast, whether you work in an office or you’re a comic. If you’re a comic, you’re accruing more quotes out there in the world. It is inconvenient when people take things out of context. I certainly have tweeted things and had people react poorly. But ultimately, my right to say what I want to say on the internet is the same as someone else’s right to react to it — whether or not they’re right, or if I feel that they’ve taken it out of context.

DM: How do you think the future of comedy could still thrive despite such a climate?

KTW: Comedy has existed since before the written word. If people think cancel culture is going to destroy comedy, they only have to look back at history and see that society doesn’t exist without comedy in it. Comedy’s not going anywhere. As long as we’ve been talking, there’s been comedy. It will exist and has continued to exist since the beginning of recorded history.

SJ: I think it’s totally thriving. This idea of cancel culture being this huge threat to comedy is actually it being a threat to certain people with views that are masked as jokes, but are actually just offensive, and don’t really back up those views with huge punchlines, feeling scared that they’re going to be phased out. The truth is, they might be phased out. A lot of the time, it’s people who are trying to perform shock comedy. Maybe, just maybe, that type of humour is what’s being phased out, not you. If that person goes deeper and starts talking about things that they actually feel, or going deeper with their material, maybe that’s the natural progression — not that it’s been a threat to comedy, but that it’s actually an invitation to do something a little more interesting.

DM: What can you tell us about the comedians taking part? Are they people who’ve been established in our country’s standup scene, or mostly people who are still quite new to it?

KTW: It really depends on how closely you follow Canadian comedy. I was thrilled to see the lineup of comics. Some of them are guys I’ve worked with tons over the years — some I would consider the very best at what they do in this country. Is it going to be a lot of household names? No, other than the judges and the hosts. I think the average Canadian might not know all the comics coming across the counter. But are they established, touring, working comedians in the industry? Hell yeah. Each and every one of them has cut their teeth and earned their spot, and deserves to be there. Hopefully this show provides them a showcase to shine and make them a little bit more of a household name in this country.

SJ: There are some people I know from back in the day, there are some new people. A lot of white dudes with chips on their shoulders. (laughs) Some of these guys just get up and immediately make the same sort of joke, like “Sabrina is here for diversity!” I’m like, “Motherfucker, everybody on the stage is brown, honey! You’re the diversity. The fact that you’re a white comic on this show is diverse.” There’s some really interesting, funny new faces. I actually left shooting the show and told my agent in the U.S., “You guys should watch this and poach these comics, because the women especially really brought it.”



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A hit is a hit

BY RYAN DIDUCK

The Many Saints of Newark, directed by Alan Taylor (HBO Films)

Fans of *The Sopranos* were undoubtedly much too excited to see the first-ever series-spinoff feature-length film, *The Many Saints of Newark*, released simultaneously to theatres and HBO Max on Oct. 1. But the first reviews were not good. Never had an audience so eagerly and so long awaited something they knew universally would prove to be so reliably disappointing.

James Gandolfini's absence, both as principle on-screen character and larger-than-life offscreen persona, haunted this picture since its inception. No one could fill Tony's wingtips. But by going back in time, focusing instead on Soprano's forerunner Dickie Moltisanti, creator David Chase discovered a clever workaround for the dilemma of making a film without him. Billed as "A Sopranos Story", Chase passed the George Lucas masterclass of prequels-as-sequels and offered an acceptable reason for *Sopranos* enthusiasts to watch.

Still, even if Chase had recruited A-listers across the board — Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt, George Clooney and Julia Roberts, Penélope Cruz and Charlize Theron, with Francis Coppola and Marty Scorsese directing — it would never have satisfied viewers hoping to rekindle the spark that made *The Sopranos* special. Nothing could.

Fortunately, *Many Saints* offers another, unexpected nostalgic pleasure: a throwback to the days of HBO before *The Sopranos*, before the network effectively created prestige TV. This film harkens back to the late 1990s, when HBO was at its best, producing pulpy, straight-to-cable and video-store fare like *Gotti*, *Gia*, and *The Rat Pack* — the latter of which also featured an over-the-top Ray Liotta turn.

These were objectively B-movies, not worthy of theatrical release. But that didn't make them any less entertaining. *Many Saints* is a solid B-movie. I'm glad that Chase had the bravery to make it and hopefully there will be more cheap-and-fearful "Sopranos Stories" in store, motherfuck the critics.

Soundwalk Collective with Charlotte Gainsbourg, feat. Lyra Pramuk, "Empower and Enhance," *Lovotic* (Analogue Foundation)

One thing they don't teach you in school is how to live next door to someone you don't like. You can read all the Shakespeare and do all the algebra and still never understand how to get along with someone you don't much care for, someone who doesn't much care for you. You can subscribe to all the world's religions and scour the sacred texts and meditate for days on end and drink ayahuasca in the Andes and still find yourself at wits' end trying to compose an email to a person who actively despises seeing your name in



Jerusalem in My Heart

their inbox but whom you must email nonetheless. Where are the courses, the departments, the degrees for the simple practice of getting along?

Nico Muhly, "Gift of Fire," *Gift of Fire* (Bedroom Community)

I miss Donald Trump. Not in the official sense, mind you; I do not miss him as President. But I miss his character. I miss him like I miss a bad TV show that I guiltily watched, that went away. I miss him like I miss *Beauty and the Beast* or *Xena: Warrior Princess*.

I think that Donald Trump's danger stemmed not solely from his character per-se, unhinged as it might have been. We are only now hearing bizarre accounts of, for instance, his aversion to vegetarianism, his outsize fear of cognitive decline, of staffers playing the *Cats* soundtrack to subdue him from episodes of violent rage. I suppose that is dangerous, but no more so than the average Hollywood movie producer. If Trump aspired to Napoleon, he only made it to Nixon.

What was truly dangerous about Trump is that he disproved democracy. The assumption until that time was that most people would collectively act in their own best interests and vote for stability. Of course, this has not been the case for some time, if ever. But the 2016 U.S. election was radically different. A collective of Americans democratically voted not so much for Donald Trump to be their President — that would be foolish — but *against* Hillary Clinton and her administrative ilk. Cold warriors and career politicians, they were on their way out.

Today, though, Trump seems like a distant memory. Biden would gladly go vegetarian for a month, no doubt. And like

almost every other American president, he's a dog man. The Trump show was cancelled. I have to admit, there was a shard in time that it made for fascinating TV.

Clara Engle, "Heart of Rags," *Dressed in Borrowed Light* (self-released)

There is something romantic about a nice hotel bar. A crowd consisting solely of people coming or going. The drinks are usually good, not great. But you're bound to go unrecognized. My favourite hotel bar in the world was at the Carlton (not the Ritz-Carlton, just the Carlton) on Madison and 28th in Manhattan. In Montreal, I used to like the bar at the Ritz on Sherbrooke. It was dark and reassuringly expensive. I went there once with a beautiful woman. We sank into a booth and drank bourbon and smoked Nat Shermans. It was one of the best bar experiences I've had. Imagine meeting a stranger in a hotel bar for a noirish tryst now. That kind of happy accident won't happen for a very long time, maybe never again. Add that to the long list of lost experiences for which to pine in a post-COVID world.

Jerusalem in My Heart, "Qalaq 5" (with Oiseaux-Tempête), *Qalaq* (Constellation Records)

The last email I received from Joni Sadler was a thank-you for playing something Constellation-related on the radio and a confirmation that a physical Godspeed LP was winging its way to me via Canada Post. Nobody does that anymore. Joni was a shooting star. She was great at her job. Her drumming kicked ass. She was a friend. I'll miss her.

Isabelle Stachtchenko

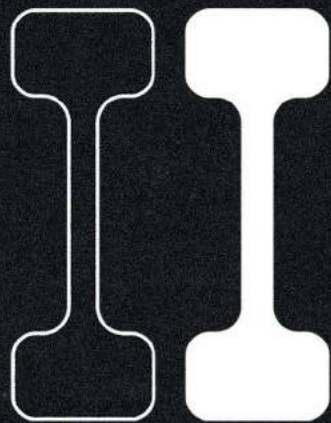
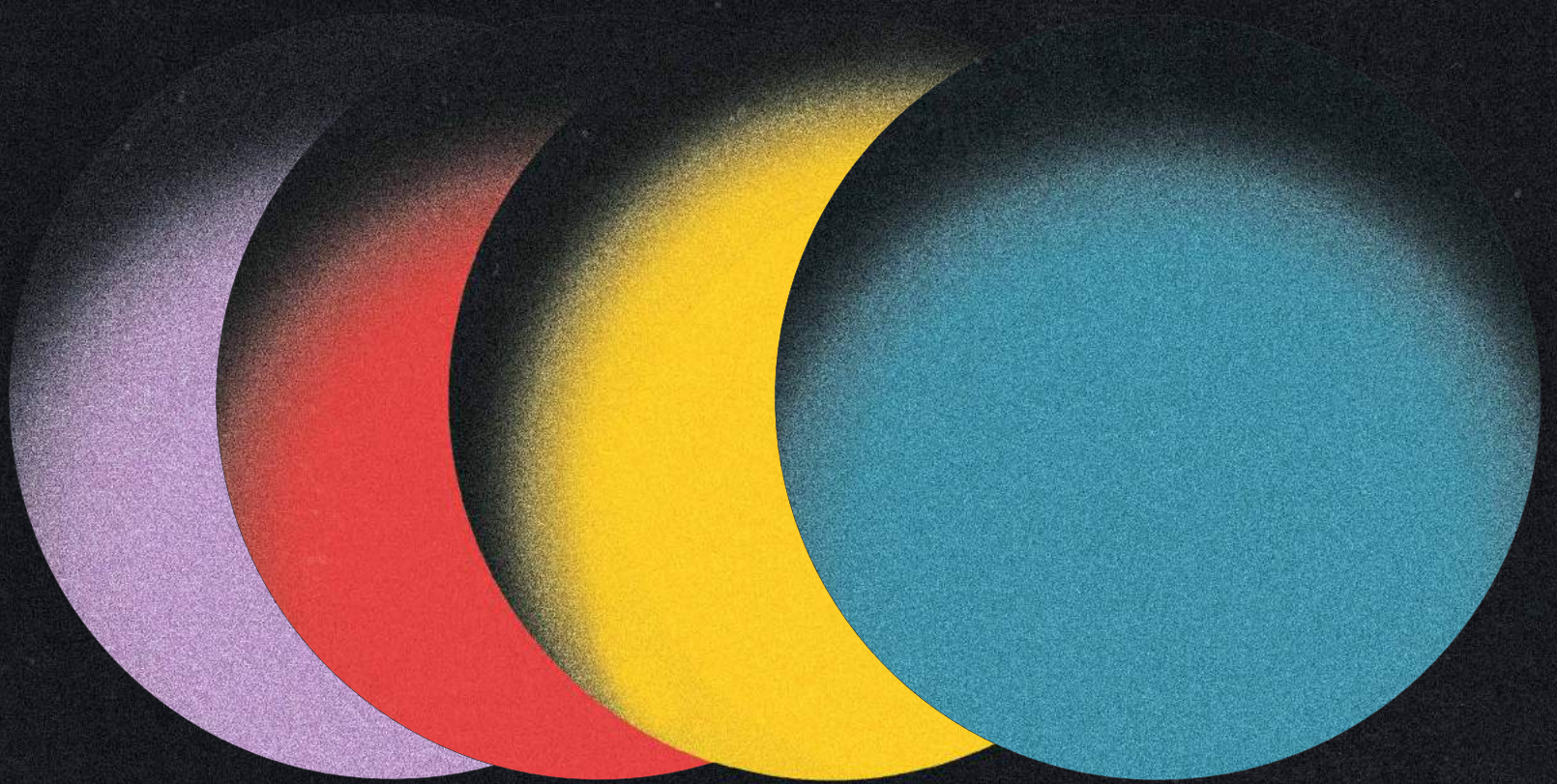
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