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Nico Williams, *Flamer*, 2022. 11/0 seed beads on thermally-fused/braided polyethylene thread, maple, cottonwood and metal. Courtesy of the artist and Blouin Division. Photo: Paul Litherland.  
Lap-See Lam, *Tales of the Altersea*, installation view, Swiss Institute, New York, 2023. Courtesy the artist and Swiss Institute, New York. Photo: Daniel Pérez.

Lap-See Lam: *Shadow Play* is presented with the support of



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We spoke with director James Gunn about casting and reflecting the political moment in his forthcoming blockbuster *Superman*, standout Montreal memories and more.

Cover photo courtesy of Warner Bros. Discovery

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Lorraine Carpenter  
editor-in-chief  
lorraine.carpenter@cultmontreal.com

Justine Smith  
film editor  
justine.smith@cultmontreal.com

Clayton Sandhu  
food editor

Dave MacIntyre  
contributing editor (music)

Savannah Stewart  
contributing editor (arts)

Paul Desbaillets  
contributing editor (football culture)

Chris Tucker  
art director

Advertising  
ads@cultmontreal.com

Contributors:  
Stephan Boissonneault  
Johnson Cummins  
Toula Drimonis  
Sruti Islam  
Darcy MacDonald  
Mr. Wavvy

Special Thanks:  
Tristan McKenna

General inquiries + feedback  
info@cultmontreal.com



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

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Cult MTL is published by Cult MTL Media Inc. and printed by Imprimerie Mirabel. Entire contents are © Cult MTL Media Inc.

We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada.

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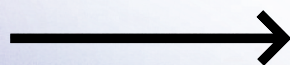
PRESENTS

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## CAQ vs. women



BY TOULA DRIMONIS

I recently watched the sixth and final season of *The Handmaid's Tale*, and while I've always enjoyed the show, watching it after Donald Trump's re-election and the steady erosion of women's rights in the U.S. felt very uncomfortable for me. It turns out it's difficult to watch dystopian fiction when it mimics reality a little too closely.

For those unfamiliar with the series, it's based on the novel by Margaret Atwood, and is set in Gilead, a totalitarian society in what was once part of the U.S. Faced with a plummeting birth rate, Gilead treats women as property of the state.

"Surely, you're exaggerating," some will be quick to say. "The U.S. isn't Gilead."

Well, no. But also, yes.

We're living next to a country, after all, that just kept a dead woman's body on life support for months to carry a nine-week-old fetus to a viable state.

Adriana Smith was clinically brain dead. Yet, not only was this young black mom and nurse initially denied adequate care, but despite her family's wishes, she was forced to remain on life support because of Georgia's abortion ban laws. The state essentially made her a human incubator, denying her dignity and bodily autonomy.

Her baby, delivered via what they're calling a "postmortem emergency c-section," weighs about 1 pound, 13 ounces and is currently in the NICU. If he even survives, he will face a lifetime of complex, very expensive medical care that Smith's family never had a choice about taking on.

"There is no data on whether prolonged, technologically assisted incubation in a cadaver can produce a living, much less healthy baby," writes Dr. Caplan, a bioethics professor. This nightmarish scenario truly highlights how the reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, and the fallout from the end of abortion

rights has had catastrophic results for American women, proving that "pro-life" has never been about the sanctity of life, but about control.

### THE CAQ'S PRETEND FEMINISM

Now, of course I'm not claiming that Quebec is Gilead or even the U.S. under Trump's presidency. (That would be silly.) But that doesn't mean we should remain complacent to the global rolling back of women's rights and priorities, and the setbacks in legal protections, access to healthcare and political representation. Quebec is not exempt from this trend.

I've been writing about women's rights, gender-based violence and the never-ending fight for reproductive rights for a long time now and I've been watching the political shift to the right in many countries with alarm. That shift is routinely followed by an increase in misogyny, inequality and greater suppression of minority rights, as well as the implementation of policies and budget cuts that primarily penalize women since they're the ones disproportionately represented in lower income groups and experience poverty at higher rates than men.

There are many insidious ways for anti-feminism to rear its head, and it doesn't always manifest in direct attacks against our bodily autonomy and reproductive rights.

Some may scoff at the insinuation that misogyny affects us in Quebec. After all, we're a pretty progressive society and the CAQ government won't stop proclaiming how much it values gender equality. In fact, CAQ politicians bring it up often — usually when they need to justify legislation like Bill 21, the province's secularism legislation that has cost many Muslim women their jobs, and made them targets of harassment and hate, or when they loudly worry about immigrants potentially not having the same values of "equality between men and women."

The CAQ's rhetoric is often a watered-down version of "femonationalism," which involves "using feminist language to promote nationalist and xenophobic agendas, particularly targeting immigrants and other minority groups." In this discourse, there's always a juxtaposition between the "civilized" and "progressive" majority and "backward" and "uncivilized" minorities — and the women we need to protect from the latter.

Immigrants unable to understand "our Quebec values" of gender equality shouldn't even bother coming here, CAQ politicians will tell us, as they slash budgets that pay teachers and early childhood educators (the overwhelming percentage of them women) and fight against nurses (overwhelmingly women) who want better living wages. As they categorically state there isn't any more money for social housing (again, affecting women and single moms the most) or when the CAQ's housing minister tells Quebecers that shelters for victims of gender-based violence are just too damn expensive.

There are many ways to undermine gender equality while still declaring yourself to be a feminist.

### THREE DECADES LATER, THE FIGHT CONTINUES

Thirty years after the Bread and Roses March, the fight waged by Quebec women against poverty and gender-based violence, and for equal opportunities and access to affordable housing, remains as important as ever.

While progress has certainly taken place, a strong global anti-feminist masculinist backlash is present here, too. A simple Facebook post about the city of Montreal's inauguration of Place du Pain-et-des-Roses, a public space honouring the 30th anniversary of the historic march, was bombarded with hateful messages by men, unhappy that a tiny public space was being allocated for this.

In similar fashion, the public announcement of Canada's new president of the Public Health Agency, Nancy Hamzawi, was accompanied by a barrage of vile online comments about her hijab and her weight, two things that have absolutely nothing to do with her qualifications and experience. The internet doesn't just incite and normalize misogyny — it often mirrors it.

Back to the CAQ. There's no denying that this government's austerity measures will have a disproportionate effect on Quebec women. Budget cuts in healthcare, childcare and social assistance inevitably impact women the most, affecting their access to services but also leading to increased work for them. When the government fails, it's often women who pick up the slack with their unpaid labour, caring for children and elderly parents left with no resources.

### FUNDS, NOT FLASHY DECLARATIONS

It's easy for the Legault government to claim they're big fans of gender equality and feminism when it suits their narrative, but when women's groups are begging them to fast-track construction of more women's shelters, they refuse to allocate the money — even while gender-based violence continues to dominate headlines.

On June 17, the bodies of a 38-year-old man and a 32-year-old woman were discovered in what police believe was a murder-suicide. The incident marked the fifth femicide in Quebec in five weeks, and the tenth femicide of 2025.

SOS Violence Conjugale says it received 60,000 calls for help between April 1, 2024, and March 31, 2025. Almost 20,000 requested a room in an emergency shelter. Over half were turned away because there was no space for them. Funding simply hasn't increased with demand. So, no, the government isn't as big on defending women as it claims to be.

Even if Quebec women thank their lucky stars for not living in the U.S. or Afghanistan right now, these totalitarian theocratic regimes and their trampling of women's rights shouldn't be our baseline for determining feminist progress.

We can't afford to remain complacent. And we should shame any government that claims to support women and fight for their safety and well-being into proving it with funding, not fancy words.



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# : best buds



BY DAVE MACINTYRE

Damn, we're already at the 40th edition of this thing!

Pretty surreal to know we live in a world where you CAN be paid to review weed strains as if you're a wine sommelier. Since we're officially knee-deep in summer and therefore conditions are ideal for going for walks with a joint in one hand and a lighter in the other, it's just as well that I've chosen to review pre-rolls for this month's column.

A gas cake strain sativa courtesy of Pixel (a brand of the Sorel-Tracy-based Nuances MJ), Escampette comes in a set of 10 joints (1.5 g each) and are thin enough that they look like glorified pinners. But make no mistake: these bad boys are deceptively hard-hitting. Let's dive in.

PIXEL ESCAMPETTE (SATIVA)

At roughly 25% THC, you're in for quite a journey considering the size and length of these things. They're definitely as dog-walkery as dog-walker joints can get in that sense, but they still give me a satisfying, uplifting head high, if a little too concentrated around my brain. Luckily, they also go down pretty smoothly, give off a gassy diesel aroma and don't canoe too often once lit. Even if they appear small and paper-thin, they take a surprisingly long time to finish. Guess that's how they get you!

A nice wave is ridden when I smoke these, they burn fairly evenly and it doesn't take tooooooo long to come down. It tends to last a few hours even during the back half of the high, but it's still enjoyable even as the high slowly descends. Mind you, this is best enjoyed in moderation like any other strain would be, as I do find myself getting into my own head a bit too much with this stuff.

I take one of these out for a walk in Parc Laurier on a warm summer day, and the pool there is pretty busy

even if the park itself is relatively empty — a smattering of adults but mostly parents with their small children. The weather on that day wasn't as oppressively hot as it's been other days this past month. (Seriously, that heatwave legit ruined my St-Jean.)

By the time I finish the joint, I'm so high that the sound of leaves bristling and birds chirping is something I feel deep in the pit of my soul, almost as if it's cleansing me by itself. If this could be Osheaga's weather this year instead of the blazing hot and humid environment that was last summer's edition, we would be so fucking back.

Otherwise, this stuff mostly made me want to spend the rest of that day eating Smarties and watching the Club World Cup as well as Glastonbury performances from this past weekend. While Kneecap and Bob Vylan's performances have led to both acts being treated like pariahs by the same institutions refusing to bat an eyelid to an actual genocide (not least of which the BBC, who broadcast the festival on TV every year), at least I got to watch Olivia Rodrigo and Robert Smith duet "Just Like Heaven." That was nice. You win some, you lose some. 8/10

# :the 1st half



BY PAUL DESBAILLETS

The 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, hosted for the first time ever in North America, has been rolling out in the United States since June 14, until July 13 — a proper test run ahead of the 2026 FIFA World Cup co-hosted by the U.S., Canada and Mexico. This 32-team format is FIFA's most ambitious Club World Cup yet.

Global media coverage has been excited to spotlight upsets, standout matches and logistical challenges:

FIFA knows how to use social media, and vibrant Latin American support has been a recurring theme, I encourage anyone to see the online highlights of Boca, Flamengo, River Plate and Palmeiras supporters from Argentina and Brazil going wild with full voices across Miami, L.A. and Philadelphia. Looks absolutely amazing.

Other countries will want to host this tournament in the future. I am putting that statement in writing.

One of the most important storylines of this event has been the presence of Lionel Messi. The icon, now

playing for Inter Miami, brought both global prestige and U.S.-based attention to the tournament.

Inter Miami's opening fixture drew one of the largest TV audiences of the tournament's group stage, with major networks in Latin America and Europe breaking viewership records for a club match outside of UEFA or CONMEBOL competitions.

Stadiums featuring Inter Miami either sold out or came close, with Messi jerseys accounting for nearly 1 in 3 sales at Club World Cup merch outlets during the first two weeks — yes, you read that right, 1 in 3.

Social media engagement skyrocketed whenever Messi appeared — all clips of his assists, goals and interactions with fans frequently trended worldwide.

Messi is the bridge between traditional football markets and the newer ones that FIFA hopes to win over. For many casual or new fans in North America, his name remains the primary draw. (Just look at July 5 ticket prices for CF Montréal to understand.) Messi's presence gave the tournament an instant credibility boost.

For fans, especially in the U.S., he delivered an authentic taste of world-class football to their doorstep. Without Messi, this tournament would still matter, but with him, it became must-see. His participation ensured the 2025 edition was more than just a dress rehearsal, it was a headline act.

Messi and the crew will take on PSG in the round of 16, which is another major victory for FIFA.

As the 2025 Club World Cup rolls out across the United States, it's doing more than just showcasing global club football, it's serving as a litmus test for next year's FIFA World Cup. The successes and tournament issues on display offer important insights into what needs to be fixed before the planet's biggest sporting event lands in North America.

From fan travel logistics and ticket pricing strategies to stadium readiness and local engagement, the Club World Cup is helping FIFA gauge where the football ecosystem stands across the continent.

If this tournament has proven anything, it's that star power sells, culture matters and the American audience is growing, but still needs a special approach.

For FIFA, the time to listen, adapt and build on this momentum is now.

The world will be watching again in 2026, but this time, the stakes will be even higher.

Don't forget: GOAL MTL 2025, a free soccer festival of community, culture and cause, on Sunday, July 27 at Percival Molson Stadium (475 des Pins W.) from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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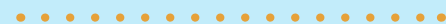
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# food

## Eat the heat

BY CLAY SANDHU

Summer, without question, is the best season for eating in Montreal. From produce to protein, most everything is available, abundant and delicious. Chefs are inspired by what's around, and that inspiration sparks an infectious appetite in diners throughout the city. I say it's the best for eating, specifically, because *dining* is something entirely different. The small restaurants, even ones with AC, can become sweltering and while the many terrasses that pop up around town offer an enjoyable alfresco experience, they offer little to no respite from the often intense weather. Dining, depending on where you eat, can be a somewhat masochistic endeavour.

When the weather is hot — especially as hot as it was at the end of June — I think of the Mediterranean. I imagine eating grilled fish on a Greek island, separating flaky filets of sardines, and drinking cold white wine by a Provençal calanque, sipping an ice-cold beer with a plate of fried squid on a beach in Puglia. For me, that's a vision of dining that celebrates the heat. The food is simple and somehow tastes better because of the climate. So when the thermostat read 40 degrees, I booked a table at Leila.

Billed as cuisine from the South Mediterranean, Leila is social media star and former Les Chefs participant, Amine Laabi's first proper restaurant — after his fast casual project, Loumi. Taking over the Mile End storefront formerly home to Maïs and then Beau Temps, Leila's aim is to capture the ephemeral essence of coastal dining and put it on the plate for Montrealers to enjoy. Unfussy and purposely laid-back, it's a dining experience that is meant to be easy, with a focus on simple cooking, good wine and a welcoming atmosphere — an ideal locale for dinner during a heatwave.

The Mile End location, from an aesthetic point of view, is as far from the idyllic scenery of the Mediterranean as you can get — it's kitty corner to a gas station, after all — but inside, it's charming enough. A long row of tables makes up the bulk of the dining room, with a handsome central bar and ample wine cellar. The decor doesn't have any defined sense of place, really. Paloma, the now closed but much beloved Niçoise restaurant from Rosalie and Armand Forcherio, by contrast, did a much more successful job, in my view, of capturing that particular Mediterranean feeling — especially in their back garden.

But Leila insists their offering is about the food. The menu, as should be expected, is geared toward sharing and comprises roughly 15 dishes. Drawing from the wide-spanning Mediterranean culinary canon, the menu flows from Galician octopus to veal Milanese or Merguez with labneh and escargot. There's a tidy and very well-balanced cocktail program along with a solid wine list and Peroni on draft. I like the beverage program here. There are plenty of delicious things to drink and nothing is overly ambitious. We selected a bottle of Tutto Anfora Bianco from Tuscan producer La Ginestra. Comprised of 100% trebbiano



macerated in amphora, it's a salty and aromatic white with enough heft to take meat and spice while delicate and bright enough to accompany seafood.

We began our meal with a trio of dishes. First, a halibut crudo topped with minced Fresno chilli, pink peppercorn, pine nuts and finished with a lemon vinaigrette. It was a surprisingly garlicky little number, which I quite liked. Meltingly tender strips of halibut soaked up the piquant dressing while the pine nuts and chillis brought layers of warmth and texture. I particularly enjoyed the floral pop of the pink peppercorns. Laabi went hard on the seasoning, which rode the line between well and overseasoned but, to me, stayed on the right side of that line. A white fish crudo with Fresno chilli is a dish I've seen and eaten a million times — Laabi's was both different and familiar, but overall very successful and my favourite dish of the night.

Next, an octopus dish inspired by *Pulpo a la Gallega* — a classic Galician dish of octopus with potatoes and smoked paprika. Laabi's version is beautifully composed and fairly classic, save for the addition of a garlicky aioli (which we felt was very toum-adjacent) and pickled onions. The cook on the octopus was perfect, and the flash-frying just before serving helped to give it a lovely crunch, which gave way to fork-tender meat. The potatoes, however, were a touch undercooked (really just a hair) and were underseasoned (more than a hair). The paprika held its own, but the lack of seasoning meant it had to carry more than its fair share of the dish and, ultimately, it just tasted a bit shy and slightly underwhelming.

The last item in the trio was Moroccan sardines on toast. Certainly the most photographed of Leila's dishes, two fat filets of marinated sardines find their way onto a crusty toast garnished with herb oil and finished with a dusting of espelette pepper. It's a delightful plate of oily fish and exactly what I was looking to eat. Paired with a cold beer or glass of white wine — if I closed my eyes, I could be in Marseille. At \$16, it's also one of the steals of the menu.

Next up, the homemade merguez and a salad of bitter greens with artichoke vinaigrette. The merguez, for me, was a disappointment. With two small links, a dollop of fennel labneh and a paltry garnish of a few slices of cucumber,

it felt like what's for dinner when you can only cook with what's already in the fridge. The merguez was decent but not especially remarkable — I'd say what you pick up at Al Khair would serve you just as well, and the rest of the dish felt too plain. At \$28, it's a tough dish to defend. The salad, however, was a delight. Crunchy baby gem lettuce cozies up with radicchio and chicory, and the lot gets tossed in a creamy artichoke dressing and finished with crispy shallots. It reminded me of the bean-aigrette salad at Beba, and was just a delightful plate of greens.

There are three pasta dishes on Leila's current menu: cavatelli with lamb, busiate with chanterelles and an unusual spaghetti made with dandelion greens and anchovy. The spaghetti called most to me, and while there were elements to like — the cook on the pasta, the tamed bitterness of the greens, the punchy anchovy — it just didn't fully come together for me. I found it a bit too oily and missing some vibrancy. It's a tight menu as it is, and I think devoting an entire section of it to pasta is overkill, especially if they're not all excellent. One or two pasta options would be more than enough. But this, I concede, may be a matter of personal preference.

The last course was a beautifully seared piece of halibut served on a bed of English peas dressed in a delicious basil pesto. This is a great seasonal dish that is simplicity embodied. Good fish, seasonal peas and a bright and vibrant sauce that holds the plate together. The fish was leaning towards overdone, but the peas and pesto married so well that it hardly mattered.

Leila isn't a transcendent restaurant. I doubt it's going to change your mind about food or introduce you to things you've never tasted or seen. Leila is a good restaurant, though. The service is friendly and attentive. The cocktails are balanced, the beer is cold and the wine flows freely (and is generally well-priced). The food has strengths and weaknesses, but it's accessible, true to its nature and done with the right kind of intention. That is to say, the food isn't aiming to impress or educate — it's meant to be easy and delicious. For the most part, that's done very successfully. Not every meal I've had in the Mediterranean has been incredible, but I've left every single meal well fed, with my thirst quenched and blissfully content. And to that end, Leila is indeed very authentic.



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# music

## Def fam

BY DARCY MACDONALD

Maybe you’ve heard this story. A couple of campus kids connect. One makes a beat, the other raps over it. They record it, and the seeds of a music empire are planted.

Except this isn’t 1983, we’re not in Rick Rubin’s crib at NYU, and the Def Jam era is over.

But in 2021, there’s better technology and more inspiration to draw from. In the party town of State College, Pennsylvania, beatmaker Joey Valence and rap fanatic Brae met in their freshman year at Penn State.

Their first recording became the DIY single “Crank It Up.” The next year, they somehow found themselves on *The Ellen DeGeneres Show*.

In 2023, the duo self-released a debut LP, *Punk Tactics*. They toured in a van and sold out show after show on word of mouth, landing at Montreal venue le Ministère in early 2024, where wall-to-wall teen girls lost their shit while parents hugged the wall.

With no deal and no outside stakeholders, in June, 2024, their sophomore *No Hands*, featuring collabs with DJ Z-Trip and Danny Brown, debuted on Spotify’s Top 10 albums. They joined Canadian pop-punkers Sum 41 as openers on their farewell tour.

JVB unabashedly channels the old school via Beastie Boys, LL Cool J, 2 Live Crew and Cypress Hill, to name a few. Joey’s production, meanwhile, is equally informed by genres and eras of electronic music past and present.

Now it’s 2025. A new single, “WASSUP,” features rapper JPEGMAFIA. A top-secret label arrangement and new project (*HYPERYOUTH*) are imminent. And JVB are set to return to Montreal to light up day one of Osheaga.

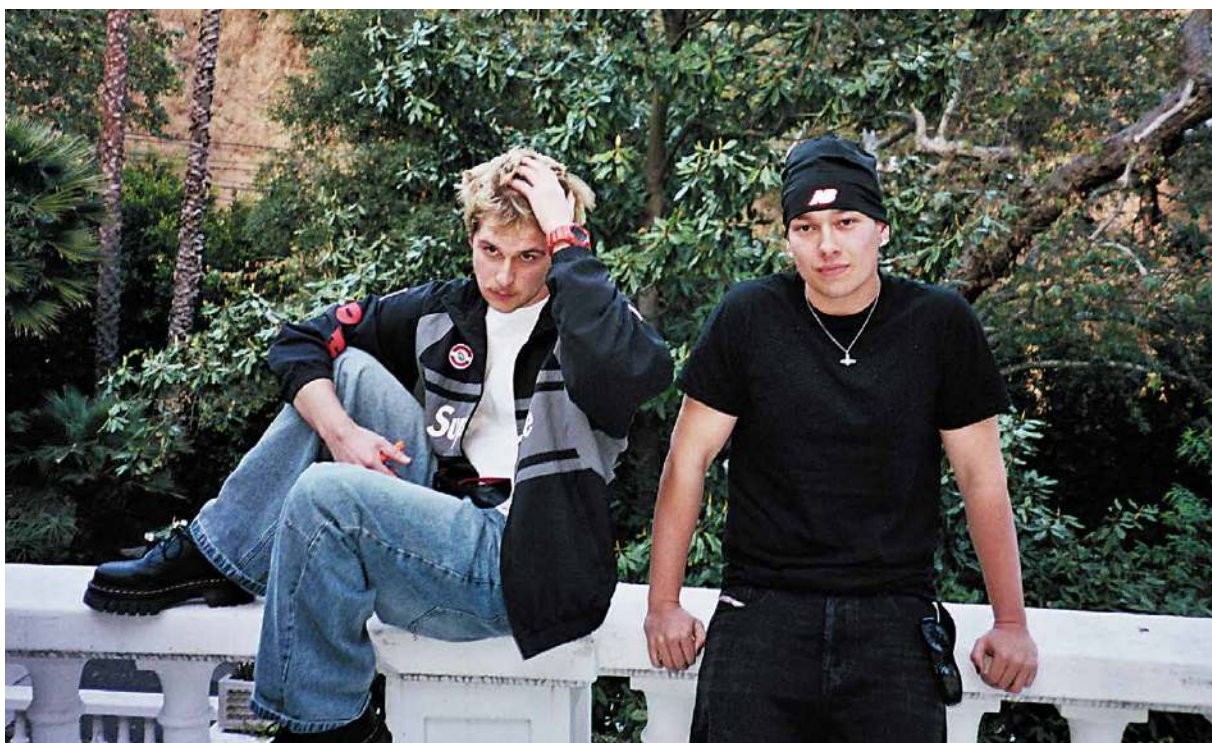
Darcy MacDonald: Give us the background on how you two linked up.

Brae: We met in freshman year of college. We were kind of like friends of friends of roommates. Joey was producing music at the time, and I wasn’t (making) music at all. On weekends, we would get together and he would have beats going and we would just be freestyling and stuff, with all of our friends, into the mic. And then it kind of just snowballed into this somehow.

Joey: Yeah, we were actually in the hula-hooping club. And then that’s how we met.

DM: Where is the intersection in terms of doing this music from the heart and kind of paying homage while being yourselves?

Joey: I think at the beginning it was way more of this thing where we were trying to bring in every single sound that we were inspired from. But at no point during any of the



Connor Phillips

music process were we ever trying to sound like something else. It’s literally just like, one time Brae and I rapped, and that’s what it sounded like. And that’s what all the music is moving forward.

Brae: I completely agree with Joey. We’re pretty much the same person at this point. I’m sure in some countries, you know, it’s just like Joey-Valence-and-Brae, like it’s one name.

DM: Where did you pick up on those old-school influences? How did that particular moment in time catch your ears before you started making music?

Brae: I can kind of speak for the both of us. It was our dads (who) were just playing old-school stuff all the time. My dad had a huge speaker system in the living room, and he’d be playing Jay-Z and Michael Jackson and Prince and Bobby Brown and Black Eyed Peas and all that shit. So that’s just what I was listening to from a very, very young age.

Joey: Literally the same. My dad would make these mixes and include all this stuff in it, everything from like Beastie Boys to Nirvana to Kanye West to Michael Jackson and all this 1980s electro-funk, and then mix it with, like, Chicago house. So I had all this shit that I was listening to growing up.

It came full circle in our music taste and (that’s) sort of where we got inspired for the beginning of our sound. And now it’s obviously just blossomed into so many things. But yeah, it was definitely our parents, and we’re lucky to have cool dads.

DM: When you’re a kid, you kind of don’t really know what you’re absorbing. How do you think it gelled in you creatively?

Joey: (Kids) just respond to energy. And you just respond to what makes you dance, what makes you excited. That’s, like, all you do as a kid. You’re just fucking dancing and moving around.

I was just always responding to anything that had energy in it. And so that’s where I got a lot of my music taste from.

And you know, people that respond to our music are coming for the energy regardless of what kind of music they like. And we have a massive respect for all this kind of music, and we’re knowledgeable about it.

DM: What level of geekery did you individually or together get into in learning about the genesis of all this music that you’re fucking with?

Brae: It varies by genre. Joey and I both have our niches.

Joey’s very into electronic and dubstep stuff, so he knows way more about that scene than I do. Whereas for me, I’ve always been into old, kind of underground hip hop, and specifically certain rappers.

I just know a lot about the history of them as people and stuff like that. You kind of just get interested in a sound and start to learn about it either from a young age or even now. You’re just discovering people and getting put on by your friends.

Growing up, I was obsessed with Jay-Z. I saw him in concert with my dad when I was like 13 or 14, so I’ve been a fan for a long time. Both me and Joey, currently, (among) new rappers that we really take a lot of inspiration from creatively, is Tyler, the Creator, who is fucking awesome.

And it’s funny because they’re dropping a new album, but recently I’ve reignited my love for the Clipse. Pusha T and Malice. I fucking love them so much. A lot of people, all these younger kids on TikTok don’t even know who the Clipse is.

Joey: I remember listening to the radio as a kid and (sort of thinking) “Did this song just appear?” Like who made it? How was it made? I was just so confused. And then I went back to eating dino nuggets.

But I got very into electronic music, and I’ve always loved sample-based music. The heart of jungle music, the breaks, they’re coming from these old funk songs.

I was just so fascinated with these people building sounds from the ground up. So I was so into the Prodigy and Pendulum. I got really into Skrillex and Knife Party and Nero and all this stuff. Massively, massively, massively love Daft Punk.

It’s like all those rappers from the ’80s to what’s current, and electronic music from that time until now, has all culminated in the sound of our music, now. I’m taking the sounds from the same type of stuff they were using back in the day. So it pays homage to that but introduces it in a totally different context with these really updated new sounds.

DM: Brae, coming from that hip hop background to now, fucking with this music — from a performance perspective or from a lyrical perspective, how does it hit you?

Brae: If anything, it’s refreshing for me. Because if it was up to me, I’d just be sitting writing to the most boring boom bap beats of all time. I could just sit and write for ages, and that’s fun for me, but it’s also fun to work with my homie.

→ Joey Valence & Brae play Osheaga’s Valley stage on Friday, Aug. 1, 3:55 p.m., day tickets from \$175



# :hammer of the mods

BY JOHNSON CUMMINS

It would seem that Montreal's July concert spread is keeping it rolling on a low simmer.

Just as the Jazz Fest puts a sock in it and Osheaga gets ready to pop (albeit with an utter "who cares" line-up), the best summer month is keeping things on the dl while letting local band names move further up on the marquee. Both the aforementioned Behemoth fests bookending July are geared towards the pedestrians, and with Suoni Per Il Popolo taking its well deserved rest for the year, these July shows definitely demand your attention. The smaller stages are just begging for you to put the sweat on their walls, or, in the case of at least one show this month, begging for you to kick up some dust.

## JULY 4

This might be cutting it a bit close as chances of the ink being dry on this street ish of Cult are slim, but fuggit, here goes: If you haven't been to the Van Horne Underpass for a gig yet, you are seriously missing out on one of the best things about Montreal summers... and you're probably a poseur. Here's your chance, Poindexter, to crush some cans and kick up some dirt with a gig full of raw metal and grindcore just like Mama used to make: STAB and DUPLAH POOTCH blast

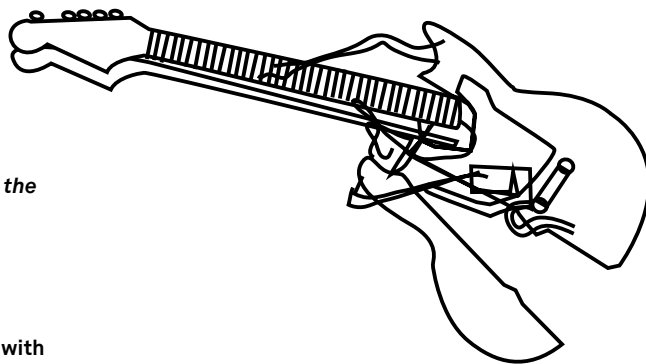
it out long before the sun goes down. *Van Horne by the tracks, show 6:30 p.m., PWYC/\$10 suggested*

## JULY 10

I know I've been laying it on pretty thick and heavy with our local treasure BLOODSHOT BILL lately, but if there's one greasy rock 'n' roller in this Godforsaken town that deserves the Hammer of the Mods reach-around, it's young William, by gummy. Recently, he's been blowing away the headliners as a sweat act, and his upcoming gig at le Ritz is no different, but he might've finally met his match when one-man wrecking zone BOG LOG III headlines supreme, and will no doubt lay down the law. Ever wonder what a boob shot is? Okay, admittedly it doesn't leave much to the imagination, but seeing it live is what real rock 'n' roll is all about. *179 Jean-Talon W., doors 7:30 p.m., show 8:30 p.m., \$27.89*

## JULY 17

Alrighty, I know I mainly go on about underground music in this little piece of real estate in *Cult MTL*, but one of my favourite bands — by a country mile — would be the 10-gallon twangers in THE FIREMEN. With a set-list chock full of Bakersfield's finest bedazzled diamonds while forgoing the glitz and glimmer of modern-day Nashville, The Firemen's tribute to 1970s dirt road country is breathtaking all the way. If you've never seen them, bring your dancing shoes and turquoise jewellery down to La



Toscadura and thank me later. *4388 St-Laurent, doors 7 p.m., show 7:45 p.m., \$12.35*

## JULY 22

For those about to post-rock, we salute you! In fact, I will probably be swaying along with you at le Ritz when instrumentalists (see what I did there) PELICAN pack in the riffage with a heaping amount of cinematic scope. Thinking man's metal? Maybe! Pelican remain one of the more exciting instrumental post-rockers that have yet to get lost up their own ass, and for that I don my cap. Opening is PORCELAIN and SOME BECAME HOLLOW TUBES (ouch, that fuggin' name) featuring members from God's Pee and thisquietarmy (shit name, great band). *179 Jean-Talon W., doors 7 p.m., show 8 p.m., \$30.97*

Current Obsession: The Fall, This Nation's Saving Grace  
jonathan.cummins@gmail.com

## Album reviews



APACALDA, *There's a Shadow in My Room and It Isn't Mine* (Behave)

APACALDA's debut album is a brooding, reverb-drenched odyssey through loneliness, memory and spectral longing. The indie goth dream pop outfit led by Cassandra Angheluta blends jangly post-punk

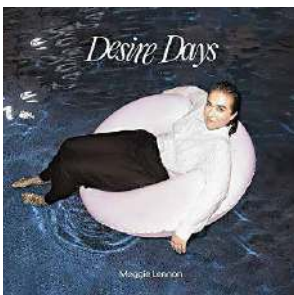
guitars with funereal synths and vocals that teeter between a whisper and a wail. Standouts like "Dead Weight" and "Almost Burnt the House Down" feel like transmissions from a haunted bedroom. With collaborative production from Samuel Woywitka (SamWoy, FHANG) and Mishka Stein (TEKE::TEKE), it's a record that doesn't shout — it lingers, creeps and curls into your bones. Fans of early Kate Bush or more recent acts like Chromatics will find themselves spellbound. This shadowy debut is more of an intimate séance than an album—and all the better for it. 9/10 Trial Track "Almost Burnt the House Down" (Stephan Boissonneault)



Turnstile, *Never Enough* (Roadrunner)

That sound you hear? That's the sound of a band working with no net. Baltimore-bred fan favourites Turnstile don't juke the stats with their latest. They're rip'n and runnin'. The game be the game, but these tracks?

They a whole new thing. Raw like a key of Prop Joe's good stuff, Turnstile don't wait for permission. This ain't bricks and corners no more. This the whole damn world. And while old-head punk purists always want it to be one way, it's the other way. Loud, restless and urgent, these 14 tracks do not flinch. On *Never Enough*, it's clearer than ever that the price of the brick goin' up. It's all in the game, yo. Sheeeeit. 9/10 Trial Track: "Look Out for Me" (Darcy MacDonald)



Meggie Lennon, *Desire Days* (Mothland)

Meggie Lennon's *Desire Days* is a hazy daydream spun in silk and sun-faded velvet. Each track drips with languid desire, like perfume clinging to summer skin, carried on a breeze of reverb-drenched guitars and pillowy daydream synths. Throughout the

album we have a lush, narcotic swirl of sophisticated vintage pop sensuality and psychedelic melancholy. Lennon's voice is a spell — equal parts siren and lullaby — floating effortlessly through bittersweet tales of yearning, surrender and fleeting connection. It's intoxicating, yet sensible, saying that, yes, life is tough, but just remember, "don't forget to breathe." 8/10 Trial Track "Vicious Cycle" (Stephan Boissonneault)

Slick Rick, *Victory* (Mass Appeal)

The Ruler's back. After a near-26-year absence — including five years in prison — the English American returns to the scene at the ripe age of 60 without missing a beat. Rick is at



his best with storytelling raps, something he offers plenty of despite the album's brief 27-minute runtime. Victory is another win for the "Adult Contemporary Hip Hop" genre, joining the ranks of Jay-Z, De La Soul and his label head, Nas, for a formidable late-career entry. 7/10 Trial Track: "Landlord" (Mr. Wavvy)



Lil Wayne, *Tha Carter VI* (Young Money)

There are approximately three enjoyable songs on Lil Wayne's *Tha Carter VI*. Although Wayne's pen game remains intact, a severe lack of direction takes a toll on the overall enjoyability of the latest in *Tha Carter* series. Most of the collaborators

are irrepressibly bad, from his sons (Kameron Carter and Lil Novi), to accomplices on wannabe stadium anthems (Bono and Andrea Bocelli) and, most egregiously, the Lin-Manuel Miranda-produced "Peanuts 2 An Elephant," with a beat that sounds straight out of a Crash Bandicoot level. Dwayne Michael Carter is still a GOAT of the rap game, but he runs the risk of hampering his legacy without an adequate executive producer aboard future projects. There is still a lot left in his tank, but he's unfortunately got his foot on the pedal with a closed garage door. 3/10 Trial Track: "Bein Myself (Feat. Mannie Fresh)" (Mr. Wavvy)





## Gods and monsters



James Gunn (left) and David Corenswet on the set of *Superman*

BY LORRAINE CARPENTER

James Gunn's *Superman* hits different.

All the key Superman characters are there, and they'll be fresh but familiar to anyone who's seen the movies or read the comics — Superman/Clark Kent and his rural Kansas parents (and ghost Krypton parents), Lois Lane and her *Daily Planet* co-workers, and Lex Luthor — but the sheer number of additional good guys and bad guys, Luthor's levelled up mad science, the "Clois" romance and the fact that you're immediately thrown into the action in a fully established world make for a more exciting experience at the movies

than we've had with Superman or almost any superhero franchise in years (with the exception of Spider-Man and the Spider-Verse). It's also an adaptation that feels relevant in 2025, one doesn't shy away from reflecting the political hellscape of the moment.

"Gods and Monsters" is the first chapter for the new DC Studios, co-run by Gunn and producer Peter Safran. Its soft launch happened last December with Gunn's animated series *Creature Commandos*, which features a lot of elements typical of his approach to superheroes and anti-heroes. From the *Guardians of the Galaxy* trilogy to *The Suicide Squad* to

its spin-off *Peacemaker* series, the show focuses on a team of messy but mostly well-intentioned meta people that are either cocky egomaniacs, bizarre nerds or long-suffering women who must work with all of them. And then there are the scrappy animals or sassy hybrid creatures who are always at the forefront of the story. All of this is present in *Superman*, too, particularly the latter in the form of Krypto, who provides a fair amount of humour and plot-driving in the film just by being a bad dog. Krypto was rendered in very convincing CGI, but he's a replica of Gunn's own dog Ozu — a rescue pet with resulting personality issues. Part of the genesis of this film was the thought, "What if Ozu had superpowers?"

But this isn't a satirical, post-modern or jokey *Guardians*-style take on Superman. Adapting the world of the original superhero (especially after Zack Snyder's DCEU and the MCU have died and largely fallen out of favour, respectively) required a certain level of attention to authenticity and an ability to meet a wide range of comics and movie fans where they are. Finding the person to portray such an iconic pop culture figure was next-level pressure for Gunn. Though he'd completed his *Superman* script in early 2023, he was by no means committed to going forward if casting didn't pan out.

"When I started casting, I said to Peter Safran, 'If we can't find a great Superman — not good, but great — we can't make this movie.' There's a way we think of Superman, in a physical way, so he has to match that. But he also has to really have the dramatic chops, the comedic chops and the athletics and all the different things that he exhibits in the movie. And I wasn't necessarily sure that this person existed in the world. We were really nervous, and David Corenswet was the second audition I saw on tape! (laughs) So right away, I was like, 'Okay, well we got this guy and everything else is gravy.'"

Corenswet went through a series of auditions, screen tests and meetings to make sure he was right for the role, according to Gunn, who sought out a reference from *Pearl* director Ty West "to make sure that he wasn't a giant jerk, which he was not." Corenswet played the small but crucial role of the projectionist in West's 2022 horror film, and last year's *Twisters* reboot is Corenswet's only other proper big-screen role prior to *Superman*. He's better known for more substantial parts in two Ryan Murphy Netflix series, *The Politician* (wherein his character is told that he looks like Superman, setting off a real-life fan-casting campaign as early as 2019) and *Hollywood*.

"I love him as a person and I also love him in the movie," Gunn says, noting that Corenswet's nerdier tendencies — a Star Wars obsession, listening almost exclusively to vintage jazz, being ignorant of current trends — are a great fit for this role.

"He's very much like Superman. He's Boy-Scouty. He's just a very odd person, and I think that works really well for him playing an alien from outer space."

The more contemporary conception of Superman as a Kryptonian immigrant who might pose a problem for the U.S. government — an element of more recent comics, the new film and the "Snyderverse" — is in stark contrast to the Superman of the "truth, justice and the American way" period, which represented the hero as an arm of the U.S. government. That catch-phrase dates back to World War II-era radio serials and early TV shows — back when the U.S. was fighting Nazis instead of putting fascists in power. According to Gunn, who had just returned to L.A. after massive fan events to promote the film in Manila and Rio when we spoke, DC Studios' consultation found that Superman is now embraced as "the world's hero."

"That's how he's looked at in Asia, that's how he's looked at in Canada, that's how he's looked at all around the world.

Greg Williams





Rachel Brosnahan as Lois Lane and David Corenswet as Superman

He's not Captain America. He is Superman and he protects the entire world, and that was refreshing to discover, actually, 'cause I didn't want to put out something that was just about the United States."

One notable difference between this iteration of Superman and previous versions of the "Man of Steel" is that he is not invincible. The film begins as the teaser trailer did, with Superman crashing to the ground, bloody and wheezing. When that first look at the film was released in December, Gunn noted that that was the state his country was in at the

time — and things have only gotten worse in the interim, for the U.S. and globally.

"It's not only in politics, but there's a general malaise right now, and a lot of the excitement for this film is, sadly, because people aren't feeling great about the state of the world. They want to see something positive. I didn't really foresee that being the case, although of course, there was a lot of negative stuff happening while we were making the movie, too. People don't trust a lot of the people in power, and people don't feel that some of these leaders have their

best interests in mind. People want Superman to exist. He doesn't, sadly, but at least we can see him in a movie."

Without getting into any spoilers (a lot of effort has been put into not revealing the film's actual plot), *Superman* deals directly with disillusionment in leaders and authority figures, and in corruption and nefarious motives among tech barons and world leaders. Though the president of the United States is never seen, an edit during the first proper *Superman* trailer fuelled speculation that Lex Luthor is the president in the film — which wouldn't be much of a stretch in reality, at least on the evil side of the equation (the genius side is extremely wide of the mark), or in terms of authenticity to the source material, because there is a Superman comic where Luthor becomes president. Don't rule it out — Gunn's partner Peter Safran recently stated that Luthor will be "a very important character" in the DCU.

Before letting Gunn get to more interviews at the L.A. *Superman* junket, I had to ask him about his experiences in Montreal.

"I love Montreal, I love it so much! The second film festival I ever went to was with *Tromeo and Juliet* in 1996 at the Fantasia Film Festival with Mitch and the gang in Montreal, and oh my gosh it was so fun.

"I have tried poutine, and I've tried poutine in different cities because I understand that you guys have a rivalry going on over who makes the best poutine, and I can say this solely for the Montreal audience, that Montreal's poutine is the best. Although I have a lot of friends in Vancouver — 'cause I've shot a lot of films there — and they're going to revile me for that statement."

→ *Superman* opens in Montreal theatres on Friday, July 11.

Jessica Miglio



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# On Screen



To a Land Unknown



Jurassic World Rebirth



The Surfer



Sorry, Baby

BY JUSTINE SMITH

Divisive as he may be, Ari Aster ranks among the few American filmmakers still able to launch an original film. His latest, *Eddington* (July 18), stars Pedro Pascal, Emma Stone, Joaquin Phoenix and Austin Butler. Set in May of 2020, a standoff between a small-town sheriff and mayor sparks a powder keg as neighbour is pitted against neighbour in the titular small town in New Mexico.

Superhero season takes flight this month with two major franchise relaunches. James Gunn takes the helm on *Superman* (July 11) with David Corenswet stepping into the spandex tights for the first time. Later in the month, *The Fantastic Four: First Steps* (July 25) hits our screens. The hardest working man in Hollywood right now, Pedro Pascal (he's in three major 2025 releases) stars alongside Vanessa Kirby, Joseph Quinn and Ebon Moss-Bachrach in this reboot, which is set in a retro-futurist version of the 1960s.

Few actors are as committed to the Blockbuster than Scarlett Johansson, so is it any surprise that she's taking over another franchise project? She stars in *Jurassic World Rebirth* (July 2), which takes place five years after the events of *Jurassic World: Dominion*, as Zora Bennett, who's charged with leading a covert team of experts into the dino-realm to collect covert genetic material. Director Gareth

Edwards, who breathed new life into both Star Wars (*Rogue One*) and Godzilla, directs. Can he bring back the magic of this otherwise fledgling franchise?

The critically acclaimed *To a Land Unknown* (July 25) finally makes it to Montreal screens over a year after its premiere at Cannes. The stakes couldn't be higher for displaced Palestinian refugees Chatila and Reda in this knife-edge drama. The cousins are saving to pay for fake passports to get out of Athens, but when Reda loses their hard-earned cash to his drug addiction, Chatila hatches an extreme plan to pose as smugglers in an attempt to get them out of their desperate situation before it is too late.

People who only know Eva Victor from her TikToks might be surprised by the maturity and weight she brings to her feature debut, *Sorry, Baby* (July 10). Victor writes, directs and stars in this Sundance hit about a grad student experiencing a few very bad years. Acerbic, challenging and often laugh-out-loud hilarious, the film co-stars Naomi Ackie and Lucas Hedges.

Cage-heads will be happy that their boy is back on the big screen with Lorcan Finnegan's *The Surfer* (July 18). Nicolas Cage stars as a man who returns to the idyllic beach of his childhood to surf with his son. When he is humiliated by a group of locals, the man is drawn into a conflict that keeps escalating and pushes him to his breaking point.

One of the most popular Quebec comedies in recent years, *Menteur*, gets a follow-up with *La Menteuse*. Anne-Élisabeth Bossé stars as Virginie, a compulsive liar who tells

lies to make people around her happy. As her partner Phil (Antoine Bertrand) fears, her many lies become reality and create multiverses that completely disrupt their lives and those around them.

For something more family-friendly, *Smurfs* (July 18) hits the screen mid-month. When Papa Smurf is mysteriously taken by evil wizards Razamel and Gargamel, Smurfette leads the Smurfs on a mission into the real world to save him. The film, directed by Chris Miller, features an insane voice cast including Rihanna, Nick Offerman, James Corden, Natasha Lyonne, Amy Sedaris and Kurt Russell.

It seems like nothing is sacred because they've remade 1990s slasher masterpiece

*I Know What You Did Last Summer* (July 18). When five friends inadvertently cause a deadly car accident, they cover up their involvement and make a pact to keep it a secret rather than face the consequences. From director Jennifer Kaytin Robinson (*Do Revenge*), the film unites a new pack of young adults to be picked off one by one by an avenging killer.

With summer upon us, there are endless film activities for cinephiles. The Fantasia International Film Festival runs from July 16 to Aug. 3. The Cinémathèque Québécoise is doing a spotlight on fantasy films. There are endless outdoor screening events hosted by Cinema Politica, Livart in association with Cinéma Public, Film Noir au Canal, le Cinéma sous les étoiles and much more!



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## True colours



BY SAVANNAH STEWART

The Festival Fierté Montréal transforms downtown Montreal into an 11-day rainbow-coloured party and show of community solidarity, with dozens of events taking over the stages and the streets surrounding the Village. Here's a rundown of some of the free outdoor events to get your Pride on.

### NASTY GLOSS + MOH DAFOK'S CARNAVAL

Four hours of fierce sound and fiery performance light up the night in this high-octane celebration of queer music and drag, kicking off Fierté with a bang. It all begins with Nasty Gloss at 6 p.m., bringing a sizzling DJ set packed with ghetto tech and hard grooves before Brazilian drag dynamo Moh Dafok brings disco, glitter, and unstoppable energy to the stage at 8 p.m. Later, the rhythm explodes with a late-night lineup blending samba, Afro-Brazilian percussion and deep beats that'll keep the party pulsing into the early hours. *Jardins Gamelin (1500 Berri), Aug. 1, 6–10 p.m.*

### FEMINIX

Celebrate the force and flair of femme artistry at FeminiX, a high-voltage night of pop, rap, queer underground beats. Le Belladone, Sorai and Juana will bring bold live sets infused with political edge and pulsing techno, and then

Maya Margarita (AKA br0nz3\_g0dd3ss, opener for Beyoncé) will close out the night with mystic tropical rave rhythms. *Esplanade Tranquille, Scène Loto-Québec, Aug. 1, 5–11 p.m.*

### MUNDO DISKO

Mundo Disko promises to light up the opening weekend of Fierté with a dazzling celebration of queer nightlife and liberating dance. This disco party pays tribute to a sound born from resistance and radical joy, with performances from Kim Richardson, Impress, B'ugo, Christian Pronovost (aka Lost Heroes) and the soaring voices of the Mighty Real Gospel X choir. *Esplanade Tranquille, Scène Loto-Québec, Aug. 2, 5–11 p.m.*

### RAINBOW MARKET

The Rainbow Market will transform the heart of the Village into a showcase of 2SLGBTQIA+ creativity. Presented by M.A.D. Festival and the SDC du Village, this three-day outdoor market features pop-up spaces filled with art, fashion and goods from local queer artists, makers and entrepreneurs. *Ste-Catherine E. btwn St-Christophe & Atateken, Aug. 3, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.*

### IMMIX

In what's become a staple of the Montreal summer festival season, ImmiX brings a celebration of Quebec's diverse music scene, uniting 2SLGBTQIA+ artists and allies for one spectacular night. Expect performances by Martine Saint-Clair, Lisa LeBlanc, Safia Nolin, Gabrielle Destroismaisons,

Calamine, Fernie, Lennikim, Kinkead, Täbi Yösha and Angelo — all backed by a powerhouse live orchestra. The show will be interpreted in Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ). *Esplanade Tranquille, Scène Loto-Québec, Aug. 3, 9–11 p.m.*

### HIGH HEELS OBSTACLE RACE

Hosted by LaDrag On-Fly, the High Heels Obstacle Race (La Course capotée) is one of the most outrageous events of Fierté Montréal! Community organizations and Village businesses unite in a hilarious, high-energy race to grab as many condoms as possible, all in support of RÉZO's mission to promote sexual health and prevent HIV/STBIs. Expect fabulous outfits, joyful chaos, six-inch heels and a whole lot of laughter. Stick around for a live DJ set from 8 to 9 p.m. to keep the party going. This event will be interpreted in Langue des Signes Québécoise (LSQ). *Scène Dovato (Ste-Catherine E. & Papineau), Aug. 4, 6–9 p.m.*

### LA THÉ GARDEN PARTIE DES DRAGS PATRONNESSES

Pride has no age, and this summer, the *Drag Patronnesses' Tea Garden Party* celebrates 2SLGBTQIA+ elders with an afternoon of joy, connection and community. Join the Drag Patronnesses, their fabulous drag-volunteers and the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence for music, tea, performances, heartfelt conversations and intergenerational storytelling. And Drag Patronnesses' Bingo has \$500 in prizes up for grabs! A celebration of queer aging, resilience and the power of shared experience. *Place du Village, Aug. 5, 6–9 p.m.*





#### SAMI ET SES AMI·E·S

Back for its third edition, Sami Landri's wild night with friends promises outrageous fun and non-stop entertainment in the heart of Jardins Gamelin. Hosted by the unforgettable Acadian drag queen and viral sensation Sami Landri, this high-energy show brings together a dazzling lineup: Xenia Gould, Darling Delight, Érika Suarez, Eboni La'Belle, Rossomodo, Virginie B and DJ Hermano. *Jardins Gamelin*(1500 Berri), Aug. 6, 6–10 p.m.

#### LA SOIRÉE 100% DRAG

The evening will begin with U.K. drag star Bimini taking the Montreal stage for the first time, launching La Soirée 100% Drag with a bang of a DJ set. At 7:30 p.m., the main event unites international stars and local legends for an unforgettable night of glamour, power and pure spectacle. Hosted by drag royalty Rita Baga and Barbada, this mega-show features queens and kings from across the *RuPaul's Drag Race* universe sharing the spotlight with Montreal queens. With appearances by Detox, Kennedy Davenport, Lemon, Pandora Nox, Soa de Muse, Gisèle Lullaby, Uma Gahd and many more, this one-night-only extravaganza promises iconic looks, epic lip-syncs and drag excellence at its finest. *Olympic Park Esplanade, Scène TD* (4545 Pierre de Coubertin), Aug. 7, 5:30–11 p.m.

#### POULIN + LA SÉCURITÉ

Poulin takes the stage with a glitter-drenched blast of '80s synth-rock, led by Valérie Poulin's raw vocals and theatrical presence, a cathartic journey of poetic emotion and glam grit. Then, La Sécurité cranks up the volume with their art-

punk punch: français anthems, Riot Grrrl spirit and chaotic joy collide in a set that's all about autonomy, movement and radical fun. Expect sweat, synths and a whole lot of heart. *Scène Dovato (Ste-Catherine E. & Papineau)*, Aug. 7, 6–9 p.m.

#### COMMUNITY DAYS

The vibrant spirit of Montreal's 2SLGBTQIA+ communities takes over the heart of the Village, featuring local organizations, businesses and cultural groups showcasing their work and inviting connection. Enjoy the lively atmosphere with live broadcasts by The Beat 92.5 on Friday (1–5 p.m.) and Rythme 105.7 on Saturday (11 a.m.–4 p.m.). Presented with support from the SDC Village. *Ste-Catherine E. btwn St-Christophe & Papineau*, Aug. 8–9, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

#### DISTINXION – A NIGHT OF QUEER POWER

DistinXion will bring together three powerhouse artists for a one-night-only celebration of queer brilliance, genre-bending sound and bold, unapologetic artistry. Canadian pop-rock icon Fefe Dobson delivers high-voltage hits and rebellious energy. Soulful R&B sensation Charlotte Day Wilson brings emotional depth and intimate resonance. And non-binary rocker G Flip closes out the night with drums, anthems and pure fire. *Olympic Park Esplanade, Scène TD*, Aug. 8, 5–11 p.m.

#### POUR QUE TU M'AIMES ENCORE – A CÉLINE DION TRIBUTE

Thirty years after *D'eux* changed the landscape of French-language pop, drag artist and Céline impersonator Bobépine

leads a glittering, emotional tribute to Céline Dion's legendary album. *Pour que tu m'aimes encore* revisits the powerhouse ballads and pop anthems that defined a generation —“Je sais pas,” “Destin,” “J'irai où tu iras” — with heartfelt flair, surprise Céline deep cuts and special guests. Expect big emotions, bigger vocals, and all the sparkle you'd expect from a Céline celebration. Bring your voice — and your tissues. *Scène Dovato (Ste-Catherine E. & Papineau)*, Aug. 9, 6–9 p.m.

#### PRIDE PARADE 2025

Join thousands in the streets for the Pride Parade, a massive celebration of 2SLGBTQIA+ rights and visibility. Marchers will make their way along a 2.2-kilometre route from Metcalfe to Ataten, symbolically linking the past and present queer Villages of Montreal. This year's theme, *Blossom here, now!*, is a call to thrive, resist and love freely in vibrant solidarity. After the parade, head to the Esplanade at the Olympic Park for the high-energy Mega T-Dance celebration. *From the corner of René-Lévesque & Metcalfe*, Aug. 10, 1 p.m.

#### MEGA T-DANCE

Closing out the festivities, just like every year, is the Mega T-Dance, Montreal's ultimate open-air dance party! Right after the parade, head to the Esplanade at the Olympic Park for an evening of music and movement with DJs Guillaume Michaud, Black Flamingo, Marti Frieson and Henrique Viana. With high-energy sets, surprise moments and the city's biggest dancefloor, it's the celebration you've been waiting for and a thrilling end to Fierté. *Olympic Park Esplanade, Scène TD*, Aug. 10, 3–11 p.m.



# Unfiltered joy and chaos



Max Levy

BY SAVANNAH STEWART

Just for Laughs returns this year with dozens of shows spotlighting the full spectrum of comedy, from rising newcomers to household names. Among the most anticipated acts is Mae Martin & Friends, an eclectic variety-style show taking the stage at l'Olympia on July 25.

Mae Martin, the genre-defying Canadian comedian beloved for their raw honesty and razor-sharp wit, is bringing a taste of their Los Angeles life back home. “This is kind of a Montreal edition of something I do monthly in L.A.,” they explained. “I host, and then I have some of my favourite comedians and friends come and do spots and experiment. So I’m bringing that here — with so many amazing comics in town for the festival, it’s gonna be great.”

If Martin’s track record is any indication, the night promises to be more than just a comedy showcase. A

master of blending humour with vulnerability, Martin’s shows blur the line between stand-up and conversation, creating a space where audience connection is just as important as the punchlines.

“I usually get people to write questions and put them in a bucket,” they said. “Then I do a little section where I improvise and answer questions from the audience. I like to create a kind of atmosphere where it feels like we’re seeing something that won’t happen again.”

The return to Montreal comes at a high point in Martin’s career. They recently won the 2025 Canadian Screen Award for Best Comedy Special for their Just for Laughs Gala taping. This was on the heels of their 2024 win for Best Guest Performance in a Comedy Series for their role on *I Have Nothing* — at the gala that they also hosted.

“Canada has been very good to me,” Martin said, reflecting on the recognition.

Though based in Los Angeles, Martin has deep roots in Montreal and the Just for Laughs Festival. “I’ve been coming to Montreal since I was a kid,” they shared. “It’s always nice

to check back in. You see the same people every summer. It’s special, and I’m glad it’s still thriving.”

Martin’s creative universe continues to expand. In addition to stand-up and scripted television — most notably their acclaimed Netflix series *Feel Good* — they’ve recently ventured into music. Their debut album, *I’m a TV*, released earlier this year, offering another outlet for the introspection and emotional nuance fans have come to expect.

“They all live in the same universe,” Martin said of their artistic outlets. “Scripted stuff, TV, stand-up — it’s like I’m always trying to say the same thing, just in different mediums.”

With political tensions simmering in the U.S., Martin also spoke about the comfort of returning north of the border. “I feel very emotionally connected to Canada,” they said. “Especially with everything going on in the States, it’s nice to be in the country. It feels like a little lighthouse of hope.”

As for how they plan to unwind after the show? “I’ll be hitting up all the escape rooms,” Martin laughed. “Come find me there.”

→ Just for Laughs presents Mae Martin and Friends at Olympia (1004 Ste-Catherine E.), doors 8:30 p.m., show 9:30 p.m., \$51.50, all ages



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Image tirée d'un film d'Aufdi Aufdermauer du col de la Furka et de l'hôtel Furkablick depuis un hélicoptère en hiver (1989), sélectionnée par Anneke Abhelakh © Aufdi Aufdermauer

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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.

*See Friendship* by Jeremy Gordon

I wasn't sure what to expect with this one, but I'm happy to confirm that *See Friendship* is sharp, funny and disarmingly tender. Our narrator, Jacob, is a New York media guy (read: imploding industry, looming irrelevance, podcast dreams... relatable), and when an old friend dies under confusing, tragic circumstances, his grief starts warping into a project. Classic. What unfolds isn't some neat mystery box, though. It's messier, more ambient. Jacob's "search for answers" becomes a conduit for unraveling everything: memory, masculinity, mid-30s malaise and that uniquely modern question of what it means to feel real on the internet. And Gordon gets it — how digital life reshapes grief, how podcasting becomes a stand-in for purpose, how

going home (in this case, Chicago) never delivers what you hope it will. There's something beautifully unhurried here. The writing never tries too hard to dazzle, and maybe that's what makes it hit so hard. A debut with *actual* emotional intelligence — what a concept.

*Ex-Wife* by Ursula Parrott

How did I not know about *Ex-Wife* until now? With an introduction by the hilarious Monica Heisey, no less. This book is pure heat — sleek, sharp, and weirdly contemporary for something that lit up shelves in 1929. Patricia and Peter are the kind of couple that would've gone viral on Instagram today: open marriage, mutual vices, progressive ideals. But then, surprise surprise, Peter can't handle the very freedom he championed, and things spiral. Fast. What follows is Patricia's crash course in ex-wifedom—a term that still feels charged nearly a century later—and her navigation through smoky Manhattan nights, exhausting flirtations and the harsh reality of being a woman with desire in a world built to punish her for it. It's dazzling, yes—cocktail bars, late-night cabs, magazine offices—but it also doesn't flinch. There's heartbreak, hypocrisy, and a raw honesty about the emotional cost of trying to live freely in a world that

only pretends to let you. A total feminist classic that feels fresher than most 2020s releases.

*Perfection* by Vincenzo Latronico

Hello, I am a millennial, and yes, I too have been to Berlin. So arrives *Perfection*, which hits like a slow, existential comedown. If you've ever scrolled through someone's plant-filled Berlin loft and felt both envy and a strange emptiness... this is that, but a novel. Anna and Tom are the kind of couple you'd low-key hate-follow: freelancers, effortlessly stylish, a little too good at making their life look intentional. (Wait a minute... Montreal?) But the aesthetic starts to crack, and what's underneath is a creeping dread that maybe none of it *means* anything. There's no dramatic plot twist here — just the slow dissolution of a curated life. The freelance gigs get dull. The sex dries up. The novel's brilliance is in how quietly it skewers everything from influencer culture to digital nomadism. Latronico writes with this crisp detachment that makes every detail feel damning and precise. It's brutal, but also weirdly funny in its honesty. A perfect read if you've ever felt haunted by the hollowness of "freedom."

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





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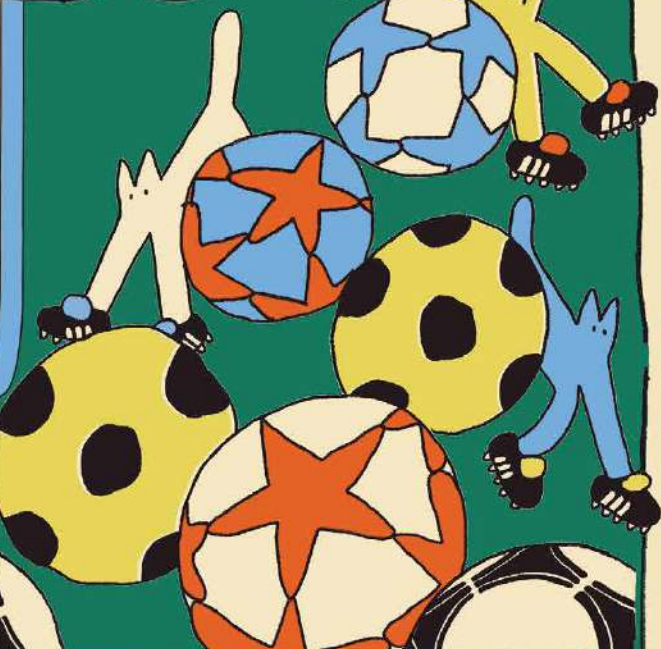
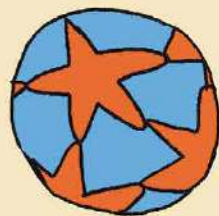
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