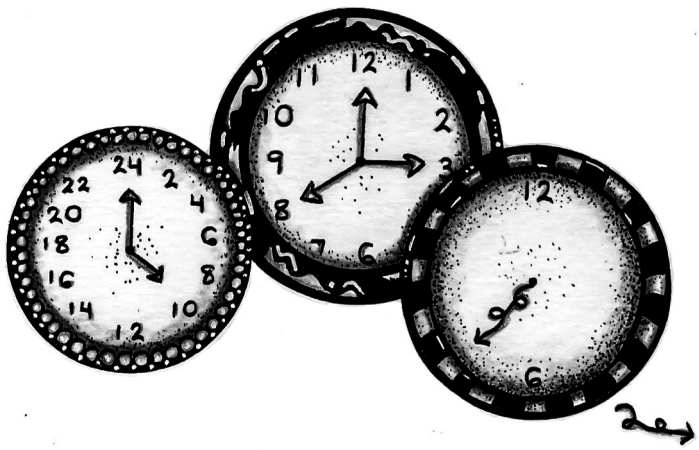

YOUR NEW ORLEANS
ANTIGRAVITY
ALTERNATIVE TO CULTURE
VOL. 24.10 OCT 2026 #284


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More Fearful Than the Man Himself!
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&
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Production Design: DONOVAN FANNON • Executive Producer: DAN STEIN • Directed by JAMES KALE
NO AI WAS USED IN THE PRODUCTION OF THIS AD

Time is a rubbery thing around the proverbial AG offices. This October issue, for example, is really a child of September, where we had to pretend to be feeling crisp autumn winds and spooky season energy in the midst of what I like to call August Part Two in New Orleans. Wherever we are on the calendar, your AG crew is already living in the future—which can be tough when December comes and we're all stuffed full of eggnog and cannolis but have to imagine having already crossed the threshold into the new year with that lean-and-mean resolute attitude.

Then there's the *nowness* of time when we put these issues together—"history's first draft" as we say in the media biz. Always the timeliness, always trying to be on top of the current news wave. We try to guess about the future—and sometimes it's easy with a month like this, where Halloween sets the table, as well as reliable, annual events like this year's New Orleans Film Festival—but it's not always so straightforward. It was no small newsroom miracle that we were able to fly in a photo of Dolly Parton on the evening of her death, announced mere hours before our upload of the September issue to the printer. It made that issue extra special as Dolly's smiling face beamed out over thousands of back covers around town in honor of our fallen national hero.

Of course, there's the time between upload and the agonizing handful of days before the new issue shows up at AG HQ, neatly bundled and ready to hit the town. They say God is in the gaps (between what we know and don't know), and on those days where the issue is completely out of our hands, and thousands of dollars' worth of paper and ink are being whizzed through a massive offset printer, I certainly pray to something beyond me. This is where time seems to stand still, like stepping outside during the eye of a hurricane.



Once the issue drops at the top of the month, time feels like a beachfront perch on the Gulf, where next month's deadline still seems somewhere far off in the horizon. This is the time we get to catch our breath, do a little housekeeping for the magazine and in our own lives, both woefully abandoned around deadline. But then like a rollercoaster, we creep slowly towards the apex of the month until our cart crests and time becomes a punisher, racing us toward the next deadline. In these last few weeks, time is like oxygen in a stuffy room—just barely enough to survive.

We also play the long game here at *ANTIGRAVITY*, where time stretches out over decades. As much as we want to capture that *nowness* and document New Orleans for the people living here at the moment (and those in far away places living vicariously through our pages), we are also speaking to future generations. This is one of the core guiding principles we use to curate content. And Dear Advertisers—I know it's not the sexiest pitch, because you need butts in seats *now*, but please consider how your message, if captured in our pages, will resonate into the future, and anyone who finds a copy years from now will be instantly transported back in time. Have you ever picked up an old *LIFE* or *Rolling Stone* or *National Geographic* from the '60s or '70s and marveled at the ads? This is not just cheap newsprint you're holding in your hands, but a veritable time machine. How cool is that? It's the ultimate trick, crafting instant nostalgia in these pages, where we write a monthly love letter to this city for everyone here and now, but also to people we will never know, but who will know us.

At this point, you may be thinking, *OK Dan. Time to pass it*. So let me end on a sincere note by saying that while some of the elements of time may be treated like a vapor or wet noodle around here, one extremely important exception to that is *your* time, Dear Reader. We always try to treat it like the priceless jewel that it is. It's the most precious resource we all have, and it's the ultimate duty of the *ANTIGRAVITY* crew to respect it. We're all so overburdened and having our time taxed constantly. This can be an issue in New Orleans, and not just in the way that half-assery and lazy, amateurish efforts abound here. It feels like too often these days we don't respect each other's time, and AI will only make this worse. I and the AG crew are taking our time to communicate to you, making sure these signals are as clear and crisp as they can be, full of love and intention. We could never disrespect you by giving this information over to a glorified summarizer. So if nothing else, whether you agree or disagree, whether you find love or offense, I hope you turn these pages feeling like your time has been well spent.
—Dan Fox

ABOUT THE COVER

When asked to do *ANTIGRAVITY*'s October cover, I knew right away that I wanted to illustrate a New Orleans Halloween Party. Not some big bombastic bash but something depicting a much more mellow meeting of merriment, the kind of get-together that will happen at houses all over the city on Halloween night: Folks hanging out with other folks in a non-digital, physical shared location. I think choosing to spend more time with other people IRL (In Real Life) helps to offset the toxic digital phantasmorgia being projected at us daily. With our present climate course, every day in New Orleans is a reason to celebrate with others. While we're waiting for the wild waves to wash us away, we will waltz with the wild and wonderful. I luv ya, New Orleans. This cover was drawn using my Apple iPad Pro. I started with rendering the house background layer first and then proceeded to riff drawing different folks at the party. The final parts I added were the little Halloween details like the cat, bats, and Jack-O-Lanterns. (Hey Folks! There's something on the cover that references the origin of *ANTIGRAVITY* magazine back in the early 2000s. *IYKYK*. Also, someone in an Elmer's CheeWees mouse costume. In the early 1950s, Elmer's Fine Foods, a New Orleans snack food company, licensed its puffed cheese curl snack to the Frito-Lay company, instead of simply selling it to them for a big payout. I've always thought that was pretty cool.) *—Circe Meadows*

ANTIGRAVITY

YOUR NEW ORLEANS ALTERNATIVE TO CULTURE

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Back cover: Dolly Parton fans and parade-goers fill the French Quarter during a celebratory memorial second line on September 25 for the late legendary singer and activist. Hosted by the Krewe of Dolly, the second line culminated in a proclamation from Mayor Helena Moreno that the date be recognized as Dolly Parton Day or "9 to 5" Day. (Photo by Dalton Spangler)

Poetry illustration pg. 61 by Happy Burbeck

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WILD WAVES

by Taylor Balkissoon

Libra, with all its charm and balance, can find itself indulgent, reactive, and materialistic. Scorpio, for all its more obvious associations with death, sex, and poison, often brings sweetness and loyalty. This month our journey begins with Libra's ruling planet Venus retrograding in Scorpio starting on the 3rd, the same day that Mars in fiery Leo will form an opposition to Pluto in Aquarius. This day in particular will acutely activate a realistic (perhaps uncomfortable) review of our relationships with money, sex, and desire. Often, these patterns are rooted in subjugation. I'm not gonna lie: The astrological weather outside is hot garbage. We have concentration camps, unlivable wages and expenses, multitudes of endless war, and climate destruction. The planets are asking this month: How are we navigating our place within a corrupt system without being swayed to complacency or escapism? The new moon in Libra on the 10th will invite us to pour out our internal buckets of fear and anxiety. Optimistic Mars in Leo can lift our heavy hearts, reconnecting us with the most beautiful aspects of both Libra and Venus—namely the principles that guide our shared leadership in building a more equitable, beautiful future. Scorpio's ruling planet Pluto will end its six-month retrograde in Aquarius on the 15th, a cycle that has torn our hearts out of our chests, shown them to us, and is now handing them back lovingly. Mercury will start its own retrograde in Scorpio on the 24th, followed by the full moon in Taurus on the 25th, the same day Venus reenters Libra. These transits are here to ground us in our assurance that it's always darkest before the dawn.

ARIES

Humans have long looked to the stars for guidance, but Aries is perhaps least likely to take heed, and your inner primal fire might be far more impactful. Your sister sign Libra is more receptive, and this month's Venus in retrograde in Scorpio and Libra will go toe to toe with your ruling planet Mars in fiery Leo. Receptivity and reflection can be helpful, but don't forget to keep feeding your flames.

TAURUS

Taurean inner landscapes are often dictated by your sign's fixed, earthy nature. That inner landscape can be both soft and stable, but when it goes untended it can become hard and brittle. Your role as an earth sign is also one of a steward, and this Venus retrograde through your sister sign Scorpio will encourage a look at your commitment to the earth. It could also point to relationships that need to end.

GEMINI

As the furthest and closest planets to the sun, Pluto and Mercury can find themselves at odds with one another. Mercury moves fast, Pluto moves slow. Mercury initiates, Pluto destroys. On the 2nd they will form a dynamic aspect (square) to one another, and this day and the days to follow might coincide with immediate and potentially life-changing impacts. Build what needs to be built, and let Pluto in Aquarius show you what needs to decompose into the soil from which your next chapter blooms.

CANCER

You and Libra share many attributes, such as your wit, charm, and capacity for care. This Venus retrograde will occur primarily in your 5th house of pleasure and romance, which could mean revisiting patterns of over-extending yourself in search of something deep and true. The sun will enter fellow water sign Scorpio on the 23rd, hopefully providing you the clarity you need.

LEO

The 3rd house is a place for play and exploration, and the sun's transit through yours this month coincides with Mars' continued movement through your sign, which could cause you to take on too much. Pluto moving direct in your sister sign Aquarius will invigorate your relational energy, but it is important to remember that you also have limits. Slow down, move with intention, and conserve enough energy to meet the moments to come.

VIRGO

Wealth might be an uneasy topic for you as you naturally resist the exploitative nature of our multitude of broken systems. Libra's rulership of the sun's transit through your 2nd house is a repeated invitation to find and define what abundance looks like to you outside of these systems. It doesn't have to be extravagant as long as it's beautiful, loving, and sustainable.



LIBRA

Happy You season, Libra! Unfortunately, this season's Venus retrograde (starting on the 3rd) will dominate the majority of your season. This retrograde will be occurring in your 12th house, making it a particularly strange and moody time to be having a fabulous birthday party. You might find yourself seeking new healing modalities beyond your usual scope—perhaps something more private like meditation, which can invite more profound types of love to form.

SCORPIO

Pluto's six-month retrograde began during Taurus season and is ending on the 15th in your fellow fixed sign Aquarius. On the 3rd, Pluto in Aquarius and Mars in Leo form an opposition, kickstarting a cycle of intense developments in both your Leo-ruled public life (10th house) and private life (4th house). Mercury retrograde in your sign will add tension to this dynamic, and when the sun enters your sign on the 23rd you might come to a necessary conclusion about holding strong boundaries.

SAGITTARIUS

Free spirits can get a bad rap. What you call autonomy, others call detachment, and unfortunately this pattern can haunt you until you come to a solid agreement with yourself. The sun's transit through your 11th house could guide you in the right direction this month as your autonomy becomes less of a concern when you put your energy toward collective efforts. Perhaps attend a meeting with a new organization and see what's possible when you put your values center stage.

CAPRICORN

Your nervous system is built to withstand many storms, but at a certain point you might find that they hit at times when you are uncharacteristically unprepared and vulnerable. Scorpio's influence over the sun's transit of your 10th house dictates that your success is tied to your ability to protect yourself without self-sabotaging, so be sure to ask for help if the storm winds become too high.

AQUARIUS

As someone who is usually very locked in, this month might feel like a surreal reprieve from your usual grind. Pluto turning direct in your sign on the 15th will ease some tension that's likely been sitting in your heart and body. The sun's transit through playful Libra in your 9th house brings beauty and exploration—be sure to make the most of it.

PISCES

Libra's rulership of your 8th house likely throws you for a loop every year. You might find that this season often coincides with deep emotional or material changes, perhaps fundamentally shifting your sense of safety or security. This Venus retrograde warns against acting on impulse at this moment. Your fellow water sign Scorpio will reward your intentionality once the sun enters it on the 23rd.



illustrations by Anneliese DePano
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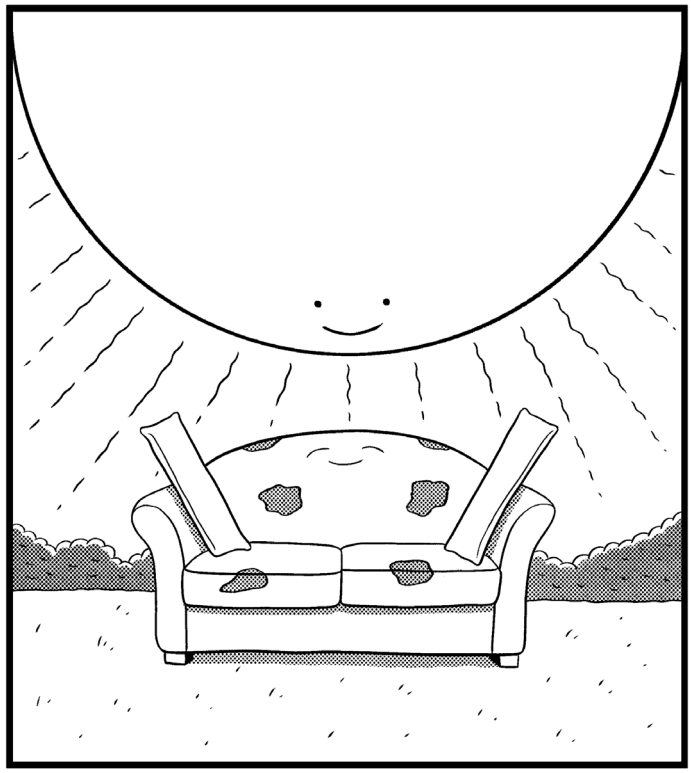


TIPS FROM THERIOT

by Isabel Ryan Theriot

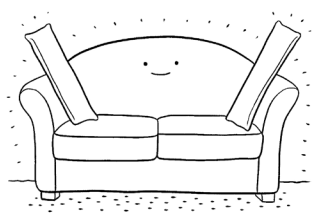
The Soul has Bandaged moments –
When too appalled to stir –
She feels some ghastly Fright come up
And stop to look at her –
—Emily Dickinson

Oh yeah! You feel that?! That's a ding dang cool breeze, my peeps! We made it through the drudgery of the stifling, wet heat of gross, musty-crevice-sweat summer and have landed in the delightful, skin-kissing-wisps of sweet air that accompany October in New Orleans. On Saturday the 10th, I'm looking forward to pouring one out to my mental health for World Mental Health Day! Y'all ever been mentally ill? Oh man, if so, you know it's a wild ride. The brain is magnificent and mysterious, a magician who uses trickery to manipulate the eyes and ears of its audience. The synapses and formations of some brains create imaginings so convincing that the owners of this gray matter believe, become enthralled by, and are sometimes utterly paralyzed by these phantasmagorical flights of fancy. The first World Mental Health Day took place in 1992 and was the brainchild of Richard C. Hunter (RIP), the deputy secretary general of the World Federation for Mental Health. Hunter conceived the day as a global campaign that focused attention on a different mental health issue each year. This year's theme is "Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change." The theme focuses on the importance of collaborating with people who have lived experience (PWLE) with mental health disorders. You can read a ton of books about bipolar II disorder for example, but if you ain't experienced it first hand, you're missing out on a vital perspective. One of the many important priorities for PWLE is moving away from long-stay, isolating psychiatric institutionalization to a more community-based approach to treatment of mental health problems. Over-institutionalization of the mentally ill (and otherwise disabled people) has always been a concern. Now more than ever it is vital to raise awareness about this issue, because the kind (joking) and rational (double joking) Trump administration is trying its damndest to reverse decades of positive strides made for Americans with disabilities by sneakily dismantling the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Terrifying. As a gal in a constant battle with an anxious, unpredictable mind that loves being an asshole to its owner nearly to the point of annihilation—and who has absolutely no shame in sharing this info about her mental illness game—I have a stake in these governmental policy shenanigans. So on October 10th, I hope that you'll give some grace and a hug to yourself or someone you know who struggles with their mental health. If YOU are battling your mind, don't be ashamed to talk about it or to ask for help if you need it. You deserve it. Cleaning questions and answers are below.



For my money, the most effective remedy for odor banishment is baking soda and the sun.

There is a big stain on my sofa, and it kind of stinks. Help!
Uh oh! I've been there. The route of this stain-removal journey depends on the cleaning code listed on the label of your sofa. "S" means that only solvent cleaners are allowed, no water. "W" (you guessed it) means that you can incorporate H_2O into this cleaning equation. If you have an "S" situation on your hands, a good non-moist solvent is isopropyl alcohol. For this method, you'll need a bunch of cotton balls or a small towel. You'll want to test the alcohol trick on a non-obvious area of the sofa to ensure that the alcohol doesn't change the color of the fabric. If it does, I highly suggest hiring an upholstery-cleaning company. If this couch is the love of your life, I'd hate to see you ruin it. If you're clear to continue, pour some alcohol onto a cotton ball or towel. Dab the stain using a slight brushing motion until you see the stain start to disappear. Continue until the stain is gone. If you have that oh-so-welcome "W" label, you can utilize the most effective stain-remover—steam—for this task. But (and this is a big BUT) only use distilled water in the steamer. Tap and drinking water contain minerals which cause water spots and rings, therefore amplifying your problem instead of eliminating it. I hope that one of these suggestions helps you. Now for the stank. For my money, the most effective remedy for odor banishment is baking soda and the sun. The absorbing power of sweet, sweet sodium bicarbonate is second to none. This next suggestion is annoying, but I promise that it works wonders eliminating odors. Move that sofa into the sun, ma dude. The antimicrobial properties of UV rays will help with odor removal. Remove any cushions from the sofa if possible and place them on a sheet next to the sofa. Cover the sofa and cushions with baking soda. Leave them outside for 24 to 48 hours (and keep a couple of tarps handy for overnight and/or rain), then suck up all of the powder with a vacuum. Put your face next to the sofa and inhale. Does it still stink? If so, repeat this process. If the sofa still smells, you can mist it with a 1/2 water, 1/2 vinegar mixture (only if you have that "W" tag) and rub it with a lint-free rag in a brushing motion. Let this dry outside. After it is dry, use a soft upholstery brush to fluff the fabric. If you'd like your sofa to have a new, pleasant odor, I suggest making what I like to call Aunt Izzy's New Pleasant Odor fabric spray. Add 20 drops of lemon essential oil to a spray bottle filled with 2 cups of witch hazel. Shake the bottle, stand about 3 feet away from the sofa, and spray the chair with this concoction. I hope one of these tips leaves you sittin' pretty!



illustrations by Ben Claassen III
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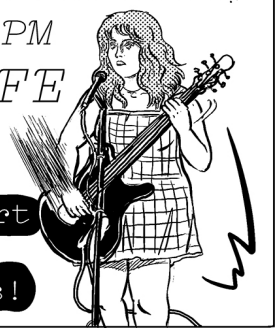
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OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

by Danielle Nelson, LCSW

Danielle Nelson is a practicing therapist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) who focuses on sexual health and wellness, trauma and recovery, self-esteem and resilience building, and general mental health concerns. Though Danielle is a trained professional, this column is not a substitute for advice or care provided by your licensed medical or healthcare professional.



October is here and festival-wise, New Orleans is just showing off. We've got the New Orleans Film Fest, NOLA Funk Fest, Praise Fest, Crescent City Chamber Music Fest, Fried Chicken Fest (and 5k), and Oktoberfest. Leave your air-conditioned indoor life behind and go explore a new neighborhood or environment. It's scientifically proven to increase happiness. And as the decorated houses on my block have been reminding me every day since the second week of September: Halloween is coming. As such, I figured it was time to revive an inquiry I've been keeping in the crypt.

I have an X-Files *"I Want to Believe" sticker on my locker at work. I like the show, but I don't believe in ghosts. I'm big on science and actual evidence. My coworkers believe in all that stuff and the sticker has made me the workplace skeptic. They are constantly telling me stories about ghosts, haunted houses, seeing dead relatives, etc. I used to laugh about it, but lately I've been correcting them. One coworker told me about seeing a figure in her hallway and I gave her an explanation about sleep hallucinations. My girlfriend says I could just say, "That sounds scary." I complained to her about my coworkers, expecting her to be on my side. Instead she told me I was "yucking other people's yum." Then I found out she might believe in ghosts. She's smart and pretty rational. She just thinks there are things science hasn't explained yet and has had a couple experiences she can't explain. I love her, but part of me is thinking, "Really? You believe in ghosts?" I know it sounds judgmental. But where's the line between believing in evidence and being an asshole? Do I need to let people have their ghost stories, or am I allowed to think some things are just ridiculous?*

Empathy hack: You can think someone's belief is ridiculous without treating the person as ridiculous.

I've got two pieces of bad news for you: First, you accidentally put a little supernatural bat-signal on your locker; and second, your girlfriend might be right. Not about the ghosts—I have no idea if ghosts are real and neither do you. That's the point.

Your commitment to evidence isn't the problem. That's actually a good thing. We need people who are able to ask questions like, *how do we know that?* The problem is what happens when we manage the discomfort of uncertainty with rationale. In my business, we call that intellectualization: taking something you find emotionally uncomfortable and turning it into an intellectual problem you can solve.

For example, your coworkers tell you they saw a ghost and instead of saying, "That's creepy," you explain hypnagogic hallucinations. You get to be right, and perhaps most importantly, you get to feel back in control.

So this isn't entirely about ghosts.

It's interesting that you seem genuinely bothered by the fact that people you consider intelligent also believe in things you consider irrational. And it sounds like now your girlfriend is one of those people. That might be why this feels bigger than it should. It's not just, *she believes in ghosts*. It's, *what does this say about her? What does it say about us? How could someone I respect believe in something so absurd?*

Here's where we get to the real issue: separating discernment from contempt.

You can have standards for what you believe. You can even hear someone voice a belief that is unsupported by evidence and privately think, *that is really fucking dumb*. Allowing that judgment to become a *judgment about the person* is when things get corrosive.

When we look at someone through the lens of contempt, we stop being curious about them. We stop thinking, *why does this make sense to you?* And start thinking, *how can you possibly be this stupid?* In the case of your relationship, this is a much bigger issue than whether or not ghosts exist.

Your girlfriend's "yucking other people's yum" comment is worth re-examining. She's not asking you to believe in ghosts. If I understand it correctly, she's asking whether or not you can coexist with people whose reality doesn't exactly match with yours without immediately feeling a need to correct them. Empathy hack: You can think someone's belief is ridiculous without treating the person as ridiculous.

While challenging, having a tolerance for ambiguity is a massively underrated life skill. Not everything needs to be resolved. Sometimes the answer might simply be, I *don't believe that. You do, and neither of us needs to win.*

As it applies to your girlfriend, I'm not advising you to talk yourself into compatibility. If her beliefs genuinely conflict with your values, that's worth taking seriously. But before you decide you've lost respect for her, I'd like you to ask yourself whether you've discovered anything actually troubling about her, or whether you've just discovered that you have a harder time respecting people when you can't respect their line of reasoning. Those are two very different things.

I'm not asking you to believe in ghosts. I'm suggesting that you might want to try and get comfortable with the fact that some of the people you care about are going to believe some things you think are absurd. And if you can learn to let them be wrong without needing to rescue them from their wrongness, I'll bet you'll find your life is going to get a lot quieter. Maybe even more peaceful.

Your co-workers, however, are likely to remain haunted.



If you need to speak to someone right away, call 504-269-COPE (2673). The COPE crisis line provides free, confidential crisis counseling, suicide prevention and information, and mental health referral services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Submit your questions to ***goodcounsel@antigravitymagazine.com*** *(email and sender info will remain confidential), or use the QR code below for our anonymous Google form.*

illustrations by Romey Petite @romeypetite

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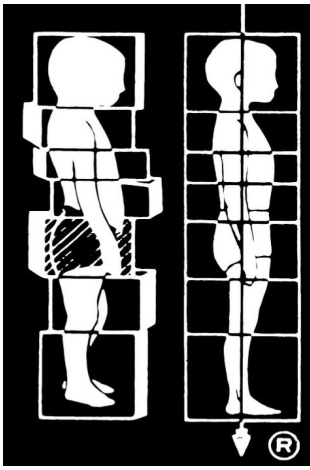


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RAISING LOUISIANA

by Various Authors

This month's column features the stories of multiple authors, who are identified by first name or initial. We are grateful to each of them for their transparency and honesty about a topic that is chronically under-discussed.

NO HEARTBEAT: FOUR MOTHERS SHARE THEIR STORIES OF LOSS



October is Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. Studies have shown approximately 1/5 of all pregnancies end in miscarriage. It is a relatively common and known outcome medically, and yet many women are blindsided by the experience because it's not something most people hear about as part of sex education. And of course it's not often discussed in "polite company" either. We asked a handful of mothers to share their experience around pregnancy loss with us and they were gracious enough to tell us their stories.

Boy or Girl?

Before welcoming her daughter into the world, Susan suffered an abdominal pregnancy—where a fertilized egg implants in the abdominal cavity—at 8-12 weeks in 1990. In her opinion, the health system only complicated what was already a confusing and distressing experience. "I had an abdominal pregnancy. I had no idea what that was and didn't understand what was happening," she said. "After my surgery, I was housed on an OB ward, next to the nursery. I could hear crying infants all day. The well-meaning housekeeper asked if I'd had a boy or a girl. An anesthesiologist came into my room by accident and asked how I tolerated the epidural (that I didn't have). My own doctor brought a group of students into my room to stare at me while he explained to them in much better detail about my abdominal pregnancy than he did with me." Unfortunately, Susan didn't find support or resources when she left the hospital either. "People were awkward about it. My mother-in-law told me I hadn't really lost a baby since it was so early in the pregnancy," she shared. "My own mother told me (four weeks post-op) that I needed to get over it and go to my sister's baby shower and help make a plaster cast of her pregnant belly." When it came to resources, Susan says there weren't any at that time, but her greatest takeaway from the experience was, "Advocate for yourself. Go to the therapy groups for mothers experiencing loss, no matter what anyone else says."

Not Viable

Emily's loss looked a bit different. She suffered a chemical pregnancy, which is defined as the failure of an embryo to develop and typically happens in the first five weeks of pregnancy. She was working with a fertility specialist at the time, which she says made a significant difference in how she handled her loss. "They did a blood test to see that yes, I was pregnant, but the levels were not going to be a viable pregnancy. They offered to do follow-up blood tests, but I ended up bleeding as I was embarking on vacation." She also made sure she was surrounded with family support. "I shared [about the loss] with my parents. I am the type of person that tells my mother and father about my day as I drive home from work. I knew I would want some other support other than my husband," she said. "My mom was very hopeful that the pregnancy would stick, even though I told her that the doctor said it wasn't going to." Emily said she had been open with her friends about her and her husband's fertility struggles and people knew she was seeing a specialist, which meant less awkwardness among friends after her loss. Her greatest takeaway from the experience was that it's vital to know your body. "If you have a feeling that something is wrong, then it is worth checking into," she said. "Shortly after the chemical pregnancy, I was already working with a gastrointestinal doctor due to my constant stomach issues. After many tests I discovered that I had SIBO [small intestinal bacterial overgrowth], and it was possible that SIBO was stopping me from getting pregnant. My research showed that the bacteria can take away essential nutrients needed to have a viable pregnancy." Emily is currently expecting her first child.

"People were awkward about it. My mother-in-law told me I hadn't really lost a baby since it was so early in the pregnancy... My own mother told me (four weeks post-op) that I needed to get over it and go to my sister's baby shower and help make a plaster cast of her pregnant belly."

Unable or Unwilling

Alyson endured four miscarriages before giving birth to her son. She found that eventually, she hit a wall with her providers. "The first few times my doctors were compassionate, but as time went on I felt as if they were unable or unwilling to continue to search for the reason as to why it was happening," she said. "I was told that it just wasn't my time to have a child. I then started to advocate for myself and found other doctors who were willing to research the problem more extensively." Thankfully, she found more support when she shared about her experiences and frustrations. "I did speak out about my miscarriages. I felt people were very understanding and compassionate. They were grieving with me and for me, but in their own way," she shared. "I did feel like something was wrong with me and people would think I was broken, but the people I surrounded myself with and those who stayed for the long haul are the ones that matter." A hard lesson that many people who have been brushed aside by our medical system have to learn, Alyson's biggest takeaway from her recurrent miscarriages is this: "Never stop trying and always advocate for yourself. If you think that there is more you can do, then seek out that help."

"Geriatric Uterus"

E experienced two miscarriages: one around 8 weeks and another around 12 weeks. When asked if the health system made the process more or less difficult, she clarified, "It's not that it was more difficult. It's more that the system made me feel like this was normal and to expect it to potentially happen again, which it did." She went on to share that she wasn't prepared for any of this because as a society we don't speak openly about miscarriages enough to normalize them. "The first miscarriage was a total shock and emotionally heartbreaking," she said. "The second one was worse. I felt like I did everything right and my body was failing me. At first, no one talked about the potential of the male sperm being part of the issue. It was inferred that I was an older mom with a 'geriatric uterus' and my body was rejecting the pregnancy because it wasn't sustainable. My eggs were old. It felt like it was all on me, which was a heavy burden to bear." Thankfully, she found her way to a provider who was willing to dig deeper. "It wasn't until I went to a fertility doctor

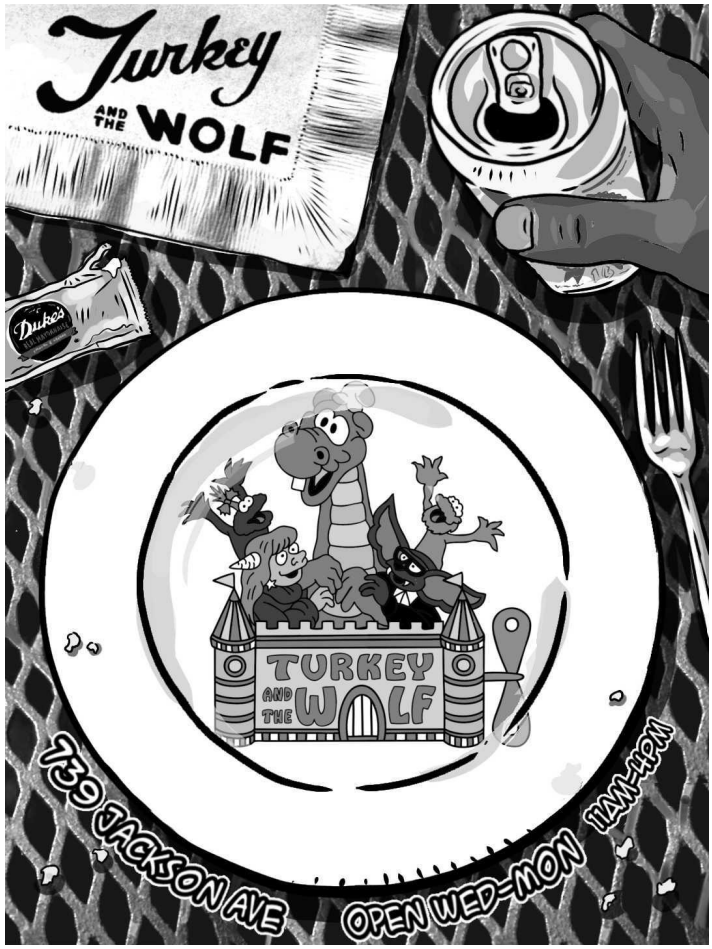
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THE FRIENDLIEST FLOWER

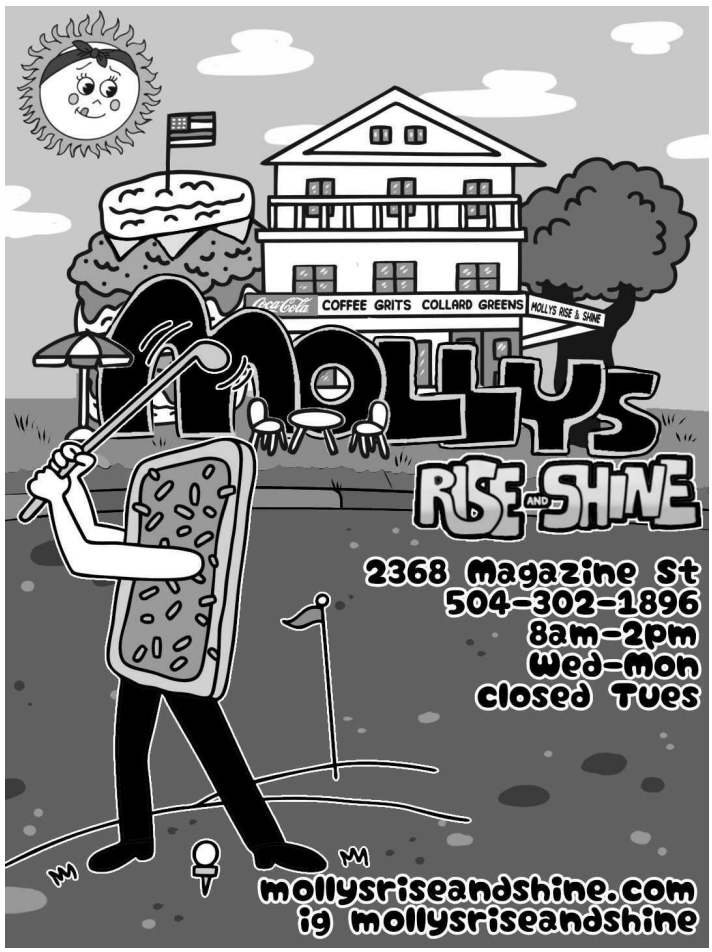
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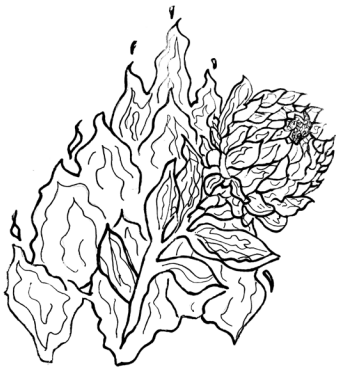
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SOIL ED

by Ian Willson

AN ENDORSEMENT TO FAN THE FLAMES OF FARMERS' CONTENT



Rather be dead than alive by your oppression.
Rather be dead than alive by your design
Poisoned my fingers
Burned out my eyes
Cut down my throat
To be alive.
—Refused

So there's this weed killer called Roundup, made up (until recently*) primarily of the chemical compound glyphosate, invented by the biotechnology industrial farming complex Monsanto, which was acquired in recent years by the even larger agrochemical and medical industrial complex Bayer.

Perhaps you have heard of one or more of these? And if so, perhaps you have heard a reason or three why they are not particularly great? And if you have ever had a garden ever in your life, especially in the summertime in New Orleans, perhaps you have also heard of weeds? And perhaps you have had a reason or three to believe they are not particularly great either?

If my premonitions of perhapsness ring at all true, then have I got a solution to your not particularly great problems! It is the first wave of the future, the oldest new thing humanity has yet known, and probably the hottest thing on your block right now unless someone is welding a fence or thunderstorms are abrewing.

We're talking about fire, arguably the most important tool to the foundation of agricultural society. But I'm not here to spark your interest in the history of slash-and-burn agriculture today. This is a practical gardening advice column, after all. So I'm here to light up your gardening life with a modernized and microcosmical adjustment to an ancient solution to an even more ancient problem with the weed flame torch.

We're talking about fire, arguably the most important tool to the foundation of agricultural society.

That's right folks, a tiny little flamethrower invented for, marketed as, and massively effective at eradicating your garden's weedy woes. And all without putting the plants you love in danger by using terrifying chemicals that kill every non-gmo Roundup ready plant they touch, and without putting the ones you love in danger of ingesting chemicals known to cause cancer, disrupt gut microbiomes, and probably do a lot of other terrible things to non-plant bodies that agribusiness has lobbied long and hard to keep secret from you.

This handy tool of the organic growing trade is extremely safe for the savvy user and costs less than $50 at most retailers, needing nothing more than a propane tank to bring its full heat to the garden. But you cannot help but wonder, *is it not insanely irresponsible and incredibly dangerous to light your garden on fire?* To which I must tell you: Yes, it is insanely irresponsible and incredibly dangerous to do such a thing and I would not recommend anyone do anything of the sort anywhere near human infrastructure of any sort.

The flame torch does not destroy plant matter with willy-nilly fire, but rather with extremely high heat focused very consciously on the plants you want gone, for a brief period of time. The idea is not to catch anything on fire, but to conduct extremely high temperatures from a plant's leaves to its roots, boiling the water up inside them, as good as instantly. Also, an added bonus from flaming your beds and beyond: Seeds that get caught in the flames will also generally die, setting you up for a blindingly brighter future in the garden.

Weeds generally turn a brighter green after you light them up—you are not trying to incinerate them at all. That would take way longer, use up way too much propane, and be very stupidly dangerous.

The way the torch kills weeds, you will see only subtle differences at first, but within one to three days the weeds will yellow and die, much like they do when you spray them with Roundup or some other broad spectrum weed killer. It's OK to get super defensive when people see this and accuse you of poisoning your garden with glyphosate when you actually just used the purifying power of the flame to cleanse your soil of evils. I wouldn't want anyone thinking I was spraying murderous liquids all over my yard and foodstuffs either.

Speaking on the aforementioned danger, it is a true and well-known, verifiable fact that fire can be extremely dangerous. Just as you should be careful when using a grill, lighting the pilot light in your water heater, cooking on a stove, or doing tricks with your Zippo, you should be aware that fire is in fact very hot and that is the reason you are using it, and that it can spread rapidly. As such, you should absolutely never operate the phenomenal power of the propane-fueled weed torch without having a hose nearby ready and waiting should you catch fire to a bit of mulch, dried grass, or diabolical landscaping fabric hiding just below the surface. Also, it is worth noting that just as water negates the power of fire, exceptionally dry places exacerbate the power of fire. Dry things catch on fire more quickly than wet things. Use rationale, use reason, and double check with a hose to be sure you haven't left any lightly smoldering heaps behind you when you're done, lest a neighbor wrongfully accuse you of trying to burn their property down.

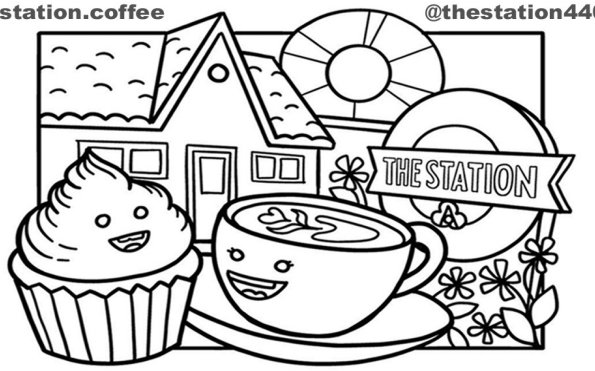
*Actually, while glyphosate is still the main ingredient in large scale agricultural weed killer, and is still readily available for unpermitted retail purchase, most recognizable brands of broad spectrum weed killer do not have glyphosate in them anymore, because of relative consumer awareness and pushback. That is not to say that the new chemical compounds are any safer for you. In fact, I'm willing to bet more than a few pretty pennies that we'll find out all sorts of (probably already confirmed by science and known by Bayer) horrible facts about these new compounds in the next five to 20 years.



illustrations by Rachel Speck
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The Music & Culture Coalition of New Orleans

The Music and Culture Coalition of New Orleans (MaCCNO) is a broad-based coalition and registered 501c3 non-profit corporation that collaborates with, organizes, and empowers the New Orleans music and cultural community to preserve and nurture the city's culture, to translate community vision into policy change, and to create positive economic impact.

In the French Quarter, Prioritize Stewardship Over Citations

The French Quarter is both one of the world's most iconic neighborhoods and a major economic engine for the City of New Orleans and the state in general. For centuries, it has attracted a wide swath of humanity—artists and dreamers, the devout and the hedonistic, the destitute and the obscenely wealthy. The Vieux Carré has hosted them all. Many would argue that is part of its appeal. Others, angling to exclude people and activities they don't like, see this as an impediment to achieving even greater economic benefit.

While of course everyone has the right to live, work, or visit the French Quarter, at times, conflicting interests, lack of coordination, and delayed investment make it feel like a neighborhood that is mismanaged and in distress. Take, for example, our efforts to get the Royal Street Pedestrian Mall re-instated several years ago. Despite the fact that a City ordinance mandated Royal Street be closed to traffic certain hours each day, for months the street remained open to traffic 24/7, putting street musicians at risk. The reason? No agency would agree to take responsibility for moving the protective barricades into place. A 10-minute, twice-a-day duty was made to feel like an impossible task and, until the issue was finally resolved by assigning the job to the Grounds Patrol (a division of the New Orleans Office of Public Safety and Homeland Security), street musicians and their audiences remained at risk of being struck by a vehicle.

But government dysfunction isn't the only disruptive factor the Quarter has faced in recent years. COVID-19 and the ensuing restrictions, though necessary for public health, not only created challenges for many businesses, they also created a vacuum that impacted the pre-existing street culture and informal economy. With many businesses still closed but people starting to re-emerge, Bourbon Street and the surrounding areas saw an influx of new vendors and performers, some driven by opportunity, others by necessity. Not privy to the pre-existing social contract and, for a time, seeing little institutional pushback, some of these activities grew to a point where they started to create what could sometimes be described as a "Wild West" atmosphere, where it felt like anything goes.

In response to neighbor and business complaints and, perhaps most notably, an upcoming Super Bowl, in October 2023 a conglomeration of City and State agencies began hosting "sweeps" of Bourbon Street and the surrounding area, cracking down on unlicensed vending, illegal alcohol sales, parking violations, and enforcing the 8 p.m. Bourbon Street "street entertainer" curfew consistently for the first time in many years. Available data shows a notable uptick in citations issued between those first sweeps and roughly September 2024, and on a recent walkthrough of Bourbon and Canal streets, unlicensed vending had all but disappeared and street performers were off Bourbon before 8. In that sense, the sweeps seem to have achieved their goal.

Yet, while the City touts—and doubles down on—its enforcement success, what continues to be missing is the ongoing stewardship of the French Quarter, particularly its public spaces. Rather than continue the cycle of periods of institutional non-action followed by bouts of heavy-handed enforcement, the City should invest in consistent outreach, assistance, and conflict resolution. The approach should always be engagement before enforcement. The goal should be compliance, not citations. This means that, for example, the Office of Safety and Permits should not suddenly force small businesses to remove their outside tables and chairs during one of the most economically challenging summers in recent memory, but rather work with business owners to find a way to bring them into compliance. Or, if that's not possible, create a grace period to mitigate some of the financial challenges. The lack of coordination on major construction projects on St. Peter and Decatur streets has been a clear disaster to even the most casual observer and has created significant—sometimes catastrophic—challenges to businesses, residents, and performers. Pre-planning and a more active, ongoing stewardship model could have prevented many of these issues.

While the City touts—and doubles down on—its enforcement success, what continues to be missing is the ongoing stewardship of the French Quarter, particularly its public spaces. Rather than continue the cycle of periods of institutional non-action followed by bouts of heavy-handed enforcement, the City should invest in consistent outreach, assistance, and conflict resolution. The approach should always be engagement before enforcement.

A stewardship approach also means shifting away from a reliance on law enforcement agencies to enforce "quality of life" issues, and in particular not outsourcing these types of activities to outside agencies like the Louisiana State Police, which was found to have used excessive force and escalated minor incidents (particularly those involving Black people or people of color) in a Department of Justice civil rights investigation that was instigated, in part, by the killing of Ronald Greene. Rather, use the resources that would have been allotted to hire outside law enforcement to instead provide greater access to opportunity, create proactive connections with support services, and develop non-carceral solutions to common minor issues, like obstruction of the public right of way. Small business owners, street performers, vendors, and unhoused folks are not the enemy. Many are actually city residents and constituents and all deserve to be given the same level of respect and opportunity as the well-connected.

Since the founding of New Orleans in 1718, the area currently known as the French Quarter has endured a myriad of challenges, large and small—fires, plagues, economic downturns, over-tourism, COVID-19. Each has left its mark, but the Quarter has persevered. It will continue to persevere. But without a more thoughtful, less-carceral approach, many of the people and institutions that make it special could be pushed out entirely. That may be a victory for a few—but a loss for the city, its visitors, and the world. ⚜

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The Slumlord Vampires Keep Sucking Away Your Money

by Y. Frank Southall

The spooky season is upon us! This means that we're in the midst of budget season. But will our public officials give us what we need? Or will they be serving horrific tricks? Join the movement for tenants' rights because at the end of the day, affordable housing is a right, not a treat.

"Let Us Not Forget" Vigil

The 7th Annual "Let Us Not Forget" vigil is taking place at 700 Elysian Fields Avenue (Washington Square) on Saturday, October 4 at 3 p.m. This event memorializes and humanizes unhoused members of our community who our city, state, and federal government ignore. Loved ones, friends, and community members of both unhoused and formerly unhoused folks will read eulogies about these individuals. Mortality rates of unhoused individuals are roughly 3.5 times that of housed individuals. While this vigil is not political in a traditional sense, the organizers are keenly aware that demanding basic human rights, food, shelter, and dignified sanitation has become "political" in this current era. Given HB 211's passage, Gov. Landry's authoritarian push to take resources from traditional homeless service providers, and the Super Bowl debacle where he gave resources to mysterious and untested entities not connected to our parish, it has become abundantly clear that our state government doesn't care about homeless individuals.

Join the movement for tenants' rights because at the end of the day, affordable housing is a right, not a treat.

Let's reverse course and fight for a better world that supports all, but on October 4 we'll pray, meditate, and collectively reflect on the lives of our unhoused neighbors and loved ones whose lives ended before they should have. See you at the vigil!

Right to Counsel Budget Madness Continues!

As you know, the City shorted the Right to Counsel budget two years in a row. The membership of Jane Place, the New Orleans Renters Rights Assembly (RRA), and Louisiana Fair Housing Action Center are calling on the City to stop the madness and properly fund this program to protect renters. There's a sign-on letter that you can find at Jane Place's Linktree (linktr.ee/JanePlaceCLT) if you or an organization you belong to want to sign on to protect tenant rights!

At this moment, we're deeply concerned that the City will only include $1.3 million for Right to Counsel. The program needs to be funded at $2.5 million. Anything less prevents ALL of our residents (you, me, and others) from accessing this critical right. Go to Jane Place's Linktree to read the letter, get your organization to sign on, and take other actions shared in our posts. You never know when you might need a Right to Counsel attorney, so protect this right you have now before it disappers!

6th Annual Slumlord Monster Mash Party and Parade

What's spookier than a vampire? An unannounced visit from your landlord! Join the New Orleans Renters Rights Assembly on Saturday, October 24 at 5 p.m. on the Moonwalk for a creepy evening of roasting our city's worst slumlords. This event starts with a small rally and a "parade" bar hop around the corner. We'll stop at the creepiest locations of some of the worst ghouls in our city. We'll end the parade just in time to watch the Krewe of BOO! parade.

Costume Contests for the following categories:

- Best Slumlord Drag (get inspo from "Bad Landlords Nola")
- Best Pest (think sexy rat or gorgeous cockroach. Maybe a vibracious mold spore?)
- Best Broken Appliance (who needs AC in August?)

There will be food, beverages, and more! Message RRA at info@nolarra.org or go to their Instagram (@nolarentersrightsassembly) to get more info!



Upcoming Fun Events, Workshops, and How to Connect

Wanna get involved? Get informed? Join us at these events!

New Orleans Renters Rights Assembly (and Renters' Rights Legal Clinic)
Thursday 10/1
6 p.m. to 8 p.m.
First Grace UMC (entrance through back parking lot)
3401 Canal St.

Weekly Tenant Rights Clinic (every Tuesday and Wednesday)
3 p.m. to 7 p.m.
200 S. Broad St. Ste. 204 (parking lot behind the building, enter from Cleveland Ave.)

7th Annual "Let Us Not Forget" Vigil
Sunday 10/4
3 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Meet at 700 Elysian Fields Ave. (Washington Square)

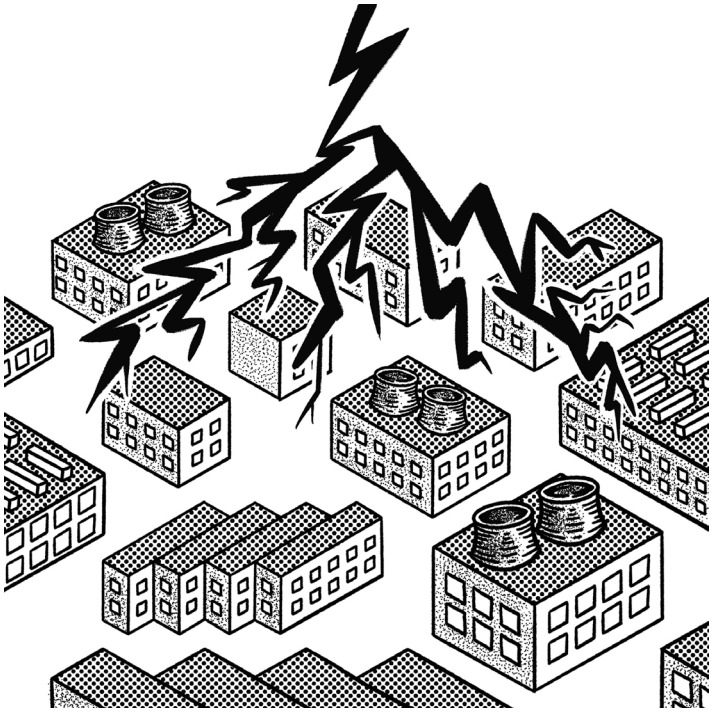
City Budget Hearing: Office of Community Development (Right to Counsel)
Thursday 10/8
8:30 a.m. Press Conference and Rally
9:30 a.m. Budget Discussion and Meeting
City Council Chambers
1300 Perdido St.

National Day of Action on Homelessness
Wednesday 10/21
Time and location to be announced (check out the RRA social media in mid-October: @nolarentersrightsassembly)

6th Annual Slumlord Monster Mash Party and Parade
Saturday 10/24
5 p.m.
Meet on the Moonwalk at the Steps to the river.

For more information, go to jpnsi.org or @janeplace_communitylandtrust on Instagram, visit linktr.ee/JanePlaceCLT, email frank@jpnsi.org, or text UPDATES to (504) 517-5470 with your name and the event you have interest in.

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Grid Locked

The Power Behind the Public Service Commission

by Marisa Clogher

Living in Louisiana, frustration with utilities is par for the course: They're expensive, they're unreliable, and there's minimal transparency in how they operate. When rates go up there's not much to be done other than pay the bill or find yourself in a Kafkaesque labyrinth of indifferent, dead-end bureaucracy. When another gas plant goes up and increases emissions while threatening our air and water quality, it feels like there's little recourse. They don't call it Cancer Alley for nothing.

Years ago, when I first learned of the existence of the Public Service Commission, it felt like peeling back the curtain of Oz. Here, I found a group of officials whose job it is to regulate these utilities—and we elect them. These officials are constantly making decisions that shape—and threaten—each of our daily lives, and I'd never even heard of them. They operate in relative obscurity, so I made it my mission to demystify this quietly powerful government body.

So what is the Public Service Commission? They are a regulatory agency whose job is to "assur[e] safe, reliable and reasonably priced services are provided by the public utilities and common carriers subject to its jurisdiction." They regulate our energy, water, gas, phones, and even towing companies, and are supposed to negotiate fair and safe usage of utilities for the people of Louisiana. Made up of five members who serve six-year terms, public service commissioners each represent more people than a congressman. And while these officials wield immense power, we *do* get to choose them—Louisiana is one of 10 states that actually elects the officials who oversee their utilities rather than via appointment.

Despite being elected by the public, it doesn't always seem that the public is who they're working for. Shockingly, the Public Service Commission is allowed to accept money from the utilities it regulates. Historically, it's a legal and regular practice for commissioners running for office. A 2013 Fox 8 investigation found that over the course of the previous four years, of the "$1.5 million raised by commissioners, at least $1 million - about two-thirds - came from the regulated industries and interested parties, such as attorneys, lobbyists and consultants." In 2022, the Louisiana Democratic Party funneled more than $90,000, according to *DeSmog*, from the utilities industry towards the fossil fuel-friendly candidate, who ended up losing to current District 3 Commissioner Davante Lewis.

Made up of five members who serve six-year terms, public service commissioners each represent more people than a congressman.

Current Commissioner Eric Skrmetta has held the seat for District 1 since 2009. The only sitting commissioner who has held the seat longer is District 5 Commissioner Foster Campbell, who has been on the commission since 2003 before term limits were introduced in 2008. Commissioner Skrmetta recently accepted a position with the Trump Department of Energy, has accepted more than $150,000 in donations from the utilities he regulates and, as the *Times-Picayune* reported at the time, in 2014 asked for campaign support in exchange for lifting the cap on solar net-metering. Solar net-metering allows people to sell unused power from solar panels back to the grid, which is both cost-effective for rate-payers and environmentally friendly. Louisiana has enacted some of the strictest caps in the country.

In 2024, District 2 Commissioner Jean-Paul Coussan had campaign contributions from utilities companies such as Atmos Energy, America's Electric Cooperatives, Baton Rouge Water Company, as well as $5,000 from Entergy. Bernhard Capital, who bought Entergy Louisiana and Entergy New Orleans' gas systems in 2024, contributed "more than $200,000 in campaign contributions" to all five commissioners, as reported by the *Louisiana Illuminator*. That sale went through with unanimous approval.

As Drew Hawkins reported, Entergy executives have also been ghostwriting PSC motions. In records obtained by The Gulf States Newsroom, "the native Word file of the motion, and its metadata — digital breadcrumbs that link a file to its original creator — lists Larry Hand, Entergy's VP of regulatory and public affairs, as the author" of the motion to approve Entergy's settlement to build infrastructure for Meta's $50 billion data center.

Commissioner Davante Lewis won his seat in 2022 against incumbent Lambert Boissiere III on grassroots power and has been the lone dissenting vote on many of these decisions. He believes one of the most misunderstood facets of the job is that commissioners serve more as judges than they do legislators—and he believes in taking the impartiality that comes with the role seriously. "I have a duty to not be arbitrary and capricious and allow all sides due process to make their arguments," he told me.

Recently, though, these deals have been coming to the commission practically done. In these large-scale deals, Lewis says, "Oftentimes, the commission is the last place to know. I will use SpaceX: SpaceX has made their announcement and no utility has told us they are building or needing anything to serve SpaceX." That deal, which was secured through a series of controversial NDAs, grants SpaceX a "125,000-acre, $100 billion rocket launch facility on Louisiana's coastline" which will allegedly fire "about 30 rockets per day." Some experts doubt these estimations, however.

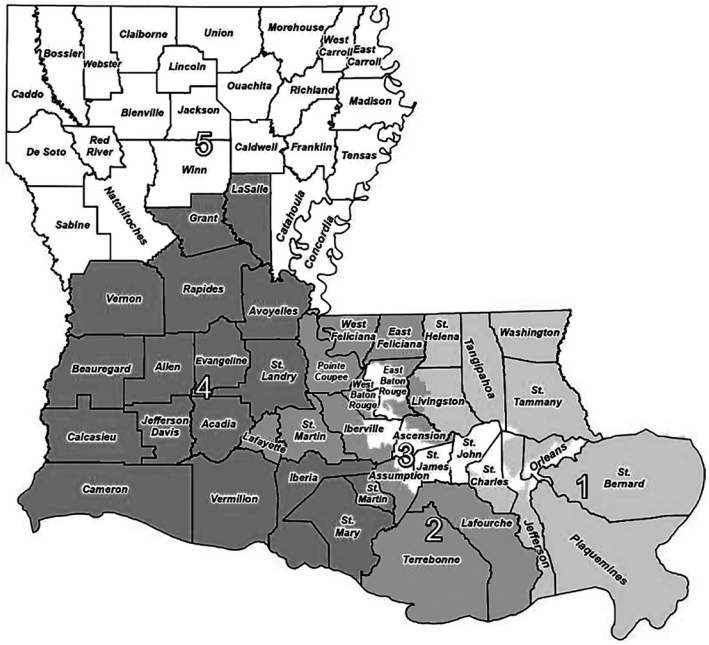
Lewis says that once these deals make it to the commission, the tax agreements, zoning, and land usage have usually already been promised. In the case of Meta and SpaceX, public officials have made these deals with little to no public input, signing NDAs surrounding the projects altogether. As Hawkins reported for WWNO, "Elected officials signing NDAs is a new and emerging practice in Louisiana under the Landry administration." These NDAs ensure that once the deal is public, it's essentially a done deal.

These companies then approach the commission asking for energy from the utilities, and the commission's job is to assess whether what they're asking for is fair, safe, and cost-effective for everyone who lives in the state. "My job is not to tell you whether a data center can come here or not... I'm only evaluating the investments that the utility is saying they need to make to serve their customer," says Lewis.

But in these recent fast-tracked deals, especially surrounding Meta, the burden of proof has seemed to be much lower. As reported by Nola.com, on August 12 in a 3-1 vote, with Commissioner Lewis being the dissenting vote, the commission "overrode a judge's recommendation that the tech giant should provide the information" about how many jobs the project would create and how much power it would require. The only way to make a fair decision is to hear all of the facts and data presented, but many of the commissioners appear unconcerned with due process.

Logan Burke, executive director of the Alliance for Affordable Energy—a nonprofit dedicated to protecting the rights of residents and consumers for fair rates and a safe environment—believes that the Republican strongholds at the state and federal levels are influencing these recent pushes.

"There is a clear impact from outside the commission on decisions that the commission is making, and decisions that the utilities are making, even the requests that they're making," she says. Under



LPSC District Map (via lpsc.louisiana.gov)

District 1: Eric Skrmetta
District 2: Jean-Paul P. Coussan
District 3: Davante Lewis
District 4: Mike Francis
District 5: Foster L. Campbell

Governor Jeff Landry, coastal restoration projects have been canceled, climate change lawsuits have been curtailed, and he has filled his team with oil and gas connections. Nationally, the Trump administration has withdrawn from the Paris Agreement, expanded coal mining, and is looking to eliminate rules that curb greenhouse gas emissions. These political frameworks ensure no reason for utility companies to look for safer, renewable energy sources.

"Louisiana is gonna have a really hard time when the cost of gas goes up," says Burke. "And not *if*, because it *will*."

Once a contract is awarded, it's difficult to alter, making these hasty decisions especially hazardous. "The majority of our decisions are long-term," explains Lewis. "If we agree to let [a utility company] do something, they're allowed to continue doing it until it is considered paid for, or if we find that they are imprudent." Lewis says that finding these companies "imprudent" is a "very hard bar to meet because you have to showcase that people knowingly made a wrong decision." This means that there is a real imperative to get it right the first time. As our coast and natural resources disappear, we have no time to waste on bad decisions.

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In December 2025, the Public Service Commission passed a "lightning directive" that has fast-tracked large projects. The directive, which was described as "Governor Landry's *Louisiana Lightning Speed Initiative*" in meeting notes, sets an eight-month target for approvals of certain large-scale projects, allowing the projects to bypass some procedures such as the standard bidding process, where companies prove the long-term safety and efficacy of their projects. In August, the Alliance for Affordable Energy requested that the PSC withdraw this initiative, saying that it was voted on unconstitutionally "without adequate notice of the proposed rule change and without any opportunity for the public to submit feedback," both of which are required by the Louisiana Constitution.

Through this lightning directive, Meta, in conjunction with Entergy, was allowed to propose seven new gas plants to power their AI data centers with a vote tentatively slated for December.

"Almost every month until December there are billions of dollars on the table," says Burke. And while it's expected that the biggest ticket items will be decided on in December, Burke notes that the commission has the authority to change the schedule and approve something whenever they decide to, so approvals for these projects could be made as early as October.

There is concern, too, that the long-term cost of these additional plants and projects on rate-payers remains unclear. SB490 would create private-use electrical networks for industrial customers and allow utility companies to extract themselves from the grid, generate their own power, and "sell up to 50% of power they generate." These grids would "not be deemed a public utility" and therefore "not subject to Louisiana Public Service Commission (LPSC) regulation" because they would serve and be operated by a single commercial customer. Consumer Energy Alliance raised concerns about the bill, saying it "could create a patch-work of disconnected power that would add layers of complexity without offering price savings for consumers" and could end up raising customer rates by "more than $16 per month." Without proper safeguards, it could mean that costs get shifted to rate-payers down the line if utility companies decide to abandon their grids.

"There's a wave coming and industrials are looking for a way out," says Burke. In the Meta deal, Mark Zuckerberg's way out was crafting an exit years before other partners, and ensuring that if "Meta exit[s] its lease early for other reasons and pay[s] high penalties for doing so, Entergy and its customers could wind up saddled with higher costs," according to the *New York Times*.

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Not all data centers are created alike. As Lewis notes, "I think there's a big misnomer around data centers. There have been data centers in the country for years. There are data centers who are not these giant hyperscalers who need



the utilities to build things for them that they may not pay for." These data centers power things like the hardware and drives for local hospitals and 911 centers.

Burke repeatedly stresses that it isn't simply data centers that are driving this push—it's AI data centers. "If the current trajectory of AI demand continues on the rate that it is on over the next four to five years... the only things that's going to be able to manage the reliability of the grid, the safety of the system, and the costs are going to be things that happen on the demand side," she says. This includes energy efficiency programs, distributed solar, distributed batteries, and demand response programs which offer incentives for voluntarily reducing energy use during high demand times. In December 2025, New Orleans invested $28 million in a distributed energy resource program that will "place hundreds of solar-tied batteries across the city," while in March the PSC approved five demand response programs, including programs for smart thermostats, electric vehicle charging, and battery storage.

New Orleans is in the unique position of directly regulating utilities within the city, which gives our local government far more control than many parishes in the state. But the decisions of the Public Service Commission still affect us greatly. Burke says that local governments have a responsibility to intervene at the Public Service Commission, whether that be through an association, direct participation, or speaking directly to the media. "Something that has worked in Jefferson Parish is simply elected officials in that parish speaking to the media about how raggedy their grid is, and calling out the Public Service Commission."

The people of Louisiana are far too familiar with having to overcorrect for the actions of environmentally destructive corporations. Like vampires, these companies are welcomed in with the express invitation of our government and allowed to feast on our environment, wreak havoc on the grid, and suck the land dry. Meanwhile, those of us building families and livelihoods here are forced to dodge the attacks to our land and well-being, armed with our scrappy, makeshift armor. It's unjust and unfair, and Burke says, "I imagine it will mean that people are gonna get pretty upset when they understand just how much of it is not just data centers, but AI in particular."

Ask a random person on the street about their utilities, chances are they'll express dissatisfaction in one way or another. Whether it be cost, reliability, or safety concerns, there are myriad complaints from myriad demographics. This, in a way, is a good thing—it means there is common ground across lines that often otherwise feel uncrossable. "A lot of people don't realize the power of talking to their family," says Burke. "Their family who they may disagree with on lots of other political issues."

On November 3, we have another election, and Eric Skrmetta's and Foster Campbell's seats are up for grabs. The Public Service Commission is an independent regulatory agency and therefore does not answer to the legislature or to the governor—it answers to the voters. But showing up to cast a vote isn't enough. Commissioners can hold their seat for up to 18 years, and they require our diligent attention for the entirety of their tenure.

illustrations by Sadie Wiese









FREAKY DEAKY

NEW ORLEANS

- FRIDAY OCTOBER 30 2026 -

THE SHRINE

PORTER ROBINSON (DJ SET)
OF THE TREES
DABIN
JKYL & HYDE
KNOW GOOD
CANABLISS
DR. JAX • PRETTY NASTY

THE CRYPT

CID
LAYLA BENITEZ
STRYFE • ROMANICING THE STONE
XSOMNIA • MERGER
DA$ON • AVEA DE LUNE

- SATURDAY OCTOBER 31 2026 -

THE SHRINE

FISHER
CHRIS LORENZO
DEVAULT
BRADEAZY
XANDRA
SKILAH
HONDO • RACHII

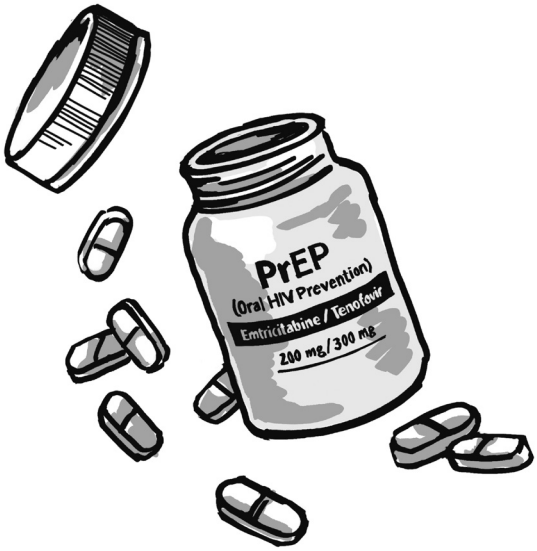
THE CRYPT

WILLIAM BLACK
DISTANT MATTER
DJ TAF • GMUR
VIET TEC B2B ARMANI
KRADO



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Detectable Freedom

The Law Catches Up to the Science of HIV with Act 177

by Mary Beth Campbell

For many across Louisiana, the 2026 state legislative session was overwhelming and disheartening. Amidst the chaos, however, there were a few victories, including the passage of Act 177, which updates Louisiana's HIV criminalization law—famously one of the most restrictive and punitive in the United States—to reflect modern scientific knowledge around HIV transmission. Instrumental to this effort has been the Louisiana Coalition on Criminalization of Health (LCCH), which for the past decade has been a leader in advocacy and education around HIV criminalization, largely due to its statewide focus and diverse coalition. While Act 177 does not repeal the law nor the decades of harm it has caused, it is an important step forward. This is not merely an issue of reform but one of empowerment, providing justice for people living with HIV (PLWH) who have faced stigma and discrimination since the onset of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

HIV Criminal Laws: A Public Health and Social Justice Issue

At the height of the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s, legislation that specifically criminalized the exposure and/or transmission of HIV began to appear in the United States. Louisiana's HIV criminal legislation was enacted in 1987. There are currently 32 states with HIV exposure and transmission offenses on the books (*Figure 1*). Five of these states, including Louisiana, may require registration on a sex offender registry (SOR) as part of the punishment for a conviction under the law. In Louisiana, individuals who are convicted must remain on the SOR for 15 years, unless an appeal can be made. HIV transmission does not need to occur for criminal charges to be filed: A person need only "expose" another person without disclosing their HIV status, something which is hard to prove in court. Individuals convicted under these laws face felony charges, up to 10 years in state prison, up to $5,000 in fines, as well as being added to the SOR. These laws were originally passed when the science behind HIV, including how it is transmitted, was still not fully understood. It would be several years before highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART) became available and changed an HIV diagnosis from a death sentence to a chronic, manageable condition, as well as before the advent of pre- and post-exposure prophylaxis (PreP and PEP) medications for the prevention of HIV infection.

In 1987, the Reagan Administration's Presidential Commission on the Human Immunodeficiency Virus Epidemic—ironically, formed to address discrimination against people living with HIV—recommended that states adopt criminal laws specific to HIV. The reason? It was believed that existing sexual assault laws were not punitive enough, and that there needed to be a more extreme deterrence for intentional exposure. Discrimination against people living with HIV therefore worsened, with the Presidential Commission promoting the removal of burdens of proof (such as intent to harm), with these laws. This contributed to the creation of a "viral underclass," in which already marginalized communities are more dramatically impacted by a disease once it emerges.

As we similarly saw during the COVID-19 pandemic, stigma, misinformation, and fear around HIV were abundant, an issue that remains to this day. Many of the HIV criminalization laws were fueled by homophobia and racism, with a fear that the so-called "gay disease" would spread throughout the heterosexual population. Dorian-gray Alexander, an HIV advocate and co-founder of LCCH, explains that "You have this sense of justification for vilifying HIV/AIDS and anything associated with it because of the history of where it was found in the Western world, who got it, and all the [stigma] around it being sexually transmitted, being shared from needles, blood transfusions. So it's treated differently than any other disease, I think, in modern times."

While viruses do not discriminate, our laws and other systems certainly do. HIV criminalization does not end with HIV. Dietz (who goes by the one name), the executive director of LCCH, states, "One of our taglines is 'You care about HIV decriminalization, you just don't know it yet,' because HIV as a disease state with all of the stigmas that are attached to it really does cross over to pretty much every social justice topic." It has only been 15 years since federal immigration law was changed to allow PLWH to enter the U.S. for either visitation or immigration purposes. To this day, HIV criminalization laws disproportionately impact LGBTQ+ individuals, Black Americans, immigrants, people who use drugs, sex workers, and anyone who is already marginalized by society. Zach Schultz, who is involved in the LCCH Speaker's Bureau, Steering Committee, and Communications Sub-committee, expands, "When we talk about people living with HIV, how we live with stigma, it's not just a theoretical or abstract concept. People bring these kinds of ideas and prejudices with them into the State House. They make laws with these things in mind."

According to the Williams Institute, 63% of all suspects in HIV-related crimes in Louisiana were Black, with Black men making up 45%. For incidents where an arrest occurred, all individuals were Black, with Black men making up 91% of the total people arrested on HIV criminal charges.

The Williams Institute—which conducts research on sexual orientation and gender identity law and public policy—reports that, for Louisiana, the majority of HIV-related incidents only involved allegations of a crime, with most of those cases based on non-sexual contact. HIV can only be transmitted via certain bodily fluids—blood, semen, vaginal fluid, breast milk—and certain behaviors: anal and vaginal sex without condoms, sharing syringes, perinatal transmission (*Figure 2*). And though we have had this knowledge for decades, many of the HIV criminalization laws in the United States do not reflect modern science. Certain

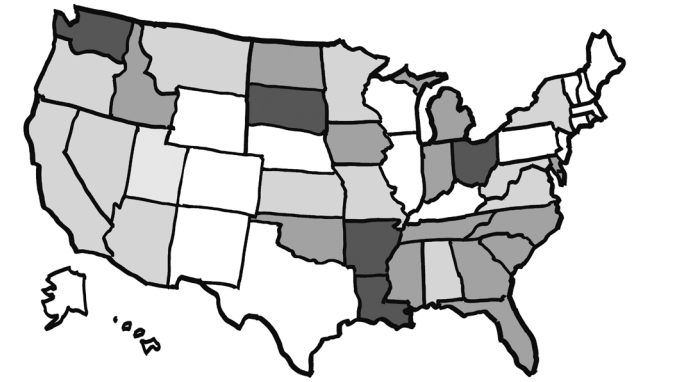


Figure 1
(Source: hivlawandpolicy.org)

behaviors—namely, biting, kissing, spitting, scratching—do not transmit HIV, though 50% of all HIV-related criminal cases over the past five years were related to alleged exposure via biting and spitting. While HIV remains a major public health issue and prevention efforts remain tantamount—including using condoms, PrEP, and PEP, as well as maintaining an undetectable viral load via HAART (Undetectable = Untransmittable, or U=U), if you are living with HIV—transmission is also not as frequent as the HIV criminalization laws would suggest (*Figure 2*). Science, not fear, should be driving public health policy.

The fear of being convicted under the charge of HIV exposure also disincentives people from getting tested. Jazmine Carroll, LCCH mobilization specialist and wellness center coordinator at The Philadelphia Center in Shreveport, explains, "The idea that once somebody knows their status and that if they get tested and they test positive, that they have to disclose their status from there on out to any of their partners intimidates people out of and disincentivizes people out of wanting to get tested, therefore preventing us from reducing transmissions in our state." Disincentivizing testing also means that individuals who do not know that they have a positive HIV status are not getting linked to treatment, and that others are not getting linked to PrEP and other resources.

This is an issue everywhere, especially in Louisiana, which ranks fourth in the U.S. for HIV diagnosis rates. According to the Williams Institute, 63% of all suspects in HIV-related crimes in Louisiana were Black, with Black men making up 45%. For incidents where an arrest occurred, all individuals were Black, with Black men making up 91% of the total people arrested on HIV criminal charges. In addition, 75% of HIV registrants on the state Sex Offender Registry in Louisiana were Black men, even though they only make up 44% of PLWH in Louisiana and 15% of the total state population. "This illustrates the depth of racial injustice in our state and the disproportionality and how that impacts Black bodies in our state," says Carroll. She continues, "We know that it says 91% of [Black] men [and] we are sure that includes trans women. We are sure that those people are misgendered when that information is obtained. And so I think, again, this law perpetuates this history of violence and mass incarceration within our state."

There are real people behind these statistics, whose lives have been disrupted and harmed. Sonya Milliman, whose many roles include director at Capitol Area Reentry Program in Baton Rouge and the LCCH steering committee, has been living and thriving with HIV for a decade. She wants people who do not live with HIV to know that, despite the fact that she has maintained an undetectable HIV status since three weeks after her diagnosis, she "actually [has] to have proof [that she disclosed her status] to have any kind of [sexual] pleasure."

Robert Smith, an LCCH member based in Shreveport, was convicted on HIV criminal charges and placed on the SOR 12 years ago when a former partner—to whom he had disclosed his undetectable HIV status—went to the police after their two-year relationship ended. At the time, Smith was not aware of the HIV criminalization law and, unable to provide any evidence of his disclosure, took a plea deal. This led to him being added to the SOR. With support of LCCH and his legal team, Smith has been working tirelessly to remove his name from the SOR, as it has negatively impacted all aspects of his life: his relationships, his options for employment and housing, and his ability to move freely in the world. "These laws are incredibly dehumanizing," he explains. "This criminalization law, it discriminates."

LCCH and the Road to Reform

For decades, advocates across the United States have been working to reform, if not entirely dismantle, HIV criminalization laws. The LCCH was founded in 2016. According to Dietz, "It was kind of a breaking point where everyone knew this was an issue, but no one had formally, to the best of our awareness, ever centered around this issue in the past in Louisiana. [LCCH] got together with the Center for HIV Law and Policy (CHLP) to essentially brainstorm what the best approach for trying to move forward with addressing the law should be and started the coalition with a summit in 2016." In 2018, the Louisiana HIV criminal law was amended without any input from LCCH or legal consultation. The amendments made the law one of the most restrictive in the country, updating the language of exposure to "any means or contact" and adding increased penalties for exposure to first responders, which includes law enforcement, firefighters, and emergency medical professionals. There has only been one documented case of an occupational-related HIV transmission in the U.S. since 1999 and no documented cases of a first responder or law enforcement agent contracting HIV while on the job in Louisiana, despite the heightened exposure penalties.

In reaction to these punitive laws, LCCH began expanding its education and coalition-building efforts across Louisiana, which included holding regular meetings with open forums, strengthening ties with community members and experts such as the CHLP, and formalizing their decision-making process. "We made decisions and criteria in our operating procedures that required that more than a majority of the people who helped make decisions were people with lived experience," explains Dietz. "So it was truly a movement led by people who this law was directly impacting, not folks who were allies who thought they knew better."

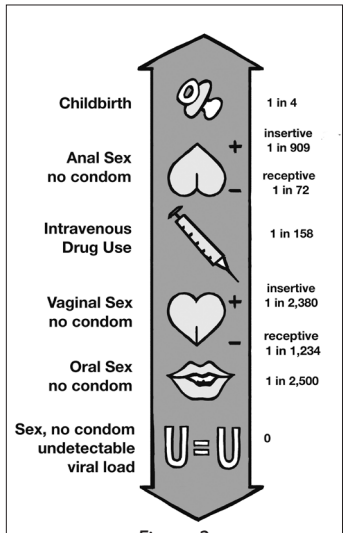


Figure 2
Estimated HIV Transmission Risk by Exposure Type
(Source: aidsmap.com)

During the 2023 legislative session, LCCH, in partnership with House Representatives Aimee Freeman and Mandie Landry, initiated the HR130 Task Force to educate members of the Louisiana legislature on the real-life impacts of the HIV criminalization law on PLWH in Louisiana. Nine focus groups were held, one in every state public health region, in order to ensure that the study

findings reflected the voices of PLWH across the state and not just in New Orleans and Baton Rouge. In 2025, LCCH and allies played an instrumental role in preventing Rep. Pat Moore's (D-Monroe) HB76—which called for the expansion of the HIV criminalization law to include all sexually transmitted infections (STIs), both curable and incurable—from moving forward. This led to Legislative Study HR322 in 2025 to examine the public health outcomes of incurable STIs, which LCCH played a key part in.

"Those were really crucial pieces in getting us to where we are today [with Act 177]," explains Dietz. "I think it's really important to name that people with lived experience created our body of data that oriented us towards what we knew needed to be prioritized in terms of changing the law."



COURTESY LCCH

Members of the Louisiana Coalition on Criminalization and Health (LCCH) gather at the Capitol in Baton Rouge on April 28. Top (Left to Right): Jenny Holl, Dietz, Peyton Rose Michelle, Robert Smith. Bottom (Left to Right): Millicent Foster, Sonya Milliman, Cara Twillie, Jazmine Carroll

HB808/Act 177: Modernizing Louisiana's HIV Criminalization Law

Act 177 began the 2026 Louisiana legislative session as HB808, the culmination of LCCH's past decade of advocacy and education efforts. State Representative Wayne McMahen (R-Minden) sponsored the bill. He had been assigned to meetings for the HR130 task force in 2023 and 2024. Rep. McMahen is a veterinarian by trade, and though he did not have a specific background in HIV, his education in the sciences gave him a perspective that his peers might not have had. McMahen viewed the existing criminal code as an impediment to HIV prevention efforts and, says Dietz, "I was very grateful that someone who maybe doesn't fit the same criteria that we might imagine an ally might have, a white male Republican from a rural part of northern Louisiana, was able to get this information and objectively say, this is wrong, there's something going on here and we need to do better."

Having bipartisan support was key, as was support from the Louisiana District Attorneys Association (LDAA). Members of the LDAA had also been assigned to both HR130 and HR322. Zachary Daniels, the executive director of the LDAA, was most engaged in HR322. "I believe he came to every single meeting," recalls Dietz. "So that meant that not only was he sitting down and getting the information pretty directly, it also meant that I was sitting down next to him and I got to have conversations with him as a person, not even anything about HIV, but just: how's your mom and them?" This direct relationship building, an often unsung part of advocacy work, proved effective, as the LDAA formally supported HB808/Act 177 in the legislative session.

While support from McMahen, Daniels, and the LDAA were important to the success of HB808/Act 177, Kytara Epps, public health and advocacy strategist at CHLP, wants to emphasize that "really the foundation of why [LCCH] were able to get this done compared to states that we see that are more like blue and liberal [is] because they have such a foundation and principles that they've stuck by since its inception to center the voices and leadership of people living with HIV from around the state, not just that blue dot of New Orleans."

After a long and exhausting legislative session, HB808 passed both the full Louisiana House and Senate unanimously. It was signed into law as Act 177 on May 15, and went into effect on August 1. The updated law now reflects modern science, limiting criminal prosecutions to actions posing a "substantial likelihood of transmission," which means that behaviors and interactions that are known to pose no threat of HIV transmission (e.g., biting, scratching, kissing, spitting) will not result in criminal prosecution or felony charges. People who are on anti-retroviral medication with undetectable viral loads may also be exempt, as HIV cannot be transmitted at undetectable levels. Act 177 also allows for medical records used in court proceedings to be sealed to public access, and it improves systems that allow defense attorneys to submit medical records to support a defendant's innocence.

These changes are a major achievement, though there is still work to be done. Compromises to the original bill language had to be made along the way, a reminder of just how politically charged HIV, and HIV criminalization in particular, remains. The original version of HB808 changed the language to require actual transmission of HIV for criminal charges to occur, not exposure. That language was walked back. The requirements for disclosure of HIV status before engaging in vaginal or anal sex remain (it is unclear what protections an undetectable status might provide). There is the additional challenge of proving in court whether or not disclosure did indeed take place, as well as whether a condom was used. And even if someone has evidence of disclosure, jail and bail requirements have not been removed. The heightened penalties for exposure to law enforcement agents and first responders remain—though contact must still prove to be a substantial

> ***"I feel like we actually have some freedom in our lives."***

risk of transmission—as do the penalties for alleged intentional exposure: up to 10 years in state prison, up to $5,000 in fines, felony charges, and 15 years on the Louisiana Sex Offender Registry. These felony charges can have long-term effects, impacting a person's housing, employment, voting rights, and access to federally-funded social services, including FEMA.

It is thus important to view Act 177 not as the end, but as an important step in reform efforts. And despite the reforms that are still needed, Act 177 is an important victory for LCCH, PLWH, and allies, not just in Louisiana but across the country. Sean McCormick, staff attorney at CHLP, states, "We've seen the political representation in Louisiana [and the United States] shift over these years, becoming increasingly more conservative and carceral, even outside of political lines. So this type of reform is really remarkable... But we're also not entirely surprised because of the organization of folks on the ground in Louisiana." Adds Sonya Milliman, "I feel like we actually have some freedom in our lives."

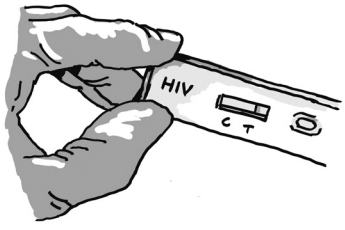
What Comes Next?

Now that Act 177 has gone into effect, LCCH's work has not subsided. In addition to discussing future plans for further reforms, they are currently engaging in a statewide Know Your Rights campaign to educate people about changes to the HIV criminal law. Their focus is not only on training PLWH about their rights under the law, but also public defenders, defense attorneys, medical professionals—anyone who might be working with people affected by HIV criminalization.

At this time, it is still unclear how the law will be upheld in an actual case. There are particular questions, too, around whether a person's undetectable HIV status will legally protect them in the event that they are not able to provide evidence that they disclosed their status to the person who is accusing them of exposure. LCCH and allies are waiting for the first "test cases" to arise, and they plan to offer support to the defendants whenever the cases do occur.

Like so many others involved in this work, Dorian-gray Alexander "want[s] to see real change and real outcomes," from Act 177. "The law is [only] as good as how prudently it's enforced or applied and how successful it is to avoid misjustice," he explains. Act 177, too, is more than about modernizing language around HIV transmission and reducing stigma. It is also an opportunity to empower PLWH, the people who are most affected by these laws and who have been leading these advocacy efforts for decades.

This is, of course, the heart of the issue. It has been over 40 years since the world first became aware of a mysterious illness that we now know to be HIV. People living with HIV have led efforts to advance science, expand social services, and reform policies, even in the early days, when they knew that they might not live to see the results of their labor. Act 177 is an example of what broad advocacy and coalition building led by people with lived experience can accomplish, and why it is imperative that they continue to be centered in this work. "We really need to use everything that we can," Alexander emphasizes. "If it's reform of criminalizing laws, if it's demanding more transparency and accountability of systems that benefit from public monies, people living with HIV should feel like they can speak up and speak out in public forums. People living with HIV have more power than they know. They need to take it back."



For information on LCCH and their upcoming Know Your Rights trainings, please visit lacch.org or @stigmaisntjusticela on Instagram.

Illustrations by Kate Lacour

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Daughters of the Forest

Grit & Grain

ANTIGRAVITY Picks for the 2026 New Orleans Film Festival

by ANTIGRAVITY Staff

It's no small feat to make a movie these days. Between the skyrocketing costs of resources like fuel and building materials, studio mergers that put the accountants in charge, endless competition from streaming services, social media, and YouTube, and the infection of AI into what has traditionally been an incredibly hands-on medium dependent on a team of people, sometimes a small army—the idea of making a film of any length feels like a Quixotic mission that no sane person would embark upon. And yet this year's New Orleans Film Festival boasts over 150 selections that range from meticulously crafted stop-motion animated shorts to documentary features about family farming in a time of climate crisis. Over 250 filmmakers from around the globe (and many from next door) are represented at this year's fest, as is their blood, sweat, tears, and dreams. We salute their efforts to keep cinema alive in its hour of need and offer this year's ANTIGRAVITY *picks, ranging from the light and sweet to the dark and deadly.*



Beware the Box Folk

NARRATIVE FEATURES

Beware the Box Folk

In a not-so-distant dystopian future where private equity is king, *Beware The Box Folk* follows an intrepid reporter trying to crack open a conspiracy involving a corrupt missing politician, a dead source, a garbage strike, and people cartoonishly moving about in cardboard boxes. Made in Baton Rouge by first-time filmmakers Nathan S. Hall and Brendan Pyron for $150,000, their debut feature is beating itself against the walls of the cardboard box it inhabits, trying to break through. It never quite gets there. Using the clever idea of the actors in cardboard boxes is reminiscent of Casey Affleck in *A Ghost Story*, but it doesn't carry the same weight. The elaborate yet simple set dressing of garbage bags everywhere works well but doesn't overcome the convoluted conspiracy and overblown runtime that could have been cut down with another quick editing pass. The concept is good, and I fully support the anti-corporate and corruption sentiment, and I'm glad local filmmakers can keep pulling something off on this scale. But I hope their second film is better. *—Carlos A. Molina*



Danny is My Boyfriend

Danny is My Boyfriend

This improvised, low-budget (filmed on miniDV) comedy begins with Lucy, a young woman living with her co-dependent mother in Los Angeles, who has been put in charge of caring for her boyfriend's three-legged pitbull for a weekend. During a spat over a parking spot, a woman named Mechi recognizes the three-legged dog as *her* boyfriend Danny's dog. The women are forced to confront the unsavory reality of their relationships with Danny, and they team up to get revenge. Because of the improvised nature of the script, the story is sometimes slow-moving, and details can be hard to follow. Directors and co-stars Lucy Sandler and Mechi Lakatos are both funny in their portrayals of immature, awkward young women who don't quite know how to navigate the situation they've found themselves in. *Danny Is My Boyfrien*d may be worth a watch for fans of mumblecore movies with a homemade vibe. *—Paula Ibieta*

Heaven Above Rowen

It makes complete sense why John Cameron Mitchell of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch* fame would lend his name to the debut feature by Alice Voena, not only because she used to be his tour manager. The mixed



The Peril at Pincer Point

media movie cleverly uses a variety of digital and animated elements, including lipstick and eyeliner for some of the rotoscoping. The experimental film follows Rowen Amadeus Camor (Alice Voena), a queer person excommunicated from their community who becomes a cult leader. Using Starlight, an experimental, smokeable medication, Rowen and others have psychedelic, mind-expanding visions depicted with some eye-popping animation. Stephen Trask's score girds some of the weaker visuals with a perfect trippy vibe that slides from background music to a key element with great versatility. Told mostly through voiceover in poetic prose reminiscent of a hopeful gospel intended to serve as the cult's manifesto, *Heaven Above Rowen* is a beautiful collage of art, images, costumes, performance, and animation that works best if you conceive of it as an art project about getting comfortable with yourself. —*Carlos A. Molina*

She Keeps Me Young

Michelle (Blair Beeken) is a rudderless woman who strikes up an inappropriate relationship with high schooler Bridget (Shay Rudolph). Or maybe Bridget strikes one up with her, since she wants to photograph Michelle for an art project. It's not the kind of inappropriate you're thinking—nothing illegal happens. But it is the kind of inappropriate where if your friend did the same thing, you'd be like, *WTF are you doing, bud?* Katy Fullan plays Kelly, Michelle's jealous best friend, whose actions—under the guise of doing good—reveal she's a pretty terrible person. The brightest spot is Alanna (Ayden Mayeri), whose small part steals the show whenever she's onscreen with lines like, "I just wanna get blackout." The film attempts to explore the similarities between a friend ghosting you and a partner turning into a missing person. This ensemble makes you appreciate great performances on screen. If any of these were slightly better, it would lend gravitas to the relatively low stakes. —*Carlos A. Molina*

The Peril at Pincer Point

In their ode to cult classic B-movies of yesteryear, British directors Jake Kuhn and Noah Stratton-Twine combine astounding sound design with nostalgic, sepia-toned visuals in an absurdly satirical celebration of filmmaking. As washed-up sound engineer Jim Baitte (Jack Redmayne) embarks on a quest to prove himself worthy of his craft, he becomes entangled in surreal circumstances on the mysterious island of Pincer Point (complete with colorful characters, mystical prophecies, and disturbingly large arthropods). Lured by the siren song of industry success, Jim submits to his ambition and abandons all reason in an effort to capture "the ultimate sound"—an ethereal recording like none other throughout the history of cinema. If he can do it, he might just achieve silver screen immortality. But at what cost? Dreamlike, cinematic, and refreshingly original, this movie combines intentional artistry with silly dialogue and a healthy respect for the filmmaking tradition that inspired it. —*Terra Durio*

DOCUMENTARY FEATURES

Daughters of the Forest

This vivid, richly textured documentary directed by Otilia Portillo Padua unfolds a layered conversation between humanity and nature, culture and science, the past and the future, life and death. Stunning cinematography and visual effects entwine the forest ecosystem with the lives of two budding mycologists—Indigenous women whose cultural heritage is deeply connected to the land and the many mushroom varieties it hosts. Using traditional knowledge passed on to them by elder matriarchs, they forage, study, and prepare a variety of fungi alongside their community and scientific mentors. This entrancing film explores the complex, interwoven systems that shape the world: the science behind forest mycelium networks, the endangered history, languages, and practices of Tlahuican peoples, and the ongoing environmental consequences of decades of illegal logging in the national forests of Mexico. Directed, produced by, and centering women, *Daughters of the Forest* asks us to consider what we hold sacred, what connects ecosystems and human communities, and what kind of future we want to build together. Highly recommended for mycophiles, naturalists, and fans of Robin Wall Kimmerer's work. —*Terra Durio*



Dew Drop Inn: Resistance and Resilience

Dew Drop Inn: Resistance and Resilience

This documentary brings viewers into local nightclub and hotel the Dew Drop Inn to consider subjects like early rock'n'roll, the Civil Rights Movement, and Hurricane Katrina. Director Michael Murphy, the leader behind multiple New Orleans music documentaries, draws upon his large archive of past interviews to incorporate insights from legends like rock'n'roll pioneer Earl Palmer, studio mastermind Cosimo Matassa, and iconic songsmith Allen Toussaint. The presence of such brilliant local figures makes it all the more disappointing when AI visuals for "Dew Brop Hotel" make an unnecessary appearance on-screen. The film provides a good overview for those unfamiliar with the space's legendary heyday when the likes of Little Richard cut it up on stage and integrated audiences challenged the segregative norms of the South. The film overlooks several decades of lesser explored history in favor of a heavy focus on the inn's recent revival, which has given the space a new meaning to a new generation. Tarriona "Tank" Ball of Tank and the Bangas reflects that it meant a great deal for her to perform in the same space where her father performed decades prior, illustrating that the Dew Drop Inn connects people to both New Orleans' past and present. —*William Archambeault*

Harvest

The Nelson brothers face another disappointing harvest season after struggling through seven years of farming together in North Louisiana. From the first shot, it's clear that the four brothers are under water. Nevertheless, you feel instinctually that they are sufficiently equipped with the grit and swagger to take on the world—and you learn quickly


Harvest

that this is exactly what they're doing. If Steinbeck were writing a contemporary novel about the systemic cruelties inflicted on 21st century farmers, he could do no better than the Nelson brothers hurling every ounce of life force at farming, saddled with chronically malfunctioning equipment on 2,800 acres of land spread out all over North Louisiana. Their bond may be unbreakable, but nerves are fraying (understandably) under the pressure. When they announce midway through the film that they've leased the other 1,000 acres that they need to finally come out ahead, you're left incredulous at what they're taking on. As the filmmakers reveal the layers of their motivations, you understand why. Their father always aspired to become a large-scale farmer, but was thwarted by white Louisianan scheming. It's obvious that they're living out his dreams, but they have plenty of their own, and no matter the challenge it's hard to believe there's anything their combined work ethic and charisma can't accomplish. A vivid portrait of these indomitable brothers, this top-tier documentary, directed by Natalie Baszile and Hyacinth Parker, cannily reveals the tangle of systemic injustice at the heart of the American dream. —*Holly Devon*

King of the Chitlin Circuit

"We've come a long way, but I've got a long way to go," remarks veteran bluesman Bobby Rush, who is still touring hard at 92 years old. The Houma native has spent his life making audiences blush with lewd lyrics and equally brow-raising motions that have not softened in his old age. "You could say you don't like Bobby Rush but 'damn, he good,'" confidently states the singer, guitarist, harmonicist, and, most importantly for him, entertainer. *King of the Chitlin Circuit* doesn't just celebrate high moments, like his first Grammy win at 83 years old. Rush opens up about the difficult parts, including navigating public life with interracial parents in the South, a cheating partner, and playing through the pain of losing his mother. Rush's silver tongue, a font of endless stories, serves as a testament to a lifetime spent captivating audiences across the globe. Director Al Warren brilliantly augments these tales with a mix of archival footage and Rush's contemporary trips across the United States and Europe. Rush has been hard at work his whole life and doesn't show any signs of slowing down any time soon. —*William Archambeault*

Last Night at the Palm Court

A love letter to the traditional jazz club that was a fixture of lower Decatur for three and a half decades until shutting its doors in 2024, directors Jarret Lofstead and Sergio Andrés Lobo-Navia offer a treasure chest of archival footage and new interviews with proprietor Nina Buck, veteran performers, and passionate longtime staff. This documentary celebrates the local club down to its intentional interior design choices, but also offers insights that go far beyond the narrow confines of the small room. *Last Night at the Palm Court* documents changing tides in traditional jazz and also looks at decades of European interest in one of New Orleans' signature sounds. As Buck remarks, "You want to keep this music alive and you want to see this music evolve." As such, this documentary is not simply about the preservation of a so-called dying art. It is about how communities come together and engage with an art form passed down across generations and now across continents. Although Palm Court Jazz Cafe hosted its final night in 2024, it is immortalized in Danny Barker's composition "Palm Court Strut," which continues to be performed locally and internationally. —*William Archambeault*

The Haunting of Pennhurst

You would think a film helmed by a trio of directors would be pulled in too many directions, but *The Haunting of Pennhurst* comes together pretty seamlessly. Mike Attie, Katarina Poljak, and Nathan R. Stenberg interweave the parallel stories of Pennhurst State School and Hospital, an abandoned institution with a history of abuses and atrocities, and its modern incarnation as one of the premier haunted attractions on the East Coast. Blending archival images of the patients' oppressive conditions with a behind-the-scenes look into how to put on a modern day haunted house is informative. The juxtaposition makes you wonder how anyone could have ever treated humans in such a way, and stands as a testament to Sarah Garrahan's editing ability. The emotional turn hinges on the fact that many of the haunters who apply for seasonal positions have disabilities, and therefore may have been institutionalized there in another time (the place was originally known as the *Eastern Pennsylvania Institution for the Feeble Minded and Epileptic)*. This documentary takes great pains to show how the current haunters feel empowered by taking back a space once used to imprison them. While interesting philosophical questions remain about who profits—figuratively and literally—and what is a disability, the film simultaneously provides a hopeful message of progress with a dire warning against the potential erosion of rights. —*Carlos A. Molina*



King of the Chitlin Circuit

Victory

Victory follows beloved New Orleans singer Irma Thomas as she records her first gospel album in three decades. This visually stunning black and white footage brings viewers into the studio to be among the first to hear part of the upcoming project, which includes a collaboration with Brazilian music legend Jorge Ben and a version of Mac DeMarco's "Chamber of Reflection." Director Ben Chace gives Thomas, 83 at the time of filming, a platform to reflect on her life and faith. She talks about the Civil Rights Movement, recalling when a white boss fired her for singing Black music during a late-night dishwasher job. Thomas is now arguably one of the city's most visible gospel singers, but she describes her former church kicking her out at a young age for singing R&B to support her family. The great-great-grandmother dispenses tidbits of timeless wisdom, such as advising young artists that, "You're not in a competition. Be who you are and do what you know how to do best." Thomas may be known first and foremost for her angelic vocals, but her warmth and kindness have further endeared her to many New Orleanians. She frequently checks in on musicians during


Victory

the recording sessions and even navigates a language barrier to console Ben, who became visibly emotional over Thomas' rendition of his song "Brother." *Victory* is a powerful celebration of the music, soul, and faith of one of New Orleans' all-time greats. —*William Archambeault*

NARRATIVE SHORTS

Angels Pull Your Hair
Gabby Beans stars in her own directorial debut short about a young Black woman named Danielle suffering from sleep paralysis after years of being warped by her mother, Marilyn (April Matthis), whose mental illness takes shape in schizophrenic episodes and religious psychosis. Marilyn believes that through white supremacy and faith, her daughter would have a better life, hence her prayer, "You may feel a slight tugging as the angels pull your hair." Even when she's awake, Danielle can't escape the wicked voice of the hunchback creature taking form as The Faceless Hag (Jasai Chase-Owens), but because of the support of her friend Nolwenn (Mirirai Sithole) and her partner Coco (Ismenia Mendes) she finds the courage to face her hell. —*Nijah Narcisse*

Aya
Written, directed, and produced by Maxine Sylvina Ayala, *Aya* follows a woman of the same name who is boxed inside a sterile white room underneath the excruciating combination of recording cameras, blinding overhead lights, and the dominating pitch of disembodied voices. Aya (Katherine Keating) appears unsettled; she's barefoot and wearing a white dress and long, platinum hair. Her body looks dehydrated as shiny blue veins peak through her pale and sullen skin. The startling voice of the ORO (Tab Benoit) echoes through the speaker, commanding her to complete many trials, each one more menacing than the last. —*Nijah Narcisse*

Haint
Haint is a Gullah-Geechee folk horror short from director Jahmil Eady, proudly presented in Geechee Creole. Eady drew upon stories of gentrification occurring along the South Carolina Geechee island coast. As Annabelle (Melanie-Nicholls-King) says in the film, "They come in and paint the place white, not knowing the culture." According to the lore, a haint is an evil spirit that cannot cross water or the sky. The Gullah-Geechee people recognized this and started to use "haint" blue on their homes as a protective ward against evil spirits. As the gentrifiers redevelop the area, they also erase these protections by painting everything white because, to the outsiders, "the blue is a bit too gauche." This erasure of the Geechee culture invites the haints in. Though it seems that the vengeful spirits would provide the horror, Eady suggests that the true horror is the loss of the Geechee people, their homes, and finally, their culture. —*Mike 5ive*

Into The Sun
Over the radio a voice reports: "It's been two weeks since the Category 5 storm hit South Louisiana and recovery efforts are still underway." Charlie (Dora Madison Burge) makes pancakes, visibly exhausted, while her son Eli (Boaz Taylor) uses an upside-down laundry basket as a table for drawing sketches of a flooded city and Charlie's partner Dani (Solaris Nico Corzine) attends to logistics and Charlie's emotional fallout. While the trio drives to different motels in San Antonio looking for Charlie's father, Muddy, the relationships between them effortlessly reveal themselves without relying on expository dialogue that announces its intention. Instead, all three actors offer grounded and subtle portrayals of a family in the turmoil of hurricane aftermath while the script and set design let the small, in-between moments speak for the larger narrative. As Charlie digs through the belongings of a character we never get to meet, we piece together the relationship despite everything unsaid. This approach makes sense coming from writer-director Monique Champagne, a set decoration veteran on films like *Sinners*, *Nickel Boys*, and *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button*. It's clear Champagne knows the importance of details and trusting the audience. —*Marisa Clogher*


Into The Sun

(Om)en
Written and directed by Mary McDade, this short delivers a Lynchian film on presence and attention, in just under seven minutes. Soft light, dreamy sequences, and a woman in red (played by Anne Brown Peterson) carry coded meaning on what seems to be a simple meditation in the park. Fallon Goodsun, as the meditator, delivers the lead from the first breath til the last, tracing arcs of intention, distraction, and the dark ways life can unfurl. Like the rise and fall of the breath, the present moment reaches up to meet us—or conversely slips from our fingers—and this short invites us to sit and see: Who is the dreamer and who is dreaming the dream? —*Megan Burns*

Pullover
The latest film from mother/daughter duo Nicole Collins and Aadyn Encalarde explores the innocence, danger, and trauma of girlhood. *Pullover* puts us in the driver's seat where we follow Lyndria (Aadyn Encalarde) and her little sister as they begin to explore the world and the space around them. As the young girls encounter new threats, they learn to lean on each other and their mother to survive the fallout. The film is a conversation piece meant to show how innocence can be lost but then found. —*Mike 5ive*


The Messiah's Daughter

DOCUMENTARY SHORTS

The Messiah's Daughter
Written and directed by Roxy Moskowitz, this short stars Cali Kira as Tehila, the daughter in a film juxtaposing the harsh reality of family against the scintillating beauty of the unknown. The father (Tomer David) welcomes his daughter to their isolated home, where it's hinted he must remain removed from society. He believes he is the messiah, and Tehila must balance illusion with reality—represented by her retreat into the world of snakes when she flees from her father's god complex. Snakes counterbalance her father's belief, representing a tangible entity she can hold on to—or are they really the root of all evil, as her father's rabbi counsels? This film subtly hands off belief to the believer, asking: What should we do with beauty and disappointment? —*Megan Burns*

We Were Girls Together
This short film by Loyola University New Orleans graduate Cameron Adams explores the complexities, strains, and joys of a longtime friendship between two young women. Jodi (Milo Howell) and Noah (Carsyn Breaux) have been best friends since childhood, and in honor of Jodi taking an internship across the country, they decide to take a road trip to the place where they became friends. When car trouble forces them to stay the night in a small town, unspoken frustrations and their changing relationship come to light. Adams' portrayal of the tension that can occur within a friendship when needs and desires diverge rings true to life, as does the emotional clumsiness of early adulthood. In its short 16 minutes, *We Were Girls Together* is a sweet, wistful look at the power of female friendship. —*Paula Ibieta*

Bachelors Only
Bachelors Only focuses on the under-documented Mardi Gras riot of 1955 in the heart of the gay section of Bourbon Street. Well thought out and meticulously researched by the artist duo Lasse Lau and Flo Maak, the film combines archival footage of 1950s Mardi Gras with audio-cassette logs and firsthand accounts from various bachelors of that era in an attempt to uncover the mystery of what happened in '55, and revealing what life was like then for young gay men in the South trying to find their way. Some of the bachelors speak about the police raiding gay clubs, while others talk about hiding their "true" selves to maintain their place in society. Amidst the pressures of the Lavender Scare, the cops, and unethical laws, the queer community still seems to find a way to live. Historian Roberts Batson sums it up beautifully: Queer folk have always existed but never have they been truly a part of history. This film aims to change that. —*Mike 5ive*

Black Soil
In *Black Soil* (directed by Nicholas Weissman and Caitlin Ochs), the land holds the lessons for a multi-generational family of Black farmers of the Yazoo River basin in northwest Mississippi. The Allen farm originated from a New Deal-era 40-acre land grant. At the time, the land was considered too close to the river to be valuable, but this in fact made it exceptionally fertile. In the generations since, the family has reciprocated the blessings of the land by serving as committed stewards. The film focuses on a father and son farming team, each of whom brings their own perspective to farming. The father, Herbert Allen Jr., takes the more industrial approach that he grew up with, back when high yields were the name of the game. His son Trentis, on the other hand, has been learning the process of regenerative agriculture, in which a holistic understanding of the needs of the land can lead to more abundance long term. But there are no intergenerational tensions here. Trentis integrates what he learns slowly, allowing his father time to adjust to new ways, and is rewarded by Herbert's genuine excitement when he sees how well it works. With stunning footage of Mississippi's earthen riches in every frame, *Black Soil* radiates hope and possibility. Watching the Allen family is enough to make you believe in the possibility of healthy working relationships between generations, learn from both the mistakes and wisdom of the past, and heal our relationship to nature before it's too late. —*Holly Devon*

¡Hola, Paisano!
Hugo Hernández and Berenice Rodriguez are two Mexican immigrants who run the beloved El Paisano Bakery in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Directors Mariana Martinez and Jess Daddio deftly weave together stories from Hugo and Berenice about their lives before and after coming to the United States. Amid images of towering cakes and colorful sweet breads, the couple opens up about their everyday joys and fears, reveal obstacles to their success: growing up in a city under the shadow of Katrina, and how poverty and a lack of resources continue to plague the city's youth. As Shawn Delahoussaye, a levee engineer and mentor, puts it, the program creates an opportunity for young men to explore their relationship with the word "Father." These relationships bolster the community we live in and strengthen the next generation of the city. —*Megan Burns*


Black Soil

Champions of Change
Directed by Jess Speight, *Champions of Change* is a close look at Son of a Saint, a football camp mentoring program. Son of a Saint is a program for fatherless boys in New Orleans that was founded in 2011 by Bivian "Sonny" Lee III, and has served over 700 young men. This film focuses on the mentors who made this difference, including former NFL player Tyrann Mathieu whose father speaks on the impact his absence had on Mathieu's life as he served a 30-year prison sentence. Former NFL player Cornelius Lucas speaks on losing his father as a child and why he feels mentoring is vital to guide the next generation. The stories obstacles they've conquered, and ones that remain. *¡Hola, Paisano!* is a reminder of the awe-inspiring journey immigrants must traverse to build a new life, as well as an indictment of the cruelty and fear that current immigration policies inflict across the United States. —*Paula Ibieta*

Second Line
Edouard Lemiale's five-minute film centers around New Orleans poet, historian, and activist Chuck Perkins and the New Orleans tradition of second lines. Born in Pigeon Town, Perkins is well known to many artists and locals and can

cont'd on pg. 64



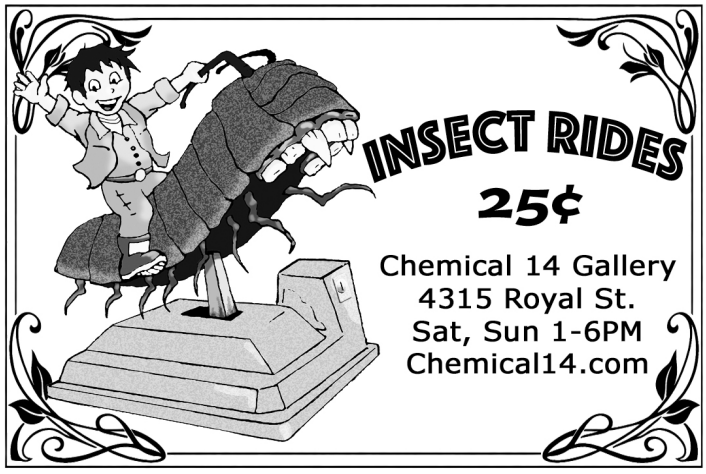
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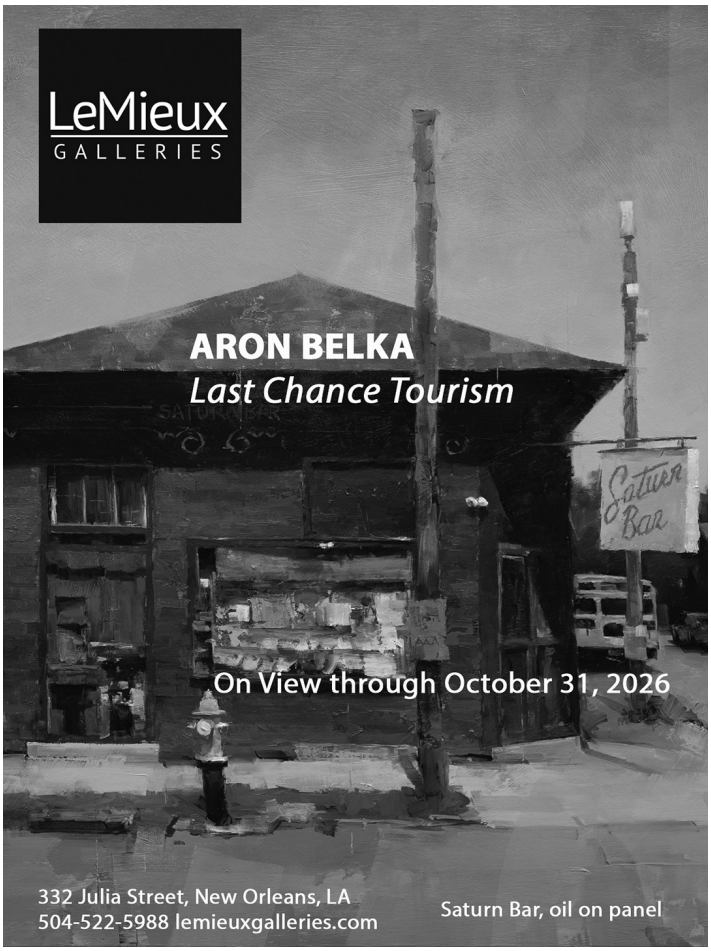
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WEEKDAY HAPPY HOUR 3 - 5PM



Baton Rouge-based S.W.A.R.M. performs at Siberia on August 26. (photo by Dalton Spangler)



Squid Pisser performs at Poor Boys on August 29. (photo by John Stephens)



Greg Rodrigue, bassist of BAD OPERATION, crowdsurfs during the band's EVERYTHING MUST GO *album release on September 5 at The Broadside. (photo by Dalton*



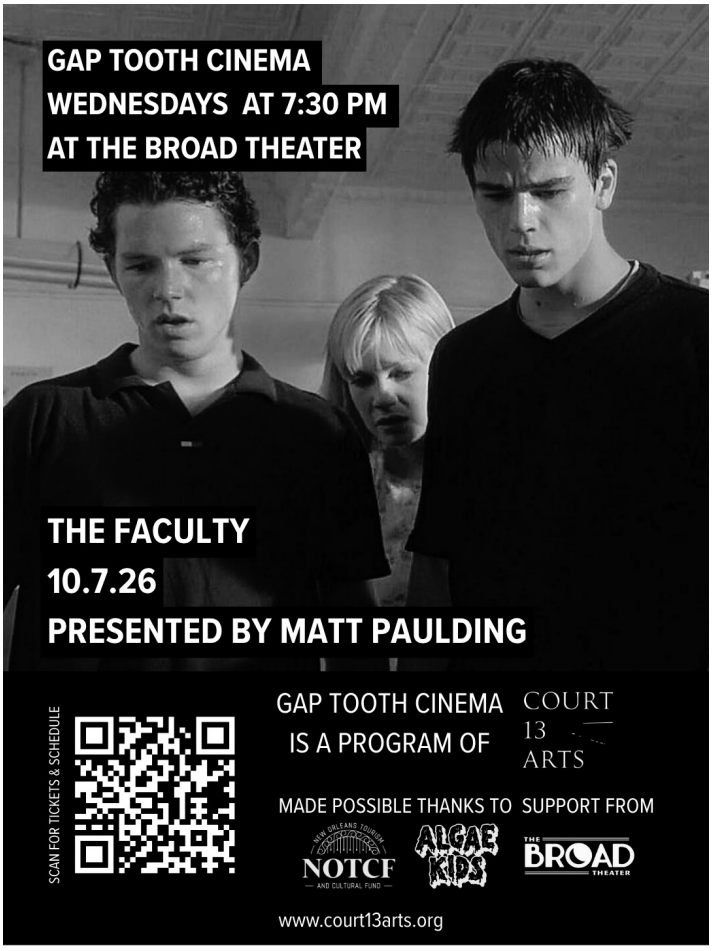
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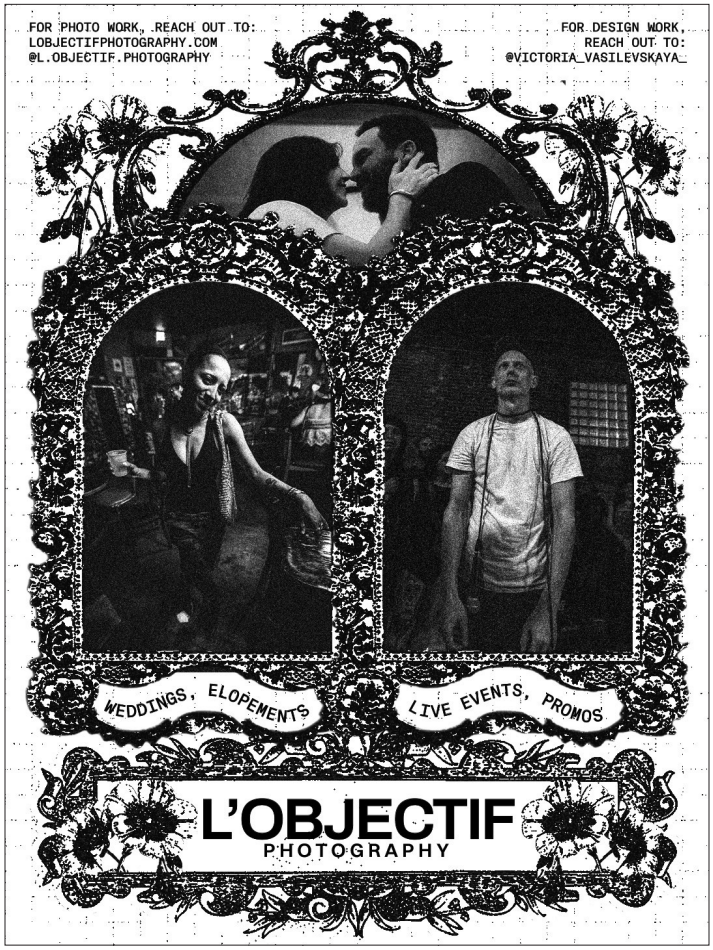


Anna Troxell, of Austin-based band mugger, performs at Holy Diver on September 11. (photo by John Stephens)



Drag flag dancing krewe The Flaming Flagettes celebrate their 10th anniversary at the Decadence parade on September 6. (photo by Leone Juliette)







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LEONE JULITTE

LSD Clownsystem
Lets Everybody In On The Fun

by Sabrina Stone

Conducting an interview with more than one subject is always a challenge, so pitching a feature on a whole clown car full of performers was a wild idea. Luckily, Jake Gold, Karl Tear, and Ricky Ostry are pros at collaboration of all sorts and proved to be excellent ambassadors for New Orleans' #1 clown-themed LCD Soundsystem cover band, LSD Clownsystem. As well as holding down the rhythm section for Clownsystem, Gold, Tear, and Ostry form the core of BAAB and NOW! That's What I Call A Karaoke Band!, two other immensely popular local cover bands. After months of rescheduling because of tours and performances, they joined me on a video call from their Bywater rehearsal space to talk about the complex social network of bands they're in, the way playing for children can be absolute madness, and how the band they're based on feels about this project bringing the circus aesthetic to their catalog. Honk if you bonk!

Long before there was a Clownsystem, there were eight disparate humans making art and music around New Orleans. How did each of you meet and discover that you should be making music together?
Karl Tear: In 2011 to 2012, me and Ricky moved to New Orleans, separately, not together. We were pedicabbers together though, with some other pedicabbers, including Kerem [Ozkan], who's the guitarist in Clownsystem. We started a band called Milksteak and I think we were pretty good. Our friend Tim Beasley fronted it.
Ricky Ostry: It was a post-rock band, shoegazey. It went through a couple iterations and, later, Howe Pearson, one of the singers in Clownsystem, joined as well.
KT: So, that was the first time that Ricky and I played together.
Jake Gold: I knew Tim Beasley through other avenues and met Karl subbing in on some other Tim Beasley project. Might have been Milksteak for all I know! It was outside, is all I remember. A couple years later, Ricky and I met, playing in a Prince cover band called Princess that was intended for one of the [New Orleans] Community Printshop cover band shows. I don't think anybody else from that band is still playing in New Orleans—
RO: Well, Dan [Cardillo], the guitarist from BAAB, was also in that band. That's how Jake and Dan met.

OK, so that's Milksteak, Princess, and BAAB. What other bands connect you all?
RO: Another central band to this universe is called TV Pole Shine. It's a 12-piece, horn-driven funk band, new wave [and] Talking Heads influenced, that is fronted by our friend Bennett Kirschner, who writes all the music. Howe Pearson is the drummer. Jake and I are in it, as well as Toren [Hardee], who's also a singer in the Clownsystem. Around the same time, I was also doing a lot of DJing with Kerem and Brooke [Trout Paulus] who are also in the Clownsystem. We throw this party called Solid Gold, which is a disco party. That's a concentric circle.
JG: And Dan and I were doing a lot of Frenchmen gigs together.
RO: The three of us, along with Dan, are Now! Karaoke Band. We're a live karaoke band with 300+ songs. That band tours every summer. And then the karaoke band plus two singers is BAAB, the Satanic ABBA band.

Opposite Page: Polaroids from the "20,000 Clowns Under The Sea" show at the Joy Theater, October 2023.

I actually met Dan before I met any of you and he told me about the karaoke band—I think it was a pretty new project at the time because COVID restrictions had just been lifted.
JG: The karaoke band started during [the] pandemic, on the back of a pickup truck. We wanted to get people outside so we drove around in the back of our friend Charlie's pickup and posted up in parks around town and had people sing into N95 microphone covers. Clownsystem did some pandemic stuff too. We did Tasche [De La Rocha]'s garage, which was a drive-thru experience where people would pick a song from a menu, the garage door would open up, we would play a song or two, the garage door would close, and the next car would pull up.

"One of the benefits of being in giant bands is that we have friends everywhere."

I do love the inventiveness that restrictions necessitated. So, OK, now we've got: Milksteak, Princess, BAAB, TV Pole Shine, Solid Gold, and Now! Karaoke Band. Is that all of them? And what about PBJ Clownsystem?
RO: That's pretty much everything. We also have our other projects and our friends' projects linked on our website, and most of our past shows.
KT: PBJ is the same band! We just change the LSD to PBJ so it's more kid-friendly. That show was really fun.
JG: The kids were *wild!*
RO: We added in two songs that the kids wrote and we did a Riot Grrrl version of a Shel Silverstein poem ["Sick"]. It was really sweet.
KT: The 30 minutes before we got on stage for that set were maybe the most chaotic moments of my life. There were a hundred children playing in the Music Box [Village], just *screaming*, running around, clanking everything possible. And I had this nightmare feeling: If we don't start playing *now* these kids are gonna tear this place apart.

My band, WAR BUNNIES, wonders why we don't get enough mosh pits and it's clearly because we don't play enough shows for kindergartners. You need those lower centers of gravity to really go at it.
RO: You do! And I think it should be PBJ Clownsystem and TICKLE BUNNIES.

We would be honored! Any time you want to do a fundraiser for anything you care about, we're down. *I absolutely love* the fact that that's a big part of your shows already. You've raised money for so many causes. How do you choose them?
RO: This band was founded at the Community Printshop benefit show, so our first gig was a fundraiser and, philosophically, the group is very much about inclusiveness. Our shows are about people showing up and dressing up and feeling like they're invited to the party. And I think that, from day one, that's been a big part of our ethos: letting everybody in on the fun. All of the shows that we've done that are benefits are things we all care about and it's a no-brainer. We never have to convince anyone in the band to do it. New Orleans has a long tradition of mutual aid and caring for our neighbors. A lot of that has to do with the fact that the city has been neglected for so long by so many people. I personally feel a debt for all of the things that this city has given me. We've done benefits for prison reform, we've done anti-war benefits, benefits for youth empowerment. It all goes hand-in-hand with music.
JG: The karaoke band, in particular, was designed to break down the barrier of us just playing a show *at* people and, instead, being in a show *with* the audience and having one experience together.

You've already got so many singers in Clownsystem and you know the audience is fully singing along. And since



LEONE JULITTE

The crowd at LSD Clownsystem's "Big Top Ball" at the Civic Theatre, February 2024

you're all dressed as clowns, it *is* hard to see where you end and they begin.
KT: That's the beauty of it, what's made people want to be a part of it: Just by dressing up, they're in it.
JG: There was a gala that we did where we had 100 people on stage with us, behind the band, at the Civic Theatre.
RO: We had a fried chicken buffet and a champagne tower.
KT: It's such a big, giant stage that we thought, if we bring our friends and audience on stage with us, it'll feel like a house party.
JG: Like we're back at Okay Bar.

Where you played your second show ever! I do appreciate that, because of the way it's laid out, everyone going to the bathroom is also a part of the show at Okay Bar.
JG: Ha! We had a show there where people had to defend us from the mosh pit and defend all our gear from getting knocked over.
RO: Were you part of that wall?
I wish! But I saw you at French Quarter Fest and I couldn't get over the fact that there were people dressed up as clowns *all day*. Who knew that clowns would be a unifier?
RO: It was a really good guess.
KT: At that original Okay Bar show, we were all getting ready at Ricky's house, who lives near there, and we saw people driving past on their bikes, dressed as clowns. That was the moment where it clicked for us like, *oh! That makes a lot of sense. People are gonna love it 'cause they can be a part of it with their costume.*
JG: BAAB is the same way. People dress up as demons and BDSM stuff.

How did that first show for the Community Printshop come together?
KT: A lot of us had seen LCD Soundsystem at the Orpheum earlier that year and were thinking, we'd had such a good time, as a group of friends... It'd be fun to do LCD Soundsystem songs for the Printshop show.
RO: And the clown thing literally came because we needed a name and Karl said, "What about Clownsystem?"
KT: It was Halloween so we needed a costume too, and that worked almost as a play on the word, and LSD made sense to make it even goofier. We don't even do drugs or LSD, especially.
RO: But it doesn't stop our fans.
JG: And we don't discourage it.
KT: We probably had three rehearsals for it [and] played five songs. I remember watching grainy iPhone videos of our set and it was really profound, the way people were responding to it. And then we played another party that same week.
RO: The Interrobang party—that's another concentric circle. A lot of us are in the Interrobang parading krewe that has rolled in Chewbacchus and in Bohème for many years.
KT: And then we got invited to play the Krewe de Lune's Space Ball one year.
JG: We've played, like, five Space Balls, with different bands, all the different versions.
RO: And became very good friends with Jose Guadarrama, who was one of the producers of Space Ball for many years. He wanted us to start an ABBA cover band. It was really his idea. That was how BAAB originally formed, to play the Space Ball at The Howlin' Wolf. As soon as we played it, we were like, "Oh no. We've done it again. We've picked a band everybody likes and we've played decent enough versions of their songs that people were able to sing along and everybody's dressing in the costume theme." Go figure. This equation works, again.
JG: And there are *wild* set pieces for that one—that first show, we had the disco ball connected to the butt plugs.

Excuse me?
RO: Our front lady was a burlesque performer and some of the people from BLOODRAVE have performed on stage with us a bunch of times so, yeah, there was a disco ball connected via chains to butt plugs to a bunch of dancers on stage.
KT: So as it lifted up, the chains pulled the people.
RO: We also played a show

called "The Pit" where we set up in the middle of Saturn Bar and we lit everything from below in red, so everybody was standing around us and we were playing in the round and the last big BAAB show was "Exercise Your Demons," which was an '80s workout theme where we had a demonic Richard Simmons lead the entirety of the Joy Theater.
KT: We had these great shadow boxes built where we had disco exercise dancers behind the shadow boxes so you could see their silhouettes. It was really, really cool.

2001: [A] Space Odyssey theme, worshiping a giant whippet canister coming from the ceiling. And later in that show, IGRAC, our friends, the aliens, sold the Joy Theater for 167 Vienna Sausages. Like Jake said, a lot of our friends were like, "Yeahhh, we didn't catch any of that."
JG: So we kinda honed in on our theme. Last weekend, it was "Diner." Howe was out on the front of the stage making eggs and pieing himself, dropping food everywhere.
KT: We're showing, not telling as much, is what we've learned.

"That's the beauty of it, what's made people want to be a part of it: Just by dressing up, they're in it."

When did you start building elaborate sets and props for your shows?
KT: The real moment where [LSD Clownsystem] went from just being a fun party band to building sets was when we did our first Clowntown show at Toulouse Theatre.
RO: We created a whole town with the clownies diner and a giant TV. There's a newspaper called *The Clowntown Tribune* that Jake and I co-produce. It's 12 pages with ads and personals and movie reviews and everything else. Jules [Merino] even made our own version of *ANTIGRAVITY* called *PROLEVITY* for one show.

That sounds like an entire musical production.
JG: For a while we went too far and were doing overly complicated plots to our shows. We did a time machine show where we came out of a time machine/clown car and we were like, "Oh no! We're in the prehistoric era. Gotta get out of here!" and then we got back in the thing and went to the future and were too far in the future, and we got back into the clown car and came into the present. And we were talking to people after the show and they were like, "You did WHAT? We didn't get any of that."
RO: I wanted to add that that show opened with two monkeys coming out to the

How many bandmates have to vote "Yay" to push a concept through?
JG: It's not really a voting process, it's more of a conversation where we end up with some people in agreement while some people aren't, and then we just have to start building shit... and then it's pretty much Karl who says, "No. This is what's happening."

Because building is your specialty, Karl? Can we do a breakdown of everybody's roles in the band?
KT: A lot of groups like this try to do things democratically but one or two people have the best idea and it's obvious. It's not *always* me. Everyone has good ideas all the time and this band—all of our bands—it's just that usually the person who's most passionate about it is the one who pushes it through. But we do take votes and sit down and talk about what we want the thing to be, and usually the best idea wins. The building part of the band is usually done by me 'cause that's what I'm interested in, but everyone comes to help out.
RO: Whereas a lot of the aesthetic elements are directed by Jules, who's more of a graphic designer and costumer.
KT: And she's the one to often do the art that gets painted for the theme and she does all the flyers.
JG: It's pretty collaborative. We all bring our strengths to each



Top two flyers designed by Julianne Merino (Drools). Bottom flyer by Lindsay Tomlinson (a.k.a. Super Helpful)



COURTESY LSD CLOWNSYSTEM

LSD Clownsystem's first show at the AllWays Lounge for the New Orleans Community Print Shop cover band show, Halloween 2018. Left to right: Snarl, Mister Softee, and Drools

area. I'd say Ricky's the cigar-chomping producer.
RO: The business clown.
KT: Ricky's definitely the organized, managerial driver of the band. Ricky's really good at following up on opportunities, making new opportunities for the band, and creating connections.

Ricky's who put this together! I think the first time we officially met was at Noé Pierre's backyard fundraiser after a bunch of his videography equipment had been stolen. We talked about how I play bass in one band and how Ricky plays in five (give or take), and the seed of this interview was born.
RO: It was! Jake's usually the musical director, to a certain extent, especially in the karaoke band, and heads up the entire merch program. The three of us do a lot of the building stuff but mostly Karl heads that up. And everyone helps.
JG: A few people do the social media work. Kerem does a lot of spreadsheets.
RO: Howe leads a lot of the on-stage antics and often comes up with some degree of the narrative elements of the theme shows. Toren usually is the one who mixes and masters the records and is one of the more technical members of the group.
KT: Brooke is very much the pied piper/cheerleader.
RO: She gets the people to show up, and she writes the best lyrics.
KT: She's a great frontperson. They all are, the four of them.
RO: Yeah, we have four band leader-frontpeople. It's awesome.

You mentioned that Brooke writes lyrics. Do the lyrics change for each show? Are there variations depending on the theme?
KT: There is an element of improv that the singers do onstage, but we've been writing our own music and we sprinkle that inside of our sets, so we'll play four or five of our own songs amongst the LCD songs or other dance/punk songs that we play. In terms of changing the lyrics for the LCD songs, we do that for a couple but generally, not really. We kinda play those mostly to the record.

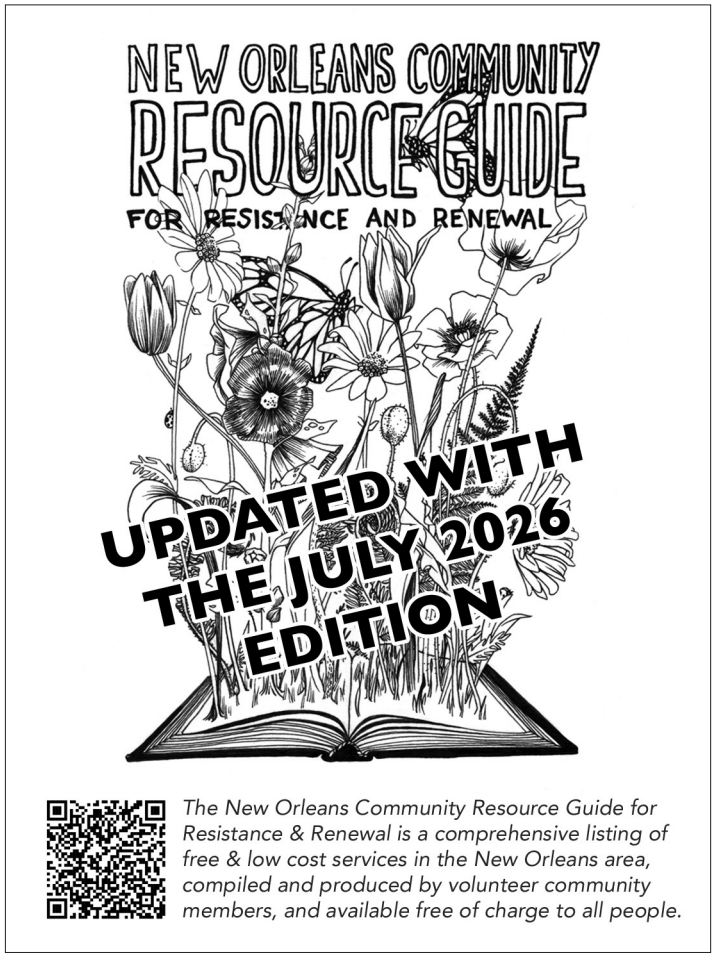
I remember you guys on stage being like, "And thank you, most of all, LCD Soundsystem, for not suing us."
JG: We think they like us! They think we're funny.
KT: Jake has met them.
JG: Yeah, I went to a show in New York one time and I texted our friend [and current LCD Soundsystem member] Korey Richey and he brought me and, like, seven of my friends backstage. We met them all, and James Murphy comes out reading our *Clowntown* newspaper and says, "This is pretty funny. Of the songs we played tonight, how many of my songs do you play?" And I told him, "Most of them?" He said, "OK, which ones *don't* you play?" And I told him we don't play "Losing My Edge" 'cause it felt too personal and too much their story. He was like, "Change the lyrics. Make it about clowns. Make it about New Orleans."
RO: We had a really fun time this past weekend. It was our first time playing at Prospect Park in New York City. We played at LeFrak Pavilion at Lakeside, which is a roller skating rink. Many of our family members were there. We had a lot of old friends show up. There were people on roller skates. It was rad. We had a really good turnout and got to collaborate with friends we met playing festivals. Our friend Adam, from House of Yes, brought in some drag queens to do a bit, the Fou Fou Ha collective. A really cool DJ called Amber Valentine opened for us.

Since you were on LCD's home turf, do you think some of the people showing up were expecting the OG band?
RO: I hope not! One of the first people to show up was wearing an LCD Soundsystem shirt.
JG: We played a lot of different songs that we don't usually play, including our originals. And even though we learned the [LCD] songs how they [play] them *before* we start genre-fucking them, we do mess with them enough so you can tell, even with your eyes closed, that it's not the same band.
KT: And then you open your eyes and it's absolute insanity on stage.
RO: Somebody talk about the Time Sandwich.
KT: A way that we've structured our set to be our own is we took three of their songs and put them together. We start with the song "Us V Them" and then, when there's a dynamic shift, we go into "Time to Get Away." Then we go back to "Us V Them." Then when there's another dynamic shift we go into "Beat Connection." All three of those songs talk about time a lot, so it makes sense as a sandwich.
RO: Me and Jake especially grew up on jam bands and it's something we stole from Phish and all those second-wave jam bands.

Let's talk about your originals!
KT: We've almost Trojan-horsed our way into getting our originals in front of a lot of people, which is really funny. We have, like, six that we've played.
JG: One of them, when we started playing it, people were singing it in the crowd. It's crazy. We had released it *that day* and they were up in front singing it.
RO: Oh yeah, that happens. I wonder if people are just *trying* to sing along sometimes.
KT: There's been times when some of the originals almost get a bigger pop than some of the covers we play. I'm always so happy when that happens. They just want to hear good music and fun upbeat stuff which, as songwriters, is what we're going for.
RO: It feels like that's not how it's supposed to go because "Shut Up and Play the Hits" is what you'd expect.

cont'd on pg. 54





The New Orleans Community Resource Guide for Resistance & Renewal is a comprehensive listing of free & low cost services in the New Orleans area, compiled and produced by volunteer community members, and available free of charge to all people.

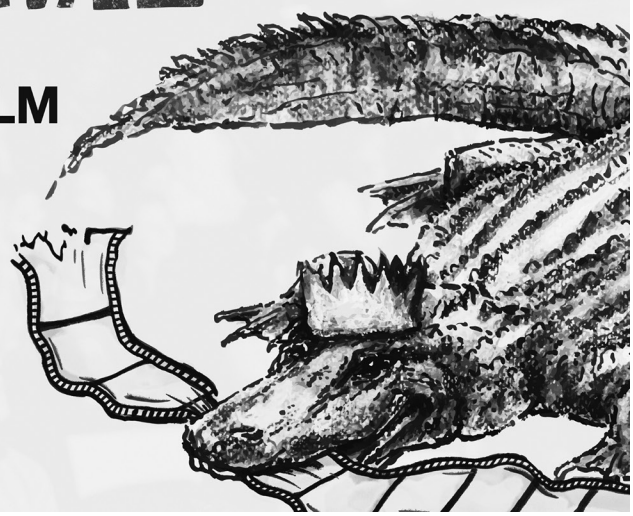
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REVIEWS



THE BOMB PULSE
SONGS OF SOUND (AND OTHER SONGS)
(SELF-RELEASE)

The BOMB Pulse is back at it again, delivering danceable punk to the New Orleans music scene with *Songs of Sound (and Other Songs)*. This latest album features erratic drum beats by Eli Gentzler, and volatile vocals and guitar by Dylan Eller, while Cody Goin's bass acts as a douse of kerosene to light the whole damn thing on fire. The trio's music convinces marble statues to tap a toe—anyone who is flesh and bone doesn't stand a chance against the insistence of their groove. Fittingly, their song "Anklebreaker" could be blasting on the radio in a Starsky & Hutch car-chase scene. If The BOMB Pulse's lyrical tongue twisters, trumpets, and trombones don't do it for you, might I suggest hard drugs? Their music gives listeners permission to have fun and shake their bodies into numbness and laughter while providing a refreshing reminder not to take yourself too seriously. —*Elisa Gomez*



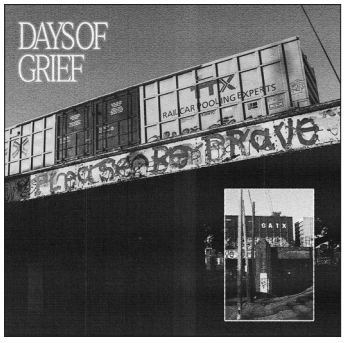
BOY HARSHER
GET MEAN
(NUDE CLUB)

GET MEAN, the latest album from Boy Harsher, was born from an ending. After 10 years together as creative and romantic partners, band members Jae Matthews and Augustus Muller ended their romantic relationship. Despite the title, Matthews and Muller have foregone the drama of a *Rumours*-style break-up album, instead crafting a mature and introspective collection of songs that navigate grief and heartbreak, and what they might evolve into when given enough time. Matthews' lyrics of lost love and Muller's delicious synths dance with and around each other. The first two songs on *GET MEAN*—the flirty "Ronny" and hopeful "Jeans"—have a comparatively poppier sound than many of their other efforts and come off like the soundtrack to an '80s movie. In fact, the first line in "Jeans" is "Okay James Spader over here, look at you." The mood then begins to shift with "Break Me," as Muller delves into their familiar, pulsing industrial darkwave. Matthews sings about the realities of loss beginning to set in ("How you get them is how you lose them"). The tone shifts slightly with each song, echoing Matthews and Muller's journey and the familiar stages of heartbreak. Sometimes ("Faulty") you need to dance it all away and sometimes ("Pray 4 Me") you just need to sit and grieve. —*Mary Beth Campbell*



CHALANT
ANOTHER ONE
(SELF-RELEASE)

Ranging from sweeping doom to frenetic math rock, New Orleans post-punk band Chalant delivers a dynamic debut album with *Another One*. Fronted by Kendra Unique, a political activist and Dancing Grounds leader, Chalant owes much of its personality to Unique's lyrics and vocal ability. Her delivery matches the diverse songwriting, going from talk-singing to full-on belting like on "Heaven's Gate." Akin to XTC's "Dear God," Unique demands that God not give her his toughest lessons and for him to "eat my ass." As objectively funny as that line is, it's made deadly sharp as it's revealed to be a prayer about a miscarriage. Unique laughs maniacally towards the end, winking at the proverbial camera as she challenges God, the band nearly falling apart behind her but never completely. This song in particular best reflects where this band is on their debut, as Unique dares to go there and succeeds while the band struggles to keep up. And not for lack of ability, as they are obviously talented musicians deploying varied instrumentation, but Unique's fitting sincerity provides a much-needed presence in a world with far too many bland post-punk bands. —*Dalton Spangler*



DAYS OF GRIEF
PLEASE BE BRAVE
(SELF-RELEASE)

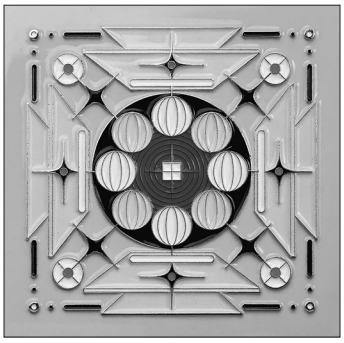
Back in the days of Blockbuster and the like, I remember seeing the PS2 game *God of War* (2005) on the shelves and having a Bart Simpson "buy me Bonestorm or go to hell" moment with my mom. She told me no for obvious reasons. But my loophole would arrive one day at a friend's house, where I could play just a little, and booting up the game into that intro of Kratos stepping off the mountain forever sealed in my psyche like a sleeper-agent codeword. So you can imagine my fervor when I first heard the scene sampled on New Orleans hardcore band Days of Grief's debut demo *PLEASE BE BRAVE*. It encapsulates much of what this band is about: anguish and wrath (just like Kratos). Fronted by Victoria Vasilevskaya, the band's lyrics read almost like post-hardcore just written for beatdown, like on "TOMORROW IT HAPPENS," where she growls, "Don't treat me like I'm / Just another bitch / You can talk to / Use and cry to / And then / Throw me away." The title track rallies against complacency and ego with a chugging groove before nearly coming off the rails as it slows down. As far as metallic grindcore goes, Days of Grief can be minimal and sparse, which allows space for its big riffs and crashing drums, but can also make them a bit stripped-down and rudimentary in nature. This works for a new band still filling out their sound and learning their instruments, adding to its scrappy charm. As far as demos go, *PLEASE BE BRAVE* captures their potential as a hardcore group with live-like clarity, and having the lyrics available reveals the anguish behind the wrath. —*Dalton Spangler*



DOG LEVEE
GOOD DEMO
(SELF-RELEASE)

dog levee invites us into the mess of romantic nostalgia with *good demo*, a 14-track debut that clocks in at just over 18 minutes. No, it's not *that* dog levee—the unofficial Uptown pet owner spot—but the album does a pretty good job mimicking its presence. It's a guilty pleasure: songs and persistent memories that we know are bitter, yet still romanticize. *good demo* captures young city love at its sweatiest and most sincere. Love, on *good demo*, doesn't know how to behave: It bleeds between the

lines, trips over itself, changes its mind, gets too close, pulls back, and then asks you to stay anyway. The album has a way of following you home and settling into the intimate refuge of your room while your mind wanders to someone forbidden. *good demo* blends bedroom pop, indie and alternative R&B with a little neo-soul, pulling from artists like Steve Lacy, Hotel Ugly, and Black Honey. "kippers," the opener, sets the tone with distant harmonies buried beneath raspy synth, brushing the past off as water under the bridge. No one track feels particularly interested in tying itself up neatly. The songs arrive, linger just long enough to leave their mark, and inevitably blur into whatever comes next. "girl" pivots with its own uncertainty. By "brightside cider," we get a contrastingly sour taste in our mouth with the lyrics "tell me it's over." It's far from a clean-cut love story, and that's exactly the point. *good demo* is too short, too messy, and too young for that. It's a compilation of almosts, maybes, and things better left unsaid. Before you know it, it's over, and you're left wondering why you already want to spin it again. —*Maecie Hardaker*



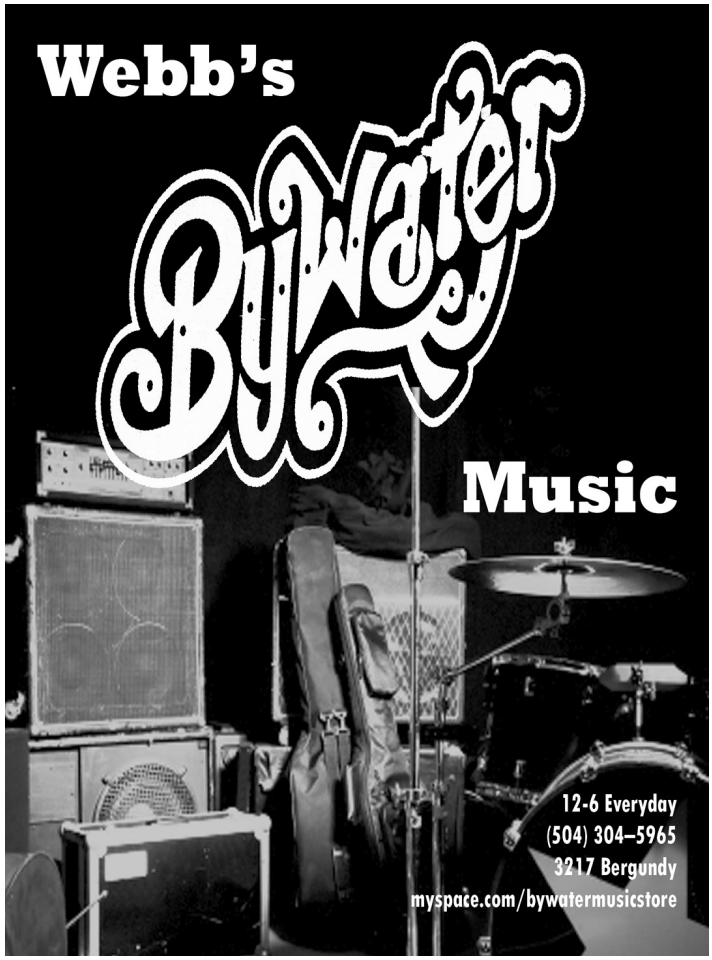
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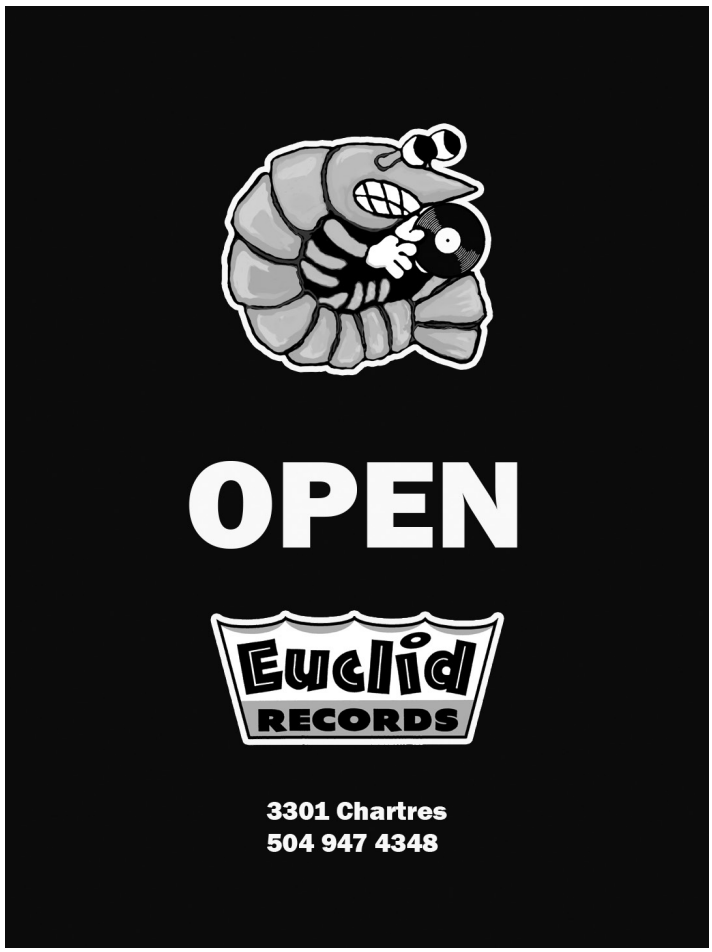
It has been over 14 years since Beastie Boy Adam "MCA" Yauch died of cancer, and 15 years since the Beastie Boys released their final studio album, *Hot Sauce Committee Part Two*. Though they continue to keep the legacy of their band and brother MCA alive, neither Michael "Mike D" Diamond nor Adam "Ad-Rock" Horovitz have released music in the subsequent years, either as the Beastie Boys (which disbanded after Yauch's death) or other projects—that is, until Mike D's recent solo debut, *Thank You*. A collaboration with his sons Skyler and Davis Diamond, *Thank You* is a glitched-out amalgamation of punk, hip-hop, and electronic music that hearkens back to both the Beastie's early days in the intersecting music scene of 1980s New York City and Mike D's own remix collaborations in the 1990s and 2010s. Lyrically, Mike D is both introspective and socially conscious, his distinctive vocals as boyish and charming as they have always been. Musically, *Thank You* exists at an interesting crossroads. The production and beats are energetic and tight, but there are many moments where it seems that Mike D is just rehashing and reconfiguring music from the 1990s and 2000s, creating well-made but somewhat stale songs—until you remember that his innovative beat-making as a Beastie Boy paved the way for this music in the first place. —*Mary Beth Campbell*



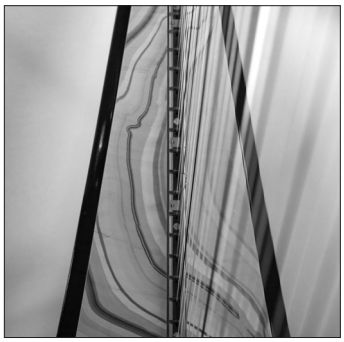
NAIL CLUB
COLLECTED METHODS
(OPTIK MUZAK)

On September 1, New Orleans-based Nail Club, the solo project of Sara Storm (an *ANTIGRAVITY* contributor) released *Collected Methods*. Or, perhaps this is a *re-release:* Originally out in 2020 on Hot Releases, Storm discovered that the label had erased Nail Club's music from all streaming platforms and that the album was also out of print. Storm has the last laugh, however, as now her music can be re-introduced into the world and reach new ears beyond her established audience. *Collected Methods* showcases Nail Club's heady and discordant take on minimal wave, indebted to classic dark wave and goth without sounding derivative. Storm's vocals, layered with sharp-edged synth tracks, create a visceral





and otherworldly experience. Standout songs include "You Lose" with its exploration of grief, as well as the spiky and introspective "Do You Have Any Flaws?" Though it is, of course, worth taking the time to explore the album in full. *Collected Methods*, as with the rest of the Nail Club oeuvre, strikes the balance between alluring and disquieting, delivering music that makes you want to contemplate your life as well as dance strangely in a dark and crowded room. —*Mary Beth Campbell*



LARA SOMOGYI
A [TIME] PATTERNED
(UNIVERSAL)

Following her debut album, *Exclamation*, Hawaiian-born harp star Lara Somogyi's second record concerns time, in all its passages and intricacies. Playing through grief after the passing of her father, Somogyi has created a series of beautiful soundscapes that blend ambient sensibilities with her classical roots. Having worked with Ólafur Arnalds, the London Symphony Orchestra, and Bat for Lashes, Somogyi has been gradually forging her own path. *a [time] patterned*, which gets more experimental as it progresses, features standout tracks such as "open fields," a sweeping and glittering high point which is precisely as open, fresh, and adventurous as its title suggests. "highway nocturne 40" starts with lower strings, lending a necessary depth to the record with a full-bodied meditative moment that splits up the album. There are still plenty of the more traditional arpeggios that one thinks of when imagining harp-playing, but combined with the electronics, the music becomes simultaneously sweeping and intricate. A record of velvety textures and dappled-patterns of light, Somogyi is emotive and earnest, dodging any new-agey corniness with deft restraint. —*Eva Karl*



S.W.A.R.M.
INFECTION
(PSYCHIC SPICE)

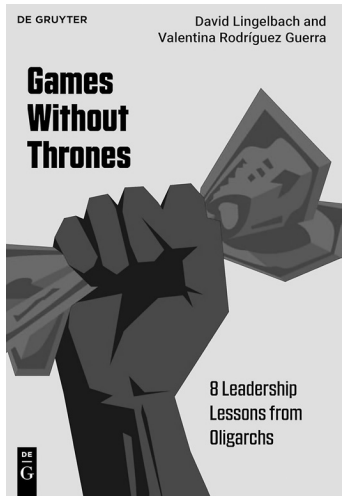
I like bugs. I like punk. So naturally, I should like bug punk in the form of the Baton Rouge band S.W.A.R.M. and their debut EP, *Infection*. It's a promising release showcasing the band's penchant for hooks, gang vocals, and ripping guitar work. The rhythm section is especially impressive and eclectic, like on the bridge for "sad boi anthem (Love Ain't Shit)," where the band drops out into this ska-esque breakdown of drum rolls, cowbell, and other random bits of percussion (complete with guitar upstrokes and horns). By far the best track is "Strawberry Jam," a haunting song about violence against women and queer people that reaches its zenith with the refrain, "Please don't kill me," chanted by the group like an undead coven. Despite its heavy lyrics, the rhythm-driven groove gives it a fast-paced funkiness that lifts the song like an ominous fog. Leaning towards polished and theatrical alt-rock, *Infection* can feel less like what the band calls "PUNK REALNESS" and more like a cheeky costume, but the punchy performances scattered throughout are made all the more visceral by the band's queer, femme, POC perspective. —*Dalton Spangler*





MARIELLE SONGY
COFFEE CULTURE NEW ORLEANS
(LSU PRESS)

Easy to read and digest, this bright, jam-packed little book, part of the *SoFAB Series on the Culture of Food and Drink*, covers centuries of historical, economic, and cultural coffee grounds. It's an excellent resource for the history buff and coffee-curious alike. Drawing from print, interviews, festivals, and other primary source material, this small but mighty coffee compendium whisks readers along on a caffeinated journey of local culinary history and heritage. By page seven, you will completely understand the anatomy of a coffee plant, from root to fruit. By page 19, the myriad processing, roasting, and origin mysteries are uncovered (with the help of Greg Rodrigue of HEY Coffee Co. and Prince Lobo of Addis). Next comes the cultural waves of coffee consumption worldwide, and our current era. By the end of chapter one, you'll know more coffee lore than the average Starbucks barista—and that's just the first taste. A U.S. leader of coffee imports, New Orleans embraced coffee uniquely as a ubiquitous part of daily life. Whether that meant business discussions over coffee in exchanges or coffeehouses, laymans' afternoon Coffee à la Creole or Cajun Café au Lait, or the advent of the boozy Café Brûlot of Antoine's fame and the Frozen Irish Coffee invented at Molly's At The Market, the book efficiently unpacks how coffee is woven into the social fabric of our city's history. Did you know the mythical "free lunch" was born in a New Orleans coffeehouse in the 1830s? Are you aware of the link many free people of color in the city had to coffee? New Orleans' coffee industry is directly responsible for opening U.S. trade lines with the Philippines and El Salvador. The fascinating information covered is so embedded in our daily life, it's easy to miss. But discovering it in C*offee Culture New Orleans* is as enjoyable as popping into one of our city's beloved coffeehouses for a steaming mug of single origin medium roast. —*Terra Durio*



DAVID LINGELBACH / VALENTINA RODRÍGUEZ GUERRA
GAMES WITHOUT THRONES: 8 LEADERSHIP LESSONS FROM OLIGARCHS
(DE GRUYTER)

Could this really be a self-help book for aspiring oligarchs? In fact, it's something more cynical than that. The authors—academics and founders of The Center for the Study of Oligarchs— declare that the continued rise of oligarchs who use political power to grow their economic might (and vice versa) is essentially inevitable, so it's best to learn from them how to survive in their world. Mixing the short yet repetitive sentences of airport business books with endless examples of

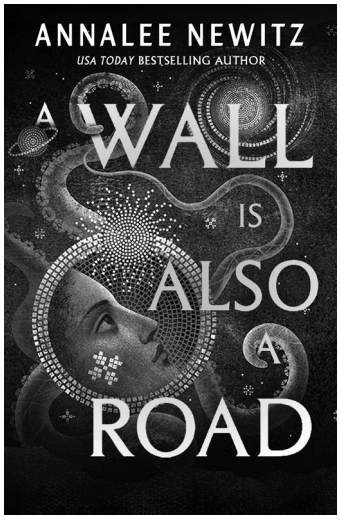
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the "It's not X, it's Y" phrasing now associated with AI, they offer advice mostly amounting to keeping your options open and holding your cards close to your chest, peppered with examples from tyrants and tycoons across the globe. There are some especially embarrassing bits—it's unclear why co-author David Lingelbach felt his personal exploration of Buddhism and existentialism relevant, and maybe too clear why a photo of Lingelbach and evidently much younger co-author Valentina Rodríguez Guerra soon follows a snapshot of Russian-Israeli oligarch Mikhail Fridman and his voluptuous mistress—but mostly, it's just a tedious book. It's perhaps unsurprising that despite their fatalistic, acquiescent approach to rule by the rich and powerful, their center only netted a mere $60,000 from a Rockefeller family foundation. —*Steven Melendez*



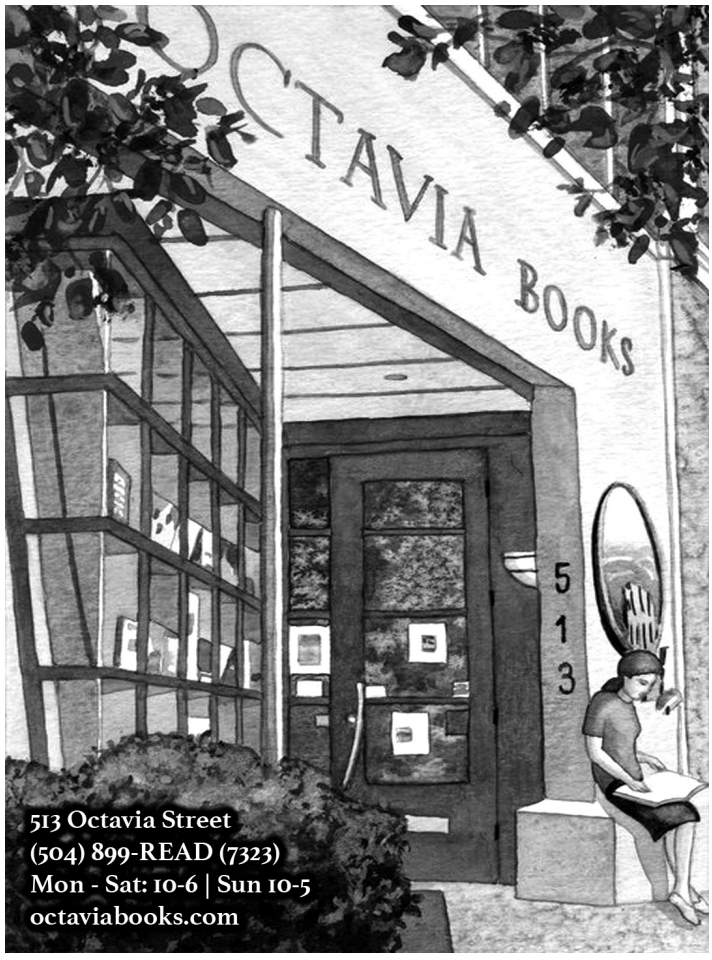
EMMA CLINE
SWITZY
(RANDOM HOUSE)

In Emma Cline's previous (and excellent) darkly comic novel *The Guest,* a young woman meanders through the Hamptons after being dumped by her sugar daddy. Slipping into a variety of social settings, she hustles and searches for food and drugs, uncomfortably blurring the line between desperation and the meditative thoroughness of a video gamer hunting down power-ups. In *Switzy*, another Cline protagonist is adrift from the novel's start. David Hastings is a retired businessman with advancing dementia, traveling with an assistant on a trip set to end at an assisted suicide clinic in Zurich after a few stops to connect with people from whom he's become distant over the decades. Such a plot could come off as a maudlin creative-writing exercise, but Cline more than pulls it off, as Hastings awkwardly contacts family, an estranged childhood friend, and a backslapping colleague of the sort to call Switzerland "Switzy." While the storytelling style raises some philosophical questions—the narrator comes off like a more lucid version of Hastings, perhaps posthumously endowed with Cline's observant wit and love of language—the novel earns its place next to final-journey classics like *The Remains of the Day. —Steven Melendez*



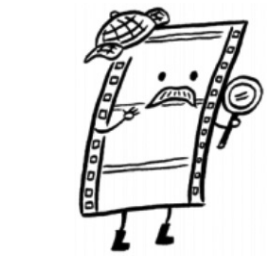
ANNALEE NEWITZ
A WALL IS ALSO A ROAD
(TOR)

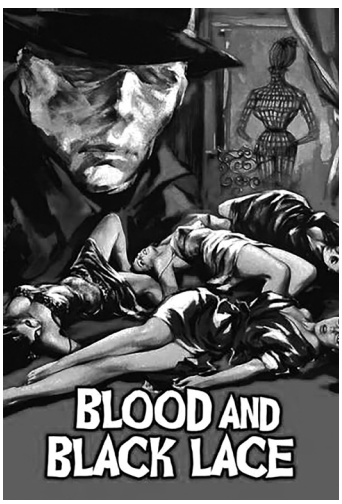
In science journalist and science fiction writer Annalee Newitz's latest novel, an intelligent, single-celled organism named Gardenpath visits ancient Pompeii from across the galaxy. Gardenpath is a grad student at a hidebound institution where scholars don't believe multicellular organisms like us can develop intelligence. Cleverly, the Pompeiians that Gardenpath meets—themselves migrants from across the Roman Empire—are unfazed by their visitor's far-off origin. Returning Newitz fans will be too, as the novel returns to their now-familiar themes of diverse life forms coming together as friends, organizers, and even lovers despite differences of





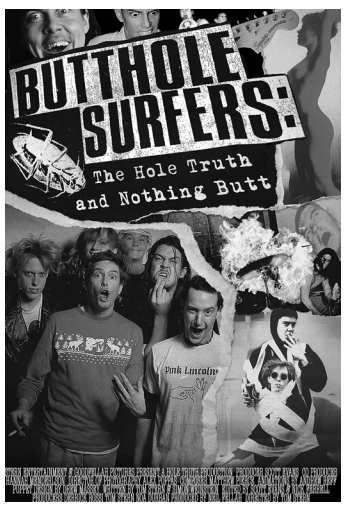
species and gender. Gardenpath builds a relationship with Murtis, a real-life Pompeii brothel worker immortalized in volcano-preserved graffiti. The science and history elements are fun and rigorously researched, and Newitz has the talent and conviction to make phrases like "tentacle tips flicking at their sensitive nucleus" unironically romantic and erotic. After all, what life form could resist being called "little Sappho" by a beautiful and charming Pompeiian? The academic plot is somewhat cliched—Gardenpath tangles with a tyrannical professor (the patriarchy is strong in their genderless society), challenges efforts to militarize their research, and navigates conflicts with friends and colleagues—and the ending is a bit too pat, but it's still a fun read. —*Steven Melendez*





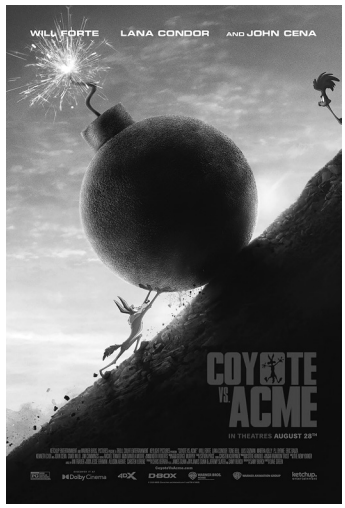
BLOOD AND BLACK LACE
DIR: MARIO BAVA
(UNIDIS)

Italian master of horror Mario Bava gives us a quintessential midnight movie with *Blood and Black Lace*, and he lets us know it right from the start. The early-era Giallo (lurid Italian horror movies named for the pulpy book series with yellow covers) film begins with what plays like a soap opera's opening credits—apparently a reference to a popular show at the time—with garish bright reds and blues lighting our way as we meander through mannequins and meet the cast while a dated, jazzy score sets the mood. It's not long before the gorgeous models of a glamorous Roman fashion house start turning up dead. A murderer in a creepy blank mask, black duster, and fedora stalks the women and gives us some great kills (our killer is very adept with a spikey gauntlet and a scalding furnace). All this just for a diary McGuffin that contains the juicy details of the models' affairs. Cocaine, abortions, and suspected suicides keep popping up as an inspector rounds up the usual suspects: the men involved with the house who the inspector believes must be sex crazed. Perfect for a midnight screening during Halloween season, especially if you're still looking for costume ideas. (Blood and Black Lace *is screening at the Prytania Theatre Uptown October 16 and 17, and at Prytania at Canal Place October 18 and 19, as part of the Night Vision series.*) —*Carlos A. Molina*



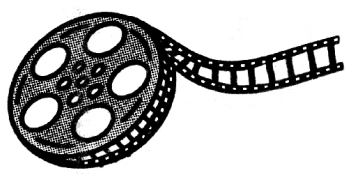
BUTTHOLE SURFERS: THE HOLE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUTT
DIR. TOM STERN
(A HOLE TRUTH)

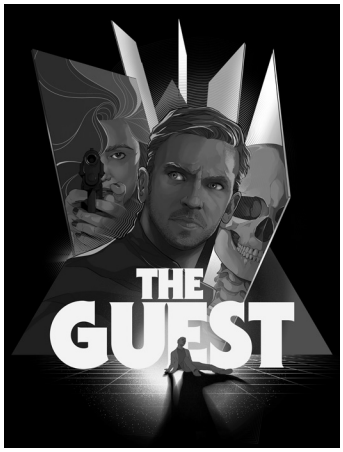
Now that a *Stranger Things* needle drop has reintroduced the "dulcet tones of the Butthole Surfers" back into the mainstream consciousness, *The Hole Truth and Nothing Butt* invites the public to take a big whiff of the band's grandiose skid mark on the Texas flag. Since the early '80s, Butthole Surfers' twisted art has continuously challenged fans and critics alike. Avant-garde nudity, penis reconstruction surgery videos, and loaded shotguns were considered normal parts of the band's now legendary performances. The eccentric members were just as crazy offstage, leaving behind story after story brought to life in this documentary through a visually stunning combination of puppets and animation. Director Tom Stern's history with Butthole Surfers goes back four decades. As such, he is intimately familiar with these Buttholes, wrinkles and all. Stern could've easily skated by with highlight reel footage of famous fanboys like Dave Grohl and Eric Andre puckering up in admiration of the band, but *The Hole Truth* lives up to its name and doesn't ignore the brown streaks in their storied career. Steve Albini describes them as "Among the worst people I've ever known." He and Ian MacKaye harshly criticize the band's decision to sue Touch and Go, the indie label that released almost half of the band's studio albums. The documentary dives deep into the Surfers' drug-fueled wipeouts, including vocalist Gibby Haynes' infamous rehab stint alongside Butthole enthusiast Kurt Cobain days before the rockstar's suicide. Drugs play an overwhelming role in this story, but Stern doesn't settle for a one-dimensional depiction that fails to see the humanity in the individuals behind the substances. King Coffey and Teresa Nervosa, the band's gay and lesbian drummers, found community by embracing punk rock while coming of age in Reagan-era conservative Texas. Contemporary footage shows Haynes beginning to explore unresolved childhood sexual trauma while taking on fatherhood. Who knew a film featuring a naked go-go dancer puppet shooting explosive diarrhea could be such a tearjerker? *The Hole Truth* has only been making limited appearances in theaters, but I already know I'll be one of the first in line for the next chance to rewatch what the late *Spinal Tap* director Rob Reiner described as "One of the best music docs ever." —*William Archambeault*



COYOTE VS. ACME
DIR: DAVE GREEN
(WARNER BROS.)

In 2023, David Zaslav, CEO of Warner Bros. Discovery, shelved *Coyote vs. Acme*—which was already complete and tested well—in exchange for a $30 million tax write-off. But after three years in studio purgatory, this delightful *Looney Tunes* vehicle has finally seen the light of day, and thank God for it. Frustrated and despondent by the perpetual failure of the ACME products he uses in his endless pursuit of the Road Runner, Wile E. Coyote sees an ad for lawyer Kevin Avery (Will Forte), who handles small claims *exactly* like his ("Have you been hit by a falling piano leaving you with teeth that look like piano keys, and when they fall out of your mouth one by one, they play a melancholy song?") and sets out to find him. Avery, an unambitious and resigned personal injury lawyer for cartoons, is hesitant to take the case, but his young and optimistic niece Paige (Lana Condor) helps him find the will to Fight The Man. Part courtroom drama, part classic *Looney Tunes* tomfoolery, *Coyote vs. Acme* is a joke-a-minute script that aims its sights at corporations looking to bury the little guys. And while the humor is nonstop, it also speaks to the Sisyphean tasks that keep us alive and kicking—and the irony of this film's path into the world only heightens its message. —*Marisa Clogher*







THE GUEST (2014)
DIR: ADAM WINGARD
(HANWAY / SNOOT)

The Guest is unassuming on the surface, appearing like a standard-issue thriller. David Collins (Dan Stevens) shows up on the doorstep of the Peterson family claiming to be a military friend of their son who died overseas, and bizarre occurrences follow. But this movie is stranger than its first impression, by turns comedic and fantastical throughout. Dan Stevens elevates this character beyond a cookie-cutter action villain, with a dead-eyed kindness that makes him both alluring and sinister—and also quite funny. And while Stevens' portrayal of Collins' calculating, one-track motives makes him a formidable villain—his icy blue eyes implicitly unsettling—there's a simplicity and fairness to his logic that makes him sympathetic, sometimes even likable. The synthwave, goth rock soundtrack and over-the-top shootouts (featuring Lance Reddick) hint at the film's tone, but the third act's haunted house sequence kicks it into high gear and devolves into horrific absurdity. One of my favorite under-the-radar horror gems, *The Guest* also offers solid critique of the American military—it's got the whole package. (The Guest *will be playing at the Prytania Theatre Uptown October 9 and 10 as well as Prytania at Canal Place on October 11 and 12*). *—Marisa Clogher*

THE HUNGER
DIR: TONY SCOTT
(MGM)

Before Tony Scott made big budget action blockbusters like *Top Gun* and *Man On Fire*, he directed this arthouse vampire movie starring David Bowie, Susan Sarandon, and Catherine Deneuve. Bowie and Deneuve play sophisticated vampires hitting New York City's club scene and teaching music. Sarandon plays a gerontologist conducting research on monkeys. The film starts with a sultry club sex and murder scene, then slows in pace as it becomes an exploration of and treatise on life, aging, and immortality. But don't worry, there's more throat slitting and blood drinking to come, and an attic full of coffins inhabited by the dying and deteriorating undead. Throw in a love scene between Deneuve and Sarandon that would have had 14-year-old boys wearing out VHS tapes in the mid-'80s, and you get this cult classic horror movie that's not really a horror movie. There's just enough blood, sex, and violence to appease horror fans, but non-fans of the genre can watch a well-acted vampire arthouse flick featuring Bowie in old-face. If you get bored, you can play "Spot the Willem Dafoe cameo." (The Hunger *is screening at The Broad Theater for Gap Tooth Cinema on October 28*). *—Carlos A. Molina*

PRIMETIME
DIR: LANCE OPPENHEIM
(A24)

All signs point to *Primetime* being great. Based on Luke Dittrich's 2007 article "Tonight on *Dateline* This Man Will Die," it tells the story of Chris Hansen's *To Catch a Predator* and its cultural and moral implications that result in the suicide of an implicated district attorney. The initial trailer was mysterious and bizarre, hinting at paranormal forces. Robert

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2ND DAVIS ROGAN 5PM / WHISKEY & RHINESTONES 7PM / LADIES FIRST OPEN MIC COMEDY 10PM
3RD BLUE VELVET REVUE LIVE JAZZ BURLESQUE 7PM
5TH CHORUS CONNECTION 6PM
6TH LGBTQ REAL ESTATE NETWORKING 6PM
7TH LINE DANCING W/ MISS HONEY SPARKLES 730PM
8TH KEYHOLE PEEPSHOW 7PM
9TH DAVIS ROGAN 5PM / WHISKEY & RHINESTONES 7PM
10TH DIAMONDS&PEARLS 7PM / QUEER NEW THEATER DANCE PARTY 9PM
12TH DUNGEONS & DRAGONS NIGHT 6PM
13TH CRAFT NIGHT WITH AIMEE 6PM
14TH LINE DANCING W/ MISS HONEY SPARKLES 730PM
15TH HER HAUS MIXER 6PM / KY JONES R&B NITE 11PM
16TH DAVIS ROGAN 6PM / WHISKEY & RHINESTONES 8PM
17TH QUEER MIXER 5PM / VILLIANOUS VIXENS W/ PEPPER POUTS 7PM
19TH CHORUS CONNECTION 6PM
21ST LINE DANCING W/ MISS HONEY SPARKLES 730PM
22ND HERE KITTY KITTY BURLESQUE 7PM
23RD DAVIS ROGAN 6PM / WHISKEY & RHINESTONES 8PM AFTERGLOW WITH KULTURE 10PM
24TH DIAMONDS&PEARLS 7PM / STRIPPEROKE 10PM
26TH DUNGEONS & DRAGONS NIGHT 6PM
27TH CRAFT NIGHT WITH AIMEE 6PM
28TH LINE DANCING W/ MISS HONEY SPARKLES 730PM
29TH JUJU DOUBLE FEATURE 7PM [ALL NITE]
30TH DAVIS ROGAN 6PM / BUMPS & GRINDS STUDENT SHOWCASE 7PM
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SHORTY K
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Sunday
October 11 at 6:
KATE BAXTER
Followed by Open Mic

Sunday
October 18 at 6:
JIMMY ROBINSON
of Woodenhead
Followed by Open Mic

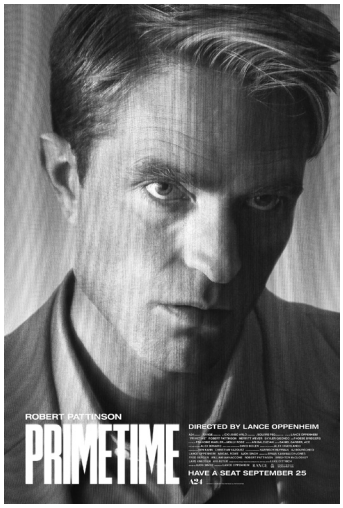
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COMING 11/1: Special Halloween show with THE BAD NAKED

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Pattinson, one of our freakiest (that's a compliment) working actors, portrays the infamous host in a manner that's both damning and enticing, while Skyler Gisondo and Phoebe Bridgers both ground our decoy characters as people—actors—simply working a job. The job in question was to provide a real face and voice to the underage characters created to entice adult men into decoy houses where they'd be confronted by NBC correspondent Chris Hansen, armed with print-outs of the messages exchanged, followed shortly thereafter by law enforcement. But despite the show's salacious premise and legitimately high real-life stakes, this movie fails to fully capture the weight, or the allure, of what it's portraying. The hyper-stylized cinematography by David Bolen works, to an extent. The grainy, retro textures and colors are claustrophobic and dark, which does lend itself to the obscene chatrooms depicted. But when the writing completely lacks focus that stylization leaves the viewer floating in space, with no clear direction as to what is important or why. The film introduces various threads—extramarital affairs, competing job offers, lust for fame, worker exploitation—and then lets them lie. The most compelling thread is that of an ancient, inhuman monster that is the root of all evil that plagues our world. Pattinson briefly monologues about this monster, and when we see the creature, its wide, unblinking eyes and skin that fades into its environment are terrifying, but it remains a background force that we never thoroughly explore. Chekhov's gun was introduced and never shot. *—Marisa Clogher*



Left to right: Emma Courish (Fallen Angel), Steve Valenzuela (Lucifero), Nyna Moore (Fallen Angel), and Claudio Caverni (Cain)

DMITRIY PRITYKIN



CAIN: A BALLET-OPERA
DIR: BODGAN MYNKA (VERISMO OPERA / MARIGNY OPERA BALLET)

In September, the Marigny Opera House (MOH) staged an original ballet-opera adaptation of Alessandro Scarlatti's 1707 baroque oratorio *CAIN*, the biblical story of humankind's first murder. Through many thoughtful decisions made by the creative team behind the scenes, the essence of each art form was captured and reimagined to complement the other. From the barren tree of life by set designer Bethany Lee, incredible choreography by Amalia Najera, and costuming by local fashion designer Magdalene Paris, every staged element was fused together with intention.

Four chorus dancers arrive onstage together then symbolically divide into two camps: the Angels of heaven exemplifying God's holy blessings, and the Fallen Angels' enticement to sin. Loyola alumni Haley Whitney's penitent Eve stunned audiences with her nimble, masterful vocal performance. Artistic Director of MOH Bogdan Mynka's rueful Adam was expressive and emotionally grounding. Visitations from God and Lucifer (Claire Shackleton and Steve Valenzuela, respectively) demarcated good and evil, with supporting Angels embodying the sacred and profane in turn.

What makes this adaptation truly unique is the choice to swap the brothers' sung parts with dance performances. It sets the pace, upholds the momentum, and puts the best of both opera and ballet on display. Dialogue supertitles above the curtain translated the 18th-century Italian songs, which came in particularly helpful during the brotherly dance interludes. The harpsichord improvisation of musical director Paul Weber during the Cain and Abel scenes brought the musical accompaniment center stage, emphasizing the moral tension. The choice to improv Italian baroque style on a 20th century French double manual harpsichord is no small feat, and it imbued the dance performances with vitality. When Cain resolves to murder his brother during a sensuous duet with a fallen angel, every movement and musical note balanced on the edge of a knife. In some such scenes, the dancers felt maybe half a beat off—but I found the unpredictability refreshing. Highlighting a new facet of an ancient story with every performance reminded audiences there's still room for interpretation here.

Some of the production decisions raised interesting questions. Cain's costume was reminiscent of his mother's (a nod to the original sin), and Abel's leather adornment looks like his father's. In their physicality, the brothers embody a strict binary: pure and impure. There's no mistaking it. Caleb Chesson's Abel is all grace, sunshine, and earnestness. Cain, played by Claudio Caverni, stood a head and a half taller than everyone else onstage, with heavy steps and jerky movements. He danced elegantly in solos and duets, but with the full ballet cast onstage, he came off, I believe, purposefully gawkish. From the outset, Cain's inevitable sin is laid bare in every gesture—even his dialogue was displayed in red lettering, the words made harsher by the color of blood not yet spilled.

Emotionally stunted by resentment and entitlement, Cain kills his younger brother Abel in a jealous rage, simply for being so beloved, and so unlike himself. Through this act, we all suffer, because *CAIN* is an origin story for the hate, violence, and war that exists so abundantly in our society. Religious beliefs aside, this is what we are asked to scrutinize and reject in favor of goodness. As God says of Abel: *"More than the pyre itself, there burned / within his breast / A humble flame of pure devotion, / Which moved Me to accept it with delight /...For truly, one may do violence against Heaven."* In this faithful, carefully updated mixed-media adaptation of an 18th century work, the ancient fabulistic story becomes pertinent again, allowing audiences to revisit the lessons of the past and consider them anew. *—Terra Durio*

OCTOBER

1. SCARYMALL + SCARY-OKE
2. FEN MAGUS TORTUOUS + SPIATTERDAY NIGHT
3. NOLADNB
4. CARRELLE MISSING CHASM COMFORT
5. SCARY-OKE
6. ULTRA SUNN + SOFT VEIN
7. PUMPKIN CRAFTING
8. VAMPIRE DISCO FT. VIOFLESH
9. Y2SLAY 90'S 2000'S DANCE
10. DARK ELECTRIC 80TH INDUSTRIAL
11. GOTHLIGHT'S HALLOWEEN MARKET
12. SCARY-OKE
13. CLOSED
14. PUMPKIN CRAFTING
15. DREW FRANK & CAB LABOR CHILDREN OF JUDAS
16. KING SIZED COFFIN + CLUB EUTHANAGIA
17. GOTHLIGHT'S TWIN PEAKS NIGHT
18. WITCH HAT CRAFTING
19. SCARY-OKE
20. MVTANT + PINK STILLETO
21. PUMPKIN CRAFTING
22. FLYING RACOON SUIT
23. BLOOD BARGE AFTERS
24. SWEET DREAMS + NOPE DISCO
25. HARLAN STEED
26. SCARY-OKE
27. SPELLBOUND DARK 80'S
28. VAMPIRE DISCO
29. MIDNITE MUTANTS
30. DARK DISCO

7PM HALLOWEEN DOUBIE FEATURE 11PM
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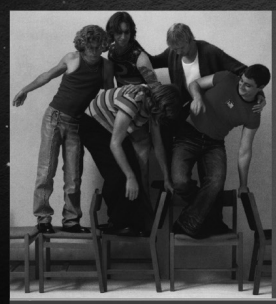
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OCT
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11.13 SURPISE SET! 11.14 SUBDIVISION 11.21 CHORE BOYS
12.4 PUNK ROCK WEEKEND DAY 1 W/ LE CHAT
VISIT DECATUR! SUPPORT MOM & POPS! SHOP LOCAL!

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
MIJITA & FIRENDS	BLACK MASS KARAOKE W EMMA	HOLY DIVER	CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	PACO EAT THE RICH	NOLAXNOLA 2 FLOORS OF RESURRECTION	NOLAXNOLA THE UNNATURALS BLACK COFFEE (SUPLECS AS BLACK FLAG)
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
	BLACK MASS KARAOKE W EMMA	SWB NOT WORKING	CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	UNSANE SUPLECS NEST	TBA	SUMMONING OF THE HOES
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
	BLACK MASS KARAOKE W EMMA	FREE JUKEBOX	CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	PACO EAT THE RICH	UPSTAIRS PRESSURE BEAT MAIN ROOM TEMPO	NOX
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
TASHI DELAY FANTASY NON FICTION	BLACK MASS KARAOKE W EMMA	SWB NOT WORKING	BOB LOG III	PACO EAT THE RICH	JUNO DUNES CHILL BUDDY CIARA ELISE	KREWE DE LOON AFTERPARTY
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
MIJITA OPEN DECKS	BLACK MASS KARAOKE W EMMA	SWB NOT WORKING	CHAMBER NOIR W PACO	MEAL TICKET W JUSTIN T.C.	DEATHCHARGE COME TO RUIN MANGE & EVE HILL	HALLOWEEN FREE PARTY

HOLY DIVER

10.2 NOLAXNOLA: JAMES HALL CONE OF UNCERTAINTY DARK LOUNGE MINISTRIES
10.3 NOLAXNOLA: THE NOCTABULANT FORMULUS (AL) ABYSM (LAFAYETTE) PYRALIS (MS)
10.4 MYSTERY FLICKS GREEN MANTLES TURBINE SIX
10.5 INTERNATIONAL + IRRATIONAL W DJ CHRISCHARGE
10.6 ROCKIN ROQUERO: LOS SAICOS
10.8 POGO MOJO W DJS DOUBLEPLUS + SHARK CITY BYRD + NATTY ADAMS
10.9 SKULLBASHER BOGBAT DJ VINYL BOSS FIGHT
10.10 RAVEYARD! FT VAMPIRIC COFFIN SAILEM SKULLBASHER
10.12 ATTACK DOG (PHL) VINNY'S MIRROR SHMOO PARTIAL HANGOUT
10.14 WELL HELL (CA) INCARI (CA) ANARETA
10.16 HELLBITCH KOMMAND (HTX) PENETRATION AND MORE
10.17 FILTH ABYSS W DJS MANGE + SCYTHE
10.18 TAPE CASSETTES RARE SEEDS RACHEL IS KOZI
10.19 THE REVEREND ROBERT SINEWAVE
10.20 UP THE HAMMERS! W KONRAD
10.23 ACAB ZINE FEST FT ¿LA PREGUNTA? (L.A.) CONSPIRE (PDX) RITVALAVTOMATION STATIC STATIC
10.26 OCTOPUOLPE AND MORE
10.27 BOBCAT PUNAMI TSUNAMI AND FRIENDS
10.29 RÅDE DUMMY DUMPSTER AND MORE
10.31 HALLOWEEN

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WED THE AMAZING HENRIETTA
WED DIVER-AOKE W KJ EJ
FRI RIK SLAVE'S DARK LOUNGE MINISTRIES
1200 ST. BERNARD



"Choose Yr Own Adventure" at Toulouse Theatre, May 2023

AVERY LEIGH WHITE

LSD Clownsystem

cont'd from pg. 44

How do you write originals with so many band members?
JG: In the middle of a tour, two summers ago, we stopped at Howe's house up in Connecticut. We shacked up there for a couple of days and he kinda led us through a songwriting retreat where everyone took turns running a song and everybody contributed, spitballing, no bad ideas. Lyricists would run off to the corner and write some lyrics and the rest of us would work on the groove. Me and the other synth player would figure out what kinds of sounds we were doing and try not to get in each other's way. We spent two or three days just heavy BBQing and swimming and songwriting. A lot of the songs came out of that. Mostly the singers do the lyrical content 'cause they're the ones that have to sing it. Our lyrics tend to be more about partying in the Bywater and more New Orleans-centric stuff.
RO: Like, "Where were you for the Hubig's Pie fire?" One of the originals, I wrote the lyrics and the melodies and brought it to the group but then it morphed from there. Whereas with others, a singer came with lyrics and we turned it into something.

Let's talk about tour a little bit. How do you make it worthwhile or even feasible to hit the road with this many humans in a van?
JG: We go vertical. We stack all our shit up in the back of the van on wire racks and we wear top hats while we do it.

So big top is the LSD thing but top hats are the karaoke band thing?
KT: Yeah, the karaoke band is the silliest, by far. We're a silly bunch of dudes.
RO: I always say that it's the cardio band. I feel that the work I've done in that band has made me a much better musician, especially when it comes to things like stamina and capacity to play really long shows.
JG: And learning a lot of music.
KT: And reacting, on stage, to when someone might miss something or you yourself miss a part. It's really just time spent on stage playing with people, communicating with each other.

I didn't even think of the fact that you basically have a new bandmate for every single song!
JG: New bandmate and no idea what the caliber of that bandmate is *at all.*
RO: And we often play a minimum of three hours, sometimes up to six hours.

How many songs have you had to learn for that project?
RO: There are about 250 songs on the main list plus 75 on the champagne list, which people pay us extra to play.
JG: It's close to 400 and we have biannual drafts where we sit around and think of 50 new songs to add to the list every half year. I have my list ready.
RO: Me too. This summer, when we went on tour, the Clownsystem played at Bonnaroo with the karaoke band and BAAB, and then the karaoke band did a tour up to New York, over to Cleveland, to Electric Forest. And then the Clownsystem met us and we all came back down together, so we were like the mule band too.

How did you guys smell by the end of it?
KT: We smell OK!
RO: One of the benefits of being in giant bands is that we have friends everywhere.
KT: And we're all in our 30s now, so we have friends who are a little more established. So we're not sleeping on couches every night.
RO: We still do that, but not every night.
JG: And we do a lot of cooking for ourselves. We don't eat badly on tour.

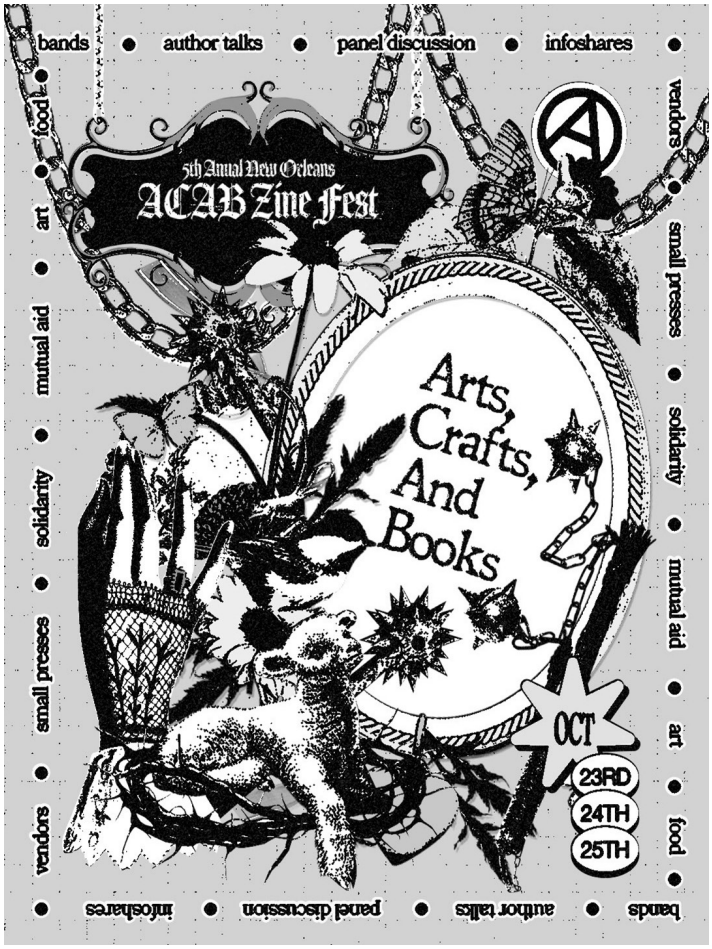
If your gear is stacked vertically, then most of the van is available for seating, and you just mentioned that all three bands kinda co-toured at some point, which adds up to about 11 members. This leads to the impeccable visual of you getting pulled over and out pours a *literal* clown car of bandmates.
JG: A dozen clowns, a satanic band, or four guys in top hats and tuxedo t-shirts. I've had that thought a lot, driving home from gigs, thinking, *If I get pulled over right now, dressed like a demon, how do I even begin to explain?*

For more info on LSD Clownsystem, including an organized catalog of past shows, photos, videos, and links to other bands and comrades, check out lsdclownsystem.com. For more information on BAAB, check out @baab.666 on Instagram. For more info on NOW! That's What I Call A Karaoke Band! check out nowkaraokeband.com.



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NITZER EBB performs at The Crypt on September 15. (photo by Steven Hatley)



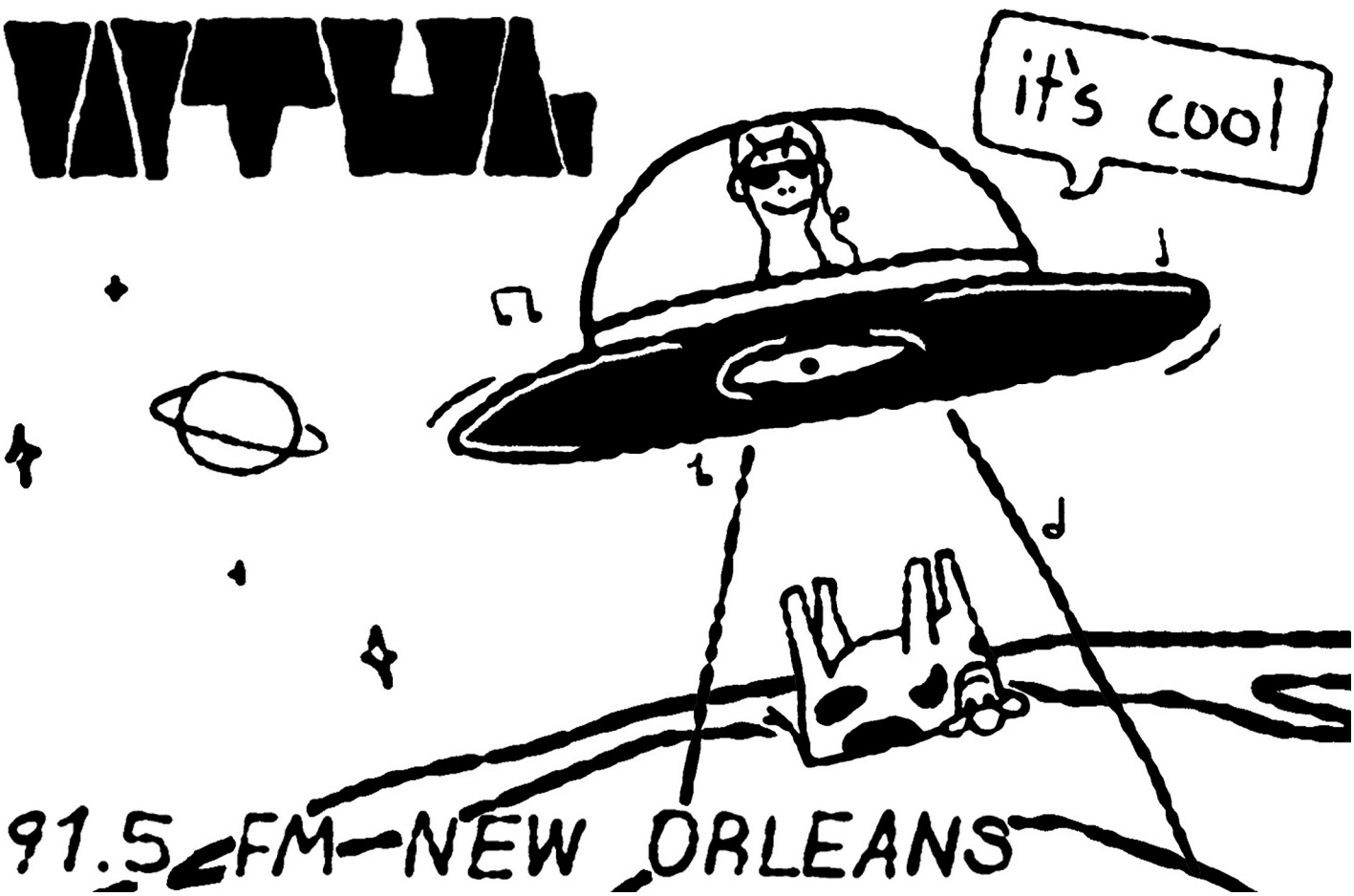
D. Sablu gets some help from the crowd at Holy Diver on September 23. (photo by Dalton Spangler)



"Candidly, when I bought this soccer-mom van twenty years ago, I imagined I'd be retired from the job of mom-chaufer by the time you all turned thirty."..."

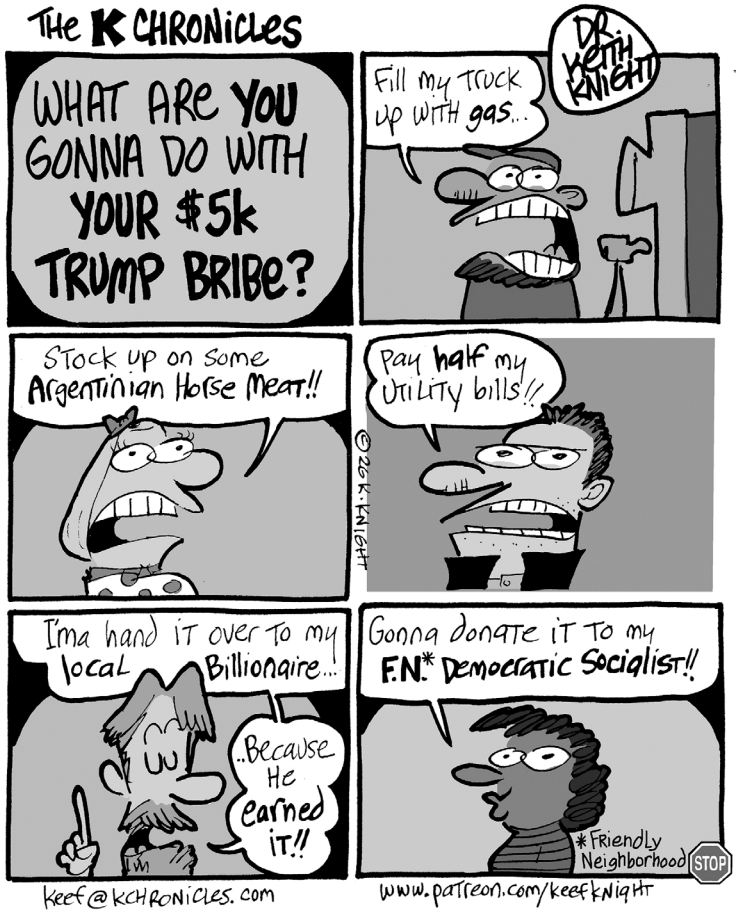
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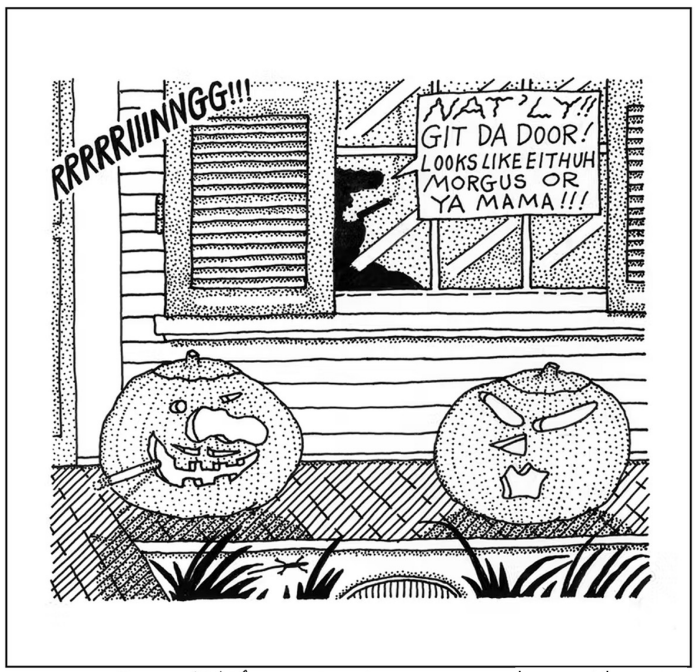




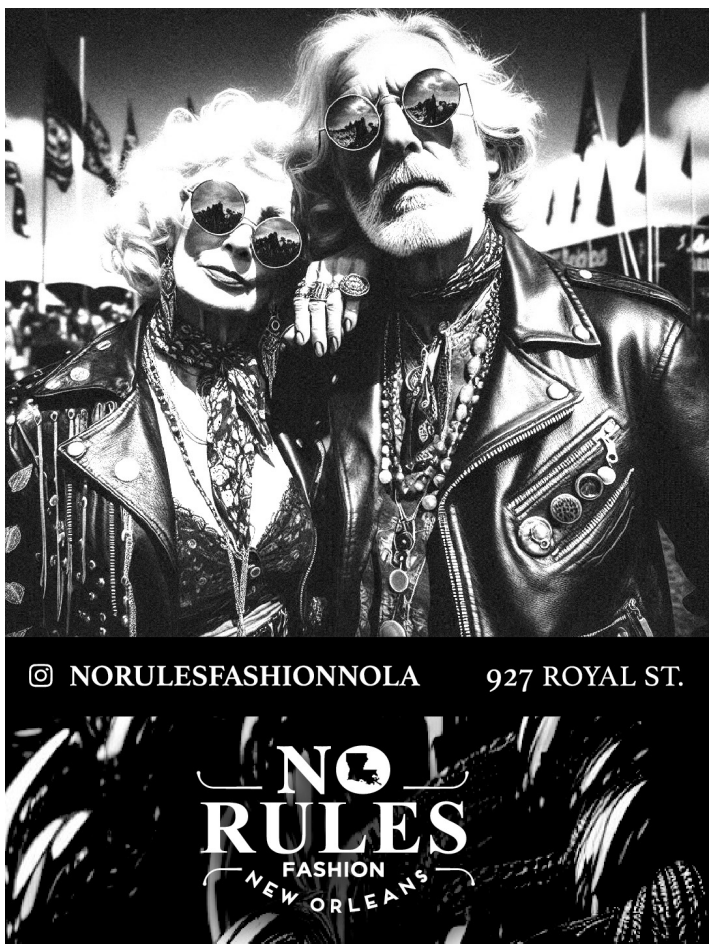
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ALT! SCENE NEW ORLEANS



COURTESY KAT DILONNO

Farewell, No Dice

by Elisa Gomez

After Hi-Ho Lounge shuttered its doors on Halloween 2024, Kat Dilonno, co-owner of No Dice, took the opportunity to leave her mark on the St. Claude music venue strip. For almost two years, she booked four shows a week, watching a community built around music, mutual support, and a shared love for the venue and its staff.

Upon receiving an offer from enthusiastic local buyers looking to restore the beloved Hi-Ho, Dilonno saw another opportunity to preserve her mark, exit on a good note, and say goodbye. "It's bittersweet. Leaving is hard, but I'm excited for the next thing for me," she told me. As someone who has seen many projects open and thrive, Dilonno establishes herself as someone who can grow and nurture a business while also seeing where the next spark can lead her when the winds of change blow—and so do the seasons of her desires.

Before No Dice, Dilonno co-owned Mortal Machine Gallery on Royal Street in 2019 with curator and artist Gabriel Shaffer. The gallery focuses on alternative artists, both emerging and established, whose expression shows innovation and relevance to cultural temperature. Then, with her family, she opened Beggars Banquet on Prytania Street. Additionally, she opened Tough Love Tattoos, always heeding the call for the next endeavor before eventually opening the now-departed No Dice.

"The St. Claude strip was a special, magical place. Getting to be a part of the scene and community was such a wonderful experience," said Dilonno, who described the feeling of knowing when the time is right to move on, and learning to embrace the uncomfortable friction of change. It's an incredibly strong and sensible act to recognize the exact point when the thing you've given your all to needs to be let go. I'm struck by the wisdom it takes to listen to the parts of yourself saying *it's time*. Despite a passion project consuming your life—which it almost fundamentally needs to do to sustain itself—she maintained enough separation between personal identity and the venue that took on a life of its own. When I asked what was next, through exhaustion she said: "I'm going to sleep for the next six months, then decide."

The music scene in New Orleans is an interesting thing to witness. Some artists tour constantly, while others take the time to recalibrate, record, create, or straight up fuck off—which we all need. That unpredictable rhythm can be tough on music venues that rely on local bands to pack rooms and bring in the steady crowds required to stay in business. Practical financial reasons aside, sometimes it's also OK to accept that this part of your life and identity will live on simply because you do. It is OK to walk away from a massive project that brought you closer to the public, even if it briefly pulled you away from the next chapter of your personal life.

Knowing when to call it quits is an absolute skill. It preserves the sanctity of the nights like hosting MiniKiss, which packed out the venue with a crowd just happy to be alive, or befriending H.R. of Bad Brains when he shared a night with local band Donny's Demeanor. "I think we did what we set out to do. We intended to build something new for that block," Dilonno said. "Doing it any longer, I personally wouldn't have been able to do it at my best. I think I gave it everything that I could for two years." Yet, despite her experience pouring her entire soul into a business, walking away into the unknown never actually gets easier.

New Orleans and its people aren't quick to embrace change, even though we watch businesses tangle their roots into our daily routines and go anyway. Any place that makes us feel safe, at home, and able to thrive is welcomed when its focus is truly to water what's already here. I remember when Hi-Ho Lounge closed, and No Dice announced it was moving in. I was skeptical, maybe even a little indignant. But when I saw the announcement that No Dice was also taking a bow, I felt the familiar sting of losing something that quickly became a regular spot in the scene. No Dice is in good company alongside Mimi's and The Goat. Heaven preserve Poor Boys.

I remember when Hi-Ho Lounge closed, and No Dice announced it was moving in. I was skeptical, maybe even a little indignant. But when I saw the announcement that No Dice was also taking a bow, I felt the familiar sting of losing something that quickly became a regular spot in the scene.

Dilonno left these final words on behalf of No Dice to its patrons, bands, and all those who came and went: "It was an absolute honor to have the local scene on our stage; that's what made it worth it when it got hard, truly. From the heart, walking into that bar ready to be stressed and annoyed, seeing strangers and friends smoke cigarettes outside, dancing to their friends' bands, people finding new music that they love—it was a joy to witness that from behind the bar."

Raising Louisiana

cont'd from pg. 13

that they started looking at both mine and my husband's fertility to explore the issues we were facing," she said. "When I got pregnant the third time, my fertility doctor was a game changer. She brought me in for ultrasounds every week to check on the baby and give me peace of mind until I 'graduated' at 12 weeks. The fertility specialists were as important for my mental health as my physical health during that pregnancy." Her greatest takeaway from these painful losses was the importance of empathy. "There's so much hope when you get pregnant the first time and so much devastation when you lose a pregnancy and a child," she shared. "I didn't know of my first loss until my husband and I went in at 12 weeks for an ultrasound. We went in so high on life and left utterly devastated. Even if I don't know another woman personally, I feel deeply for her and her partner for their loss and empathize with the emotion I know they are feeling." E and her husband are the proud parents of a beautiful son.

Words of Wisdom

Each of these amazing moms had advice to share with families experiencing pregnancy loss.

Susan: "What happened to you matters, and how you grieve and move forward is a very personal choice. Your grief at any stage of pregnancy should never be stuffed into someone else's timeline."

Emily: "It is hard, and no one has any right to dictate how you feel. Even if it is an early loss, there was still that hope, that little moment where there was a life inside of you, and any kind of loss is very tough."

Alyson: "Don't wait to change routes or healthcare. If you question what is being provided then please do yourself a solid and seek out someone that is willing to help."

E: "Take time to grieve and process. Tell others that you love, so they can support you. And don't take all of the burden on yourself. There's so many factors at play and we just don't know what causes all of these losses. Give yourself grace and love.

Resources

New Orleans Grief Center
Infertility Group Therapy
psychologytoday.com/us/groups/infertility-group-therapy-new-orleans-la/268137

The Fertility Institute of New Orleans
Patient Education & Support
fertilityinstitute.com/fertility-support-groups-events

Re:birth Counseling
Perinatal Mental Health with focuses on Infertility & Loss
Instagram: @rebirthcounseling

Share Pregnancy & Infant Loss Support
Online Support Groups
nationalshare.org/online-support

illustrations by Victoria Allen
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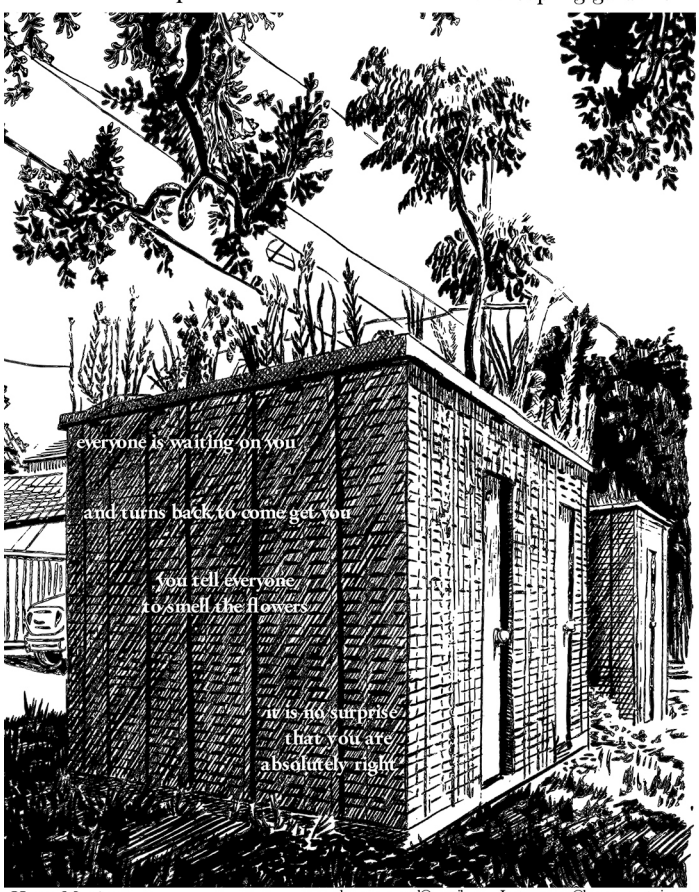








Velox Perscripta "the sapling gardens"



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Stores Are Tired

Stores are tired of eating people stealing eating people are the worst when it comes to shoplifting, because eating people have appetites for things as well as food, though that didn't deter that legendary lady from stuffing a small turkey up her very versatile snatch. Did you know you could catch a cold that way 'cause that bird was frozen? I heard she did and she didn't get out of bed for almost a year. Probably wasn't worth it, but stores are still tired of eating people stealing, so much so that cameras pivot and whir right outside changing room doors, right at the cracks of those doors, hoping to catch a shadow or movement that's suspect even though stores don't really have to ask permission to search your bag or even detain you for awhile. I worked in a place where security would dogpile repeat offenders in the elevator on their two floor journey up to the inquisition room where they'd dogpile 'em again. That didn't learn any of 'em a goddamned thing because they'd be back at it the next month and one even came back and took a dump in the understock. Have all those tired-ass stores considered that *we're* tired of barely being able to afford groceries and maybe might want to lower prices even a few cents so people can eat more than white bread and baloney sandwiches while they dream of oranges, pancakes, and coffee? Things that were considered staples, not luxuries, up until about five minutes ago. I'll tell you what, I ain't eating any baloney sammiches anytime soon, so stores better make way for my salad-snatching skills and chocolate pilfering. Did you hear about that guy who tried to use a floatie to steal gas? Set himself on fire when he was running away, swirled with vapors. Maybe he should have waited to have that smoke. Bet he wished he had a super versatile snatch that day, though not quite sure how that would have worked either.

—Karen Lozinski

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

compiled by ANTIGRAVITY staff

Aren't you tired of swiping in the hopes of running into a specific someone you have an existing, lingering curiosity about? Here's your chance to be brave—to take the active route instead of the passive one. Let's connect again. (Entries may be minimally edited for clarity.)



Editor's Note

It was pointed out on Instagram that an ableist slur ("spaz") was used in a Close Encounters entry last month. While we don't think the sender meant any harm, we appreciate the ever evolving nature of language and would like to note this for ourselves and any future submissions to Close Encounters.

Vintage UNO Ringer Tee

a beautiful vintage UNO ringer tee, i believe from 1977. i didnt act fast enough on facebook marketplace, assuming you'd hang around for longer. forever will be ISO you.

Curious Librarian at Pal's

Friday night at Pal's you were leaning against the wall next to me reading a book. It was probably 11 p.m. and the bar was really busy and loud and it looked like you were on page 4 of 600. I'd love to know more about that. —*a curious librarian*

A Closed Book Encounter

Came in to [redacted name] bookstore for a book to read on my summer trip. You were easy to talk to and I wish I had left with your number, too.

Dog Treat at 12 Mile Limit

Shout out to the guy locking up/unlocking 12 Mile Limit early in the morning that saw my dog and I walking and then unlocked the bar, went in to grab two big treats, and made her (and my) morning.

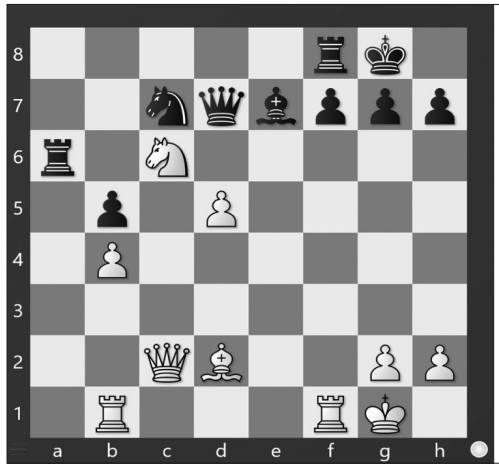
Full Moon On the Bayou

This isn't directed at a single person, it just felt like a communal event as the sky turned pink and the moon lit up behind the clouds. I felt like we all shared something sitting along the bayou, and if you were out there you know.



Submit your own close encounter to ***closeencounters@antigravitymagazine.com*** *or through our new ANONYMOUS Google form (via QR code below). All email addresses will remain confidential. Don't be a creep.*

illustrations by Maegen Guidroz @maegen_arts



SAVVY CHESS

Louisiana State Championship 2026

CM Dr. Robert Keenan Forney (White)

Prince Jhamie Reyes – (Black)

White to play

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ONLINE OPTIMISM

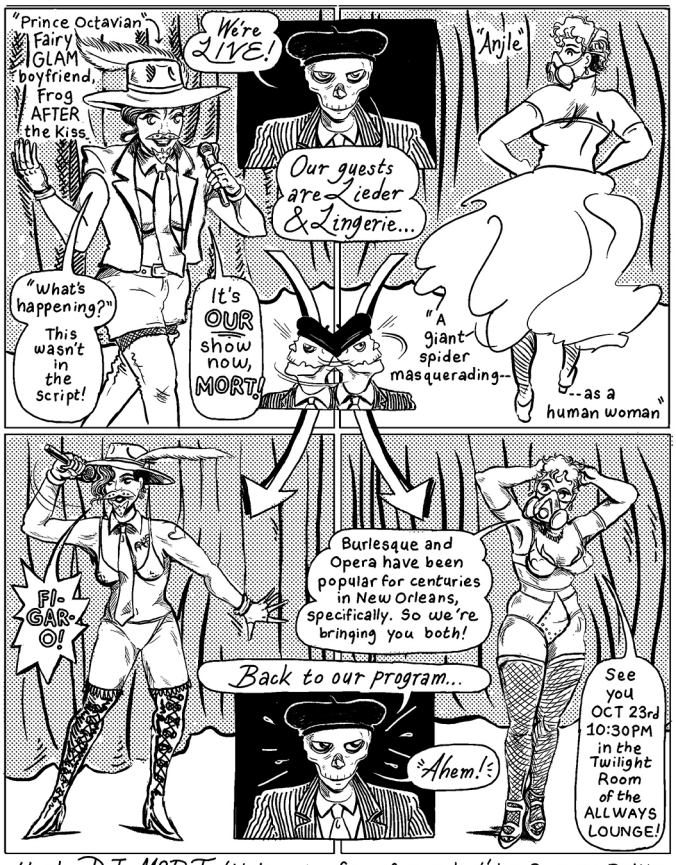


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OCTOBER 24, 2026 *DOORS 6 PM / SHOW 7 PM*
HANNIBAL BURESS: COMEDY SPECIAL TAPING

OCTOBER 29, 2026 *DOORS 7 PM / SHOW 8 PM*
OSEES FT. BRIGID DAWSON
SUPPORT FROM TRAPS PS

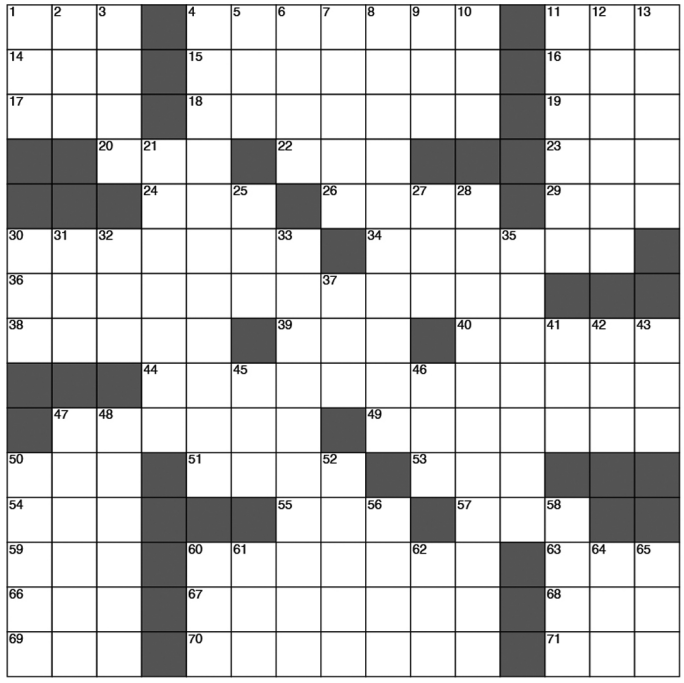
NOVEMBER 10, 2026 *DOORS 6 PM / SHOW 7 PM*
BITCH CABAL FEAT.
MANNEQUIN PUSSY & WEDNESDAY
SUPPORT FROM SNÕÕPER

NOVEMBER 14, 2026 *DOORS 7 PM / SHOW 8 PM*
THE RENAISSANCE ORCHESTRA

NOVEMBER 17, 2026 *DOORS 6 PM / SHOW 7 PM*
HOT MULLIGAN
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CROSSWORD by LEO RAUF



ACROSS
1 Castable thing
4 Wild Strawberries director
11 Some scans
14 Like foley
15 Crooning Cohen
16 Faust ___
17 Big bird
18 English 6D
19 Old Macdonald excerpt
20 Key title
22 Favor
23 Arch place
24 Parts of a yr.
26 Restaurant job
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30 Bowler's request
34 A's 6, musically
36 Castable thing
38 AC feature
39 Global troublemakers org.
40 To sneakily insert
44 Cause for baby?
47 Tundra creators
49 Most controversial
50 Chuck
51 Expensive seats, usually
53 NYC airport
54 Scene starter
55 Last ending
57 Draw
59 Krautrock kings
60 "Can I peek?"
63 Actress Hermann
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67 Castable things
68 Sea zapper
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DOWN
1 Scots refusal
2 Like Sandstorm
3 Elvis' aim?
4 Prophetic TV show
5 Small ejaculation
6 Spanish hats?
7 Teeth action
8 Quality reminiscent of Backrooms??
9 "____ we there yet?"
10 Handle's center
11 Roman figure
12 Sandwich filling
13 Castable thing
21 Promise upon
25 Moonlight's source
27 Personal info
28 "I haven't ___"
30 Direction
31 Sounds like "F"
32 Start of 12D
33 Eat slowly
35 Endless
37 Pip's place
41 One of a March thing?
42 ...---...
43 A group of turtles if they weren't ninjas
45 Occult society (abbr.)
46 Trucker's need
47 Printer parts
48 Thick
50 Castable things
52 Cast ____
56 Backwards hatch show?
58 Actor Udo
60 Butterfly site
61 Chips ___y
62 Girl sheep
64 Outdoorsy store
65 Sports thing





FOR ANSWERS Check INSTA @leograuf or @antigravitymag

New Orleans Film Fest

cont'd from pg. 32

often be found at his lively event space, Cafe Istanbul. Perkins' poetry provides the backdrop while images of second lines flow past, weaving across the screen amidst the sound of drums and tubas. "We want the beauty and the pleasure," he recites, and it's true. It's hard to imagine that over two decades ago, the decision to rebuild this city was a question that could be posed. Trying to capture what happens in the streets of New Orleans takes a poet to truly explain: "There's freedom in these streets." *—Megan Burns*

Settling St. Malo

If you've heard of Louisiana's historic Filipino community, whose presence here stretches all the way back to the 18th century, it's likely due to the work of poet Randy Gonzales. With an art practice that combines scholarship and multidisciplinary storytelling, he has successfully restored the Filipino community to South Louisiana's cultural mainstage. In *Settling St. Malo*, director and co-producer Virgile Beddok retraces the ground laid out in his poetry collection by the same name to connect his personal family history to the broader impact of the Filipino diaspora. The material is perhaps a less natural fit for film—or the 30-minute runtime is just unnecessarily long. Still, Gonzales is a seasoned traveler of this particularly vibrant corner of Louisiana history, and it's fortunate to be taken along. *—Holly Devon*

Some Kind of Refuge

Precarity has always defined the lives of those who chose to settle along the New Orleans batture, a strip of land Uptown between the river and the levee. Taking your chances there has historically meant hitching your survival to the whims of the river, which in turn grants you freedom from the strictures of life beyond the levee. In *Some Kind of Refuge*, director Alexandra Kern introduces us to the two oldest remaining batture residents, who muse about their bargain with the river as we watch them live according to its rhythms. Though a simple offering, this documentary short has far-reaching resonance. While their batture dwellings remain unusual, environmental precarity no longer is. What is less common is their joyful surrender to an uncertain future, and the loveliness of their riverine existence makes a compelling case for following their example. *—Holly Devon*

ANIMATED & EXPERIMENTAL SHORTS

A Little Death

Death is having an existential crisis. All his attempts to teach his bubbly young apprentice reaper the ways of the business seem to be for naught—the apprentice is more interested in flowers than scythes, wandering off to frolic with woodland creatures rather than focusing on collecting the latest soul on their list. Fortunately for Death, the person they have been fruitlessly pursuing also happens to be a psychoanalyst. And so goes the plot of *A Little Death,* Leto Meade and Jonathan Rockefeller's whimsical adaptation of Nicholas Gurewitch's 2020 graphic novel, *Notes on a Case of Melancholia, or: A Little Death.* The animation team behind *A Little Death* emulated Gurewitch's painstaking black and white etchings, which were, in turn, heavily influenced by Edward Gorey's deliciously macabre cartoons. Splashes of hot pink are the only other color, and an important plot point. No actual dialogue is used, with the story moved forward instead by the jaunty soundtrack, nonsensical language (with subtitles), and the expressiveness of the characters. A kind-hearted little fable, *A Little Death* asks us to consider different ways of approaching work, and to appreciate what others can teach us, both in life and in death. *—Mary Beth Campbell*



A Little Death

Ball Face

Written, directed, and animated by Laurence Thérien, this animated short understands the terror of elementary P.E. class all too well. This four-minute claymation film follows a young girl whose Quebecois P.E. teacher, Eric, announces, "I tried to be a police officer, but they told me I have a heart problem." From there, the students engage in a game that appears to be a mix of wall ball and dodgeball on steroids as Eric screams from the sidelines, "Kindergarten is over, guys. This shit is serious. This is elementary school." And so our heroine must find a way to survive the game until the end. The absurd plotline reflects the big feelings and changes—literal and figurative—that children go through at that stage in their lives, and how they develop resiliency (for better and for worse). Thérien's claymation figures are colorful and cartoony, and the animation details are intricate, with minute changes in characters' facial expressions and the main character's metamorphosis all created with painstaking stop motion animation. No CGI was used at any point in the creative process. According to Thérien, the entire creation and production took six months, with 14-hour days, six days a week. *Ball Face* is a testament to the artistry of claymation and a tender and funny tribute to the often surreal experience of childhood. *—Mary Beth Campbell*



Ball Face

Crab Diane

Writer/director Ryan McCown and the psychedelic sounds of composer Peter Czibolya are the perfect match for this surrealist, satirical animated story about a waitress surrendering to alien crabs. The protagonist Grace (Grace Beerhorst) lives a mundane life as a server at a seaside diner. Her sullen voice and nonchalant demeanor hide a yearning for a new life. After a long day of serving an unbearable pair of old ladies, she lies restlessly in bed dreaming of escape. Suddenly, she's approached in her bedroom by Crab Diane (Colleen Alley), dressed in baby blue from head to toe, and she offers Grace a chance at something different. Grace surrenders to the anthropomorphic crab, then the two are sucked into an alternate world that awakens her true purpose. *—Nijah Narcisse*

Dollhouse Elephant

Without dialogue, this lush animated short by Jenny Jokela tells many stories—actually, those of an entire apartment building. The bulbous square building and its denizens feel familiar yet altogether original: The colorful cast includes an anxious introvert, insatiable lovers, an elder cook, an avid plant collector and her unhappy boyfriend, and three merry child pranksters ding-dong-ditching a long-suffering bodybuilder. Through brightly-hued



The Body of Christ (El Cuerpo de Cristo)

paintbrush strokes, unique choral sound design, and a kaleidoscopic, fluid animation style, the audience follows each of their lives through the walls and floors of the building. Carried by a ceaseless current through their apartments, we witness their inner worlds and public existences as well as how they collide in unexpected ways. Through navigating isolation and togetherness, communities are formed—and the mesmerizing experience of *Dollhouse Elephant* reminds us how special it is to be part of one. —*Terra Durio*

Paradaïz

"[Paradaïz] *noun*. 1. An idyllic place or state. 2. Also, a tomato." So opens Matea Radic's animated short, whose title is a play on the English word "paradise" and the Bosnian word for tomato (paradajz). In an interview, Radic explained that the title "made me think about language and the space between words and their meanings, which then reminded me of my own in-betweenness." Radic and her family fled Sarajevo in 1992 at the beginning of the Bosnian War, eventually ending up in Canada. She did not return until 25 years later. Using absurdist, childlike animation, black and white photographs and footage (some from her family archives), and traditional Bosnian music—notably, both traditional and modern versions of the Bosnian folk song "Kradem ti se u veceri [Stealing away into your evening]"—*Paradaïz* attempts to reconcile the past and the present. On her journey, Radic's cartoon stand-in arrives in Sarajevo, and the passport control officer changes the anglicized version of her last name in her Canadian passport back to the Baltic "Radić" with the stroke of a pen and the wink of an eye. Cigarettes abound in the city, even lighting abandoned birthday cakes, and smiley face stickers cover up the holes in Radic's former apartment building. A snail without a shell accompanies Radic on this journey, and a juicy red *paradajz* acts as a gateway while memories—many of them painful—unfold and Radic's child and adult selves converge, if not bringing peace, then at least bringing resolution. —*Mary Beth Campbell*

SomatiQ Black: Neci

Created and directed by Olamma Oparah, this experimental short functions as a communal healing apparatus, narrated through archival images, soothing voices, and rhythmic sounds. The subtitle "Neci" is a Black Southern term used to describe a niece. A '90s commercial of the Kenya doll by Tyco Toys along with a Sesame Street episode teaching hand games calls back to Black childhood. The positive affirmations from the auntie archetype become a generational ritual that transforms the way Black women see themselves. Oparah is a storyteller, shaping the persistence of joy regardless of the colossal weight of oppression. —*Nijah Narcisse*

Tell Me When You Get Home

This animated slice-of-life by director Tshay Williams is a love letter to the people of the Caribbean diaspora. The film centers around 15-year-old protagonist Honest Cardamom as she wrestles with losing her mother and holding on to her memory and spirituality at her uncle's birthday party. The animation and party backdrop act as an entry point, dropping you into Cardamom's world and helping to visualize her unseen feelings. The various aunts, uncles, and cousins in attendance can't help but bring up Cardamom's mother, which only heightens Cardamom's anxiety. She may look like her mother, but she is still trying to understand herself and what her mother meant to others. The film crams nuance into every shot: The plate of rice and peas, the guy vomiting fish, and even the "riddim" add to this fantastical story. —*Mike 5ive*

The Body of Christ (El Cuerpo de Cristo)

Director Bea Lema's debut film is a striking hybrid animation that synthesizes real embroidered backgrounds with digital animation designed to recreate the look and feel of textile art. The short film tells the story of Adela, a woman who is plagued by the constant feeling of being watched. Struggling to explain what's going on internally to her family and community, she looks to religion and spirituality for solace and begins to come to terms with a traumatic past through an experience with a healer. The film's unique animated style is impressive: The physical and digital tools work seamlessly in the telling of this woman's path toward healing, demonstrating the potential for new technology to amplify the beauty and imperfections of a handmade craft. —*Paula Ibieta*

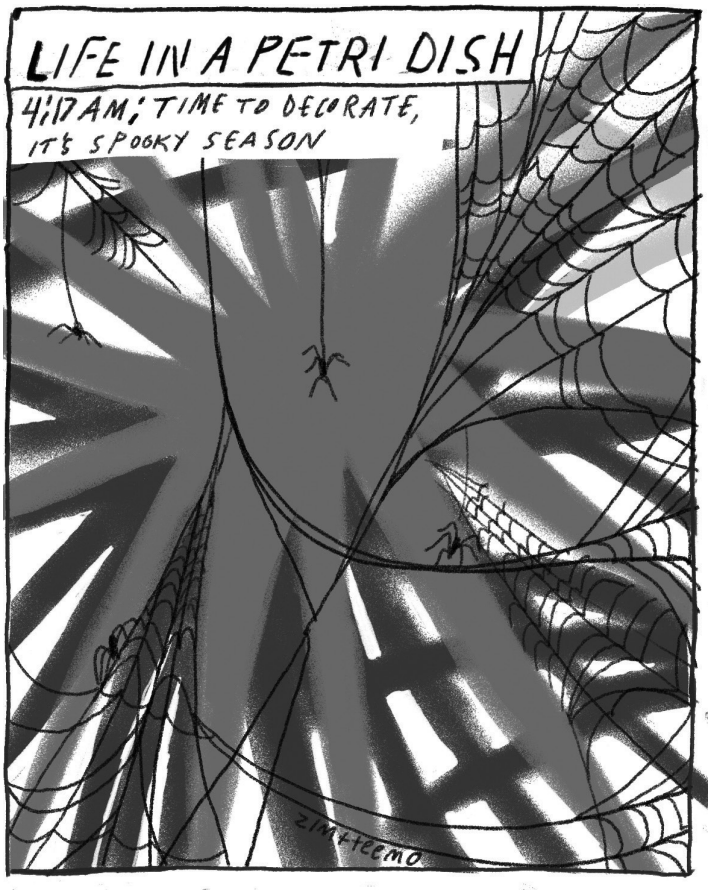
With Tapes and Toasts in the Car (Im Auto Tapes und Butterbrot)

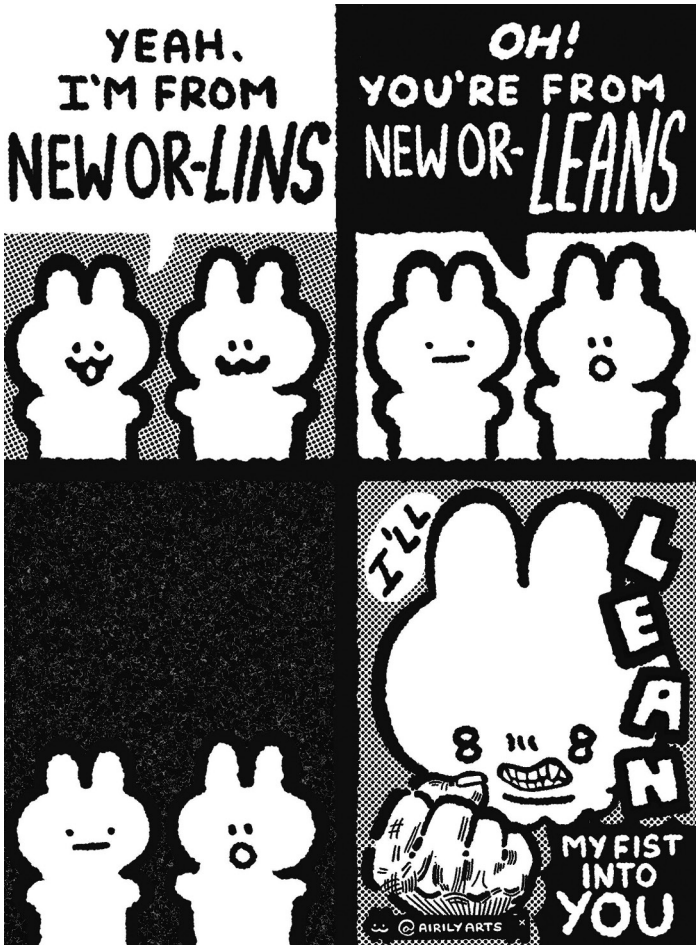
An electronically-distorted voice opens this short by narrating psychedelic animated scenes of outer space: "Crystals and molecular chains. Cosmic atoms. Stars decay into new formations. You and me, part of it." From there, we meet Shari Hamu, who has just received a fatal diagnosis from her doctor: Her body, both literally and figuratively, has begun to go back to the cosmos. Unable to reveal to her loving and concerned family that she has, at most, a few months to live, she begins to have visions of Laika, the Soviet space dog. Laika—who we learn is also the narrator—acts as both a guide and companion to Shari on her journey through the stages of grief as she faces the fact that her life, just like Laika's, is ending too soon. Writer, animator, and director Kiana Naghshineh took inspiration from Soviet propaganda materials featuring Laika and cosmonauts, and the characters are based on people in her life. Accompanied by Ziggy Has Ardeur's electronic and hip-hop-influenced score, this 14-minute short is aesthetically bold and emotional. The cycle of life and death goes on, but that does not diminish the fact that the memories we leave behind, even a mixtape, hold meaning for someone. As Laika reminds us, "Stars decay and new ones emerge. The echo of her light remains." —*Mary Beth Campbell*



The 37th New Orleans Film Festival will take place in-person between October 22 through 27 and virtually until November 1. For more info, check out neworleansfilmsociety.org.


QÖMIX
BY CIRCE MEADOWS
HARD LICK & SPOOKY TOOF
T-BEAUXN
KINGDOM
YO LICK! WHACHA DUN 'ERD 'BOUT DEM 'GATOR CENTERS?
AH 'ERD DEY 'BOUT TA START PUTTIN DEM EV'RY WHAIRZ!
HOW DEY GOIN' KEEP DEM GATORS IF IT AIN'T NEAR NO BAYOU, TOOF?
AW BRAH! DEM 'GATOR CENTER'S GOBBLE UP A BUNCHA WATER TA HOUZE DEM GATORS!
BULLSHIT... WHY DEY NEED TA PILE UP DEM GATORS?
I DUNNO...
MAYBE DEM GATORS GOT GROWN UP IN SUM GROOSUM GUBMINT LABORTEN-TORY?
WHA DAT MEAN? DEY SMART OR SUMTHIN'? CAN DEY LEAP LIKE DEM SWAMP RABBITS?
HA!HA! COULD BE A SECRET PLAN TO LOOSE ALL DEM SMARTY GATORS OUT IN DA WURLD WUN DAY!
TOOF, AH TINK FOLKS AIN'T GON' CARE TOO MUCH FO' DESE 'GATOR CENTERS.
HAH! MAYBE, LICK, MAYBE.
END
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IG: MOGIHEAD


LIFE IN A PETRI DISH
4:17AM; TIME TO DECORATE, IT'S SPOOKY SEASON
ZIMMERMO

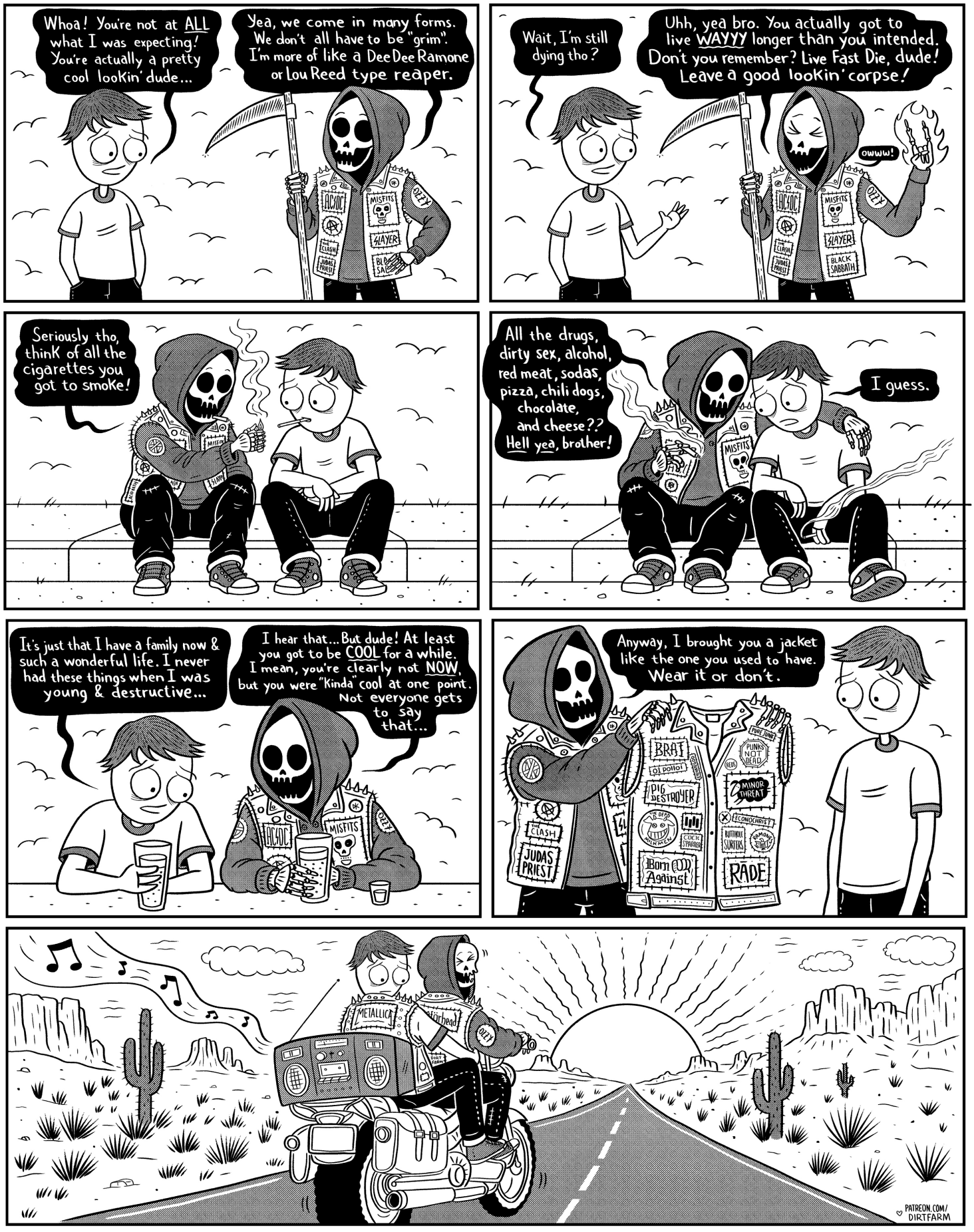

YEAH, I'M FROM NEW OR-LINS
OH! YOU'RE FROM NEW OR-LEANS
I'LL LEAN MY FIST INTO YOU
@AIRILY ARTS


alōn Thom 10.26
HEY!- YOU WANNA SEE SOMETHING REALLY SCARY?
ARE YOU GONNA SHOW ME YOUR GROCERY BILLS?
HEY BOB - I WAS THINKING HOW MUCH WE COULD USE THE $250 GRAND PRIZE FOR "SCARIEST COSTUME" AT THE HALLOWEEN BALL - SO I HAVE A FEW IDEAS...
LOOK- IT'S TERRIFYING!
I'M A DATA CENTER!
UMM...? WHAT ELSE YOU GOT?
NOT FOR CONSUMPTION
PETROLEUM
HEAVY METAL
MICRO PLASTICS
RADIATION
NIGHTMARE FUEL--- NO DRINKING WATER!!
NEXT.
OK- LET'S SEE- A ROGUE NUCLEAR WAR-HEAD? MALEVOLENT A.I.? CLIMATE CHANGE? AUTHORIT-ARIANISM? EXPANDING WARS?
OR I CAN BE THE FORBIDDING APATHY OF THE AVERAGE AMERICAN!
WELL...
SELF
I'M GOING AS BLUEY. I WAS REALLY HOPING YOU'D BE BANDIT.

DIRTFARM #615

"COOL REAPER"

Ben Claassen



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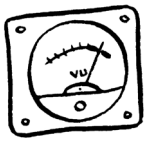
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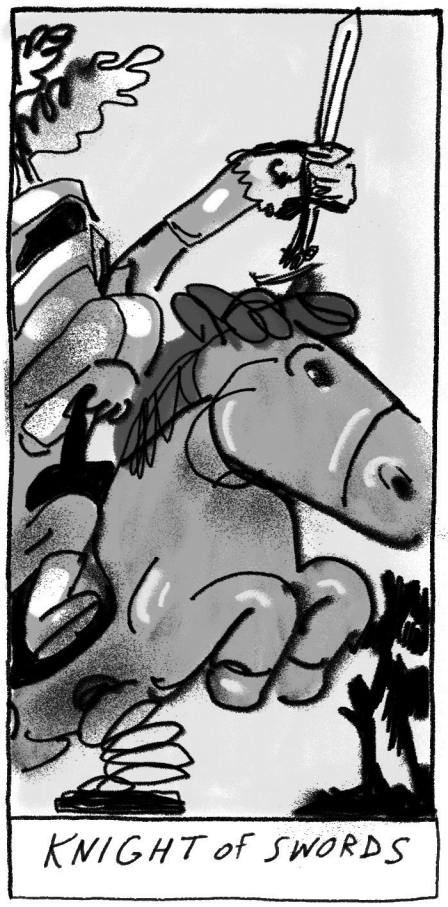
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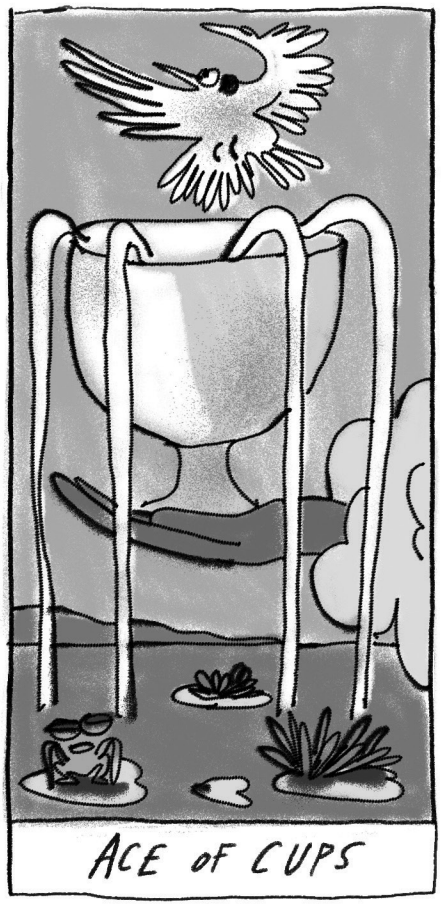
3. LIKE, FOLLOW, SHARE AND ALL THAT SHIT

We are on the following social media sites, and bigger numbers means a higher profile and more value for our advertisers. So as the kids love to say these days, "like, follow, and share!" We have active social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Bluesky, all at **@antigravitymag**.

Anything and everything helps. We appreciate you, and we look forward to sticking around a little bit longer.









The Knight of Swords is relentless, not reckless. She plans for what she can reasonably predict but otherwise trusts herself to face the unforeseen. She is the embodiment of courage. Choose where you will make your stand and commit to it because that kind of focus reserves energy and sets us up for success. Remember, if you wait until you are entirely certain, you will stay right where you are while the years go by. Learning to do meaningful research and validate information lays a foundation for wise action. We need to be teachable, capable of seeking out the right people for the kind of input that will advance both our knowledge and the palpable humility that will keep us the safest and sharpest. Humility is the state of being that allows us to assess situations and people with accuracy. We become myopic and weakened when we focus on the clash rather than the goal. The Knight of Swords offers a message: *You will never out-reason those committed to disagreement. Reserve your strength.* The Knight of Swords suffers neither fools nor saboteurs. She keeps her mind focused so that she can face the unknown in peace—as should we.

The Ace of Cups arrives to give us advice on how to soothe ourselves both emotionally and psychologically as we meet with the people and the pursuits that are most important to us. We need the ability to give ourselves comfort because if we just power through our feelings constantly, we are missing out on opportunities and courting an inevitable explosion, too. Stress and the pressure to beat the clock creates substantial barriers to awareness of both the physical and emotional bodies, which leads to a lack of tolerance for the natural flow of feelings. Squashing emotional discomfort with rejection will conclude in an eruption over something seemingly unconnected. The Ace of Cups tells us to check in with ourselves and make sure we know what we are feeling throughout the day. Naming what is happening inside of you goes a long way toward easing tensions. The Ace of Cups tells us to find sanctuary within ourselves so that we will have a place to anchor from when we need to decide whether to put our faith into someone or something, or not.

If you wait until you are entirely certain, you will stay right where you are while the years go by.

The Six of Wands means victory. It is an achievement that benefits the community as a whole. This card represents a moment when a person's potential is realized and everyone knows it. If we are to hold a level of esteem among our peers, we need to develop a tolerance for feedback that we might not expect, or like. Constructive criticism is a gift, but it can be tricky to decipher whether the person offering it is doing so in good or bad faith. It is possible to hear true and useful words from someone who wants to bring you down a notch, and it is also possible to take the advice but refuse the spite. If you can do this, you will continue to build a network of support. If your psyche registers critique as rejection, take a long pause before you respond. Consider how you will present yourself and your ideas and be cautious that you don't lose sight of your real goal. This is an art, and a delicate one. The Six of Wands accepts the reverence others hold for her with grace and it is this that gives her the wisdom to decline compromise disguised as diplomacy. May our trust lead the way.

reading by Michelle Embree | michelleembree.com
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HALLOWEEN AT THE LIBRARY



THE CRAFT OF FEAR:

Generating Scares in Fiction, A Fiction Writing Workshop with Adrian Van Young

Wednesday, October 14, 5pm–6:30pm

Latter Library
5120 St. Charles Ave.

CITIES OF THE DEAD:

The History of New Orleans' Cemeteries, With Heather Veneziano of Tulane University

Thursday, October 15, 5:30pm–6:30pm

Latter Library
5120 St. Charles Ave.



HOUSE OF SCHLOCK:

Killer Klowns From Outer Space (1988)

Saturday, October 17, 2pm–4pm

Nora Navra Library
1902 St. Bernard Ave.

FRIGHT NIGHT:

An Evening of Terrifying Tales

Thursday, October 22, 5:30pm–6:30pm

Rosa F. Keller Library & Community Center
4300 S. Broad Ave.

Locations subject to change. Please check **nolalibrary.co/halloween** for updates.

Find more Halloween celebrations at **nolalibrary.co/halloween.**

Library Foundation of New Orleans

NEW ORLEANS PUBLIC LIBRARY


WHAT
WOULD
DOLLY
DO?