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FREE

* Les Shirley * image+nation * Roger Waters * Moccione * Waahli

NELSON HENRICKS



ŒUVRES INÉDITES

DU 17 NOVEMBRE 2022
AU 10 AVRIL 2023

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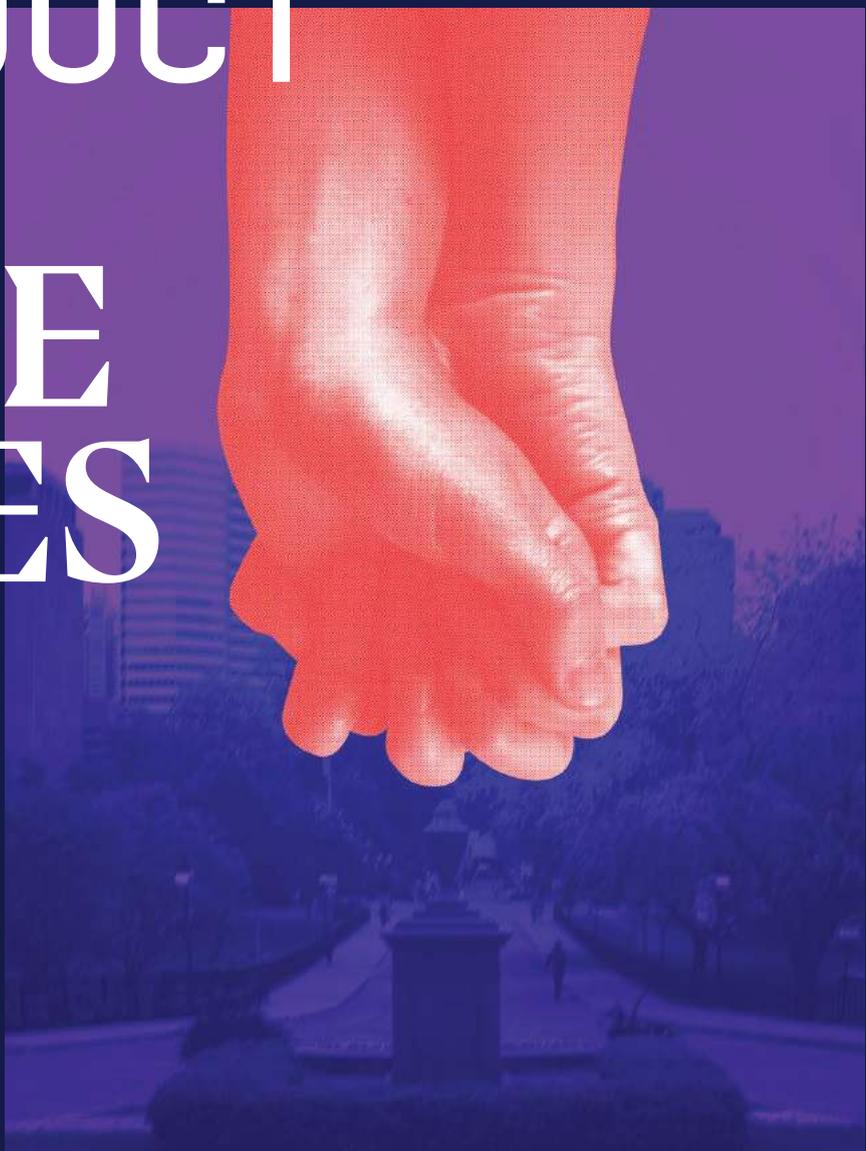
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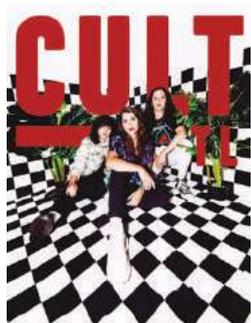


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On the occasion of the release of their second album *More Is More*, Montreal trio *les Shirley* defined for us what a Shirley is and what it means to get Shirley'd.

Cover photo by Stéphanie Dinsdale.

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: best buds



BY DAVE MACINTYRE

If I'm going to write a monthly weed column, I might as well watch a documentary educating me on what weed's all about. So this month, I decided to try out another Québécois hybrid in Tropicana Punch from Pure Laine Cannabis, while also watching the 2019 documentary *Grass Is Greener*. With a name like Pure Laine, you literally can't get more "chez nous" than that for a brand of government-approved cannabis! Supplied by Rose Science Vie, based in Huntingdon, a town just a little over an hour southwest of the island. You know it's especially pure laine when it's grown in such a rural area!

While at home rehabilitating a sprained ankle, I decided to light some of these bad boys up while learning all about how cannabis came to be illegal in the U.S. in the first place, and — surprise surprise — racism and anti-scientific rhetoric are big parts of the equation. Let's dive in.

PURE LAINE CANNABIS'S TROPICANA PUNCH

At 25%, you already know you're in for a fairly wild ride with this one. It's quite a fruity-smelling strain, too, living up to its orange juice-referencing name. Speaking of which, this might get you thirsty, as you can definitely feel some cottonmouth after inhaling. This batch also does pretty well at balancing feelings of relaxation with fast-acting intensity. It's balanced, it's pleasant-smelling, the buds aren't too dry, and it gives you a nice, fuzzy, lightheaded feeling in your frontal lobes. The high is pretty long-lasting, and makes you feel quite comfortable, while also helping you focus more easily at times. All in all, it's a highly enjoyable flavour of the Devil's Lettuce — I just wish I hadn't sprained my ankle playing with my family's dog, so that I could take a joint of this for a brisk, long walk. Crutches will make that sort of thing challenging.

As for the documentary, none other than rap pioneer Fab 5 Freddy narrates, and the film's main message seems to be that a lot of anti-weed rhetoric is actually just propaganda and fear-mongering — something that goes back many decades. Without spoiling too much, the doc rounds up some big-name interviewees (Snoop Dogg, B-Real, Chuck D,

Damian Marley, Killer Mike) to talk about their relationship with weed, and how the U.S. government had been — to put it mildly — reluctant to embrace cannabis for medical purposes despite all kinds of scientific evidence pointing to its health benefits.

It also does a nice job also in tying together weed culture as being entwined with the history of music, specifically jazz. We even notice that some of the most famous names in that genre were big fans of the reefer, so much so that they wrote songs about it. Unfortunately, it also proves to be part of why weed became illegal in America to start with — for hugely frustrating reasons. Also obvious are the repercussions of how weed laws have impacted the lives of those who've gone to jail for pot-related crimes, and on their loved ones.

The film definitely holds a strong position, and doesn't touch on the less savoury effects of cannabis, but it's still a nice collection of quotes from experts (including the CEO of *High Times*) and pothead celebs, as well as archival footage I never even knew existed. Smoking weed might not be a time for thinking, but if you're going to learn about something while blazed, you might as well watch this.

The weather's getting colder and park hangs have come to a close, so roll up some of this highly comforting and relaxing strain while you're stuck back inside streaming the crap out of shows under your weighted blanket.

The weed: 9/10

The film: 8/10



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:the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

November is all about the World Cup — no matter your thoughts on the designated location. But before we get into the biggest sporting event in the world, watched by millions upon millions, let's review what went down at the end of October...

CF Montréal was eliminated from the 2022 MLS Cup playoffs, losing 3–1 to New York City FC at Stade Saputo, in the Eastern Conference semifinal round. Maximiliano Moralez and Talles Magno scored for New York, while Djordje Mihailovic scored for Montreal late in the game. Coach Wilfried Nancy had this to say about their run: "We always believed that we could do something good. We would have liked to go further and continue the adventure. Little by little we have earned the respect of the league this season. Montreal is recognized today because of what we do. But we must also not forget that New York City are champions." CFM and Team Canada's Alistair Johnston returned with the following words: "It was tough. Having played what we considered our best half of football this season but going into halftime 2–0 down was difficult. We're disappointed. New York is a good team. They picked their moments. We could have been more decisive. It's a bummer because we have a special group. The support of the crowd was unbelievable. We felt we had the group to lift a trophy. It was nice to see. We're not just a team worth cheering for. We're an exciting team that everyone can get behind."

Montreal had a powerful season and it was great to see the widespread excitement in the city during this most recent playoff run, all while smashing club records. Next year, the CFM will go through another transition and transformation. The team will have a new look, as some players are already scheduled to leave or are out of contract, (except for Captain Samuel Piette who is already locked in for next season). Also, the team will change the logo (yet again), replacing the short-lived and divisive snowflake.

A lot to get excited about, Montrealers!

The MLS Final will have the Philadelphia Union from the Eastern Conference face LAFC from the Western Conference on Nov. 5 at 4 p.m. EST.

In the English Premier League, VAR (*Video Assisted Referee*) continues to create chaos in matches and seems to be getting worse. Rules and how rules are applied seem to not line up with officiating, the rule book and the matches themselves. More than ever, coaches, players and media are complaining. We can only wonder if changes are on the horizon for this digital component of the beautiful game.

Aston Villa have appointed Unai Emery as manager, following the sacking of footballing legend Steven Gerrard. Former Arsenal boss Emery, who had been in charge of Spanish Club Villarreal, takes over at Villa on Nov. 1. Villa have paid a \$6-million buyout fee to Villarreal for the 50-year-old manager.

The Premier League itself will go on break for the World Cup as of Nov. 13, and will return Dec. 26. This is one of my favourite days in football. The big Boxing Day fixture list always sees all 20 teams battle it out at 10 a.m. EST. Getting together with other football



fans after the seasonal holidays is something special.

At press time, the Premier League table, sees Arsenal still in first place with Manchester City, Tottenham Hotspur and Newcastle United rounding out the top four. In the Champions League, we got a better look at who will be moving on and who will be heading to the Europa League (the younger, less attractive sibling of the Champions League).

The next stages and round of 16 will have a live draw on Nov. 7 in Switzerland. Teams that have qualified thus far are: Bayern, Benfica, ChelseaFC, Club Brugge, Dortmund, Inter Milan, Liverpool, Manchester City, Napoli, PSG, Porto and Real Madrid. No team can face another team from the same National association. Clubs cannot face opponents they met during the group stage either.

To date, the most exciting games to look for during the first week of November, before the break, are all match-ups in Group D. The results as they stand mean that as of right now, all four teams in that group could still go through. For my Spurs-loving brothers and sisters, this means that Tottenham simply cannot afford to lose against French side Marseille. Because of how the final day fixtures work, if Tottenham get a point, they are bound to qualify for the last 16. However, if they don't, they won't. Marseille will go above them if they win and the same will apply to whomever wins the match between Sporting and Eintracht Frankfurt. If Tottenham loses and the other game ends in a draw, three teams will have eight points and second place would be decided by results in matches involving them all.

There are many elements to address surrounding World Cup 2022. This edition of the tournament is controversial, as many others have been in the past. The Australian National team has released a collective statement against Qatar's human rights record, becoming the first 2022 World Cup team to do so. The video message criticizes the World Cup hosts' treatment of migrant workers and LGBTQIA2+ people. Football Australia also released a statement saying: "The suffering" felt by workers and their families caused by the tournament "cannot be ignored." The video calls for "effective remedy" for migrant workers and the decriminalization of same-sex relationships. The 16 Australia players involved in the video, including captain Mat Ryan, are all saying:

"Addressing these issues is not easy, and we do not have all the answers. We stand with FIFPro, the Building and Wood Workers International and the International Trade Union

Confederation, seeking to embed reforms and establish a lasting legacy in Qatar. With that expressed, Australia will continue to play at the tournament in Qatar. This must include establishing a migrant resource centre, effective remedy for those who have been denied their rights, and the decriminalization of all same-sex relationships. These are the basic rights that should be afforded to all and will ensure continued progress in Qatar and a legacy that goes well beyond the final whistle of the 2022 Fifa World Cup."

These subjects are on the lips and minds of everyone and are difficult to broach. I myself was not sure what I was going to do, since the majority of my business is wrapped up in football. There is no simple solution or answer but it is good to keep it in the media and on everyone's minds as the tournament gets off the ground. Talking about it is important, but at a certain point, actions speak louder than words.

For the casual football fan and hardcore Canadian supporter, important matches to look out for and get involved with are as follows:

CANADA V BELGIUM, WEDNESDAY, NOV. 23, 2 P.M. EST

CANADA V CROATIA, SUNDAY, NOV. 27, 2 P.M. EST

CANADA V MOROCCO, THURSDAY DEC. 1, 10 A.M. EST

It just does not get more exciting than this for Canadian football fans. Pub Burgundy Lion, (home of football in Montreal, and, full disclosure, co-owned by yours truly) will once again be hosting the usual football events, with the added bonus of securing the *Home of Football* title for Team England once again. For the first time in the Lion's 13-year history, we'll be hosting three official Canada viewing parties with Team Canada beer partner Carlsberg.

Enjoy the ride and be kind.

"In football (soccer), the result is an impostor. You can do things really, really well but not win. There's something greater than the result, more lasting – a legacy."
—Xavi, Spain international

food

Do Italian better

BY CLAY SANDHU

Italian food is sometimes a challenge to talk about. As one of the most influential and ubiquitous cuisines in the world, having an opinion on it feels irrelevant — oh, you like Italian food, too? Who gives a shit? But as someone who possesses a great reverence for all the regionality, history and tradition behind the food, I'm fascinated by its enduring allure.

Nearly everyone I know who considers themselves serious about food has some sort of obsession with Italian food. Its inherent simplicity and often incomprehensible ability to be greater than the sum of its parts make it a cuisine that feels approachable yet next to impossible to master. For young cooks and home cooks alike, it's often the first plate of pasta, or maybe a risotto made from scratch, that truly feels like real cooking. For all those reasons, I think that it's a cuisine that is claimed by many.

In Quebec, Italian food is considered the most beloved “ethnic” cuisine. Extremely well-suited to both high and low culture, it is, in a very particular way, baked into the culinary fabric of Quebec. After all, is this not the ancestral home of pizza-ghetti? Ask anyone in the city what the best Italian restaurant is and you're bound to get a mixed bag of answers. One place, however, might come up more than others: Moccione.

Partners Luca Cianciulli and Maxime Landry leveraged their Toqué pedigree (where Cianciulli served as sous-chef) to open their Villeray restaurant, to relative fanfare, back in 2018. Since then, the consensus has been that it is exceptionally good. The roughly 50-seat restaurant is booked solid most nights and generally books up for the month shortly after a new reservation window is opened. Despite being curious about this restaurant for ages, it's taken me some time and some foresight to be able to finally snag a table.

I managed to get a two-top in the first seating on a Wednesday evening earlier in October. When my dining companion and I arrived, the room was already softly humming. This is, above all, a neighbourhood joint. It's got a lovely design and it feels somewhat posh in a certain way, but the crowd is local and feels representative of Villeray. A mix of 30-somethings, some with kids, some without, neighbourhood lifers in their late 60's and early 70's enjoying a glass of wine and a few small plates. All stylish, mostly francophone.

The room itself feels quite intentional. There's wood panelling on the walls, beautifully veined granite on the bar and on the countertops, which cleverly divide the different sections. A particularly deft job has been paid to incorporating the distressed concrete wall in a way that makes it feel organic somehow. It does, however, still feel a bit too new. It's begging for a patina and it needs a decade more to make it happen. There's also a sense that “homey Italian” was the inspiration but the designer couldn't help themselves but get a little Scandinavian — a trope too common in Montreal restaurant design. It's a lovely room — pretty, even — but a bit forgettable.

The beverage program, headed up by another Toqué alum,



Maxime Lavallée, has a modest collection of house cocktails (mostly Italian riffs), a small selection of beer and ciders and a more robust collection of natural wines. I'm of two minds on the list. There is ample choice and the list is full of excellent producers but a good wine list, like a good menu, needs to have some vision. At first glance, I find the list to lean a bit too French and a bit too wild considering, after all, that this restaurant's claim to fame is its classic Italian style of cooking. On the other hand, the wine is very good and maybe works extremely well with the food — we're talking about a list crafted by a sommelier with plenty of experience creating pairings for tasting menus. Perhaps, I'm being too judgemental — it certainly wouldn't be the first time.

We started with a glass of Sans Pagne, a pét-nat of Chardonnay from Loire Valley producer, Ludovic Chanson. Its rich bubbles and ripe baking-apple profile are exactly the kind of thing I look for in an aperitif: something reminiscent of food while being light and fresh and doing its job to whet the palate. To accompany the meal, we had a bottle of Riva del Cillegio from Emilia-Romagnan producer Casè, which was recommended by our server. An evocative and powerful expression of Italian Pinot Noir (Pinot Nero, in this case), the wine is rustic with notes of red fruits so ripe that if you waited a moment longer to eat them, they would be spoiled.

For our first course, we ate grilled artichokes with girolles and fonduta and a classic beef carpaccio dressed with giardinera. The artichokes, quartered hearts with a delicate char interwoven with tender florets of golden girolles, were sublime and easily the standout dish of the night. Smokey and savoury, the artichokes were a substantial and prominent flavour, which I worried would be overwhelmed by the fonduta, and the mushrooms, which I thought would be an afterthought, somehow brought freshness. Though I was assured they were not pickled, I suspect they must have been deglazed with vinegar or white wine, at the very least. The most impressive aspect of the dish, however, was the fonduta — a sauce made of Fontina cheese, milk, egg yolks and butter from the Italian Alps — which was uncharacteristically light and delicate. The dish, despite being a study in the many shades of beige, was excellent, a classic example of how good Italian cooking can be.

The carpaccio, a staple of the menu since its opening, was also very good. Paper thin slices of raw beef were dressed in a giardinera — a mix of chopped pickled veg and oil — and topped with hefty leaves of peppery arugula and a generous dusting of parmesan. A classic carpaccio like this is hard to find and this was about as classic as you can get. It's not sensational the way the other dish was but it is unquestionably tasty. If, like me, you like beef carpaccio, I have no doubt this will be right up your alley.

On to the primi. Two pastas, two absolute classics: Bucatini all'Amatriciana and Maccheroni al Ragù. This is really where the mettle of this kitchen is going to be tested. I am not a pasta expert but I am experienced in eating pasta and I know that there are two pasta regions that are never to be trifled with: Rome and Emilia-Romagna. To put two quintessential pastas on the menu is to proudly announce to the world “I am good at making pasta.” So let us see if that claim holds true.

Both pastas, for their part, were great: toothsome, well-seasoned, the correct shapes, noodles that hold sauce

— everything was right. I do, however, have some notes. The bucatini, for me, was the better of the two dishes. The amatriciana sauce was quite good. The slightly funky and beautifully fatty Guanciale — cured jowl bacon — sang in the dish and the pasta was whistling away while I slurped but I could have used a bit more pepper and I found the tomatoes to be slightly tinny. It's not to say that they used canned tomatoes (which I have no issue with, for the record), as that metallic taste can be present even in fresh tomatoes. There is also the questionable choice of adding basil, which is not entirely incorrect but, generally speaking, is not done. My two cents: leave it out.

The maccheroni (pronounced the same way as, but distinct from, macaroni) is a tubular pasta that is roughly two inches long. It looks quite a bit like what most would call rigatoni. Moccione's maccheroni was served in a traditional ragù bolognese — the slowly cooked ground meat sauce native to Bologna. Again, ragù bolognese is just about as classic as you get. Their version was also near pitch-perfect, or void of any obvious faults. The pasta, despite being atypical (ragù is usually served with tagliatelle) worked very well but, like the use of basil, I have to ask why? Maccheroni isn't a better shape for the sauce than tagliatelle, and if you particularly wanted to use that shape, why pick such a famously opined-on sauce? The reality for both plates of pasta is that, despite being very good, they weren't perfect and, though mostly faithful to their origins, didn't blow me away.

Our last course, pan-fried veal sweetbreads, was undoubtedly the least successful dish of the night. A cluster of beautifully browned sweetbreads were placed on a swoosh of pale grey eggplant purée in which roasted tomatoes were embedded. Scattered across the plate was a handful of pickled Piquin peppers and the lot was topped with both a touch of pesto and veal reduction. For me, it felt like a dish designed by committee — a product of compromise. Someone clearly wanted to run a sweetbreads dish, all rich and unctuous and sauced with a silky jus, whereas someone else wanted to make one final dish with the end of the great late-summer produce. The result was a bit confused, a bit chaotic, and not very nice to look at either. For one of two proper main courses, I find it unacceptable to serve anything less than a delicious dish, which sadly this was not.

For dessert, we were recommended the ricotta cannoli. The shell was delicate, crisp and not at all oily, and the ricotta filling, flecked with orange zest, was smooth and beautifully light. A great cannoli but, to be honest, a bit of a cop-out dessert. We also had the tiramisu which came pre-potted in a water glass. It, too, was a nice rendition of a classic but nothing to write home about either. I suppose what I'm looking for is a dessert program that is taken as seriously as the rest of the menu, and for a restaurant that has received so much consistent praise, I would have expected more.

Look, at the end of the day I generally side with the consensus — Moccione is good, quite good even — but it is not a revelation. If you're wanting to try something new and you can get a reservation, I'd say go, it's certainly worth experiencing. On the other hand, if you've just got a hankering for a solid plate of pasta and a good glass of wine, there are plenty of excellent options in town with a much shorter waitlist.

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Montreal, consider yourselves Shirley'd

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

What, exactly, is a Shirley? For Raphaëlle Chouinard, lead vocalist and guitarist for les Shirley, it means being someone's good friend or buddy — their ride-or-die, basically, even if you don't identify as female. In fact, the Montreal trio even use it as an expression to describe the experience of seeing them play.

"We bring so much energy onstage, and people who see us live are definitely like 'Oh shit!' They receive tons of massive energy," she says. "We always say after the show, 'You've been Shirley'd!'"

The band's second album, *More Is More*, sees the band taking their blistering garage rock sound in moodier, more esoteric directions — all while never losing their trademark spunk or raw energy. Musically, the album evokes bits of punk rock, grunge, shoegaze, dance-punk, post-punk and even dream pop.

Though two members, drummer Lisandre Bourdages (Chouinard's former bandmate in electropop outfit Syzzors) and bassist Sarah Dion are also in NOBRO (Bourdages and Dion play keyboard/percussion and drums in that band, respectively), Chouinard is the only member speaking to us for this piece, as her bandmates were both on tour with NOBRO in Europe. (The members of les Shirley also sometimes work as hired guns for other artists.)

Despite the pandemic being a "fearful" time for Chouinard as artists around the world suddenly saw their schedules emptied (les Shirley had plans to play multiple festivals in 2020 before COVID hit), it gave her and her fellow Shirleys an opportunity to make a new album. The end result would be *More Is More*, the band's sophomore LP and follow-up to 2021's *Forever Is Now*.

The first thought entering your head as you read that last sentence might be, "Why such a short gap between albums?" According to Chouinard, we can partially blame the pitfalls of being an up-and-coming musician trying to make money off your art in today's precarious musical climate.

"The reality of being a musician nowadays is that you need new material to tour. You need to feed the booking agents with new material constantly," she says. "That was part of it. But also, we had all these songs. We were writing a lot during the pandemic, and we just thought, 'You know what, why not make another album?'"

"Also, the cycle of an album is shorter than before. In the '80s and '90s, you could release an album and wait for four or five



Stéphanie Dimsdale

years in between. Some people do it, but I feel like you need to feed the people — you need to feed the beast."

Those who enjoyed *Forever Is Now* can expect deeper lyrical subject matter on *More Is More*, particularly as it was written through the ups and downs of our ongoing COVID reality. "A lot of nostalgia, melancholy, addiction. It's all about that," Chouinard says.

"For me, it was a tough time at first because I deal with a lot of anxiety. I think that a lot of artists have anxiety nowadays, so they can totally relate. We've been trying to find some psychologists lately, (but) they're all overlooked. People are in desperate need of help right now. I hope that people will relate to that in terms of the ups and downs, and the deeper side of les Shirley. We're showing this other face that we didn't show in our previous album and EP, which was a bit more on the light side of things."

More Is More was also produced by the band alongside Marie-Pierre Arthur, and Chouinard "couldn't have hoped for a better fit" in a production collaborator for the album. "We respect her so much as an artist," she says.

"We were really, really big fans of her music prior to knowing her personally. She's such a Shirley — she is the definition of a Shirley! (laughs) It definitely was an amazing contribution to the album... Sometimes we'd get stuck with some parts of the songs, and she'd always be coming in with fresh ears and fresh ideas for us."

You can hear a strong '90s influence on songs like lead single "Nothing Compares," which is focused lyrically on loss and the overwhelming knowledge that something you cherished will never return. Inspired by a major life event that shook the band to its core, the track was written during the band's first day in studio for *More Is More*, at the start of a three-week stint recording the album back in May.

"The very first day we came into the studio, there were a lot of emotions, a lot of baggage. We ended up crying basically the whole day," Chouinard says. "I don't know why, but we just picked up the instruments, and Sarah came up with this lick. She played that, and I was like, 'Whoa!' We came up with the song right on the spot. This subject really reflected where we were at that time."

There's also "It's Time," a pulsating, hard-rocking feminist anthem all about smashing the patriarchy. The riot grrrl-esque tune begs the question of how far female representation has come in modern music over the years — especially in punk circles — since the days of bands like Babes in Toyland, Bikini Kill and L7. If you ask Chouinard, that kind of representation in music has been improving since her teenage years.

"When I think about when I was in high school, and the bands that I was listening to, I can't think of any all-female bands," she says. "I can think of some frontwomen, but that was about it. Today, we're doing a better job at it. There are more and more girls popping up. In my inner circle of friends, there are a lot of kickass female musicians around."

"I see it when we play as les Shirley, as well. Sometimes we'll play in front of young girls, and I can see the sparkle in their eyes — the realization that 'I can do this!' There's still some work to be done, but we're definitely doing better. There's more and more space for women onstage. The next step would be for festivals to understand that a 50-50 split with female-led projects on the lineup would be amazing. But we're getting there."

Les Shirley's sonic palette isn't simply restricted to punk or garage rock, either. Songs like "Hands on the Wheel" give off strong shoegaze vibes, specifically Slowdive and My Bloody Valentine. Chouinard even confirms to us that these two bands inspired them for this tune, though it actually began life as a completely different-sounding song.

"If you listen to the demo, it has nothing to do with (shoegaze) at all," she continues. "Even the lyrics — everything had changed. The only thing that remained was the chord progression. I think that's because we went into the studio not knowing if that song was actually going to make the cut or not. We liked it, but maybe not enough to put it on the album."

"It was Ryan Battistuzzi, our sound engineer, who was like, 'No, there's such potential with this chord progression! But I really see it as a Slowdive, shoegazey song.' At first, we were like, 'What? No.' Then he's like, 'No no no, just trust me.' We just trusted the process. When it came time to record the lyrics, I had none. I was like, 'Okay guys, give me 20 minutes.' I sat in the little vocal booth, and it just came out."

Though les Shirley are a three-piece, Chouinard admits it'll be challenging for them to perform this album live as a power trio. During the band's three upcoming launch shows in November (in Montreal at Fairmount Theatre on Nov. 24, as well as dates in Quebec City and Toronto), they'll become a sextet with two extra guitarists and a keyboardist, adding new layers to their live sound — and ensuring that fans get properly Shirley'd.

Beyond this, Bourdages and Dion will return to the studio with NOBRO in December, but les Shirley plans to reconvene for a tour in 2023 (including in Europe). Chouinard says a "secret project" is also in the works with Montreal rappeuse Calamine — a rap-rock EP, to be more precise.

"You know when Linkin Park came out with that album (*Collision Course*) with Jay-Z? Think about that," she says. "That's what we're going to release, sometime in 2023."

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Soapbox storyteller

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

These days, it feels like everyone's standing on top of a soapbox, whether they're actually making a speech at a political rally or simply spewing hot takes on social media.

Sometimes, though, people can use them for good: to tell stories, share ideas and empower others. For Waahli (himself an actual soap maker), the concept of soapboxes serves as inspiration for the title of his second full-length album.

Known partly for his involvement with Kalmunity and co-founding Nomadic Massive, this trilingual Montreal singer/rapper/songwriter — born to Haitian parents and raised in Saint-Michel — blends hip hop with a host of other genres like jazz, Afrobeat, dancehall, Haitian music, funk, Latin and soul. Performing in English, French and Haitian Creole, his music aims to break language barriers by making sure the vibe outweighs and overcomes any inability to understand his lyrics.

With *Soap Box*, Waahli has made a project that not only reaffirms his identity, but also acts as a love letter to the Haitian diaspora and an homage to his parents who fled Duvalier's regime to build a better life for themselves in Montreal. We also hear Waahli occasionally showcasing his singing abilities, in contrast to his more rap-focused debut, 2018's *Black Soap*.

Though he admits the pandemic was a "blessing in disguise" for him, and says it was "perfect" for him to have more time to focus on himself and his music, that good feeling would eventually wear off — at least momentarily — after the first year and a half of COVID life.

"I hit an all-time low with my creative juices, and my motivation and inspiration," he says. "It came back up a month after, and I was able to complete my album. But (the pandemic has) had its highs and lows. For the first year and a half, it was kind of a blessing for me, because I could slow down for a second."

In fact, *Soap Box* was completed about a year ago — done thanks to him and co-producer Boogat exchanging WAV files from home ("There was a lot of time spent on computers," he adds), a definite adjustment compared with being "all crammed up in the studio" with collaborators. Furthering the fully-remote approach to making the album, *Soap Box* was mixed in Mexico and mastered in Germany, after Waahli had done his parts from Montreal's Sud-Ouest and Boogat's from the Eastern Townships.

Even if it wasn't the communal in-person vibe he was used to while making new projects, Waahli says he's glad the album is out in the universe and the process behind making it is behind him. That doesn't mean the album wasn't a collaborative endeavour, as he rallied Clerel (the title track and lead single), Malika Tirolien ("Bridge"), Sam I Am ("Invisible"), Dr. Mad (closing track "Listen") and Colombian duo Dawer X Damper («Prince Waah») to feature on the project. Tirolien also sings backup on «Te revoir» and recorded her parts in Waahli's apartment after some pandemic measures had been lifted.

Waahli tells us he listened to EARTHGANG, the Afrobeat genre and late Haitian folk musician Manno Charlemagne while making the album. Appropriately, songs like "Te revoir" — the last song he recorded for the album — have a strong Afrobeat feel to them, while short-and-sweet opening track "Mechann" (Haitian Creole for "merchant") is based around a sample of vocal chanting from Cuba's Grupo Vocal Desandann.

He also found inspiration in instrumental music for this project. "That's how I find different ways of being inspired, and



Bruno Destombes

writing differently," he explains. More specifically, he'd been bumping a lot of lo-fi hip hop, instrumental soul and loop-based hip hop productions without drum beats, such as the works of the Alchemist and local producer Nicholas Craven.

"It opens new dimensions in approaching music, and how I'm writing," he says. "I'll sometimes test some of my verses on that, or write something on it, and see what inspires me."

Continuing his trend of using soap-themed titles for his releases since he also works as an organic soap maker, the title of Waahli's sophomore LP feels at first like an allusion to how often people love to express strong opinions on social media, as if they're standing atop a theoretical soapbox.

However, Waahli tells us its initial genesis came from his desire to find a title that was both emblematic of his music and his career as a soap maker. His work with young people under 25 at NDG's Head and Hands, helping them in their personal development and teaching them how to make informed decisions, is another source of inspiration for the title. So are themes of racism, identity, discrimination, and being the son of an immigrant and part of the Haitian diaspora.

"I feel like this album is me standing on a soapbox, and sharing my story with the people," he adds.

The album's title track, a collaboration with Montreal-via-Cameroon soul artist Clerel, boasts a video filmed on a yak farm in the Eastern Townships (East Bolton, to be more exact). This was due in part to the "bluesy, soulful influence" Waahli felt the song had, and also to not wanting to film the video in the city while simply rapping in front of a camera.

"I wanted to do something different," he says. "I wanted to push boundaries. Sometimes, we dream and we don't push our thoughts further. I was like, 'Why not do it on a farm?' I did a call-out online. I was like, 'Do I know anyone in my network who knows anyone who has a farm? Please DM me!'"

"People started sending me recommendations for farms. I was checking my DMs, and one of them was a friend of a friend who owns a yak farm in East Bolton. I showed them my idea, and they said yes. I feel like it fit really well with me and

Clerel, and the theme and vibe of the song. To do it on a farm really only made sense."

Despite a great deal of time spent alone with no one to bounce ideas off of during the making of the album, Waahli feels a ton of chemistry with Boogat in particular. Even if their creative styles are distinct from one another, their mutual passion for music, hip hop and its culture is a common denominator for them both.

"Hip hop made me fall in love deeply with music," Waahli continues. "When I discovered hip hop, it was like, 'Whoa.' When you discover jazz and all the sampling, you discover a lot of new artists. I think it's the same with Boogat, who also has a deep passion for music and the art of sampling."

The two started working together during the pandemic's onset in 2020, with the first track they made together being "Bliye sa" — first released on the EP *Soap Opera*, and also included on *Soap Box*.

"I sent him my vision of the song, and how I see it. I sent him a maquette," he says. "He worked on it, sent it back to me, and I was like, 'Wow. It turned out really well.' From that day, we started to collaborate. It's been a joint venture since the last two years."

Waahli intends to continue promoting the album and maximize its visibility for the remainder of 2022, with a tour in Canada, the U.S. and Europe (he also hopes to play in the Caribbean, specifically Haiti) in the works for 2023. He'll also play some local gigs before year's end, including on Dec. 6 at l'idéal bar.

As far as what *Soap Box* represents to him regarding where he's currently at as an artist, Waahli feels it emphasizes him being a product of his environment—that, of course, being born and raised in Montreal with parents of Haitian origin.

"It's what makes me. It's my identity," he says. "It's how I grew up. The statement is how I'm taking my space... I want to inspire people from the diaspora to take their space, as well. We are here. We've been here for a very long time. The statement is to take our space, be creative and go for yours."



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Jérôme Bosch : Le Jardin des délices

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Album reviews



Backwash, *HIS HAPPINESS SHALL COME FIRST EVEN THOUGH WE ARE SUFFERING* (Ugly Hag)

Slicing precision meets helter-skelter bludgeoning as Backwash submits the third entry in a trilogy that began with 2020's Polaris-winning *God Has Nothing To Do With This Leave Him Out Of It* and its 2021 follow-up *I LIE HERE BURIED WITH*

MY RINGS AND MY DRESSES. Perhaps "submit" is a poor choice of words. There's nothing submissive about the rapper/producer's voice, words or presentation, despite the vulnerability and introspection woven into the chaos and violence of the metal-edged hip hop she's acclaimed for. The precision is two-fold. It's no easy feat to design and execute a trilogy of anything on schedule, much less a complex rap autobiography. And the imagery, wordplay and attention to detail in every aspect of each movement of this third act are equally explicit. As for the helter-skelter bludgeoning, let the music do the cutting and feel it for yourself. With *HIS HAPPINESS*, Backwash outmatches herself in a sudden death round at her own playoff series. 9/10 Trial Track: "NYAMA" ft. Pupil Slicer (Darcy MacDonald)

The 1975, *Being Funny in a Foreign Language* (Dirty Hit)
If the 1975 are the sound of pop music eating itself, they've worn it pretty damn well over the years. The heavily '80s-influenced British four-piece — led by enigmatic frontman Matty Healy — have built their brand upon hooky yet subversive pop rock tunes that are blissful and melodic while also challenging listeners either musically, lyrically or both. After their previous album, 2020's *Notes on a Conditional Form*, was bloated, chaotic and tried too hard to be too many things at once, this fifth LP feels more simplistic, straightforward and concise at only 11 tracks — half as many as its predecessor. The band have also maintained their identity despite having plenty of songs that sound like other artists. Opener "The 1975" (the opening track of each of their albums is named after the band) basically apes the piano riff from LCD Soundsystem's "All My Friends" and



loops it throughout the song, while "Part of the Band" is dominated by "Eleanor Rigby"-like strings and "About You" is perhaps the most outwardly shoegazey song they've ever put to tape.

Even if Jack Antonoff — whose fingerprints seem to be all over a lot of modern pop music these days, for better or worse — was this

album's co-producer, his influence only feels obvious on a handful of tracks, namely the Justin Vernon-esque "Human Too," the waltz-tempo ballad "All I Need to Hear" and "Looking for Somebody (To Love)" — the latter of which frankly sounds like an outtake from Antonoff's own musical project, Bleachers. Otherwise, singles "Happiness" and "I'm in Love With You," as well as "Oh Caroline," are the kinds of dopamine-heavy, heartfelt pop tunes we've already come to expect from Healy and co. On *Being Funny in a Foreign Language*, the 1975 realize that less is usually more when it comes to making a cohesive album, and the end result is more consistent, refined and musically unified than last time around. 8.5/10 Trial Track: "I'm in Love With You" (Dave MacIntyre)

The Beatles, *Revolver: Special Edition* (Apple)
How much better can a good thing really get? In 1966, the Beatles' seventh studio album signaled both the arrival of the psychedelic music scene and the imminence of sea change for the rock 'n' roll movement as it entered late adolescence. Over a half century later, the predictive accuracy its title predicted remains unimpeachable. And in taking the absolutely unnecessary risk of experimenting with sound tech developed by *Get Back* director Peter Jackson, Giles Martin (son of Beatles producer George) has succeeded in unearthing further purpose from 35 minutes of music that, lest we forget, were simply the result of a creative surge from a talented foursome of newly minted megastars. Basslines are rendered more assertive. Snare, toms and cymbals are given room to swing at the forefront. Vocal mixes are better defined. Strings, keys and guitars are repurposed in trippy contrast to it all. **Shit, you can practically hear the dirt being wiped from Father**

McKenzie's hands as he walks from the grave. Martin listened to the colour of the Beatles dreams and added clarity to their integrity. Depending how deeply you wish to surrender to the void, the five-disc version has some moments of background insight and brilliance. But no one will be faulted for skipping straight to new mixes of non-album single "Paperback Writer" and its b-side, "Rain." The only reason the 2022 mix of *Revolver* isn't getting a perfect 10 is because no amount of goodwill can ever forgive "Yellow Submarine." 8.5/10 Trial Track: "She Said She Said" (Darcy MacDonald)



Phoenix, *Alpha Zulu* (Loyauté/Glassnote)
Having a hook in your song like "Woo! Hah! Singing hallelujah!" can only come from a band that's having a blast making music together. This is exactly what we hear Phoenix do during the title track of their seventh album, *Alpha Zulu* — and that fun and carefree vibe can be heard pretty much throughout

the album, the veteran French four-piece's first in five years. Produced by the band themselves, they balance bouncy pop hooks with frontman Thomas Mars's trademark esoteric lyricism just like they always have, but the moods here tend to shift more from track to track. We also hear them continue building upon the synth-heavy direction they took starting with 2013's *Bankrupt!*. Instrumentally full of texture and colour (the album was recorded in the Louvre Palace, after all), *Alpha Zulu* boasts some of the band's most glittering pop tunes, including "Artefact" and "Season 2" (the latter track even references Niagara Falls!).

Techno bop "All Eyes on Me" feels both catchy and menacing at once, "Winter Solstice" is considerably darker and more electronic than you'd expect from a Phoenix tune and Mars shows solid chemistry with Ezra Koenig of Vampire Weekend in their duet on "Tonight." If gripes are to be had, they're that the album isn't among their most consistent or unified (2009's *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* remains the benchmark for that), and the inclusion of "Identical" — a song the band released in 2020 for the film *On the Rocks*, directed by Mars's wife Sofia Coppola — as the album's closer definitely feels somewhat jarring despite the being much longer here than the original version. Regardless, *Alpha Zulu* sees Phoenix sounding more revitalized and full of vigour than they have in a hot minute — a full quarter-century after their formation. 8/10 Trial Track: "Alpha Zulu" (Dave MacIntyre)

:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Despite rising ticket costs, it seems most Montrealers are still only too eager to shell out for gigs. No matter what genre or musical generation, shows are selling out more than ever.

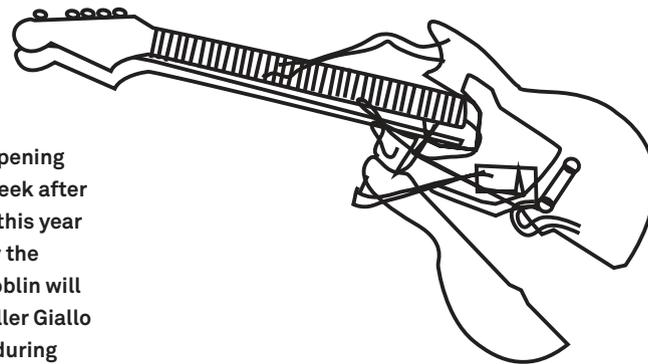
November is hosting some great shows that, unfortunately, if you aren't gripping tix, you'll be left scrounging for scalper dregs or scanning Verified Resale options. Some of the shows that are sold out this month include metal clown princes Steel Panther at Corona and instru-metalists Russian Circles at Théâtre Fairmount.

As always, this month I'll hip you kids to some killer shows, ones that (at press time) have not yet sold out. To ensure you grab tickets, I would drop this rag right now and prime up that credit card. I should also mention that hardcore super group OFF! have postponed their show this month at Café Campus but keep your eyes peeled for the weekly online edition of this column for mention of their makeup date.

Monday, Nov. 7: Not one but two killer gigs are happening on the shidiest night of the week. Not only is the week after Halloween great for getting really cheap candy, but this year it also holds the big pick of the month, and probably the best horror event of the year. Claudio Simonetti's Goblin will celebrate the 45th anniversary of Dario Argento's killer giallo chiller *Suspiria*. Simonetti will perform a live score during the projection of the film, following that with a resto-of best-of Goblin set, packed with soundtrack and non-soundtrack gems. If you are as old as I am, you will also be pleased to find out this is a seated event and will be happening in the comfort of la Tulipe. 4530 Papineau, doors 7 p.m., show 8 p.m., main floor \$62.50/balcony \$52.50

Happening the very same night is the crushingly heavy KEN Mode (ie. Kill Everyone Now mode), who will be completely packing 'em in at Turbo Haüs. Adding more ballast to this unquestionably crushing bill is Frail Body and the Great Sabatini-adjacent band Cell Press. This WILL sell out, so if you want to squeeze into this punisher, better grab tickets right now. 2040 St-Denis, 7:30 p.m., \$23.54

Friday, Nov. 11: Okay, Halloween may be behind us, but if you still haven't gotten your fill of pure evil, you will definitely want to catch (members of) metal royalty band Mercyful Fate. King Diamond and co.'s sheer impact on underground metal is without question, and given Mr.



Diamond's advanced age, I wouldn't snooze on this one. If you still need further convincing, openers are German legends Kreator, who will deliver their crushing thrash alongside and the true descendants of Mercyful Fate, Midnight — who sadly got their gear nicked the last time they were in our fair burg. This is pure metal mayhem happening in Laval at Place Bell. 1950 Claude-Gagné, doors 6 p.m., show 7 p.m., \$69.75

See ya at the bar.

Current Obsession: Tubeway Army, self titled
jonathan.cummings@gmail.com

LE SACRE DE LILA

Ismaël Mouaraki
Destins Croisés



Photo: © Amen Lahcen

November 23, 24 and 25 — 7 P.M.
November 26 — 4 P.M.

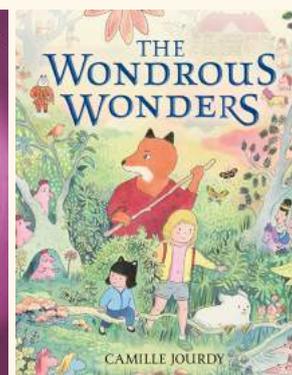
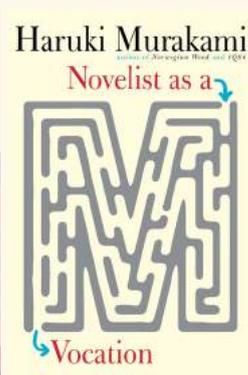
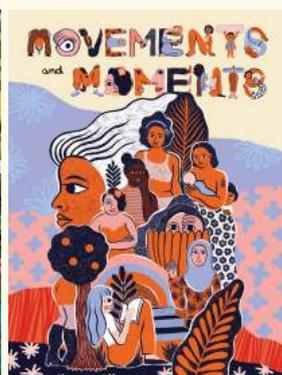
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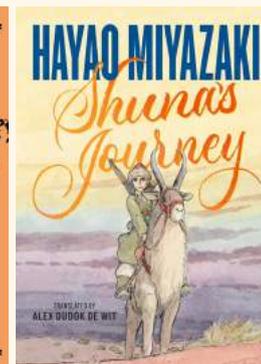
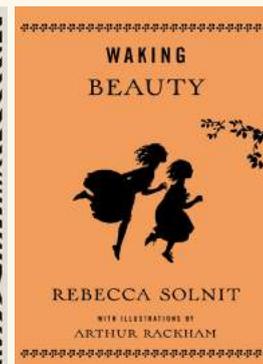
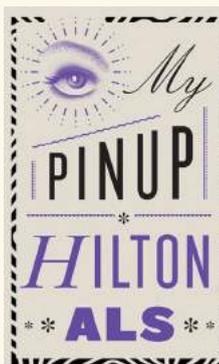
UPCOMING EVENTS & BOOK CLUBS

FRI, NOV 4 | 7 PM **LATINX** | *Things We Lost in the Fire*

THUR, NOV 10 | 7 PM **BOOK LAUNCH**
Der Eydes Volume II

FRI, NOV 18 | 6 PM **YOUNG READERS**
Mapmakers and the Lost Magic

SUN, NOV 27 | 7 PM **BOOK LAUNCH** | *Pathetic Literature*



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film

More than a festival



Rosie

BY JUSTINE SMITH

When image+nation emerged in 1988, most films were still shot on tape. Queer stories and filmmakers presented their low-budget and radical visions, and they quickly found an audience.

“As you can imagine, at first, the festival was born out of necessity,” recalls Charlie Boudreau, image+nation’s festival director. “Thirty-five years ago, the representation of gays and lesbians was not positive.” The festival opened up the door for artists and filmmakers to change that. “The first years, it became a place to tell our stories. People flocked to it. At one point, we’d have four screenings at once, all with lines around the block.”

Over time, of course, the scope of the films and the festival has only widened, but it remains an important meeting point. Celebrating its 35th anniversary, this year’s image+nation festival will run from Nov. 17 to 27. After two years of being relegated to an online-only format, the festival will be a hybrid this year. While other festivals have dropped the online component entirely, image+nation saw it as an opportunity. “COVID is horrible, but it helped us achieve this dream we’ve had for a long time of having image+nation online,” says Boudreau. “It’s a lot of work, and many other festivals have dropped it, but it’s worth every minute of work to help make the festival more accessible to more people.”

For Kat Setzer, the festival programming director, one of the most remarkable things about the festival is the evolution of storytelling. “At first, it was mostly coming out stories and stories of first love. Not to discount the importance of those stories — claiming your identity is crucial to anybody’s life — but what we are seeing is this wonderful evolution of the kinds of stories and characters we see; the nuance of different families and the evolution in the past 20 years of trans and non-binary characters and identities.”

This year’s opening film, *Rosie*, almost feels like kismet, bridging the gap between the festival’s origins and its sense of community. For director/co-producer Gail Maurice and lead

actor/co-producer Mélanie Bray, the film is almost a return home. In 2018, image+nation presented Bray’s short film of the same name, which would become a feature film. Set in Montreal in the 1980s, the film centres on the experiences of a suddenly orphaned Indigenous child and her experience of finding and integrating into her chosen family.

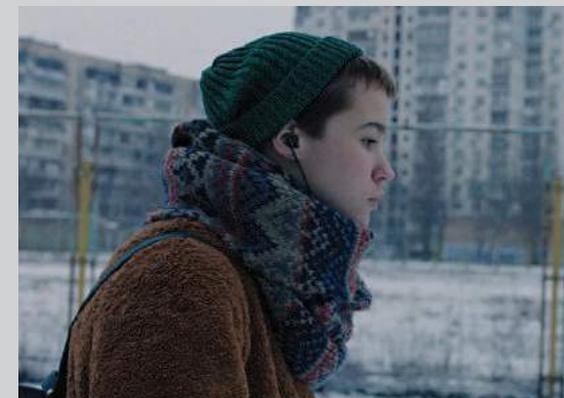
Though the film deals with heavy material, including grappling with the impact of the Sixties Scoop, *Rosie* maintains a positive vibe. “We do it in a way that you’re laughing and crying at the same time,” says Maurice, “because in Indigenous culture, it’s everything. Even though your whole world is ripped out from underneath you and your whole heart is shattered, you can still laugh. You have to go on and fight.” The film pays tribute to resilience and hope, all against a colourful and musical backdrop.

The film will be presented at the Imperial on opening night, and will be one of the first times in the festival’s history that so much of the cast and crew will be in attendance. “It’s like a real opening night,” says Boudreau. “It’s going to be a lot of fun.”

The program features a wide selection of films, including a focus on Ukrainian cinema, a spotlight on Indigiqueer cinema and “Queer Cultures: present and past perspectives,” which matches a classic queer film with a contemporary one as a means of generating discussion. As always, the festival caters to community and discussion, providing inclusive and welcoming spaces and venues for festivalgoers to meet and chat.

After 35 years, Canada’s original LGBTQ2+ film festival continues to grow and evolve. A long way from its humble beginnings, it’s now a vibrant international festival that features films from a plethora of countries and experiences. “I’ve heard over the years people saying they brought their family, their brother or mother,” says Boudreau. “People come with their colleague who then comes out.” The festival is more than just a tribute to films but a celebration. “It’s our occasion to share the great diversity of the many ways of being.”

5 program picks



Stop-Zemlia

Rosie (Dir. Gail Maurice)
After a sold-out premiere at TIFF, *Rosie* returns to image+nation for the festival’s opening night. Inspired by Maurice’s experiences growing up queer and Indigenous in the 1980s, the film is set on the streets of Montreal as a young girl grapples with her mother’s death and discovers the resilience and hope of her newfound family. With an incredible soundtrack and colourful aesthetic, the film promises to make you laugh and cry.

High School (Dir. Clea Duvall)
Inspired by the coming of age of Tegan and Sara, *High School* is a new original TV series brought to the screen by Clea Duvall (*But, I’m a Cheerleader!*). Inspired by their memoir of the same name, the show is set in the 1990s when Tegan and Sara first started performing together at the age of 15. The film deals with being queer and the trials and tribulations of working and living with a sibling and finding your place in the world.

Stop-Zemlia (Dir. Kateryna Gornostai)
Screening as part of the spotlight on Ukraine, with guest curator Molodist Kyiv International Film Festival, *Stop-Zemlia* won a prize at the Berlin Film Festival earlier this year. As it blurs the line between documentary and fiction, Gornostai’s feature debut focuses on young people navigating growing up in Ukraine during their last year of high school. Radical and authentic, *Stop-Zemlia* captures the bewildering strangeness of adolescence with sincerity and sensitivity.

My Father Is My Mother’s Brother (Dir. Vadym Ilkov)
Also screening as part of the Ukrainian Spotlight, *My Father Is My Mother’s Brother* is a documentary portrait of artist/singer Tolik, his sister Anya and his niece Katya, whose struggles through daily life are filled with love, soul searching, loneliness and illness.

This Place (Dir. V.T. Nayani)
Nayani’s feature debut, starring Devery Jacobs (*Reservation Dogs*) and Priya Guns, is a queer love story about two young women living in Toronto and dealing with difficult family questions. With dialogue in Mohawk, Persian, Tamil, French and English, *This Place* represents the diversity of the Canadian urban experience as it examines the joys and challenges of holding onto your culture and paving your own path.

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On Screen



Holy Spider



Bardo: False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths



She Said



Black Panther: Wakanda Forever

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Considered pretty universally among the very best Marvel has to offer, the Black Panther quadrant of the MCU has enormous shoes to fill following the death of Chadwick Boseman. Though it doesn't often mean much, as first reactions to Disney products tend to toe the party line, early buzz about *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever* (Nov. 11) has been very strong. With most of the rest of the cast and crew returning, it will be interesting to see how they handle the death of the series' lead actor.

Inspired by his childhood, Steven Spielberg brings his most personal film yet, *The Fabelmans* (Nov. 23), to the screen this fall. Growing up in post-World War II-era Arizona, a young man named Sammy Fabelman discovers a shattering family secret and explores how the power of films can help him see the truth. Michelle Williams and Paul Dano play Sammy's parents, and the cast includes Seth Rogen, Judd Hirsch and Jeannie Berlin.

Another family-oriented film from an American auteur is James Gray's latest, *Armageddon Time* (Nov. 4), inspired by

his childhood in the 1980s. A coming-of-age story about the American dream and finding your place in a society where you are only tangentially accepted, the film tackles big questions of race and class in America. *Armageddon Time* features an all-star cast, including Anne Hathaway, Jeremy Strong and Anthony Hopkins. Trigger warning: The film heavily features baby Donald Trump.

With pre-awards season underway, many heavy-hitter auteurs are making their late-year debut. The Dardenne brothers' latest, *Tori et Lokita* (Nov. 11), is about a friendship that unites two youngsters who have travelled alone from Africa and are contending with the cruel conditions of their exile in Belgium. Alejandro González Iñárritu is also releasing a personal film: *Bardo: False Chronicle of a Handful of Truths* (Nov. 18) is about a renowned Mexican journalist and documentary filmmaker who returns home and works through an existential crisis as he grapples with his identity, familial relationships and the folly of his memories. *EO* (Nov. 25), from the great Polish filmmaker Jerzy Skolimowski, follows a donkey on his terrible journey through Europe.

From Iran, *Holy Spider* (Nov. 18) goes back to the early 2000s when a serial killer was roaming the streets of Mashhad in a kind of holy war against sin. This is Ali Abbasi's follow-up to his 2018 film *Border*, which helped establish the director as an essential new voice in international arthouse cinema.

For some other prestige viewing, *She Said* (Nov. 18) goes

behind-the-scenes of the MeToo movement, which led to the arrest of Harvey Weinstein. Carey Mulligan and Zoe Kazan star as NYT journalists Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor, who work tirelessly to bring the story of Weinstein's abuses to light.

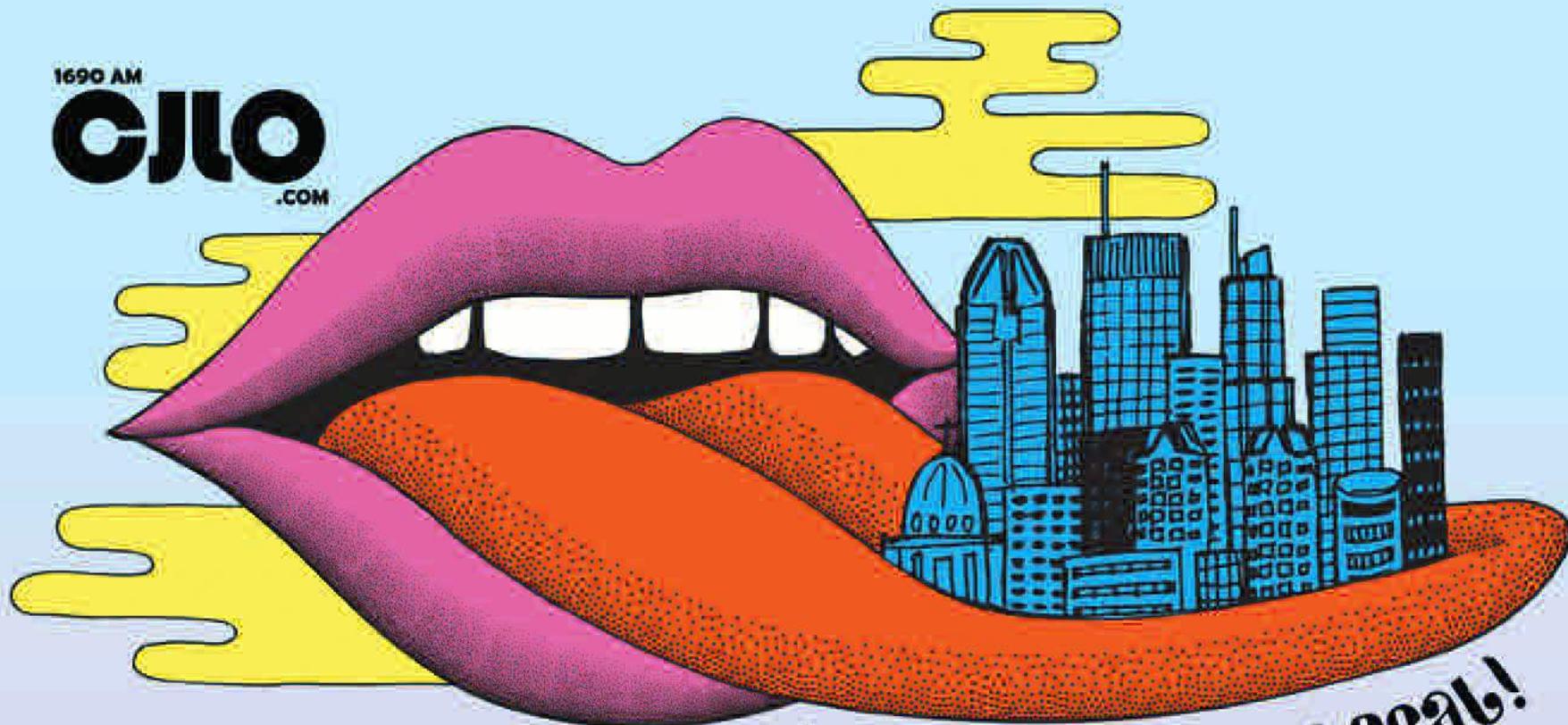
If you prefer your high-brow cinema a little more French, there are two big French releases from Arnaud Desplechin (*Un Conte de Noël*) on Nov. 11: *Frère et sœur* stars Marion Cotillard and Melvil Poupaud (*Laurence Anyways*) as estranged siblings who have been avoiding each other for over 20 years and are forced to reunite after a tragedy. His other film, *Tromperie*, is about an American novelist living temporarily in London who converses with his wife, his mistress and other female characters he may have dreamed up. It stars Léa Seydoux and Denis Podalydès.

A new adaptation of Romain Gary's novel *Chien Blanc* (Nov. 9) is closer to the original text than the 1982 cult classic directed by Samuel Fuller. A Canadian co-production directed by Anaïs Barbeau-Lavalette, the film is a semi-autobiographical story about Romain Gary and his wife, Jean Seberg, after the arrival of a so-called Southern White Dog — which is trained to attack Black people on sight.

There are also plenty of festivals to check out this month, starting with the French film festival (with English subtitles) Cinemania (Nov. 2–13), the documentary festival RIDM (Nov. 17–27) and Canada's original LGBTQ2+ festival, Image+Nation (Nov. 17–27).

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Immigration ink



BY SAVANNAH STEWART

During Quebec's provincial election this year, immigration was a focal point of the discourse.

The five party leaders battled over everything from how many immigrants the province should accept yearly to how best to integrate them, and Premier François Legault was in hot water time and time again for false and incendiary comments made by himself and his candidates.

When politicians pontificate about numbers and statistics, it buries the fact that behind the numbers are real people, with real and varied but in some ways shared experiences.

In Poline Harbali's exhibition *They wrote the countries borders on my skin*, it's those stories that are brought to the forefront. This multidisciplinary exhibit uses tattooing, photography, sculpture, installations and archival documentation to explore the migrant experience, and specifically how it is felt in the body for women and non-binary people.

Over the four years Harbali spent working on the project, she developed close bonds with 10 people who had migrated from all around the world to Montreal, talking with them about their experiences and, finally, tattooing them. *They wrote the countries borders on my skin* documents those years of encounters, collaborating with the participants all the way to the final step.

For Harbali, the theme of the exhibit reflects her own experience as a migrant.

"I was stuck going through a complicated situation in my migration experience, and I was in a period where I had no papers or work documents," she explains.

With no community here, no job to occupy her, she began working on this project, not knowing what shape it would take at the end.

"My main goal at first was to meet other people experiencing similar situations as me, to develop connections and break out of the social isolation that is a major part of the migration experience," says Harbali.

At first she spoke to people of all genders, but she came to notice commonalities in the experiences of women and non-binary people, specifically around the body in the migrant experience. So, she decided to hone in on that.

"It really reflected my own experience as a migrant."

For the Franco-Syrian artist, the first time she ever felt the desire to get a tattoo was in that dark period after coming to Canada, going through the long administrative wait times to sort out her situation.

"I think the migrant experience can be extremely passive at times. I wasn't working, I didn't have a lot of friends, I really didn't have anything going on. I had this desire to feel a sense of control again, over my life and my body. I also wanted to experience a strong sensation, because those administrative wait times are really idle and lethargic."

Her first tattoo was a symbolic, cathartic act – and a political one, too.

"The exhibition is really about the act of tattooing, not the tattoos themselves," she emphasizes. "It's about the experience of reintegrating our body, and making a political statement of doing so in the time we're living in."

They wrote the countries borders on my skin is an exhibit in two parts: one, the collaboration with the participants over years of meeting and discussing, and two, getting tattooed.

She took notes of their encounters, and kept all the sketches and drawings they worked on. When it came time to get inked, Harbali filmed the process — not the tattooing itself, but the participants' faces through the experience.

Harbali now has a practice as a tattoo artist, but before this project she had never tattooed before.

"I considered working with an artist, but I wanted the intimacy that I had developed with the participants to continue through the duration of the work. I didn't want to bring an outside person into the situation. So, I learned how to tattoo."

As the exhibit's been planned for about two years, it's a coincidence it's happening on the heels of an election campaign so divisive on the topic of immigration.

"I'm really happy the exhibition is coming out now, after the election," says Harbali. "It sheds light on what it is to be an immigrant, and I think that's important."

"I hope it shows people that personal, intimate experiences have a political impact, and that political decisions can either foster or destroy that personal intimacy," she continues.

And importantly, she wants those who are unfamiliar with the difficulties the migration experience entails to learn something, and those who have a personal connection to immigration to feel seen and have a place to share their stories, and be understood.

"I want people to come to get to know the stories of these participants. My main intention of course was to tell their stories, show their individuality but also how their experiences are shared in one way or another by a lot of people in Montreal, where a quarter of us are immigrants."

→ *They wrote the countries borders on my skin* runs at Fais-Moi l'Art (900 Cherrier) from Nov. 5 to Dec. 30, with the vernissage on Nov. 5.

: game jam



MEGAMIGS memories

BY NATALIA YANCHAK

MEGAMIGS is Canada's biggest event in the games industry. Founded by la Guilde du jeu vidéo du Québec, the Montreal International Gaming Summit (MIGS) started in 2004 with a focus on the industry and business development side. Then in 2017 came the public-focused Montreal Expo Gaming Arcade (MEGA). In 2019 the two events joined forces to become the almighty MEGAMIGS.

The 2022 edition of MEGAMIGS saw the glorious, in-person return of the festival, with a focus on discovery and playability. We still see the two sides of the conference with events split across the 10th

and 11th floors of Hotel Bonaventure. The venue was really excellent and brought the outdoors inside, replete with a rooftop pool and duck pond water feature. The public-facing trade show, where you could demo games, schmooze with developers, speak with university and college recruiters or partake in tabletop gaming or laser tag, was on the main floor. The upper floor provided space for folks to take business meetings and included an extensive catering spread.

The conference does rest heavily on business development and conferences, with four days of panels, talks and presentations from industry experts. But that doesn't mean there's not room for glamour! MEGAMIGS also hosts an opening cocktail and closing party for VIP and Pro pass holders, and the five-day conference is capped off with the MEGAMIGS Awards.

Showcasing and presenting a game at a conference like MEGAMIGS is an important part of the games marketing ecosystem. Depending on the stage of development of the project, a showcase might be a means to finding funding or publishing partners, or if later in production a direct path to increase sales and visibility.

With Montreal being the games hub that it is, the community is fortunate to have the support of la Guilde and its sponsors for shining this spotlight on our city's scene. To put this into a global context, gamedeveloper.com calculates an average of 34 games were released on Steam every day in 2022. That's over 6,000 games in the first half of 2022.

Add to that the idea that Philomena Schwab — the co-founder of Swiss Games Hub and lead designer of *Niche* — suggested (at a DiscoMTL panel this summer) that studios allocate between 25% and 50% of their project budget to marketing and release. That's a major chunk of a production budget, but also speaks to the competitiveness of the games market and the importance of showcasing.

One of the best parts of MEGAMIGS was the Indie Zone. Subject to the sounds of the Ubisoft barista banging out espressos, the Indie Zone squeezed in about 10 indie studios and solo devs onto five tall café tables. The Indie Zone gave attendees the opportunity to meet up-and-coming devs. This space offered by the fest and supported by Ubisoft is really the most inspiring section on the public floor.

Two standouts at the Indie Showcase were *The Big Con*, where you play a teenage hustler in the '90s with a cartoony feel, from Toronto studio Mighty Yell, and *Secret Meadow*, an extremely serene and peaceful fairy gardening game from Montreal indie dev the Glowing Pond.

Overall it was an excellent event for anyone even remotely interested in video games. I met a bunch more folks from indie studios to AAAs (stay tuned to this column!), and it's a great way to learn about the community and to find out about the games and projects being developed in Montreal.



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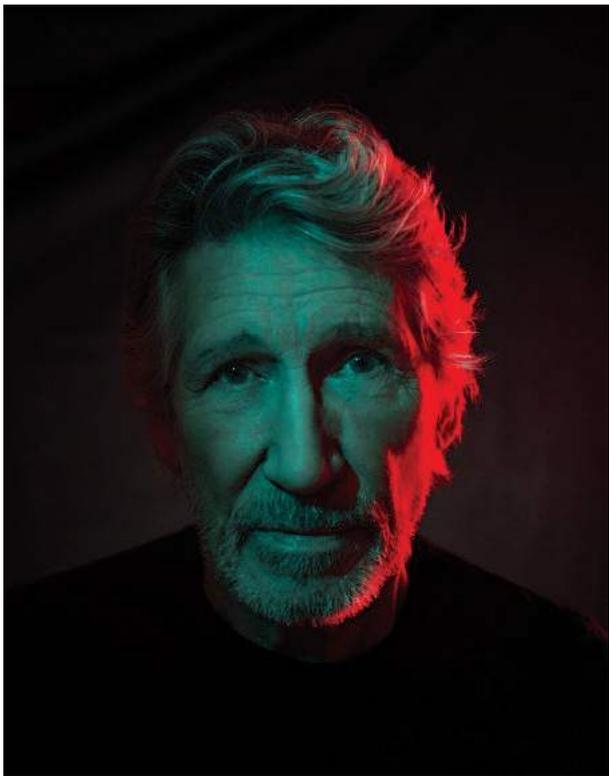
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Roger Waters sides with McGill students



BY TAYLOR C. NOAKES

It is hard not to have a lot of respect for Roger Waters.

Nearly 80 years old, he's in the midst of a massive international tour entitled *This Is Not a Drill*, and it's a production of monumental size, scope, complexity and perhaps most importantly, significance. It is a warning to the people of a planet in trouble: stand up, rebel, dissent, fight back — the forces of hate and fear are surging, both at home and abroad.

He doesn't need to do this. Waters isn't supporting a new album and he doesn't need the money. He also doesn't need the aggravation, but it's obvious from the very beginning of his performances, when his voice booms over the PA announcing just how much time you have left before the show begins, that he's impatient to get a few things off his chest.

He also acknowledges there's a certain type of person out there who claims to enjoy the music of Pink Floyd but doesn't support Waters' political inclinations. On the *This Is Not a Drill* tour, Waters invites those people to fuck off shortly before the show begins.

Evidently, they haven't been paying attention to what he's been saying all along.

This Is Not a Drill is quite unlike any other rock concert I have ever seen. I've never felt sad, or terrified, or angry, listening to the music of Pink Floyd, much as I have never had those feelings at a rock show. I was struck by the alienness of the emotions (given the context) though I recognized they were nonetheless genuine. It was like hearing all this music for the first time, all while reliving feelings of rage I thought had passed long ago. The show reminded me that I'm still quite upset about the murder of George Floyd. So is Waters, who had the names of innocent people murdered by the pigs — flashing across multi-storey screens for all to see. Remember their names, lest they die in vain.

Waters is probably the only rockstar out there who can regularly fill 20,000-seat arenas and stadiums the world over, often several nights in a row, and spend several hours each of those nights turning a spotlight on the brutal truths of our time.

He uses his influence to champion the causes of those who have done immense public good at a terrible cost to themselves, like Chelsea Manning and Julian Assange (who showed the world the utter depravity of the American military), and the environmental and human rights lawyer Steven Donziger (who, despite winning a court case against Chevron seeking damages for what's been termed the Amazonian Chernobyl, found himself arbitrarily detained for more than 1,000 days at Chevron's request).

Waters also defends the underdog, those who have been maligned and consigned by the elite, the establishment and the corporate media to the dustbin of history. In an era in which seemingly everything that is righteous is an unpopular cause, Roger Waters has stuck his neck out in defence of a brutalized people seemingly no nation wants to help, one whose nation cannot even be mentioned on the CBC.

In July, a McGill University student by the name of Jonah Fried launched a lawsuit against the university, the Student Society of McGill University (SSMU), and Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) McGill, a pro-Palestine student group that has been trying for several years now to get the SSMU to pass a boycott, divest and sanction (BDS) motion. The lawsuit, which has the financial backing of B'nai Brith, is essentially a SLAPP (strategic lawsuit against public participation) suit designed to force the university to clamp down on the campus free speech and freedom of conscience of the McGill student body, which has been consistently favourable to taking action against Israeli apartheid.

Before I go any further, let's get a few points down.

First, criticism of the government of Israel, its policies and actions, is fair and legitimate, just as it would be for any other country.

Second, said criticism is not equivalent to anti-Semitism, which is the irrational and racist hatred of the Jewish people. To that point, I am culturally Québécois and am critical of the actions of the government of Quebec, but that doesn't mean I hate my own people.

All of this should be very obvious — it is common sense after all. That said, the Israel lobby, which is particularly active on the right side of the political dial in Canada and the United States, has been working hard to conflate legitimate criticism of the actions of the current (and very right-wing) Israeli government, and in particular their policies towards the Palestinians, with antisemitism.

Of particular concern is the overt lobbying of Canadian provinces and institutions — especially universities — to adopt the contentious IHRA working definition of antisemitism, which critics argue stifles legitimate criticism of the state of Israel. The Jewish Faculty Network, representing academics of the Jewish faith who teach in universities across Canada, issued an open letter last April detailing their concerns and strong opposition to the adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

Third, referring to the Israeli policies towards the people of Palestine as "apartheid" is internationally recognized and appropriate. Apartheid is "an institutionalized regime of oppression and domination by one racial group over another" and constitutes a serious human rights violation which is prohibited by international law. The term is recognized by the United Nations, Amnesty International and a host of nations, notably including South Africa, the country that was brutalized by the original apartheid for nearly half a century.

It should come as no surprise that McGill University has gone out of its way to clamp down on SPHR and interfere in the normal operations of the SSMU: it took years for students to convince McGill's administration to submit to similar boycott and divestment efforts targeting the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. McGill only took action after sustained student protest (and even then, the writing was already on the wall for apartheid South Africa, which by the mid-1980s was condemned by nearly all the nations on earth — except Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States).

McGill isn't commenting on the case as it is customary for large institutions to not discuss matters before the court. Similarly, B'nai Brith isn't talking about this. SPHR McGill told me recently that they haven't heard anything either.

Roger Waters, on the other hand, has quite a bit to say.

Taylor Noakes: What do you make of this B'nai Brith sponsored lawsuit against SPHR McGill?

Roger Waters: Well, it's standard procedure for the Israel lobby, B'nai Brith in particular, who are old friends of mine... you know, they have been attacking my shows as much as they could for the last maybe 10 years. But I think they're losing ground. I think people are less and less inclined to buy their bullshit. And that's why I responded to the call from the students at McGill and made a statement about it.

This whole affair that they're carrying out is endemic in the United States, as well as presumably all over Canada, because they're desperate that students and activists like me, and probably you, are shining more and more of a light on the calumny of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. And they want to switch the light off. And so they're using any means that they can to do so, and this is just extremely bleak.

TN: Why don't you think the McGill University administration wants to talk more openly about this?

RW: Well, that's part of the tactic, isn't it? If that's in fact true, that they can't talk about this because it's "before the courts," then B'nai Brith will be very happy, because it kills the conversation. If this ever becomes open debate, they have nothing to stand on. It's the actions of a cornered rat. They're trying to say that black is white, which is an argument that you can only support if you're in the dark. Because if there's any light, it's obvious to everybody that black is not white and white is not black.

The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and subjugation of the Indigenous people and their settler colonial plunder of other people's property — violating all laws of property, and all human rights law as well — is blatant. And I'm ashamed. Luckily, people like the students at McGill have stepped forward and said, "No, this is wrong. We will make a noise about it and we will shine a light on it."

TN: McGill University, like a lot of Canadian institutions, has an Indigenous land acknowledgment statement, and recognizes (to a degree) that it occupies unceded Indigenous territory. And yet, the same university won't defend its own students who are pointing out that Israel is in the exact same position. Can you explain that inconsistency?

RW: I don't have to explain it. It's the way they behave. They believe the propaganda, the lies coming out of Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs, whose job it is to propagandize and to lie through their teeth as loudly and as vociferously as they can.

That said, I'm very glad to hear you say that McGill University, at least on paper, acknowledges the rights of the Indigenous and recognizes its obligations to First Nations people in Canada.

TN: What would be your preferred solution to the Israel and Palestine problem?

RW: That it cannot be sorted on the basis of white, ethnic, or any kind of religious supremacy. We have a rule of law, and there are international laws, and it's embodied in the United Nations Charter and in the Paris 1948 Declaration of Human Rights, and Israel completely ignores it. They just say, "No, if we want to steal all of this, we can. And if we want to commit genocide, we can, and if we want to expel these Indigenous people from this land, we can."

We stand up for the Palestinian people, such as at McGill, by having a good, honest democratic vote of the student body and say, we support them, and we want the university to divest. That is part of a global struggle, by all of us who actually genuinely believe in human rights, which none of our governments do.

The remedy, almost certainly now, will be a single democratic state in the Levant, where each person of a certain age gets a vote. And I have no doubt that the people who call themselves Israelis will still be able to live there, but they won't be able to rule it with an iron fist, and they won't be able to operate a system of apartheid. They'll have to make do with a truly democratic state with equal human, civil and property rights for all, and they won't be able to go in and uproot the olive trees and steal the land willy-nilly, as the settlers are doing in the occupied territories today. And that will be good.

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