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ERIE READER

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Contributors

Liz Allen

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Sarah Brown

Jonathan Burdick

Ally Kutz

Tommy Link

Aaron Mook

Erin Phillips

Jen Sorenson

Forest Taylor

Bryan Toy

Amy VanScoter

Larry Wheaton

Photographer

Jessica Hunter

Interns

Anna Malesiewski

Ellie Welsh

Cover Design

Nick Warren

1001 State St. Suite 1315
Erie, Pa., 16501
contact@eriereader.com

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JESSICA HUNTER

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From the Editors

Instruments of change

It was a chilly Christmas Eve in 1818, and Austrian pastor Joseph Franz Mohr found himself in need of a song — and not just any song, but an absolute banger in the most reverent sense of the word. What's more, he needed it in mere hours — when the congregation of St. Nicholas Church in Oberndorf was due to show up for midnight mass. Scrambling, the pious procrastinator dug up an old poem he'd written and recruited his ride-or-die homie, Franz Xaver Gruber, for a melody. Gruber (pronounced "GROO-ber" auf Deutsch) was the church's choir director and organist, so he knew a thing or two about stringing notes together. Unfortunately, the St. Nick's organ had recently been knocked out of commission by flooding from the nearby Salzach River (don't you hate it when that happens?)

Despite the tight deadline and the unavailability of his chief instrument, Groobs pulled through — group project MVP. With just one guitar (presumably slung way down low), "Stille Nacht" came alive that night, just in the St. Nick of time. Better known as "Silent Night" to the English-speaking world, the carol would become an Austrian national treasure, and to this day is not played or performed publicly before Christmas Eve in its country of origin.

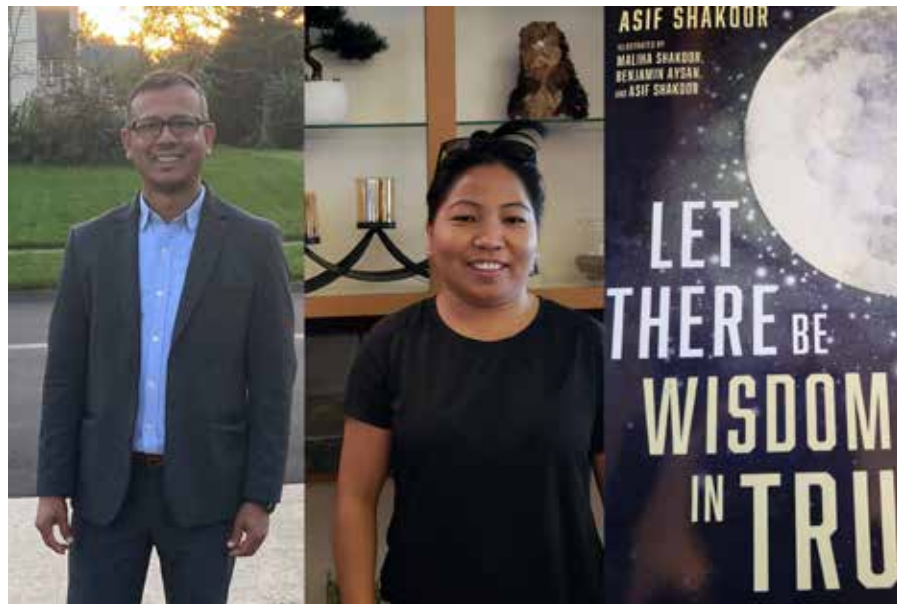
Although we in Erie are separated from the original "Stille Nacht" by the Atlantic Ocean and a gulf of 203 years, if there is one thing we can extrude from the story of Mohr and Groobs, it's that necessity is absolutely the mother of invention. The songwriting duo was presented with less than ideal circumstances, but did not accept things as they were — instead, they tuned into themselves and the moment, envisioning what *could* be. By leaning into their talents and maximizing limited resources, they created something that has stood the test of time.

For decades, Erie has been trying to rewrite its theme song using instruments that haven't been working — worn-out models of funding and facilitating transformational change that have accomplished neither. To its credit, local leadership has acknowledged that the ponderous pipe organ of past ideas and past methodologies has been dragging us down, and our need for a more nimble future, one that anyone can pick up and play along to. But even if our guiding hands have their fingers on the fretboard, there are many nuances and accents to be mastered before we can truly elevate this composition, and many dissonances they will need to find a way to tastefully resolve.

So pull up a chair by the fireplace (or electric space heater) and relax and reflect with us about an uneven 2021, and the uncertain 2022 that is yet to come. Our city and society may never be heavenly, but perhaps one day we'll all be able to sleep a little more peacefully.

Season of Giving

Some takeaways from the presence of immigrants



(left) Erie's 40 Under 40 alumnus Nanda Chuwan, whose family was forced to leave Bhutan when he was 12, lived for 17 years in a refugee camp in Nepal before arriving in Erie in 2009. Now finance coordinator for the International Institute, he was previously an employment counselor there. (center) Dharmia "Amrita" Gurung, another recent 40 Under 40 honoree, came to Erie as a refugee from Bhutan via Nepal in 2011, working three jobs to save money to start her Indian restaurant, Tandoori Hut. (right) *Let There Be Wisdom* is a collection of poems by Dr. Asif Shakoor, an Erie physician. Maliha Shakoor, a high school student and one of his five children, illustrated the book and Benjamin Aysan, a native of Turkey, did the calligraphy

LIZ ALLEN

By: Liz Allen

I sometimes stumble upon stories, but I literally fell into this one.

Walking in my neighborhood with two friends, I tripped, hit my head, got an ugly black eye, then daltied before seeking medical care, because who wants to admit that you need your head examined? At the insistence of my three sisters, I went to the UPMC Hamot ER the next afternoon and was admitted overnight for observation.

But if I hadn't taken a tumble, I wouldn't have met Asif Shakoor, M.D., the UPMC internist and hospitalist who examined my test results and discharged me. And if I hadn't met Dr. Shakoor, I wouldn't have known that he would be part of the Nov. 15 Gannon University panel discussion on "Immigrant Stories."

I marked my calendar to attend, because I wanted to hear his tale. Born into a poor caste in Pakistan, he grew up in Brooklyn, then became the first in his family to finish high school, to graduate from college, and to go to med school — when he was also married and raising his children. "The idea is you can all achieve something," he told the audience of about 100 Gannon students.

I also wanted to hear the other panelists: moderator Kaustav Mukherje, Ph.D., an assistant English professor at Gannon; Nanda Chuwan, the International Institute's finance coordinator; Syed Khalid Rizvi, Ph.D., a former

police officer in India and retired professor; and Niken Astari Carpenter, New American liaison for the City of Erie.

When Dr. Shakoor's mother asked why he moved to Erie, he teased that he took a wrong turn on Interstate 79 after his residency at Allegheny General in Pittsburgh in 2007. But Erie is the right place for him, he said. "What drew me to Erie is that cultural diversity and so much beauty out there," he said. "I have an opportunity to change so many lives. It's not what you receive, it's what you give."

Dr. Shakoor's comments were a perfect reminder that some of the best presents we can give and receive this holiday season are real-life family-origin stories. In the 1990s, I quizzed my family and recorded videos about their favorite childhood memories, first jobs, proudest accomplishments, and best advice they'd ever received ("Look busy," my dad quipped).

One answer from my mother also sticks with me. "I think I fell out of a tree," she replied when I asked about her early life. Years after Mom died, I finally understood that she was only half-joking. Born in a scrubby Pennsylvania coal-mining town, the daughter of Italian immigrants, she was raised at St. Joseph's Home in Erie from infancy until high school graduation. She never knew her parents and had no birth certificate. My siblings and I are only now learning about our Italian heritage, thanks to a relative who connected on Facebook

with a distant cousin from Tuscany.

In contrast, New Americans remember exact details about their journeys here. Those facts may include years spent in refugee camps, the date they were approved for resettlement, the number of airport layovers before landing in Erie, and the tight deadlines to become self-sufficient in a new place known for its biting winters, where they don't speak the language, and where they have to be schooled in the basics, including how to ride the bus and go to the grocery store.

Eventually, after studying hard and saving up for the application fees, they also cherish the dates of the naturalization ceremonies when they take oaths as new American citizens.

Rather than griping about Erie's small-town feel or cursing the snow, as we are wont to do, immigrants and refugees view the city as a welcoming place with a beautiful, inviting lake.

Rizvi, from India, describes Erie as "a good place for youngsters." Chuwan, from Bhutan, calls Erie "beautiful by nature" and is determined to do whatever it takes "to make our community better."

Mukherje, whose doctorate is from Michigan State, specializes in international literature at Gannon. He opened the panel discussion by talking about the recent report, "New Americans in Erie County," which documents the impressive impact that immigrants and refugees have made on Erie's economy. Yet, he said, "What we have here is more than numbers. We have stories."

As in any engrossing story, these characters grow and evolve, even as

they face challenges.

When I interviewed Niken for a column in 2016, I learned that she had been a judge in Indonesia before she married Erie radio newsman Allan Carpenter in 2010; it then took a year before paperwork could be completed for the two of them to be reunited in Erie.

In her City of Erie role, she guided the process for Erie to be certified as a Welcoming City. She also organized and leads the New American Council, which works to bridge language barriers, to introduce newcomers to various resources and to connect them with each other, across many cultures.

At the first council meeting, she inquired: "How are you doing?" Members were mostly quiet in response. "No one had ever asked them that," she said.

Now there is animated discussion from council members, who are eager to help members of their communities adjust to Erie and to also celebrate their own traditions, as previous generations of immigrants have done. Like many of us, they are multitaskers.

"I have worn many hats," said Rizvi. "An engineer's hat. A police officer's hat. A professor's hat. A grandpa's hat." A native of India, he had lived in New York City before retiring to Erie with his children and grandchildren. "It's true that Erie stands out as a welcoming community. This is a city of immigrants," he said. "Here, people like to scare us. (They say) there's a lot of snow," he said. But he enjoys Erie's leisurely pace, where "nobody's honking at you and yelling at you."

In addition to his medical degree, Dr. Shakoor is a Sufi mystic who has recently published a book of poetry, *Let There Be Wisdom in Truth*. He read aloud one of his poems, "A Wandering Spirit," which begins: "I am a mosaic of many cultures and the face of many nations. I am a wandering spirit that runs deep into the journey of life looking for unity in the fragment of existence."

At a time of so much division, stories from immigrants and refugees can help us to piece the fragments of our existence back together.

During the panel discussion and in a



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later interview, Chuwan affirmed his belief in the American ideals of hope and hard work. At age 12, he and his family, who are Hindu, were among thousands of victims of ethnic cleansing that targeted minority religious groups in Bhutan. His family was evicted to Nepal and he celebrated his 13th birthday in a refugee camp, where they lived for 17 years before they were approved for resettlement in the U.S. in 2009. Fifteen days before their departure, "They gave us a map and said, 'You go to Erie, Pennsylvania,'" he recalled.

His family left Nepal on Nov. 3, landed in Newark, N.J. on Nov. 4, and arrived in Erie on Nov. 5. His parents had arrived the previous day. He lives here with his wife and two children and works as the finance director at the International Institute, a field office of the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, where he started as an employment counselor.

Chuwan, 43, introduced me to Dharma "Amrita" Gurung, 32, owner of Tandoori Hut at West 26th Street and Washington Avenue. When she was four or five, her Buddhist family was also forced to leave Bhutan for Nepal. After departing Kathmandu and changing planes six times, her family landed in Erie at midnight on Aug. 2, 2011.

Chuwan and Gurung had grown up in separate refugee camps, but unbeknownst to them, their parents had known each other in Bhutan. Thanks to Chuwan's caseworker skills, 23 days after her arrival, she was working at an Erie plastics plant.

Meeting Chuwan was the first "turning point" in her life, she said, because he helped her to land that first job, which put her on a path to becoming an Erie business owner.

She didn't make the leap immediately from plastics plant worker to restaurateur. After three months at the plastics plant, she was laid off, so she got a hotel housekeeping job. Then she added jobs at St. Vincent Hospital as a sanitation aide and as an interpreter at the Multicultural Community Resource Center. For five years, "I worked three jobs at a time," she said matter-of-factly.

She also took office assistant classes at Great Lakes Institute, and she helped to put one of her brothers through a technical school in Pittsburgh, all the while focused on starting her business. Even after opening

her restaurant in Perry Square in 2018, she continued to work at St. Vincent for six months, "to make sure it's OK to leave the job." She left the Perry Square location earlier this year to buy the spot that had been occupied by the Summer House Cafe.

"I came to America to work. That was in my mind," said Gurung, who already has her eye on starting a new business and on helping the next wave of female immigrants to realize their full potential.

Still, there are always challenges for immigrants, starting with language. "I'm kind of a 'Hi, Hello,' person, but I'm also kind of shy, kind of reserved," she said. Sometimes, it's difficult for immigrants to express in English what's in their hearts, she said.

Despite Erie's official designation as a Welcoming City, there are some who don't welcome newcomers. Niken, whose law degree is from Indonesia, has encountered people who question the master's degree she earned in project management. It must be from a Third-World country, they scoff. She then informs them that her advanced degree is from Penn State Behrend.

Some also criticize accents of the foreign-born. "We have accents, which I cannot change," said Niken.

I personally liked listening to Dr. Shakoor's Brooklynese, as he explained what happened once when the coach of the school handball team demanded an explanation for why he had failed a course. "Because I'm a dumb ass," Shakoor said. "Come here, you little schmuck," replied the coach, who moved him into an honors class from special ed.

"When he put me in that honors class, the whole world changed for me," he explained. He studied Greek philosophers and read Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Frost, and Gibran. In turn, when he was in college and teaching in a program for teenage mothers, he introduced them to his favorite writers. They resisted at first. But he urged them to write what they knew. "Oh, boy, did they write," he said. When he collected their poems to publish and gave them copies, the girls were enthralled. "You're all poets," he assured them.

He reinforced that message for the Gannon students. "There's a hidden genius in all of us," he told them.

That, I am convinced, is also part of the genius of America. "You are our legacy of hope," Mukherje, the

Gannon professor, told the panelists. "Talk about Erie as a land of opportunity."

And they did.

Liz Allen has started pecking away at a memoir for her family. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com.

Did you know?

The International Institute is currently working to resettle 124 former residents of Afghanistan, according to Dylanna Grasinger, director of the International Institute Erie field office for the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Catholic Charities is also resettling Afghans, she said.

"Everything has moved so quickly with this group. They just really need time to settle in a place that's not a military base or a hotel. Then we'll see them as their community comes together, we'll start to see their persona," she said.

The International Institute has created an Amazon Wish List for the newly arrived Afghans. The delivery address is:

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To learn more about how to help the new Afghan arrivals and other immigrants, visit the International Institute's Facebook page.

Read more

"Memoirs have staying power," according to Anitra Gates, technical services manager for the Erie County Public Library who also reviews memoirs for Library Journal.

"The story of someone's life is timeless," she said. "Places, dates and language may be different, but there are themes that remain true no matter what — such as finding a sense of home and belonging, figuring out one's place in the world, or building and maintaining relationships with family and friends. Memoirs are also a great way to meet a person that you may not normally get to interact with, which gives the reader an opportunity to empathize and learn from the writer's experience."

Recent memoirs from immigrants include Beautiful Country, by Qian Julie Wang; Floating in a Most Peculiar Way, by Louis Chude-Sokei; Seeing Ghosts, by Kat Chow; App Kid, by Michael Sayman; and Concepcion: An Immigrant Family's Fortunes, by Albert Samaha.



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Will the Real Brenton Davis Please Stand Up?

The Erie County Executive-elect on his past, present crises, and the future of Erie County as his administration prepares to take office in January 2022



When Brenton Davis assumes the Erie County Executive office this January, he will need to reconcile his identity as a self-proclaimed “firebrand” with that of a wide-minded public servant. Faced with the challenges of managing the ongoing pandemic, responsibly allocating millions of dollars worth of American Rescue Plan funding, seeing to a nascent Erie County Community College he once opposed, and running the county government, the on-the-job learning curve will be steep.

post for only the first four years. Since 1978, Erie County has been governed by its home-rule charter — a measure adopted by voters as a referendum on the ballot in 1976 that converted its form of government to an executive-legislative structure. Lynch won reelection for her second term, and a third, and a fourth, and a fifth — governing just four years shy of the rest of Erie County Executives combined.

With Democrats having held the post for the past 16 years, Davis' victory marks the first time since 2002 a Republican has been elected to the office. And while twice as many Democrats — four — have held the post than Republicans prior — two — Democrats have led the county 36 years to Republican's eight.

The Challenges Ahead

In the time since his election victory, Davis has built and named a transition team that includes bipartisan support. As Matt Rink wrote in the Sunday, Nov. 21 edition of the Erie Times-News, Davis “vowed to usher in what his campaign wordsmiths called ‘a new era of two-party cooperation.’”

Rink also points out the obvious that cannot be overlooked: “Davis will adopt a county government navigating its way through the COVID-19 pandemic, still nurturing the infant Erie County Community College, and responsible for distributing tens of millions of dollars in federal American Rescue Plan funding.

“And that’s on top of the monumental task of running county government.”

In other words: Governing during times *not of* crisis is difficult in and of itself. Davis, who’s never held an elected position before, will take over

in just a few weeks, as both crisis and opportunity abound with the pandemic continuing to rage on with new variants while at the same time a historic amount of federal resources are on their way.

Tom Petty once sang that “the waiting is the hardest part.” Right now, we find ourselves in the interregnum — the chunk of time after which an election has been held, its outcome certified, and when the victor takes office. During this time, we wait. And in our waiting, it’s not uncommon for questions to outnumber answers.

So we ask:

Is Davis ready to lead?

Will he really usher in a new era of bipartisanship?

Has he truly evolved his position on critical issues, such as the community college, toward which he was once a vocal opponent but now says he’s a cautious optimist?

Can Erie County residents expect, in January, to be led by the Brenton Davis who’s calling for that new era of bipartisanship, or will they see more of the candidate who built a reputation as a, in his own words, “firebrand?”

Asked another way: As he’s about to take the seat as the highest executive at the county level, will the real Brenton Davis please stand up?

How Davis Got Here

The Friday before the week of Thanksgiving, Brenton Davis is a man on the move. We connect over a Zoom call that turns into a phone call from his truck immediately following a call he had just had with a renowned urbanist and economic development expert and before he has the second meeting of the day with one of the members of his transition team. While the interregnum can be more easily measured in days if not weeks, it wouldn’t be surprising to find Davis has done the calculations to know the minutes.

A newcomer to elected office, Davis isn’t fresh to the campaign trail. Four and a half years ago he saw his chance to lead in Erie County within grasp only to see it slip away. He’d thrown his hat into the political ring and fell

By: Ben Spегgen

While voters determined exactly *who* would take the seat as the chief executive at the county level of government Erie, Pennsylvania in the November 2021 election, it’s been a known outcome since December 2020 that Erie County would have a new leader come January 2022. That new leader is Brenton Davis, a 38-year-old Republican, whose victory has made local history.

Davis is the youngest candidate ever elected to the Erie County Executive office. The same history, however, would’ve been made had his Democratic opponent, Tyler Titus, who’s 37, had won. The 2021 election came down to Davis-versus-Titus after each emerged victorious from the 2021 primary — which made history in that it did not feature incumbent Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper even though she was eligible to seek one more four-year term.

Erie County Exec 101

Erie County residents have known since December 2020 that they’d have a new county executive in 2022 because Dahlkemper, a Democrat, announced she would not seek reelection for a third term. Had she decided to mount a reelection bid a second time, she would’ve been only the second county executive in Erie’s history to do so. Still, she made her own his-

tory in 2017 — proving that winning more than one election as county executive wasn’t an anomaly.

In the years prior to Dahlkemper’s reelection to a second term in 2017, Erie County had a history filled mostly with “one-and-done” when it came to county executives. From 2002 to 2006, there was Richard Schenker, a Republican. Following his one-term reign, Mark DiVecchio, a Democrat, took over at helm in 2006. Four years later, while the Democratic party kept the post, it was Barry Grossman leading the county’s executive branch. And in 2014, Kathy Dahlkemper, also a Democrat, began her first term. That same year, Erie County voters overwhelmingly voted in favor of imposing term limits, limiting incumbents to three four-year terms, despite it having been more than a decade since Erie elected an incumbent to serve an additional 48 months.

In the 2017 election, Dahlkemper, just as those throughout the 15 years before her had done, sought a second term. But unlike them, she won her first reelection bid — something only one person had done before during the 20 years between 1982 and 2002 when it was a different story with Erie County and its top leadership.

For two decades, and in an era well before term limits, Erie County had just one county executive: Judith Lynch. A Democrat, Lynch served as Erie’s second county executive after Republican Russell Robison held the

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just over 200 votes shy of earning the Republican nomination for County Executive in 2017's primary election, losing to Art Oligeri, who incumbent Kathy Dahlkemper went on to to defeat by just over 300 votes in the general election.

After that race, in a post-election follow-up piece for the Reader, I wrote:

"A surprise to some was how tight the Republican candidate race for county executive ended up being. Just 214 votes separated 64-year-old Oligeri from Brenton Davis, a 33-year-old private contractor. Although Oligeri took an early lead and held it throughout the night, the top three returns shuffled with Davis, Ed DiMattio, and Tim Sonney remaining in the mix."

Davis, a newcomer to Erie politics, surprised some, rocketing upwards in the vote tallies late into the night, drawing in strong support from Erie County's outlying districts. DiMattio, a current county councilman representing the 6th District, took third after Davis, earning 1,695 less votes than Davis did."

In the short-term, Davis endorsed

Oligeri and pledged his campaign's resources to Oligeri. In the longer-term, Davis went back to work, worked on earning a master's degree, and ultimately plotted a new path to the county executive's office.

Fast-forward to just three weeks after incumbent County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper announced she wouldn't seek reelection: Davis announced his candidacy. He was the first of two Republicans and four Democrats to do so.

Davis' candidacy wasn't without controversy. There was a sharp pivot in his stance on Erie County Community College. His COVID-19 vaccination and military service records came under scrutiny, as first reported by the Erie Times-News. And, as also reported by the Erie Times-News, Democrats criticized some of his comments on social media as misogynistic and anti-democratic.

"Verel Salmon, chairman of the Erie County Republican Party, emphasized the right of free speech in America but added that Davis has displayed 'wonderful growth' over the years," A.J. Rao reported.

In His Own Words

"I'm not proud of everything I said — you know, 'F Biden' and all that other stuff," Davis said about his lightning rod social media posts. "I was a young guy that lost an election, and I was pissed off."

Then came a self-realized moment of reckoning, he said. "I just looked at that, and I realized, like, 'What the hell is this helping?'"

So he stopped posting, he says, deleting his accounts. He likens walking away from them and the anger to an alcoholic putting down the bottle.

"I don't have any social media accounts," he said. "I have one social media account — that's my official account, and I don't have access to it. And I don't manage it. I type what I want to put out to my constituents and send that to a media manager, and they handle it from there."

While he's not shy about acknowledging the vitriol expressed in posts prior to his latest political run, Davis remains reserved as to how deeply he's willing to dive into discussing his social media past in the present. He

did, however, on record, advise me to visit LinkedIn, where visitors would find an impostor account riddled with inaccuracies about him and his past. As of the time of filing this story, that page still existed, suggesting that Davis, once accused as being an internet troll has himself become the trolled.

"I'm just trying to keep all that at arm's length and focus on doing my job as the county executive-elect and making the mature decisions and really showing people that government doesn't have to be tumultuous — and I never thought I'd be the one saying that," he said. "I've had this reputation of being a firebrand. But I see now on the other side, starting out as an elected official, just from the emails that I get and the conversations that I have with private citizens, I understand why I was the way that I was back then. And a lot of it comes out of frustration. The other part of it comes out of just not necessarily understanding the complete capacities and complexities of governance. And I don't profess to even know them completely myself, getting started. I have a lot to learn."

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NEWS & VIEWS

It's one thing to hurl comments out into the ether. It's another to be on the receiving end.

"I've come to realize that my words, even as a candidate, have impact. And you know, when I woke up one day, I'm like, 'wow, you're no longer the Erie Working Man (Davis' self-given brand) just leading a small charge of like-minded people; you're really swinging a pendulum that can hurt people, you know, or that could hurt an initiative that could help a lot of people.' I've realized now that my words carry great weight, as crazy as it sounds. I take that seriously."

While there can be a hopefulness in leaving the past in the past, a present threat will persist into the future that includes a Davis administration in Erie: COVID-19. At his campaign announcement in early January, Davis was initially focused on the economic response to the pandemic. Now, he's facing new variants, a rising case count, and filling a soon-to-be-critical vacancy. Just hours before he and I spoke, Melissa Lyon, director of the Erie County Health Department, announced she'd be leaving the post effective Jan. 3, 2022 to head up the Delaware County Health Department.

Davis acknowledges that he's not a medical expert and that he'll take advice and guidance from the experts as to his administration's response to the crisis.

"We've already been in the process of looking for who the next health director is going to be," Davis said. "I've got all three hospital systems engaged, I've got other health systems, people that I know that are making recommendations."

Back in January, when Davis stood in front of the defunct-but-still-county-owned Pleasant Ridge Manor, he stressed his vision for the future of the Erie County Community College to not be a duplication of services. That remains his point today, while also acknowledging the process and the potential in the institution's future — which should be to "make sure it's the community college of 2050, not 1960," he said.

"The reality is this. It's here, it's the democratic process, you know, it went through a due process, it was challenged in court, it's been approved, it's here, it's operating," he said.

"The people," he added, "have spoken." Just as the people have spoken

in electing him county executive.

"We need a community college that is innovative, outside the box, collaborative — that works with the private sector, for jobs in high-demand areas," he said. "We need to make education affordable and accessible to people to help lift them out of poverty. You know, I would be lying if I didn't say I was skeptical in a lot of areas. But the benefit is now as the county executive-elect, in the coming years, the areas in which I'm skeptical, I have the power to fix."

Waiting for the Answer

Come January, Brenton Davis will have power as the seventh county executive in Erie's history. Is he ready to lead? Will he usher in a new era of bipartisanship? Has he displayed "wonderful growth" over the years that's continuing to evolve? Can Erie County residents expect, in January, to be led by the Brenton Davis who's calling for that new era of bipartisanship, or will they see a return of the firebrand?

Too, voters who voted for him must ask: Will they blindly follow wherever he leads even if it's off the path of progress simply because he waves the same team flag that they do?

And voters who voted against him must ask: Will they be willing to follow him if his path does lead to progress even though he waves a team flag different from their own? Will they champion his success as a leader? Be willing to overcome his past comments they found objectionable? Abhorrent?

To root actively against an elected official's success — since it should, in its purest form, mean the success of the place and people over which they govern — is antithetical to democracy. To root fervently no matter the message or course of action, too, is antithetical to democracy.

So, as we march through the interregnum and into the governing period in which Davis takes his seat, we'll watch to see who stands up, who follows, who doesn't, and where words turned to action take Erie County over the next four years that will likely have implications measured in decades.

Ben Spегgen can be reached at bSpегgen@ErieReader.com and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpегgen.



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Erie Strayer Workers Hold the Line

What the Erie steel construction labor strike of the 1950s shows us about today



Union members of the Ironworkers Local 851 recently went on strike as negotiations for a new labor contract with Erie Strayer Company have fallen through. Formerly known as Erie Steel Construction, Erie Strayer Company has been in operation since 1912.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

By: Jonathan Burdick

On July 3, 1941, the Bridge, Structural, and Ornamental Iron Workers Union won a labor board election with the workers of Erie Steel Construction in Erie, Pa. It was a year in which organized labor was flexing its muscles across the country; industries were growing rapidly as the economy rebounded from the Great Depression and defense contracts were increasing due to the war. Over 4,000 strikes took place nationwide during this year (before Pearl Harbor brought the U.S. into the war and many agreed to “no strike” pledges). This involved over 2 million workers who demanded fair pay for their labor, more reasonable hours, and safer working conditions. In Pennsylvania alone, nearly 550 strikes took place (the second most of any state in 1941), involving nearly half a million workers.

Strikes like these continue to this day. But more on that later.

“This trend reflects the attempt of workers to keep their wages in line with the rising cost of living and to obtain their share of increasing profits from the rapidly expanding defense program,” a Department of Labor report concluded.

After the vote, the unionized ironworkers at Erie Steel Construction

immediately commenced negotiations with the company for a 10-cents-an-hour raise. A month passed with little progress, so the 65 employees voted to strike, led by their union president Alex Bolash and union representative William McCool. A stalemate continued throughout the following week. A federal labor conciliator from Cleveland was soon brought in. It took another week, but by Aug. 15, the workers and company officials reached an agreement and the strike ended.

Over the next decade, the laborers of Erie Steel Construction would continuously demonstrate their unified strength. In March of 1946 during the massive postwar strike wave (these were the largest labor strikes in U.S. history), 75 ironworkers went on strike again. Union president Cyril Bauer told the Erie Daily Times that their contract had expired the previous August and the two sides couldn’t agree on new terms. Workers requested an 18-and-a-half cents per hour raise, a five-day 40-hour work week, and time-and-a-half pay for overtime and Saturdays as well as double-time for Sundays and holidays. The company counter-offered with a 10-cent-an-hour raise. This was quickly rejected. After two more days of intense negotiations, an agreement was settled upon: 18-cents-an-hour, a

40-hour workweek, and overtime pay for Saturdays.

This strike wave led to the passage of the Taft-Hartley Act by Congress in 1947, overriding President Harry Truman’s veto. This law, advocated for by business lobbies, weakened labor union power and amended much of the New Deal’s pro-worker, pro-union National Labor Relations Act of 1935, which had increased unionization of the workforce from 10 to 25 percent.

This did not deter the workers of Erie Steel Construction though. On Feb. 22, 1950, they once again voted for a strike, having worked without a contract since the previous July.

“The strike has been a long time in coming but now we are going to make sure it’s a good strike,” Cyril Bauer told the Erie Daily Times, as he and the workers, who had “picked one of the winter’s worst days,” were “huddled around a huge fire” on their picket line. The newspaper described this as another “bitter chapter to the turbulent labor relations in the plant.” Soon, other Erie labor unions began contributing money to their strike fund, encouraging the strikers to not accept an unacceptable contract.

The company at this point was being supervised by Hamilton Strayer, the son of G.H. Strayer who had founded the company in 1912. After five days of little headway between the opposing sides, a state mediator was brought in. The primary conflicts were over paid holidays, insurance and retirement plans, and a maintenance of membership clause, which required workers to remain in the union for the duration of the contract.

After a few more days passed with a stalemate, the union filed unfair practice charges with the National Labor Relations Board against the company. Hamilton Strayer responded by filing unfair practice charges against the union, stating the union did not provide government mediation bodies enough notice before striking as re-

quired by the Taft-Hartley Act. As the weeks passed, the rhetoric reported in the Erie Daily Times became uglier. Strayer accused the union of refusing to negotiate, while the newspaper noted that the two sides couldn’t even agree on something as simple as meeting dates. One high-ranking union official referred to the strike as a “show-down” that would be “a real fight to the finish.”

Two days later, during a nine-hour negotiation session that lasted through the night, the deadlock appeared resolved. Another two days passed before the strike *officially* ended following a rollercoaster seven-hour session during which the two sides “reached complete agreement, then complete disagreement, and finally signed a new contract.” The workers received six paid holidays, an agreed-upon insurance policy for sick time and hospitalization, and a revised maintenance of membership agreement that provided an escape clause after one year. The workers unanimously agreed upon the contract which they believed “had some teeth” Strayer stated he was glad it was over and he was also “satisfied with the terms.”

The workers found themselves at another impasse with the company two years later though. On April 25, 1952, they again authorized a strike, demanding improved working conditions along with a wage hike of 18 cents per hour, better benefits, and more vacation time. This strike would last over two months and require a federal mediator out of Pittsburgh before ending on July 8.

The company changed its name from Erie Steel Construction to Erie Strayer Company in 1954. The change was due to shifting production away from steel fabrication and towards manufacturing concrete batching equipment. The following decades weren’t without struggle and turmoil at Erie Strayer (one strike in the early ‘70s lasted four months), but due to a generation of workers at the plant who had organized and sacrificed, the company could now truthfully advertise positions in the newspaper as having “good pay, hospitalization, [and a] vacation plan.”



From Then to Now

In the decades since these labor struggles, union membership across the United States has declined significantly as labor's power has been chipped away. The Taft-Hartley Act still remains in effect. Yet, labor strikes are back on the rise this year as unified workers see leverage in a rebounding economy that is concurrently experiencing a labor shortage from workers exiting their private sector jobs. Cornell's Labor Action Tracker has identified over 300 strikes across the United States this year along with hundreds more labor-oriented protests.

In Erie, the workers at Erie Strayer remain unionized and undeterred. In April 2021, their five-year labor contract expired. On October 4, these current members of the Ironworkers Local 851 went on strike once again in protest over what they describe as "insulting company proposals that seemed aimed at derailing negotiations." It is especially insulting, they feel, considering they worked through the entire pandemic seven-days-a-week without a single shutdown.

The union proposed a three-year contract that would raise wages by 60 cents an hour for the first year and then 50 cents per hour in the following two years as well as retroactive pay from when the contract expired, a signing bonus, a fair attendance policy, and dental insurance. Erie Strayer responded with a five-year contract offering 5 to 15 cent raises each year — less than the 18 cents achieved in 1946.

The Erie community as well as other local unions have stepped up in their

Finding Erie Strayer Company's labor contract proposal "insulting" (5 to 15 cent hourly wage increases each year for the next five years), union members of the Ironworkers Local 851 are holding the line in their fight for a contract that would include much higher raises, a signing bonus, a fair attendance policy, and dental insurance.

support of the strikers, providing meals and care packages, helping cover healthcare costs, spreading awareness, and attending a march along West 26th Street.

"This is what it's about, this is a family, this is a community," Terry Baker, an electrician with IBEW Local Union 56, told YourErie during the march. "We should be here together and we should be helping our community stick together and do what we can for them."

The strike at Erie Strayer even captured the attention of Tom Morello of Rage Against the Machine and Audio-slave fame, who featured it in a list of current strikes in his music video for his pro-labor song "Hold the Line" and which he and singer Grandson recently performed on The Tonight Show.

"Nobody said it would be easy. Nobody said that it would all be fine," Grandson sings on the track. "But to get where we're going, brother, you've gotta hold the line."

Negotiations between the union and Erie Strayer continue into December. In the meantime, the workers plan to hold the line.

You can learn more about what Erie Strayer's workers are asking for at www.eriestrayerstrike.com.



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The 2021 Year in Review

Did Erie mash, or is our future fried?



After accommodating a more characteristically vibrant Erie summer, a snow-covered Dobbins Landing lays dormant under a stark gray sky. Thoughtfully conceived and managed bayfront development remains one of the linchpins to Erie's continued revival.

Fest (although a month later than usual) returned. An unfortunate Memorial Day brawl notwithstanding, the usual sounds of joy and delight issued forth from Waldameer Park and Water World, reinvigorated after a very down year. Meanwhile, the Erie SeaWolves finally got to play ball in a vastly upgraded UPMC Park, competing within a realigned Minor League Baseball system with their long-term future assured for the first time in a long time.

Then the variants struck — the U.K. variant first, followed by the even testier Delta variant in late summer, just in time for back to school. The contentious debates over mandatory mask-wearing and vaccinations were reignited anew, as teachers and students stared down the prospect of yet another year of partially or fully remote learning. Thus far most of our local school districts have been able to persevere in-person, but not without their share of setbacks and disruptions — even with the FDA authorizing emergency administration of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children and teenagers.

At the time of this writing, new COVID cases in Erie County have spiked to some of their highest levels since March 2020, way back when we first spoke of spike proteins in our midst — predominantly among the unvaccinated, although breakthroughs have been documented. As of yet, however, they've not ground society to a screeching halt in 2021 like they did a year ago. But with the omicron variant looming, we must be cautious with our optimism.

Event planners and venues have become much better equipped and adapted to respond to public health advisories and protocols, and so the shows have gone on at places like the Bayfront Convention Center, Erie Insurance Arena (welcome back Otters), Erie Art Museum, Jefferson Educational Society (congratulations on a tremendously successful Global Summit XIII), Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture, community theaters (Erie

you think tastes better — and make yourself comfortable. There's plenty to talk about, even though I have not foreseen what happens in December yet (this Curly Fry Vodka is doing nothing for my prescience).

Fully Vaxxin' and Relaxin' All Cool?

We love our folk remedies. If only drinking your curlies afforded you long-term immunity against this dad-gum pandemic — then we could save our horse dewormer for a more special occasion.

As we are all brutally aware, the novel coronavirus is not much of a novelty anymore. Despite the rollout of multiple very effective vaccines over the year's first months, COVID-19 is officially going into 2022. Early returns in Pennsylvania were promising. In the wake of mass vaccinations, new infection and hospitalization figures dropped sharply in late spring and early summer. On May 13, the CDC lifted public masking mandates for the fully vaccinated. On June 28, mask mandates were lifted altogether in Pennsylvania, with the faith things were trending in the right direction.

For a moment, it seemed COVID would no longer impede our ability to sniff normalcy. Live music filled the air again this summer as popular events like 8 Great Tuesdays, the UPMC Sunset Music Series, Asbury Woods' Monday Music in the Woods, The Gathering at Chaffee's, and Erie's Blues and Jazz

By: Matt Swanseger

Confession: by the time this "2021 Year in Review" is written, edited, and printed, we will not have even flipped the calendar to December yet. As such, you might rightfully diagnose us with premature encapsulation. But then again, *haven't we seen enough?* I mean, we've got a pretty good idea, at least — and no, we're not going to compare the past year to a dumpster fire again. Not when there was an underground electrical fire right outside the Reader offices as recently as September. Metaphors don't get much more local than that.

Conversely, metaphors don't get less local than Doug the ugly New Zealand potato, but it's got potential. Massively gnarled, bulbous, and lumpy, Doug weighed in at an astonishing 17.4 pounds when a New Zealand couple discovered him in their garden this past August. Obviously no small potato, Doug enjoyed brief celebrity status as the most tremendous tuber on record, touring the town of Wellington in the back of a cart wearing a tiny hat. But as fame so often does, Doug's time in the spotlight dried him out, and he was retired to a freezer to be distilled into vodka.

What I'm saying is that although this year had its share of bumps and bruises, there was still a lot of substance. So pour yourself a glass of Arby's Crinkle Fry or Curly Fry Vodka (a 2021 limited release) — depending on which shape

Playhouse, Dramashop, PACA, All An Act), indoor music venues (e.g. Basement Transmissions, King's Rook), and many others even as the weather has turned. Soon, we'll be able to add the historic Warner Theatre (and the Erie Philharmonic) to the list, as an extensive renovation project highlighted by a state-of-the-art rehearsal hall is slated for completion in January.

If you were looking to grab a bite to eat or something to drink in between those activities, there is a surprising slew of new and returning options. Few industries had been hit so hard during the pandemic as bars and restaurants, so it's been incredibly encouraging to see new ventures like Bar Ronin, Local Eat and Pour, Pier 6, Julius, Lettuce Head, Fine Restaurant & Bar, Lumi Cafe, Rex Brothers' Bakery and others popping up, as old favorites like Cloud 9, Tap House, and Jekyll & Hyde's have emerged from hibernation. Of course, we would be remiss not to mention the recently debuted Flagship City Food Hall on North Park Row, featuring eight unique vendors in a communal dining space.

And after being sidelined for all or most of 2020, food trucks are again a fixture at regional breweries and distilleries, with a couple (The Que Abides, Bro Man's Sammiches) even gaining enough traction to open brick and mortar locations. Who's hungry?

Things Picking Up Downtown

Property developers have displayed an especially ravenous appetite as of late, piqued in large part by the expansion of the LERTA (Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance) program in 2019. What this did, of course, was allow for new commercial and residential developments within the city's eight federally-designated "Opportunity Zones" without the obligation of property taxes for a full decade.

At the literal center of this has been the Erie Downtown Development Corporation (EDDC), backed by powerful entities such as Erie Insurance (the 347th largest U.S. company as measured by revenue at \$8.66 billion), Arctaris Impact Investors, and others. The Flagship City Food Hall was one of their first projects to see completion, along with the Shops at Fifth & State, a retail space on the southeast corner

JESSICA HUNTER

FEATURE

of the 400 block of State Street. Set to join these developments soon are the Flagship City Public Market (on the ground floor of the former Dispatch Building on North Park Row), a \$45 million building on the corner opposite the Shops at Fifth & State (which will include a three-story climbing gym courtesy of Pittsburgh-based Ascend Climbing), and a total of 136 apartments. No doubt about it, a radical transformation surrounding Perry Square is well underway.

Just up the road, Griswold Park may soon be undergoing a metamorphosis of its own. A group of nearby businesses including Logistics Plus, Great Lake Insurance Services, Kellar's: A Modern Magic and Comedy Club, Rick Griffith Properties, The Brewerie at Union Station, and Lilly Broadcasting have compiled a plan for a Station Square District that would transfigure the underutilized park into one of downtown's recreational epicenters. The blueprints include six pickleball courts, a synthetic ice rink, musical swings, an illuminated fountain and statue of Erie magician Harry Kellar, and street-scapes improvements. The collective

partnership has formed a nonprofit called Erie's Station Square Ltd., which continues to hammer out negotiations with the City of Erie, as well as a timetable for completion.

But those revamps, while significant, are only part of the story. On the corner of 10th and Peach, you'll come across Marquette Savings Bank's new Innovation Learning Center. Go around the block and you can't miss Gannon University's I-HACK, or Institute for Health and Cyber Knowledge, a total reinvention of a former Verizon Call Center into a cutting-edge cyber learning facility and collaborative space. Those traveling further northwest to the Hagen History Center would be greeted with stunning new exhibits and interactive features worth a collective \$11 million. East of State Street, the Warner Theatre is staging an impressive reboot, UPMC Hamot's gleaming Patient Tower is delivering world-class clinical care, and Erie Insurance's \$147 million Thomas B. Hagen Building has been officially dedicated.

There's no denying that downtown is looking a bit different these days — the question remains whether these

changes will transcend the topical and finally catalyze the positive identity shift this city has so long yearned for.

Holding Our Water

As crucial as downtown is, Presque Isle Bay may be the better analog of our ultimate fate. Erie's future is tenuously cradled between the peninsula and the bayfront — every major decision surrounding our harbor holds serious economic and environmental implications. Not to be melodramatic, but what is the Gem City if we throw away our gem?

From a tourism standpoint, the future seems secure on the Presque Isle side of things. In its 100th year as a state park, PI continued to be adored by visitors and locals alike. Of course, its geological history dates back much further — as chronicled in David Frew and Jerry Skrypzak's *Accidental Paradise: 13,000-Year History of Presque Isle*, published this year by the Jefferson Educational Society and available from Presque Isle Gallery and Gifts. There's no question that PI is the region's crown jewel, and a multi-pronged effort is being made to heighten our awareness

of that. The most prominent of these endeavors are Millcreek Township's Presque Isle Gateway project (focusing on beautifying and enhancing the area around West Eighth Street and Peninsula Drive) and the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' purchase of an 18-acre parcel of land at West Sixth and Peninsula, south of the Tom Ridge Environmental Center (TREC) campus.

On the bayfront side of things, matters are more contentious. It's not that bayfront developments are unwelcome, it's whether they are *welcoming* to everyone deserving to share in these assets, regardless of socioeconomic status. Between hip new spots (e.g. Pier 6, Oliver's Beer Garden), forthcoming ventures (Scott Enterprises' ongoing Harbor Place project, Erie Events' Bayfront Market House on the former GAF property), and mainstays like the Bicentennial Tower (soon to feature an "outdoor living room" seating area under the deck) there promises to be plenty of opportunity to enjoy the waterfront. But will there be *equal* opportunity?

Perhaps the biggest bugaboo is Pen-



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nDOT's impending plans with the Bayfront Parkway — which prescribe an underpass at State Street, “highway-style exits,” and dual-lane roundabouts to facilitate the flow of vehicular traffic. Pedestrians and cyclists, meanwhile, would use overpasses located at the feet of Holland, State, and Sassafras streets to travel north and south between the downtown and the bayfront. Strong opposition has been voiced by social and environmental advocacy groups as the increased traffic threatens to further sever historically redlined neighborhoods (such as the East Bayfront neighborhood) from the waterfront, impede safe east-west travel for those without cars, contribute to air and noise pollution — generally favoring money over opportunity and accessibility.

Another conundrum of conscience exists in the International Recycling Group's plans for a \$100 million automated plastics sorting facility on the former site of International Paper. On the surface, it sounds like a revolutionary solution to our plastics problem — recycling rates of up to 90 percent and tens of millions of tons of plastic spared from our landfills. But with one major caveat — four of the seven resin types would be shredded into tiny flakes destined for a blast furnace in Ontario as a substitute for coke in steel production. There are several environmental concerns implicit in this setup, but containment has to be number one. Microplastics already have a disturbing presence in Lake Erie, and it's not hard to conclude that finely grating millions of tons of plastic (polysty-

Completed in 2020 but dedicated in 2021, the \$147 million Thomas B. Hagen Building on the east end of Perry Square represents another massive investment of Erie Insurance in Erie's downtown.

rene reggiano anyone?) might exacerbate that, accumulating in food chains and in our waterways.

Whether all of these ambitions become reality remains to be seen. But one thing is for sure — our bayfront deserves to be treated like bae, not a second THOT.

Comeback City?

Erie may be first in our hearts, but according to results of the 2020 census, it's now just fifth in Pennsylvania as measured by population after being eclipsed by Reading. It should stand as little surprise — population trends within the Commonwealth over the past few decades have largely favored the east, with Allentown also pushing past Erie. So we must ask ourselves, how do we bring people back? Moreover, how do we *keep* them here?

The easy answer is jobs — more specifically, *well-paying* jobs. The fight to raise a minimum wage that hasn't budged since 2007 has raged for years between the state's Republican-dominated legislature and Democratic Governor Tom Wolf, with the all-too-predictable partisan gridlock that has intensified in a progressively bitter and more polarized political climate. Many restaurateurs and retailers (by the way, the world's largest, Amazon, opened a shipping facility in Erie this year), desperate to bounce back from the ravages of COVID, have taken mat-

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ters into their own hands, offering walk-in interviews and signing bonuses to potential applicants along with increased hourly wages.

But it's not just so-called "unskilled labor" that employers are scrambling for — sectors like manufacturing and healthcare (nurses in particular) are also having difficulty filling positions. Much has been made of the decline of Erie industry, and if we were to solely focus on GE/WABTEC (who did land some major orders this year, including a couple for the innovative FLX-Drive battery-powered locomotive), we might fall into that tired narrative. The truth is that local manufacturers are also racking their brains about how to attract and retain new employees, as interest in the trades has plunged among the younger generations.

The best way to offset these deficits, of course, is with affordable and accessible education — such as one might find at their local community college. Problem is that up until June of 2020, Erie County was the state's largest population area without one. Just 15 months after being approved by the

Pennsylvania Board of Education, the newly established Erie County Community College of Pennsylvania (EC3PA) held its very first classes on Sept. 1, 2021, the culmination of a whirlwind year. With tuition waived for county residents, EC3PA is certainly affordable. And with four locations in Erie County (including three served by EMTA bus routes) and online course offerings, EC3PA is certainly accessible. Now it's a matter of the community embracing and seizing this opportunity, and the college tailoring transfer degree programs that meet the requirements of partnering universities, and applied degree and certificate programs that meet the needs of employers.

Among the four-year institutions EC3PA will hope to forge relationships with are Mercyhurst, Gannon, Penn State Behrend, and Edinboro — excuse me, Pennsylvania Western University at Edinboro following Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE) consolidation. But don't worry; the Fighting Scots have not been *kilt* off. Edinboro will continue to maintain its own campus and identity,

but will now share administrative and instructional resources with Clarion and California universities in an effort to reassert the school's affordability advantage that has diminished greatly over the past decade amidst rising costs.

In regard to career and entrepreneurial resources, the buzz continues to grow within the NWPB Innovation Beehive. At this year's Beehive celebration, Mercyhurst introduced its Innovation Entente Lab (for marketing strategy development and business intelligence data analysis), another strong addition to a network that already includes Edinboro's Center for Branding and Strategic Communication, Gannon's Center for Business Ingenuity, Penn State Behrend's Innovation Commons (which this year saw the opening of a biomedical translational research lab that will collaborate with Magee Women's Research Institute), and Erie County Public Library's Idea Lab.

Between all these initiatives, it would seem local high school graduates and community college transfers — and by extension, Erie's future — are set up well.

But that future also depends on shrewd, sensitive, and equitable leadership going forward, most critically from reelected Erie Mayor Joe Schember (who beat out Tom Spagel and Sydney Zimmerman in the primaries and faced no opposition in the general election) and Erie County Executive Brenton Davis (the controversial Republican candidate who defeated Democratic challenger Tyler Titus this past November). Will they commandeer the steering wheel with grace and tact, or veer off-course like the Erie man who crashed his Mazda into a tree after robbing Millcreek's The Saucery under the influence of a quart of gin?

That guy did all of that wearing a clown mask, and we must hope our leaders aren't making false promises behind a similar guise. Because no matter how you like your potatoes, there's clearly much at stake here. If we won't do it for ourselves, let's do it for Doug.

Matt Swanseger (mswanseger@eriereader.com) loves eating potatoes of all shapes and sizes, and has probably been thinking about them this entire time.

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Grounded Print Shop's New Leaf on Old Ground

How Ashley Pastore has made repurposing an art



[left] Ashley Pastore loves to imagine the potential of the large amount of historic space available to use at Grounded Print Shop, which she purchased in February of 2021. [bottom right] The main studio space at Grounded Print Shop at 1902 Cherry Street. This former industrial space houses large scale print and paper making equipment as well as a live music performance space.

ERIN PHILLIPS

By: Erin Phillips

The first time I met Ashley Pastore, creator and owner of Grounded Print Shop — a printmaking, papermaking, and artist residency space — was in March of 2020. Yes, that March of 2020. My daughter had taken it upon herself to spearhead a paper recycling program in her 2nd grade classroom. She brought in her own recycling bin, and for a while we were just putting the classes' paper in with our own weekly recycling. But then I learned about Grounded Print Shop, and Ashley Pastore, and how she turns discarded paper products into recycled, handmade art and paper in her shop. I thought about how beneficial it would be for my daughter to actually see recycling in action. It so happens that the day we delivered that first load of paper for recycling was my daughter's last day of normal school for a long time. There was an incredible, theatrically strong wind blowing in swirls and gusts as we met Pastore outside of her original shop to pass off that bag of paper.

The wind amplified the shared surreal, apocalyptic feeling of anxiety and disbelief and confusion that everyone was feeling at that time.

That time marked a change for literally everyone in the world, but it was also the start of a shift in the future of Grounded Print Shop. When Grounded began in 2018, it was located in a rented warehouse space at 15th and Cherry, and Pastore was working in collaboration with another artist to get their vision off the ground: to create a place where artists could collaborate, discuss, and create their art. But challenge after challenge threatened Pastore's vision for Grounded: her partner left the project, the pandemic squashed the momentum she gained on group classes and workshops, and amidst all this, the lease on her rented workspace was canceled by the property owner. If Pastore wanted to continue to do her own work, have a place for all of her large scale print and paper making equipment, as well as continue to work toward her vision of creating an artist residency space, she needed a creative solution and

a permanent location.

When Pastore began looking at sites to start over, she considered potential properties the same way she views her art: "I don't like starting with things that are brand new. A brand new sheet of paper is really hard for me to deal with. When I make my art, I use found or secondhand materials because it already has some kind of history in it. I don't always know what that history is but I feel it; like a backstory that gives the piece depth." UI-

timately, that feeling of depth and history made its way into the decision to purchase the current space at 1902 Cherry St. and begin to transform the mishmash of buildings, all with their own history, into the new Grounded Print Shop.

The buildings comprising Pastore's new property tell the story of their own history as well as the evolution of the neighborhood. The original building on the site is a barn that was built before 1870, which is rare to survive in such an urban area. Originally, the land at the southwest corner of 19th and Cherry contained a house with this barn behind it. One of the earliest owners of this property was a man named Philip W. Hoffman. Philip was born in 1813 in Bavaria, Germany and came to Pennsylvania in 1845. His family lived in this frame house with a barn at 609 W.

19th St. from about 1863, and owned that property up until Philip's death in 1887. Hoffman's business was in moving houses. Not moving the contents of houses, but moving literal houses, which was a more common practice in the past than it is today. Given the cost of labor and the expense of new materials, reusing and moving a house was often a more affordable option. Hoffman was in the house-moving business well before the widespread availability of the internal combustion engine, so likely the barn on the property was used to hold massive equipment, a herd of horses or oxen, and the equipment for their care. And this barn still stands as the far western portion of Grounded Print Shop.

"The core is about reuse. I'm all about reuse." Pastore's art as well as her choice of buildings reflects this value. And Grounded Print Shop isn't the first reuse of the property at 1902 Cherry St. It began as a barn, but then, with the construction of the Nickel Plate Railroad along 19th Street in 1882, the property became more desirable as a connection to that transportation line. The Nickel Plate Road was an important rail devel-



ERIN PHILLIPS



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

[top left] During the Erie County Library's Erie Makes Day, Pastore hosted the community and gave paper and print making demonstrations in her studio space at Grounded Print Shop. [bottom right] Letter presses, printing presses, paper making equipment, and etching machines dot the large square footage of Grounded Print Shop's open studio space.

opment that connected the Great Lakes from Cleveland to Buffalo and Chicago, and Erie was an important connection point. The rail line carried freight, but it was mostly used in a passenger capacity and was an extremely popular transportation method for taking day trips from Erie to Cleveland and Buffalo. The rail was in constant use up until the construction of I-90 in the 1950s, which made short passenger rail travel nearly obsolete.

The Hoffman house and barn was sold in 1887, the house was demolished shortly thereafter, and by the 1920s, the barn on the property was being reused. Its first major addition happened at the hands of lumber baron F.W. Burnham, who used the railroad along 19th Street to his advantage, having mills and yards established at Raspberry and Cherry Streets. It was also around this time that Charles "Chas" Fry established his construction and concrete business along the Cherry Street side of the property and built the existing office building there (which is also a part of Grounded, and is used as private studio space).

When walking through Grounded Print Shop now, you can see the visible "seams" in the brick that indicate renovations, changes and addi-

tions that have happened over the years. The barn portion is very obviously the oldest part, with an original stone foundation slap-dashedly repaired with pieces of brick over the years, the towering barnwood walls, creaking stairs, hay loft, and exposed rafter beams. An early expansion on the barn's second floor provides a massive amount of raw space that Pastore hopes, with the help of her cousin, woodworker Ryan Zimmerman, to transform into a woodworking shop. Below the barn's second floor, the building is more recognizably an industrial warehouse space. Pastore has worked hard to convert this open warehouse portion of the building into a working art studio, while allowing the original space of the building to remain recognizable as a part of Erie's industrial history. "I love imagining what happened in a place before I was there. And I love the idea of reinventing what this was."

In this spirit, Pastore is excited that Erie Arts and Culture has chosen to partner with her to provide dedicated studio space for their Visiting Artist in Residence Program, which is a rotating program that brings artists from all across the country to stay and work in Erie for a period of time. Director of Erie Arts and Culture

Patrick Fisher commented on the importance of spaces like Grounded: "Erie Arts & Culture looked to Grounded as a partner in our visiting artist residency program when the program launched in 2020. Having Grounded as a partner helps promote cross-pollination between our visiting artists and members of our community. Visiting artists are able to arrive in Erie and be welcomed into a studio space that is equipped to provide them with time and space to explore new ideas, try new processes, and take some calculated

risks. It also allows for studio visits and collaborations with Erie-based artists, art educators, or creative and cultural professionals. By having partners like Grounded, we've seen relationships established that don't end simply because an artist exits our community."

So what does the present and future hold for the new Grounded Print Shop? Not only is major work ongoing to make some primitive areas of the shop more usable, but a lot of work has already been completed in the main studio area of the building. Pastore has equipment available for artists to use in the studio space including everything necessary for paper-making, including a five pound Hollander Beater (a machine used to produce paper pulp), three different letterpress machines, two etching machines that can accomplish etching, monoprint, woodblock, and li-

noleum block printing as well as a Risograph machine. She is also using the building as a music venue. She has installed 26 raised garden beds on the grounds for a community garden. She has hosted open houses to provide demonstrations of the equipment, and will soon be resuming classes for children and adults alike, to teach the basics of paper-making, bookbinding, and printmaking.

After a very stressful time, scrambling to keep her vision for Grounded Print Shop alive, Pastore has landed on solid ground and feels positive and excited about the opportunities she can provide to Erie. In her mission statement, Pastore writes: "Our side lot can be likened to the city we reside in; turning a new leaf, creating something new, while acknowledging its roots. We like to think this is fertile ground begging to be planted." As Erie turns it's new leaf, Pastore is excited to provide a place that will nudge this change forward.

Erin Phillips runs the Instagram @olderieonfoot, an in-depth look at local architecture "by foot, stroller, papoose, bike, and occasionally minivan."



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Pier Kids explores the lives of homeless queer and trans youth of color. In support of the film, WQLN PBS is hosting an intimate screening followed by a panel discussion with local leaders of the LGBTQ+ community around themes of the film.

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Clinic, and as a summer associate with Knox Law.

Charlie graduated from the University of Michigan and cum
laude from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law with a
Tax Law concentration. Before attending law school, he spent
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Steeped in Intuition

New local business Sacred Ayla Tea Co. creates custom blends



PATRICK FISHER

After cultivating an interest in teas while working with an herbalist in Conneaut, Ohio, Erie musician Jess Royer began tinkering with custom tea blends as a hobby — now, eight years later, it's become a blossoming business in the form of Sacred Ayla Tea Co.

thing that is intentional and true." She says this connection is what allows her to help her customers create the right blend for them. "When someone comes to me with whatever they may be going through, I listen, feel, and basically go through the herbal Rolodex in my head in order to make them something that would be supportive for their healing process. It's a very emotionally connecting thing, and many of my customers have become some of my dearest friends; it's honestly one of the best things that has happened to me. I get really emotional about it a lot," Royer said.

Her experiments with loose and steeped tea blends created with intuition, a bit of magic, and lots of love have led Royer to shift her focus even more toward the tea business. "It started out as a hobby and source of joy, and now it has blossomed into my career path and remains a source of joy. I am currently in a business incubator program (Thrive in Erie) alongside many other inspiring entrepreneurs and I am being guided by a mentor, Kristen Santiago — a true angel and amazing business mentor, to build my business the right way," Royer said.

Royer says her website is launching soon at sacredayla.com. If you're interested in learning more you can also find her on Facebook as Sacred Ayla Tea Co., Instagram as @sacredayla or via email at sacredayla@gmail.com. All inquiries are welcome.

Amy VanScoter is a certified yoga and meditation teacher at PACA and SchoolHouse Yoga in Erie with a passion for wellness, and a marketing and communications professional. She can be reached at avanscoter@gmail.com

By: Amy VanScoter

Erie winters are made for curling up with a soft blanket, a good book, and a hot mug of tea. For those tea lovers looking to infuse a bit of herbal magic and intention into their cup, local business owner Jess Royer has created Sacred Ayla Tea Co. Sacred Ayla is an intuitive tea business, meaning that all the teas are custom made based on each customer's needs, with the use of intention and guidance of intuition.

The history and lore of tea is vast but dates back to ancient China, almost 5,000 years ago. According to legend, in 2732 B.C. Emperor Shen Nung discovered tea when wild tea leaves blew into his pot of boiling water. He was intrigued by the pleasant scent and drank some of the brew. Royer says her interest in teas started eight years ago while working with an herbalist in Conneaut, Ohio. "I have been independently studying since I started casually concocting tea blends after learning about their medicinal value. I would give these blends to my dad or to my best friends, just to see if they were any good, knowing that my best friends would tell me if they were actually garbage. After years of just making blends based on herbal knowledge and

for the opportunity to continue learning, I realized that I was really into it ... more than I even anticipated," Royer said, adding that "I actually feel like I'm doing the right things."

Royer has a creative process she goes through while making her tea blends that allows her intuition to speak, combining her knowledge and experience with the medicinal qualities of the herbs with her inner sense of knowing. She says she has always used this process on herself for her own intentions. "Whenever I am feeling unwell, I tune into my body. I take a moment to step back and let my intuition speak. I have always been a person that is very in tune (spiritually and emotionally) with myself, and this part of my process wasn't even something that I thought about practicing; it was just something that I did. When I take a moment to be present with myself, I hear exactly what I need, and that is exactly what I'll use."

Her connection to and love of nature inspires Royer as well. "Spending years out in the woods with plants, I really got in the habit of, again, being present with myself, and with nature. That really is the root of what I do — taking a moment to connect with my inner knowing, in order to create some-

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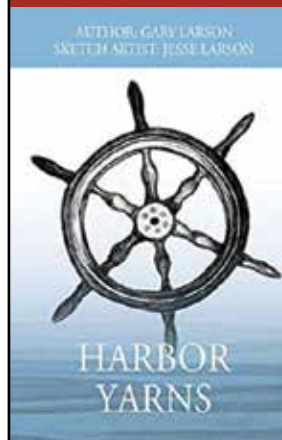
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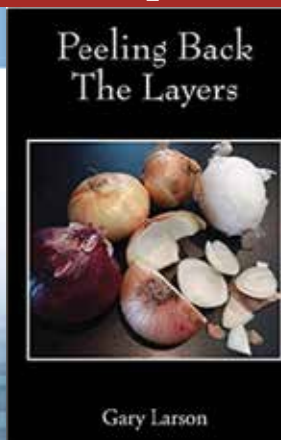
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EVENTS

Playhouse Dreaming of a White Christmas

The holiday classic is coming to Erie's LECOM Stage



RICK KLEIN

BEGINNING FRIDAY, DEC. 3

The Erie Playhouse is getting ready for the holiday season with a production of none other than Irving Berlin's *White Christmas*.

The stage play is based on the hit 1954 film from Paramount Pictures, which

was itself formed around the astounding success of the title track. Originally performed in 1941, the song later appeared on the soundtrack to the film *Holiday Inn* August of the next year. That fall, it spent 11 weeks at number one on the Billboard Chart. It was said to resonate deeply

A stage adaptation of the song and feature film of the same name, Irving Berlin's *White Christmas* tells the tale of two WWII vets turned reluctant song-and-dance duo. The show stars (from left) Aaron Holman as Phil Davis, Rose Pregler as Judy, Claire DeArmitt as Betty, and Richard Kress as Bob Wallace.

with U.S. servicemen overseas fighting World War II.

It's no coincidence, then, that the show centers around two WWII veterans. Bob Wallace (Richard Kress) saves the life of Phil Davis (Aaron Holman), and reluctantly agrees to form a song-and-dance duo with Davis. A few years later, they meet singing duo of sisters, Betty (Claire DeArmitt) and Judy Hayes (Rose Pregler Hitt), and convince them to go with them to their upcoming gig in an unseasonably warm Vermont. To their surprise, the inn is run by their old boss General Waverly (JR Fabin). Hearts are broken and reconciled eventually the snow falls providing a truly white Christmas.

The staged musical version of the film

hit the U.S. in 2004, 50 years after the film's release in 1954. It of course includes other well-known hit songs like "Happy Holiday," "Blue Skies," and "I've Got My Love to Keep Me Warm."

The production features a 25-member cast, with direction and choreography by Richard Davis and assistant director John Burton. Heidi Sheehan provided additional tap choreography, while Joe Hasler designed and painted the beautiful sets. The show's costumes were done by Ryan Ingram and Crystal Corritore, with vocal direction by Rhonda Berlin, and musical direction by Andrew Rainbow. — Nick Warren

Fridays and Saturdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 2 p.m., Dec. 3 through Dec. 12 // Erie Playhouse, 13 W 10th St. // Adults: \$17 - 24, Children and Students: \$15 // The Playhouse requires proof of COVID vaccination (or negative COVID test) as well as face masks for all patrons // For tickets and more information call (814) 454-2852 or go to erieplayhouse.org

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Krampusnacht Erie's Holiday Bizarre



DEFPICS

SATURDAY, DEC. 4

As we move into the holiday season, you'll be hearing a lot about good ole' St. Nick. But, there is another tradition rooted in German-speaking countries that began centuries ago. The legend of Krampus — a goat-like demon out of Alpine folklore said to punish badly behaved children by lashing them with birch rods — has gained so much attention in recent decades that around the world, many countries celebrate the night known as Krampusnacht (Dec. 5) and here in Erie, we'll have the first Krampusnacht Holiday Bizarre.

All things Krampus will be celebrated in Erie at Krampusnacht Erie's Holiday Bizarre at Basement Transmissions. Vendors from all around will showcase their creepy creations, oddities, and campy Krampus collectibles. Erie's own Kerrie Fargiorgio is organizing the event. Kerrie and her husband Eric spend much of the year vending at various events similar to this one in other cities. "We have some local vendors and some we've met in our travels. All were selected based on a very specific theme of our show. *Mothboys* podcast will be there and they will cover our event on an upcoming show. We are charging a buck just to offset some of the costs going into holding an event of this size," said Fargiorgio.

Fargiorgio says that Krampus has been a part of her family's holidays since she was a kid, living in Canada. "Having old-

er brothers you learn about that stuff pretty early," she said. "Krampus is a big part of the holidays for us and we hoped Erie would feel the same about him. We have our very own Krampus to take a holiday photo with. Leadhead Screen Printing will be live printing the official event shirt. We will be having a best-dressed Krampus contest; yes, dressing up is encouraged. Our DJ will be playing our collection of weird, obscure Christmas music. Word on the street is there's going to be a Krampus pub crawl, and a lot more exciting details that will be announced in the coming days," Fargiorgio said.

Besides the vendors, there is much more to see and do. Local Pin Up Penny Shaut is hosting a Krampus themed Miss Krampusnacht pin up contest at the event. Registration is at noon and is open to the first 25 people who sign up in person. Entrance fee is a new toy donation for Toys for Tots. The contest will be held at 1 p.m. More details can be found on the Facebook event page. — Amy VanScoter

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // \$1 admission // facebook.com

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EVENTS

Have a Wild Christmas Binge at PACA

Jeff Rodland directs Christopher Durang's *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge*



DAVE SCHROEDER

Christopher Durang's *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge* is a twisted take on the Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol* — and a favorite of director Jeff Rodland, who will also portray Bob Cratchit during the show's two-weekend run at PACA. The show stars (from left) Char Newport, Krista Perry, Will Rodland, Jeff Rodland, and Jason Fried.

example, the "humbug" of Scrooge (Jason Fried) is Tourette's syndrome, the Christmas ghosts are all played by one bold black woman (Krista Perry), and the lead character becomes Mrs. Bob Cratchit, Gladys (Char Newport). The ghost "has this Wayback Machine that goes funky," Rodland (who also plays Bob Cratchit) explains. "It keeps going to Cratchit's house or it'll go to *The Gift of the Magi*, and to *Oliver* at one point." He underscored that "it's a very meta play."

"I read this show when it was in manuscript form, because Durang is my favorite author, and Christmas is my favorite thing," explains Rodland. He noted that he had staged a produc-

tion of the show many years ago at the Roadhouse Theatre, with a run slated at PACA five years ago that never came to fruition. This time around, the assembled cast ended up being tightly knit, a group who were essentially friends to begin with. "I always liked doing Christmas shows. I wanted to be 'Mr. Christmas,' because I could force my friends to be together for six weeks," Rodland jokes.

Regarding the show's musical nature, Rodland indicates that "it's a straight play. It has an opening and closing number and a couple of incidental songs," sung in manner befitting the characters themselves, 1800s Dickensian Londoners.

For a totally inverted retelling of a tale we know all-too-well, PACA has the goods that should bless us, everyone. — Nick Warren

Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m., Dec. 10 - 18 // PACA, 1505 State St., Second Floor // Mask required // \$15 // For tickets and more information, go to paca1505.org

BEGINNING FRIDAY, DEC. 10

You wouldn't expect PACA to do your standard Christmas performance, now would you? The Performing Arts Collective Alliance will present Christo-

pher Durang's *Mrs. Bob Cratchit's Wild Christmas Binge*, directed by Jeff Rodland.

The show is a twisted take on Charles Dickens classic *A Christmas Carol*. For

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Top Albums from Erie Artists in 2021

A selection of three of the best local albums we've heard this year



By: Nick Warren

It wasn't a bad year at all for Erie recordings. Along with the top picks listed below, there was the collaborative opus of *Taken Me a While* from Elle Taylor. There was Mala Sangre's blistering LP *Catholic Cemetery*. Tone Fach (Tony Facchiano) brought 18 explosive tracks of hip-hop glory to the table. Gabe Poland gave us the stripped-down dark folk of *No Turning Back*. We got a live album from Matty B & the Pickles, showcasing their energetic, retro revue. Six Year Stretch put out their third full-length album *Crazy Ride*, filled with beautiful, radio-ready earworms. Jeremy Yamma put out two full albums under the moniker High Seer, with mesmerizing loops you need to hear. Our very own Tommy Link released *Grow*, a gorgeous songwriter's love-letter of a record that won't get out of your head. I hear there's even an unreleased album by Optimistic Apocalypse floating around out in the ether, not to mention the fact that there were plenty of great EPs too, like Maniacal Device's *Hail to the King*, Mallory Run's *Picture Perfect*, Fog Giant's eponymous EP, and *Eat Glass*, the hard-hitting debut from blouses. Whether by ignorance, or by real estate, I'm leaving plenty out of course, as Erie makes a whole lot of music. And that's a really good thing.

Blunt Guts // *Cranberry Blood*

This is just a damn fine album. Robert Jensen, the man behind Erie's Basement Transmissions, has not only fostered generations of local artists, but is able to put his money where his mouth is too, as clearly evidenced on *Cranberry Blood*. The album exists in this simultaneously chaotic and chill atmosphere, moving like jump cuts pieced together by electronic instru-

mentation. Synth work, modulated vocals, and some great guests dot the landscape of the record. This cutting-edge experimental endeavor is exactly what we need, creating something truly new and infinitely playable.

LUCID // *KITCHEN GROOVES*

I'm so excited that LUCID (sometimes styled as LUC!D) exists. The band is relatively new, formed in 2019, and don't seem to be afraid of anything. The quartet have blended genres to build their own unique sound. Looking at them and knowing their politics, you might want to call them punk, but that would be sonically reductive. An often psychedelic swirl of sensuous rallying cries, *KITCHEN GROOVES*' 36 minutes fly by. On first listen, the band's sound is so varied you might find yourself checking to make sure shuffle isn't on. The innovative energy of this band is something we could all use more of.

Smilo & The Ghost // *Fingers Crossed and Godspeed*

It's no coincidence that Tyler Smilo often finds himself on these year-end lists. He's an outstandingly consistent presence in the Erie music scene, and he's prolific, releasing full albums at a regular pace that's tiring to think about. This album finds him and his backing band, The Ghost at the top of their game. The lyrics are beautiful, arranging Smilo's often fragmented, frenetic thoughts into a poetic throughline that's easy to sympathize with. While on the surface he's using the language of post-Dylan troubadours, Smilo, like everyone on this list, is pushing for something more.

Know something you wish was on the list? Email Nick Warren at nick@eriereader.com to make next year even better.

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Top Ten Albums of 2021

Our favorite records to round out the year

By Aaron Mook and Nick Warren

1. Turnstile // *GLOW ON*



Turnstile fans really should have seen this coming. If the slight shift towards even more melodic punk sounds found on 2016's *Time & Space* signaled a step forward for the band, *GLOW ON* is a sprint towards creative freedom, preceded by the genre-bending singles of the *Turnstile Love Connection EP*, all of which are featured components of the band's third LP.

GLOW ON takes all of the vibes of "positive hardcore" and avoids the associated lyrical clichés. Moreso, in addition to 311-aping funk-rock ("Fly Again"), Turnstile revels in transforming simple riffs with new genre flairs, including arena rock ("Holiday"), dream pop ("Underwater Boi"), and borderline gorgeous samba experiments ("Don't Play"). *GLOW ON* sneers in the face of elitism and joyously makes itself accessible to anyone who's ever had an interest in heavy music. — AM

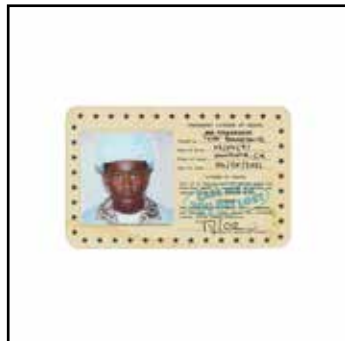
2. Japanese Breakfast // *Jubilee*



This is Michell Zauner's year. She is certainly the first person

to be on both our top albums list and to author one of our top books of the year — her bestselling memoir *Crying in H Mart*. She's an undeniable talent, and her third studio record *Jubilee* finds her at the top of her game. A gorgeously lush album that evolves from the booming "sad girl" fad into indie pop prescience — easily the height of indie pop (and dream pop for that matter) this year. Don't think that the album is devoid of emotion for one second though. Zauner's songwriting is firing on all cylinders, and her musical choices are varied enough to keep you guessing from track to track. — NW

3. Tyler, the Creator // *CALL ME IF YOU GET LOST*



Where was Tyler, the Creator supposed to go? After releasing an intensely personal hip-hop opus (2017's *Flower Boy*), the artist decided to take a leap and do what he always wanted to: sing. This particularly large and rewarding swing showcased the no limits attitude of the musician and producer savant, one which would inevitably seep into his latest amalgamation of genres.

Tyler's sixth studio album isn't afraid to look back as often as it looks forward. Taking the manic energy of his 2015 album, *Cherry Bomb*, and infusing it with a love for the mixtapes that formed him (*Gangsta Grillz*, anyone?), the album plays like a retrospective on Tyler's career and a greatest hits collection of entirely new songs. — AM

4. Cade Eliason // *Forget Me Not*



If you haven't listened to this album, you clearly haven't been hanging out with me that much this year. A magnum opus in the form of slacker-soul indie rock bedroom albums, *Forget Me Not* is as close to perfect as you can get. The (appropriately-titled) track names form a sentence from the final track, and the last notes of the record end with the drum beats of the opening. It's a geniusly formed concept album, coming from a prolific 19-year-old from Minneapolis with less than 2,000 monthly Spotify users. Take a cue from some of the people closest to me. Listen to this album and explore Eliason's full catalog. He's a talent like I've never seen. Get in on the ground floor while you still have the chance. Now! — NW

5. Bo Burnham // *Inside (the Songs)*



Technically this is the first soundtrack to make it onto our top ten list. For anyone who has seen it though, *Inside* is not like any other comedy special that has come before it. A diary-like rumination began at the height of COVID-19 quarantine, musician and comedian Bo Burnham made something that's hi-

larious, emotionally evocative, and absolutely fucking catchy. The "throwaway" songs are given just the right amount of time they need to breathe to get the joke out, while Burnham's deeper dives provide the entree to the album's meal. Aside from Charli XCX's *How I'm Feeling Now*, this is likely the second best album created as a direct response to the pandemic, even if Burnham's existential woke-ness grinds on you. — NW

6. SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE // *Entertainment, Death*



In our eyes, the albums that often deserve to be named on lists like these get here by daring to try something new. Philadelphia's SPIRIT OF THE BEEHIVE has always been skilled at blending woozy indie rock with elements of shoegaze and psychedelic spaz-outs, but *Entertainment, Death* is night and day compared to what came before it. Filled with atmospheric field recordings, unsettling strings, and a newfound appreciation for electronics and sampling (think The Postal Service sharing a bad trip with Animal Collective), we can confidently tell you that there isn't another album on this list — or any other, for that matter — that sounds quite like *Entertainment, Death*. — AM

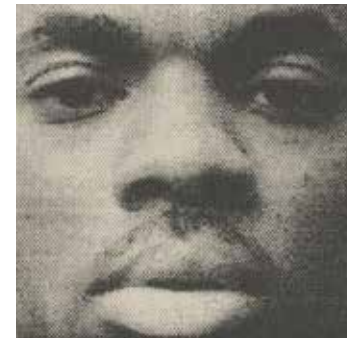
7. Lucy Dacus // *Home Video*

A thoroughly personal coming-of-age story, *Home Video* succeeds in rising to the heights Dacus achieved in her 2018 debut, *Historian*. As one third of the supergroup Boygenius, Dacus also has no problem living up to her peers Julien Baker and Phoe-



be Bridgers. Specifically, the album looks autobiographically at the songwriter's youth growing up in a heavily Christian environment. The songs stick with you, both in lyrical content and musicality. Using a more direct approach, the content lands like a sharpshooter's arrow right to the heart. With her third studio album, Dacus has cemented herself as indie rock royalty. — NW

8. Vince Staples // *Vince Staples*



Vince Staples deserves all the love he can get. The charismatic, free-spirited, and often hilarious online personality (not to mention exceptionally talented rapper) is a man of the people, and his self-titled album proves as much. In a year where two of the biggest albums not only in this genre, but in any genre, were bloated beyond recognition, Staples delivered his best project yet, an understated and masterfully produced 10-track tape that packs more of a personal punch than any of its competitors in just 22 minutes. And for our money, it has the most replay value of anything released this year. — AM

9. St. Vincent // *Daddy's Home*

Is this Annie Clark's best album? By no means. But she's

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still freaking *St. Vincent*. A retro throwback to the glory of the 1970s (Clark was born in 1982), with merchandise that included a copy of the album on a workable eight-track tape, *Daddy's Home* is a fair departure from the ever-less experimental indie genius of her earlier work, reinventing herself in an almost Bowie-esque fashion. The album truly grows on you though. I found myself revisiting it far more than I expected to, a record filled with catchy melodies harkening back to a glitzy era. — NW

10. Porches // All Day Gentle Hold!



Porches' current value and influence in indie rock is understated to say the least. While their peers (Alex G, Japanese Breakfast) finally receive the critical acclaim they deserve, Porches continues to churn out consistent, and increasingly strange, synth-pop records. Short, sweet, and filled with just as many left turns as melodic gems, *All Day Gentle Hold!* feels like a companion record to last year's *Ricky Music*. While other bands continue to replicate the sad boy beats of their breakthrough record, *Pool*, Porches chooses to continue forging their own path with a unique mix of electric guitars, samplers, and keyboards. — AM

Five Top Films of 2021

The best bits of cinema from all over the world



Our favorite films of the year included (clockwise from top left) Magnus Van Horn's *Sweat*, Michael Sarnoski's *Pig*, David Lowery's *The Green Knight*, Tsai Ming-liang's *Days*, and Mia Hansen-Løve's *Bergman Island*.

niness. It is all held together by Michael Sarnoski's slick direction and an award-worthy performance from Nicolas Cage. The film is all the proof one needs that American independent cinema is still original, exciting and has the power to show you something you didn't know you wanted until it arrived.

Written for the Screen and Directed by: Michael Sarnoski, Story by Michael Sarnoski and Vanessa Block // Starring: Nicolas Cage, Alex Wolff, Adam Arkin // 92 minutes // Neon // Photo by David Reamer

By: Forest Taylor

1) Days

After his 2013 masterpiece *Stray Dogs*, it was believed that Slow Cinema genius Tsai Ming-liang may never make another film again. Then he surprised the world with this near dialogue-free mood piece that may be his best film yet. Once again he expertly shows the isolation that modern life can often bring and the intense feeling of loneliness one can only get when surrounded by people. We watch the mundane daily routines of two men before their lives come running into each other in one beautiful, emotionally-charged moment. All leading up to one of the most spectacular final shots in recent film. The welcome return of a master at the top of his craft.

Directed by: Tsai Ming-liang // Starring: Lee Kang-sheng // 127 minutes // Grasshopper Film

2) Bergman Island

Mia Hansen-Løve's filmography has always been deeply personal, but this one may hit the hardest. Her story of

husband and wife directors looking for inspiration at the island home of Ingmar Bergman is just as autobiographical as anything by the Swedish legend himself. As her protagonist tries to balance being a filmmaker and a mother, we can feel the same desires and fears of the real woman behind the scenes. This all builds to a brilliant third act that blurs the lines between fiction and reality, art and life. While Bergman's presence looms over the film world, there's still a place for Hansen-Løve and, at least for a moment, I prefer Hansen-Løve.

Written and Directed by: Mia Hansen-Løve // Starring: Vicky Krieps, Tim Roth, Mia Wasikowska, Anders Danielsen Lie // 105 minutes // Les films du losange

3) The Green Knight

David Lowery has said that nothing he makes will ever top *A Ghost Story*. That may be true, but this surreal, ethereal take on an Arthurian legend comes close. Here, Lowery takes the themes of Sir Gawain and the Green

Knight and recontextualizes them into a tale about the myths of Medieval Europe versus the reality of how it came to be. It is an answer to the age-old question "by what right do kings rule?" and Lowery answers it with an amazing, wordless final sequence bridging the gap between myth and history that stands as one of the best scenes of the year.

Written for the Screen and Directed by: David Lowery, Based on Sir Gawain and the Green Knight by Anonymous // Starring: Dev Patel, Alicia Vikander, Joel Edgerton, Sarita Choudhury, Sean Harris, Ralph Ineson // 130 minutes // A24 // Photo by Eric Zachanowich

4) Pig

Don't let the trailers fool you. For some reason, this story of a truffle-hunter on a quest to retrieve his stolen pig was marketed as some kind of gritty, *John Wick*-style action thriller. It is in actuality an emotionally devastating drama about loss, the pain of letting go, as well as the drive for artistic authenticity in a world that celebrates pho-

5) Sweat

Easily one of the most interesting films about life in the 21st century. Magnus von Horn's tale of a fitness motivator and social media influencer simply but effectively shows the isolating effects of social media as well as the pain one can feel with having to be perpetually online. He never takes the easy route by judging his character for her profession (admittedly, a source of easy ridicule). Instead, he just presents a world where one's online and offline personalities can easily blur. He isn't interested in condemnation, but merely presenting a modern problem that hasn't quite been rectified yet.

Written and Directed by: Magnus von Horn // Starring: Magdalena Kolesnik, Julian Swiezewski, Aleksandra Konieczna, Zbigniew Zamachowski // 105 minutes // Gutek Film/TriArt // Photo by Artificial Eye

Honorable Mentions

Annette
Titane
Shiva Baby
The Last Duel
Censor

Top TV Picks of 2021

Some of the best scripted episodics to stream on the small screen



By: Nick Warren

Thank goodness for TV, right? As the winter months set in, it's good to pack a list filled with bingeable content to pass those snow-addled days. This year wasn't too bad for TV either, the word "television" is having less and less to do with the medium than it ever has, with more and more people watching on other devices, and traditional broadcast television slowly going the way of the dinosaur. Streaming is where it's at, and it's frankly getting a little annoying. It only took a decade, but now managing multiple monthly subscriptions is just as expensive as cable was, and maybe even more frustrating.

There's the streaming giant Netflix, with its ever-devolving slate of shows, with original series highlights like *You* and *Midnight Mass*, and returning animation hits like *F Is for Family* and *Big Mouth*. Though they do have the numbers in terms of quantity, the quality of their original content continues to become much more populist and broad a la network television.

Right now, as far as original content, Hulu and HBO Max are the places to be. Hulu has ongoing originals like *Shrill*, *The Handmaid's Tale*, and *Letterkenny*, and new offerings like *Dopesick* and *Reservation Dogs*. Not only did we finally get more *Succession*, this year, HBO Max debuted shows like *The White Lotus*, *Mare of Easttown* and — in my opinion, the fourth-best show of the year — *Hacks*, with the channel's first-run movie streaming making the service

worth it unto itself.

It wasn't a banner year for Amazon Prime's original content, though it's a great way to stream Showtime, with new episodes of *Dexter: New Blood*, *Bilions*, and criminally underrated shows like *Black Monday* and *Work in Progress*.

Disney Plus has proved its value with MCU hits like *Loki*, *WandaVision*, and *What If?* Peacock has winners like *Yellowstone* and *Rutherford Falls*, while Apple + has the nearly undiscovered brilliance of *Mythic Quest* and *Physical*. Long story short, there's a lot of great TV out there, and here — along with the above mentioned — are some of my personal favorites.

Most Deserving of Praise : *Ted Lasso* // Season Two // Apple +

Believe this: *Ted Lasso* won seven Emmys this year. Is it that good? Yes. This ensemble comedy is overflowing with heart, and the shifts it made from Season One to Season Two are worth notice. Becoming less about Jason Sudeikis' title character, the supporting cast really got a chance to shine in Season Two, with literally four out of eight of the Supporting Actor nominations going to team *Lasso*. This got a well-deserved win for Brett Goldstein (who needs to play Wolverine), as well as wins for actress Hannah Waddingham (apologies, but the wrong Hannah won; despite category confusion, that award belonged to *Hacks*' Hannah Einbinder) and Sudeikis himself. The sophomore

Although the growing number of streaming services continues to overwhelm us, quality programming was in no short supply in 2021, with shows like (top left) FX's *What We Do in the Shadows*, (center) Peacock's *Lady Parts*, (top right) Amazon's *Invincible*, (bottom left) Netflix's *I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson*, and (bottom right) *Ted Lasso* from Apple +.

outing also dials back the outlandishness of the main character, fleshing him out richly, elevating everyone at the AFC Richmond football club. We're Richmond 'til we die.

Best Show You Haven't Watched: *We Are Lady Parts* // Season One // Peacock

This six-episode show is reason enough to try out a Peacock subscription. A comedy about a all-female Muslim punk band living in England, it's fantastically easy-to-love. The earnestness of the cast, particularly the show's star, Anjana Vasan is electric and inspiring. At times it's downright cartoony, with sound effects and slapstick, while at others it's emotionally sincere, while never straying from its main path, perfect for young adult audiences in particular. All that, and the band actually plays every one of their instruments! If you watch this, you'll want to recommend it too. Simply put, for the good of all mankind, there needs to be more TV shows like this.

Best Movie Adaptation: *What We Do in the Shadows* // Season Three // FX

I think the debate should be settled once and for all. The series *What We Do in the Shadows* is finally better than the original movie. That being said, the movie is *freaking* great. Now in its third season, the vampire mockumentary has found the perfect balance between its hilariously macabre characters, having them team up in new ways. The six principal cast members have fully hit their stride — with Matt Berry remaining to be the greatest vocal treasure the world has ever seen, and the genius of Colin Robinson, an energy vampire played by the wonderful Mark Proksch. It's also a gorgeous looking show, with some of the best set decoration and costumes around. The character quirks are absurd and addicting, and likely the funniest you'll see on all of cable — it's the only one on this list watchable without an internet connection.

Most Rewatchable: *I Think You Should Leave with Tim Robinson* // Season Two // Netflix

There hasn't been something as quotable as the second season of *I Think You Should Leave* in quite some time. I literally cannot tell you how many times my friends and I referenced lines from this season. From Dan Flashes, to Calico Cut Pants, to Coffin Flops, to tables, there are so many iconic, and meme-ready moments in this six-episode run it's prolific. While Season One was wholly worthwhile, Season Two has truly transcended, banking on Robinson's deceptively immature, avant-garde style in the tradition of *Tim & Eric*. Who knows what's ahead for the show's third season? Because we know doubles are good, but *triples is best*.

Best Animated Series: *Invincible* // Season One // Amazon Plus

Though I mentioned earlier that Prime's 2021 slate was a weak one, *Invincible* is the high-flying exception. It's an adaptation of the long-running Image Comics series created by writer Robert Kirkman, who you may know as the man behind *The Walking Dead*. The show begins with a teenager discovering he has superpowers, creating the superhero identity of *Invincible* (and whose suit is basically the comic company's logo). It features the voice talents of Steven Yeun and J.K. Simmons, as well as Gillian Jacobs and Jason Mantzoukas. With an animation style that echoes the source material from Cory Walker, it's a refreshing look.

Honorable Mentions:

Best Comfort Watch: *Only Murders in the Building* // Hulu

Best Original Song: "I'm Afraid (Dawn's Song Of Fears)" // *Girls5Eva* // Peacock

Best Show You Still Need to Watch: *Feel Good* // Season Two // Netflix

Best Documentary Miniseries: *The Lady and the Dale* // HBO Max

Most Unlikely Worldwide Sensation: *The Squid Game* // Season One // Netflix

Nick Warren spent too much time comfort-rewatching *Bojack Horseman*, *The Sopranos*, and *The West Wing* this year, and that's okay. He can be reached at Nick@eriereader.com.

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Remembering Alex Harrilla

Despite losing battle to muscular dystrophy, Gimp Guy Underground promoter never stopped moving



[left] Alex Harrilla, a longtime promoter and champion for Erie's local music scene through Gimp Guy Underground, sits beside caregiver Heidi Servidio. Musicians are still grieving the loss of Harrilla after a lifelong fight against muscular dystrophy. [bottom right] Alex Harrilla watches local band The Light In the Dark at Bobby's Place in 2015. That show, celebrating his birthday, was one of hundreds of local performances Harrilla either attended or arranged during his 46 years of life.

DAVID DESIN

By: Larry Wheaton

There is now a huge void left in the Erie music scene, one left by a man who was so motivated and selfless that there wasn't a person who didn't respect the work that he was doing. Alex Harrilla, booking agent and promoter for Gimp Guy Underground passed away on November 4 after a lifelong battle with muscular dystrophy. In a music scene where there can be in-fighting and backstabbing, Alex managed to make friends with every scenester and musician who had the pleasure of playing or attending one of his shows. He took his passion for music to a level where he was as synonymous with the bands and venues he associated with as the musicians themselves.

Alex Harrilla was from Allison Park in Pittsburgh and moved to the region when he enrolled in Edinboro University. Alex decided to stay in the Erie area after graduation, where he eventually became a key figure in supporting local music. Close friend Iggy Imig first met Alex in 1994 while working as an aide for disabled students at Edinboro University. At that time Iggy was the singer for

the hardcore band Abnegation, when Alex, along with his friend Tom Hicks, set up a show on the Edinboro campus. Iggy believes this was where the seed was planted in Alex to become a promoter. Iggy recalled, "The first show had everything you could ask for: Car-surfing, punks, political debates/screaming matches, and the police eventually came and shut the show down." Iggy went on to say that Alex's love of music was so intense that they had a morning routine that consisted of listening to everything from hardcore bands like Integrity to more commercial rock like Radiohead. Alex, along with his friend Tom, would also go to every show possible in a two-hour radius, no matter who was playing.

Around the age of 27, Alex had a long stay in the hospital when he was placed on a ventilator. Iggy believes this was a defining moment for Alex. Iggy said, "When he got out of the hospital, he had a renewed passion for life and music. It was shortly after this that he started booking shows regularly via Gimp Guy Underground."

JC Nickles (close friend and musician) said, "Just this year alone, anytime I accompanied Alex to a show there'd be an

experienced musician that would state that Alex Harrilla is the staple of this town (Erie)." Nickles also spoke about Alex's drive and passion, "With the ups and downs in business and the music scene many give up or move on because they're in it for the wrong reasons, however, Alex of Gimp Guy Underground kept things alive because he loved life."

Close friend and musician Kristen Nielsen said that "not only did he whole-heartedly support the music scene, in fact, he is responsible for many musicians in the region for pushing their creative outlets. He also helped small venue owners that were, at times, struggling to keep their doors open. She also added, "Alex was my best friend. He literally saved my life. He is also single-handedly responsible for my career in the local music scene." These sentiments were echoed on social media throughout the day as word began to spread of his passing. It was hard to scroll without seeing a loving tribute to Alex and the personal stories on how he touched those in the scene. It was an outpouring of love that is usually reserved for rock stars, artists, and other celebrities that people have a close connection to, but

will never meet.

Bob Jensen, owner and operator of Basement Transmissions, expressed, "Alex's service to the community has often gone under the radar. For all the venues and promoters this city has seen, Alex has been a consistency." Jensen went on to say, "The thing that made Alex so unique is his deeper understanding of the value of a show to us all, as individuals, and he was willing to make it happen for us even if the cost came out of his own pocket." The thing that every musician and venue owner will tell you is that it's hard getting people to show up. Alex had a love for music that went beyond the "bottom line" — for him, the bottom line was that these artists needed to play, not just for themselves or for fans of independent music, but for the scene to continue to grow. Kristen said, "When Alex started putting together shows with local no-name bands and helping those touring through the area, there wasn't really a scene here. Gimp Guy Underground was born out of Alex wanting to go to shows and give bands a chance."

Passing away at just 46 years young, Alex Harrilla carved out a scene where we could all feel welcome and support each other in our craft. To quote Iggy Imig, "Alex could barely move his fingertip, yet still did all of his own flyer and promotional work." That dedication, with his passion, is not only something that we should remember him for, but something that should motivate us in our daily lives.

Larry Wheaton can be reached at wheaton1138@gmail.com.



NXP

PODCASTS

Our Monthly Podcast Picks

Audio infotainment to engage your egg-noggin

Radio Rental

Hosted By: Rainn Wilson as Terry Carnation and Payne Lindsey // tenderfoot.tv

Okay, you may feel like you're experiencing déjà vu... yes, we did review the *Radio Rental* podcast in fall of 2020 — in the very first round of podcast write-ups we published. But 2021 was a weird year (to say the least) and new episodes released in the fall drew us back in instantly, making it my personal pick of the year. To recap, Rainn Wilson hosts as character Terry Carnation from his fictional video rental store in this semi-scripted podcast series, sharing stories that are stranger than fiction. Told by those who experienced them, the stories range from bizarre and unusual to downright creepy.

The concept itself draws a listener in immediately — who isn't interested in real stories about strange coincidences or bizarre happenings? But creator Payne Lindsey takes the concept to a new level in interviewing those who experience the strange and unusual, weaving together mesmerizing stories told in the words of those who know the tales best. Add in Rain Wilson's comedic relief as the in-character host Terry Carnation and you have the perfect recipe for success.

In a year that made many of us feel like we've gone crazy — or radio rental, as the Brits say — these stories help to make us feel a bit less alone in this strange and unusual world. — Ally Kutz



Doughboys

Hosted by: Nick Wiger and Mike Mitchell // headgum.com

Considering the amount of love the staff of this publication has for *Doughboys*, it's kind of shocking we're just now getting around to recognizing it, but also fitting considering the podcast's major achievement this year. Let's start with the basics: hosted by comedic personalities and "friends" Nick Wiger and Mike Mitchell, *Doughboys* is a podcast about chain restaurants that invites a guest on to review a franchise with them each week. Simple enough, right?

As with all great podcasts, only about half of any given *Doughboys* episode is actually about the restaurant they're reviewing. The other half is filled with excessively detailed background information, roasts, "drops" (or audio segments put together by listeners), song parodies, games, mailbag sentiments, and of course, countless inside jokes. Beyond that, Mitchell and Wiger become increasingly antagonistic toward one another as the show goes on, resulting in increasingly hilarious and personal jabs.

The reason they deserve podcast of the year? Their 24-hour Doughathon raised over \$184,000 for the Restaurant Workers' Community Foundation during the pandemic. As much as these hosts may try to convince you their podcast isn't funny, as the ninth most popular podcast on Patreon, they've captured the laughs and hearts of many. (As a starting point, we recommend "KFC with Paul F. Tompkins" and "Wendy's with Paul Rust.") — Aaron Mook



Threedom

Hosted by: Scott Aukerman, Lauren Lapkus, and Paul F. Tompkins // earwolf.com

I have to admit, I initially scoffed at the idea of *Threedom*. The concept (or lack thereof) seemed almost too self-indulgent. Three comedians, who are constantly podcasting, host a freeform show where they basically just talk to each other about ... whatever. The thing is, not everyone is capable of doing this (and there's still some format with the final new "three-ture" improv game that closes every show). Not only are hosts Scott Aukerman, Lauren Lapkus, and Paul F. Tompkins on-mic virtuosos, but they know each other extremely well, and have a natural rep-
artee.

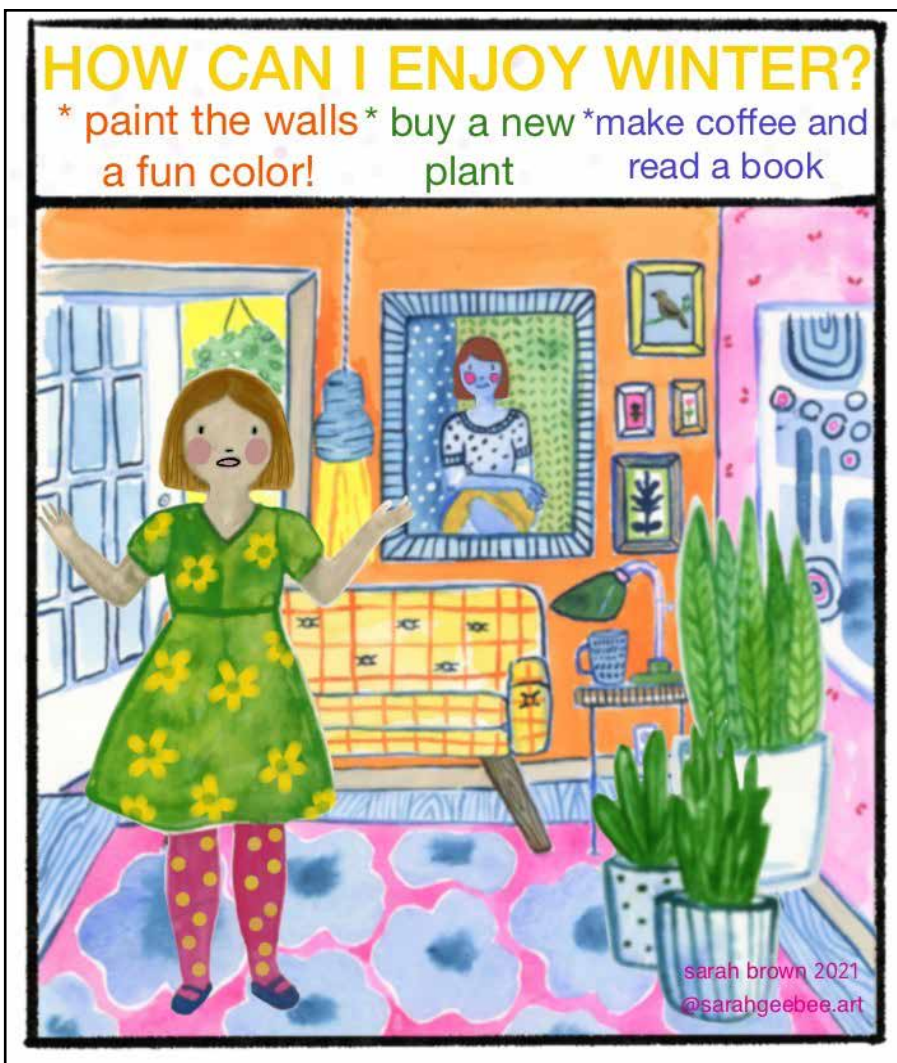
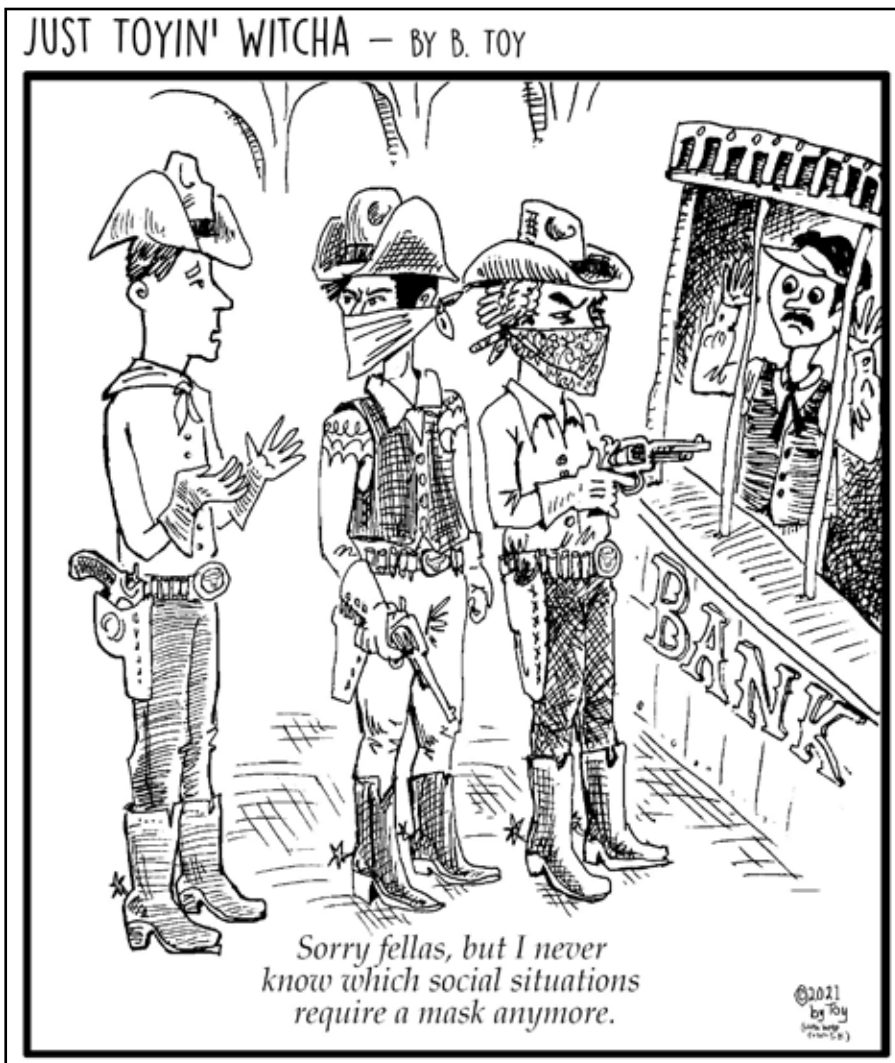
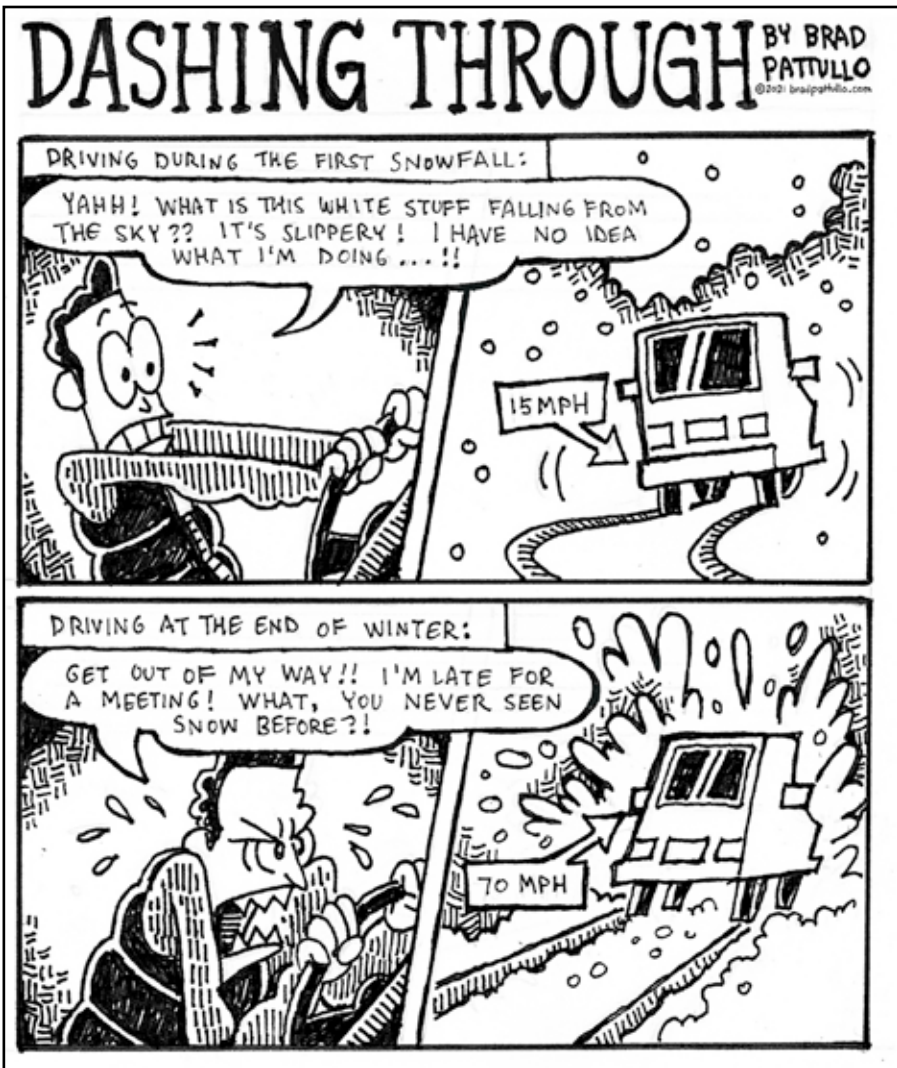
The result is at very least equal to the lofty sum of its parts. It's addicting and refreshing. You'll want to start from the beginning back in March of 2018 (oh what simpler times!). After finally taking a listen to an episode after years of hearing about it, that's exactly what I did, and I've loved every minute of it. The *Threedom* boys in fact just recently came back from a nine-week hiatus, while Lapkus had her baby, so now's the perfect time to jump in.

Think of *Threedom* like The Grateful Dead of podcasts. It's not for everyone, but for its many fans, it's exactly what they need. It's a well-oiled machine of improvisation that's both exhilarating and comforting at the same time. — Nick Warren



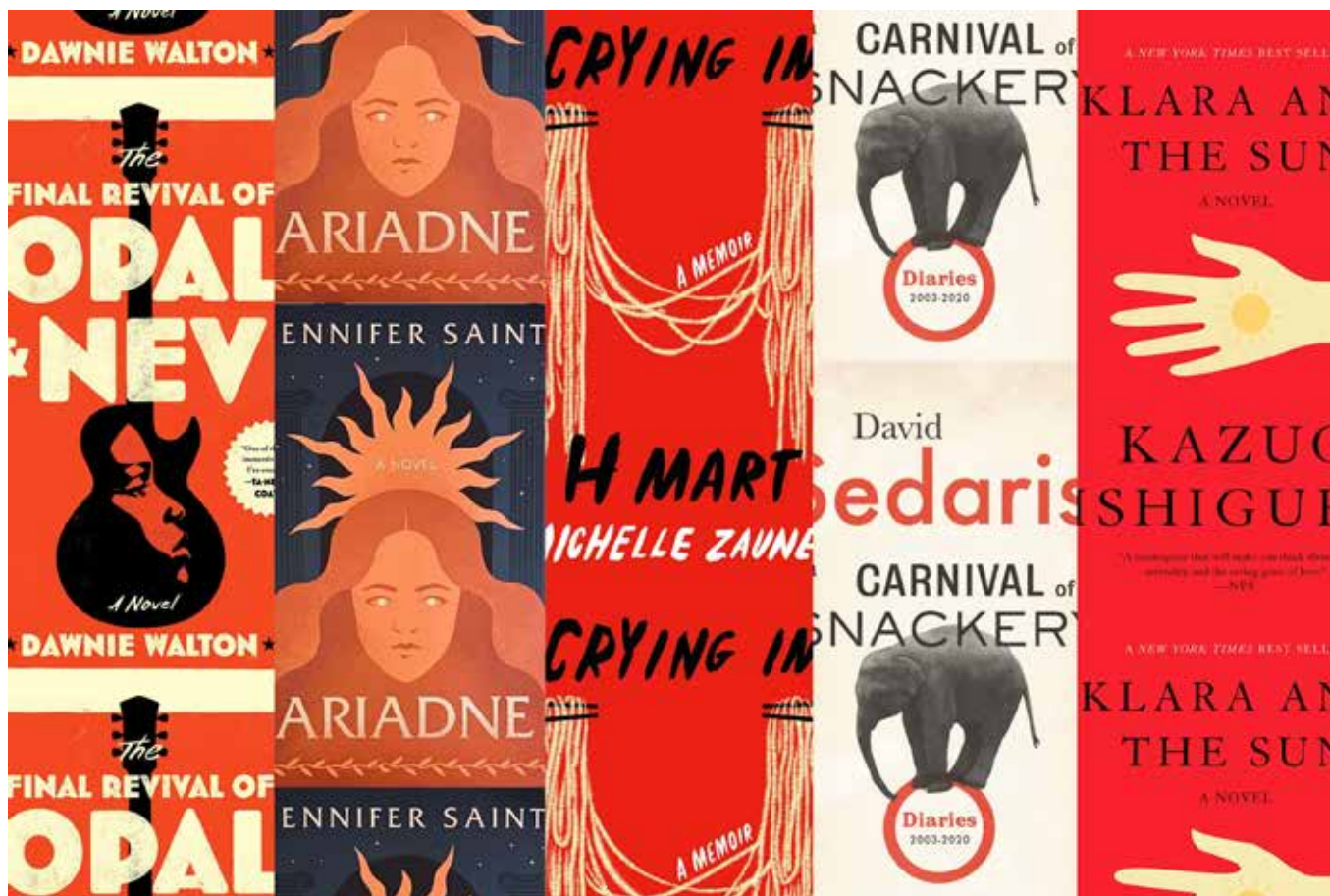
TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK





Top 5 Books of 2021

Another year, another great selection of books



Our Top 5 Books of 2021 include Dawnie Walton's historical fiction novel *The Final Revival of Opal & Nev*, Jennifer Saint's female-centric reimagining of Greek mythology in *Ariadne*, the Michelle Zauner memoir *Crying in H Mart*, another hilarious volume of David Sedaris musings in *A Carnival of Snacker: Diaries 2003-2020*, and Kazuo Ishiguro's thought-provoking *Klara and the Sun*.

Masterfully written with both honesty and humor, Zauner's debut will resonate with many and leave readers wanting more.

Knopf Publishing Group // 256 pages // Memoir

***Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

With possibly the most unique story concept on our list, Kazuo Ishiguro's newest novel tells the tale of a near future in which Klara, an Artificial Friend (think humanoid AI), observes peoples' behaviors from her place atop a shelf in a store, hoping that a customer will choose her. With Klara as narrator, the perspective is unique and unforgettable. An excellent look at our ever-changing world through the eyes of Klara, this book aims to understand the nature of humanity and the human heart. Readers who enjoyed Ishiguro's previous works — such as *Never Let Me Go* and *The Remains of the Day* — will be absolutely entranced by this novel that explores the fundamental question: what does it mean to love?

Alfred A. Knopf // 303 pages // Science Fiction

Honorable Mentions:

Under the Whispering Door by T.J. Klune

The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah
Cloud Cuckoo Land by Anthony Doerr

Infinite Country by Patricia Engel

Project Hail Mary by Andy Weir

Be sure to also check out our other favorites that we reviewed throughout the year:

When We Were Young by Richard Roper
Survive the Night by Riley Sager
Great Circle by Maggie Shipstead
The Lost Apothecary by Sarah Penner
Malibu Rising by Taylor Jenkins Reid

By: Ally Kutz

In 2021, we continued to try our best to adjust to a new normal while navigating an ongoing pandemic. With many of us facing uncertainty going into the year, it was nice to see that many authors continued to write excellent prose and offered a reprieve from another year of the unknown.

***Ariadne* by Jennifer Saint**

In Greek mythology, women most often are portrayed at best as background characters or points of advancement for male gods and heroes, with many more falling into obscurity or ruin. In her stunning debut novel, Jennifer Saint flips the script on what we know about Ariadne, the Princess of Crete, by retelling the legend of Theseus and the Minotaur from the perspective of the woman who was the catalyst for the events that unfolded in the labyrinth. A captivating, compelling, and at times heartbreaking story, *Ariadne* surpasses all expectations and earns itself a spot at the top of our list for the best books of the year.

Flatiron Books // 308 pages // Fantasy, Mythology, Fiction

***A Carnival of Snacker: Diaries 2003-2020* by David Sedaris**

Anyone who has met David Sedaris will often tell you the same thing: he is brutally honest, and brutally funny. In his follow-up to 2017's *Theft By Finding: Diaries 1977-2002*, Sedaris continues to prove his mastery in the art of comedy through his diary entries from 2003 up through 2020, a year many of us may want to forget. From planes to hotels and everywhere in between, Sedaris records life as he knows it, allowing readers a sampler of the sometimes bitter but sometimes sweet memories of the last two decades. Though things change as time continues forward, Sedaris has perfectly preserved the thoughts and feelings associated with the 2000s in a way only he can: filled with honesty and hilarity.

Little, Brown and Company // 576 pages // Nonfiction, Humor

***The Final Revival of Opal & Nev* by Dawnie Walton**

Dawnie Walton makes a stunning debut in this uniquely told rendition of fictional rockers Opal Jewel and

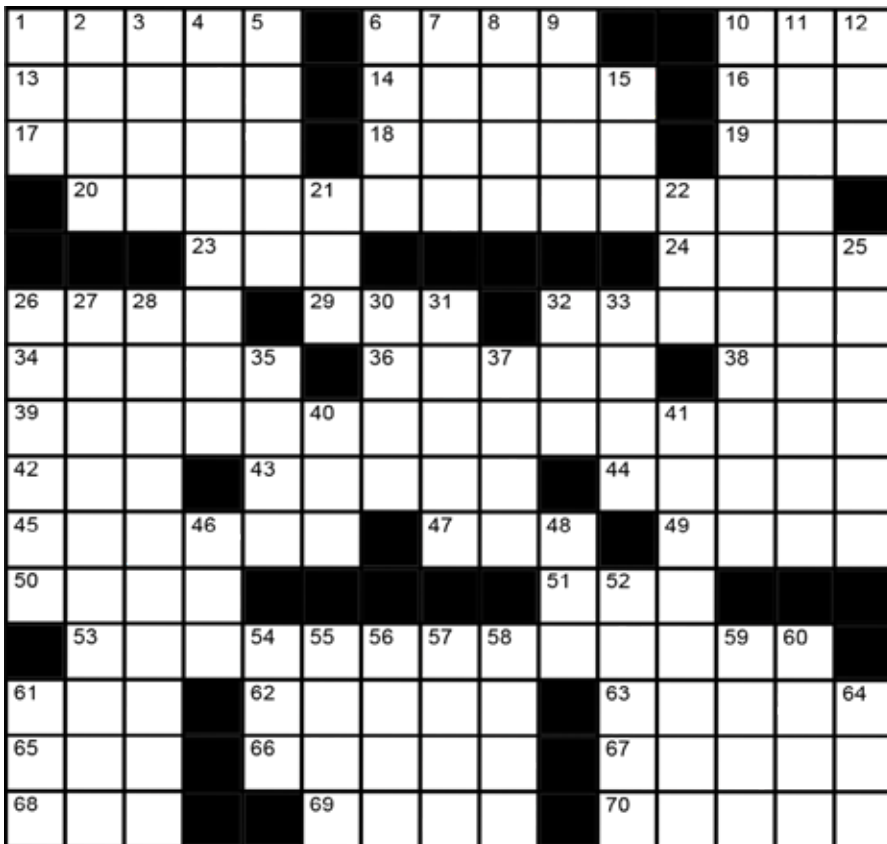
Neville Charles. Composed from fictional interviews, transcripts, footnotes, letters, and editor's notes, this distinctive novel transcends fiction and allows readers to dive into the all-too-real-feeling world of Opal and Nev as they navigate the rock music scene of the 1970s. As the duo tries to reunite decades later for one last tour, the past doesn't stay buried and unearthed with it are secrets and allegations that threaten to blow everything up. Riveting and utterly spellbinding, *The Final Revival of Opal & Nev* will draw readers in, grab a hold of them, and never let go.

37 Ink // 368 pages // Historical Fiction

***Crying in H Mart* by Michelle Zauner**

You may know Michelle Zauner better as the frontwoman of indie rock band Japanese Breakfast, but after reading *Crying in H Mart*, you'll know why she's made our top books of the year list. In this memoir, she reflects on growing up Korean American, losing that identity as she grew older, and finding it again following her mother's diagnosis with terminal cancer when Zauner was only 25.

CROSSWORD



Across

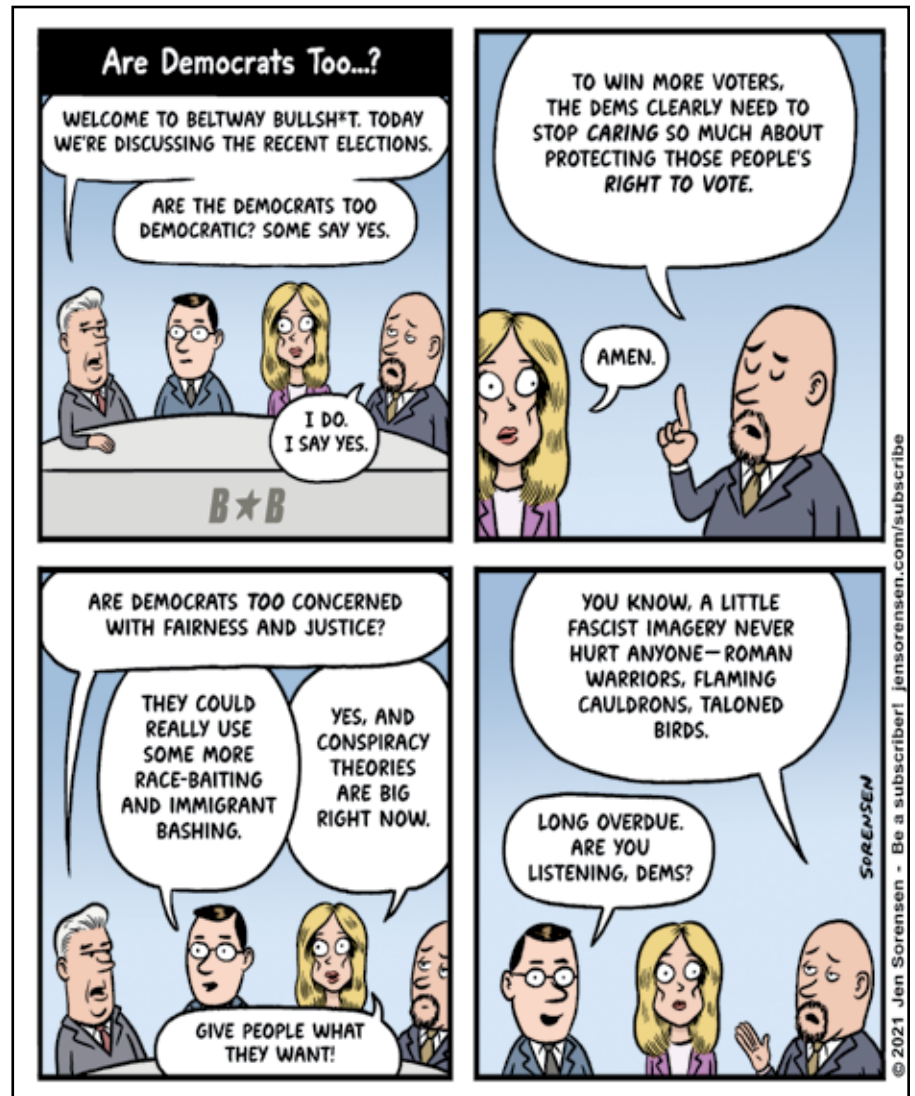
- 1. Super Bowl XXI MVP Phil ____ who was the first to say "I'm going to Disney World!"
- 6. Purity ring? (... and for more punny clues, see 20-, 39- and 53-Across)
- 10. Frequently, poetically
- 13. Bugged incessantly
- 14. Slack-jawed
- 16. "Don't think so"
- 17. Arms and legs attach to it
- 18. Like about 97% of U.S. land
- 19. Mao ____-tung
- 20. What a chandelier provides ... or a punny clue for 6-Across
- 23. Lunch bread
- 24. Fly catchers
- 26. Capital of Samoa
- 29. Like pets and parking meters
- 32. Researcher's rodent
- 34. It forms at the mouth
- 36. Barbecue glowers
- 38. Cheer at a flamenco show
- 39. Group of fellow worshipers ... or a punny clue for 6-Across
- 42. KJ who plays Archie on "Riverdale"
- 43. 0 to 60, e.g.
- 44. Prepared for a TV interview
- 45. Charge toward, with a lance

- 47. "You ____ me at hello"
- 49. Ukr. and Lith., once
- 50. Photo blowups: Abbr.
- 51. Bed-Ins for Peace participant
- 53. High employment rate, e.g. ... or a punny clue for 6-Across
- 61. "I meant to tell u ..."
- 62. Sundance Film Festival local
- 63. Army base about 16 mi. from Trenton
- 65. Chess piece between dame and fou
- 66. Emmy-winning choreographer Debbie
- 67. Colorful upholstery fabric
- 68. Qty.
- 69. Blokes
- 70. Actor Ed

Down

- 1. Couldn't stand, maybe
- 2. "Was ____ harsh?"
- 3. "Jeopardy!" creator Griffin
- 4. Auto pioneer Alfieri
- 5. "Long ____ short ..."
- 6. Loser in an Aesop fable
- 7. The rain in Spain, e.g.
- 8. Pie crust ingredient
- 9. Autumn birthstone
- 10. Not neat
- 11. Pitcher who can throw 97 miles per hour, say

- 12. Word ignored in indexing
- 15. ____ Young Band (country group)
- 21. Defendant in a 1963 obscenity trial, for short
- 22. 43rd prez
- 25. Knights' horses
- 26. Madison Ave. cost
- 27. One who's looking the wrong way?
- 28. Line from a permissive judge
- 30. Subj. for Janet Yellen
- 31. Baker's need
- 32. Cousin of "Inc."
- 33. "____ sure you already know ..."
- 35. Taj Mahal's city
- 37. Off the coast
- 40. "Can ____ least think it over?"
- 41. Dishes prepared alla Milanese
- 46. General with a dish named after him
- 48. OB or ENT
- 52. '90s commerce pact
- 54. "Levitating" singer Lipa
- 55. " ____ be a cold day ..."
- 56. Kiara's mother in "The Lion King"
- 57. Batted but didn't field, in MLB lingo
- 58. Roadside stopovers
- 59. Frigga's husband
- 60. Vex
- 61. Maidenform purchase
- 64. Child of the '70s, e.g.



Answers to last puzzle



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