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Elisapie Isaac discusses her latest album *Inuktitut*, a collection of translated classic rock songs that required the Montreal-based Inuk artist to connect with music legends and reflect on the emotional magnitude that made these songs resonate for her, and in Indigenous communities.

Cover photo by Leeor Wild

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The problem with reconciliation



National Day for Truth and Reconciliation in Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan

Adam Scotti

BY TOULA DRIMONIS

As another National Day for Truth and Reconciliation is commemorated, recognizing the history and ongoing impacts of Canada's residential school system, it's important that we recognize that colonialism — as a system of systemic oppression and discrimination — is still present today.

As a general rule, Canadians don't like to hear this. In Quebec, resistance to that idea is even stronger, because some insist that British colonialism erased French colonialism. To them, because the French were colonized by the British serves to somehow magically erase the fact that the French were also colonizers.

"If colonization is defined as the intent to take land away, to impose foreign laws and to disrupt culture, if that defines colonization in 1609, it still pretty much defines the relationship today," writes Kahnawake Mohawk activist and scholar Taiaiake Alfred in his just-released book, *It's All about the Land: Collected Talks and Interviews on Indigenous Resurgence*.

"Colonization is not a historical reality," he continues, "it's

a contemporary political, social, cultural and psychological framework for the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and non-Indigenous peoples in countries like Canada. We're not in a post-colonial society, we're in a contemporary colonial society."

According to Alfred, colonial processes are "just as vital, just as ongoing, just as harmful and just as present in the lives of the Indigenous population as they were in the 1600s."

While some might find such statements controversial (a recent academic colloquium on Quebec colonialism had the usual pundits foaming at the mouth), a quick roundup of news only serves to validate Alfred's assertions.

As journalist and author Michel Jean tweeted recently, "In the expression 'Truth and Reconciliation,' there's a very important word. The word 'truth.' As long as we do not agree on the truth, there is no reconciliation possible."

'DISADVANTAGE, DISPOSSESSION, DISLOCATION'

Some inconvenient truths...

Quebec's Superior Court just authorized a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Atikamekw women who say they were sterilized against their will. There have been at least 22 cases of forced sterilization of First Nations and Inuit women in Quebec since 1980. Many women went in for other medical procedures and came out unknowingly having

undergone hysterectomies and tubal ligations. The most recent case was in 2019.

A similar case of sterilization against an Inuit woman's knowledge in Yellowknife is also making headlines, with police recently concluding they won't pursue a criminal investigation into the case. The clear message sent is that these horrific violations to people's bodily autonomy are not as serious when committed against Indigenous women.

A recent study by the Public Health Agency of Canada concluded that racism and the lack of primary care providers translate to Indigenous women and girls experiencing poorer health overall compared with their non-Indigenous counterparts.

Three years since 37-year-old Joyce Echaquan, an Atikamekw mother of seven, filmed and livestreamed hospital staff in Joliette making derogatory comments toward her as she lay dying, nothing much has changed according to Ghislain Picard, Assembly of First Nations Quebec-Labrador's regional chief. He says distrust in the medical system remains.

In *Fighting for a Hand to Hold: Confronting Medical Colonialism against Indigenous Children in Canada*, Dr. Shaheen-Hussain shares multiple examples of unequal treatment that severely penalizes Indigenous communities both in Quebec and across the country. Testifying at the inquiry, Dr. Shaheen-Hussain concluded "medical

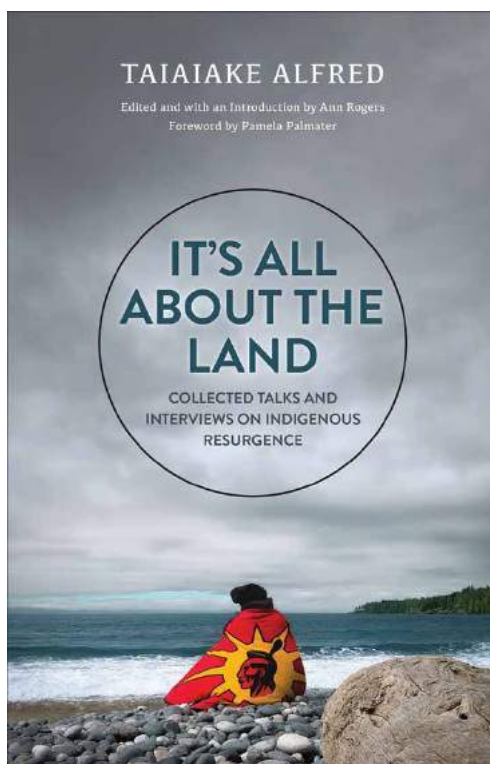
colonialism killed Joyce Echaquan” and that her death was avoidable.

In Manitoba, not only is there widespread opposition to searching a landfill for the remains of two Indigenous women believed to have been murdered by an alleged serial killer, but Progressive Conservative Party leader Heather Stefanson is running a full-page partisan ad and has paid for a campaign billboard promising to “stand firm” on that denial. Not searching for these two women has become a central part of her campaign. I doubt something this callously cruel would have been accepted by the general public or even PC partisans if the possible remains of two white women were in that landfill.

Lawyers representing Inuit children in Nunavik and First Nations children living off-reserve are seeking to launch a class-action lawsuit against both the Canadian and Quebec governments because of inadequate youth protection services.

Two First Nations groups are going to court over Bill 96, Quebec’s language legislation, which they say infringe on their rights to self-determination and to teach children their ancestral languages.

The RCMP has spent nearly \$50-million on policing



pipeline and logging standoffs in B.C., and Wet’suwet’en land defenders have been criminalized time and time again in the process.

“Anyone who is concerned about the land,” writes Alfred, “should be concerned with the things that are being done on Native land in the name of Canadians.”

Examples of ongoing settler colonialism are not hard to find...

MOVING BEYOND RECONCILIATION TO DECOLONIZATION

In his book, Alfred challenges contemporary ideas around reconciliation and questions what their real purpose is.

He takes mainstream (often good-faith) assumptions about reconciliation as seen and processed through a colonial filter and turns them on their

head. The book forces us to think differently about decolonization and what reconciliation — as currently advocated by the government — really stands for.

“Colonization is usually thought of by settler people as something that happened in times of their ancestors,” writes Alfred. “I think that in both Australia and Canada, there are ongoing processes which continue to disconnect people from land, which continue to disrupt Native families, which

continue to undermine the ability of Native people to have healthy lives. If something is doing that, it’s colonial. It’s not historical, it’s not people with felt hats and muskets coming to take land away in some distant colonial era.

“People imagine that because we are now Indigenous Peoples in universities, [...] that we drive cars and live in single-family dwellings that resemble everyone else’s, that colonization is in the past,” he continues.

Alfred says Indigenous communities continue to be defined as the problem. “The problems that our people are suffering — lack of clean drinking water, substandard housing, all of the social and psychological challenges that our people face — were seen to be a failure on the part of our people to adapt to the natural reality of the development of modern society.”

While most Canadians understand the need to reflect on our dark past and make amends, many resist it. Some even stubbornly deny the damage residential schools have caused and seek to minimize it. Real amends, of course, require real reparations and ceding some of our privilege. Words are easy to come by and land acknowledgments can quickly become performative. While some meaningful progress has been made and some argue the settlement process has indeed been accelerated, continued government litigation against survivors of residential schools shows we still have a long way to go.

For Alfred, reconciliation remains flawed, because it asks us to work within the framework of colonialism to solve a colonial problem.

“Indigenous Peoples are not losers of history asking for the beneficence of a superior people,” he writes. “They’re human beings with a commitment to preserving their own existence, which is a basic human right.”

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Appreciating Claude Cormier

BY TAYLOR C. NOAKES

It is rare for a city to be physically altered by the vision and work of an individual, particularly when they're not a member of a city's elite, be they old money or political juggernauts. We've had plenty of those. It's rarer still for a city to be physically transformed by the work of an artist or architect.

Montreal is richer today because of Claude Cormier, who passed away on Sept. 15 at the age of 63. He created whimsy — and over the course of his career helped transform our urban environment in ways that will likely, and hopefully, last for many more years.

Cormier joins a very small club of landscape architects who had profound impacts on the design of the city. This may be controversial, but I think the group really only includes Frederick Law Olmsted (the designer of Mount Royal Park), Frederick Gage Todd (Canada's first resident landscape architect, responsible for upgrades and improvements to many of the city's parks in the early part of the 20th century, as well as creating Beaver Lake and the landscaping of Île Sainte-Hélène), Moshe Safdie (who played an integral though perhaps under-appreciated role in developing the master plan of the Expo fairgrounds), the van Ginkels (Blanche Lemco van Ginkel and her husband Sandy, who were involved in Expo 67 as well as the preservation of Old Montreal and the conservation of Mount Royal) and Melvin Charney (who designed the CCA's gardens and Place Émilie-Gamelin, and likely inspired generations of local architects and artists with his Corridart project, infamously destroyed by Jean Drapeau).

Cormier may be one of the strongest links to Charney and the philosophy behind Corridart, namely small interventions that can have a transformative impact on the built environment. His 2016–'17 project *Ballade pour la paix* was a one-kilometre long installation along Sherbrooke Street that featured a number of monumental artworks along its route, tied together conceptually with the flags of all the nations of the world hanging overhead. Some of his artistic interventions, like *Solange*, *Blue Tree*, the *TOM installations* on Avenue du Musée and *Pink Balls* are excellent latter-day demonstrations of the ideas first expressed by Charney and the artists who participated in Corridart.

It's been a joy to watch Cormier's work mature over the years. I had some initial reservations about his rejuvenation of Place du Canada and Dorchester Square, but they've since grown on me, particularly the considerable reforestation of the former (all the trees now seem to be maturing nicely and feel almost as if they've been there all along), as well as the fountain and bridges at the north end of the latter. The addition of crosses on the ground to indicate that these spaces were formerly cemeteries adds a nice historical dimension, as did the extension of Dorchester Square north, as it restored some of the park space lost to road and parking infrastructure developed around the middle decades of the last century. Both of these city squares were looking pretty tired and beat up prior to Cormier's rehabilitation, and now they shine. One need look no further than to Dorchester Square and Place



Photo courtesy of CCA Architects paysagistes inc.

du Canada to see how much Montreal values public spaces, green spaces and its considerable history.

Parc Hydro-Québec, located between the Théâtre du Nouveau Monde and the Maison du développement durable, seems like an excellent demonstration of two constants in Cormier's body of work: first, that you really can't have enough plant life in urban environments — particularly downtown Montreal — and second, that even small interventions in nondescript places can make a big difference. The park was inspired by the irrigation grates that frame many of the trees planted along downtown sidewalks — those on Ste-Catherine are a good example. At Parc Hydro-Québec, the entire space is composed of permeable grates that allow rainwater to be absorbed by the ground underneath. As such, the park allows for greater groundwater retention even though most of the space isn't uncovered open ground. It's a clever intervention that maximized the natural element in a space that had heretofore been little more than a gap between buildings.

Some other excellent examples of Cormier's small projects with big impacts can be found at NDG's Benny Farm housing project. Public housing efforts have a bad history of providing either insufficient or underwhelming green spaces; Cormier's landscaping additions gave Benny Farm green space superior to what's available at most condo projects. Another would be UQAM's science pavilion, which had been lacking in intimate green spaces and a genuine campus feel.

Place d'Youville is another important highlight of Cormier's additions to Montreal's urban environment, bringing a lot of much needed greenery to a small part of Old Montreal that had been used as a parking lot for far too long. In a part of town that can occasionally feel congested and cramped, Cormier's rehabilitated Place d'Youville created an intimate public environment that managed to revive some of the charm of our Victorian-era city squares, albeit with a tasteful contemporary design. That's no easy feat in a neighbourhood defined by primarily 19th century buildings set on a 17th century street grid. That Cormier's reimagined Place d'Youville further bridges the edge of Old Montreal with the heart of the Old Port — creating a new axis from which the transition between the two develops seamlessly and coherently — was another success.

I'm still not sold on the Ring, however, and I'm not sure if it will age well. If McGill College gets the extensive redevelopment promised by Mayor Plante, perhaps it will appear to have a

different content, or mean something different. To me the Ring feels unnecessary, namely because the curve of Mount Royal already provided a visual bridge linking Place Ville-Marie buildings 3 and 4. I feel the Ring obscures this effect. I'm also still not sure what exactly it's saying or doing, though I'll admit it's impressive in how it seems to float in space. Time will tell.

Among future projects to look out for from Cormier's firm is the revitalization of the old Royal Victoria Hospital as it transitions into becoming a new addition to the McGill University campus. His plan will also extend the 'mountain domain' in form and function, first by extending ideas developed by Frederick Law Olmsted for Mount Royal Park, and then by increasing the site's green footprint by a considerable degree. New semi-public spaces will be integrated onto the roofs of some of the buildings as well, though these seem well balanced with an overall scheme that respects the distinct Scottish Baronial institutional style of the former hospital. It's more integration of the new into the old while respecting the latter and giving otherwise intimidating old buildings and spaces a new lease on life.

The final question: How best to honour the man who has left such a remarkable and positive impact on our city?

Unless he specifically stated otherwise, I would propose permanently reinstalling one of his oeuvres, and I think *18 Shades of Gay*, Cormier's multicoloured update of the iconic *Pink Balls*, is the very best project to choose. The Village could use it — grand public art projects tend to have a positive effect on the urban environment — and if timed right and integrated into a broader rejuvenation effort, it could become the centrepiece of a post-pandemic Village relaunch program for the next major tourist season.

This piece hits a number of key marks, namely that it's a relatively simple idea with an outsized impact, that it's already iconic (not to mention highly photogenic) and it points to Corridart, which I'm quite certain was a project that inspired much of Cormier's work if not his overall aesthetic sensibilities. It is stunningly beautiful, and these days, actually a bold statement, too, so all the more reason to do it.

I think Cormier understood this better than most: Montreal is a stunningly beautiful city, a perfect blend of bold statements and subtle, almost understated whispers, working together in unison and equilibrium.

Tu nous manqueras Claude. Que ton esprit continue de vivre dans cette ville pour toujours.



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BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Fall is officially upon us, fellow stoners!

As much as the weather has thus far led us to believe it's really just "second summer" (which is both comforting and fucking terrifying in equal doses), it's nonetheless time to start busting out windbreakers and jeans again. Of course, there's no bad season to consume the devil's lettuce in, and fall is the leafiest season of them all! There'll be no dried flower reviews this month, unfortunately, as I've been getting over a cold for the past week and I'd rather make things as easy on my lungs as possible.

Instead, I've bought a couple of bottles from the SQDC's fizzy drinks selection, both from Bon Jak (who also sell dried flowers through the SQDC), a Quebec-exclusive brand owned by the Kelowna, B.C.-based Valens Company. I'll be testing two different flavours (both 7.5 mg CBD and 2.5 mg THC), judging them based on taste and how fast-acting the THC part is when I take a sip. Let's dive in!

Bon Jak Fraise et Ananas
(Strawberry and Pineapple) 3:1

This one is tasty! The pineapple/strawberry combo almost makes me feel like I'm drinking liquid yogurt, which is always a nice feeling — and also somewhat dangerous, knowing this stuff will get me high when I drink enough of it. It's comparable to drinking a fruity alcoholic beverage — even if it'll taste really smooth and sweet, I know deep down it's a slippery slope toward a night I won't remember and a morning I'll want to forget. As for this THC-infused bevv, the high is surprisingly quick to get going, even if it feels like an insidious, subtle build-up. Of course, because I've learned nothing from previous times I've overindulged in mind-altering substances, I take big gulps of this one like I would if there were no THC of any kind involved — and obviously, I get higher and higher as a result. This is highly recommended, but in moderation, of course. 9/10

Bon Jak Menthe et Baies
(Mint and Berries) 3:1:1

As someone who doesn't really like mint to begin with (the taste has never fully agreed with me for some reason), I went into drinking this flavour with some degree of trepidation. But I have to say, it didn't bother me too much here at all! In fact, it pairs nicely with the berry flavour, and also helps create a mild, comfortable head high. It's not quite as sweet as the strawberry/pineapple flavour — you can feel the "sparkling water" side of things more here — but it's still a pleasant experience to taste and get high off of. I probably shouldn't have drunk both flavours in such quick succession, as it makes my eyes start to feel heavier and my head lighter, but I'm glad this one exceeded my expectations given my pre-existing dislike of mint. Given how I don't always love getting high during the day, it makes for a good type of high under those circumstances, too. I still prefer the strawberry/pineapple variety, but this is no slouch, either. 8/10

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BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

Soccer is not just a sport, it's a global phenomenon that transcends borders and languages, has been known to start and stop wars, and to bring brothers to blows. It's also a game that brings people together, not only for its passion on the field but also for its off-field influences.

One of the most exciting and high-profile aspects of soccer culture is its deep-rooted connection with fashion. Fashion and soccer go hand in hand and have for years and years now. When you think of soccer, you might think roaring fans draped in their team's colours, scarves held high, zip-ups and jerseys covered with iconic logos. But the influence of fashion on soccer culture goes beyond fan gear. It extends to the players themselves.

Soccer players are modern-day style icons. From David Beckham's sharp suits and haircuts to Cristiano Ronaldo's impeccable grooming and toiletry bags, these athletes have become synonymous with style. Some soccer stars use their platform to make bold fashion statements, not just on the pitch but also on the red carpet and all over social media.

More and more of these stars are creating their own fashion lines and their influence can be felt across the fashion world, inspiring trends and collaborations with luxury brands. I don't think you will ever see a fashion show again without a footballer sitting in the front row.

Beyond luxury brands, almost every soccer club has tapped into the fashion industry by creating merchandise that goes beyond traditional jerseys. Scarves, hats, jackets, and even sneakers emblazoned with club logos have become fashion statements. Sports team collabs with fashion brands or designers is what 'must be done' these days just to keep up with the Joneses.

Fans wear these items proudly, not just to show allegiance but also as fashion accessories. Streetwear culture's blend of sportswear and high fashion has further cemented the connection between soccer and style. Brands like Adidas and Nike have collaborated with top clubs and designers, creating limited-edition collections that unite the worlds of sport and fashion seamlessly.

Don't even get me started about the vintage soccer market. When Kim Kardashian wore an AS Roma 1997/98 vintage kit, Google search data reported a 2.3 million increase in search volume for the Italian club and gear associated with it. Just try and find this shirt today.

Soccer's fashion influence isn't a purely European phenomenon. Across the world, jerseys are worn proudly as casual wear, not just by fans but by people who may have never kicked a soccer ball or even know or care about the team they're representing.

Recently, the football and fashion trend has been taken to the next level with Liberal Youth Ministry and their collaborations with several high-level clubs, even showcasing these looks in Paris fashion week runway shows.

Collaborations between soccer clubs and brands are also heading in a more pro-environment direction. Eco-friendly materials are being used in jerseys, boots, scarves and packaging.

Soccer is also no longer a male-dominated sport, and this is reflected in fashion. We are also seeing a larger range of gender-inclusive designs and sizes. Women's soccer fashion is gaining more steam, notably Angle City FC, and with more options for kits for female fans and players. I personally like the women's Team Canada kit better than the men's version.

BAPE x Inter Miami, Birmingham City FC x UNDEFEATED, Daniel Patrick x New York Red Bulls, Ed Sheeran x Ipswich Town FC and AC Milan x Off-White, just to name a few partnerships that will keep pushing the boundaries of soccer-inspired fashion, creating limited-edition pieces that are both collectible and stylish.

I can't wait to see what the beautiful game and high fashion have in store for us next. What we're seeing in soccer and fashion is an important piece of the larger sports culture, and with the World Cup 2026 just around the corner, I think this market segment is just getting started.

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Elevated Vietnamese



BY CLAY SANDHU

Michelle Vo, the newly minted restaurateur better known by her Instagram handle and pop-up moniker Pasthyme, is among my favourite stories to come out of the pandemic.

A former administrator for a dental clinic, her weekly subscription noodle soup was one of the most celebrated take-out operations I have ever seen. Bold, powerfully spicy and unapologetically true to family recipes, Vo's cooking was a breath of fresh air. So in 2021, when Vo announced plans to open a proper sit-down restaurant, I was overjoyed. If she could do for Vietnamese food what Pumpui and Pichai had done for Thai, the city would be better for it.

Long delays meant that *Ăn Chối* Plaza, as it's come to be known, only ended up finally opening up at 6553 St-Hubert in June. Joining Vo in the venture are Vien Man Cao-Tran (of Bar Otto and Otto Ramen) and Douglas Tan (of la Bêtise), and the trio is supported by chef Galaxy Duong and sommelière Daphné Blondin. Taking cues from Vo's favourite haunts, the concept is meant to bring a mix of homestyle Vietnamese cooking into casual fine dining space or, more accurately, into the world of natural wine bars.

The bay window lined with empty wine bottles gives the long and narrow dining room a *buvette* feel. It's a simple but good-looking space. Choosing wines to go with Southeast Asian food is tough. The flavours are just so aromatic and often spicy that the food tends to overpower or be in conflict with the wine. It is always such a shame to spend \$70 to \$80 on a bottle of wine only for it to be completely overshadowed. Blondin, however, managed to put together a solid list that leans light, fresh and vibrant with plenty of high-acidity wines that stand up to lime juice and chilli. I also appreciate

that she keeps things affordable with lots of wine under \$60.

I ordered a bottle of Tatto from California-by-way-of-Utah-based winemaker Evan Lewandowski — a blend of riesling, muscat and friulano from California that overflows with notes of yellow stone fruit (peach, nectarine, yellow plum) and white flowers. It's pretty puckering when it comes to acidity but when matched up against the menu, it held its own quite well. There are also a few cocktails that look quite good, and a line-up of craft beers. I also want to mention that there is a robust selection of non-alcoholic options that don't feel like a cop-out.

On to the food. What I loved about Pasthyme was that she introduced me to regional specialties and unapologetic flavours that bring together blistering hot chilis, fermented shrimp and crab pastes, tripes and marrows. I wanted to see more of exactly that from *Ăn Chối*. To the team's credit, they do (more or less) exactly that. Take the roast bone marrow with whelks for example — you'd be hard-pressed to find that dish on a menu anywhere else in the city. The *bún riêu*, a crab noodle soup with homemade crab and pork sausage, fried tofu and tomatoes, is a Pasthyme classic (and every bit as good at *Ăn Chối*).

Duong's menu is compact — 10 dishes in all — and is organized from smallest to biggest respective to portion size. We made our way through a handful. The *bò tái chanh*, the classic rare beef and herb salad, was delicious (although I could have used a bit more acid and a bit more chilli) but I found the *gỏi xoài* (a mango and grilled squid salad) to be lacking in the unapologetic boldness I was hoping for. It's tasty, don't get me wrong, but it just fell a bit flat.

The best dish of the night by far was the *cơm cua* — fried rice with soft shell crab, corn and salted egg yolk. Fragrant and decadent, it's a dish that makes fried rice entirely luxurious. The sweetness of the crab interplays with the

kernels of sweet corn and the smokey, crispy rice is rendered profoundly rich thanks to the deep, salty grating of cured egg yolk. That's the kind of cooking I like to see. This along with the *bún riêu* and the *thịt nướng* (little grilled pork skewers reminiscent of *arrostitini*) was the evidence that this team can pull off some truly excellent food. I would come back and eat those dishes on repeat happily.

The one slight disappointment of the night was the *chả cá lã vọng*. A specialty of Hanoi, this is typically (or so I've read) a dish of fried catfish with dill, vermicelli and shrimp paste. *Ăn Chối*'s version swaps out the catfish in favour of the more luxurious monkfish, which is grilled rather than fried. I love this dish. It's brilliant. However, the monkfish, which is prized for firm, almost lobster-like flesh, was simply overcooked. I appreciated the char that it got from grilling, which worked beautifully with the funk of the shrimp condiment, but everything that's great about monkfish was lost. I'll give them the benefit of the doubt and say this was just a one-off occurrence but it put a damper on what I'm sure is otherwise a fantastic dish.

Ultimately, *Ăn Chối* succeeds in doing what it set out to do: create a welcoming and convivial space for people to go for a drink and enjoy quality Vietnamese food. For me, however, the fact that it's good (quite good even) leaves me slightly disappointed because I believe that *Ăn Chối* has the potential to be exceptional. In my mind, the proof is already there. If Joe Beef can convince a generation of diners to eat eel croquettes and horse tartare and Pichai has cool 20-somethings clamoring to get the last order of whole firefly squid, then there are no limits to what a menu can look like. I once declared that Vo made the best Vietnamese food in Montreal. That statement stands on the shoulders of her uncensored approach to championing the diversity and inherent deliciousness of Vietnamese food. Add a few spoonfuls of Vo's iconically fiery passion and I have no doubt that *Ăn Chối* can become the restaurant I believe it's meant to be.

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Northern touch

BY DARCY MACDONALD

Elisapie Isaac is reflecting on her return to the stage on the last day of August, under the Blue Super Moon, at le Festival de Musique Émergente in Abitibi-Témiscamingue.

There, the Salluit, Nunuvik-raised singer debuted selections from her new album, *Inuktitut*, a collection of covers from the canon of classic rock revisited and translated into the Inuk language, released on Bonsound two weeks later, in mid-September.

Specifically, Elisapie is describing the moment of connection and first contact with her FME audience.

But the internationally acclaimed artist could easily be describing her relationship to the music she chose to cover. Or indirectly, to the artists whose work she has reimagined, and the fact that she even managed to bring the idea to life.

“It was weird. And it’s fun. And it feels real, even though it could feel very artificial because we don’t know each other. And yet we do, through music. I don’t know how to explain that.”

A LOVE DIVINE

Even in preconceiving *Inuktitut*, the stakes were high, if not completely out of reach. The loftiness of Elisapie’s ambition stood in contrast to the project’s roots in her imagination, however.

Those initial stages required one high emotional standard: her own tears.

The music of her childhood and her adolescence is, in many instances, also the music of her parents and even her grandparents’ generations, popular radio songs that are as ubiquitous on the dial today as they were 30 years ago, or 50 years ago.

Among a younger Elisapie’s earliest musical role models were her cousins and uncles, one of whom, George Kakayuk, cofounded the group Sugluk, who had a significant profile across Canada in the ’70s and ’80s.

She points to Inuk-language versions of early ’60s folk classics as part of her own cultural DNA.

“I grew up listening to music like ‘Four Strong Winds’ and Charlie Adams doing ‘Blowing in the Wind,’ thinking they were Inuktitut songs.

“And my uncles, being in Sugluk, sometimes they would cover a song. It’s almost like I’ve always been familiarized by other Inuktitut artists, where it’s natural to sing other people’s songs but translate them into the language.”

In the late-mid 20th century, popular musicians often covered their peers, turning their songs into hits. Elisapie is less interested in that wider phenomenon than with her



Leeor Wild

own emotional experience, and the associated memories of times gone by that stir her soul even today.

She points to the Rolling Stones “Wild Horses,” still a standard-bearer for contemporary rock ballads, as an example of where music takes her, and why she chose the pieces featured on *Inuktitut*.

Hearing the original version on a jog during the height of pandemic isolation, Elisapie found herself confronted with the weight of shared sorrow as it made her reflect on a friend who sought solace in the Stones classic. Back at home, in tears at her dining table, her partner asked her what she felt coming out.

“I just realized we were sad!” she said. “There was so much sadness, and I was sad about that. I was like, ‘It’s so unfair! Why did we have to inherit all this pain?’ I thought of my friend who would listen to ‘Wild Horses’ and I think it wasn’t just because he was sad, but because he was also hurt. He was just this young, beautiful, innocent teenager. And I

wished I could just go back there and hug him and say, ‘Hey, my friend, it’s gonna be okay.’”

She reflected on the idea of what he might have been thinking when he listened to it, why he would come back to it at sad moments.

“I realized he had issues with his dad. That’s one thing I knew. I then realized, maybe he also loved this song even more than I knew because his father loved it. It’s from his father’s era, his generation.”

PLAY THE WAY YOU FEEL IT

If a song she thought of couldn’t bring up that level of associative self-examination, Elisapie decided, it didn’t make the cut.

That process may reveal new insight into what constitutes true timeliness. Now in her mid-40s, Elisapie in her teen

years was as informed by then-current popular music as she was by the rock classics that made the cut.

Fleetwood Mac's "Dreams" and Pink Floyd's "Wish You Were Here" are '70s rock classics. Blondie hit at the end of that decade with "Heart of Glass."

In the mid '80s, Cindy Lauper dropped the megahit "Time After Time," while Queen's "I Want to Break Free" performed modestly on the Billboard charts.

The only song on *Inuktitut* that actually dropped when Elisapie was an angsty teen is Metallica's "Unforgiven," the album's first single, which received near-immediate praise from the band.

"I thought about Pearl Jam or Counting Crows. But I didn't cry to them! So that's how it goes!"

The imaginative process, the act of going back in time and actually attempting to put herself in the shoes of people she remembered along those memory journeys, became the more powerful inspiration to move the project forward.

"I love imagining my uncles in the '60s and '70s just being these young kids, going back home to the North after a year at the residential school and just trying to forget about how the gap has developed between them and my grandfather. He was a tough Inuk man who had lost access to his teachings with his kids, because they were taken away. So he was just being quiet. And probably very strict. And not really understanding why these kids were now a bunch of hippies," Elisapie speculated.

She considered as well that the feedback she gets, whether it's for this project or along the way of her music career, is not always comfortable for either family or friends who are in a different environment.

"I've been in the south for over 20 years. And also being an artist who has the ability to write songs, for sure I'm in

a good situation to either doubt or raise questions about certain emotions. So I guess I have the ability to go to the vulnerable world.

"The whole system we were raised in makes us all, in a way, victims of a certain injustice. Even though not all of us suffered the same way individually, collectively it's something that is present. And I think that's why I cried so much. Just having witnessed something marks who you are."

But *Inuktitut* isn't bogged down in burden and pain. Joy and celebration were birthed by Elisapie's process of recall, and nothing short of magic brought the unlikely project to the finish line.

NEW BLOOD

Perhaps no other song featured exemplifies the challenge endured by Elisapie, her management team and her collaborative partner Joe Grass, and the triumph of their persistence, more than Led Zeppelin's "Going to California."

Jimmy Page and Robert Plant hold a notoriously tight grip on the rights to their music. As enormous and enduring a rock 'n' roll phenomenon as Zeppelin is, the number of times their music has been granted licence to be used commercially or otherwise can be counted on two hands.

Not that securing rights for the other songs was easy, but getting Led Zep would be the holy grail. Until then, all of Elisapie, Grass and everyone else's work could just as easily have existed as a personal project on their own hard drives, never to be heard except by friends.

"Almost a year after we recorded, we were still waiting for music rights, and we still didn't have news from Led Zeppelin," Elisapie explained. "I asked management, 'Can we just try *one more* email?' Let's just try. We have nothing to lose, and we can say we'll have tried everything."

Elisapie had the name of Serge Grimaux, a Montreal concert producer responsible for local tour stops by Pink Floyd, among others, "back in the day."

"I called him through his daughter, whom I know. She told me to call him up because he knows Robert Plant. (And Grimaux) liked the idea of the project."

Word came down to prepare a short description and to get the track ready to send. But before it was even ready, on Grimaux's recommendation, Robert Plant approved the cover, sound unheard. Jimmy Page's approval came next, and the Inuk-language cover of another cultural touchstone was green-lighted.

"I was just like, 'Oh my God!'" Elisapie exclaimed, still squealing with disbelief.

"This was like a week before Christmas! And it started like that. Then we got the rights for Pink Floyd, and then Cindy Lauper, in a matter of like four days. I don't know what happened. Sometimes life is very mysterious."

So can be said of the transformational, emotive language of music itself. And their translations, surprisingly, came easily.

"I always say that maybe we already heard them in our heads in Inuktitut when we would hear them. We'd listen to these songs and in our minds, we were in the Inuit world. I really can't believe (how natural they sound) in Inuktitut.

"The Unforgiven' is like an Inuk story, really. And 'Wish You Were Here' really makes sense in Inuktitut, too. Because these songs were really close to us, and made sense for us.

"And that's the magic, or the mystery, of how or why," Elisapie mused. "Because somehow, these songs are important for a reason, I think."

→ Elisapie will perform three sold-out shows at Usine C (1345 Lalonde) Dec. 7–9.

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Swan songs

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

An exoskeleton is something you normally associate with insects rather than humans. On la Force's upcoming sophomore album, she uses this concept to represent a more intrinsically human emotion.

The artist born Ariel Engle released her second LP, *XO SKELETON*, on Sept. 29 on Secret City — the follow-up to her 2018 self-titled debut. Some may know her from her work with Broken Social Scene, as well as AroarA, her project with husband Andrew Whiteman, and ALL HANDS_MAKE LIGHT, her noise-pop project with Efrim Menuck of Godspeed You! Black Emperor fame (she and Menuck plan to make more music for that project during the winter).

In the meantime, Engle is pleased with the release of her latest record as la Force, considering the album's been finished since December after being worked on in "fits and starts." She's technically already started working on its follow-up.

"People who make albums are always making an album, and they don't necessarily know they're making an album," she says. "I know I'm already making my next album — I'm collecting pieces and fragments. It probably started when I finished my last record, in some way. I suppose at a certain point, I decided I'm now taking this time. But everyone took that time. The world shut down. That's when I really kicked into a higher gear."

Chatting on her backyard's deck as she'd graciously invited me into her Mile End home, many of the album's songs were written during the "Voldemort era" of the pandemic, and its themes of loss and grief correlate with her own "unhealthy obsession" with death during her childhood to the point where even looking at the night sky was too much for her. Additionally, Engle took part in a "song a day" exercise where she and other songwriters have to finish writing a song each day in a 24-hour span, or they're kicked out.

She was invited to participate by fellow BSS collaborator/living Canadian music legend Feist, whose friend, producer Phil Weinrobe, runs the program. (The exercise also helped shape Feist's most recent album, *Multitudes*.) Beck and Maggie Rogers — the latter of whom is a BSS fan and previously shared the stage with the band at SXSW to sing their eternal classic "Anthems for a Seventeen-Year-Old Girl" — also took part in the exercise.

"It was a time of total isolation. We were all feeling cut off from one another. It's hard to feel creative when you don't ever interact with people, or it is for me. Then she said, 'Why don't you do this thing? I think it should be fun.' It started off as about 20 people. I did three of them. It was an incredibly difficult and fruitful process. It confirmed what I had known, which is that making art is work, and you just have to dedicate your time to it. The more regular you are in setting aside time to make art, the more it bears fruit."

Among each of *XO SKELETON*'s tracks, lead single "Condition of Us" had the shortest journey toward completion, and was written while she participated in the song a day exercise. "Most of what we hear on the recording is what happened [during the exercise]," she adds. "There was a little bit of work — there were some lyrics missing, but the bed track is the GarageBand Song a Day. That happened in a couple hours."

One of the longest tracks to complete was "Empty Sympathy", which she made with Warren Spicer of Plants



Norman Wong

and Animals, who co-produced the album with her and was a key collaborator throughout the making of *XO SKELETON* ("[That] was one we wrestled with a lot," Engle says). Another was "Ouroboros," which started as a fast-paced dance song also written for song a day before Engle and Spicer decided to slow it down.

The album is just as evocative as its instantly memorable cover art, with warm, rich, diaphanous soundscapes matching the imagery of Engle's face that could be interpreted as melting and raining simultaneously. Her 2018 self-titled debut album initially began as an AroarA record and she wasn't as involved with that LP as she would've liked to be, whereas her input is much greater this time around.

At first glance, the title *XO SKELETON* could be seen as representing the inevitability and acceptance of death, almost to the point where you cherish or embrace it. If you ask Engle, that interpretation is definitely part of the title's overarching meaning.

"To embrace death as a frame to your life gives it its boundary and its value," she adds. "For me, *XO SKELETON* is also a kiss and a hug. It's about the desire to protect the people you love. After you lose someone who has loved you, it's like you have a sense memory of them having loved you. It's like a psychic protection, but it can almost feel like a physical protection."

On that same topic, the album's second track, "how do you love a man" is described quite succinctly as "a swan song to a dead man." Writing songs specifically wrestling with the concept of grief can often teach you things about grief that you didn't previously know, and for Engle, it doesn't always hit right away.

"I think that when you first experience grief, it's not particularly verbal or articulate," she says. "Now, with a lot of time — the person I'm talking about died six years ago — it becomes almost more intellectual. That's why I could ask those questions. I'm referring to a very specific trip that I took with him. I don't think I could have written that song when I was still so sad."

Days after our interview, Engle flew to Cork, Ireland to perform a residency at the Sounds From a Safe Harbour festival to help kick off a string of European tour dates. She also sang with other musicians like Richard Reed Parry and the Vernon Spring at the festival, in addition to playing a la Force show there. One of that festival's curators this year was none other than J. Robert Oppenheimer himself, Cillian Murphy — who also happens to be a friend of Broken Social Scene.

After this had finished, Engle continued the rest of her European jaunt opening for Patrick Watson, whom she collaborated with on last year's single "Height of the Feeling." At the end of our chat, Engle mentions how a German interviewer had asked her — as an opener — why there were no uptempo songs on *XO SKELETON*; an album that, again, initially began life as a dance record.

"What's there is what's there, is what happened," she says. "I was going to make a dance record, and then that didn't happen. It's an excuse, but I just allow whatever comes to me to be what it is. Allow yourself to just be a vehicle on some level, and whatever magic happens — or doesn't — is what it is."

→ La Force performs at PHI Centre (407 St-Pierre) on Nov. 22, 8 p.m., \$24.57

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Band on the run



BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

Will Butler has a new band.

The former multi-instrumentalist for Arcade Fire left his old fold in late 2021, a move that was announced in March 2022, less than two months prior to the release of their album *WE* — and about nine months before the emergence of sexual misconduct allegations against his brother (which cast Arcade Fire into the shadows, somewhat, but didn't cancel their career as a touring band).

Will calls his decision to leave “multifaceted” and “fundamentally instinctual,” “which is what makes every important decision so scary.” He also views his departure from the band he cofounded in the early 2000s as merely a tiny part of “a massive societal force.”

“Like, I’m not the only person who quit their job in the year 2020 or 2021. Plenty of people went through the pandemic and were like, ‘You know what? I’m gonna become a gardener,’ or whatever. So in an anthropological sense, it’s hard for me to not see myself as the same as every 39- or 40-year-old in North America.

“But it also felt right. We finished the record, and I loved working with Nigel Godrich — what a fucking dream. He was a teenage hero. I felt like, if that’s the button, then great. I think I should do something that’s a little scary for me.”

Ironically, what Butler ended up doing brought him back to somewhat familiar (and literally familial) territory: evolving his solo career into a band project, with his wife Jenny Shore as one of the members. Will Butler + Sister Squares features

members of his touring band since 2015 (Jenny, Julie Shore, Sara Dobbs and Miles Francis), now promoted to a larger role in the studio as well as on stage.

“I was making a solo record, and I was like, ‘I would rather make a record with Miles. I would rather have Miles here making it three-dimensional.’ So I went to Miles and said, ‘Let’s make a record. I don’t know that it’s a Will Butler record.’ And it became a Will Butler + Sister Squares record.

“(On stage), sometimes the Sister Squares take lead and I will go back and play a synth and they’ll sing a song, which is literally different, but also the energy is different. It’s a little bit more like Neil Young and Crazy Horse, like, ‘Who is fucking Crazy Horse? Who is driving that car?’”

Butler says that his dynamic with this group has “always been fairly bandy,” even in the songwriting stages. However, he’s no longer presenting the group with near-complete songs to add to, instead bringing in fragments and saying, “This is nothing, let’s make this something.

“Then people get more invested in it. Julie is sending me voice memos, she’s taking a song and cutting it and being like, ‘I think the chorus should be there.’ When that starts rolling, it changes the vibe.”

The band’s self-titled album, released by Merge Records on Sept. 22, is upbeat and energized, danceable and thematically dreamy. While “Stop Talking” will absolutely appeal to Arcade Fire fans, the single “Long Grass” evokes the post-Bowie New Romantic era of the early ’80s without relying on retro synths to push specific nostalgia buttons.

“In some ways it’s literally Romantic in the 19th century

way, like, ‘I wandered lonely as a cloud,’ like properly strong emotion recalled in stillness. Maybe it’s the great grandchild of 19th century Romantic, like, ‘I am looking at the cloud and I am drifting but I’m also calculating how to make pottery out of that.’ Some of the dreams are a little literal and some of them are just like what is this strong emotion? Is it a memory? Is it a memory of an emotion? Or is the memory giving me an emotion? It’s trying to investigate something when I’m not sure what the source of it is.”

Outside of the band, Butler wrote music for a play called *Stereophonic* that opened this week in New York City (where he lives), telling the story of a feuding band making a record in the mid-’70s, and will be contributing music to an upcoming film project called *Lips Like Sugar*. Directed by Brantley Gutierrez and starring Owen Wilson and Woody Harrelson, the film is set during the 1984 Olympics in L.A.

“I said, ‘Yes, I can definitely soundtrack that, say no more.’ That era is very much in my wheelhouse; you should see my playlists. I’m really looking forward to seeing it. I think it’ll be really awesome.”

Asked if there are any favourite directors whose films he’d like to score, Butler said he’d prefer to start a new relationship with the next hot filmmaker.

“I want to do the soundtrack for whoever is 36 years old, is this many years out of school and is working on this kind of feature. More like trying to get in on the ground floor to be the Jonny Greenwood to someone’s Paul Thomas Anderson.”

→ Will Butler + Sister Squares will play with opener Rachel Bobbitt at Bar le Ritz PDB (179 Jean-Talon W.) on Oct. 18, 8 p.m., \$23.02

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Star alignment

BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Right now, Banx & Ranx might just be the biggest musical act you didn't know came from Montreal.

KNY Factory (born Yannick Rastogi) and Soké (born Zacharie Raymond) both developed a passion for DJing and producing around the ages of 12 and 13. They've come quite some way in the years since, polishing their distinctive, culture-blending, West Indies-tinged sound known as ECM (electronic Caribbean music) while tacking some big-name collabs and commercially successful hit records onto their CV in the process.

Their most recent single, "The Birds," features Zach Zoya and has been a "long time coming," according to Soké, since the song was first written in 2018. After pitching the track to numerous artists, the duo's A&R rep encouraged them to release it themselves.

The year "The Birds" was first written, 2018, just so happens to also be the year Banx & Ranx first tasted pop success — at least, on the other side of the pond. That year, they produced "Answerphone" for Ella Eyre and Yxng Bane, which peaked at #5 on the U.K. Singles Chart. The duo have spent quite a bit of time in dear old Blighty in recent years ("We used to go [to London] every six weeks," KNY says).

Banx & Ranx formed via Soundcloud, when Soké stumbled on KNY's remix of Eiffel 65's "Blue (Da Ba Dee)" and was so impressed with what he heard, he reached out to him afterwards.

"That was one of my favourite songs when I was 10 or 11 years old," says Soké. "I was obsessed. I would wait next to the radio for it to play. That was in the days before Napster."

Upon finding a remix of one of his favourite childhood bangers with the hashtag #montreal on it, Soké decided to check it out. Little did he know he'd be getting far more out of that one listen than he bargained for, in the best possible way.

"He was doing exactly the type of music I was doing," he says. "Which was a blend of reggae, dancehall, Caribbean music and electronic music. So, two and two together, guys from Montreal, why don't we know each other? Why haven't we met?"

After realizing they had mutual friends in addition to having "amazing chemistry," the two joined forces and started Banx & Ranx. But why are they KNY Factory and Soké, and not just "Banx" and "Ranx" respectively? Well, because that name came after their artist names were already decided upon.

KNY Factory is because KNY is "Yannick" spelled backwards and disemvoweled (his moniker was "Kinay" when he first started making music). The "Factory" part comes from how many hats he wears in his music career. "I was like, 'I'm recording, I'm producing, I'm singing, so I'm a factory,'" he says.

Soké, meanwhile, chose his name during his previous career as a graffiti artist. "I just loved the way the letters looked together," he adds. "It looked good — I thought I invented a word. Then I researched it on Google to see if there were other artists named Soké."

"I found out that it means 'grandmaster' in Japanese. In



Nigeria, it means pretty much the same thing. Not in martial arts, but it means 'head of your family,' or something like that. Burna Boy has a song called 'Soké!'"

Neither Soké nor KNY Factory are originally from Montreal; they moved here in 2006 and 2008 respectively. While Soké currently calls the South Shore home (though he's originally from Gatineau), KNY Factory — who lives downtown — hails from Guadeloupe.

Banx & Ranx have lent their producing talents to some of the pop world's biggest names, including helping write songs for Dua Lipa, BLACKPINK, Sean Paul, Ellie Goulding, David Guetta and Ty Dolla \$ign, to name a few.

So how did some of these huge-name collabs come about? You can thank Sean Paul — whom the duo worked with remotely in 2016 before meeting him IRL at Beachclub the following year — for at least some of them. "[He's] been a big part of our career, and has really trusted us from day one," says KNY Factory. "He gave us a chance when nobody would. We became good friends. Many of these cool collaborations happened because Sean wanted us to work on those records."

Banx & Ranx — both of whom say Sean Paul was a "dream collaboration" for the duo — balance their pop sensitivity with their respect for the codes of each genre they work in. Combine Caribbean and world music with a sense of grooves, basslines and a love for every culture they dive into musically, and you've got the Banx & Ranx DNA in a nutshell.

The duo's imprint 31 East was founded in 2017, and is both a publishing company and a record label (Rêve and Preston Pablo are among the artists on 31 East's roster) — though they say it's more of the latter. ("The publishing

aspect is being developed as we speak with other partners," says Soké.)

Despite all these accolades and accomplishments in their young career already, arguably the duo's biggest so far is their victory at this year's JUNO Awards in March, where they took home the award for Breakthrough Group. The two attended the ceremony in Edmonton, expressing "every emotion known to man" upon finding out they won. Validating as winning that JUNO was, it also motivated the duo to keep working even harder.

"Don't take anything for granted, but at the same time, be like, 'Okay cool, we achieved that. How can we use that as leverage to keep going towards the direction we want to go?'" says KNY Factory.

"The direction we want to go is higher and higher... We love challenges. We love to travel. We love people. And we love to build what we're building. I feel like right now, in this moment in time, we're at the most exciting moment in our career. It feels like we're on the verge of the next step, which is to get the label where it should be, [same for] us as producers and songwriters, touring. Every day, I'm waking up feeling blessed. That JUNO was just like, 'Okay, that's cool. Let's get it.'"

Banx & Ranx hope to release an EP or an album in 2024. "We've been talking about it for a while," says KNY Factory. "It's definitely something that's on our radar. It's one of our dreams to have a vinyl of Banx & Ranx, so fingers crossed!"

→ Banx & Ranx's Sound System and Block Party will take place at Club Soda (1225 St-Laurent) on Nov. 18, 9 p.m., \$42.19, as part of M for Montreal's Marathon festival.

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:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Holy moly, how good was that Swans show at le National last month?

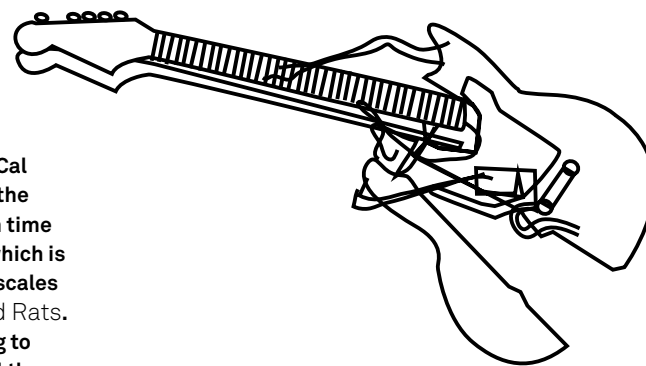
It was easily the droniest and, dare I say, the loudest I have ever seen 'em, and considering I saw them on the decibel blasting and thoroughly pummelling '84 tour, that is saying a lot. Without even a hint of surprise, Gira and his devastatingly good group of cohorts delivered my show of the year. But fear not my young bucks 'cause the year ain't done yet. October is hosting some incredible shows before the greatest holiday on the calendar year gets its spook on.

First off, there are a couple of gigs within days of this writing that should be happening just as the ink on this ish is drying, so don't be tardy.

On Thursday, Oct. 5, you will definitely not want to miss the greatest USBM band since Weakling, Wolves in the Throne Room, who will stink up the Fairmount with the sweet smell of mead, chemical smoke and patchouli, This will devastate so don't be late (dear promoters: feel free to steal that line). Opening up is Blackbaird, Ghera and Hoaxed. Anybody remember their show at Death Church where there were no fire exits or at Sala when they wiped the floor with Lichens? No? Poseur! 5240 Parc, 7 p.m., \$47.88

On Friday, Oct 6, you can catch some serious So Cal classic surf/punk when Agent Orange kick out the utter punk rock classic "Bloodstains" for the nth time at Bar le Ritz PDB. Opening up is Spice Pistols, which is everything you think it is, and really tipping the scales is a rare appearance from local skate punx Hood Rats. If that wasn't enough, the Punk Police are going to be putting the needle in the groove all night. Will the fine furry vinyl fiends of the Punk Police play Hubble Bubble's "I Wanna Die (But Not Right Now)" sometime during the night? Only time will tell, my inquisitive little punker pal, so better show up and find out. 179 Jean-Talon W., 8 p.m., \$30

If you're ready to drink your weight in beer, you will definitely be getting thirsty on Sunday Oct. 15 for the Australian explosion that is Down Under brats the Chats with one of the dumbest bands of all time, Cosmic Psychos. Da Psychos are as dumb as their name suggests and if it wasn't for AC/DC, Rose Tattoo, Amyl and the Sniffers, the Scientists, Buffalo, Colored Balls and Radio Birdman (and maybe about 27 other bands), they could boast being the greatest Aussie band of all time. The Schizophonics grab the sweat act on this glorious bill and it would appear that the same person who named the Cosmic Psychos also christened the Corona venue's new moniker, Beanfield Theatre (ya can't make this shit up, people). I will be there, and I will be drunk, so there. 2490 Notre-Dame W., 7 p.m., \$63 (crikey!)



Formally known as Great Big Hair, GBH will bring their widowed peaks to the (ahem) Beanfield Theatre on Wednesday, Oct. 25, along with a hometown tribute to local legends the Nils, called the Nils. Admittedly I am more of a Discharge man when it comes to the UK 82 thingy, and back in the '80s it was pretty darn easy to make fun of the fellas in GBH but I gotta admit that *City Baby Attacked by Rats* has really aged a helluva lot better than the garden variety punk of that day like Varukers, Abrasive Wheels etc. This actually might turn out to be great. Expect to see the same people you saw at the Agent Orange show but with more tartan. 2490 Notre-Dame W., 7 p.m., \$44



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film

6 must-see films at FNC



The Feeling That the Time for Doing Something Has Passed



She Is Conaan



Priscilla

BY JUSTINE SMITH

What does new cinema look like? As one of Canada's oldest film festivals, Festival du Nouveau Cinéma, committed to groundbreaking cinema for over half a century, tries to answer that question.

Over 50 years since an inaugural edition screened films by Frederick Wiseman, Peter Watkins and Werner Herzog, they remain committed to highlighting the most compelling voices working in contemporary cinema. This year's edition is inspiring, striking a balance of iconic established filmmakers and exciting emerging voices with new films from Sofia Coppola, Todd Haynes, Catherine Breillat, Nuri Bilge Ceylan, Bertrand Bonello and Hirokazu Kore-Eda among many others.

For those overwhelmed by this year's stacked program, we've taken the time to highlight six films well worth your time.

Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World
(Dir. Radu Jude)

As far as we're concerned, Radu Jude's latest film, *Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World*, may be the best film of the year. It depicts a day in the life of a Romanian PA, Angela (a hilarious and resplendent Ilinca Manolache), who drives around Bucharest as she splits her time making parody videos of Andrew Tate for TikTok and helping to produce a safety video for an Austrian company. Few films "of the moment" are as clever and biting as this — a singular and essential film.

Do Not Expect Too Much From the End of the World screens at Cinéma du Parc on Oct. 7, 6:15 p.m., at Quartier Latin on Oct. 9, 7:45 p.m. and again at Cinéma du Parc on Oct. 14, 6 p.m.

The Feeling That the Time for Doing Something Has Passed
(Dir. Joanna Arnow)

There's little doubt that Joanna Arnow is destined for great things based on her caustic and hilarious second feature, *The Feeling That the Time for Doing Something Has Passed*. Arnow writes, directs and stars in this unusual comedy about a stagnating 30-something New Yorker who finds excitement and meaning in BDSM. Told as a series of vignettes, the film highlights the humour and loneliness of millennial despair with insight and absurdity. *The Feeling That the Time for Doing Something Has Passed* screens at Quartier Latin on Oct. 7, 8:30 p.m. and again on Oct. 9, 8 p.m.

Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person
(Dir. Ariane Louis-Seize)

This feature debut from prolific short filmmaker Ariane Louis-Seize (the festival will also feature a retrospective of her shorts) has been praised for its surprising tone. This light touch evokes gothic horror and adolescent angst as it explores the sensitive Sasha (Sara Montpetit), a vampire unwilling to kill, who strikes an unlikely friendship with a suicidal peer. The film won the Best Direction Prize at Venice and was one of the most talked about films at this year's TIFF. *Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person* screens at Cinéma Imperial on Oct. 10, 7 p.m. and at Quartier Latin on Oct. 12, 6:30 p.m.

Our Body
(Dir. Claire Simon)

One of our greatest documentarians, Claire Simon, brings us her comprehensive look at the gynecology ward in one of France's public hospitals in *Our Body*. Breaking from her

more usual observational tone, Simon inserts herself in the narrative, bringing a subjective tone to an institutional story. From the hospital day-to-day to Simon's personal story, *Our Body* explores healthcare from a personal and feminist perspective. *Our Body* screens at Cinéma du Musée on Oct. 8, 12:30 p.m. and at Cinéma du Parc on Oct. 15, 4:30 p.m.

Priscilla
(Dir. Sofia Coppola)

Last year, audiences were wowed by Baz Luhrmann's extravagant and bombastic *Elvis*. This year, Sofia Coppola offers a rebuttal in the form of her quiet portrait of Priscilla, who was little more than a wallflower in the former film. Based on Priscilla Presley's memoir, the film examines the tumultuous relationship that began between Priscilla and the King when she was still just a teenager. The film stars Cailee Spaeny, who won best actress at Venice, and Jacob Elordi from *Euphoria*. *Priscilla* screens at Cinéma Imperial on Oct. 8, 9 p.m. and at Cinéma du Parc on Oct. 15, 8 p.m.

She Is Conaan
(Dir. Bertrand Mandico)

Mandico's unusual cinematic stylings have always had a home at the FNC. His latest, *She Is Conaan* (also presented with two of his short films), retells the six lives of Conaan from her childhood to her ascension to the Queen of the Barbarians. Infused with Mandico's expected eroticism and retro-stylings, this retelling of Conan with a feminine twist promises to be an utterly unique and bewildering cinematic experience. *She Is Conaan* screens at Quartier Latin on Oct. 5, 8:30 p.m. and at Cinéma du Parc on Oct. 9, 6:30 p.m.



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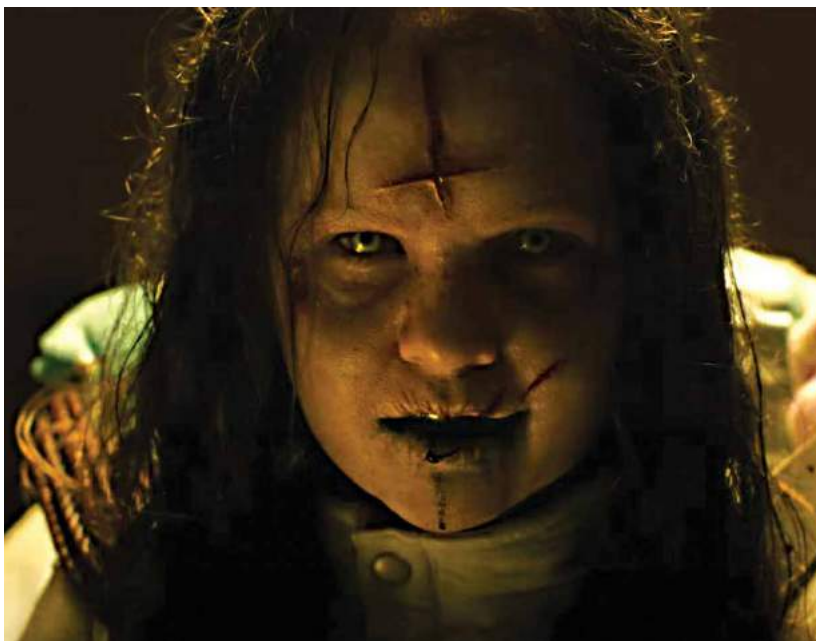
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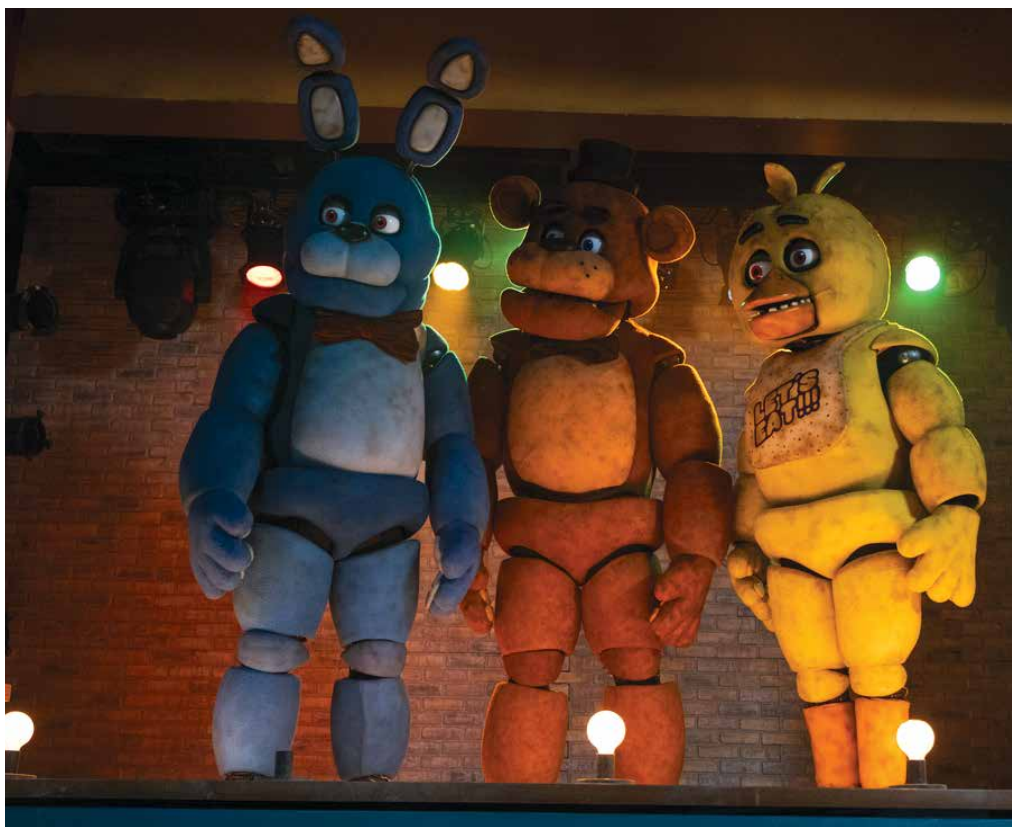
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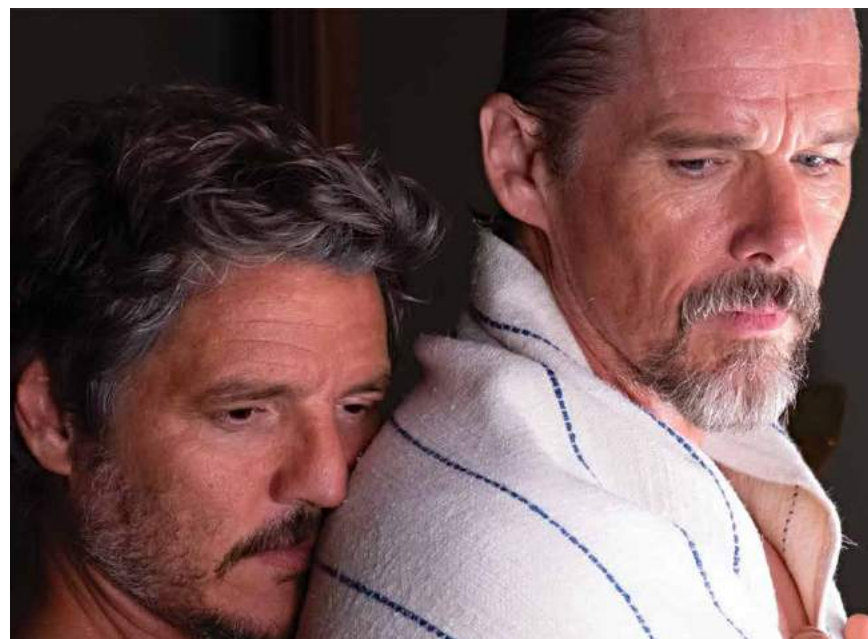
The Exorcist: Believer



Five Nights at Freddy's



Killers of the Flower Moon



Strange Way of Life

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Martin Scorsese is back on the big screen with his much-anticipated adaptation of *Killers of the Flower Moon* (Oct. 20). Starring Leonardo DiCaprio, Lily Gladstone and Robert De Niro, the epic film recounts the true story of the Osage tribe, who become oil-rich and are murdered one by one. The film opened to rave reviews at Cannes and was made in close collaboration with living members of the Osage tribe.

David Fincher is also making a theatrical comeback, with *The Killer* (Oct. 27), the story of an assassin's day-to-day life gone wrong. The film stars Michael Fassbender and its score was composed by Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross. Legendary Quebec filmmaker Denys Arcand is releasing *Testament* (Oct. 5), a satire that follows an older adult as he navigates a strange new world in his quest for happiness. Cannes's Palme d'Or winner *Anatomy of a Fall* (Oct. 20) also gets its theatrical release after screening at this month's Festival du Nouveau Cinéma (which runs Oct. 5–21). The darkly comic courtroom drama is about a writer who suddenly finds herself accused of the murder of her husband, who may or may not have jumped off the roof.

For many, October is spooky season, and many films are available for those seeking some big-screen scares. At the top of the month is *The Exorcist: Believer* (Oct. 6), helmed by David Gordon Green (with writing partner Danny McBride), who recently rebooted the Halloween franchise to mixed effect. Based on the viral video game sensation, *Five Nights at Freddy's* (Oct. 27), starring Josh Hutcherson and Matthew Lillard, involves a security guard trying to survive a night at Freddy Fazbear's Pizzeria. For something a little lighter, *Humanist Vampire Seeking Consenting Suicidal Person* (Oct. 13) is a horror-comedy about a young vampire who refuses to kill humans and strikes up an unlikely friendship with a suicidal teen. It's basically Wes Anderson meets Abel Ferrara's *The Addiction*.

Beyond new releases, keep an eye on Cinéma du Parc's midnight program for some spooky favourites including *The Exorcist* and *Evil Dead 2*. The Cinémathèque Québécoise is doing a haunted retrospective on romantic ghosts featuring films like *Ghost*, *Birth* and *Rouge*. Cinéma Public has *Ginger Snaps* and *The Exorcist* on schedule for the month. Cinéma Moderne will likely follow up on their wildly successful Halloween programming with new and old favourites.

It's a big year for auteur-driven shorts. Wes Anderson recently premiered four short films inspired by Roald Dahl

on Netflix. Now, Pedro Almodóvar will be premiering two short films on the big screen in a double feature (Oct. 20). *Strange Way of Life*, a gay Western starring Pedro Pascal and Ethan Hawke, premiered this year at Cannes. It will be followed by *The Human Voice*, a short he made two years ago with Tilda Swinton.

After a long hiatus, Meg Ryan steps behind and in front of the camera in *What Happens Later* (Oct. 13), a new rom-com with David Duchovny. They play ex-lovers who see each other for the first time in years when they both find themselves snowed in, in transit, at an airport overnight.

Kitty Green's *The Assistant* was one of the most startling fiction feature debuts of the last few years. She's now back, reuniting with Julia Garner with *The Royal Hotel* (Oct. 6), a film about U.S. backpackers who take a job in a remote Australian pub for some extra cash and are confronted with a bunch of unruly locals and a situation that grows rapidly out of their control.

Looking for something big and dumb? John Cena and Alison Brie star in *Freelance* (Oct. 27), a comedy about an ex-special forces operator who takes a job to provide security for a journalist as she interviews a dictator, but a military coup breaks out in the middle of the interview; they are forced to escape into the jungle where they must survive...



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OUTPOST



IN THEATRES OCTOBER 20

Finding the missing pieces



BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Xavier Watso is a man of many talents: actor, activist, powwow emcee, former high school drama teacher and TikTok influencer, to name a few.

An Abenaki person originally hailing from Yamaska, Watso's become a celebrity of sorts on the video-sharing platform recently, where his content — which focuses on his culture and Indigenous activism — has earned him more than 49,000 followers. With an APTV TV series coming up next year, Watso is costarring in the upcoming production of Drew Hayden Taylor *alterNatives* at Centaur Theatre, where he plays the character of Bobby.

Dave MacIntyre: Tell me more about *alterNatives*.

Xavier Watso: The play is a dinner party with three couples. We have one couple who are middle class, vegan, white veterinarians. We've got a couple who's inviting all of these people together: a young Indigenous writer and an English literature professor at a university. They're a newly formed couple. There's this other couple, who are two Indigenous old friends of the main character. They were invited by the new girlfriend without the main character knowing, because they lost touch.

It's a comedy, but there's also a lot of truth being said about how people perceive Indigenous people, or how people

believe they're Indigenous because they have some sort of Indigenous blood flowing through their veins from their great-great-great grandmother a long time ago. There's this big argument about vegetarianism, or veganism, going against hunting or culturally based harvesting of the land. All of this culminates into this kind of suburban dinner party fiasco. It blows up in everybody's faces. There's not one person who comes out of there unscathed.

DM: You're playing the role of Bobby. Can you describe your character, Bobby?

XW: I love Bobby, because I feel like I resonate a lot with (him). I used to be a teacher, but more than that, I used to be an Indigenous activist, during the Idle No More times. There are a lot of things Bobby says that I've actually said, when he confronts one of the other characters and he says, 'Well, you say you have some Indigenous blood in you.' It's not hurtful, but you can't say things like that, because it gives you a chance to control the narrative when you try to be part of something you're not.

There's that part, there's the vegetarianism part, which is very interesting, because I used to be a vegetarian also. But I would also advocate for Indigenous rights for people to hunt. It's very hard to be a vegetarian up north, in remote places. You can't impose it. When I was a vegetarian or vegan, I would always say, "You can be whatever you want, but don't try to impose it on other people." There's this discourse Bobby has that's very interesting, too. He's more of a rebel, but he's also the comic relief in the play a little bit. He's there to stir the pot. He's always trying to get under the two white couples'

skins. He's trying to get a rise out of them, to see how far he can push them and make them explode. I like that part of him. It's very fun to play.

DM: How did you first develop an interest in drama and theatre?

XW: Like I said, I used to be a teacher. I taught for 16 years in the Montreal school system. I was a drama teacher in high school, which is not at all the same thing as playing in a professional play at the Centaur! (laughs) But yeah, I used to do theatre when I was in CEGEP and in university, then I started teaching it to my students. In the past year or two, because of TikTok, TV and everything I'd been doing on the side, I quit teaching last June. Since then, I've been doing all kinds of different things. This play came up. I knew some of the actors in it, I knew the director, the person in charge of the play. There was an audition for this character that I decided to take last December.

I didn't even believe I would get the part. I just wanted to try it out, because it seemed like fun. I got the part, so that cemented my decision to stop teaching, because I couldn't do both. I do a lot of emceeing, so I have that background in me. But to play a character is something I hadn't done for a long time. It's fun, but it's also terrifying to be onstage to do a real play. But the people here are so great. They're giving me a lot of confidence. They're helping me out a lot. It's a cool team to be on. I'm very lucky to be working with all these great actors.

DM: Coming from the Odanak community in Centre-du-Québec, how did your environment shape you as a person and in the work you do?

XW: Do you have half an hour? (laughs) I moved to Montreal when I was five. I think of myself as a true Montrealer, but I would go back to my community often, because all my family is there. I grew up far from my culture, my Abenaki traditions, and far from my language. Not because I didn't want to, or because my parents didn't want to teach them to me. It's just because when my grandmother went to residential school, it was taken away from her. She wasn't able to give it to my mother, who wasn't able to give it to me. In my mid-20s, for the first time, there were going to be Abenaki-language courses in Montreal. My mother, my brother and I decided to go take those classes, just to see what it was like. Once I took that first class, I was hooked. That's when I realized there was something about me that was missing, and that I needed to find and discover who I was. That was approximately 2012, I think.

I started to do more, you know, for my community. I started emceeing the powwows in Odanak and in Wôlinak, which is the other Abenaki community. I was able to give back with what I was good at, which was emceeing. I felt like I was part of something. When I started TikTok two years ago, that's when I started talking about Indigenous issues. I started talking about language through my account. That's when my account blew up. It went really, really fast from 25,000 followers in the first year to 50,000 in the second. I realized I needed to learn about my language and about who I was, but also by teaching it to others, not only did it help me, but it helped others realize who they were a little.

DM: At what point did you realize, 'Oh shit, TikTok could really help my career'?

XW: I've never thought of it that way, because my career was being a teacher. I loved being a teacher and never thought I was going to do anything else. I was just having fun through the app. I've always wanted to leave my mark, change the world and help others. I was doing that activism through TikTok — being a teacher by day and Batman by night. (laughs)

When I got the role of Bobby last December, I knew I was going to have to quit teaching. That's when, starting in January, I decided to focus more on what I was going to do, and how I was going to be able to use that app to further my career. In the past six months, I've been using it more and more that way. But then again, I think it's served its purpose. It's already put me on the Quebec map of traditional media. Even now, I still do it just for fun. I don't see it as work. I do it when I want to do it, and I talk about what I want to talk about.

→ *alterNatives* will be performed at the Centaur Theatre (453 St-François-Xavier) from Oct. 17 to Nov. 5, various times, \$30-\$68



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: weird era



BY SRUTI ISLAM & ALEX NIERENHAUSEN

More about books you should read, and the authors who wrote them, that were recently featured on the Weird Era podcast.

Mona Awad returns to the literary landscape with *Rouge*, a re-telling of *Snow White*, split between Montreal and Southern California, that dives deep into the twisted side of the beauty and wellness industry. Belle's mother has just passed away under mysterious circumstances. When Belle flies to So-Cal to tie up her mother's loose ends, she is pulled into Rouge: a luxury "spa" (where her mother was a member) with strange and tantalizing promises. Check out my episode with Mona to hear what she thinks about immortality being the end goal of the beauty industry, and why she still loves Tom Cruise. (AN)

Critically acclaimed writer Sean Michaels launches *Do You Remember Being Born?* It is the latest in an

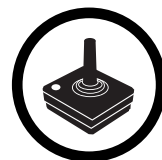
onslaught of tech novels, while mostly navigating what it means to be a mother, daughter and artist. A Google-like giant of a tech company has been working on groundbreaking A.I. software, claiming to be able to write the first original machine-made poem. They enlist Marian Farmer, an established poet who lives modestly in a one bedroom apartment in New York (how many poets have money?), and who is eager to find ways to financially provide for her son. Marian embarks on the poetic journey with a software temporarily named Charlotte. In this episode, I ask Sean about tech novels, what having kids does to the passing of time and what happens to art when it's commodified. (SI)

In *Her Body Among Animals*, Paola Ferrante explores the complexities of womanhood and toxic masculinity through the lens of the natural world and animalistic behaviour. In 11 exciting and thought-provoking short stories, sex robots rebel, unhappy wives turn into spiders and women enact their revenge in a world plagued by ecological disruptions.

Come for the extremely clever stories, stay for the way Ferrante narrates this collection like a David Attenborough documentary. Listen to our interview to hear what she thinks of horror movies as fairy tales, and whether or not she would call her work "dystopic." (AN)

Isle McElroy returns with the gender-bending, Kafkaesque novel *People Collide*. In the first few pages of the book, Eli wakes up to learn that he is now inhabiting his longtime partner and wife's body. Eli then sets out to find his missing wife, as well as his missing body. This brilliant premise sets the stage for a rare kind of brilliant interior writing. The book explores intimacy, in the purest sense. Only Eli could navigate as Elizabeth, and even still, be shocked at how removed one is from one's oldest friend. This is a book that asks if we can ever really know each other. In this episode, we discuss whether a body is anything but limits, how we can own our sexuality with the knowledge gender is fluid, whether anyone marries for love and more. (SI)

: game jam



By Natalia Yanchak

Get ready for a super slick, vibrant and stylish FPS roguelite that asks you to blast your way through trap-ridden levels in a quest to liberate your city of New Elysium from obnoxious Overlords. In *Battle Shapers*, you play as Ada, a laser-rifle-wielding android.

With a hint of anime to its visual style, this fast-paced shoot-em-up has been in development for three years and is a must-play for fans of titles like *Doom Eternal*, *Overwatch*, *Hades* and *Mega Man X*.

Battle Shapers is the first title from Metric Empire, an independent development studio located in Mile End. Co-founded by Nicholas Routhier and Pier-Luc Papineau, two seasoned design directors whose combined AAA history includes work on Ubisoft franchises like *Prince of Persia*, *Assassin's Creed* and *Far Cry*.

AAA VS. INDIE

We asked Nicholas Routhier if being a Montreal-based studio had an influence on *Battle Shapers* at

all. "Funnily enough, being in Montreal doesn't really affect what we do, but it does affect how we do it. Montreal is full of so many talented game developers, choosing the right blend of both junior talent and veterans of the industry in order to make our company thrive has been a really rewarding challenge with great payoff."

But bringing AAA experience doesn't solve every problem. "I think it makes it easier, but it's definitely a double-edged sword!" Routhier explains. The knowledge gained from working on big teams at AAA studios doesn't always translate to an indie configuration. "You tend to become super specialized in a specific craft, and you'll get a lot of opportunities to observe and learn from people who've spent a lot of time in their field."

And this might not prepare everyone for the roller coaster of founding a studio. "If you're a veteran who wants to start a studio, get as much information about business, management, marketing and finance before starting your own. Making the game is only a portion of the work that goes into the process."

"However, (at an) indie, you may end up doing a lot of things, some really outside your comfort zone. For me, this was hard to wrap my head around."

Routhier underlines the value of working on bigger, less risky teams that ship one or two titles before

becoming a founder. "It might mean pushing back your dream project by a few years, but the knowledge and connections you'll make on the way will save you in the long run."

MAKING BATTLE SHAPERS

In *Battle Shapers*, while you're able to level your character up to your liking, you can only play as Ada. While this might not appeal to the type of player that likes to spend hours on customizations, it does allow for a deeper connection with the character and game.

"The relationships between Ada and the different Overlords/bosses she faces are incredibly playful and funny! The way their relationships evolve throughout the game is definitely cool."

The game is also designed with replayability in mind, with a massive combination of power ups, traps and special talents to discover and deploy, making each playthrough more enjoyable than the last. Plus, *Battle Shapers* has a blazing, adrenaline-pumping rock soundtrack that will have you diving fist-pumpingly head-first into the action.

Battle Shapers will receive updated content throughout the rest of 2023. Entering Early Access this month, the devs at Metric Empire want to see what the community is drawn to, and what they like about playing the game. A full launch is scheduled for 2024.

→ *Battle Shapers* is available to play in Early Access on Steam.



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