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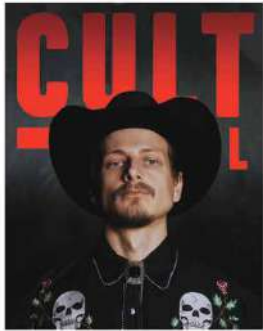


CHROMAKOPIA

ALL SONGS WRITTEN, PRODUCED, AND ARRANGED BY TYLER OKONMA

OUT NOW

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Nova Scotian musical polymath P'tit Belliveau spoke with us about going independent and running his career like a small business at the top of his game.

Cover photo by Sacha Cohen

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Pictured (left to right): Julie Tamiko Manning,
Qianna MacGilchrist, Shiong-En Chan



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Persona non grata



BY TOULA DRIMONIS

As public support for immigration dwindles in Quebec and Canada, and as both provincial and federal governments slowly start implementing immigration policy with an eye on the next elections, expect to see even more measures and rhetoric directly targeting newcomers. Opposition parties will, in turn, bang the same drum even louder so the focus remains on them.

Record numbers of immigrants and asylum seekers, post-pandemic inflation, housing shortages amid government failures to provide adequate infrastructure and social services have created a “scarcity mindset” where immigration — even in cases when there’s no direct or provable correlation between the stated issue and high levels of newcomers — is constantly seen as a problem to be solved. In Quebec, immigration is also perceived by some political parties as an existential threat to the province’s French identity, language and culture, which only adds to sentiments of malaise.

BUSINESS AS USUAL FOR THE CAQ

In response, the Coalition Avenir Québec (CAQ) government recently announced that it’s suspending applications for the Quebec Experience Program, a popular path for permanent residency for foreign students who graduate in the province. It also put a stop to applications from the Regular Skilled Worker Program. The moratorium, which affects most of Quebec’s economic immigration, is effective immediately and is already causing concerns among the province’s business community. Earlier this year, the CAQ also slashed family reunification applications by half, devastating the 43,400 Quebec families currently separated by immigration quotas.

I don’t expect much from the CAQ when it comes to immigration. Cheap nationalism has been a mainstay of the party’s politics since the very beginning and it has stayed consistent over its two terms, with Legault claiming that accepting more than 50,000 immigrants per year would be

“suicidal” for Quebec (even as the CAQ just announced the province will welcome up to 67,000 immigrants in 2025) and the party’s former immigration minister Jean Boulet brazenly (and falsely) claiming that “80% of immigrants don’t work, don’t speak French and don’t integrate.”

The CAQ was, after all, elected on the promise to reduce immigration by 20%. It’s also the party that proposed in 2016 that immigrants be screened for compliance with Quebec’s secular values and French language and shipped off elsewhere if they fail after two attempts. Proposals, by the way, the Parti Québécois (PQ) opposed at the time as “absurd” and “harmful,” but I’ll get to them in a second.

Knowing all this, the CAQ’s latest attempts to hold on to power and distract from its many failures by, once again, blaming immigration for all that ails Quebec, should come as no surprise.

Housing shortages? Immigrants.

Even though housing policy experts will tell you that immigrants have historically always been blamed for the housing crunch and shortages also exist in the regions where few immigrants can be found.

A severe shortage of public-school teachers? Immigrants.

Even though educational professionals point out that staff shortages have also been taking place in English schools, which newcomers don’t attend because of Bill 101, and teacher shortages have long plagued rural Quebec as retiring educators aren’t being replaced.

A lack of promised francisation classes? Immigrants.

Even though Ottawa provided Quebec with more than \$775-million for the 2023–2024 fiscal year, yet the total budget of the Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Francisation et de l’Intégration (MIFI) was just over \$478-million, indicating the total sums are not being used.

An explosion in demand for youth protection services and the inability of Quebec’s Youth Protection Department (DPJ) to stay on top of long-standing cases involving sexual misconduct of minors? Immigrants are apparently to blame for that, too.

Even though Social Services Minister Lionel Carmant later admitted he doesn’t have any figures to support such a claim.

This past October, Quebec Premier François Legault told reporters that Ottawa should forcibly relocate half of asylum seekers. Back in 2019, the CAQ government wanted to throw out 18,000 skilled-worker applications as a quick way of reducing backlogs. After a major outcry, the government backtracked, but not before talented and hard-working

wannabe Quebecers got the message that their contributions and expertise weren’t as appreciated as they should be.

PQ SHOWS SIMILAR POPULIST TENDENCIES TARGETING IMMIGRANTS

And there are no signs anything will change as the political landscape shifts in Quebec. If anything, the closer the PQ is to forming government, the more likely it is to play on fears revolving around immigration, identity and language.

I worry that as the PQ, which nearly fell off the political map in the 2022 election, starts to slowly rebound in popularity, it’s pushing aside its more progressive agenda and engaging in the same anti-immigration rhetoric that the CAQ has successfully used to its advantage. A big reason for the PQ’s revival has to do with its leader intensifying populist identity-based appeals and evoking fear for Quebecers’ survival.

In citing too much immigration as a potential reason for why Quebecers aren’t having as many children, PQ leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon sounded eerily like far-right People’s Party leader Maxime Bernier, who recently made the same claim on social media. With Plamondon at the helm, the PQ appears to steadily be lurching to the right, claiming immigration is to blame for the housing shortage or declaring Canada’s goal is to “assimilate” Quebec’s francophones, discourse solely aimed at ramping up support for sovereignty. The PQ’s immigration plan was recently espoused by far-right conservative pundit and current immigrant himself, Mathieu Bock-Côté, as “courageous.”

The PQ has proposed to slash the number of international students allowed into Quebec by half, dropping it from the current 123,689 to 50,000 in the first year of the party’s mandate. This is despite those in academia warning such measures could seriously affect the province’s ability to attract top-notch academic and scientific talent from around the world.

A PQ government would also reduce the number of permanent immigrants from the current level of 50,000 a year to 35,000. The number of temporary immigrants would drop from 270,000 to 40,000. A PQ government would also put a moratorium on the arrival of permanent immigrants in the economic category.

OTTAWA ALSO REACTS TO A DECREASED APPETITE FOR IMMIGRATION

Even the Trudeau administration has caved to decreasing support for immigration. Amid constant attacks by Conservative demagogue Pierre Poilievre, Ottawa announced dramatic cuts, reducing new permanent resident numbers by almost 100,000 in 2025 and for the next few years. That represents a 21% drop in permanent residents in 2025, from a previous target of 500,000 to 395,000. That’s on top of already announced reduced targets for both international students and temporary foreign workers. Quotas, by the way, that were often exceeded at the request of premiers themselves (that includes Premier Legault, too) to correspond to severe labour shortages at the time.

As I watch politicians locked in a cycle of ever-increasing anti-immigrant rhetoric, aided by media outlets that either misreport or constantly over-report on immigration, creating these dangerous narratives that we’re being completely overrun by outsiders causing all our problems, I worry.

Negative news doesn’t create an environment that’s conducive to reason, empathy and compassion. Asylum seekers, the most vulnerable among us, stand to lose the most. As for immigration, whether there’s social acceptability for it or not, we still need newcomers to boost our aging workforce and a birth rate that’s simply too low to replace our population. No amount of debate or resistance to newcomers will change that reality.

Despite having a critical mass of immigration scholars in Quebec and Canada, too often the public gets its information from those who often deliberately conflate systemic social inequalities with the increased presence of immigrants and who, in the quest for easy votes, often propose simplistic solutions to complex issues.

Framing immigration solely as a problem without also reminding people of how vitally we depend on it inevitably affects our perception of it. We must continue discussing these issues responsibly and constantly call out all politicians willing to exploit fears and social insecurity for political expediency.

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Drawers, organized



Will Chalker and Harry George Owen

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

The House of Harry George may soon be a major player in the men's underwear market, having launched a line of undergarments that's racking up testimonials as the only drawers their clients will ever wear going forward. But the proudly local company's story began in the same unlikely place where a number of Montreal stories begin: the circus.

"I was a Cirque du Soleil performer, performing around the world in front of millions of people, and whilst being at the top of my game in that realm, there was a problematic area — every single day, every performance, every time, it was like lights, camera, action: I had problems with my underwear," says the company's founder, Harry George Owen. "I was battling for at least two or three years whilst on stage, going to the wardrobe department and saying, 'Can we fix this?'"

The Welsh-born gymnast transitioned from the world of international competitive gymnastics to aligning with Cirque du Soleil in 2016 for their productions of *Volta* and *Totem*, developing an obsession with Cirque's costuming magic, as well as one outstanding wardrobe flaw.

"One minute, I'm in some tight multicoloured costume with 50 different pieces attached to it, the next I'm in some shiny blue sequin hotpants, the next minute I'm dressed up as a frog. All of these different costumes had so much detail in them that I kind of got obsessed — like, how does the fabric move so well in this direction? How does this one make me sweat more? Why does this one make me feel great?"

Owen became determined to solve the underwear problem — one that extended beyond the realm of circus performers and athletes. Not only did he find that there were no workable underwear on the market suited to frequent physical contortions, there weren't even boxers or briefs that were comfortable enough for long flights or sedentary work, for gym training or commuting to work. During his final Cirque tour in 2019, Owen bought a sewing machine and five metres of fabric and created the first pair of Harry George underwear right there in his San Francisco hotel room.

"I started learning what a first stitch was," he explains. "I sewed two pieces of fabric together and started testing them, pulling the fabrics apart. I drew a little pattern, did the whole works, and Harry George underwear was born. I had no waistband on it, the compartments were terrible, but I put it on and thought, 'Wow, this is the best underwear ever.'"

After over a year of research and development, Owen made the first iteration of Harry George underwear available on Spotify. His old friend Will Chalker — a British model who's worked with brands ranging from Gucci and Dolce & Gabbana to Zara and Gap — bought 10 pairs, becoming an early adopter and fan of the brand, and someone whose enthusiasm drove Owen to push himself harder — hard enough to eventually hire Chalker to be the face of the company.

"He followed me through my sporting career, I followed him through his modelling career, we kept in contact throughout the years. I'd congratulate him when I'd see him on a billboard in an airport I was travelling through with Cirque du Soleil," Owen explains. "He's attested (to the product's quality) since the moment 'go,' saying, 'I love it, it's all I wear! It's a great product, I'm really happy you brought it out.'"

"But I wasn't entirely happy with that first version, so I constantly tried to tweak it aesthetically. The feel, the look — it was very important, especially enough that he could see the improvement, to be able to put his body and face on

it. And that was ultimately the biggest high that I've had out of it. Will Chalker's blessing was definitely something that spurred me on to really attack it and stick with it. Especially as somebody who pretty much came from nowhere in the fashion world, to create a product that a man who has modelled with every brand in the world has endorsed."

The House of Harry George is now selling the boxer brief, boxer trunk and long boxer for between \$45 and \$55, hitting that middle-range to upscale price point that places the product up there between some of Owen's main influences, like Ron Dorff, CDLP, Derek Rose, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and Tom Ford. With the upcoming addition of longjohns, t-shirts and jock straps, the complete line is something Owen calls "the turn-key solution to one's underwear drawer."

This past July, Chalker flew into Montreal to shoot the campaign photos and footage that were used to officially launch the brand online late last month — a culmination of four years of effort. Plans are underway to bring the Harry George line, with its sleek copper boxes and art deco-inspired font, to major retailers in North America in the new year, an endeavour to be launched with a tour of pop-up events, beginning with one in Montreal in mid-December (location TBA). Though Owen himself is featured telling his story in many of his brand's promotional videos, Chalker is the primary face (and body) of the House of Harry George.

"The timing all worked out this year for him to be at the forefront of Harry George, to launch this out into the world properly. He's got the right face for it — he's a British guy, and we have a James Bond feel to the brand. He's 44 years old now, and that is a target market of ours. He does look as a model would, he takes care of himself. This is something that we highly value with the brand — he likes a routine, he's somebody that really dives into self-care, and I think underwear is a big part of that."

→ For more, please visit houseofharrygeorge.com.

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-Dale Maplethorpe, FAR OUT



: best buds



BY DAVE MACINTYRE

The fact that it's already November is such a mindfuck. Is it just me or did this year go by in an absolute nanosecond? Or am I just smoking away all my capacity for time, space and memory (no thanks to me keeping this column alive, admittedly)?

Whatever the case, I'm going to keep smoking it away — partly for you people out there who keep reading my column, and because I enjoy doing it. Anyway, this month, I'm giving a sativa from Fleurs de Lise a shot, and it's an absolute doozy — the bag I got rounds up to a whopping 30% THC (29.64%, if we want to be exact). I've reviewed this company before (supplied by Origine Nature from Ste-Agathe), and the products I've tried from them have been consistently solid. Let's see if the streak continues.

Fleurs de Lise, Le Passe Partout (Sativa)

At \$25.50 per 3.5 grams, this one gives me a lot of bang for its buck. This is very much an uplifting head high, and one you really feel around the eyes.

I enjoy it. It's pleasant, smells nice and keeps my mood above ground for long periods of time, just as any sativa worth its weight should do. It also doesn't make my mind race too much. This stuff keeps me pretty focused and in the moment mentally, and is a solid option for afternoon smoking. Even if there was no little hydration pouch to be found, the buds weren't too dry or brittle, and stayed that way for a while. Truly a miracle!

It's also very quick to act, a wholly unsurprising factor given the sheer magnitude of its THC content. I know "Passe-Partout" was a children's show in Quebec, and it's probably what gave this product its name. But it also feels so fast-acting that the high feels like it's going through every nook and cranny of your brain. This stuff passes "partout" through your mind.

Of course, it makes me crave greasy food, so I order boneless fried chicken from Coquios, fully knowing

I'd regret it later. That should tell you all you need to know about how it's making me feel. I expected bigger portions, but it was still damn tasty. My wallet is regretting the shit out of it, but it was satisfying. It also tastes and feels almost more like calamari rather than fried chicken... and I kinda like that?

This stuff (not the chicken) also gets me more into music emotionally and mentally, and I respond to that by watching the new Tragically Hip docuseries on Amazon Prime Video. All I can say is MAN, Gord Downie as a teenager was a cool-ass motherfucker who hadn't even scaled his peak yet. Also, guitarist Rob Baker admitting he was a great student "before the dope took care of that" is hilariously relatable.

All in all, I like this one. It's strong, but also not toooooo overwhelming most of the time. Having said that, don't try this one if your tolerance level is too low. I don't usually go through bags of weed too quickly if they're this strong, but I feel like I went through this one in a hurry. This is probably fucking dangerous for me, but good weed is good weed.

:the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

In the world of football (ie. soccer), where passions run high and loyalties run deep, music is much more than just background noise. It's a profound part of the experience, adding to the emotional and cultural depth of the game.

Music is woven into every aspect of the sport: fan chants, stadium anthems, club-associated bands and even walk-out songs that amplify the game's energy.

Every major club boasts a repertoire of songs and chants that can be distinctive as their colours or crests. Fan songs create a unique atmosphere for each team, and unite fans across all demographics. In the stands, fans become a choir of thousands, belting out tunes that range from popular songs to time-honoured hymns unique to their clubs. These songs are rallying cries that inspire the team on the pitch while intimidating opponents — a wall of sound that resonates through stadiums, binding everyone within

its vibrations while adding goosebumps along the way.

For example, "You'll Never Walk Alone" (from the musical *Carousel*) was embraced by Liverpool fans in the 1960s and has since become synonymous with the club, echoing through Anfield before every home game. The shared singing experience not only boosts morale but also serves as a connection between the club's history, its players and its loyal fans around the world.

The energy before kick-off is a mix of excitement, tension and hope, and music plays a critical role in setting the vibe. The pregame music choice varies by club, each selecting a song that aligns with their identity and energy.

Chelsea FC, for instance, adopted "The Liquidator" by Harry J Allstars. With its upbeat tempo and reggae rhythm, it's a song that sends an electric current through the crowd. I personally play it on the way to watch every match at Burgundy Lion, and the first time I sang along to it at Stamford Bridge was an experience that changed my life forever.

In England, the bond between local musicians and their soccer teams is particularly strong, especially in Manchester, a city known for producing legendary bands.

While Manchester City fans have long connected to "Blue Moon" as a stadium chant, they also have a strong association with Oasis. Members Liam and Noel Gallagher are both outspoken City fans, and "Wonderwall" often plays through the Etihad Stadium.

Similarly, Manchester United is linked with the Stone Roses. Tracks like "This Is the One" connect deeply with United fans.

In South America, fan culture is famously intense, with drumming, chanting and dancing creating a unique carnival-like experience. In Argentina and Brazil, the rhythms of samba and other traditional styles influence the way fans celebrate their teams. These musical expressions become part of the fanbase identity, much like a club's colours or crests.

It's no different throughout Europe, where certain musical traditions and specific songs are key to soccer fandom. Every Italian stadium has choirs of fans singing passionately. And not only are some of the songs about their teams, some teams even have songs dedicated to taunting their rivals.

Through anthems, chants and even pregame playlists, fans and players are given a chance to voice their passion and loyalty, and express emotion on a huge scale. Music and soccer complement each other because both tell stories of communities, victories and heartbreak.

Whether it's a lone fan singing in the rain or getting pumped in their car on the way to a match at the pub or an entire stadium doing it all together, music is a reminder that soccer is more than just a sport or a game, but something that can connect us all.

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food

I'm thinking Dorsia

BY CLAY SANDHU

“Courtney, dinner — I’m thinking Dorsia.”

Movie buffs will recognize this line as a tantalizing invitation from *American Psycho*'s Patrick Bateman. They might also remember Courtney's reply, “Dorsia's nice.” Spooky season and cult classics aside, Dorsia is a spectacular new restaurant from WITH Hospitality (Ryu, Ayla, Sushi Dept, Livia), and not only is it nice — you won't have to kill anyone to get a table.

Let's get it on record: Dorsia is swanky. Its lavish decor, prime Old Port location and imported Michelin-starred chef have all played their part in piquing my curiosity. Montreal's culinary scene has long been defined by small budgets offset by an abundance of good taste; we're known to bootstrap the build-out so we can stock the cellar with the good stuff. But as Montreal evolves into a world-class city, with rising prices and fine dining increasingly impacting the wallet, I can't help but wonder what this city could produce with a “blank cheque.” Unlike Marcus and Maison Boulud, which align with luxury hotel brands, Dorsia feels like WITH's bold, standalone bid for high-end dining. And with the MICHELIN guide announcing its local picks in early 2025, the timing feels right to test Montreal's appetite for luxury.

Located in a grand, wedge-shaped building on the corner of Notre Dame and Sainte-Hélène, it's got all the makings of a posh night out. The interiors, designed and rendered magnificently by Ivy Studio, are inspired by the opulent dining rooms of London, Paris and New York. The space is positively dripping in luxury from the moment you walk in — grandiose floral displays, beautifully crosshatched parquet and a massive central blown-glass chandelier. Most striking, however, is the central service station, which is custom-made in what appears to be Empress Green marble. There's some whimsy, too — playful art on the walls recalls India Mahdavi's use of David Shrigley's art in her rendition of Sketch in London. Plus they've got this colourful pastel paint-stroke motif that finds its way onto the inside of the menu and eventually onto the tiny dessert plates. Dorsia's most significant import, however, is their Michelin-trained chef, Miles Pundsack-Poe.

Having made a name for himself working under Christopher Kostow at the Restaurant at Meadowood, a celebrated three-star Michelin restaurant in Napa Valley, he would follow Kostow to Ensue in Shenzhen, where he'd take on a more senior role. Pundsack-Poe carries a lot of weight on his shoulders, especially as he's helming a restaurant with obvious Michelin aspirations — a tall task for anyone, especially in a market as unique as Montreal's. Unlike Ensue, which marries Napa's farm-to-table philosophy with Chinese ingredients and techniques, Dorsia's menu follows a much more approachable French-Italian formula, though still with plenty of attention paid to sourcing quality local ingredients whenever possible.

As my dining companion and I perused the menu, I ordered Dorsia's signature dirty martini. Made with your choice of gin or vodka (gin all the way for me), the cocktail arrived properly chilled, accompanied by a sidecar of assorted pickles and olives. It was a flawless martini, and if not for the \$20 price tag (and the fact that it was a Tuesday), I would have happily had three or four more. The service also deserves a special mention: the white-jacketed staff were consistently professional yet approachable, providing a truly impeccable level of care. The wine list, while more conventional than my usual preference, was filled with



great choices for fans of both old and new-world wines — though be prepared; it, too, is on the pricey side.

Our meal started with an order of littleneck clams. Taking the role a half-dozen oysters might usually play, eight littlenecks were served on the half-shell in a dazzlingly grandiose crystal bowl filled to the brim with crushed ice. It's a magnificent display that far outclasses most plates of oysters I've had, and at \$22 feels entirely reasonable. The clams themselves are dressed with a briny and electric green kohlrabi and seagrass condiment, which gets a touch of heat from a drop or two of mustard oil. It's got the kind of freshness and brightness you'd expect from an *augachile* but the flavours are more nuanced and complex in a way. An absolute hit. Alongside the clams, we ate a classic beef tartare, which was dressed up with some slices of cured duck yolk and a pappadam-like sunflower chip. It's a great tartare, but next to the revelatory clams (and even the bread and butter service) it's somewhat overshadowed.

Our next course was the star of the night: squash agnolotti with sage and black truffle. It sounds quintessentially autumnal, perhaps even predictable, but Pundsack-Poe's version is special, featuring about 10 perfectly plump parcels filled with sweet, fragrant kabocha squash, dusted with sage crumble and grated black truffle. If that were all, it would already be an excellent pumpkin pasta dish. However, what truly sets it apart is the butter sauce, infused with the scent and flavour of citrus — specifically lemon and orange peels that, we were told, had been dry-aged along with the meats. I can't say what magic is at work here or if the dry-aging is more than just a clever story, but the citrus element elevated the dish in a surprising way, allowing me to experience this classic pasta combination with fresh perspective. At \$37, it was a generous enough portion to share and in line with what you'd expect at Nora Gray or Moccione. Another brilliant dish.

The final savoury course was the duck crown for two. The crown, which refers to the entire bone-in breast of the bird,

receives a treatment that draws on Chinese techniques Pundsack-Poe learned at Ensue. Dry-aged, five-spiced and roasted to achieve a glistening, crisp, lacquered skin, then sliced thinly, it is a near-perfect plate of duck. Once again, Dorsia offers a generous portion for the \$110 price tag: both duck breasts, along with a heaping side of roasted and glazed mushrooms (including maitake, enoki and king oyster) and sunchoke. It's a rich, unctuous and powerful dish, with some relief from a scattering of sea buckthorn berries, though a bit more acidity would have helped balance the flavours.

The final flourish was Dorsia's millefeuille. Stacked just three layers high, it was a pretty, albeit dainty tower of cream and wafers. I worried it might sacrifice indulgence for aesthetics, but thankfully that wasn't the case. Silky dollops of cashew cream were suspended between impossibly crisp, flaky pastry layers, accompanied by a quenelle of passionfruit ice cream. Just before we dug in, a luscious — better than the real thing — mango sauce was poured onto the plate. Cutting into the dessert, my spoon easily sank into the decadent cream and shattered the delicate pastry. Texturally perfect, indulgent and masterfully balanced between sweet and savoury, it was one of the best restaurant desserts I've ever had.

As I've said, Dorsia clearly has grand ambitions, and from my experience, they're fully delivering on them. The meal for two came to nearly \$500 — a price point that, while alienating for some, feels entirely fitting for the calibre of experience Dorsia aims for and achieves. I've had plenty of dinners at neighbourhood spots and casual fine-dining restaurants that ended with a similar bill but left me wanting more. Leaving Dorsia (after a tour of Bowie, their soon-to-open basement bar), I felt full, slightly drunk and genuinely happy. From start to finish, we were well taken care of; the service was impeccable, and the food was both approachable and delightfully surprising. Most importantly, it was a complete dining experience. If you're seeking a special night out that's sure to impress, I urge you to visit Dorsia — you won't be disappointed.

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music

The not-so-small business of being P'tit Belliveau



BY DARCY MACDONALD

After another successful year filled with jam-packed, self-booked shows and the release of his eponymously titled third LP, *P'tit Belliveau* — his first fully independent studio effort since parting ways with his former label Bonsound — the touring season is finally slowing down.

When we reached him by phone in early October to discuss his upcoming MTELUS concert and the transition from finding success at home and abroad with the support of a label to taking the reins of his career in hand, we found Jonah Guimond messing around on his guitar and appreciating the calm in his hometown of Clare, Nova Scotia.

“Ever since I’ve been doing my own booking, I have more office-type work,” he reflected. “It’s nice to be at the house to catch up on that and also just be in the studio and everything.”

For Guimond, running P’tit Belliveau as a project, a band and the small business he’s been busy developing is as much about self-sufficiency as it is about creating music.

“For me, it’s practical,” he explained of his decision to go fully indie, which he began by taking on his own tour bookings in 2023.

“I’m not going to go out there and lose money if I don’t need to, and if I can still do a good job.”

He’s noticed the contrast in how other signed artists approach touring, often traveling with large teams regardless of venue size, and working with promotions people and other label-appointed help.

“A lot of artists are really deeply in tune with music. It’s almost all they could do in life. The sensitive, deeply in-touch artists — people that are really committed to the music — need a team around them.”

“It’s a different mindset, you know?”

While Guimond says he’s “not the most organized,” he’s comfortable with making big decisions and taking risks in the name of staying on top of his ambitions.

“The business mindset is not something I’m a pro at, but I always knew I could handle it. And for me, it was a good decision and I have no regrets. It’s been good. I don’t know to what degree I would recommend it for most artists.”

“I can go into a booking negotiation without fear. At this point, I still have a small team and delegate the stuff I’m lousy at or don’t want to do. I’m just the chef of this team.”

As ever, Guimond speaks with a mix of common sense and humility. While he didn’t dive deep on the subject, he most certainly deserves credit for keeping P’tit Belliveau viable not only for himself, but for his longtime accomplices les Grosses Coques, his four-piece touring band, as well the outside help and the studio musicians he occasionally hires.

Consider the first single and video from *P’tit Belliveau*, “Comfy,” which features Guimond’s friend and occasional stage collaborator FouKi, a Quebec superstar in his own right.

While we didn’t discuss specifics, it’s fair to infer that despite the pair being pals, even the most closely knit industry friendships still require a contract at the end of the day.

That said, over the past half-decade and change, the creative universe Guimond has been forging with P’tit Belliveau is entirely his own brainchild.

He described a songwriting process that isn’t about adhering to a specific genre or style, but instead about following what feels right in the moment.

If a song naturally unfolds as a mix of “broke country with Auto-Tune and an unexpected touch of nu-metal,” Guimond doesn’t resist or overthink it. The real work, he says, is in identifying the unique character of each track early on and then executing it with that vision in mind. That approach allows him to break open his own preconceptions, trusting instinct over structure to let each song emerge as it wants to.

It’s this kind of creative pragmatism that allows Guimond to keep his music financially sustainable and successful in terms of audience appeal, making it possible to tour without dependence on a label’s budget.

“Even when someone else was bankrolling it,” he said, “it was just practical for me to think that way.”

His choices stem from a hard-earned understanding of business, a sense shaped by both his time working

Sacha Cohen

construction as a roofer, and even observing his father's work ethic.

"I've worked for big companies, too, but the work ends up being the same at the bottom," Guimond reflected. "My dad runs a small refrigeration company, and I've seen him plugging away at that kind of stuff my whole life."

In that sense, the "P'tit Belliveau Company," as he offhandedly referred to it, is like any small business, something he manages personally to keep it both creative and profitable.

That approach carries into Guimond's songwriting process. He cites the philosophy that 'perfect is the enemy of good' to describe his belief that a song is better served by instinct than over-refinement, be that in the studio or on stage, where any composition is free to take on a new shape.

"I don't want my musicians to be stressed about mistakes. I don't want them to be stressed about perfection," he added, describing a stage atmosphere that favours honesty over polish in the pursuit of having fun.

"I'm not trying to introduce concepts so much as raise questions," he explained, adding that he prefers his albums to have the same eclecticism as a playlist.

His philosophy doesn't end with the music. Guimond questions the structures that shape conventional career paths, particularly those that leave students financially limited by early debt.

"It's messed up that we expect every kid to go straight to university with no break," he said. The pressure to go

directly into higher education locks people into financial obligations that aren't always necessary.

"It should be weird to go to university at 18 or 19," he argued, proposing that a few years of experience would help young people explore options before they commit to debt.

"If you want to be an engineer or a doctor, go for it, but I've avoided debt and live a modest life regardless of how much money I make."

That avoidance of debt is about more than just financial practicality — it's about having the flexibility to pursue creative goals without the anxiety of "Plan B" pressures.

"I think it's impossible to live a 'Plan A, don't look back' life if you're burdened with debt and unrealistic lifestyle expectations," he said. In Guimond's view, the best way to build a lasting creative life is to set up a foundation that makes it sustainable.

The balance he's crafted between pragmatism, creativity and personal conviction even extends to how he approaches relationships, especially in a world where polarized opinions often turn conversations hostile.

Guimond is vocal about his belief in empathy over absolutes.

"Some people think it's wrong to be friends with someone who has certain opinions," he said. "I find that to be a disgusting way of seeing the world, full of hubris."

He sees value in open dialogue, in allowing space for perspectives to evolve. "People come to conclusions over time and can change them. How are they going to change if

you don't even talk to them?"

But for Guimond, staying true to his values matters more than popularity.

"Wanting to be right is such a toxic goal."

This grounded approach defines Guimond's vision for P'tit Belliveau and for the life he's building around it. By managing his music career with both business sense and a sense of freedom, he's setting his own terms and offering a version of success that's as adaptable as it is independent.

When P'tit Belliveau takes the stage at MTELUS later this month, it will be the Acadian talent's first-ever concert experience at the city's most storied surviving large-capacity music venue, having never even seen a show there himself.

But for Guimond, it's just another busy day at the office to look forward to.

"I've always been slow at learning, but persistent. It's not a superpower, but I can end up knowing a lot. I still make a lot of mistakes, and I'm sometimes aware of it," he offered.

"A lot of artists are perfectionists in a way that paralyzes them. I'm not like that. For me, it's about identifying the essence of what's important and prioritizing, always asking, 'What's really important here?'"

→ P'tit Belliveau performs at MTELUS (59 Ste-Catherine E.) on Friday, Nov. 22, 8:30 p.m., \$40



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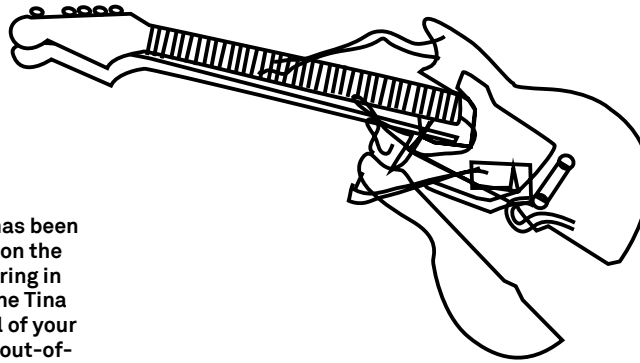
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:hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

Whenever the question “Who is the best live band ever?” comes up, I always have to offer up Nomeansno as one of the most transcendent and blistering shows I have ever witnessed. I’ve been lucky enough to have seen them more times than I can count and just always assumed that they would always be around and remain as vital as ever. Sadly, in 2016 they hung up their army boots for good.

In early 2024, the incredible NMN biography *From Obscurity to Oblivion* by Jason Lamb dovetailed with the debut release of NMN drummer John Wright’s new project Dead Bob. For Nomeansno fans, Dead Bob’s *Life Like* record has everything you want, with teeth-gnashing intensity, stop-on-a-dime arrangements and a constant state of urgency always at the fore. If you want to see this old-guard punk slug it out and play for all the marbles, scroll down to the Nov. 23 announcement. Happy birthday to all of the Scorpions!



NOV. 9

The greatest watering hole in the city, the Barfly, has been a fly in the ointment of gentrifying condo dwellers on the Main for almost three decades now. Helping them ring in 28 years of slingin’ the suds is Barfly’s fave band the Tina Trons, who will get the dance party started with all of your ’80s synth-drenched delights. In a Yelp review, an out-of-towner once described Da ‘Fly as “stabby,” which is the raddest thing ever. *4062A St-Laurent, 9:30 p.m., \$10*

NOV. 12

If you wondered what noise rock should sound like in 2024, you could do worse than check out Chat Pile at Club Soda with Agriculture and Traindodge. *1225 St-Laurent, 8 p.m., \$41.50*

On the flippity flop, utter Black Metal legends Mayhem will celebrate 40 years of thrilling young acne-ridden incels that just got out of professional wrestling at l’Olympia. Don’t get me wrong as Mayhem’s debut (post-*Deathcrush*) is still lethal after all of these years, and they can still draw blood, but their last stint in town at Club Soda was so limp, I actually left in the middle of the set to eat a poutine. Bad night? Maybe, but that poutine hit the spot though. *1004 Ste-Catherine E., 8 p.m., \$70.75*

NOV. 18

If you want to witness classic thrash from Bay Area duders who were at ground zero back in the early ’80s, you can catch legends Exodus with Havoc, Candy and Dead Heat at Beanfield Theatre. *2490 Notre-Dame W., 7 p.m., \$52-\$73*

NOV. 23

John Wright from Nomeansno, under his new band Dead Bob, will obliterate Foufs like he did back in the day with Lung (and my own rock ‘n’ roll bonanza USA Out of Vietnam). Their debut *Life Like* is amazing at every turn, but it’s when stomping pines that Wright’s merry band of West Coast weirdos prove they are one of the best live bands in Canada. *87 Ste-Catherine E., 7 p.m., \$30.20*

NOV. 25 & NOV. 26

Speaking of one of the greatest live experiences you can have, you’ll have to check out the two-night stint from one of Montreal’s best bands ever — actually, probably THE greatest — godspeed! you black emperor at MTELUS. Most things flying under the “post-rock” flag prove to be as boring as watching paint peel, but these local freaks can still raise the goosebumps with slow-crawling crescendos, and still manage to hit new heights that easily beat their best days above that car-repair garage. *59 Ste-Catherine E., 8 p.m., \$57*

Current Obsession: Nomeansno, *One*
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Nell Fisher and Elijah Wood

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Elijah Wood has come a long way since his days as a child star. After leading one of the most successful franchises of all time, *Lord of the Rings*, Wood has taken an unconventional route when it comes to his career.

From wholesome to gruesome, in the past decade or so, he's gravitated towards projects that are anything but kid-friendly. Among those collaborations was a starring role in New Zealand producer-turned-director Ant Timpson's debut *Come to Daddy*. In that film, Wood plays a man who receives a letter from his estranged father that takes him on a brutal, violent, funny and bloody journey through grief.

Five years later, Timpson and Wood have reunited for a different kind of film. In some ways, *Bookworm* feels like a return to the wholesome vibes of Wood's early career. Timpson, who spoke with us at the Fantasia Film Festival in July, alongside Elijah Wood, said that both the team and the approach weren't all that different from those of *Come to Daddy*.

"Obviously, it's a family film, it's PG and everything, but I don't think that approach was at the forefront. It was more like, this is the situation, these are the characters. We're making a movie with the same type of humour and it feels like it's from the same DNA because it's the same creative team behind it, but it's mining our younger selves as opposed to *Come to Daddy*, which was more our older selves."

Bookworm is about Mildred (Nell Fisher), whose life is turned upside down when her mother ends up in hospital and she's put under the care of her estranged, magician father from America, Strawn Wise (Elijah Wood). In this odd-couple family film, the bookish preteen and her insecure father must face the brutal New Zealand wilderness in search of a mythological beast. In Timpson's words, the film is "a tribute to '70s types of family cinema that I love, which

were generally films that didn't pander to kids. They weren't preachy, there was never a message that you had to come away with. I didn't want to learn lessons, I wanted to have fun and escape."

More than just a coming-of-age story for Mildred, the film also forces Strawn to grow up and take responsibility. Elijah Wood explains how he approached the character, "At the core of the film is this idea that as a parent, when you find that you're at a moment where your ineptitude is actually putting your child in danger, or you see that you're afraid, there's a vulnerability there that could lead to something dangerous." In many ways, Strawn is someone afraid of being vulnerable, afraid of disappointing those around him. Wood explains that Strawn's fears are rooted in a desperation to impress his daughter:

"My journey with Strawn was very much coming into a situation as almost a peacock, to show his daughter that he's this accomplished, wonderful person. The hidden vulnerability is that he's not accomplished. A lot of my experiences and what I was going through making the film was just this dichotomy of who he wants to be and who he wants to present as holding onto these ideas in front of someone he's desperate to impress."

Timpson builds on this idea, "For Strawn, he has to step up and be a dad but it's her coming of age as well. As Elijah mentioned, it's coming from a place of pure fear of not stepping up in a time of crisis as a parent and shitting the bed. As a dad, there's a lot of pressure. I grew up with very stoic, country folk. My family's very Southern, so you never show fear, you never show vulnerability. That's part of our bedrock of the Kiwi male, the rugby fighter type. We wanted to play with the comedic aspects of someone dropped into those elements that we as Kiwis are so used to and floundering, which is sort of what happened to me in a family situation in front of my kids where something fun turned into a moment of pure terror. Analyzing that first moment where your kids see that you aren't in control is a really pivotal moment in your life."

The film also draws inspiration from literature. Roald Dahl is discussed but Timpson also points to the Willard Price books, a series about kids going on adventures without parental

control. He says, "I experienced that as a kid. It's hard to think about life without oversight from your parents, but back in the 1970s, we were just free to roam like wild animals. I tried to capture a little bit of that magic in the intention of the film, and also play up the comedy and tension of what can go wrong. You add two people who are complete oddballs who are forced together, they're like magnets and you need to write them with polarity throughout the film."

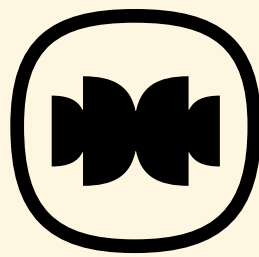
In *Come to Daddy*, Elijah Wood starred with Canadian actor Stephen McHattie, who embodies a kind of stoic, distant masculinity of a previous era. In this film, he plays with Nell Fisher, who portrays the precocious Mildred. Wood describes working with Fisher: "She's precocious, super bright and a bookworm. She would regale us every day with a new word of the day, which was something obscure with too many letters to remember." Timpson adds, "She's not a wallflower!"

The production posed its challenges, with a lot of outdoor scenes and varying conditions. They had rehearsal time and were also able to work a lot on location. Wood explains that she has a lot of resilience: "She was game for everything. It was never always that easy."

Timpson also explains how she was a perfectionist. "On set, Nell was even giving me script notes, it was incredible. They were always on the money, too," he says, "whether it was grammatical or otherwise, she would just pick up on it. She was so into making sure everything was right, perfect. She was a perfectionist across the board. The confidence in someone that young to be able to question things — not in an annoying way, to be clear — was so welcomed. She wanted to know everything."

Bookworm stands out as a rare family film that strikes a perfect balance between the personal and universal. It's fun and human, without ever feeling condescending. The movie is colourful and features whip-smart dialogue. Mostly, though, the film is a pleasure to watch for the performances. Nell Fisher's Mildred is easy to love, but so is Strawn Wise's fragile pageantry. As Ant Timpson jokes, Wood nailed the role because he was in "the Strawn vibe."

→ *Bookworm* is now available on VOD.



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LGBT2SQ+ camera action



Queer, by Luca Guadagnino

BY JUSTINE SMITH

From Nov. 20 to 30, the image+nation festival of LGBT2SQ+ film will showcase queer cinema from around the world.

The festival's 37th edition, featuring more than 150 films from 27 countries, will open on Nov. 20 with Luca Guadagnino's *Queer*, starring Daniel Craig as a gay expat

looking for connection and his next fix in 1950's Mexico City.

Screenings will take place in cinemas across Montreal (Cinéma du Musée, ONF Cinéma, PHI Centre, Concordia University, UQAM) and online, offering an accessible way for audiences to enjoy their selection.

This year's festival will launch two new projects: an initiative called Culture Queer, encompassing the wide range of year-round activities that image+nation offers, from film programming to mentorship. They will also be launching a

new website to help better accommodate the growing needs of their audience — not only by streaming films, but also offering an online space with resources and information on queer storytelling and their programming selection.

Closing the 10-day festival, on Nov. 30, is *Perfect Endings* by Daniel Ribeiro, a starchy-eyed rom-com from Brazil about a 32-year-old filmmaker navigating the dating scene after a decade in a monogamous relationship.

In addition to image+nation's usual Voix Autochtones / Indigiqueer, Queerment Quebec and Made Au Canada programs, this year's edition will continue its focus on films from France (*Langue étrangère*, *Les reines du drame*, *Miséricorde*) and highlight the Beijing Queer Film Festival (*Mama Rainbow*, To the South shorts program). The festival will also focus on Acadie with the very latest documentary by Julien Cadieux (*Y'a une star*), who will attend the festival and speak about his creative vision.

Another returning focus is *Une question de genre / A Question of Gender*, which looks at what non-binary and trans folks have to say about the world today (*Really Happy Someday*, *We Forgot to Break Up*, *Any Other Way: the Jackie Shane Story*). The new Zeitgeist focus will feature a selection of films that address some of our most pressing cultural preoccupations (*Light, Light, Light*, *Drone*, *Les reines du drame*, *Sabbath Queen*).

Image+nation 37 will also launch I+N CONNEXE, a branded series of live discursive encounters between filmmakers and audiences, offering opportunities for the public to discover queer creators from Quebec, Canada and around the world. This year's speakers include Courtney Montour (*Rising*), Martin Henri, Eli Jean Tahchi, Myriam Farsaoui, Béatrice Moukhaiber and Jean Pierre Bergeron (*La dernière communion*), Alysha Brilla (*The Queen of My Dreams*) and Justine Primlott (*A Mother Apart*).

Among some of the other 2024 program highlights are *Sweet Angel Baby*, *Fanatical: The Catfishing of Tegan and Sara* and *La révolution des coordinatrices d'intimité (Sex Is Comedy)*.

→ For more, please visit image-nation.org.

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On Screen



All We Imagine as Light



Who Do I Belong To?



Gladiator II



Bird

BY JUSTINE SMITH

The two big year-end blockbusters to hit the screen this November are unexpected sequels.

Ridley Scott returns to Ancient Rome after nearly 25 years with *Gladiator II* (Nov. 22). Paul Mescal, Denzel Washington, Connie Nielsen and Pedro Pascal star in this film set years after the events of its predecessor. Mescal is Lucius, who is forced to enter the Colosseum after his home is conquered by the tyrannical Emperors who now lead Rome with an iron fist. For something a little lighter, there's also Disney's *Moana 2* (Nov. 27). After receiving an unexpected call from her wayfinding ancestors, Moana journeys alongside Maui and a new crew to the far seas of Oceania and into dangerous, long-lost waters for another epic adventure.

Another major movie release this November is *Wicked* (Nov. 22), the adaptation of the extremely popular Broadway musical that presents an alternative origin story of *The Wizard of Oz*'s Glinda and the Wicked Witch of the West. While running at 160 minutes, just 5 minutes shorter than the stage production, the film is Part 1 of 2. Ariana Grande and Cynthia Erivo star as Elphaba, an ostracised but defiant girl born with green skin, and Glinda, a privileged aristocrat born popular, who become extremely unlikely friends in the magical land of Oz.

If spooky season extends all the way into the fall for you, there are a few films keeping the Halloween spirit alive

throughout November. *Spirit in the Blood* (Nov. 1) is a horror thriller about a pack of teenage girls who embrace their own dark nature to fight against the evil spirits they believe killed a young girl in a secluded religious mountain community. In *Heretic* (Nov. 8), Hugh Grant stars as the “diabolical” Mr. Reed, the subject of an attempted conversion by two Mormon missionaries who find it difficult to leave after they enter his home.

Always playing with new technology, Robert Zemeckis uses de-aging tech to create *Here* (Nov. 22). Tom Hanks and Robin Wright star in this drama that covers the events of a single spot of land and its inhabitants, spanning from the past to well into the future. According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the film uses generative AI technology to face-swap and de-age actors in real time instead of using additional post-production methods.

Three films that screened in competition at Cannes will also be released in Montreal this month:

Jacques Audiard's unusual musical, *Emilia Pérez* (Nov. 1), is about a lawyer offered a job to help a notorious cartel boss retire and transition into living as a woman, fulfilling a long-held desire. Zoe Saldana, Karla Sofia Gascón and Selena Gomez shared the prize for best actress at Cannes.

Andrea Arnold is also back with *Bird* (Nov. 8), is about a 12-year-old girl named Bailey who lives with her single dad Bug and brother Hunter in a squat in North Kent, England. Bug doesn't have much time for his kids, and Bailey, who is approaching puberty, seeks attention and adventure elsewhere.

All We Imagine as Light (Nov. 29) is a poetic drama set in Mumbai, where Nurse Prabha's routine is troubled when she receives an unexpected gift from her estranged husband. Her younger roommate Anu, meanwhile, tries in vain to find a spot in the city to be intimate with her boyfriend.

For some local cinema, Concordia alumni Meryam Joobeur makes her feature debut with *Who Do I Belong To?* (Nov. 1), about a Tunisian woman who is caught between her maternal love and her search for the truth when her son returns home from war and unleashes a darkness throughout their village. Sophie Deraspe's follow-up to *Antigone* is *Shepherds* (Nov. 15), about the pastoral adventure of a young Montreal advertising executive who moves to France to become a Provençal shepherd.

From critically acclaimed stop-motion filmmaker Adam Elliott (*Mary and Max*), *Memoir of a Snail* (Nov. 8) is the bittersweet story of a melancholic woman called Grace Pudel — a hoarder of snails, romance novels and guinea pigs.

For some Christmas-season content, Dwayne Johnson, Chris Evans, J.K. Simons and Lucy Liu star in *Red One* (Nov. 15), an action comedy about an infamous bounty hunter trying to save a kidnapped Santa Claus.

November is also a big month for Montreal film festivals. From Nov. 6 to 17, Cinemania will showcase French cinema from around the world, accommodating anglo viewers with English subtitles. The 30th edition of Image + Nation, dedicated to sharing the stories and experiences of LGBTQ+ communities, runs from Nov. 20 to 30. For documentary fans, RIDM takes place this year from Nov. 20 to Dec. 1.

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November arts calendar



The Conditions at MAI



Titanique at Segal Centre

BY SAVANNAH STEWART

A guide to some of the most promising performances and exhibitions happening and launching in Montreal in November.

The Wolves

The Wolves offers a peek into the complex, intense lives of nine girls playing on the school soccer team as they warm up for the big game and navigate the challenges of adolescence. Performed at Segal Centre and presented by Geordie Theatre — Montreal's English-language theatre producers and school for all ages — this raw and fast-paced play delves into themes of friendship, identity, sexuality, grief and social issues, and was recognized as a Pulitzer Prize finalist and New York Times Critics' Pick. There will also be a relaxed performance on Nov. 10, designed for audiences with sensory sensitivities. Please note that the show includes mature content such as swearing and references to self-harm. 5170 Côte-Ste-Catherine through Nov. 17

Three Women of Swatow

This darkly comedic play by acclaimed playwright Chloé Hung delves into family secrets, generational trauma and cultural expectations. After a mother accidentally kills her husband, three generations of Chinese-Canadian women must confront their painful histories and unravel their complex relationships. With sharp dialogue and dark humour, the play asks whether these women can break free from the cycles of the past or are fated to repeat them. Directed by Sophie Gee and featuring Shiong-En Chan, Qianna MacGilchrist and Julie Tamiko Manning, this powerful story is brought to life with raw emotion and wit. Performances, at Centaur Theatre, will include French surtitles on Nov. 14, 15 and 16. 453 St-Francois-Xavier through Nov. 24

Titanique

Titanique is a fresh musical comedy that combines the music of Celine Dion with the epic romance of *Titanic*, reimagining the story of Jack and Rose through Celine's wild perspective. The Segal Centre production of this Off-Broadway hit brings audiences a hilarious take on the iconic film, with Dion's classic songs, such as "My Heart Will Go On" and "All By Myself," performed by a live band. This celebrated theatrical remake reshapes the beloved moments and characters of *Titanic* in a fun, over-the-top way, as directed by the character of Celine Dion. 5170 Côte-Ste-Catherine through Nov. 24

Jim Henson's The Storyteller: The Seven Ravens

This innovative experience, narrated by author Neil Gaiman, uses advanced AR technology to transport you directly into a classic fairy tale in which a woman embarks on a journey to save her seven brothers who've been turned into ravens. Through a see-through optical device, captivating visuals and interactive features blend together, transforming traditional storytelling into a mesmerizing journey. The Montreal-based Felix & Paul Studio, specializing in immersive video art — who brought us the captivating VR experience *Space Explorers: THE INFINITE* — are behind the creation of this new work displayed by PHI Centre in partnership with the Société de la Place des Arts. 175 Ste-Catherine W., through Feb. 23, 2025

Laure Prouvost: *Oma-je*

Forever a fan of plays on words, Laure Prouvost's exhibition *Oma-je* pays homage to people who have marked her, up close or from afar. The renowned French artist uses her work to celebrate over 100 people — family, loved ones, activists and thinkers, primarily women — with notable works from her over 20-year career. Audre Lorde, Ada Lovelace and Marie Curie are three examples of women referenced in *Oma-je*, soon to be on display at the Fondation PHI. And best of all, it's a free exhibit! *Laure Prouvost: Oma-je is on display at the PHI Foundation (451 & 465 Saint-Jean) from now until March 9, 2025*

Spaces of Resonance

The PHI Foundation presents *Spaces of Resonance*, a public engagement project by artist My-Van Dam. Visitors can participate in weekend workshops in the Foundation's Education Room to create sculptural pieces, organized in conjunction with the Laure Prouvost: *Oma-je* exhibition. Dam's interdisciplinary work spans performance, sculpture, installation, video art and drawing, using a fluid, body-centred approach to explore ideas and emotions. The objects crafted in the workshops will remain on display alongside Dam's *Objects of Solidarity*, later incorporated into public performance workshops led by the artist and guest performers. The project will conclude in March 2025 with a final performance showcasing Dam's exploration and the collaborative works created throughout the program. 451 & 465 St-Jean through March 9, 2025

Witches – Out of the Shadows

The latest exhibit at Montreal's museum of archaeology and history, Pointe-à-Callière, takes visitors on a journey through the complex history of witches, featuring over 400 artifacts such as manuscripts, paintings and ethnographic

objects from Europe and America. The exhibition explores the roots of witchcraft, including the brutal witch hunts of the 16th and 17th centuries, which led to the persecution of many women. Interactive displays allow visitors to engage with traditional practices like divination, spells and healing rituals. The show also examines the shifting image of the witch, from the old crone of folklore to today's powerful feminist icon. 350 Place Royale through April 6, 2025

The Conditions

This multidisciplinary exhibit will take up the full space at Montréal, arts interculturels (MAI) with video pieces, shadow puppetry, a live performance, an art installation and more. It all flows from contemporary dance artist Lucy M. May's search for an embodied connection to her home of Wolastokuk/New Brunswick, all while coming to terms with her settler colonial origins. *The Conditions* presents the improvised works of six artists including May, evoking feelings of nostalgia and discomfort and inviting the audience to listen, watch, move through the space with curiosity and reconnect with the sensations of their body. 3680 Jeanne-Mance, Nov. 12–16, talkback session moderated by Hanako Hoshimi-Caines on Nov. 13

Being There

The exhibition *Being There* explores architect Arthur Erickson's travels in Europe, North Africa and Asia, showcasing how these experiences influenced his architectural philosophy. Focusing on letters and photographs from 1950–1952 and his 1961 journey through Japan, Cambodia and Indonesia, the exhibition highlights Erickson's belief that architecture must be experienced firsthand to be truly understood. His letters, especially to mentor Gordon Webber, and his travel photography served as vital «site annotations» for his later work. This exhibit, part of the Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA)'s exploration of photography in design, shows how Erickson's travels informed his vision and practice. Join curator David Covo for the opening on Nov. 14. 1920 Baile, Nov. 14–March 16, 2025

Costume Balls: Dressing Up History, 1870-1927

This temporary exhibition at the McCord Stewart Museum takes the visitor back in time to Montreal's costume balls over a century ago. With photographs, paintings and some of the original costumes worn by Montreal's high society at the time, *Costume Balls: Dressing Up History* doesn't just show what entertainment events looked like 100 years ago, it also uncovers how costume balls reinforced colonial realities. 690 Sherbrooke W., Nov. 14–Aug. 17, 2025



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Sexy, savvy cabaret



Miami Minx

Josh Kirschner

BY SAVANNAH STEWART

Quarterly feminist comedy cabaret PeachClub turns two this month, and its Nov. 14 anniversary show promises to be an eventful one.

Cult MTL caught up with co-founders Cat and Margaux, also known by the pseudonyms PeachClub Barbie and Gomar Babe, at a restaurant in the Plateau to talk about their upcoming event and their work using comedy to make the statement that sex work is real work.

The two best friends/business associates, one anglophone and the other francophone, are like a snapshot of this city in all its eccentricity — they switch between English and French at a rate that would be dizzying for anyone outside of Montreal to keep up with. Their vision for the PeachClub cabaret was born on the streets of this sexy, sassy city, too: an unabashedly pro-sex work, bilingual comedy night interspersed with drag, burlesque and pole-dancing cabaret numbers, putting women and non-binary, LBGTQ+ folks and sex workers in the spotlight. Can it get any more Montreal than that?

“Montreal is a bilingual city, and it’s important to us to reflect that,” says Margaux. She and Cat host the cabaret comedy, and their rapport is apparent across the table from where they sit in the booth of the cozy bistro we meet in.

They’re even linked in the story of how they got into comedy.

“We kind of ended up in comedy against our will,” Cat jokes, explaining that their mutual friend, a comedian, sensed their

aptitude for humour and tried enlisting them for a show. “We were like, absolutely not.”

Luckily, their friend didn’t take no for an answer and booked the two of them anyway, putting their names on the flyer and sending it out. They had two weeks to put their sets together, though neither of them had ever written a bit before.

“And we killed it!” says Cat. “Our first performance, both of us, we did amazing.”

Cat ended up writing her bit about her experiences as a sex worker. She wasn’t sure how it was going to go, but unbeknownst to her, it was the start of a journey that would eventually lead to the PeachClub cabaret.

“The reception was just so unbelievable,” she says. “People not only want to know, but they are a lot more open-minded than we would have given credit for.”

They realized that comedy was a way to talk about the realities of sex work that was accessible to people who didn’t have a personal connection to it. Margaux takes on the role of the ally, symbolically representing that they, too, have a part to play in helping to bring the lived experiences of sex workers to light and mobilize for safer working conditions.

And it’s not just jokes about sex work on the menu, but the whole gamut of experiences for women and queer people today.

“We want to also take out the, *la lourdeur du sujet*,” says Margaux. “So, you listen to a bit from a sex worker, or from a feminist experience or from someone from the LBGT community, and right after, you have a beautiful cabaret performance — it brings fun!”

PeachClub cabaret shows are designed to be unique and non-repetitive, with different performers and themes each time, ensuring that every event feels fresh and different. Usually held at Café Cléopâtre, the two-year anniversary show on Nov. 14 will be their first time having an event at Stock Bar, the gay male strip club.

“*On est allé des danseuses au danseurs*, because we’re inclusive,” Cat jokes.

The lineup for that upcoming show demonstrates the eclecticism Cat and Margaux strive to create, featuring three comedians, a draglesque number, a go-go dancer and a genre-bending pole-dance artist.

The comedy acts include Toronto-based Adrienne Fish, as seen on *Crave* and *Just for Laughs*, promising “all-around very high energy, a badass like us,” says Cat.

Saad Fennich, a Moroccan-born, Montreal-based comedian blending humour, theatre and poetry, and the local comic/sex worker and organizer of another pro-sex work comedy night (*Putes en Criss*) Toni Bâtard, are also on the lineup.

Drag/burlesque performer Envy the Clown will bring their high energy to the stage with a performance that’s all about empowerment. “If there’s one way to define Envy the Clown, it’s ‘Power,’” Cat remarks.

Palestinian performer Moonshine Sunshine will bring the go-go number, so attendees should certainly remember to take out some cash to participate in the performance. And rounding out the evening is Khadija Mbowe of *Operatika*, which fuses pole-dancing and opera.

“That they’re all going to bring an epic energy to our show and just embrace the message and help us get it out there,” says Margaux. “We’re very excited for this one.”

With nine shows already under their belt, the two co-founders have been keeping busy for the last two years. But their vision for PeachClub is even broader than the cabaret.

As a nonprofit, they are working to expand and create educational events as well, inviting speakers and working with organizations in Montreal who support the communities they highlight, namely sex workers and queer, femme-identifying communities.

Still, it’s tiring work, and the two spoke of the challenges they face staying true to their vision in a world where the arts are always struggling for funding and sex work is still criminalized.

“There’s something special in acknowledging how difficult it is, and that’s just not a part that is necessarily shown or seen,” says Cat. “And especially with the kinds of subjects that we’re engaging with, the kinds of challenges that those subjects present us with.”

Something as simple as advertising their events on Instagram becomes an obstacle, as some of their posts referring to sex work have been taken down, resulting in the PeachClub Instagram account being penalized in the algorithm.

“We are confronting the shadow-ban experience, in a world where social media is your first most important tool to promote,” says Margaux. “It’s very frustrating because we’re facing suppression and everything, but at the same time we see masculinism content, extremism. We see all those subjects that really brainwash and are propaganda that we all know shouldn’t be there. And us, talking about the truth, not even talking about opinions, just talking about the truth, and we’re faced with (censorship).”

Rather than accept defeat, Cat and Margaux have taken to the streets to promote their upcoming events the old-fashioned way, handing out flyers and talking to people one-on-one. Their previous shows, attended by 150 to 250 people, prove that they can fill a venue.

“I think there’s a million reasons to come to our show,” says Cat. “And even if you can’t find one, you’ll probably find one once you get there.”

→ PeachClub’s 2-year anniversary edition is happening at Stock Bar (1171 Ste-Catherine E.) on Nov. 14, 7 p.m., \$35



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: weird era



BY SRUTI ISLAM AND ALEX NIERENHAUSEN

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

An Honest Woman by Charlotte Shane

If you know, you know. I am not a non-fiction girlie. I so want to be, and thankfully, texts like this from Charlotte Shane help make it so. With a deeply emotive grasp on her prose, our narrator recounts an experience from her early 20s of quitting grad school to pursue the much misunderstood industry of sex work. I adore this memoir — intentionally honest, definitely, but in reading, it felt like it was impossible for Shane to lie, even a little bit. She speaks transparently of her early obsession with “boys,” and with desire, which begs the question: is sex work only about the money, or can it also be about the sex? This is not a voyeuristic text that romanticizes its

work (yes, we all wish we were selling feet pics), but instead is a text about a young woman who values the ways in which her femininity could be so voluptuously and achingly wanted. Part of the book reads like a love letter to a long-time John, offering a tender but realistic account of the kinds of connections sex can inspire — financial or otherwise. In this episode, I talk to Charlotte about loving cis-hetero men, being worshipped as a woman, Libra-ness, Britney Spears, and much more. (SI)

Cloud Missives by Kenzie Allen

Kenzie Allen, Haudenosaunee poet and multimodal artist, has gifted us with *Cloud Missives*, her debut poetry collection that reads very unlike a debut. Told in four distinct parts, this is an anthropological study in love, loss, abuse, mythology and Indigenous identity. Allen interrogates all of these subjects with a deft hand and a curious eye. In what are surely some of the most memorable poems in the collection, Allen confronts Indigenous representation in popular culture, with her calling on the characters of Tiger Lily from Peter Pan, Disney’s Pocahontas and even Indiana Jones to ask them and their creators: do you know the damage

you’ve done? Come for these conversations, and be sure to stay for the last section of this collection... This part is a beautiful collection of love poems that contain some of the most tender and beautiful passages I’ve read in a long time. “Must there be rain in this poem to approximate my longing?” Allen writes, “Then let there be rain. A greater flood. Let us grow into creatures that survive it.” (AN)

Absolution by Jeff Vandermeer

Weirdos rejoice! Ten years after the Southern Reach series first engrossed readers with *Annihilation*, *Authority* and *Acceptance*, Jeff VanderMeer brings us back to the uber-mysterious Area X with the surprise fourth volume in this series, *Absolution*. Told in three parts, *Absolution* (kind of) explains the circumstances that allowed Area X to emerge, what happens once the border falls decades later, and the players involved in all of it. Part spy novel, part ecological horror, expect the existential dread from the original series to persist here. And I’ll be real with you: If you’re looking for answers to your questions from the first three novels, you might not be satisfied. However, if you’re like me and never expected answers to these questions, *Absolution* is a brilliant return for VanderMeer and marks one of his weirdest (and most fun) books yet. We spoke on the podcast about pushing readers, magic mushrooms, whether he thinks we’ll be treated to more tales from Area X, and much more. (AN)

The *Weird Era* podcast is available via Apple and Spotify. @weirdera.ca

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