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* David Cronenberg * Jazz Fest * Montreal Fringe * Patrick Stewart * Bar St-Denis

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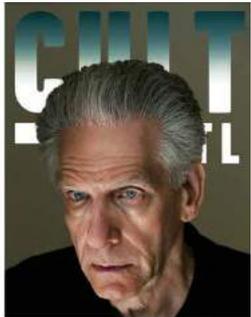
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An interview with legendary Canadian filmmaker David Cronenberg, whose new film *Crimes of the Future* is his first in eight years.

Photo by Caitlin Cronenberg

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Cult MTL is a daily arts, film, music, food and city life site. Visit us at

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LA
PRESSE



:the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

It has been a very wild month of May in the world of football.

The seasons have come to a close for all of the major European football leagues. In Italy, you had AC Milan crowned champs. In Spain, it was Real Madrid. In Germany, Canadian superstar Alphonso Davies and his club, Bayern, claimed the title. In France, it was the powerhouse club PSG who were named kings of the castle.

Not to stray too far off topic, but the whole Kylian Mbappé saga came to a close with him staying in the French capital for \$35-million a year until June 2025. He led the league in goals and assists.

Some other big money news in the world of football saw 21 year-old Erling Haaland's story come to close. The Norwegian flew to the U.K. to complete his \$65-million transfer to Premier League champions Manchester City. Man-City announced they had reached an agreement with the forward to join them from Borussia Dortmund.

In England, we saw the champions declared based on one point alone. It was a very exciting last day of

the season with nothing set in stone until the final whistle. In the end, Manchester City were crowned British champions, and by winning the league, they undercut the potential for Liverpool to win the quadruple. Liverpool were on pace to do that after beating (my beloved) Chelsea FC in not one but two different trophy matches this season, with both being decided on penalties. Manchester City have now won the league eight times.

In other Premier League news, Nottingham Forest ended their 23-year wait for top-flight football, with a win over Huddersfield Town in the championship playoff final at Wembley. This victory was worth about £170-million to the club. They will be joining Fulham and Bournemouth as the three new kids on the block next season.

Speaking of my beloved Blues, the ongoing sales saga is finally coming to a close. The British government, the previous Russian owner and now the Premier League have approved the £4.25-billion sale of the club to American Tom Boehly & Co. I will be watching very closely what all this will mean during the off-season as the clubs use the next month and a half to prepare for the beginning of the 2022–2023 season, which starts Aug. 6.

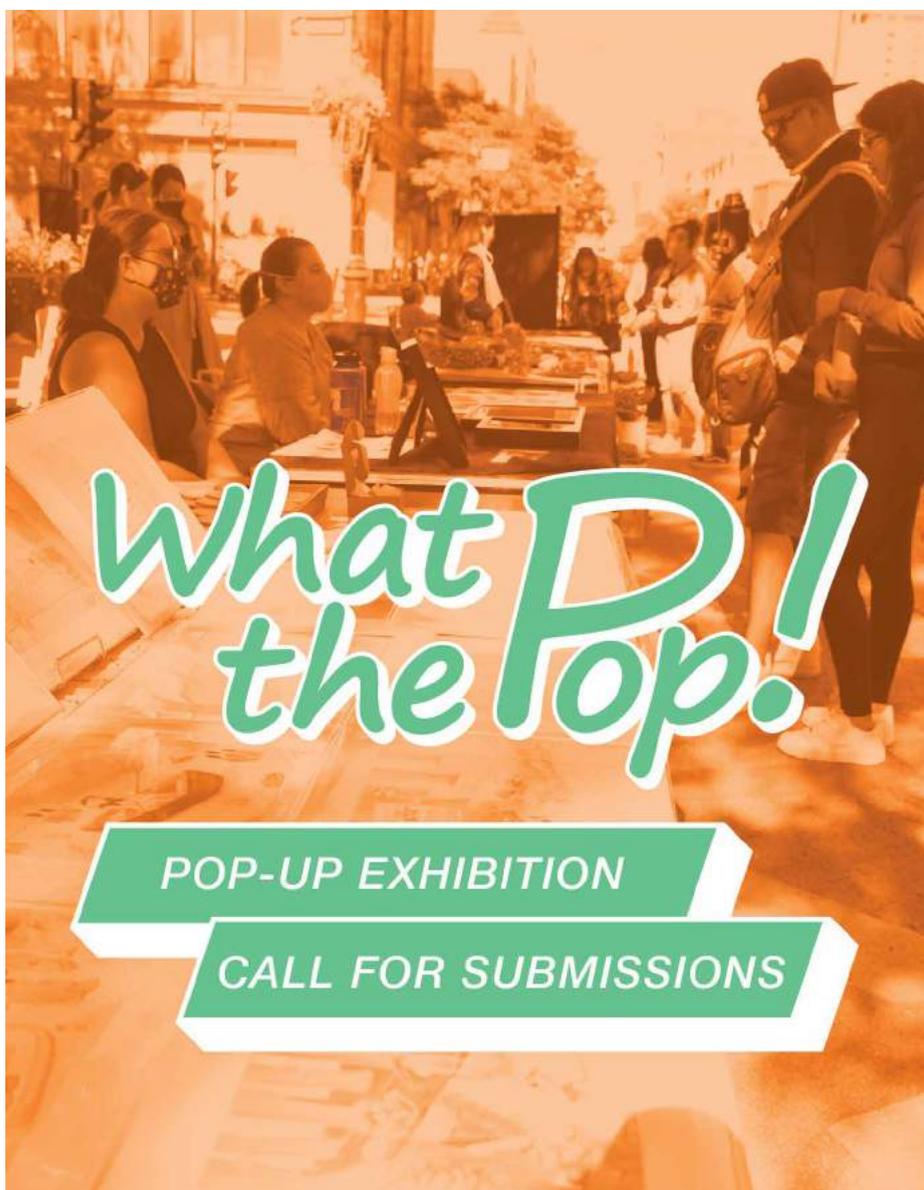
To wrap up European football nice and clean for this season, I need to mention the big match at the end of the month. Liverpool FC played Real Madrid in the Champions League

final in Paris on May 28. Real Madrid won the match 1–0 and have now won a mind-blowing 14 UEFA Champions League titles. Potential Ballon d'Or winner Benzema, Modric and Carvajal now join Ronaldo as the only players to play in and win five Champions League finals.

In North American football news, the MLS season is going strong and our local CF Montréal is doing remarkably well this year. At press time, Montreal sits fourth in the Eastern conference and have advanced in the Canadian championship. The team is working well together and being effectively coached. As the weather gets better, more and more Montrealers are making their way out to the stadium to cheer on the boys.

In the last week of May, the club also unveiled a new logo to make up for the shortcomings of the last re-brand, which happened during the pandemic and was not well received by the majority of the local football-loving public. Out with the snowflake and back in with the fleur-de-lys. CF Montréal's new logo will debut in the 2023 season. The club says the new crest honours its past, with the crest featuring the team's name, the fleur-de-lys, the shield, the predominance of the colour blue and 1993, the year of the club's first season. The black and blue stripes are an homage to the early years and to the year 1994, when they won their first championship.

"Take your victories, whatever they might be, cherish them, use them, but don't settle for them." —Mia Hamm



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:MTL courtside



BY MR. WAVVY

It's hard to believe that this month already marks a decade since Joel Anthony won his first NBA Championship. The centre played a key role in the Miami Heat superteam led by LeBron James, Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh.

As a born and raised Montrealer, Anthony's inclusion in the roster marked an important milestone for the city's basketball footprint. After all, this was the first time since Bill Wennington of the Chicago Bulls in 1998 that a local athlete helped secure a Larry O'Brien trophy.

Two years removed from his playing career, the player affectionately known as the Warden continues to contribute purposefully to Montreal's basketball landscape. In December of last year, Joel Anthony was named the inaugural General Manager of the city's new Canadian Elite Basketball League franchise, the Alliance. With his new role, Anthony hopes to echo the class-act "Heat Culture" that turned him into a winner.

Mr. Wavvy: What was it like for you as a kid from Montreal playing in the NBA? At the time, there was only you and Samuel Dalembert.

Joel Anthony: There weren't a lot of us. I was always proud to wear my Expos fitted cap! So I used to have my Expos fitted all the time, people that would only see me in that, because I wanted to represent where I was from. That representation is obviously huge.

You fast-forward to where we are now, we have all these different players that come from our city in the league and more coming in. I love to see the growth for our city and province.

MW: What do you think has changed in the world of basketball that has made it so much more feasible for Montrealers to get their foot in the door?

JA: It is so much more of a global game now. We are hitting that curve where a lot of development is catching up and the exposure has been big.

Montreal has always had talented guys — we've been overlooked. Now, some of that talent is able to go to school, Division One universities and college and get a chance to develop there. And that has given them more opportunities, playing against really good competition to speed up their development.

MW: That's beautiful. You guys are creating an opportunity where kids could really envision playing at home one day.

JA: Exactly. I was talking to Samuel (Dalembert), actually, not too long ago, about how we would dream to have the

opportunity to be able to play at home. To have this opportunity where there's a team right there in your backyard is extremely special. That's why we want to make sure we're able to do everything right, because I think this is a great opportunity that we don't want to miss out on.

MW: How do you feel about the Miami Heat this season? **(Note: this interview was conducted before their Easter Conference Finals elimination)**

JA: They're doing good. Coach Spo' has proven himself to be one of the top coaches in the league. They're very locked into their culture, their style. Everyone understands the standard comes with playing with the Heat. They've been able to do a good job of putting together wins and being extremely competitive. You can see it in the success that they've had.

MW: Does seeing your old teammate Mario Chalmers sign a 10-day contract with the Heat give you an itch to return at all?

JA: Ha! No, I definitely don't have the itch. I told (Mario) congratulations and everything, I'm happy he's still playing and still having fun. That's the most important thing. It's always good to see someone you know, be able to go back home and get that opportunity.

I'll always miss (playing) basketball because it's such a huge part of me, but now, I have something now that's been able to really fulfill me. Something different, obviously, but it's been great for me to be in this situation right now.

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BY DAVE MACINTYRE

This month, I'm taking on a strain from DLYS (which I'm assuming is pronounced like fleur-de-lys?), Quebec's first collective of provincially approved regional cannabis micro-producers.

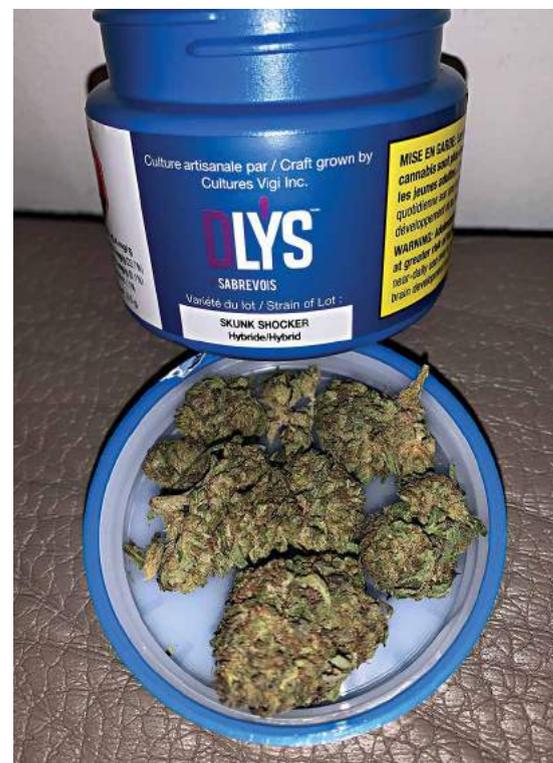
Since it's notoriously hard to get a permit to grow weed in Quebec, relative to other provinces, it's awesome to see an initiative like this come around and help get regional growers' plants onto SQDC store shelves. The one I'm about to detail my experience with is Sabrevois: grown in Sainte-Anne-de-Sabrevois, just south of St-Jean-sur-Richelieu. Keep reading to find out whether the quality of weed matches the number of hyphens!

DLYS SABREVOIS

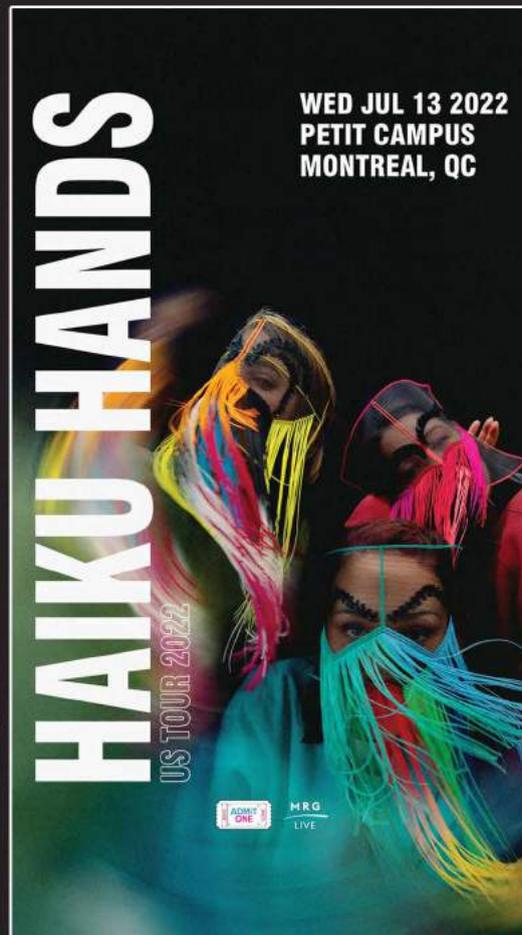
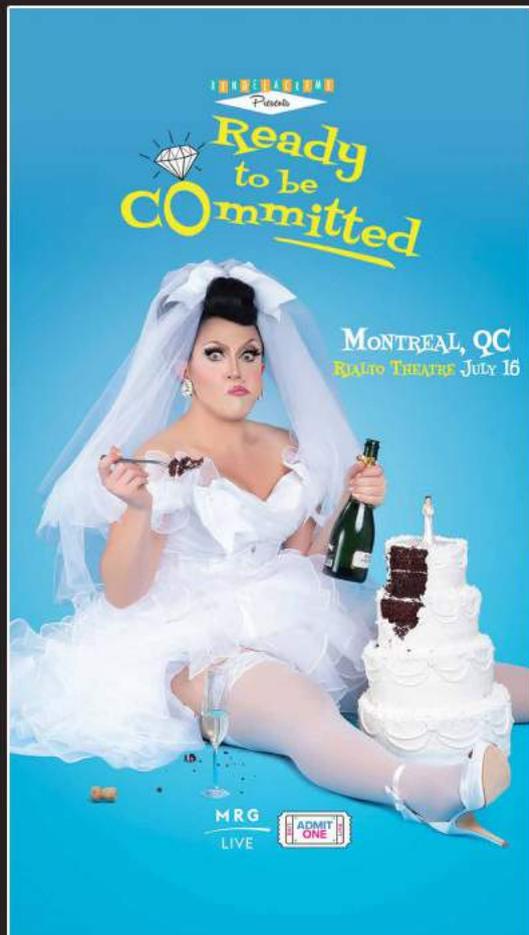
This craft-grown variety is a well-balanced hybrid, clocking in at a hefty 23.7% THC. Hilariously, the strain of this grow lot is called a "skunk shocker"

(whatever the flying fuck that means), so I know I'm most likely in for quite a treat. The buds are a bit brown, but they're moist enough that they don't feel old or brittle—not always easy to find at the SQDC. It goes down pretty smoothly when smoked, as it has a nice, almost fruity taste to it without being very harsh on your lungs. Despite being mildly skunky (and not as shocking as the name suggests), it's a relaxing head high, and boasts a good amount of staying power once smoked.

It's also a nice strain for daytime smoking, which I enjoy since I'm not usually a fan of lighting up during broad daylight. This should be music to the ears of anyone reading this who's looking for something to smoke during their park hangs. In fact, I tested this theory out while at Parc Laurier with two of my closest guy friends. During a game of frisbee, in which I was admittedly pretty blasted, I somehow forgot how to properly throw a frisbee. As such, I was so high that I completely botched one throw, much to my buddies' amusement. Not only did I throw it in the wrong direction I'd intended, it hardly went anywhere at all. Turns out if you do too much of this stuff, it'll literally throw you off your game. At least the high was satisfying enough to justify the laughs at my expense! 8.5/10



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Bar St-Denis

BY CLAY SANDHU

A few weeks ago, I was visiting with some friends of mine at Paradiso — their recently opened pasta counter in Westmount — and they mentioned they had a delivery to make at Bar St-Denis and invited me to come along. The plan was that we'd drop off the pasta and stay for a drink and a small bite.

Bar St-Denis was a spot that had been on my radar for a while, having opened back in 2018, but not somewhere I was overly keen to visit. I heard the wine list was decent and I'd seen pictures of the impressive art-deco ceiling and bubblegum pink bathrooms designed by Appareil Architecture but I figured it was just another small plates and natural wine bar. I was wrong. Bar St-Denis — perhaps for the fact that it bears that name — is in my opinion, one of the most underappreciated restaurants in Montreal. If you read no further than this — just go and eat there and you'll see exactly what I mean.

The restaurant's claim to fame undoubtedly rests on the pedigree of principals Emily Homsy and David Gauthier. Homsy spent more than a decade as the chef de cuisine of Au Pied de Cochon, where she met Gauthier, who eventually ended up moving on to the PDC Sugar Shack. However, aside from the quality of cooking and attention paid to the quality of product used, there is little evidence of PDC's famously indulgent and abundant cooking. Gauthier, who runs the kitchen, cooks with generosity — but of flavour rather than portion. Homsy, for her part, works the room, greets guests and generally oversees the operation. Her influence on the menu, however, doesn't go unnoticed as the use of the many Middle Eastern flavours and condiments can be easily traced back to her Egyptian roots. After my initial introduction to the restaurant, I decided to return with my wife and do a deeper dive into the menu.

Bar St-Denis, as you might have guessed, is located right on St-Denis and just around the corner from the Jean-Talon Market. The name is left over from the former dive bar on which the current restaurant was remodelled. I bring this up because I think, in part, the name belies the exceptional cooking going on in the kitchen. The name suggests that this is a bar first and foremost — a place to get a drink where some food can be had to stave off drunkenness. I think that does this place a disservice. The pints are cold, the cocktails look good and the wine list is full of good references at reasonable prices — but they aren't anything special. The food, on the other hand, is worth writing about.

Take, for example, the flatbread — simple enough, right? Gauthier's version comes out warm with a picture-perfect char on the exterior that's brushed with green-flecked ramp butter. The bread is beautifully soft and delicate like a tollhouse roll meets a tandoori naan. It's served with a hefty bowl of crème fraîche bathed in a bright green pool of verdant ramp oil. We enjoyed ours as an accompaniment to two other phenomenal dishes: razor clams, and whelks.

The razor clams were truly a sight to behold. Two colossal razor clams had been removed from their shells, portioned and tossed with a tabouleh made with samphire (sea asparagus). The vibrant, citrus-driven salad is then put back in its shell and served in a vintage pressed-pattern glass bowl filled with a mound of crushed ice. It's delicious, beautifully presented and feels far more nuanced than what I would generally consider bar food.

The whelks, commonly referred to as sea snails, were cut into bite-sized morsels and enveloped in pale green-hued tzatziki (my guess is that ramps were used as the garlic for the condiment) and topped with rounds of cucumber and crostini chips. The fresh, clean flavours of cucumber and whelk gain richness and depth from the tzatziki, and while some bread and dip might well constitute a bar snack, you'd be hard-pressed to call this *that*.

Before moving on to mains, we opted for a pasta course (it would be rude not to) of Bucatini — made by Paradiso —

with sea urchin. Let me state this outright: I am not generally an admirer of sea urchins. I've had the pleasure of enjoying some very high-quality urchins in Japan, but here in Quebec, I find the prized sweetness to be masked by a murky and somewhat bitter flavour. Which is to say, I was expecting to be underwhelmed. Again, not the case. A spiralled nest of bucatini was topped with a plump egg yolk and dotted with bright orange and perfectly handled pieces of urchin. The dish was, unsurprisingly, rich, as the egg yolk mixed with the pasta and created a luscious and silken coating. The urchin retained its characteristic sweetness and imparted a brininess that broke up the richness. The pasta, for its part, had an extraordinary texture and was cooked perfectly and made its signature whistling noise with every slurp. Top class and a perfect match for our wine.

The well-stocked wine list boasts over 100 references and is very diverse. Wines from many notable and well-loved producers are interspersed with wines from local producers — like Frelighsburg's Joy Hill and Saint-Armand's Pigeon Hill — as well as from producers further abroad in Turkey and even Japan. For our Mediterranean and seafood-driven meal, we selected a reasonably priced bottle of *El Clar* by Catalan producer Finca Parera, a vibrant, saline and aromatic white with just enough maceration to give it structure.

Alongside the pasta was a plate of “all dressed” grilled *sucrine* (baby gem lettuce) dressed with a duo of pickles (cucumber and banana pepper) and served on a caper-forward relish. A few summers back, I went to a *casse-croûte* out in the townships that served a *guédille* — essentially an all-dressed hot dog, hold the hot dog — this dish tasted a bit like what I imagine that would be like. Except, you know, much more delicious. It was the strangest of the dishes on the night but, overall, still very good.

The last two courses of the evening were dedicated to two of the most prized ingredients of the season: lobster and morels. The lobster dish was a particularly simple preparation of a half-lobster (claw and half-tail) served in a pool of coral-tinted *beurre blanc* with poached Tokyo turnips and a healthy scattering of tarragon. This is one of those tried and true dishes that doesn't need any additional innovation. The lobster was tender and had been perfectly cooked and the *beurre blanc* — *beurre rose* really — was beautifully emulsified and added both richness and acidity to the dish. Well done.

The other dish, however, was a masterpiece. An exquisitely prepared ballotine of *pintade* (guinea fowl) came served on a nest of gently wilted spinach and covered in a heap of succulent morels, the whole lot soaking up the silky, chestnut-brown sauce Madère (Madeira). The characteristic dimples of the morels act as a conduit for the sauce and the fowl, whose flavour is somewhere between chicken and turkey — this is the very embodiment of good food. This is the most PDC-influenced dish of the night and certainly the most substantial, but if it's on the menu when you go, I insist you order it.

We wrapped up the meal, our bellies nearly bursting, with a light and airy strawberry trifle beautifully presented in what looked to be a proper single-serving pedestaled dish. Layers of fresh strawberries mingle with layers of vanilla-speckled custard, delicate spongecake, a sort of strawberry gel and dollops of chantilly. The lot is dusted in a bit of gold flake. Lovely.

For some time now, I've asked myself the question, “What is bar food?” and while I don't know that I've found the answer, I don't think it's *this*. I can't put my finger on precisely why — there is plenty of considered, well-executed bar food — but the feeling at Bar St-Denis is different. I recently came back from a trip to Paris and the meal I just described would have eclipsed a few of the meals I ate at some very reputed restaurants over there. For those who have been, I'd liken it to the *l'Avant Comptoir* — exceptionally good and decidedly unfussed. However, *l'Avant Comptoir* and Bar St-Denis are distinct.

The place that the meal most reminded me of was Hotel Herman, one of my all-time favourite restaurants. This is a compliment I don't dish out lightly. It's cooking that is non-derivative, playful and altogether smart. It's executed with confidence but without grandeur. It's seriously good cooking with a hefty dose of nonchalance. More importantly, it's exactly what I like to eat. Bar, restaurant, resto-bar — call it whatever you like, it's one of the best places to eat in town.

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music

Back to its roots



Tash Sultana

BY DARCY MACDONALD

The Montreal International Jazz Festival is back in full configuration for its 42nd edition and its stars are aligned. Jazz Fest is returning with top-tier programming reminiscent of its glory days.

Most of the biggest names on this year's bill will perform free outdoor shows, offering Montrealers and tourists a generous welcome back to the Quartier des spectacles, and to what we can only hope remain brighter days.

While by no means an exhaustive list, here are some of our top picks for this summer's edition.

THURSDAY, JUNE 30

Jazz Fest wastes no time getting the party started at the Rio Tinto stage with the electronic a capella amalgamations of Madison McFerrin, daughter of Bobby McFerrin and a talent in her own right. (Place des Festivals, 5 p.m., free)

Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier hosts jazz heavyweight Wynton Marsalis leading the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra. (175 Ste-Catherine W., 7:30 p.m., \$61.50-\$96.40)

And the festival isn't playing games with its main stage headline for day one, welcoming summer fest circuit heavyweight Tash Sultana. The Australian multi-instrumentalist's live performance is a surefire crowd pleaser. (TD Stage, 9:30 p.m., free)

FRIDAY, JULY 1

Modern R&B legend and Jazz Fest darling Meshell

Ndgeocello brings her bass and her badassery back to town at Monument-National. (1182 St-Laurent, 8 p.m., \$58.10)

And not to be outdone on the TD Stage, Brit R&B fave Corrine Bailey Rae gets the weekend started on a high note. (Place des Festivals, 9:30 p.m., free)

SATURDAY, JULY 2

There's a healthy dose of this-and-that all over today's program. But Saturday night's alright for a revolution. Sax great and leader of the jazz new school Kamasi Washington turns it upside down on the TD Stage to headline. (Place des Festivals, 9:30 p.m., free)

Montreal crowd favourite and New York hip hop torch bearer Joey Bada\$\$ takes the stage at MTelus for a paid show that includes VIP packages and a meet and greet, too. (MTelus, 59 Ste-Catherine E., 8:30 p.m., \$44/VIP \$132+)

SUNDAY, JULY 3

Bring your mom on a date and watch her swoon to Jazz Fest old-guard regular Colin James. (MTelus, 59 Ste-Catherine E., 8:30 p.m., \$50-\$66)

No less than God Almighty headlines the TD Stage Sunday night. Montreal's Jireh Gospel Choir sends up the praise. (Place des Festivals, 9:30 p.m., free)

And homegrown Quebec oddity Hubert Lenoir promises a random night to remember at le Gesù. (1200 Bleury, 10:30 p.m., \$36.80)

Monday, July 4

The kids love Masego's take on jazz, and so will anyone with an ear for the goods. (MTelus, 59 Ste-Catherine E., 8:30 p.m., \$60)

Put your funky boots on and get up to get down with soul survivor Lee Fields at the TD Stage. Pretty damn great for a Monday night! (Place des Festivals, 9:30 p.m., free)

TUESDAY, JULY 5

A couple of Jazz Fest classics play indoors tonight.

The legendary Holly Cole takes Place des Arts's Théâtre Maisonneuve, on a jazzy journey through time. (175 Ste-Catherine W., 8 p.m., \$52.15-\$65.75)

And the arrival of everfresh orchestral jazz act Pink Martini is a definite sign that Jazz Fest is now well underway. They play PdA's Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier two nights in a row, returning Wednesday, July 6 as well. (175 Ste-Catherine W., 7:30 p.m., \$76.75-\$102.50)

WEDNESDAY, JULY 6

Robert Glasper at Théâtre Maisonneuve is a treat for jazz fans and music lovers of all stripes. (175 Ste-Catherine W., 8 p.m., \$56.35-\$66.75)

And Montreal's own CRi takes the honour of headlining the TD Stage and party rocking his hometown. (Place des Festivals, 9:30 p.m., free)

FRIDAY, JULY 8

Canadian hip hop talent, honorary Montrealer and 2021 Polaris Prize winner Cadence Weapon finally gets a crowd back on its feet at the Rio Tinto stage after a couple of awesome seated/distanced shows last summer and fall. Last year's *Parallel World* LP is his best yet, and this will be a righteous party. (Place des Festivals, 8 p.m., free)

And Montreal music royalty, the venerable Bran Van 3000, celebrate the 25th anniversary of their eponymous debut album, an opus that helped herald the attention of the outside world



Robert Glasper

toward our little island city back when our brand of cool was still a secret. (*Place des Festivals*, 9:30 p.m., free)

SATURDAY, JULY 9

Jazz Fest closes out its 2022 season with a huge night.

Bossa Nova icon Bebel Gilberto gets intimate at Théâtre Maisonneuve. Postponed since 2020, the show has long since sold out, but it's worth keeping your eyes open for ticket transfers given the circumstances. (175 Ste-Catherine W., 8 p.m., sold out)

At MTelus, the wayback machine delivers a double bill featuring the Psychedelic Furs and X. Will it be good? Who knows. Will it be cool anyways? Bet. (59 Ste-Catherine E., 8 p.m., \$60)

We'll go ahead and say that Jazz Fest has saved the best for last. The grand finale of this year's edition welcomes back a sorely missed festival mainstay with a blowout party at the TD Stage.

Philadelphia's finest, hip hop royals and late night TV superstars the Roots bring their Hollywood swagger back to Montreal for their first Jazz Fest appearance in an entire decade.

Get ready for a block party that will doubtlessly leave its mark on Place des Festivals to close this year's ceremonies with a symbolic crown that cements the fact that yes, indeed, the live music experience is alive once again.

→ The 42nd Montreal International Jazz Festival runs from Thursday, June 30 to Saturday, July 9. For the full festival lineup by date, time and venue, visit montrealjazzfest.com.

Club Montreal TD Stage

New to the Fest this year and located on the Esplanade of Place des Arts, a new outdoor stage will offer two to three free shows each evening. Locally sourced food and drinks will also be on offer, curated by a yet-unnamed guest chef.

The Club will also serve as the afterhours party place to be, with a series of 11 p.m. shows scheduled nightly and some amazing local talent.

Here are some quick-pick highlights we're excited about.

Fernie: The West Island youth puts a soulful accent on a decidedly goth aesthetic with an incredible live presence. (Friday, July 1, 7 p.m.)

Emma Boko: A *Cult MTL* favourite, the singer/MC plays the same night. (Friday, July 1, 11 p.m.)

Suuns: On the heels of last autumn's heavy-hitting LP *The Witness*, Suuns bring it home with a stiff night cap. (Friday, July 8, 11 p.m.)

Chiild: The pop soul project from Montreal's Yonatan Ayal and Pierre-Luc Rioux delivered one of last year's strongest albums with *Hope for Sale* and finally, triumphantly headlined their hometown late last month. This last-minute addition to the lineup is not to be missed. (Saturday, July 9, 11 p.m.)



Sonic boom

BY STEPHAN BOISSONNEAULT

Suoni per il Popolo may sound like a fancy pasta dish at an upper class Italian restaurant, but it's actually a fantastic avant-garde/experimental music festival here in Montreal that's been running in some shape or form for 21 years. The festival has brought world-renowned acts like Sunn O))), Orville Peck, Jay Reatard, Jonathan Richman and more in past years, and this year they are pulling out all the stops.

It's next to impossible to know every act at this festival that spans the entire month of June, so I've made a little list of my highlights so your head isn't completely spinning.

Week 1: Angel Bat Dawid, Silvervest 3 + Joe McPhee, & Thus Owls

Angel Bat Dawid is a virtuosic jazz pianist, vocalist and clarinetist who has played with Sun Ra. She's one of those people who is way too talented and rubbed shoulders with the jazz greats. She opens Suoni with a solo set that will be followed by the legendary free-jazz multi-instrumentalist Joe McPhee, playing with locals Silvervest 3 (aka bass player Nicolas Caloia and spoken word jazz vocalist Kim Zombik). I have no idea what to expect with Joe McPhee running around.

You will absolutely want to check out Thus Owls on June 4. The local husband and wife duo Erika and Simon Angell released their expansive double album *Who Would You Hold If the Sky Betrayed Us* back in March and it's a near masterpiece, tip-toeing on post-rock, spoken word, free jazz and any other experimental genre you can think of. The album never got a proper launch show due to COVID-19, so the Suoni performance is a rare one. I knew of Thus Owls a bit before my sojourn to Montreal in late 2020, but after diving into their repertoire, I don't understand how they aren't a huge international act.



JOYFULTALK

Angel Bat Dawid

Week 2: New Chance, Seulement, Crasher

This show featuring Toronto electronic producer and vocalist New Chance, Montreal's own experimental electro wizard SEULEMENT and dance punks Crasher is going to be insane. New Chance can be described as trancey dream electronica, with her 2021 album *Real Time* sending you in a kaleidoscopic haze. Even though it's just Mathieu Arsenault in charge of SEULEMENT, his live show is bonkers. Make sure to not stare directly into the strobes as his one of a kind form of electronica percolates throughout the room. I saw Crasher during a sweaty night at l'Escogriffe (one of the first full-bar concerts I went to after lockdown) and I remember dancing my ass off. The 2021 album *street cleaning machines of the world* doesn't really do the band justice. They are made to be a live band and frontman Ash (bka Airick Asher Woodhead, formerly of Doldrums) does not accept swaying bodies when they play. He will get you moving to his infectious mix of punk, dance and tomfoolery.

Week 2 continued: S.H.I.T., HOME FRONT, Total Nada

I guess you could call this Suoni's hardcore punk night? We have a new group, local DIY punks Total Nada, who play buzzing distorted music to angry Spanish vocals. Their debut EP sounds like it was recorded in a shoe. Edmonton disco new wave dance punks HOME FRONT are then ready for their Montreal debut. This band is close to my heart because they're from my hometown and also made up of members of Shout Out Out Out Out, Wet Secrets and No Problem. Their debut album *Think of the Lie* is outstanding, mixing a bit of the Cure, Suicide and Echo & the Bunnymen. Then we've got S.H.I.T., not the bodily excrement, but the Toronto punks who have been crushing it in the crust/hardcore punk scene since the early mid-aughts. They had a recent two-song release called *Hidden in Eternity*, which is heavy as well... shit.

Week 3: JOYFULTALK, Yoo Doo Right + Anna Arrobas, Kee Avil, the Besnard Lakes, Cola, Blessed

I recently checked out JOYFULTALK's latest album *Familiar Science* while I ran around and got lost in Westmount City Hall. The album is a bunch of freakish jazz and sounds a bit like elevator music on speed. It's maddening, in a way that will make you feel like you're losing your mind as drum fills, piano breaks, saxophone and synths continually oscillate and repeat. I thought the album was skipping at one point, but that's just how it's mixed. It's a bit BADBADNOTGOOD, but really dives into the mania you can experience through improvised and random music.

Next to probably Godspeed You! Black Emperor, local post-rock stooges Yoo Doo Right are probably the loudest band in Montreal. Their sound reverberates through bodies and



takes the mind on a dark and wonderful ride. Their second LP, *A Murmur Boundless to the East*, will be a week old at the Suoni show. Bring the ear plugs for this one and get your mind melted within the inexplicable boundaries of sound. Setting off the night will be the dreamy, ethereal sounds of local Anna Arrobas.

Kee Avil is one of the weirdest and most singular projects coming out of Montreal right now. Her debut LP *Crease* is terrifying, with gothic vocal whispers, down techno production and dark ambient/post-punk guitar. It's the kind of music you play loud if you want to scare your neighbours, kind of a more sinister Fiona Apple mixed with Björk and later Radiohead. I haven't witnessed her live, so I'm excited for her performance at Suoni. Local visual artist Myriam Bleau will accompany the performance with interpreted visuals. Jessica Moss will also perform her experimental violin soundscapes alongside Vancouver's Meredith Bates and cellist/composer Mark Molnar.

There's a triple header show with psych rock influencers the Besnard Lakes, post-Ought project Cola and Vancouver art rocker Blessed. The Besnard Lakes are not to be missed with their latest album *The Besnard Lakes Are the Last of the Great Thunderstorm Warnings* being a contender for one of their best in years. Cola just released their debut album *Deep In View* (visit cultmtl.com for our interview with them) and it's full of that post-punky goodness. Blessed are fantastic at building atmosphere during their songs, which take you to art rock worlds and the unlimited wonders of experimental music.

Week 4: Mas Aya, Rap Ferreira, Magella

Mas Aya's release last year, *Máscaras*, sounds like an airy expressionist painting. It's a calming but at times violent album that deals with a real-life revolution, specifically the Nicaraguan revolution in the '70s. It's a bit Brian Eno and Boards of Canada, featuring traditional flutes, drips and off-kilter drums. Again, I have no idea what to expect for the live iteration of Mas Aya, but I anticipate being surprised.

Finishing off Suoni is a hip hop soul night led by R.A.P. Ferreira, Strange Fruits and soul songstress Magella. R.A.P. Ferreira's latest release, *The Light Emitting Diamond Cutter Scriptures*, brings to mind Earl Sweatshirt and Cadence Weapon. It's jazzy hip hop at its finest. Strange Fruits is a kabal of female hip hop wordsmiths à la Missy Elliot with a penchant for fun remixes and appealing vocal hooks. Magella is full of soul (just check out her *Checkmate* album), but what separates her style from many is her operatic vocal refrains that scream someone like Nina Simone.

→ For the complete Suoni per il Popolo program, please visit suoniperilpopolo.org.



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Album reviews



Kendrick Lamar, *Mr. Morale & the Big Steppers* (Top Dawg/Aftermath/Interscope)

An acknowledgment that Kendrick Lamar is among the most important modern musical talents alive is a necessary preamble to anything a critic can say about this fourth major label excursion from the Compton star. There's little to be

gained from picking apart this opus. And in fact, listening to it piecemeal or trying to identify obvious hits or standout songs is a fool's errand. Lamar has yet to offer the world anything less than an exercise in musical cohesion. *Mr. Morale* raises that bar, again. It's hard to believe it's been a decade since *good kid, M.A.A.D. city* and tougher still to believe he has now twice topped 2015's near-perfect *To Pimp a Butterfly*; once with *DAMN* and now again with a 17-song passion play that requires undivided attention in a world that is pulling its people in every direction. Secrets die in the light. Kendrick is the light. 10/10 Trial Track: "Father Time" ft. Sampha (Darcy MacDonald)



Orville Peck, *Bronco* (Sub Pop/Columbia)

After such a critically acclaimed 2019 debut, *Pony*, many may have wondered if Orville Peck was peaking too early. The album was well-received by the industry and country music fans alike, with his follow-up EP *Show Pony* featuring an iconic duet with Canadian

country queen Shania Twain. Such a feature and several talk show appearances put the fringe-masked singer in the spotlight with many eager to see how he would follow up such momentum. Orville Peck delivered *Bronco* to quell any doubts. While the sophomore album does not veer too far sonically or thematically from its predecessor, it contains catchy tunes that will stick in your head for days. Orville sings about falling in love with fellow cowboys, the subsequent heartbreak, longing for home, the desert and his love of horse riding, among other unsurprising themes. The artist taps into his inner Elvis and Roy Orbison, his baritone voice the highlight of every song. With several music videos to accompany the album's singles, Orville is letting us into his world on *Bronco* more than ever before — a world much different from ours, which is perhaps what makes it so darn captivating. 9/10 Trial track: "The Curse of the Blackened Eye" (Jacob Carey)

The Smile, *A Light for Attracting Attention* (XL)

Thom Yorke's ability to create stellar bodies of work decades into his career is nothing short of remarkable. His new project The Smile, alongside fellow Radiohead member Jonny Greenwood and Sons of Kemet drummer Tom Skinner (with Nigel Godrich at the helm), shows he can also make a brilliant LP with a whole new band — one that stands out as an exuberant, masterfully constructed art rock album. Across 53 minutes, we basically hear the full range of musical hats Yorke is capable of wearing: driving, garage rock-y post-punk ("You Will Never Work in Television Again"), stirring acoustic ballads ("Free in the Knowledge"), piano dirges ("Open the Floodgates"), funk ("The Smoke"), minimalist electronic music ("The Same," "Waving a White Flag") and even Afrobeat ("The Opposite"). Even if it can sound too much like a Radiohead album ("Thin Thing" and closer "Skirting on the Surface" feel somewhat like *In Rainbows* outtakes), *A Light for Attracting Attention* is nevertheless a gorgeous, pristine

collection of tunes further cementing Yorke's legacy as one of our generation's artistic giants. 9/10 Trial Track: "You Will Never Work in Television Again" (Dave MacIntyre)



Rapallo, *You Were Born to Drive This Car* (independent)

Just try and not be utterly enchanted by this dynamic duo's romantic comedy yacht rock escapades. Nick Lanyon and Kyla Kaplan-Chinard hit that sweet spot of saccharine and songwriting prowess again and again in the four self-containing universes they've

created on this EP, starting with a call for more excitement in a stale relationship before getting into a sexy car sale role play, a city pop ode to the jet set and a request to rewrite the law of attraction. Guaranteed to elicit a few grins along the way. 8/10 Trial Track: "Can't Catch Us" (Erik Leijon)

Loud, *Aucune Promesse* (Joy Ride)

We have peace in our time: All hail Quebec's undisputed king of rap. In the three years since *Tout ça pour ça*, Loud's dominance has remained a foregone conclusion with no one seeking a shot at the throne, and the rap keb vet comes into *Aucune Promesse* without even the need for a pop crossover or Cardin cameo. This is as pure a no-nonsense rap album as we've gotten from solo Loud, which means this is one for the details, whether it's maturing lyrics and pristine production that laps his peers. Is that enough to rekindle the sheer hype and excitement that's followed Simon Cliche Trudeau at times in his career? Probably not, but nothing wrong with getting back to basics. 7/10 Trial Track: "Coin à l'ombre" (Erik Leijon)

:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

I still get the chills a bit when it comes time to tap about upcoming shows. After some false starts, we finally have a ton of shows happening this summer, or at least until monkeypox casts its dark cloud upon us all. True, ticket prices — both for local and for touring bands — have risen significantly, but on the other side of the coin, I personally applaud shows now starting far earlier. Judging by the size of the audiences that have been showing up, not to mention the sheer number of nightly shows, it seems the local live music scene is definitely in a healthy state.

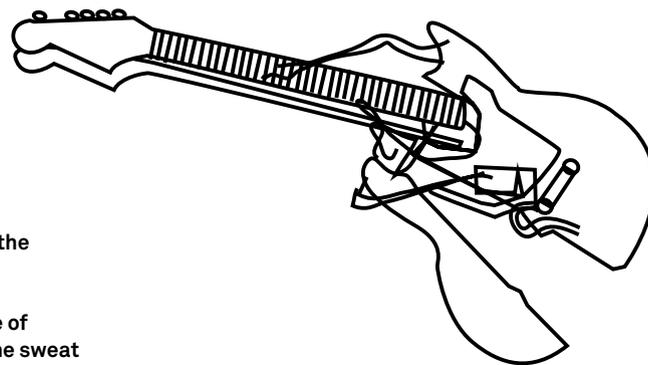
So without further ado, here's some of my picks for the glorious month of June.

It wouldn't be a summer start without the true pride of Montreal, the Suoni per il Popolo festival, putting the sweat on the walls for the majority of this month. There are plenty of shows that will be pushing the musical envelope, but if you really want to do your June right, you'll want to squeeze into the good ol' Casa on Friday, June 10 for TOHC potty mouths S.H.I.T. with the local hardcore help from Home Front and Total Nada.

While it's true that instrumental post-rock is about as sexy as members of jam band Phish doing laundry, pedal-pushin' nerds Caspian definitely have the goods, and the pedalboards to actually rise up from the tech-bro mire. Myopic dudes can show up to Théâtre Fairmount on Friday, June 3 to get their drone rock on, with openers Arms and Sleepers.

Your other option on June 3 would be to have your fillings liquified by the sheer decibel blast of modern noise psych heads A Place to Bury Strangers, with Glove and the City Gates at Bar le Ritz. Judging by the true love Montreal has shown these Brooklynites in the past, better show up early as this might sell out. Don't be tardy, Marty! Pro tip: bring earplugs.

On a totally different tip is milk chuggin' little bro Jonathan Richman, who will make contact with the inner child in all of us at le National on Monday, June 6 with the tub thumpin'



accompaniment of Tommy Larkins. I might be the youngest person in the room (I am very, very old), so thankfully this gig is seated! Pinch me! Fans of cuddling take note!

Although there are some killer shows this month, the easy pick for me would be robotic electronic pioneers Kraftwerk, who finally make good on their make-up date. This tour has been blowing up the internet with amazing reviews as the 3D effects are guaranteed to get your head tingling. This blippy blop gigger is at Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier on Wednesday, June 8, and I'm not one to advocate drug use but yes, you should totally be tripping balls for this.

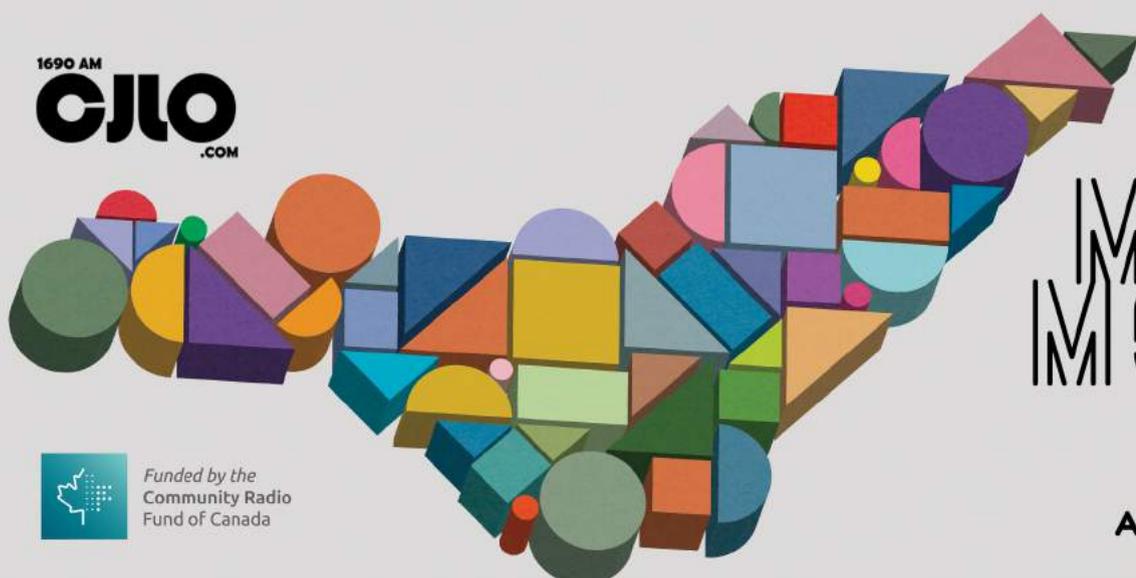
I'm pretty sure Can-cotn hardcore legends D.O.A. have done a couple of "last" tours in the past but if you need to see Joey Shithead garble through the ol' dusty chestnuts, he'll be at le Ritz on Sunday, June 19. When I first saw D.O.A. in the early '80s, they were so good I almost cried; when I saw the them almost three decades later, I again almost cried, but for totally different reasons.

Current Obsession: Wire, 154
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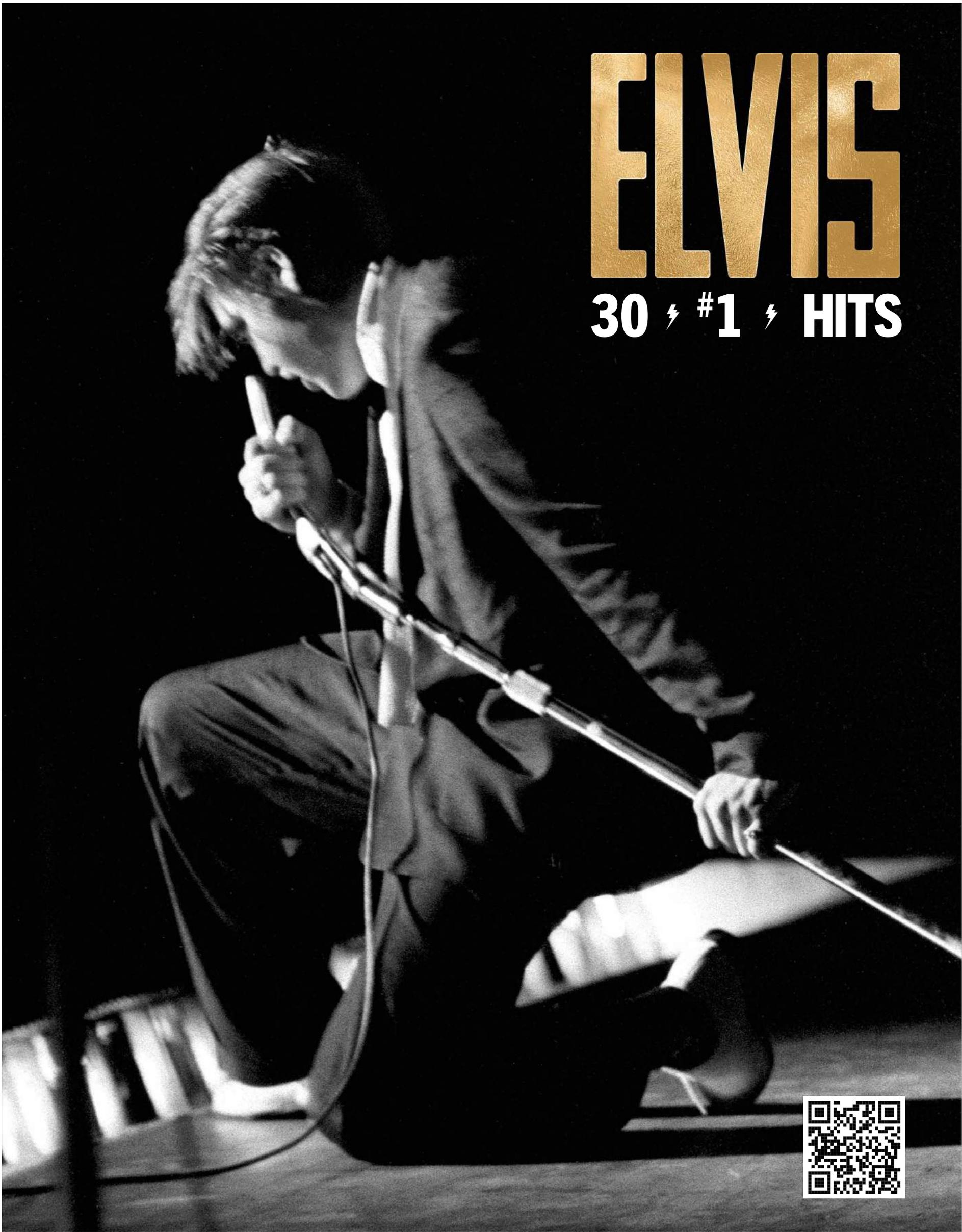


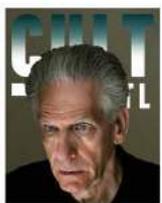
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Body of work



Nikos Nikolopoulos

BY SARAH FOULKES

Despite what I wrote in my review for *Crimes of the Future* (read it at cultmtl.com), it may be a mistake to refer to David Cronenberg's cinema as staging interactions between bodies and technology. For Cronenberg, there is no between the two. Fused together through futuristic fantasies of transhumanism, Cronenberg's subjects are often like cyborgs, although they may never be explicitly described as such.

The characters in Cronenberg's latest creation are no different. It is set in a bleak and desolate world in which the eventual eradication of pain does not suggest an increase of pleasure. Saul Tenser (Viggo Mortensen) grows vestigial organs that his partner Caprice (Léa Seydoux) tattoos and extracts in a performance art piece. These nonfunctional organs are not art materials for everyone, however. Wippet (Don McKellar) and his assistant Timlin (Kristen Stewart) at the National Organ Registry fear that these organs may

compromise the future of the human species if they were to be passed down from one generation to the next. Meanwhile, shadowy figures emerge from the margins to declare their allegiance to this vision of the future.

Crimes of the Future is thick with ideas, the elements of gore always at the service of Cronenberg's prescient imagination of the future. But Cronenberg has never seen himself as a prophet of digital futures — his eyes are instead trained on his present surroundings.

I reached him in Paris.

Sarah Foulkes: First off, I loved the film.

David Cronenberg: I'm glad. That makes it easier for us both to talk.

SF: (laughs) And it's so funny.

DC: Yes. It is funny. I think all my movies are comedies, actually.

SF: You shot the film in Greece. I noticed that there are a lot of Greek producers in the credits. Was the choice of location motivated by funding?

DC: It was motivated by money. But as usual, it's money first

and then it's the creative aspects. The fact that the Greek government decided to institute a 40% rebate has made it a very attractive place to shoot. But I was excited that I could have both money and Greece. It was great. I did fully embrace Athens and what it had to offer: the Mediterranean, the light, the textures, the graffiti, everything. In other words, I didn't try to make it look like a North American city.

SF: I really appreciate the extent to which you foreground the architecture in this film, and in all your films. What was it about the somewhat rundown landscape that appealed to you? There are a number of capsized ships. It almost feels like the end of global trade and the end of capitalism.

DC: That's no joke. That actually is the idea. For example, the ship in the opening shot was something we discovered when we were looking at locations: this boat that was on its side. And when I asked, they said, "It's been there for like 20 years." And Greece had a financial meltdown in 2008, and they haven't completely recovered. So yes, this sort of decay and — to be metaphorical — the capsizing of the economy, has lent the city a modern kind of dystopian decay aspect to it. And that was perfect for the world that I was trying to create.

SF: The film was originally called *Painkillers*. What made you switch to the same name of one of your earliest films?

DC: It's pretty straightforward. Since I wrote the script, the title "Painkillers" has been used for quite a few movies and

TV series. So my producer Robert Lantos suggested, “Why don’t we steal the title from your earlier film, since this movie is legitimately about crimes of the future?” And I said, “Well, that feels pretty cosy.” Of course, the complication is that I thought that nobody would really know about or remember that early film. I was wrong about that. Almost everybody is saying this is a sequel or a remake. And it’s neither of those things. We just stole the title.

SF: What was the biggest change in the script from when you first wrote it to when you shot it?

DC: There were none. I did one draft of the script and I didn’t change a word of dialogue. The only changes were the found-art elements. Athens was one of them. And I think of that ship at the beginning as found-art. Something you never expected to see and there it is. And you say, “Well I really need to have that in my movie.” But aside from that, there were a couple of scenes that I cut out just because they were a little redundant. In a way, in the editing room you’re doing the next draft of the script.

SF: Wow. And it’s one draft?

DC: One draft.

SF: I’ve been thinking of other films in which organs play a vital, rather than vestigial role. Films such as *Dirty, Pretty Things* and *Never Let Me Go*. Did you have any films or texts that were useful in the preparation for this film?

DC: No, none. You mentioned *Never Let Me Go*. I really like that book. At one point, I was talking to the producers about directing it, but it didn’t work out for various reasons. I don’t really think of it as an organ movie, but of course you’re right that it is an issue.

Early in my career, I thought that you want to look at other movies with your cinematographer and talk about approaches to the visual style. But I have found that that actually never works with me. As soon as we start working on the film, it

takes on its own life and you forget about all those other things that you thought you were going to use as references.

Journalists that I have talked to here have talked about me being self-referential and point out the connections between this movie and some things in *Existenz* or *Naked Lunch*, and so on. And I say, “Of course those connections are there,” but when I’m making a movie, I’m really not referring to myself. I am myself. It just comes out of the same sensibility.

SF: This is your first depiction of performance art. What interests you about performance art, specifically the performance of self-harm and pain? It’s especially interesting considering that pain no longer really exists in this reality, except in your dreams.

DC: I think it’s a very brave thing to be a performance artist. I am an artist, but I have not yet altered my body specifically for my art. I think that’s an expression of an incredible commitment to your understanding of art that you will make changes to your body. Especially the ones that are not reversible.

It’s my mantra that is expressed in the movie, which is that “body is reality” — that what we understand about reality is really a function of our bodies, of our senses, of our eyes, our ears, our nose. That’s reality. And by altering our bodies, we are altering our reality.

I thought one of the impediments to body performance art would be your fear of pain, but what if there wasn’t that fear? What if you didn’t need to have anaesthetic, and if there wasn’t pain during recovery? Then you would be free to do even more dangerous and outrageous performances. That really was the key.

SF: Pain is such a subjective experience. It really puts you inside your body and affords you certainty. There’s this Elaine Scarry quote from *The Body in Pain*: “To have great pain is to have certainty; to hear that another person has pain is to have doubt.”

DC: Well that’s a good quote, I haven’t heard that before.

SF: If you change the pain threshold, you also change the world.

DC: Yes, you do. And there are people who are born without being able to experience pain and it’s a disaster. Children eat their tongues and they’re not even aware of it. But I was not dealing with that very realistic aspect of zero pain in the film. But it is an issue that I was aware of, for sure.

SF: Birth plays a big role in your films. In this film, birthing the organs and delivering them seems to be a kind necessary humanising act. It’s as if Saul has to give birth in order to preserve his place within the category of human, as Wippet says, “in the classical sense.” Does birth always feel like a life-saving necessity to you, or is it more of a biological fact?

DC: As the father of two children and the grandfather of four children, I am still in awe of the phenomena of birth. It is absolutely incredible. Beyond science fiction, actually. As a creative act, giving birth...there is nothing that matches it. But I hadn’t really thought of the surgeries as birth. I like the idea and I’m going to steal it and use it in the next interview.

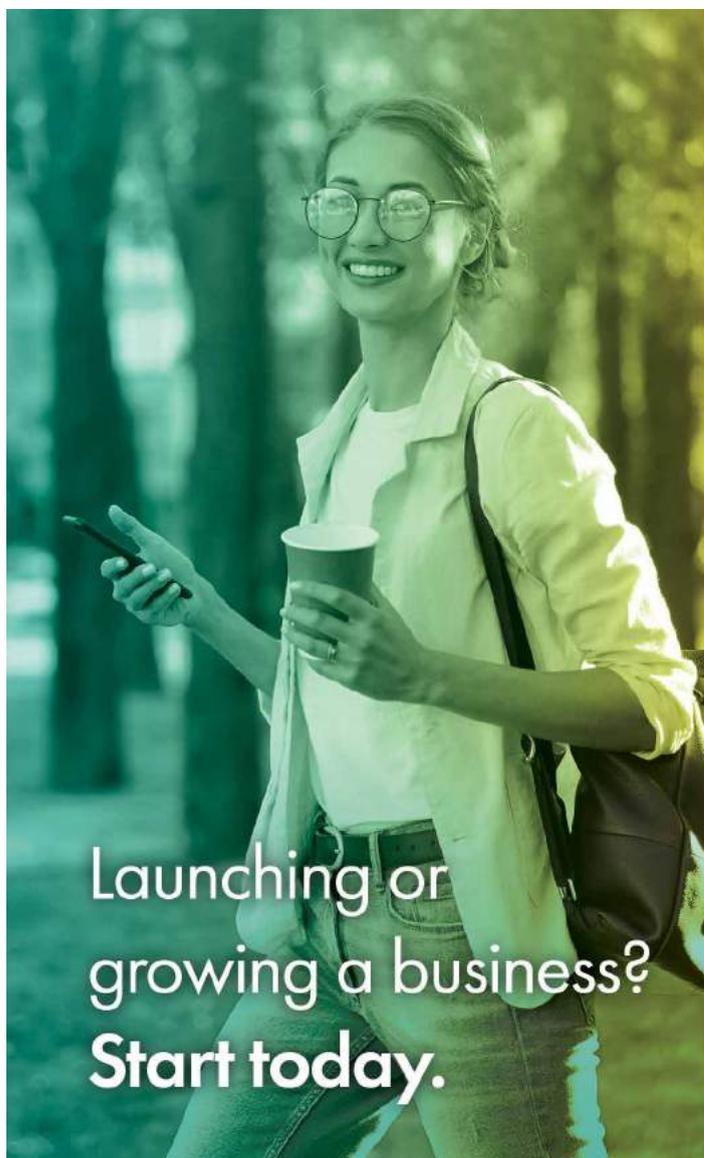
SF: Please do! Finally, because I’m writing for *Cult MTL*, what is your fondest memory of shooting in Montreal?

DC: I guess it must be the Decarie expressway.

SF: (laughs) What in the hell?

DC: Yeah I know, I know. It’s shocking isn’t it? I spent a lot of time going up and down that expressway. I really loved my time there. I particularly enjoyed Cinepix. It was a small company that was at that point the only company that was making what we would call independent films in Canada. So I had to take the Decarie expressway to get to their offices.

→ *Crimes of the Future* opens in Montreal theatres on Friday, June 3.



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Sublime cinema



Coda

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Patrick Stewart has had a long relationship with Montreal. Nearly every *X-Men* film since 2000 has been shot here, and his long-standing role as Charles Xavier has brought him to the city many times since. For Stewart, though, returning for his latest role in the musical drama *Coda* was different. “The crew spoke French all the time, and my French is dodgy at best,” he laughed. “But I enjoyed it tremendously. A wonderful aspect of the job is exploring other people’s work.”

Coda (not to be confused with the recent Best Picture Oscar winner) is an original screenplay written by Quebec screenwriter Louis Godbout, and the directorial debut of screenwriter Claude Lalonde (*Les 3 p'tits cochons*). The film examines the trials of aging and investigates the power of the sublime. Stewart stars as Henry Cole, a famous concert pianist in the twilight of his career. As his mental state begins to deteriorate and he struggles to perform, Henry strikes up an unlikely friendship with a music critic named Helen (Katie Holmes).

The idea for the film came during a trip Godbout took to Switzerland, where Nietzsche wrote many of his books in the 1880s. Godbout studied philosophy and wrote his PhD on Nietzsche’s work. “It was kind of a pilgrimage,” he laughs.

One of Nietzsche’s theories was that of *amor fati*, which translates to “love of fate” — it’s an attitude towards life that takes all the good and bad and views it as necessary. As Godbout was taking in the natural environment and listening to music, he wondered if he could capture that feeling in a screenplay.

Stewart loved the script and immediately saw himself in the role. “I went to visit him in England,” recalls Lalonde. “Then when he agreed to do the film, he came to Montreal and we discussed it every day with Louis. I asked about working in English, as both Godbout and Lalonde speak French as a first language. “My English is not that good,” says Lalonde, “but with emotion and music, it works. Anyway, I don’t think Denis Villeneuve’s English is any better than mine! So I don’t worry too much.”

Stewart learned the piano and learned what it meant to be a pianist for the role. He trained for months, and during the shoot, he would regularly brush up on his posture and movements with Godbout during lunch breaks. “The big challenge with any non-musician playing music is not to overdo it. Stewart tended to move a lot, and I’d remind him to relax. He is this great actor, and he studied as if it was his first film, so enthusiastic and appreciative.”

Shot in Montreal and Switzerland, many key scenes were shot in Westmount Park, disguised as the Bronx Zoo. One day during shooting, Godbout recalls Stewart going on a walk between breaks. “Stewart is a dog lover, and a little dog comes up to him. He starts playing with the dog. This older woman must be wondering about this weird man playing with his dog. He looks up, and she’s totally stunned. She’s talking to Captain Picard! Stewart just wanted to know about the dog and told her all about his dogs.”

As a trio, Godbout, Lalonde and Stewart worked hard to bring the feeling of music to the big screen. Godbout’s script had already included the chosen musical piece. “It helped give us an atmosphere to work with,” Lalonde says. “We all loved the music and worked hard to make it work.” The movie captures both the burden and ecstasy of creation while also reflecting on what it means to be reaching the end of your life and slowly feeling that part of yourself fade away.

“When I was young, I was reckless,” Stewart explained about his process. “I believed I could do anything, but I discovered that that isn’t the case.” At that point, he started to devote himself to training and preparing for each role. “That meant hard work, training and exploration of what the process of being an actor really was. As I’ve gotten older, I find my anxiety about whether I’m doing it right has actually gone away. Before I shoot a scene or go on stage, I always say very quietly, ‘I don’t give a shit.’ It liberates me.”

“The film was never young,” says Godbout. “It doesn’t raise topics, and its values are perennial. It’s a celebration of beauty and the burden of getting old, being struck with the fragility of things.”

It’s a movie that explores the spiritual possibilities of art. While the film may seem suited to the small screen, as much of it as a personal drama, *Coda* reflects on the power of cinema. In an era where people think that the big screen only belongs to action films and superhero spectacles, *Coda* harkens back to something simpler but no less powerful.

“I know it’s not popular because we live in a very ironic time, but there’s a dimension of the sublime in the film that needs to be seen on the big screen,” Godbout says.

→ *Coda* opens in Montreal theatres on Friday, June 3

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On Screen



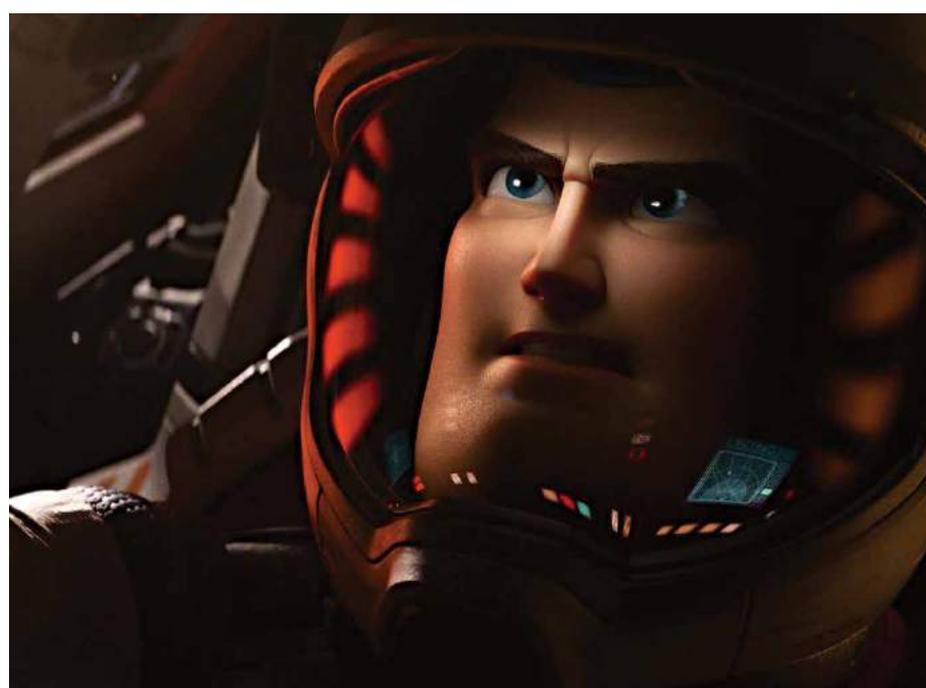
Babysitter



The Black Phone



Dear Jackie



Lightyear

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Jurassic Park: Dominion (June 10) closes off the new saga, finally bringing back all your favourite actors from the original film. *Dominion* takes place four years after the Isla Nublar was destroyed, and now dinosaurs roam the earth alongside humans. The other big-name movie of the month is *Toy Story* spinoff *Lightyear* (June 17). The film looks into the inspiration behind the Buzz Lightyear toy, an astronaut on an ambitious intergalactic journey. *Lightyear* will be voiced by Captain America himself, aka Chris Evans.

Are you ready to embrace the new flesh? David Cronenberg having a new film is always an event, and his latest *Crimes of the Future* (June 3) is well worth celebrating. It's also darkly funny and not for the faint of heart. Canada's filmmaking maestro takes the audience on a strange

futuristic journey in a world where human beings no longer experience pain, and a select few can spontaneously grow new organs. We follow two performance artists (Léa Seydoux and Viggo Mortensen) who make art from live surgical performances.

If you're not so into surgery but are still looking to be spooked, *The Black Phone* (June 24) might be what you're looking for. Set in 1978, the film focuses on a serial killer on the loose and young boys who keep going missing. Finney Shaw becomes the potential next victim when he's kidnapped and wakes up in a soundproof basement. Ethan Hawke reunites with Scott Derrickson, director of *Sinister*, in an adaptation of a short story by Joe Hill.

It's hard to say if the latest film by Baz Luhrmann (*Moulin Rouge*), *Elvis* (June 24), will be a disaster or a masterpiece. Austin Butler stars as Elvis Presley, the king of Rock, and the film covers his life story through the relationship with his manager Colonel Tom Parker (a creepy-looking Tom Hanks). Don't expect a traditional bio-pic, though, as reviews out of Cannes hint that this is pure Luhrmann maximalism, and the movie never lets up for a second.

It's been three years since Monia Chokri made a splash with her directorial debut *La femme de mon frère*, and she's back with her sophomore film, *Babysitter* (June 3), an adaptation

of a play by Catherine Léger. It is a surreal comedy about Cédric (Patrick Hivon), who goes viral for kissing an unwilling TV journalist on live tv. At the same time, his wife, Nadine (Monia Chokri), suffers from post-partum depression as hiring a new babysitter disrupts both their lives.

Another local production bringing together Patrick Stewart and Katie Holmes, *Coda* (June 3), hit the screen in early June. Stewart plays a famous concert pianist struggling to perform in the film, and Holmes, the music journalist, covers his life. *Coda* investigates the importance of art and the sublime; it's a classically made film that ponders timeliness. It's a movie where Montreal does not play itself, so have fun spotting a gorilla in Westmount Park.

With *Dear Jackie* (June 17), director Henri Pardo takes a fresh look at Jackie Robinson's life and work by focusing on the baseball player's arrival in Montreal, particularly in the Little Burgundy neighbourhood. A documentary that will be great for baseball fans and Montreal residents alike.

Another worthwhile documentary hitting the big screen this month, *Jazz Fest: A New Orleans Story* (June 10), will be a perfect companion to the Montreal Jazz Fest at the end of the month. Part concert movie and part history of the festival that has been going on 50 years strong, this documentary is perfect for a hot summer's night.



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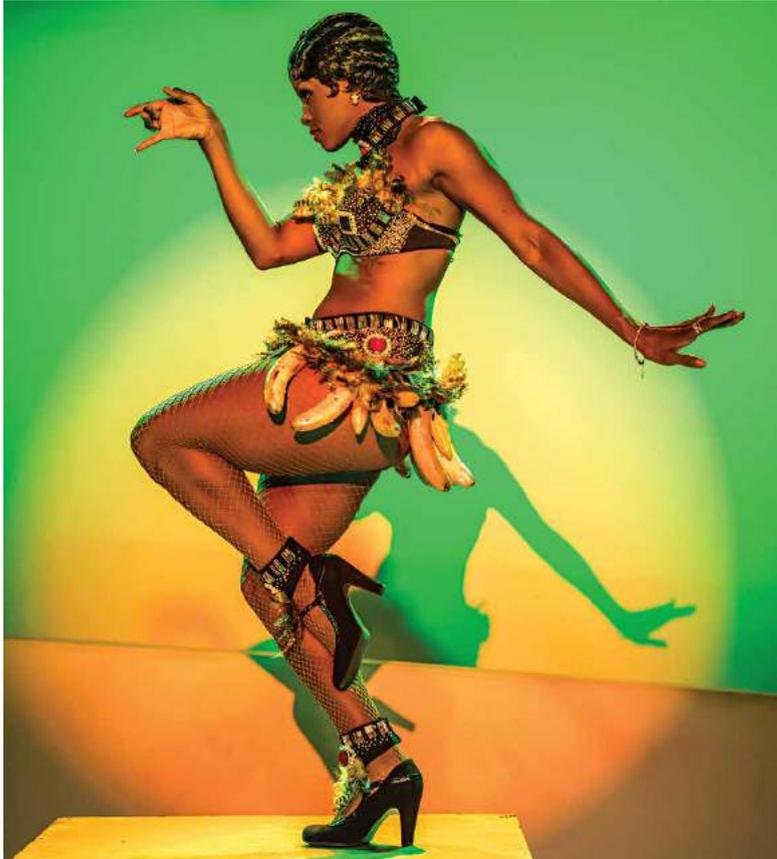
NEW AND EXCITING THIS MONTH



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arts

Keep calm and Fringe on



Josephine, a burlesque cabaret by Dynamite Lunchbox



flying on the G by meleleleow

Matteo H. Casis

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Ahhh, it feels good to get our Fringe on again. Known as a festival made for artists by artists, the St-Ambroise Montreal Fringe Festival is back and ready to surprise and entertain Montrealers enjoying the return of blissful summer weather.

As the first Montreal Fringe Festival to take place in its full form since 2019, this unique 20-day celebration of arts from all corners of the creative spectrum is going down from June 9 to 19. The next several weeks of full-on fringing will include acts from the worlds of theatre, puppetry, music (including a performance from rapper Socalled on opening night), comedy, dance, storytelling and even burlesque. Given that it's the first Fringe since *The Before Times™*, this year's edition has thus far adapted smoothly to our pandemic reality.

"The part that we're really excited about is the fact that we're able to persevere through them," says Amy Blackmore, the festival's executive and artistic director, who also says she's "overwhelmingly excited" about its return.

"We're still looking for volunteers, and we still need donations. But the artists are ready to go. They're ready to perform. For our big opening night concert with Socalled on June 9, I have a feeling I'm going to walk into the beer tent that day and start bawling, because I'm going to be so happy to be back. Not having a Fringe beer tent for the past couple years has been really tough. We really rely on its income, but also because it's where our community gathers to talk about shows and meet other people."

Monday, May 31 marked the beginning of this year's fest, with the opening Fringe-for-All show at Club Soda (full of short teasers of this year's performances), which was preceded by a VIP cocktail for industry figures. As for what

most separates this edition from previous ones? Blackmore credits the increased sense of drive among the performing artists, in part since they aren't bound to any censorship rules and receive 100% of their box office ticket sales. Though that part of the Fringe experience stays the same, the festival is committed to developing a sense of "radical hospitality" at the festival going forward — including banning flyers (the first Canadian fringe festival to do so) and going ticketless to protect the environment.

"We're going to be saving 40,000 flyers from going into the recycling bin by doing that," she adds. "Everything's online... Fringe has definitely been growing up in recent years. I think we're really starting to come into our own as an event. I'm expecting audiences to really feel that when we're there."

There are tons of excellent events and performances for fringers of all tastes, even if they buy a pass not knowing what they're going to see beforehand. In Blackmore's case, she's excited for literally everything at this year's festival, since she discovers the programming the same way the general public does—by buying a pass, since the money fully goes back to the artists.

"I'll probably start with a three-show pass, and then I'll pick something I know I'm going to love," she says, later naming *The Awkward Ballerina* as one of the shows she's most excited for this year. "I'll pick something somebody's recommended to me, and then I'm going to pick a show at random."

"There's a show called *JOSEPHINE, a burlesque cabaret dream play*, coming from the States. I actually saw that show at the Winnipeg Fringe Theatre Festival a couple years ago, and it blew me away. It's about the life of Josephine Baker, and it's a one-woman show. There's also *The Family Crow: A Murder Mystery*, which is a puppet show. I really love puppetry, and Fringe is kind of where I get my puppetry fix. My background is in theatre, but I come from the dance world. This year, there's so much dance happening. It's going to be a little bit of an escapist Fringe."

77 companies from around the world — some from as far away as France and the United Kingdom, including English performance poet Jem Rolls — will be involved in this year's festival. If you're reading this and have never had the Montreal Fringe Festival experience, Blackmore has some ideas for where your journey should begin.

"I would start by doing a Plateau Astro (walking astronomy) tour. That's a tour in Jeanne-Mance Park where you get to look in a telescope and learn about what's up in the sky," she says. "Then I'd come to the beer tent (in the park at the corner of Rachel and St-Laurent) on our opening night to see Socalled play, and to really feel the spirit of Fringe."

"Everyone's going to be there. Artists will be there. It's a great way to meet others, find out who's at the festival, browse the posters we have up in the park, and make some choices. The three-show pass is a good entry, but you can't stop at three. Also, the drag races with Mado Lamotte, which are taking place June 18 next to the beer tent — Mado brings her queens, we bring our own and it's a big drag race where someone gets crowned at the end."

This year's festival also includes events held both in-person and on-demand, including 12 episodes of the *Fringebuzz Lab* podcast, hosted in English and French (each of them are already available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts).

Ultimately, Blackmore is proud of the reflection the festival has done over the last two years, and how it's influenced this year's programming. Having run the festival as long as she has, she views fringe festivals as being something that can change the world.

"We're seeing fringe festivals pop up internationally. The movement is real, it's great, and it's a lot of fun at the end of the day," she says. "There's a lot of generosity around our event, because it's a people power kind of festival."

→ For the complete Montreal Fringe program and to buy tickets, please visit montrealfringe.ca.

SUONI



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The Niche MTL manifesto



BY RYAN DIDUCK

Which iconic building is this?

Hint: it's on every Montreal mood board along with bagels and Smoked Meat sandwiches, Rue Barrée signs and orange cones. If you said Farine Five Roses, congratulations, you win!

It is not, however, the traditional perspective from which this familiar edifice is often photographed. It's taken at a different angle, from within the niche.

Niche is an often misused word. Nowadays we deploy niche to underscore the hyper-specificity of something hyper-specific, something that appeals only to a select few.

You might say, for instance, that Arcade Fire is Montreal's biggest rock band, but Godspeed You! Black Emperor appeals to a more niche audience. Or float further into the fractal: Godspeed You! Black Emperor is Montreal's biggest post-rock band, but Fly Pan Am appeals to a more niche audience. A rich continuum of niche-ness emerges.

Montreal is uber-niche under this definition. One could argue that Paris is the world's French cultural capital, but Montreal, Quebec, is niche. We're not Paris, not New York, not Berlin, and we're definitely not Toronto. And yet Montreal is among, and in some ways greater, than any of these. We're a totally unique city, one-of-a-kind, but not for everyone. Niche.

We use the word niche this way, but niche is not primarily an adjective. It's a noun. A niche is a

physical space in which something else exists. It is an architectural feature. You'll find niches predominantly in devotional places like churches and art galleries. Niches are indents or recesses in walls, carved out to showcase objects, like a sculpture or something else special.

There is lots in Montreal that is niche, and that also needs a niche to showcase its niche-ness. There is an overabundance of cultural production in this niche city that flies under our radar, and all too often, flies elsewhere. The Montreal musician Julien Racine recently reminded me of this condition in our interview for this publication: As much as Montreal prides itself upon supporting its local scenes, there is only so much space upon the critical landscape. We have an exceptional problem: there is more signal than noise.

Montreal has CultMTL, the city's only English-language broadsheet, and thank goodness. Plus, there is MTLBlog, FnoMTL and other Montreal-defining feeds. No city loves to talk about itself as much as Montreal. And yet there is no niche for things like opera (which never used to be niche, but is now), jazz, travel, nature, animation, satire.

So I (along with the folks at Cult MTL) went ahead and carved out one: we launched NicheMTL as a column and a URL, with accounts on Instagram, Twitter and TikTok. (That's probably enough niche for now!)

NicheMTL will be a space for things that are too niche for Montreal's other publications, but nonetheless worthy of special attention. A niche doesn't necessarily need to be ornate, either. It can start out austere. It's what's inside the niche that counts.

In the early 2000s, Constellation Records posted a manifesto

on their website: "The world has not changed. Evil cowards rule the world and terror prevails on all sides."

That world hasn't and won't change. The strategy now is to create a space where things can change, and terror is a stranger knocking at the door.

There are two possible outcomes for NicheMTL. It could become nothing. A lot of things become nothing. Or it could become something. It is already a web address, so it exists in what we consider space nowadays. Whether it becomes something else is something else. We're not expecting nothing. If you are something, don't ask for nothing, kinda thing.

The artist Dale Nigel Goble was the first person I knew who was an artist and nothing else. I grew up in Edmonton and moved to Montreal in 2004. Edmonton before 2004 didn't have a lot of artists. But Dale had good ideas and worked hard to realize them.

Dale had lots of little sayings that he would scrawl on torn pieces of paper and duct tape to the wall. Things like, "before you can be, you must do," and "don't let your pies cool on the windowsill." Dale died in 2019 at age 47.

One of Dale's early motifs was to paint an otherwise completely darkened skyscraper with one solitary light on. That light was supposed to represent him, toiling away in his studio. I couldn't help but think of Dale when I saw the light on above the niche in Farine Five Roses. It attracted me like a moth, like this city did.

The lifestyle is why people want to live in Montreal: the music, the art, the architecture, the literature, the theatre, the dance, the cinema, the scholarship, and yes, even the French. Montreal's Old Port is this nation's old port. It is the nerve centre for this side of Canada, and that is evident in the people who come here and the culture they produce.

People born and raised in Montreal always compare Montreal to other cities, as if tilting at some imaginary city-sized windmill, but there is no comparison, other than it is, in fact, a city. Montreal is a real, bona fide, modern, international metropolis. It doesn't have to be the Berlin of Canada, or the Paris of North America. Montreal is the Montreal of Montreal.

As such, Montreal deserves a dedicated publication that serves our niche, and serves it well. This niche will be a showcase for the kinds of things that come from Montreal, that are made in Montreal, that might have been transplanted here, but nonetheless take root and grow in Montreal.

This incomparable city, and the fruits of its distinct culture, belong to no culture. The French might have colonized Quebec, but there were people here before, and many still to come. They will want a niche.

It could not be a better time to celebrate Montreal's cultural life in all its diversity and inclusivity. NicheMTL is our new column and we're ready for that task. Not too big, not too small, it's NicheMTL.

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