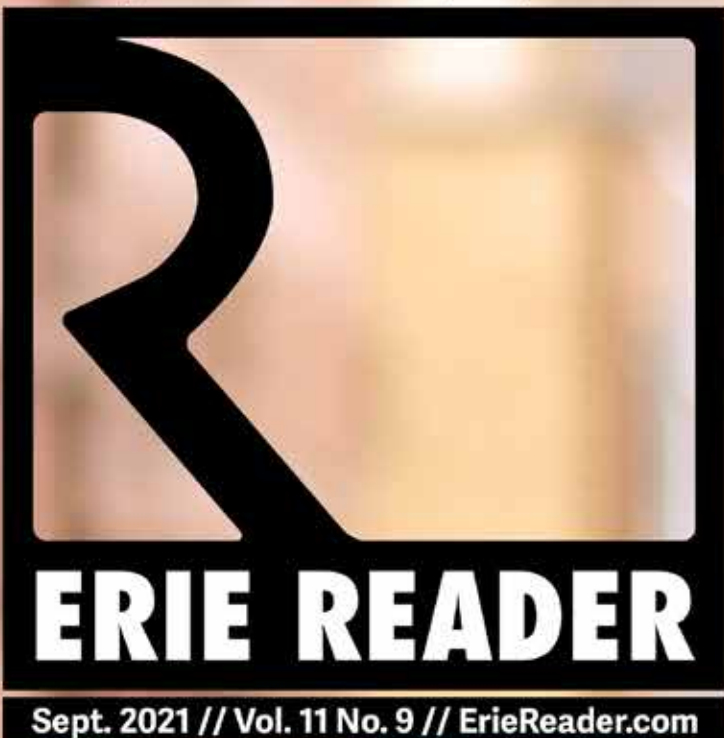


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Tyler Titus

Listening to Erie County

Back to School

Educators, epidemiologists
plead for common sense

Wonder of Oneders

At 25, Erie celebrates
That Thing You Do!

Pat Toomey

Sitting down with the
outgoing Senator



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From the Editors

Generally managing reality

Whether you’re an actual NFL general manager (thanks for picking up a copy of the Erie Reader!) or among the millions of fantasy football GMs across the nation, anyone who’s ever danced the dance knows that the draft is an “absolute crapshoot.”

Perhaps your prized first round pick suffers a season-ending injury in pregame warmups of the very first game. Or perhaps the long-dependable veteran you were counting on is suspended mid-season for a banned substance in his eye drops. Or maybe your star quarterback tears his rotator cuff while spearfishing off the coast of Barbados during the bye week (insert eye roll). Any of these scenarios might serve as reminders to “expect the unexpected,” or that “there is no sure thing,” or very possibly that you’ve been a Browns fan for far, far too long.

But more than that, they might bring to mind another oft-repeated press conference platitude — “it’s not how you start, it’s how you finish.” Yes, now and then the league champion will dominate from wire to wire, dodge all the slings and arrows (and wayward penalty flags) of outrageous fortune, and leaves the competition trembling in their wake. But more often, success is predicated on careful observation, patience, and opportunism — by seeing the value in people and their talents before any one else does. It’s the late-round gems that fuel championship runs.

Over the years, Erie’s stock has tumbled — once a lock for third most populous city in Pennsylvania, it’s dropped to fifth. But those with a keen eye are bullish about its upside, and continue to seek the right combination of playbook and personnel to propel Erie back into the first round conversation. They’re in our corner, beating the proverbial rally drum like Tom Everett Scott in *That Thing You Do!* (see Liz Allen’s 25th anniversary retrospective on the Tom Hanks classic)

One such believer, Tyler Titus, adorns this cover. Emerging from a humble background, the Erie County Executive candidate has nurtured a serious knack for leadership — and by extension, listening. If selected to represent the area in November’s general election, Titus hopes to set a new precedent for how local government should be done, seeking to address the flaws in our systems — particularly those that keep marginalized groups behind the line of scrimmage.

In their interview with Nick Warren, Titus cites fair and equitable education (another focus of this month’s edition) as our best chance as a community to find daylight and mount a serious comeback.

But in order to achieve that and more, we must better generally manage our reality — a much more stingy opponent than any in fantasy. Its lineup is formidable — COVID-19, poverty and social unrest, misinformation and propaganda, climate change, hatred and fear — and a pretty deep bench beyond that. Coming out on top is all about the team we put together on the frontlines, and the talent we have waiting in the wings.

Erie At Large: The Stakes Remain High in Local Elections

Important races include several in state judicial system



There will be several important local and state offices at stake when the general election arrives on Tuesday, Nov. 2 this year. Besides higher profile regional races for Erie County Executive and Sheriff, many seats are up for grabs in the state judicial system.

did last year when democracy and the future of government were on the ballot. The choices for voters are clear and the stakes remain high.

Thankfully, candidates up and down the ballot with professional and personal experience in county government and courtrooms across Pennsylvania made the decision to run for the Democratic Party's nomination, giving voters a sound alternative to dark and dangerous trend setters emanating from the modern Republican Party.

With your help, Tyler Titus will be the next Erie County Executive. Titus is the only county executive candidate with experience in elected office and experience working in county government. A married parent of three kids, a small business owner, and licensed mental health professional with more than eight years working for the County's Office of Children and Youth, Titus has the experience to keep Erie moving forward.

As someone who was raised in rural poverty in Titusville, Pa., and a therapist for children who were placed in the foster care system, Titus recognizes that a profitable future for Erie County means that county government must make the most of the opportunities before us to create and sustain infrastructure that supports our business communities as well as neighborhoods and families.

In the race for Erie County Sheriff, Captain Chris Campanelli brings more than 25 years of experience and leadership in the Erie County Sheriff's Office. He's endorsed by the retiring sheriff, John Loomis, who promoted Campanelli to captain of his squad five years ago. In addition to his professional experience, Campanelli is a veteran of the United States Marine Corps.

One of the least understood offices in local government is the County's Clerk of Records, who oversees the

clerk of courts, maintaining records for the criminal courts; the prothonotary, who processes and maintains civil court records; the recorder of deeds, who records and indexes documents relating to real estate; and the register of wills, who maintains records relating to estates. As the retiring Clerk of Records, Ken Gamble, will tell you on any given day, it's a job that requires a great deal of organization and experience. That's why he's endorsed Aubrey Haggerty-Hanes, who currently serves as the office's first deputy clerk of courts, and oversees criminal records at the Erie County Courthouse, after more than 22 years in county government.

There are seats open on each of Pennsylvania's three appellate courts. This November, we'll elect a new Superior Court judge, two new members of the Commonwealth Court, and a new justice of the Supreme Court.

In Pennsylvania, we elect appellate court judges in partisan elections, meaning the candidates run and serve identified as a member of a political party. This is different from our county courts, where judges are elected in non-partisan elections and can seek the nominations of any political party.

In this year's appellate court contests, only the Democratic slate is composed in its entirety of sitting judges who are either recommended or highly recommended by the Pennsylvania Bar Association. The Republican ticket includes lawyers with little or no experience on the bench and one that was denied a recommendation by the Pennsylvania Bar Association, which evaluates judicial candidates and offers recommendations for the retention of sitting judges and justices when their terms near expiration every 10 years.

The Superior Court is composed of 15 judges who hear appeals in criminal and most civil cases. Republicans currently hold an 8-7 majority on the Superior Court. Democrats hope to change that balance this year by electing Judge Timika Lane, a judge of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas where she is the sole judge handling human trafficking cases in Philadelphia County. Judge Lane was

By: Jim Wertz

For many people, it felt like there would never be an election more consequential than the 2020 presidential election. And after treasonous Trump-supporting insurrectionists stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6 in an attempt to stop the counting of the electoral college votes, the final step in affirming the national vote for the presidency of the United States, during which more than 100 police officers were injured, our glimpse of the anti-democratic future envisioned by the Trump base of the Republican Party should give us more than enough reason to stay engaged in electoral politics. The nation depends on it.

One could argue that the seeds of that insurrection were sown in Northwest Pennsylvania, where a smarmy Republican congressman filed baseless lawsuits in state and federal courts and our Republican state senator signed on to a brief attempting to influence the decision of the United States Supreme Court in

attempts to overturn the results of last year's election.

Both of these Republican standard-bearers now support Republican candidates for county and statewide offices who share their values and who oppose much of the progress that's been made locally over the past decade. Rooted in ideological xenophobia, anti-intellectualism, and paranoid conspiracy theories, Republican candidates on the ballot this year are more unfit for duty than their party's nominees of the past.

This November, we have the opportunity to elect leaders in county government who will chart a course made possible by the informed decision-making of their predecessors and federal investment in our community and in communities like ours all across the country. We'll also elect judges to our statewide appellate courts, which affect the daily lives of people across the Commonwealth but often remain underappreciated and unrecognized for the power they actually wield.

Voters should take heed, just as they

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NEWS & VIEWS

first elected to the bench in 2013 after a successful career as a law clerk and a child advocate attorney. She is recommended by the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

The nine-member Commonwealth Court hears cases related to state and local government, including those related to gerrymandering and last year's baseless claims of election fraud. Following the 2020 election the Pennsylvania Commonwealth Court, where Republicans enjoy a 7-2 majority, was the only court in the nation to rule in favor of the Trump campaign. That decision was overturned by the Pennsylvania Supreme Court and went unrecognized by the United States Supreme Court.

Democrats hope to trim the ideological grasp of the Republican-heavy court this year by electing Judge David Spurgeon and Judge Lori Dumas, judges on the Court of Common Pleas in Allegheny and Philadelphia counties, respectively. Based on the merits of these accomplished jurists, voters should have an easy choice to make.

One Republican candidate and one sitting Republican on the Commonwealth Court were not recommended by the Pennsylvania Bar Association for retention or election, citing lack of experience and lack of commitment for the organization's vote of not recommended.

For his part, Spurgeon has spent the past five years hearing cases that involve children and families in Allegheny County. Prior to that, he spent 19 years in the Allegheny County District Attorney's office, where he became a national expert in domestic violence law. Judge Spurgeon also currently serves as an adjunct law professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh. He is highly recommended by the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

Judge Lori Dumas brings more than 18 years experience on the bench in Philadelphia to the Commonwealth Court race. Like Spurgeon, Dumas also served in the family court division for the majority of her career, but has also heard cases in the criminal and civil divisions. Judge Dumas is a graduate of the Fels Institute of Government at the University of Pennsylvania, and is also a Georgetown Fellow, specializing in systems which serve crossover youth (those dually involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems). Judge

Dumas has also taught legal courses at several Philadelphia-area institutions.

The seven-member Supreme Court hears appeals from the decisions of the Superior and Commonwealth Courts. Judge Maria McLaughlin, who currently sits on the Superior Court, brings 19 years of experience as an Assistant District Attorney in Philadelphia, the Chief of the Child Support Enforcement Unit, and later a judge on the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas in the Family Division. Judge McLaughlin appears often as an instructor and/or guest speaker on a variety of topics for the Pennsylvania Bar Association, Pennsylvania Bar Institute, local bar associations around Pennsylvania, and universities and law schools throughout the Commonwealth. She is highly recommended by the Pennsylvania Bar Association.

Each of these judges brings to the campaign trail their legal experience as well as their personal stories. Each of them came to the bench from humble beginnings in working class families. The struggles and adversity they faced on their successful paths is apparent in their placement among some of the most sensitive and challenging divisions of the Court of Common Pleas in their respective counties.

This year, Democrats have nominated candidates with professional achievement and personal experiences that engender empathy and a worldview that will chart a path forward for Eriettes and Pennsylvanians across the Commonwealth. The folks across the aisle can't claim such a distinction. By and large, the Republicans who will appear on the ballot this year are universally anti-government rather than pro-solution.

At this critical time in our county and in our country, we can not validate that brand of politics that used to lurk only in the shadows of the Republican Party, but has now become mainstream. The stakes have never been greater and the choice for voters has never been more clear.

Jim Wertz is a contributing editor and chairman of the Erie County Democratic Party. He can be reached at jWertz@ErieReader.com and you can follow him on Twitter @jim_wertz. Register to vote or apply for a mail-in ballot at VotesPA.com.

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Sitting Down with Senator Pat Toomey

Discussing the state of the senate and the GOP, the filibuster, Afghanistan, cryptocurrency and infrastructure bill, Donald Trump, and more



Ben Speggen, Erie Reader contributing editor (foreground), sat down for a discussion with outgoing U.S. Senator Pat Toomey (R - Pa.) at Romolo Chocolates in Erie on Aug. 24. Toomey has held his seat for a decade, but decided last year he would not pursue another term.

to prevent things that you disapprove of, and that gives you leverage, and that gives you an opportunity to influence policy. Because inevitably, if somebody wants to do something, they need your cooperation to do it.

BS: If you had to do a pulse check on the state of the Senate in 2011, how would you describe that?

PT: The Senate was functioning reasonably well by the only standards I have to personally judge, which is everything that happened subsequently, right? That was when I was new. I didn't have the experience, the history. But it was functioning well in the sense that legislation was routinely on the floor, the amendment process was open, committees were functioning, if you wanted to litigate an idea, you could do that in the form of an amendment to whatever was on the floor, you could get a vote.

BS: The state of the GOP, then in 2011, when you entered the Senate — how would you describe that?

PT: At that point, there was a resurgence underway of the Republican Party. We were in the minority, but there was a feeling that we had a lot of energy. A lot of new members came in the class of 2010. I felt — and I still feel like — that was a time when the party was coalescing and growing, and not long thereafter, we took the majority. And I think that was evidence that we were on an ascending path.

BS: If that's how it looked through the door on the way in, how would you sum up the state of this Senate today, as you're about to leave? And the state of the GOP?

PT: Well, as a body, the institution is not working well now, not at all. It's, in fact, barely functioning. And when it does function, it functions badly. We don't follow the processes that allow you to have a vigorous, thorough debate on topics, offer amendments and litigate the ideas behind those amendments, and iterate your way to a consensus product — that's the way the Senate is designed to work, the way it used to work — but it doesn't work that way now. And that's a shame.

BS: What do you think the breakdown has been — from something you observed to be functional to now something that's barely functioning? Where do we assign credit for that? Where do we place blame for that?

PT: It's a complex combination of things. I don't think there's any single one dynamic. But I think ultimately, the driving dynamic has been the increased polarization of American politics, right? That is true of society as a whole, and it ends up being reflected in the elected representatives, whether in the House or the Senate.

By: Ben Speggen

On Oct. 5, 2020, U.S. Senator Patrick Joseph Toomey Jr. had something to say. Some suspected it might be an announcement of a reelection bid to represent Pennsylvania for a third term in the Senate with the approaching midterm election of 2022. Others thought it might be a run in another race in the same year.

An early favorite amongst Republicans, Toomey, some wondered, might declare a gubernatorial bid. With Pennsylvania Governor Tom Wolf, a Democrat, unable to seek reelection next year due to term limits, that election will be wide open.

Instead, those at the news conference held near Toomey's home in suburban Allentown found that not only would the race to replace Wolf still be wide open, so would Toomey's Senate seat. He would serve out the final two years of his second term and then return to the private sector, he told those gathered.

On Aug. 24, Sen. Toomey was in Erie, Pa., mostly to listen. He attended a roundtable discussion at the Manufacturer & Business Association to hear what Washington could do for businesses in Northwest Pennsylvania. He also toured development throughout Erie's urban core, meeting with the Erie Downtown Development Corporation.

After that — and before he had to catch a flight back to Allentown — Toomey headed to Romolo Chocolates for a short interview. With the clock

ticking, we didn't get to talk about his party-breaking vote on Feb. 13, 2021, the midterm elections, why he identifies as a Republican, and what lies ahead for the two-term senator; that'll be for another interview. But we did talk about what drew him to the Senate, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, the state of the GOP, the future of the filibuster, cryptocurrency and infrastructure bill, and what he sees as his greatest accomplishment during his time as a senator.

Ben Speggen: What first drew Pat Toomey to want to be Senator Pat Toomey?

Senator Pat Toomey: I had served in the House, so I had that experience in Congress. I knew that I could have a much bigger impact in the Senate. I actually ran for the Senate in 2004 in a primary challenge against Arlen Specter, and I lost. But the combination of the political circumstances made it clear that there was a path for me to win in 2010.

BS: But not everybody jumps from the House to the Senate — the teacup to the saucer. What was attractive about the Senate?

PT: The opportunity to have an impact is very, very different in the two bodies. The House is, by design, a dictatorship of the majority, and the leadership of the majority party has enormous control over the entire process, the entire legislative agenda, everything that happens.

In the Senate, the rules are such that every individual senator has tremendous ability to stop things. You don't have the ability to dictate what will happen, but you have a very, very powerful set of tools

BS: Can we go back to where we were before?

PT: My belief is, and not everybody shares this view but I'm certainly not alone in this view, is that politics is downstream from culture, and the rules of an institution ought to be designed to enable the institution to function in the culture that prevails at a given point in time. Since the culture has changed so much, I think Senate rules need to change to make it more likely that the body can function in a more polarized culture.

BS: The filibuster: Do we keep it? Do we scrap it? Do we modify it?

PT: So first, let me remind you of something you're probably well aware of, but you know, very recently, like, during Donald Trump's first two years in office, Republicans had complete control of elected government — we had the House and the Senate and the White House, and we had a president in the White House who was adamant that we should get rid of the filibuster so that we could do whatever we wanted and jam the Democrats and simply pass party-line legislation.

We told the president we're not going to do that, for the sake of the institution, and for the sake of our country. It's important that there be some level of consensus, and the Senate is the place where that has historically happened. It's the place designed for that.

The filibuster is the mechanism that forces consensus, right? Very seldom does either party have 60 votes. The Democrats have occasionally; Republicans have not in over 100 years. For the most part, it's the mechanism that drives a need for consensus and allows the minority party to have some say in this — and why that's important is because the broader the consensus behind a piece of legislation, the more enduring it's likely to be — frankly, the better it's likely to be in many cases. But even if it's not necessarily great, it is more likely to be enduring. And there's a value to that because it diminishes the volatility of the government and society.

BS: A quote in your statement on the infrastructure bill was that it was “too expensive, too expensive to pay for, and too likely to threaten the innovative cryptocurrency economy.” What got you excited about cryptocurrency?

PT: I'm just agnostic about the value of any given token. But what I am convinced of is that the underlying technology that has given rise to these tokens is very, very powerful. The distributed ledger methodology of validating transactions so that two people can exchange something of value without needing to rely on a trusted intermediary, that is revolutionary, that is powerful, that is going to change major sectors of our economy. It's going to allow people to transact instantaneously, virtually, at very low cost or no cost. It's going to be really, really good for innovation and our economy.

BS: Afghanistan and the U.S. departure: Are we departing on time, too soon, or too late?

PT: First, I was a critic of the Trump announcement that we were going to withdraw by a certain date. In my view it was a huge mistake to announce, we're going to abandon this. We've had troops on the

ground in South Korea, in Germany, in Japan since World War II. And the fact that we've had troops there, they're not getting killed there just as Americans were not getting killed in Afghanistan. But they provided tremendous stability, and that's good for us.

So first, I totally disagreed with the Trump announcement. And I totally reject the idea that Biden somehow had to carry through because Trump had announced it. He hasn't felt that way about a lot of other Trump policies; he wasn't obligated to carry through on this one.

And then it's been handled in a completely incompetent fashion. No planning, the obvious obligation on the part of a president who makes this decision to evacuate American forces would be first and foremost, you maintain your control until American citizens and the Afghans who deserve to be protected have a chance to leave. So we never should have

“As a body, the institution is not working well now, not at all. It's, in fact, barely functioning. And when it does function, it functions badly. We don't follow the processes that allow you to have a vigorous, thorough debate on topics, offer amendments and litigate the ideas behind those amendments, and iterate your way to a consensus product—that's the way the Senate is designed to work, the way it used to work — but it doesn't work that way now. And that's a shame.” — U.S. Sen. Pat Toomey on the current state of the Senate

given up Bagram and the other bases that we have, we never should have retreated to one airport in the northern part of Kabul. Huge tactical mistake. And now, we're at the mercy of the Taliban to decide which Americans get out, which Afghans get out.

BS: Should Congress step in, override the president, the executive branch, and redeploy or keep what troops are left?

PT: So at this point, it's very, very hard now that the Taliban was quickly able to roll up the areas that they would not have been able to. They're there now,

they occupy that, the American forces have already left. At this point, the president absolutely has an obligation to do whatever it takes to get every last American out, and to get the Afghans who worked for us who risked their lives and their family's lives, and who might very well be killed along with their families, out. It's pretty hard to go back and unscramble the egg on the departure.

BS: You've brought him up twice: Donald Trump. How large is his shadow still hanging over the GOP?

PT: He is a significant influence. There are some Republicans for whom he is their ultimate political hero, and he can do no wrong. There's another group, that's at least as large, that believes he pursued many really good policies and had many important successes, but he is a flawed character and problematic. And then there's a small group of Republicans that completely reject him and want no part of him.

I think his influence over the Republican Party is going to diminish over time, because it is the nature of politics to look forward and not to look backwards. He tends to obsess over the last election, because he lost it, and he wants to convince everyone that he couldn't possibly have lost, and therefore it was stolen, it was rigged, it was fill-in-the-blank. But that's going to wear thin. And most people are more interested in the future.

Now, if he decides he's going to run again, which I don't know what he's going to decide, then, he'll be a major force. But I don't know how that plays out.

BS: Final question I'll sneak in: Now that you're looking at the exit — you've decided not to run for reelection — what are you most proud of amongst your accomplishments for the country, for the state of Pennsylvania, and for Erie during your time in the Senate?

PT: I think the biggest legislative accomplishment would be the role that I played in the tax reform in 2017, when we really remade the tax code. It was the most dramatic reform in over 30 years. It contributed to the strongest national economy and Pennsylvania economy in my lifetime.

Statewide, there's just so many things; it'd be very hard for me to cite one. The persistence that it took to ensure that we finished dredging the channel for the port of Philadelphia so that we could take in the next generation of super tankers, to ensuring that the Army Corps of Engineers prioritize replenishing the erosion on Presque Isle — literally untold thousands of Pennsylvanians for whom we provided the constituent service that they needed in many cases, change people's lives, breaking through bureaucracy, getting them services, whether it was Medicare, or whether it was in Social Security, or at the VA — it's a long list and I don't think I'd be able to say “this one clearly ranks above all the other.”

This Q&A has been edited for length and clarity. Check out the full-length interview at [ErieReader.com](https://eriereader.com)

Ben Speggen can be contacted at bspeggen@eriereader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @BenSpeggen.



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Kyle

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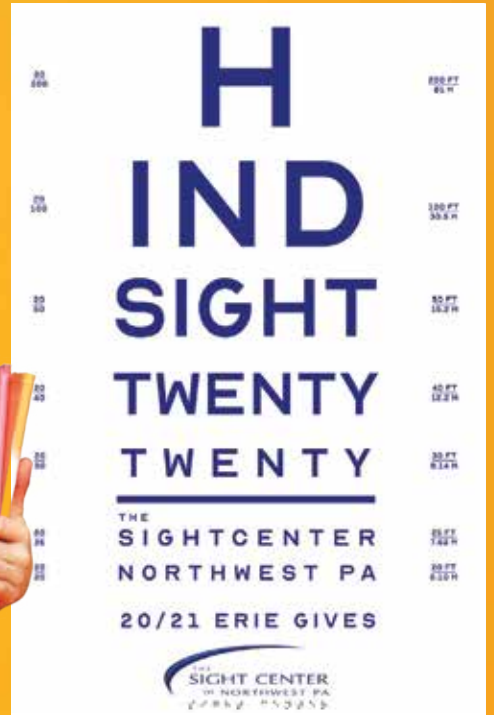
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The Yearning for In-Person Learning

As new school year begins, educators join epidemiologists in pleas for common sense



With the recent resurgence of COVID-19 cases — predominantly the more virulent Delta variant — schools have been confronted again with difficult decisions regarding in-person vs. online learning, and resistance to mask mandates as adults around them continue to refuse vaccinations.

(the same size as the smallest particles of SARS-CoV-2), they examined the “fitted filtration efficiency” of breathing in viral particles with over a dozen types of masks — nylon, polyester, cotton, even bandannas — and found that they all help with reduction.

“A cloth mask is intended to trap respiratory droplets that are released when the wearer talks, coughs, or sneezes,” the Mayo Clinic explains. “It also acts as a barrier to protect the wearer from inhaling droplets released by others.” The American Lung Association also confirms that there is absolutely no evidence that masking lowers oxygen levels, despite some parents’ concerns.

Erie County Public Health Director Melissa Lyon, who studied biology and chemistry in addition to public health, and has been in the field for two decades, signed the order for universal masking, which is authorized by Section 5 of the Pennsylvania Disease Prevention and Control Law of 1955. The law states that health departments “shall be primarily responsible for the prevention and control of communicable and non-communicable disease, including disease control in public and private schools.”

“The last 18 months have left deep scars on educators, on students, and on our nation,” wrote Steven Grant in the latest issue of *NEA Today*. Recent studies reflect this. Students are reporting higher rates of depression, anxiety, social isolation, and difficulty concentrating. This will add to this year’s challenges as educators work to meet the needs of all students. Even pre-pandemic, student health and safety have always been prioritized first. Psychologist Abraham Maslow’s influential hierarchy of needs demonstrates how a student’s physiological and safety needs being met are the necessary base before students can begin learning to their full potential.

Students are not the only ones affected either. In May 2021, the CDC re-

leased a report on the mental health of teachers and school-age parents. Over one-quarter of teachers self-reported symptoms consistent with clinical depression and 37 percent with symptoms of anxiety. Over half of teachers said they were considering leaving the profession altogether. Meanwhile, nearly one-fifth of parents reported poor mental health and feelings of being “overwhelmed” and “burnt out.” One can imagine similar sentiments among public-facing administrators and elected, unpaid school board members.

Brian Polito, superintendent of Erie’s Public Schools, is very aware of such concerns entering this school year.

“All of us — administrators, teachers, staff members — are mindful of the toll this pandemic is taking on the emotional well-being and mental health of our staff, students, and families,” he says. “Part of our job will be continuing to make sure any individual who needs additional help or support receives it.”

Dr. Ian Roberts, superintendent of the Millcreek School District, notes that concerns over not only learning loss, but also the increased risk of illness to students, teachers, and administrators has been the greatest challenge. The district has experienced serious illness and death. He also loses sleep over the thought of more school closures and the idea of students losing out on more in-person instruction and extracurricular programs.

“The uncertainty of the changing public health data and our inability to guarantee the safety of our students and adults from the COVID-19 virus [worries me],” Roberts says.

Despite these concerns though, he remains optimistic and is focusing on strengthening the district’s relationship with the parents and community and ensuring students get a quality education. He is looking forward to having students in school for face-to-face learning five days a week for “the incredible expertise” of Millcreek teachers who “provide world class pedagogical delivery.”

Like Roberts, Polito is looking forward to seeing teachers and students in the classroom again (Erie’s Public Schools were virtual for the vast majority of last year), although he compli-

By: Jonathan Burdick

Another school year has commenced, the third impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In early summer, as vaccination rates increased and hospitalizations decreased nationwide, many in Erie County were cautiously optimistic about the coming school year. Fingers were crossed that maybe classrooms could be *somewhat* free from masking, social distancing, and shutdowns.

After averaging over 3,000 daily deaths nationwide during the winter peak — before vaccines were widely available — it dipped below 200 a day throughout much of June. Vaccination rates then plateaued as the more contagious Delta variant began spreading throughout the country. By August, ICU beds were filling up again in some parts of the country, overwhelming hospitals once more as the United States eclipsed over 1,000 daily deaths.

It initially appeared that Erie County school districts would individually develop their own masking policies, but between mid and late August, local COVID-19 hospitalizations had increased by 60 percent, the Erie Times-News reported. On Aug. 23, alarmed by the data, the Erie County Department of Health ordered universal masking for all private and public schools. This was recommended by the CDC, the

Children’s Hospital Association, and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), an organization of 67,000 primary care pediatricians who also endorse prioritizing in-person learning this year — but not without necessary and proven safety measures such as proper ventilation, testing, quarantining, cleaning, and disinfection.

“There are many children and others who cannot be vaccinated,” Sara Bode, MD, chairperson elect of the AAP Council on School Health Executive Committee said in their statement. “This is why it’s important to use every tool in our toolkit to safeguard children from COVID-19. Universal masking is one of those tools, and has been proven effective in protecting people against other respiratory diseases, as well.”

The goal is to safely keep schools open where possible. Masking isn’t infallible, of course, but it has proven effective in reducing transmission, especially when combined with other safety measures. In a study by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, even 3-ply cotton cloth masks and neck gaiters were found to have reduced the expulsion of respiratory aerosols while coughing, breathing, and speaking by about half. Numerous other studies have produced similar results. In a collaborative study between University of North Carolina researchers and EPA scientists using airborne salt particles

ments the creativity of teachers engaging students online. Uncertainty still lingers though.

“There is no doubt that this will once again be a challenging and unpredictable year given COVID-19,” he says. “We are, once again, going to find ourselves constantly assessing and reassessing. All of our administrators, teachers, and staff are going to have to be patient and flexible and we’re going to have to ask our students and parents to be patient and flexible. And we’re going to have to do all of that while remaining focused on fulfilling our mission and protecting the health and safety of our staff and students.”

Garrett Skindell, an 8th grade social studies teacher in the Erie School District, has the perspective of both an educator and parent.

“There have been so many challenges and all of them happening at the same time,” Skindell explains. “Revamping and learning an entire online platform to deliver instruction in a short period of time to figuring out how best to deliver instruction via Zoom meetings was no easy task in and of itself, but

to have to juggle that and *then* turn around and try to help your own children at home through their own struggles of virtual learning was definitely a challenge.”

This sometimes led to 16- to 18-hour days for Skindell, which was “brutal and exhausting,” but it did help him empathize with everyone’s point-of-view last school year. What he disliked most though was the difficulty of establishing relationships with his students while virtual.

“The thing I am most looking forward to is reestablishing those relationships with the students,” he says. Like all educators, he’s worried about everyone’s safety, but also with the misinformation and disinformation being spread. “It seems like a lot of folks are directing their ire at school officials for trying to keep kids safe.” He cites school board meetings across the country making news for being so volatile over boards trying to enact safety measures meant to keep students in school and safe. “It’s concerning,” he says.

“Clearly, the new variants have us all concerned [too],” Skindell adds. “The

safety of the students and my coworkers is paramount. The possibility of students catching the virus is real.”

As a public school teacher, I can relate to many of these concerns. I am fortunate to teach in a school district where we were in-person for most of last school year. We had strict and carefully planned safety measures implemented by our administrators, custodians, support staff, and board. Students were distanced, masks worn, and desks sanitized between every class. Students were great and seemed genuinely thankful to be in the building with their teachers and peers when so many schools around us were not. Our district also offered a cyber option, of course, and (for last year) even the option to Zoom into their classes live if parents preferred or students were quarantined. This meant we were teaching students in our classrooms *and* online in their homes at the same time — a seemingly impossible feat, but one we accomplished. It wasn’t ideal and was overwhelming at times, but during a once-in-a-century pandemic? We all did our best.

As so many of us now know, teaching and learning virtually is a challenge. It requires different skill sets for both students *and* teachers. Teaching is performance art. It’s building relationships and rapport; it’s learning about one’s students and scaffolding and differentiating; it’s planning and identifying needs and making adjustments; it’s disciplining and redirecting and listening and learning. It’s a tap dance at times. It’s improvising. Sometimes it’s simply making it all up as you go.

“Hopefully everyone can get vaccinated, mask up, and be healthy and safe entering this year so we can put this all behind us and get back to some semblance of normalcy and best practices,” says Skindell.

Students have been through a lot. We owe it to them to work together as communities to ensure their safety and that they have the best year possible, whatever it looks like.

Jonathan Burdick, a teacher at Cambridge Springs High School, runs the historical blog Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com



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Tyler Titus Is Listening to Erie

A talk with the candidate for Erie County Executive on their plans for office



Tyler Titus, the Democratic candidate for Erie County Executive and first openly transgender person elected to office in Pennsylvania, brings with them extensive experience working with children, families, and community as a counselor, social worker, and invested participant in local government and activism.

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A recent poll by GQR showed Titus leading Davis 46 to 43 percent. While they are leading, that difference is well within the survey's 4.9 percent margin of error, making this a decidedly close race.

We talked to Titus about their campaign, and what's important to know before election day on Tuesday, Nov. 2

Nick Warren: Let's start with the basics. What made you want to run for Erie County Executive?

Dr. Tyler Titus: So, my story starts 45 miles south of here. And that's really where the seed was planted, that I was eventually going to run for something like this office. Being born into rural poverty, having my parents become foster parents, watching how much they struggled to get those kids' needs met through service providers because we were in a rural area. There just was nobody.

NW: And this is technically outside of Erie County?

TT: Yes, that was Crawford County. But my stepfather, being a logger, my mom working at the WIC office, and taking in these foster youth, watching them fall through the systems with schools and resources, it was frustrating. And then, this little five-year-old boy came to our house. We were around his 12th placement, he swept us off our feet, very quickly. And that was the first child my parents adopted. I still have his picture — I keep it by my desk — when he was on this boat that we were renting. And he's looking at us, he's got a smile. But I told him that I was going to do whatever I could to make sure kids didn't have to go through what he went through. And that literally started me down this trajectory. I became a case aide at Venango County and would

By: Nick Warren

In December of 2020, Erie County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper announced that she would not be seeking a third term in office. This was big, as it opened up the field for both Democrats and Republicans across Erie County seeking the top office. The May 2021 municipal primary had weight to it. On the Democrat's ballot were Carl Anderson, Rita Bishop, Dylanna Grasinger, and Dr. Tyler Titus. When all the votes were counted, Titus bested Anderson (who seemed the likely favorite) by just over 200 votes.

It was a well-earned victory. Over the last year, Titus (they/them pronouns) has built up a strong grassroots campaign, knocking on doors and talking one-on-one with the voters of Erie County. Most of all, Titus is *listening*. They want to know what the people want, not just the voting Democrats, but everyone, especially those who have been historically underrepresented and left out of the conversation.

That conversation is, of course, getting more and more divided. After besting Shawn Wroblewski in the primary, Republican Brenton Davis won the other nomination for the role. Davis represents the other side of politics, an outspoken, Trumpian candidate who has built his platform on small government.

At no time was it clearer just how important the role of Erie County Executive was than in 2020. Because of the pandemic, Kathy Dahlkemper began a series of daily video conferences informing the public about the presence and spread of COVID-19 in our area. With the Erie County Department of Health as one of the major wings under her purview, Dahlkemper's leadership, involvement, and transparency helped guide Erie through unthinkable times. Erie needed that.

A 40 Under 40 honoree from the class of 2017, Titus rose to national prominence two years later by becoming the first openly transgender person elected to office in Pennsylvania. They were elected to the Erie School Board, later being named vice president, then

president.

Titus is a Licensed Professional Counselor in the State of Pennsylvania, a trauma-informed leader, and public speaker. They have worked with the Erie County Office of Children and Youth (ECOCY) since 2007. They're a doctoral candidate with the University of Southern California and hold a Masters degree in community counseling from Edinboro University and a Bachelor of Arts in Marriage and Family Studies from Mercyhurst University.

Titus' prior experience in local government, both the city and the county, make them uniquely prepared to address concerns that might otherwise go unheard. As a social worker, Titus has a firsthand understanding of what Erie's government programs do, and how they can change lives for the better.

Titus knows the importance of bringing jobs to Erie and having them stay here. Titus knows the important infrastructure needs of the county, and how to properly allocate state and federal funds to make sure they go to

JESSICA HUNTER

transport youth. I learned the family systems from that angle. I would help break court reports starting at age 19. I then came up here for college to Mercyhurst, got an internship down at the Erie County Office of Children and Youth, and jumped in it from that angle. From an intern, I worked my way up to becoming an administrator over there. And it just solidified this understanding that systems work for some, and systems leave many behind. And I needed to do whatever I could to have a positive impact on changing those systems that were designed to help but were often causing harm.

NW: And this ties into your whole background in social work, which is not exactly the most common trajectory. How do you think that directly plays into it?

TT: I realized that there were so many barriers that prevented the families from moving forward and healing. Lack of access to gainful employment, because of crimes of property, lack of access to quality education, because they don't have great transportation, or again, crimes of

poverty preventing them from getting loans. So you start to see that there were so many barriers in the way, for families to get up. Then as a social worker, I realized that I had to move from the micro work where I was at OCY [Office of Children and Youth] working at that administrative level, up to the macro work and really affecting the policy and the procedure that are keeping these systems in place that were holding people locked in.

NW: How did your role at the Erie School Board shape your positions?

TT: What it did was solidify my love for local politics. Serving on the school board allowed me to dive in and help address problems that people I work with, people that I know, that my neighbors are facing right now. And I can bring together real-time solutions for that. I saw this possibility that unfolded, being appointed vice president unanimously, then being voted in as president unanimously, that not only was I able to create solutions, but I was being seen as a leader guiding some of those solutions. And so that helped

me forge this path forward. Being the president of a school board during a pandemic, there wasn't a lot of guidance. And we were really having to come together and navigate through things that no one ever has navigated through, making sure we were keeping the most vulnerable protected and safe, and making sure they still had access to education. What we learned during this pandemic is that there are huge inequities that we already knew about, but now that you can't unsee them, you can see what we saw during the pandemic. And that laid out that: A) I wasn't backing away from politics, that now I was in it for the long haul. And B) That I needed to do even more to help more families. And so taking what I learned as the school board president, at that city-level and moving that into a county-level — being able to bring that same passion, that same momentum, that same commitment to building the Erie County we all deserve.

NW: You talked about how the position on the school board has evolved during the pandemic. Can you talk about how the Erie County Execu-

tive role has evolved? Because Kathy Dahlkemper in 2019, she wasn't on TV every day addressing a national crisis.

TT: Absolutely. So what we saw transpire right in front of us was the county executive who oversees public safety, which includes the Health Department that had to become the face of where we were getting our knowledge; the face of setting the tone, the vision, the mission, the face of bringing together those collaborative efforts. And we've now moved into this role, where the county executive is really leading at a much higher level. On the economic side, on the human services side, on the public safety side, and being a strong advocate down in Harrisburg, we've always had to do that. But now, even more than ever, that there's this funding that's coming out, there's the Infrastructure Bill. We've got to make sure that Erie County isn't just seen for the ways that we're behind, but the ways that we can move forward, and that we aren't being left out of conversations, and that we get to the money that we've been long overdue.



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One example being the Erie Public School District, which has been severely underfunded for decades. And it took a long time and a lot of people championing that movement to get passed through to Harrisburg. We can't let that happen at a county level. We can't sit this through. So if you're Kathy, and this role is moved into being the leader here in your county, but then also being a leader at the state level, you're fighting, because if you're not, another county is going to step up, another region is going to step up and they're gonna get it.

NW: If you were to win, what would your leadership look like there?

TT: My leadership would be one that is 110 percent behind the community college.

NW: And how would that differ from your opponent?

TT: So my opponent has been the opposition when it comes to the community college, single-handedly funding and starting a PAC against the community college and making that be the single point of his platform when he ran prior, as he launched his campaign that no county tax dollars or county money would go to supporting this community college effort. And where we vastly differ, is that we have needed a community college since we heard what community colleges were. We have been behind the eight-ball, we have lost millions, tens of millions of dollars because we don't have a community college. Businesses don't come, students don't stay. We don't have the access to immediate on-the-job training because a community college can pivot in ways that universities can't. Our universities here have lost out because the community college prepares the person who might not be ready to jump into that four-year university. It's a direct feeder system. We have tremendously failed the county by not having this already here. And what this brings in the level of possibility is literally only limited by our imagination.

NW: So, election-wise, how are things looking? Are you optimistic?

TT: I'm optimistic, and we're realistic. This has historically been a very close race. And we don't expect this one to be any different. And so we put in 200 percent every day. We wake up, and we go immediately into work. It's all strategizing, it's organizing. But most importantly, it's *engaging*, and it's *listening*, and it's following the

message that we've heard throughout the primary, through now.

NW: So, if the polls weren't surprising, I think the primary may have been. I think some people expected different results. Can you tell us your thoughts on that night and beyond and how things have evolved since then?

TT: We were definitely written off by many who have been involved in politics for a long time here in Erie, saying that we were too young, we weren't ready, and that people weren't ready to hear our message. As we moved through the primary, that's not at all what we were finding when we were going out there knocking on doors. We did upset the system. We have shown that when you listen to voters, and you share the message that voters deliver to you, and you speak to the things that matter most to them, they respond. And that's exactly what we saw happen back in May, is that the voter showed up because we were showing up for them. We were listening, we were engaging. What is most historical and exciting about this, is the progressive forward-thinking message of this campaign was embraced, and people got excited about it. They're excited about the change.

NW: If you win, what are the first three things you do?

TT: The first three things we do is to take a genuine look at the ways Erie was hurt during the pandemic — we have people who are still mourning the loss of loved ones. More loved ones will be lost during this pandemic. Jobs, dreams, small businesses who had to close their doors — how do we elevate those people? You have to look across the board, we're seeing drug use on the rise, mental health is declining. People are leaving, we just lost 3.9 percent of our population. Those are the things we have to immediately turn to. How do we improve the health of our community and our economy? Because we're hurting, we are a hurting county right now.

NW: Let me just directly steal this from one of my colleague Ben Speggen's favorite questions. If you had to sum up your campaign in six words, what would it be?

TT: [thinks] Creating good jobs. Fighting for everyone.

NW: Can we talk a bit more about the Infrastructure Bill and what that could mean for Erie County?

TT: What we see here now is an opportunity to invest in broadband internet, in transportation that connects — let's look at high speed rail. We're in the hub, we're in the thick of it. So let's capitalize on that. Let's look at bridges and roads and urban design that promotes and creates walkability and usability. We don't have a downtown that's super friendly to bike riders, or to the millennials who want to call this space home. Talking to local groups, there are so many perspectives here, and so many great solutions here.

NW: What do you think is the most forgotten department in Erie County?

TT: Public safety. Just looking at, you know, the radio system, the dispatch, how we respond. When we are in a state of crisis, the first place we call into is 911. And we have not done a phenomenal job of caring for the people who care for us. And then the Department of Human Services. There's been a lot overlooked there. We're seeing how those systems have inequitably affected Black, brown, and immigrant populations.

NW: What would you do directly, for those populations, and how would that be different from what we are doing now?

TT: A lot of this is advocating at the state level. Because what people don't understand is that so much of the legislature that dictates mental health services, drug and alcohol services, or OCY comes from a regional and a state level. But there are policies within those on how we hire, how we promote, and how we provide resources to the families that we're serving that we do have a lot of control over. What programs are we going to continue to utilize through all these organizations? Are they working? Are they helpful to people? Or are they causing more families to be broken apart? I think taking a genuine and serious look at that has to be done. That's absolutely a priority. Because when you're talking, again, when we're out there talking to families who interact with these systems, that's what we're hearing, that their voices aren't being heard or that their voices are being forgotten.

Nick Warren can be reached at Nick@eriereader.com.

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Edinboro Feeling Like a Campus Town Again

But how long it lasts is anyone's guess



RYAN SMITH

By: Ryan Smith

Breaking a short stretch of afternoon quiet, there's a booming stray yawp out of one apartment — "AAAAYIYIYIIIIIIiiiiiii..." — met, rapid-fire, from somewhere next-door:

"SHUUUT the F*** UP!"

"Who said that?" asks that screamer, stepping out his door.

"I did," says that neighbor.

He comes out of his door. She rounds the corner in front of hers.

Uh-oh, I think. A second or two pass, and ...

"Bike ride?" he asks — and off they go.

Christ these kids are weird, I think. And everywhere, and so damn loud ...

And we're more than happy to have them — literally hundreds upon hundreds more young people than we've seen around in a very long time — back to disturb what's been a too-long, veering into straight up eerie kind of peace in sunny Edinboro.

See, for us, those kinds of fun little messes (and the people who bring them) being all over the place have always been part of making a neighborhood in the smack-dab middle of town — just off the sprawling campus of Edinboro University of Pennsylvania — our home.

Or they were, at least, until COVID came to eat 2020 alive. Then, everything went quiet around here. Like, QUIET.

And (with initial full lockdowns last year, then subsequent partial and remote learning-heavy restarts heading into 2021) stayed that way for a long while, until everyone started listening to the facts and science (*right?*); everyone eligible for it got a COVID vaccine (*right?*); and, as sure as the sun rises, everything eventually went from new-normal back to good 'ol regular-normal (*RIGHT?!?!?*).

Yeah, right.

As with everything else, when it comes to getting back to it for all of the academic institutions throughout the region, the realities of the situation are a good bit murkier than that.

On one hand, full public school and college reopenings that have been well-buffered by ongoing

mitigation and strong plans/practices, as well as the ever-growing numbers of vaccinated people throughout the country (and, yeah, the absolute glut of advertising with that *you're back!/we're back!/everything's awesome!/buy shit!* vibe all over it) makes it sort of easy to relax into it a bit. To feel like, you know, we got this.

And, hopefully, we do.

But there's that other hand, real as your face, that we can't separate from, too — the one where COVID outbreaks continue as way, way too many millions of people in the U.S., for whatever (and but damn few good) reasons, haven't gotten any kind of vaccine, and aren't whatsoever planning to despite their wide-as-can-be availability and evidence of efficacy, complete with FDA approval.

Then, to top it — and compound the plethora of possible threat, risk and challenge to everyone — there's that Delta variant.

At Edinboro and throughout the rest of Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE), riding the undercurrent of all of this has been news in recent months of the upcoming mergers/consolidations of a total of six PASSHE schools (Edinboro, Clarion and Slippery Rock universities in the state's northwest; and Mansfield, Lock Haven and Bloomsburg universities in the northeast), meant to address what have been continually declining enrollment numbers throughout the system and position the schools for adaptive changes and futures that allow them to remain open, affordable, and accessible for

Edinboro students have returned to campus during an uncertain time for the longstanding institution — not only due to the lingering COVID-19 pandemic, but also because of an impending merger/consolidation with fellow PASSHE universities Clarion and Slippery Rock.

students.

As far as handling current COVID-related challenges go with the college having kicked off its first week of classes at the end of August, Edinboro spokespersons politely pointed me in the direction of their official University Emergency Response Team's Fall 2021 Plan, which strictly adheres to current national Centers for Disease Control recommendations and protocols.

That means, in short, for now:

Classrooms are occupied by students pre-pandemic style, but with masks required and social distancing encouraged; dorms are occupied pre-pandemic style, but with move-in screenings required and strong recommendations that everyone get vaccinated; and, in the event there are any outbreaks, it's right back to quarantines and, if it gets bad enough, potential returns to online-only teaching and learning.

And as far as handling that upcoming merging-into-something-new goes, PASSHE has laid out its plans for the mergers, which will not close any of the respective campuses, to officially take place starting in 2022.

For Edinboro — like it is for so many people, places and things — how it goes in the future could depend largely on how things are handled now and in coming months.

Here's to hoping those crazy-ass kids are still yelling across the street next fall.

If you're interested in digging deeper, you can find all sorts of information about the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education's merger/consolidation plans at passhe.edu/SystemRedesign. Edinboro University's Fall 2021 Plan is available at edinboro.edu.

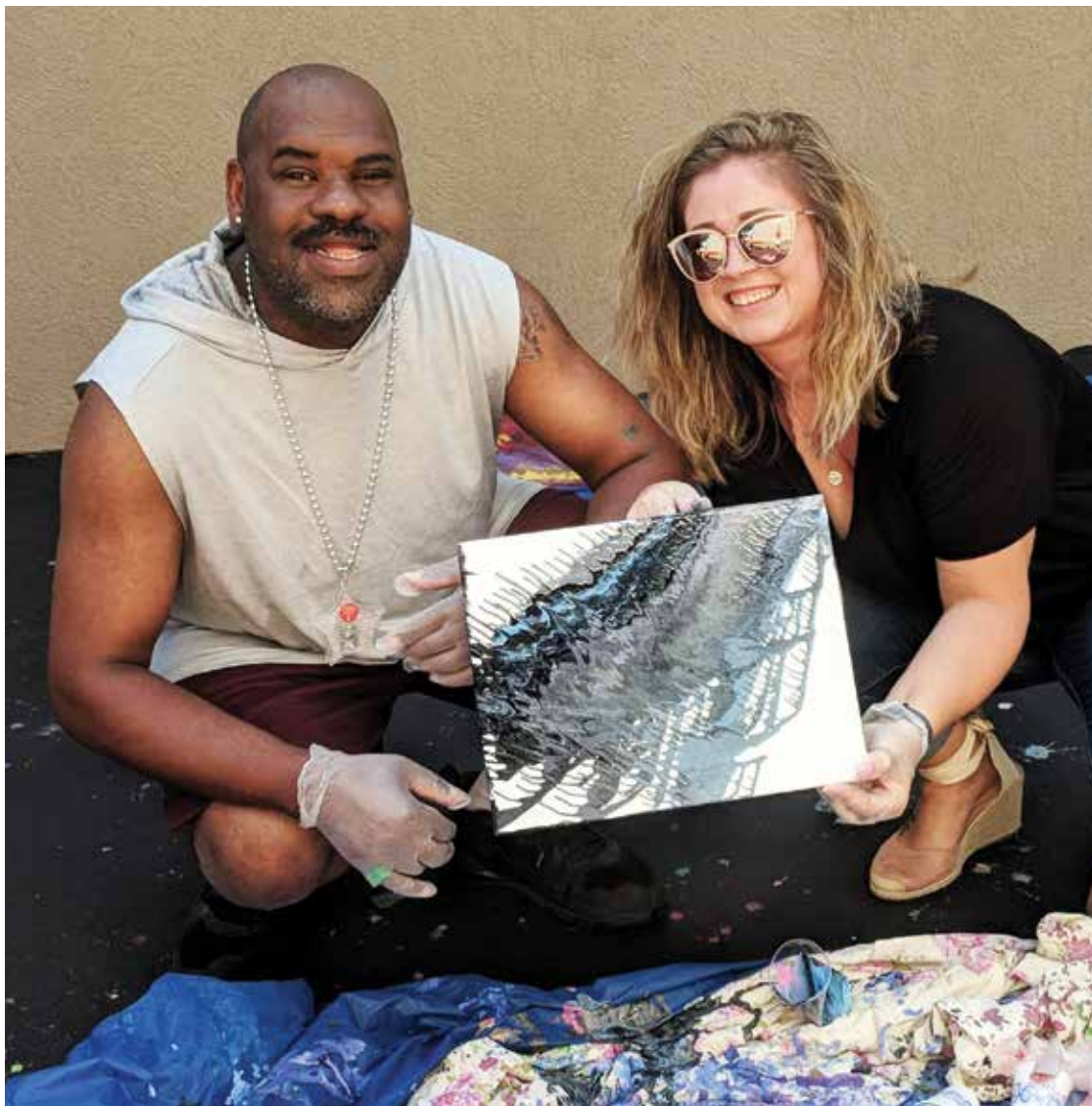
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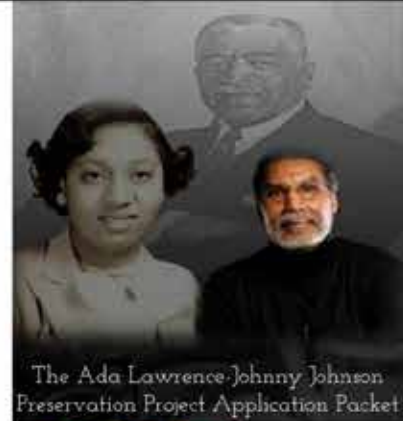
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At 25, Erie celebrates *That Thing You Do!*



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By: Liz Allen

The movie musicians in *That Thing You Do!* are proud to be from “Erie, PA!” even though the movie was filmed in sunny California and premiered in Toronto, Canada.

Now, 25 years after Tom Hanks wrote, directed, and starred in the Erie-centric film, we will get our turn in the lime-light.

Details about how Erie became the inspiration for *That Thing You Do!* are a bit fuzzy.

In a February 1996 Erie Times-News story, a 20th Century Fox publicist said that Hanks was driving to the Shakespeare Great Lakes Festival in Cleveland in the 1970s when he stopped here to eat. At other times, Hanks said he passed through Erie in 1982 or 1983.

At any rate, Hanks “never forgot the town,” the PR woman said. “He remembered it as a piece of Americana.”

So what could be more “Americana” than celebrating the quarter-century anniversary of *That Thing You Do!* at an Erie SeaWolves baseball game on Labor Day weekend? On Saturday, Sept. 4, the four actors from *The Wonders* (Tom Everett Scott, Steve Zahn, Johnathon Schaech, and Ethan Embry), the one-hit Erie garage band, will reunite at the Erie vs. Harrisburg Senators game.

Pulling off this hometown-rich promotion has been a labor of love for Greg Coleman, Erie SeaWolves president. The feat required great attention to detail, in much the same way *That Thing You Do!* demanded painstaking work to

make Orange, Calif., where much of the film was shot in November 1995, resemble Erie in the summer of ‘64.

Hanks finally got very specific about why he set his film in Erie during a press conference at the Toronto International Film Festival in September 1996, after his movie premiered there.

“I spent some formative years in Cleveland, Ohio,” Hanks said, according to a Sept. 15, 1996 Erie Times-News story. In October 1982, he drove to Cleveland after making a TV movie in Toronto. “And I was bored and I got off the beaten path. I drove through Erie and stopped at an Oktoberfest ... I had half a stein of beer. I walked around the grounds, threw some money in the carnie booths, and I just kind of dug Erie, and ever since then, it sort of stayed in my head.”

Erie might have been lodged in Hank’s brain, but Pennsylvania Gov. Tom Ridge failed to soften Hank’s heart when Ridge flew to Hollywood in March 1996 to ask Hanks to host a premiere of *That Thing You Do!* in Erie. Ridge pitched the idea as a way to raise more money to restore the Warner Theatre, in addition to the \$7 million that Ridge proposed for the project in the state budget. That September, Hanks turned Ridge down, although Erie did receive two sneak previews of the film in October 1996, before its nationwide release — at Cinemark’s Tinseltown theatre, not the ornate Warner.

“You’ve got to be quick with me. I’m from Erie, PA,” guitarist Lenny Heise (Steve Zahn) quips in the movie. It’s

[top left] Steve Zahn (left), Tom Everett Scott, Johnathon Schaech, Liv Tyler, and Ethan Embry star in the Tom Hanks-directed *That Thing You Do!* — released 25 years ago in 1996. Zahn, Scott, Schaech, and Embry will return to Erie as *The Wonders* on Saturday, Sept. 4, as the Erie SeaWolves celebrate Wonders Night at UPMC Park. [bottom right] Great care was taken on the set of *That Thing You Do!* to replicate the look and feel of 1960s Erie — in Orange, Calif., where the film was shot.

ironic, then, that it’s taken 25 years (and \$26.7 million) to restore the Warner to its original glory.

But Erieites are generally sincere, not sardonic, so it is also good news that *Wonders’* appearance at the SeaWolves’ game includes a fundraiser. Game-worn jerseys with the *Wonders’* neon logo will be auctioned to benefit NoticeAbility, a nonprofit that helps young people with dyslexia reach their full potential and gain self-esteem. Johnathon Schaech, who plays singer-songwriter James “Jimmy” Mattingly II in the movie, serves on NoticeAbility’s board.

Tying the *Wonders* reunion in Erie to a good cause is fitting, because *That Thing You Do!* is built on upbeat vibes, starting with its feel-good plot: A garage band ascends from humble beginnings in Erie to raucous yet fleeting fame, thanks to a fluke. Guy “Shades” Patterson (Tom Everett Scott) agrees to play drums with the band at a Mercyhurst College talent show only because the regular drummer (played by Giovanni Ribisi) busted an arm by leap-frogging over parking meters along

State Street.

Jimmy wrote the movie’s titular song “That Thing You Do!” as a ballad. But Guy, stuck in a humdrum job at his father’s appliance store in Downtown Erie, unleashes his percussion prowess at Mercyhurst and the college crowd goes wild. Lenny and the Bass Player (Ethan Embry, who is never referred to by name, though in the credits he’s winkingly named as T.B. Player), dig Guy’s snappy rendition. So do the patrons at an Italian restaurant near the airport when the band is booked there.

The band inks a record deal, signs on with Mr. White (Tom Hanks) as their manager, joins a cavalcade of musical groups touring state fairs, lands a spot on an Ed Sullivan-like TV show in Los Angeles, then splits up. Still, there’s a happy ending, because Guy gets the girl, Faye (Liv Tyler).

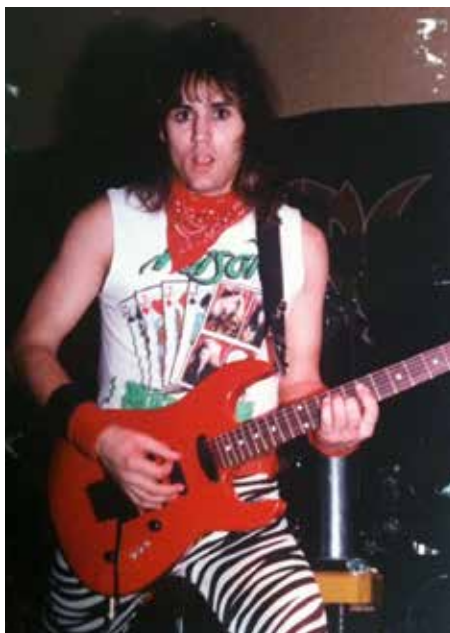
It took months for Guy and Faye to confess their love, but Erie embraced the idea that we might become a little Hollywood even before we knew about the Hanks film.

In summer 1995, then-Pennsylvania Secretary of Commerce Tom Hagen toured Erie with T. William Hanson from the Pennsylvania Film Bureau. “If you ever wanted to find Southern California in Erie, that’s it,” said Hanson, referring to possible location settings such as the Griswold Plaza Post Office and Waldameer Park, in a July 28, 1995 Erie Daily Times story.

In mid-October that year, Hanks announced that he would make a film set in Erie. “Erie Goes Hollywood” ex-



JERRY SKRYPZAK



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

[left] Jamie Shaw of the O'Needers was into heavy metal and KISS tribute music in the 1980s, when his band Satin Steel had a Wonders-like experience as a flash in the pan success. [right] The Fabulous Epics with the Beatles at the Peppermint Lounge in New York City on Feb. 9, 1964. Pictured from left to right are Paul Yoculan, Loren Cope, Paul McCartney, Vinny Frazzini, and John Lennon.

claimed a newspaper headline.

Alas, things didn't pan out as anticipated. In November, producers said the movie would be filmed in Orange, Calif., with storefronts transformed to look like Woolworths, Hess Optical, Stanley Brothers Furniture, Isaac Baker & Son, and the fictitious Patterson Appliance Store in Downtown Erie. Filmmakers needed to shoot in warm weather, not during an Erie winter, they said.

We got over any disappointment. All that mattered was that this film was *about* Erie. Or was it? In September 1996, when Hanks said that he wouldn't premiere his film in Erie or even attend two early screenings here, Tim Chambers, head of the Pennsylvania Film Bureau, threw another curve ball to Erie.

"Only a couple of minutes in the movie identify Erie," he said. "It's a road picture."

Chambers was mostly wrong. Erie dominates the first half-hour of the film, and toward the end, after Jimmy ditches her, a dejected Faye says she's moving back to Erie from L.A.

But in some ways, Chambers was correct. *That Thing You Do!* isn't a documentary about Erie. Instead, it resonates with all kinds of viewers.

Coleman, 47, doesn't recall when he first saw *That Thing You Do!* but said, "It's a movie I always enjoyed" long before he moved to Erie from Trenton, N.J., to run the SeaWolves.

You don't have to be from Erie to understand the thrill that band members and Faye felt the first time they heard *That Thing You Do!* on an Erie radio station. Coleman felt that kind of exuberance the first time he saw his team on *SportsCenter*, he said. That moment

also rings true for anyone who hits a home run. For me, that was seeing my first newspaper byline, at age 16.

Erie musician Jamie Shaw, 57, loves *That Thing You Do!* for several reasons.

"It became my favorite movie, because it's about music, it's about Erie history, but also ironically, I lived the '80s version of this movie," said Shaw. In 1985, his heavy metal band, Satin Steel, cut a record that got radio airplay and climbed the charts. "We decided to move to California, we played out there, (then), as it fell apart with the Wonders, it fell apart for my band," he said.

"I ended up coming back to Erie. I had gotten out of the business for a while, to be a family man," he said. After he and his wife Jill raised their two daughters, "I met some new friends who are musicians and we put a band together. We couldn't think of a name. I had just watched *That Thing You Do!* and said, 'What if we call ourselves The Oneeders?'" The movie band settles on calling themselves The One-Ders, but after too many people mispronounce it as The Oneeders, they adopt "The Wonders" name instead.

To avoid any copyright issues, "We spell it O'Needers, like we are Irish," said Shaw, who has played drums with his band for 12 years.

Audiences don't always understand the allusion. "I'll pause and say, 'Don't you get it? Did you ever see the movie *That Thing You Do?*'"

Baseball and movie fans who hear Shaw and the O'Needers play during pre-game festivities at the Sept. 4 SeaWolves' game should be well-versed in the meaning of the band's name, though.

Other Erie rock 'n rollers might also be tickled that Erie's O'Needers and the celebrity Wonders will appear in the same venue, because there's additional Erie history wrapped up in this story.

Some will recall that *That Thing You Do!* sounded surprisingly similar to the real-life story of The Fabulous Epics (later The Younger Brothers). The Epics started at the Sons of Italy in Erie before landing a three-year gig at the Peppermint Lounge in New York City. Band members Paul Yoculan Younger, Vinny Frazzini, Larry "Bugsy" Cope, Neal Myers, and Walter Slivinski of Erie goofed around with Paul McCartney, John Lennon, and Ringo Starr at the Peppermint Lounge after the Beatles played the *Ed Sullivan Show* on Feb. 9, 1964.

The Younger Brothers endured for years in the music industry. In contrast, The Wonders only lasted a few months. Lenny becomes a casino manager. The Bass Player serves two tours in Vietnam. Jimmy makes three Gold albums with his new band, now punnily named the Heardsmen. Guy and Faye marry, have four kids, move to Bainbridge Island, Wash., and start the Puget Sound Conservatory of Music.

In my alternative ending, the Pattersons move back to Erie, because it's a good place to raise a family and still pursue a music career. Shaw, from the O'Needers, can attest to that. "The Erie music scene is made up of many musicians who played 30 years ago who are still doing it," said Shaw. "I'm amazed at all my colleagues still performing."

I also picture Lenny and The Bass Player coming from the same mold as The Epics/Younger Brothers. In a 1996 Erie Times-News interview, Ray Tubbs,

manager of The Younger Brothers, described the band's ethos: "At that time, we were all young and poor. Our dream was to be successful and come back to Erie and build our parents new homes and make it easy for them."

In 2014, the Erie Times-News asked Paul Yoculan Younger about the tabloid show *Hard Copy*, which had pursued an expose claiming that Hanks had ripped off the Younger Brothers' story. "They wanted me to go after Tom Hanks for stealing the idea," said Younger, who died in 2019. "I said, 'You're kidding. Why would I want to do that?' I never got to know him, but I know he's a good guy and gave our town some exposure."

And that's no shade.

Liz Allen will be doing that thing she does, working as an Erie SeaWolves' usher, on Sept. 4. You can reach her at lizallenerie@gmail.com.

If you go

A limited number of tickets remain for the Sept. 4 Erie SeaWolves game vs. the Harrisburg Senators, which will feature the four actors who played the Wonders in *That Thing You Do!*

Game time is 4:05 p.m. and the first 1,000 fans will receive SeaWolves sunglasses like the ones Guy "Shades" Patterson (Tom Everett Scott) wore in the movie.

Tickets for a meet-and-greet buffet and for an autograph session with The Wonders are sold out, but there will be plenty of chances for all fans to see the band members. The Wonders will throw out the ceremonial first pitch, sing "Take Me Out to the Ballgame" at the seventh-inning stretch and participate in other activities inspired by the film.

The O'Needers, an Erie band whose name plays off the original name of The Wonders in the film, will play at the pre-game festivities. Learn more about The O'Needers on the band's Facebook page or at theoneedersrock.com

After the game, fans can stay to watch *That Thing You Do!* on the UPMC video scoreboard.

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Edinboro's Bruce Gallery Features Erie Artists of Color

CHROMA Guild members highlighted at current exhibit



[left] Sheldon McNeill explains that his "Malcolm X" and "Mother Rose" paintings reflect "black identities in the United States." [bottom right] Cosmetologist Danielle Slade, co-owner of So Fancy Hair Salon, describes her artwork: "our hair is complete self-expression."

By: Heather Amancio

In the midst of Northwestern Pennsylvania's green pastures, the Bruce Gallery at Edinboro University presents "Let's Pretend," an art show curated by Dr. Leslie C. Sotomayor II. "Let's Pretend" is believed to be the first regional show exclusively created and designed by artists of color. A multimedia exhibition, "Let's Pretend" features members of Erie's CHROMA Guild including Antonio Howard, Lourdes Jasso, Sheldon McNeill, Esther Ortiz, Emidays Serrano, Danielle Slade, Roland Slade, Armando Reyes, and Marquis Wallace.

"Let's Pretend" is a response to Aruna D'Souza's book *Whitewalling: Art, Race, and Protest in 3 Acts*. In her book, D'Souza reveals a troubling history of racist incidents in major arts institutions and sparked a national dialogue about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the art world. Inspired by *Whitewalling* and discussion groups held in Edinboro and Erie, Dr. Sotomayor's exhibition examines the historically fraught relationship between gallery spaces and artists (and people) of color. The title suggests that a museum is a space of racial privilege: a world where the art gallery is open and inclusive does not exist. Pretending, in a sense, is about storytelling,

and "Let's Pretend" serves as a platform for artists of color to tell their stories of both systemic issues and cultural pride.

Chicago-born, Erie-based artist Armando Reyes' giant, wall-mounted game of Scrabble sets the tone for the exhibition: the experiences of people of color is not a game, and advocacy is not a choice. Reyes's hand-

crafted wooden sculpture, *Words Matter*, materializes the concept of reclaiming space. The white walls of the gallery have historically been occupied by predominantly white artists. Reyes challenges that narrative by claiming an entire wall of the Bruce Gallery. Using English and Spanish, words like cages, ghetto, protest, cultura (culture), and justicia (justice) physically intertwine to demonstrate the connections between them. This game is a reality for people of color: some words perpetuate harmful stereotypes or connote trauma. White individuals, however, can treat their allyship as a game. It's not their reality, but this exhibition urges them to pretend that it is.

Painter, writer, and spoken word artist Antonio Howard received the Erie Arts & Culture Emerging Artist Fellowship Award in 2019, and serves as the current president of the CHROMA Guild. Howard's painting *Juvenile Life* was made while he was in prison, where he had been incarcerated since he was 15. *Juvenile Life* depicts three



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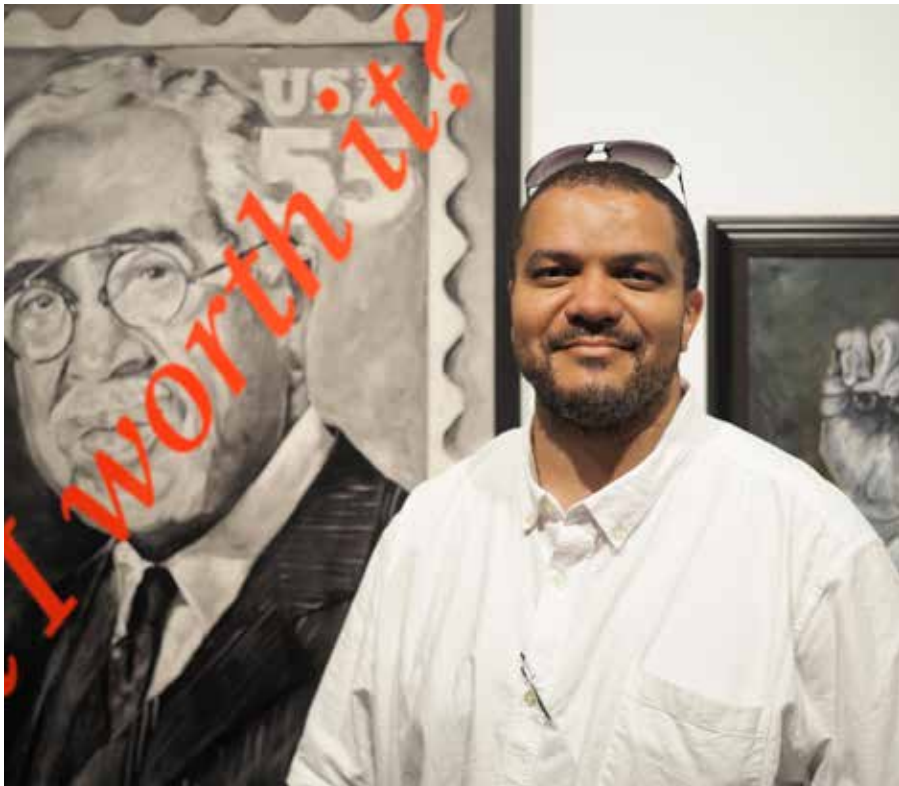
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Black children, each reflecting Howard: one dressed in pajamas holding a stuffed bear, another dressed in a collared shirt and tie that are too big, and the last one dressed in the unmistakable orange prison uniform. A giant handcuff binds them all to a brick wall. Howard was paroled at 41, after spending almost 27 years in prison. Painted in 2003, *Juvenile Life* represents contemporary issues that plague the United States prison system and urges viewers to care about imprisoned youth.

Danielle Slade is a hairstylist, small business owner, community leader, and activist in Erie. Her work, *Erie Crown*, is a part of her #ErieCrown project featuring the styling and photographing the hair of women of color in Erie. The photos will be displayed on billboards to celebrate the beauty

and pride of women of color. Slade's work challenges current beauty standards and shifts the focus of white trends to a more diverse and inclusive definition of beauty. Like museums and galleries, beauty standards have a racist history of favoring a Eurocentric perspective. Slade's work conveys the beauty of textured hair with a project that transcends the gallery walls and flows into the community.

The themes of specific, racially-informed perspectives, systemic issues, and cultural pride evident in "Let's Pretend" represent the complexity and multitudes of experiences within the CHROMA Guild and the Erie community as a whole. The CHROMA Guild is still a new organization, embracing the opportunity to educate their area about their experiences as artists of color.

[left] Antonio Howard was incarcerated at 15 and paroled in 2017; while in prison, Howard says his paintings "broke free." [right] Roland Slade's found-video collage, "Celebrity Activists" — critiques our focus on those who are a part of "the entertainment machine" instead of giving our attention to intellectual leaders.

"Let's Pretend" encourages the audience to think about the ways in which people of color have been left out so often that they needed to be given their own space in order to have their voices amplified. "Let's Pretend" asks just that — for the viewer to pretend that the gallery walls are always fair and equal. "Let's Pretend" is not a quiet, modest art exhibition. It demands to be seen, heard, and celebrated.

"Let's Pretend" curator Dr. Leslie C. Sotomayor (formerly a professor at Edinboro and now a faculty member at Texas Tech University) served as the president of Erie's CHROMA Guild, a group creative professionals

founded by Erie Arts & Culture that works to provide access and opportunities to creative professionals of color in northwestern PA.

Heather Amancio, a junior art history student at Allegheny College, is pursuing a career in museum curation and can be reached at amancioh@allegheny.edu.

"Let's Pretend" can be seen at Edinboro University's Bruce Gallery. www.BruceGallery.info. Summer hours by appointment with the Director laustin@edinboro.edu. Open 3-6pm, M-F from August 23 — September 24. Closed Labor Day. Reception and conversation with curator at 6pm September 1 in the gallery at Doucette Hall, 215 Meadville Street.

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If You Like to Read, Will Likes to Write

A look at local author Will Isaac



NICK WARREN

By: Symone Crockett

Will-Likes-To-Write is a local publishing company that was founded by local author Will Isaac. He started the publishing company in 2017 with goals driven at providing his audience to experience an escape from the real world as they dive into his fantasy and fiction literary works.

"This is who I am, this is what I do," expresses Isaac. Drawing inspiration from Disney movies such as *The Lion King* and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, Isaac creates stories that leave you rooting for the main character while you journey through their ups and downs. His passion for writing is shown through each story as he also uses experiences from his own trials and tribulations in life, such as in his first book *The Sondian - The Killing of a Chief*.

The creation of Isaac's company also came out of a desire to be his own boss, being an extreme goal chaser, and love and motivation from his loved ones — primarily his wife and two daughters. His oldest daughter is even following in his footsteps as she is already a published author herself at the age of 13.

Now with the recent release of his first horror series, "The Woods of Washington," Isaac introduces two horror stories, *The Man Without a Face* and *The Huntress*, with tales that turn our natural environment into something terrifying. The release of this series was held at PACA's "Attack of the PACA, Comes Back(A)" in July, where Isaac was able

Local author Will Isaac poses with two of his previously published horror stories, *The Huntress* and *The Man Without a Face*. Isaac founded his publishing company, Will-Likes-To-Write in 2017.

to sell a wide selection of merchandise as well as his books, provide a live showcase of his horror series, and meet and greet with his newly found fanbase.

Since the release, Isaac has been busy participating in a variety of pop-up shops including at Keyz Bazaar and The Tippy Bean. He will also have a spot at this year's ComiCon Erie, which is something Isaac has always wanted to be a part of. All of this had been made possible with the much needed creative help from his illustrator, Walter Smith Jr. Meeting one day at the gym, the two have now become a dynamic duo, with the ability to create works that catch the eye and make you want to keep reading. With the help of other very important team members, they combine talents and enrich one another's quality of work throughout the process.

With plans to move from literary works, to audiobooks, to soon to come short films, Isaac isn't limiting his growth of this one-of-a-kind local publishing company. Isaac's main message to all of his readers is to "not allow your creativity and imagination to go unused, these are the things that make you unique and make the world a better place with you in it."

For more information, follow Isaac on Facebook at facebook.com/WillLikesToWrite

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Erie Natives Chase a Dream with *Rathskeller: A Musical Elixir*

Original musical seeks to register high proof among NYC theater community



By: Matt Swanseger

If I were to tell you that a Broadway-quality musical could be conceptualized, written, cast, choreographed, and produced in less than a year, you might tell me that I should go home because I'm drunk. But no matter what the breathalyzer test may or may not say, the fact of the matter is that *Rathskeller: A Musical Elixir* will debut at the New Ohio Theatre in New York City's West Village later this month after only nine months in development.

Don't worry, creative producer Julian Decker and director Rachel Rudd can scarcely believe it either. After all, it seems like just yesterday they were both involved in Erie's community theater scene — Decker with the Erie Playhouse (he says he "grew up" there) and Rudd with the Playhouse, Mercyhurst Prep drama program, Footlights Summer Theatre, Station Dinner Theatre, and her own Triple Threat Studios (among other things). It was Rachel's husband, Chris — "who doesn't consider himself a theater guy" — who first broached the idea of a dive bar musical 15 years ago.

Although there were talks to get the project off the ground back then, they dissolved like the head on a draught beer as familial and business obligations took

precedence. And then the pandemic arrived, slowing all of society's systems to a near halt. All of the sudden, the creative well — and will — were refilled, and *Rathskeller* was pulled out of the cellar ("Rathskeller" is a German word referring to a basement bar or tavern). In the intervening years, the Rudds' daughters, Grace and Sydney, had grown into young adults and established their own theatre company, Dame Productions, in Marietta, Ga. near Atlanta. Grace was eventually able to get on a call with Decker, who currently teaches theater and runs his own studio in New York City, and things began to happen very quickly — you could say the pace was *staggering*.

Although initially conceived as a jukebox musical (i.e. borrowing songs from popular music) following one man's struggles with alcoholism, Decker felt that approach to "this subject matter was totally going to do it a disservice." He leveraged his connections to cultivate a team of creatives that he'd either worked with before or whose work he had admired in the past. His college classmate and friend, Collin Kessler, was recruited to write the book, while Brianna Barnes composed the music and lyrics. Decker explains that because the book was written *before* the music (contrary to convention), a jukebox-like

Confronting the pitfalls of alcoholism, *Rathskeller: A Musical Elixir* is an original musical set to debut at the New Ohio Theater in New York City on Friday, Sept. 24. Several veterans of the Erie theater scene are heavily involved in the production.

dynamic evolved anyway, as the songs were informed by the characters' individual quirks and nuances as they appear in the script. The ease of that collaboration made Grace Rudd's job of choreographing all the more natural.

Those characters, by the way, are portrayed by a diverse cast of actors culled from all over, including right here in Erie. At the center of the narrative is the man, portrayed by Erie singer-songwriter Doug Phillips in middle age. Rudd explains that the man wanders into a dive bar that unbeknownst to him is actually purgatory — each act is a faded and scarcely recognizable memory from his gradually deteriorating life. The other principal characters represent in some facet the Seven Deadly Sins that either beget or are begotten of alcoholism — Pride, Greed, Lust, Envy, Gluttony, Wrath, and Sloth. Genevieve Ellis, a Buffalo native who recently appeared in the Erie Playhouse production of *Into the Woods* was a unanimous choice for the Lust-inspired character.

Decker reiterates again and again that in showbusiness, there are only two degrees of separation — he mentions the connections between him and the Rudds and Erie, between him and Collin and Brianna (the two were also familiar with another from college), and between him and the Erie Playhouse and Ellis. "I saw her, I reached out to a connection to connect me with her, and boom, she's

in the show." And that's essentially how a bunch of Erie theater people rubbed their eyes and woke up in New York City.

"I don't know if you know much about Erie theater, but everywhere I go, and anyone who I meet, I tell them about how active the Erie community is in theater, and they're like 'Where's Erie?' and 'Why is it that active?' I don't know, but it just is. We have turned out a ton of exceptional working actors, directors, and really cool managers," relays Rachel Rudd.

Unless you can make it to the New Ohio Theater the weekend of Sept. 24 - 26, unfortunately you will not be able to see the culmination of that — there are no plans to stream the performances live or record them for public viewing. However, the team is optimistic that the production — privately funded in its entirety — will eventually see wider distribution through high-end regional theaters, Broadway, and eventually smaller school and community theaters once the material is licensed as a package deal down the road.

For now, they're proud (arguably not a Deadly Sin when borne out of hard, honest work) that they'll be able to promote a successfully executed production that has universal appeal, embraces inclusivity (women, BIPOC, and LGBTQ+ individuals both on stage and behind the scene), and a book and score that tie together seamlessly.

We'll drink to that — in moderation, of course.

Matt Swanseger's (mswanseger@eriereader.com) dive bar choreography has historically been of the improvised variety — kind of what Ornette Coleman is to free jazz.



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9:45 AM Col Halt: Rendlesham Forest Case
11:30 AM Lunch On Your Own
12:30 PM Bill Birnes: UFOS, JFK, Marilyn & Area 51
2:15 PM Richard Lang: Declassification and Disclosure
3:34 PM John Ventre: Native American Folklore & Creatures

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Thursday, September 9	6pm Open Mic w/50 Miles to Empty
Friday, September 10	Touch Of Grey 630pm
Saturday, September 11	9/11 Patriots Day Hosted by VVFD
Friday, September 17	Rick Magee & Jack Adams 630pm
Saturday, September 18	End of Summer Seafood Fest (Live music all day!)
Sunday, September 19	Sunday Brunch with Jesse Weston
Friday, September 24	Monica Lewis 630pm
Saturday, September 25	Salmon Frank 630pm




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MIAC Live 2021-2022 Season

No 'Short'-age of talent in biggest name lineup yet



The 2021-2022 MIAC Live Season may boast the greatest lineup of names yet. Slated to perform next spring are (left to right) jazz musician Branford Marsalis, the retro pop interpreters of Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox, acapella group The Ten Tenors, author/satirist David Sedaris, and opera singer Kelli O'Hara.

the Grammy/Tony/Emmy-nominated Williams is at the pinnacle of her artistic powers.

Ana Gasteyer: *Sugar & Booze*

Tuesday, November 30 // 7:30 p.m.

After six seasons on *Saturday Night Live*, and numerous TV and film appearances (she managed to be hilarious even in small roles, like Cady's mom in *Mean Girls*) that span over 25 years, Ana Gasteyer could retire today and consider it a career well done.

But the comedy icon and trained vocalist released a holiday album called *Sugar & Booze* in 2019, with strong vintage '50s and '60s vibes that recall the wintry seasons of yore, backed up by the same band she's toured with since 2016.

And she is bringing her act to the MIAC stage for the perfect post-Thanksgiving event — just what we all need to get our spirits bright.

Leslie Odom, Jr.: *"The Christmas Tour"*

Monday, December 6 // 7:30 p.m.

Watching the *Hamilton* film on Disney+, one thing was clear: In a room crowded with superstar talent, Leslie Odom, Jr. somehow still managed to shine a little brighter than the rest.

His gift for bringing complexity and humanity to any role has been noticed — most recently by TV and film academies, who have heaped nominations on him for roles in *One Night in Miami* and *Central Park*.

The Tony winner and current Emmy award nominee (for his performance as Aaron Burr in the *Hamilton* film) grew up in Philadelphia and graduated from Carnegie Mellon cum laude, has also published a book, *Falling Up: How to Take Risks, Aim Higher, and Never Stop Learning*.

An Evening with Branford Marsalis

Tuesday, February 1 // 7:30 p.m.

With two musical parents, and four musical brothers (you may have heard of Wynton Marsalis) composer and saxophonist Branford Marsalis is basically jazz royalty.

By: Cara Suppa

The pause on live performances in every sphere — from the bright lights of Broadway shows to smaller-scale local theaters — this last year and a half has been nothing short of paralyzing for everyone involved in the arts.

But as the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, a gem on Mercyhurst University's campus, celebrates 25 years since its dedication in 1996, and The Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture (MIAC) prove with their 2021-2022 Live season: The show must go on.

Indeed, they proved it last season, when events switched to a free, online format, before resuming in person this past spring.

Brett Johnson, the director of Mercyhurst's theater program and artistic director of MIAC, commented, "Lives-streamed performances and other virtual offerings have played an important role in helping us navigate the challenges of the past year. At the same time, many of us have missed the communal nature of live performance, in which our heartbeats synchronize and we laugh, cheer, and cry as one."

With that, MIAC's 2021-2022 Live sea-

son is going ahead with in-person events in the artistic home that has illuminated so much talent the last 25 years.

"We look forward to gathering once again in the beautiful Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center and experiencing the life-affirming artistry of these world-class performers," Johnson said.

Of course, the safety of their patrons during an ongoing health crisis is uppermost in MIAC's mind; you can find their COVID-19 guidelines on their website.

Without further ado, let's take a look at the nine exceptional performances in store for the MIAC Live 2021-2022 season.

Martin Short

Thursday, Sept. 23 // 7:30 p.m.

A comedic legend, Martin Short got his big break over 30 years ago with *Saturday Night Live*, particularly with his character Ed Grimley, a nerdy, hyperactive *Wheel of Fortune* fan.

From there, Short's career began a rapid ascent, with memorable roles in feature films like *Three Amigos*, *Mars Attacks*, and *Father of the Bride 1 and 2* (who could forget Franck Eggelhoff, his nutty German wedding planner — and

arguably the funniest character in the movie?).

The Emmy and Tony winner, who hails from Hamilton, Ontario, is still an incredibly active talent, appearing in guest spots on major TV programs like *Modern Family*, *Big Mouth* and *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, to name just a few.

Vanessa Williams

Friday, October 22 // 7:30 p.m.

If you are a millennial woman right now, then chances are good you danced around your living room and sang along to "Colors of the Wind" when Disney released their animated classic *Pocahontas*, and your parents broke down and bought you the soundtrack (on cassette tape, most likely).

You tried to match the vocal powerhouse that is Vanessa Williams, a Bronx-born singer and actress whose vocal gifts brought her much early fame, while notable TV roles, like Wilhelmina Slater on *Ugly Betty* and Renee Perry on *Desperate Housewives*, further solidified her household name-status in the 2000s and 2010s.

With eight major albums under her belt and dozens of TV and film appearances,



The 2021-2022 MIAC Live Season will see some prodigious talents right out of the gate. Performing this fall will be comedian Martin Short, actor Leslie Odom Jr., singer Vanessa Williams, and comedian Ana Gasteyer.

David Sedaris

Tuesday, April 19 // 7:30 p.m.

I'm going to break the fourth wall here for a second, because I want to say: one of the first times I ever laughed so hard I cried while reading a book was when I picked up *Me Talk Pretty One Day* by David Sedaris.

(If you've never read him before, the short essay "Big Boy" is your perfect introduction — go, read it now!)

The memoirist, essayist, and comedian has made it his life's work to address matters of everyday life, and make them memorable, thought-provoking or utterly hilarious.

Sedaris has been on the Mary D'Angelo stage numerous times now, and on each occasion, his presence is a gift, a reminder to look at the world, to look at one's own existence, through a different lens on occasion.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

From his early days at the Berklee College of Music in Boston, to the '80s when he worked with Sting, through the 90s and beyond, with a variety of projects under his belt (including composing music for the 2010 Broadway revival of the play *Fences* by August Wilson) Marsalis has also had a hand in dozens of albums across multiple musical genres.

The Branford Marsalis Quintet has been his artistic mainstay, however, forming in the mid-1980s and enduring as few other groups can claim to have done.

Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox:
The Grand Reopening Tour

Wednesday, March 16 // 7:30 p.m.

2022 is likely going to be the year for

many grand reopenings, and none more exuberant, more stylish or more innovative than Scott Bradlee's Postmodern Jukebox.

Returning once again to the Mary D'Angelo stage, the collective of musical talent, including a rotating lineup of singers and musicians, will bring their repertoire of doo-wop, jazz and other vintage covers of popular pop songs.

With millions of fans around the world, it's not bad for bandleader Scott Bradlee, who started off in 2009 with a series of YouTube videos.

The Ten Tenors: Love is in the Air

Wednesday, March 30 // 7:30 p.m.

Pop/opera fans love a tenor, and

when you combine the vocal talents of 10 accomplished male singers, with expansive, eye-popping 10-part harmonies, well — you've got yourself a memorable evening.

Hailing from Australia, the group formed in 1995 and has since performed over 2,000 times, selling more than 3.5 million concert tickets.

Their musical repertoire is as varied as the tone and timbre of their voices, and there is sure to be something for everybody — a little opera here, a little pop music there, and even some rock to change things up a bit.

While the date is a little late for a Valentine's Day date, tickets to the Ten Tenors would nonetheless make an excellent, and extremely romantic, gift for that special someone.

Kelli O'Hara

Thursday, May 5 // 7:30 p.m.

Not every opera singer could perform equally well under the bright lights of Broadway, or vice versa, but Kelli O'Hara is that rare performer and vocalist who makes the transition look effortless.

For 20 years, O'Hara has captivated audiences with her performances in shows like *Jekyll and Hyde*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *My Fair Lady*, operas like *Così fan tutte* and *Dido and Aeneas* and even appearances in film and TV, with roles in *Sex and the City 2* and *13 Reasons Why*.

All shows begin at 7:30 p.m. // 501 East 38th St // Free parking in all University lots // For more information and tickets visit: miac.mercyhurst.edu

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Arts And Drafts Pours Another for Fall 2021

The Brewer's much-loved local art and music festival is back with packed lineup



THURSDAY, SEPT. 9 - 11

The award-winning Erie festival Arts and Drafts is back for your eyes to behold and full glasses to toast with. Conceived by the late Drew Kauffman in 2008, this showcase has been giving Erieites an opportunity to indulge in the city's arts — from paintings and photography to music — for over a decade. Downtown Erie's Brewer's at Union Station houses this event each year, allowing artists from all over the area to submit their works for the public viewing while enjoying the sweet sounds of multiple local acts for three days.

The festival is put together by Brewer's owner Chris Sirianni and arts organizer Amanda Ferguson, with assistance from the Brewer's staff, volunteers, and all artists involved. Arts and Drafts aims to recapture their momentum after the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 iterations of the tradition fell by the wayside due to COVID-19. Sip craft beers, enjoy a bite to eat, and marvel at the amazing architecture of the former Union Station.

This year's festival will go strong with 14 local bands playing throughout the three-day event from start to finish. From Paper Matches and LUCiD to

The concourse of The Brewer's at Union Station will once more be filled with the works of local artists as its long-running Arts and Drafts festival returns after a year-and-a-half hiatus. Upstairs on its trackside patio 14 local bands will perform over the course of the event's three days.

onewayness and Elle Taylor, you'll get a great dose of the 814's sound (all performing outdoors at the trackside stage) while being surrounded by various framed works and more. Over 60 artists have submitted their projects for the public to check out and if you're interested, their work will be available for purchase on each night. This year's featured artist is none other than Kaitlyn Page, the talented watercolorist who has been making waves and gathering thousands of fans over the past few months.

Arts and Drafts offers a grand experience for those who appreciate what art stands for and for others who are looking for a night out into the town. This is more than an event. This is a jamboree for us all. — Charles Brown

Noon to midnight, music Thursday from 6 to 10 p.m., Friday and Saturday from 6 to 11 p.m. // The Brewer's at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. // \$5 donation // For the full lineup, visit facebook.com/artsanddraftsfestival

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ERIE GIVES 2022 AUGUST 9

Fire Lights Festival Illuminates Edinboro

Large-scale fest champions experimental bass and jam bands



DAY OF VICTORY STU.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 9 - 11

It's not everyday where you see an event like Fire Lights, let alone one that hits so close to home. This festival is going big, and they're even doing it for a good cause,

Headlined by jamtronica stalwarts Jimkata, the Fire Lights Festival in Edinboro will emphasize dance-friendly electronic acts, especially experimental bass music.

benefiting the Edinboro Volunteer Fire Department. Situated right off of Edinboro Road/Rt. 99, Fire Lights will turn a modest area in the college town of Edinboro into a full-fledged music festival, complete with on-site camping. With the beloved Jimkata headlining the weekend, dozens of experimental bass acts will descend on the area, building a groove-based vibe that festival-goers all across the country are hungry for. "There's not a single bad bone in the body of this event," stated festival director Andrew Lehr. "It's really an incredible experience to be a part of it." Lehr, along with his girlfriend and fellow festival director Andra Cioca, is thrilled to be putting on an event of this magnitude.

Along with the festival's musical performances, there's a packed slate of workshops and activities taking place throughout the weekend, from event management to

yoga, glassblowing, meditation, massage, sound healing, and more.

While Jimkata may be the name most locals can identify, the roster of artists is loaded with an eclectic mix of dance-friendly acts, mostly centering around electronic music, specifically that of experimental bass, marked by "heavy basslines and interesting sounds," Lehr detailed. He went on to describe that the lineup is filled with "very unique experimental sound design. It's something that you've probably never heard before."

"Fire Lights Festival was founded by us lovers of music and arts," its website explains. "We hunt for new music, we appreciate the visual arts, and we have probably been your festie neighbor at some point in time. The Fire Lights Festival is about bringing the people together to give them what they want." — Nick Warren

1000 Washington Dr., Edinboro, PA // For tickets and more information, go to firelightsfestival.com

Erie's 40 Under 40 Experience Boasts the Best of Erie

The annual event returns in a big way at the Courtyard by Marriott



BRAD PERRINE

Erie's 40 Under 40 Experience — last held at the Avalon Hotel in 2019 (featuring plenty of socializing along with live tattoos and a silent disco) — returns in 2021 better than ever, this time at Erie's Courtyard at Marriott. Past 40 Under 40 honorees and the community at large are invited to enjoy a stunning bayfront backdrop and some of the finest food, drink, and entertainment the Gem City has to offer on Friday, Sept. 17.

The mainstage will feature music from Abigail (aka Abby Paulson, class of 2019), Charles Brown (class of 2013), and Fox Grotto (previously known as Falling Hollywood, featur-

ing three different honorees). Acoustic performances from Brooke Surgener, Jess Royer, and Zack Orr will entertain guests during the latter half of the evening, while the silent disco from WNY-In Your Ear Events and Erie Encore Entertainment rages on in the main tent, with DJ Vinnie Hoffman emceeing.

Sample local libations from Erie Beer, the Lake Erie Ale Trail, Altered State Distillery, Luminary Distillery, Cart/Horse Distilling, and Blind Tiger Spirit-Free Cocktails.

Get your fill of delicious food from Red Letter Hospitality (Skunk and Goat, Molly Bran-



EMMY HACKSHAW

FRIDAY, SEPT. 17

Anyone who has been there knows: Erie's 40 Under 40 Experience is the place to be. At its heart, it's a celebration honoring the achievements of the recent classes of Erie's 40 Under 40. Like many events, it didn't happen in 2020. This year, it's back and better than ever. Hosted in conjunction by the Erie Reader and the Young Erie Professionals, it's a cocktail chic event for not only the past and present honorees of Erie's

40 Under 40, but the community at large. Bringing together the food, drink, and music that make Erie special, it's a tightly packed and unforgettable night. Keeping in step with previous years, the location is once again new. Erie's Courtyard at Marriott provides an exquisite backdrop, with its eponymous courtyard becoming the epicenter of the night's activities. With an expansive outdoor tent, the venue offers the best of both worlds, letting guests mingle in the open air.



BREA SIMMONS

nigans, The Cork), the Brewerrie at Union Station, Lavery Brewing Company, and of course The Shoreline Bar & Grille courtesy of the Courtyard by Marriott, as well as more TBA.

Celebrate in style and see some of the best Erie has to offer at this one-of-kind evening. It's an experience. — Nick Warren

7 p.m. to 11 p.m. // Courtyard by Marriott Erie Bayfront Hotel, 2 Sassafra's Pier // \$40 pre-sale, \$75 for couples, \$50 at the door (special pricing for past 40 Under 40 honorees) // For more information and tickets, go to 40u40.eriepa.com

EVENTS

Erie's Blues and Jazz Fest Back at Frontier Park

One of Erie's best-loved events shifts from August to September



FACEBOOK @SQUONKOFFICIAL

FRIDAY, SEPT. 24 - 26

Sometimes good things are worth the wait. As August came and went, one weekend remained in question: Erie's Blues & Jazz Festival. As any jazz musician knows though, you need to pay attention to the changes.

Presented by Highmark Health and AHN Saint Vincent, Erie's Blues & Jazz Festival will return for its 29th year on Friday, Sept. 24, running until Sunday, Sept. 26. All this will take place — once again — at the lovely Frontier Park.

Eager Erieites can rest easy knowing that the festival is not gone, and has every hope of continuing on well into its third decade. While the festival has traditionally taken place the first weekend in August, a slot at the end of September will do the trick, with the 2022 festival finding itself back in early August.

John Vanco, the longtime artistic director of the festival, noted that "sponsors have stepped up and said, 'we're glad you're doing this; the community needs this event.' You know, it's good for the mental health of the community."

Friday night will mark the screening of the first Erie Dance Film Festival, beginning at 7:30 p.m. Both Saturday and Sunday will see performances and workshops by Squonk Opera, whose in-

Full lineups and details for Erie's Blues & Jazz Festival have yet to be determined, but what we know for sure is it will again take place in Frontier Park over three days (Sept. 24 - 26), be free for the public to attend, and feature performances and workshops by the Squonk Opera (pictured here).

novative, elaborately constructed performances some may remember from 2018.

Vanco cited that blues artists King Solomon Hicks and Larry McCray are slated for mainstage performances on Saturday, at 6 and 8 p.m., respectively. Vanco was quick to note, however, that plans remain tentative at this time due to pandemic concerns, with the full lineup still to be announced. The local organization Our Air, Our Water, Our Rights will be sponsoring an electric vehicle show on Saturday, located along West Sixth Street.

The outdoor event will be similar to years past, with the main stage for performances and other events and interactive workshops going on throughout Frontier Park, in tandem with the concurrently running Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier (LEAF) Festival. — Nick Warren

Friday through Sunday // Frontier Park, 1501 W. Sixth St. // Free // For a full schedule of events, go to eriebluesandjazz.com

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EVENTS

Wine Lovers All Around Should Be Grapeful

Celebrate the start of fall with the return of WineFest



ZSOLT BICZO

FRIDAY, SEPT. 24 - 26

Nestled against Lake Erie and the New York border, the town of North East may seem like a quiet town. Yet, each year this hidden gem draws in thousands of visitors with what once started as a humble street fair to what is now a regional event. The Wine Country Harvest Festival, known simply as WineFest, returns for its 40th birthday after a one-year COVID hibernation. Meaning, you can stop your whining and finally get your wine on.

Harvest is arguably the golden time of year to be in North East. The endless rows of vineyards leave even residents in awe — not to mention the overwhelming aroma of fresh grapes that seems to reach every corner of town. With 13 participating wineries, wine lovers have the opportunity to sample 100 different wines (emphasis on *opportunity* — that much wine is sure to knock you off your feet!).

As tradition goes, the three-day festival falls on the last weekend of September, from Friday, Sept. 24 through Sunday, Sept. 26. However, instead of hosting multiple sites as it has in the past, WineFest will only be held in its original location in downtown North East, Gibson Park. Designated tasting hours will run from Friday evening through Sunday afternoon, giving attendees the choice of purchasing tickets for a single day, two, or all three. Tickets are limited and available online only.

Whether you prefer a bottle of white or a bottle of red (or perchance a bottle of rosé instead), the Wine Country Harvest Festival — better known locally as WineFest — will have something to please your palate when it returns to North East's Gibson Park.

Although this weekend festival showcases the best wines of the region, it caters to the whole family. Tickets are required to enter the wine tasting area, but admittance into the park is free. Vendors offering local arts and crafts for purchase as well as delicious eats will scatter the park. Live music from varying artists can be heard throughout the fest every day. Adding to this joyous event are strolling entertainers ranging from a balloon artist to a magician. Your children will love it and so will your inner child. Come with your best friends, significant other, or whole family — there's something for everyone to enjoy.

They say it takes a whole village to raise a child, well apparently it also takes a whole town to throw a great wine festival. Raise your glasses to the North East Chamber of Commerce for organizing this grape event as well as to the countless volunteers, sponsors and participating organizations. — Morgan Ashlee Grenz

Friday: 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., Saturday: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m., Sunday: 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. // Gibson Park, North East // nechamber.org/about-winefest/ // See website for ticket prices and details

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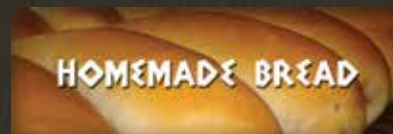
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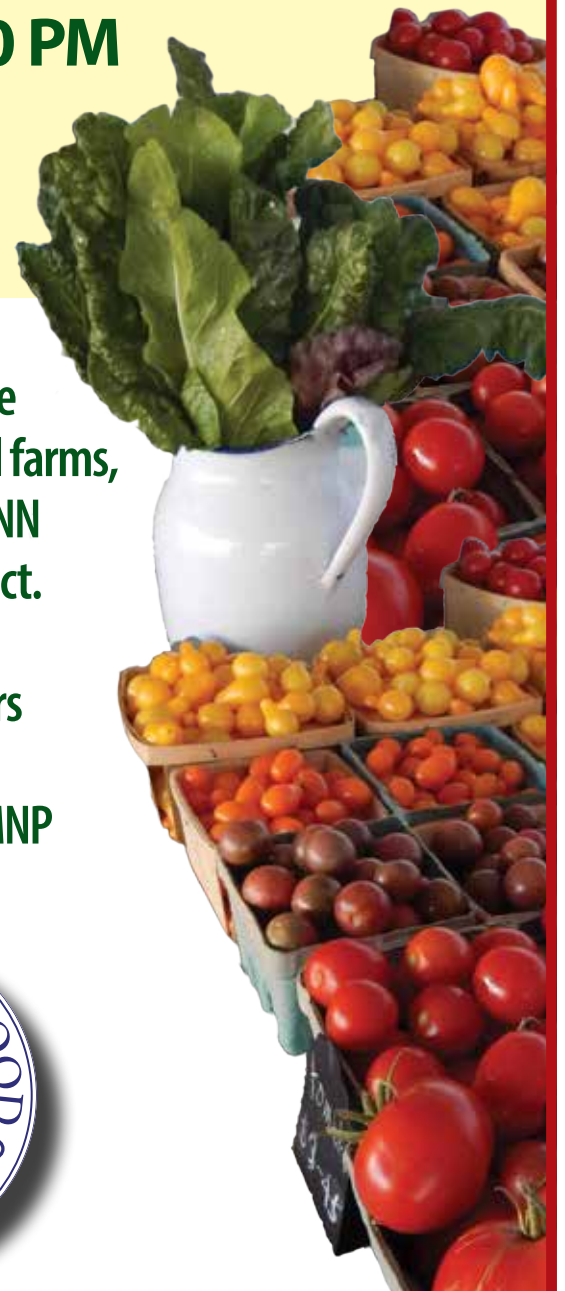
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La Belle et la Bete: Annette is a Beautiful and Haunting Experience

★★★★★



UGC DISTRIBUTION

French filmmaker Leos Carax’s last film *Holy Motors* was in part an examination of the inherent artificiality of movies. His newest, *Annette* also addresses that artificiality. The film begins with the director and his daughter along with the film’s composers (the art-rock band Sparks) joining members of the cast and crew to sing directly to the audience about what we are about

to see. It makes no attempt to imitate reality but in the process it gets to some fundamental truths about obsession and the exploitative nature of the entertainment industry. The result is a unique combination of opera, Greek tragedy, and character study as well as one of the most fascinating and emotionally devastating films of the year.

The story centers on Henry McHenry (a career-best Adam Driver), a volatile stand-up comedian in an intense love affair with opera singer Ann Deafranoux (Marion Cotillard). Their relationship takes a turn upon the birth of their daughter Annette. When Henry discovers that Annette has a strange talent, his dark obsessions begin to reveal themselves and threaten to consume him and everyone around him.

As said, the film makes no effort to strive for realism. The character of Annette is mostly played by an intricately designed puppet and almost all of the dialogue is sung rather than spoken. The result feels like a dark step-sibling to a Jacques Demy film or even a kind of modern day Grimm fairy tale. Carax and Sparks are shooting off multiple themes simultaneously and they don’t all connect, but when they do, the impact is powerful. The style and structure could prove alienating to some audiences, but those on the same wavelength as the filmmakers will find this unique and bizarre tale a fascinating and exhilarating experience. — Forest Taylor

Currently playing in select theaters and streaming on Amazon Prime // Directed by: Leos Carax // Written by: Ron and Russell Mael // Starring: Adam Driver, Marion Cotillard, Simon Helberg, and Devyn McDowell // 140 minutes // Rated R // UGC Distribution

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BOOK REVIEWS

Divine Lola

The true story of Lola Montez, a hollow-famed influencer from the 1800s

Today's influencers, YouTube stars, and Hollywood elite have nothing on Lola Montez, a famous 19th century dancer and one of the first self-invented international social celebrities.

Originally published in her native Spanish in 2017, journalist Cristina Morató's *Divine Lola: A True Story of Scandal and Celebrity* is a new translation of the story of one of the Victorian era's most notorious women, Spaniard Lola Montez. Mesmerizing and intriguing, Lola captivated audiences around the world with her famous "Spider Dance" as well as many other Andalusian dances.

The only problem? She was a complete fraud.

As it turns out, Lola was born Eliza Gilbert to an Irish mother and British father. After much of her young life spent moving between Great Britain and India and following a failed marriage, she decides to reinvent herself as the raven-haired beauty from Spain whose dances charmed many famous men of the time period.

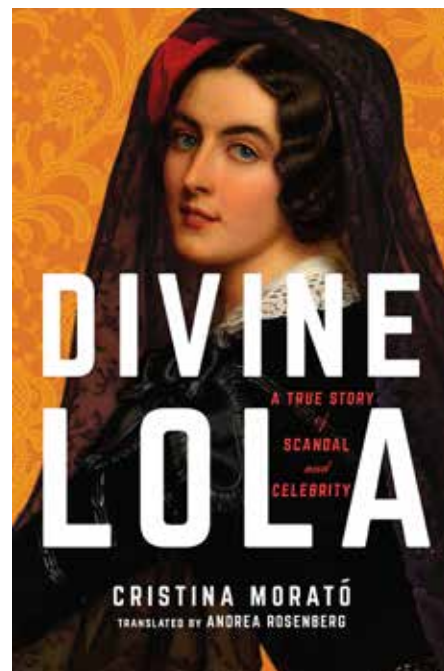
Translated by Andrea Rosenberg, the picture Morató paints of Lola Montez is not a flattering one. Although the dancer is intriguing, she is not a likable person and Morató does not hide this fact. Indeed, she instead delves into Lola's unpleasantness, describing often the bouts of rage the dancer would fly into when things did not go her way.

A big part of the allure of Lola's story is the fact that, despite this challenging and oftentimes baffling behavior, her beauty and charm seemed to allow her to continue to get away with the same things, time and time again. Very rarely do the consequences of her actions catch up with her, and in many instances, by the time they do, she is long gone. While her downfall seems inevitable, it is every bit as dramatic as her life up until that point had been.

Lola's renown and infamy makes for an excellent adventure, allowing readers to delve into the self-invented dancer's often chaotic but always interesting life. *Divine Lola* is a cap-

tivating look at the first truly self-made celebrity and her rise to fame. — Ally Kutz

Amazon Crossing // 448 pages // Biography, Non-Fiction



Malibu Rising

A little party never hurt anybody...right?

It's August 1983 in Malibu and that means one thing is on everyone's mind: Nina Riva's annual end-of-summer party. Everyone who's anyone wants to attend just to be close to the famous Rivas: Nina, a surfer and supermodel, brothers Jay and Hud, and youngest sister Kit. Together, the four make up the famous children of renowned singer Mick Riva.

Except this year is different. Recently — and very publicly — abandoned by her professional tennis player husband, Nina is dreading being in the spotlight again. Never wanting to have been the center of attention in the first place, she is dreading her annual party. Hud, too, is anxious about the evening, deciding he must finally confess something to the brother he's been close with since birth.

Jay and Kit, on the other hand, are both awaiting the evening with anticipation, for very different reasons: Jay will get to see the girl he can't stop thinking about, while Kit has invited a mystery guest without consulting anyone.

By the time the clock strikes midnight,

the party will be entirely out of control, and by morning the Rivas' mansion will go up in flames. Before all is lost, though, secrets that have made the Rivas into who they are will surface, ripping through the family and changing their lives permanently.

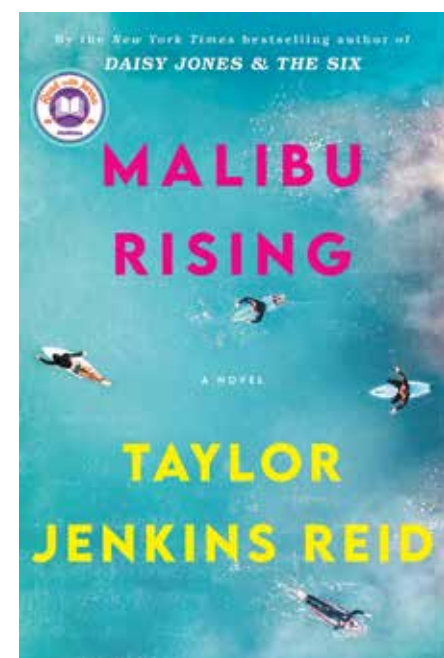
Taylor Jenkins Reid — the master behind *The Seven Husbands of Evelyn Hugo* and *Daisy Jones & the Six* — is a natural storyteller. The depth and complexity of each character is a hallmark of her novels, with *Malibu Rising* proving no different. Each book has a way of pulling readers in, leaving you hanging on every word and feeling the emotions each character experiences.

Jenkins Reid has done it again, creating an absolute masterpiece in which each character leaps from the page, transporting you into the scene. Her ability to write in a way that allows readers to empathize with rather than sympathize for characters sets her apart from many of her contemporaries. *Malibu Rising* lets readers dive head first into the wonder and chaos of 1980s

Malibu.

You've been invited to the party of the year; don't be late! — Ally Kutz

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The Bayfront Boys - 603 W 6th St.
Alison Huffman and Adam Boaks - 627 Myrtle St.
Jack Campbell - 323 W 2nd St.

2:00 PM
Cee Brown - 1242 West 10th St.
Brooke Surgener - 623 W 9th St.
Stephen Trohoske Jazz Trio - 519 W 6th St.
Box of Chocolates - 357 W 4th St.

3:00 PM
Dave Van Amburg & Phil Papotnik - 1262 West 9th St.
Tommy Link - 519 W 9th St.
Ron Yarman - 922 W 6th St.
Doc Proto - 501 W 4th St.

4:00 PM
Lenny Ransil - 562 W 8th St
Monica Lewis - 1402 W 10th St. (Pineapple Eddie's)
Chautauqua Jazz Revival - 1043 W. 10th St.
نطو عقر (Watan) - 312 Chestnut St. (MLK Center)
Yeshuwa and Jordy the Traveler - 359 W. Front St.

5:00 PM
Familiar Spirit - 1330 W 8th St. (Strong Vincent Middle School)

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PODCASTS

Our Monthly Podcast Picks

Streaming infotainment to stoke your synapses

The Ringer Fantasy Football Show

Hosted by: Danny Heifetz, Danny Kelly, and Craig Horlbeck // fantasyfootball.theringer.com

You can do all the research you want when it comes to fantasy football, but in the end, it's basically chaos. From injuries (and now adding in potential COVID outbreaks), to weather, to random slumps and breakouts, being an "expert" within this world comes with its limitations. That's probably why I tend to favor vibes over accumulated expertise when picking my go-to pod for each season.

Enter *The Ringer Fantasy Football Show*, a podcast featuring staffers from The Ringer talking draft strategy, weekly waiver wire targets, and much more, all the while embracing the chaos and fun. This preseason, they've leaned heavily on the 2000s comedies for episode structure, using *Dodgeball* to pick their "Average Joes" for the year, and *Anchorman* to sort out which fantasy football narratives they're buying and selling.

"Fantasy Court" and the newly introduced "League Rescue" are other highlights, as they're mainly based on crazy listener questions. In the former, the trio of co-hosts litigate fantasy league disputes between friends. In the latter, they try to fix fully broken leagues. For example, one league that emailed in has quarterbacks getting 1/2 point per pass attempt, 1 point for completions, and then a small deduction for incompletions. None of this is normal.

In not skewing too academic in their coverage, this fantasy football pod keeps it light and thus closer to the reality of this virtual sport: it's chaos. — Christopher Lantinen



QAnon Anonymous

Hosted by: Julian Feeld, Travis View, and Jake Rockatansky (with Annie Kelly and Liv Agar) // qanonanonymous.com

When it began, *Qanon Anonymous* (QAA) was a snarky, conversational takedown of the conspiratorial right. A guilty pleasure, even. But as it enters its fourth year of existence, it has transformed into a genuinely substantive hotbed of investigative journalism.

At its heart, QAA explores the mechanics of QAnon — the debunked theory that a cabal of Satanic elites (mostly Democrats and celebrities) secretly run a child sex-trafficking ring — with a particular emphasis on the inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and outright grifts of the movement. As you might guess, the show's hosts are adamantly anti-Q, though that doesn't stop them from infiltrating plenty of Q-adjacent gatherings — where true believers are often quite willing to explain themselves (remember the so-called "Q shaman" who stormed the Capitol on Jan. 6, shirtless and wearing a furry, horned hat?)

Sometimes QAA is absurd and sarcastic, as in the hilarious episode about *Passion of the Christ* star Jim Caviezel. But it can also be layered and scholarly, as in a recent episode about Milton William Cooper's disturbing novel *Behold a Pale Horse*. Guests have included activist Chelsea Manning, comedian Tim Heidecker, and journalist Michael Hobbes, to give you a sense of the shifting tone.

If none of that convinces you to listen to a weird show about an extremely weird topic, I'll add that The Washington Post named it the Podcast of the Year in 2020. — Dan Schank

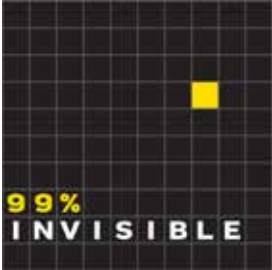


99% Invisible

Hosted by: Roman Mars // 99percentinvisible.org

Of all the stereotypically hushed-voice informative podcasts, *99% Invisible* is simply the best. Move over, *This American Life*, take a seat *The Daily*, because Roman Mars has this all locked up. The show is in essence about design and architecture, and all the magical things that go along with it. Like its wistfully poetic name (based on a Buckminster Fuller quote) suggests, it's about all the things that we don't notice, the remarkably unremarkable, and the brilliant thoughts that go into how things are made. It's some of the greatest infotainment ever produced. Hosted by creator Roman Mars, the show began in 2010 and has since amassed a catalogue of more than 450 episodes. Each one runs a digestible length of around 40 minutes — in its earlier years relying on episodes half that length.

In October of 2019, the book *The 99% Invisible City: A Field Guide to the Hidden World of Everyday Design* was released, co-authored by Mars and Kurt Kohlsted. Along with its captivating themes, its biggest draw just might be how the episodes themselves are made. Beautifully and meticulously sound-designed, there's a rhythmic flow to each episode throughout, making the actual product a work of art unto itself. Whether you want to find out about cities, architecture, and infrastructure, or what goes into certain sounds, visuals, or technology, there's something in store you didn't even know you wanted to learn about. — Nick Warren



Erie County Human Relations Commission

The Erie County Human Relations Commission (ECHRC) works to eliminate discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations through identification, consultation, and investigation of complaints.

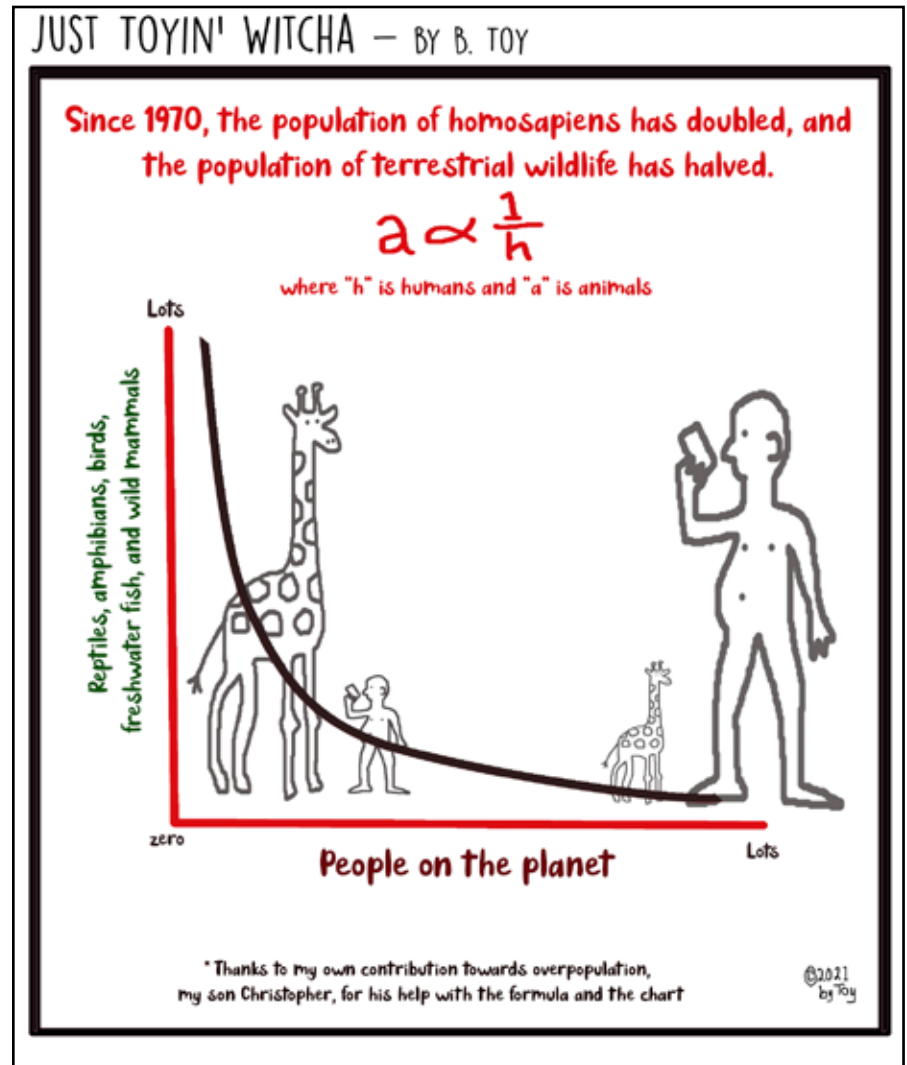
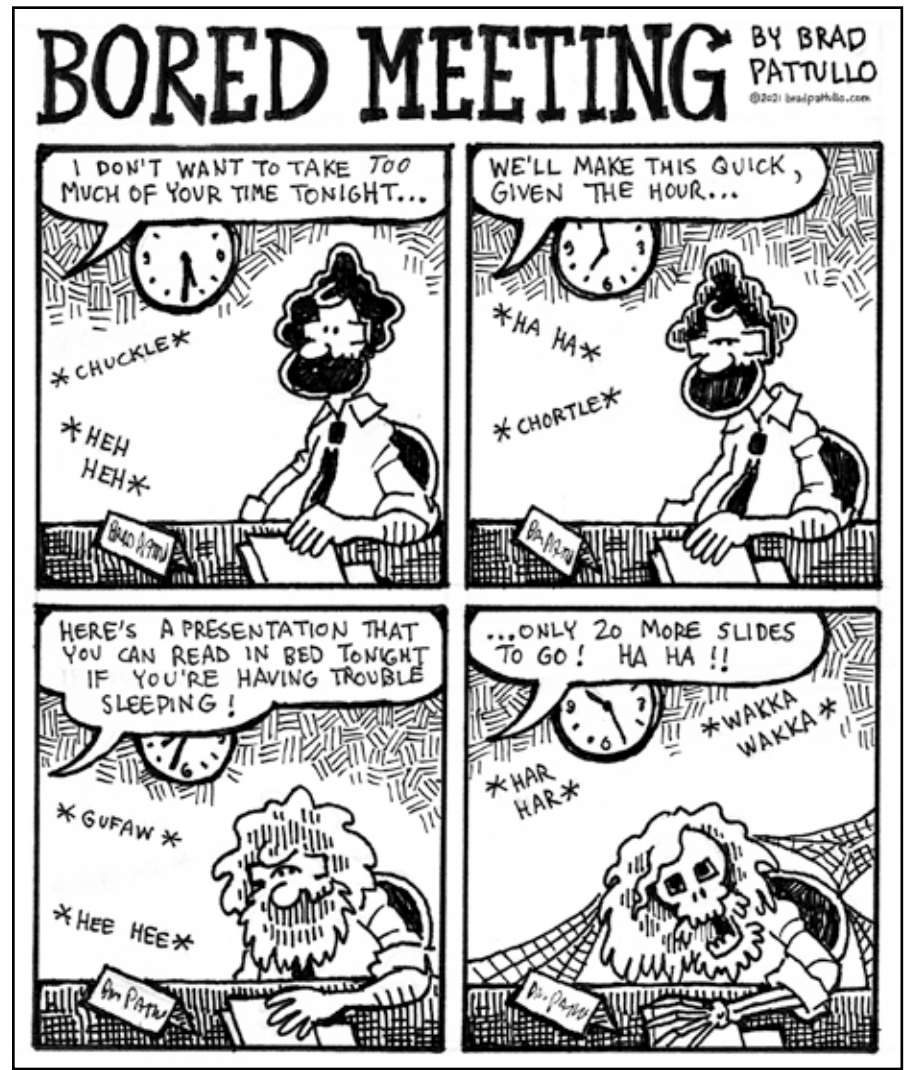
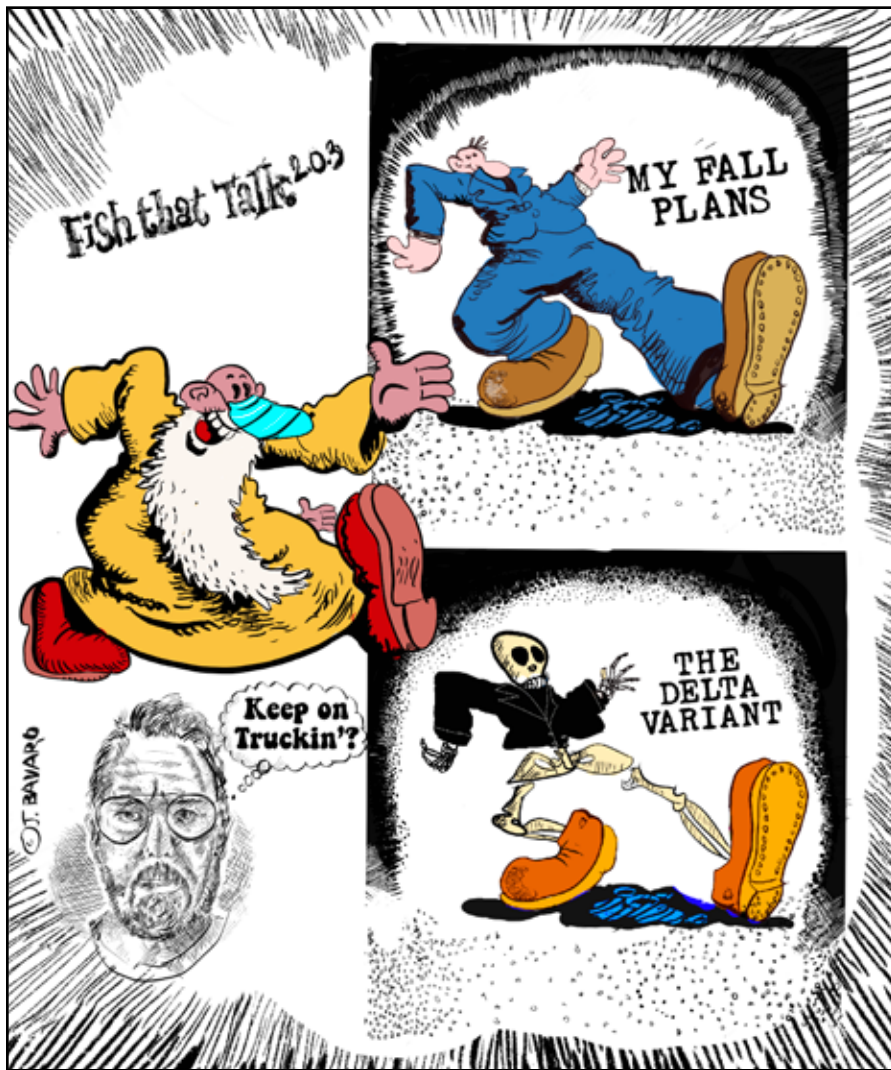
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ALBUM REVIEWS

Six Year Stretch

Crazy Ride
Self-released

★★★★★

Six Year Stretch is about to take you to church. The Erie band's third studio album harnesses all the poppy passion the five-piece is known for, presented in a rich-sounding record. It's a substantial record in a few ways. At 13 tracks and a whopping 53 minutes, this *Crazy Ride* is one you'll want to take many times. The brothers Brown (Andy, Adam, and Alex) have been hard at work, along with Mike Wolfe and their secret weapon, guitarist Eric Brewer. Hearing Brewer unleashed, in blistering solos like in "Song in the Deep" or "The Dream" is something truly glorious, even adding some occasional shred to the mix. Singer Andy Brown is as heartfelt as ever, perhaps even more so, his voice somewhere between Anthony Kiedis and Rob Thomas. The album is remarkably consistent, with tracks like the southern-fried "Little Misses" and the horn-spiced darkness of "Pitter Patter" being a few of the standouts. Be sure to catch them at their album release party on Friday, Sept. 3 at Churchill's Bourbon and Brew, as well as their appearance at Rib Fest on Thursday, Sept. 16, and Saturday, Oct. 2 at the Luminary Distillery Fall Fest. — Nick Warren



Matty and the Pickles

LIVE
Self-released

★★★★★

Anyone who has seen Matt Boland play knows that he leaves his heart on the stage. With this live recording, you get all of that energy encapsulated in a feverish 10-song set over 47 minutes. If you're charting the evolution of Matty, you'll note that the band has dropped the "B" and the "Dirty" from their name. The band is all sonic bombast, an old-school retro rhythm and blues revue of the finest order. Featuring seasoned vets like David VanAmburg, Paul Sontheimer, Digg It Dave, and Phil Papotnik, the band doesn't miss a note on this live record. Recorded by Russ Illing at 98 Beat Productions, hear their takes on classic favorites like "Johnny B. Goode," "That'll Be the Day," and "Stand by Me" as the band puts its stamp on hits from the '50s and '60s. It's rockabilly in its true and honest form, simultaneously raw and perfected. Boland is doing what he's best at, leading a band with the fervor of a dyed-in-the-wool entertainer. The band will perform at a special album release at the Erie Art Museum on Thursday, Sept. 2, and at the Albion Fair on Friday, Sept. 17. — Nick Warren



Nas

King's Disease 2
Mass Appeal Records

★★★★★

Nas is one of the most respected rappers of all time. Last year, the Queensbridge, N.Y. native linked with producer Hit-Boy to create his twelfth studio album *King's Disease*. This 15-track sequel presents Nas in an undeniable comfort space flowing beautifully over his producer's rich sound. He kicks off *KD2* with the smooth "The Pressure," a track that implies his reign over low expectations. Without any fear, Nas goes down memory lane on the second track "Death Row East," where he finally discusses the run-in between him and the late Tupac Shakur. As the songs go on throughout the album, Nas brings lyrical prowess while giving us star-studded moments with guest appearances from Eminem (first-time collaboration) and the elusive yet legendary Lauryn Hill. *King's Disease 2* is packed with great stories, life lessons, and good times. The sound between Nas and Hit-Boy is more organic this time around which has fans wondering if a third installment is in the works. Whether the two heavy-hitters are tossing that idea around or not, it is clear that Nas is right back to where he needs to be — the top. — Charles Brown



LUCID

KITCHEN GROOVES
Self-released

★★★★★

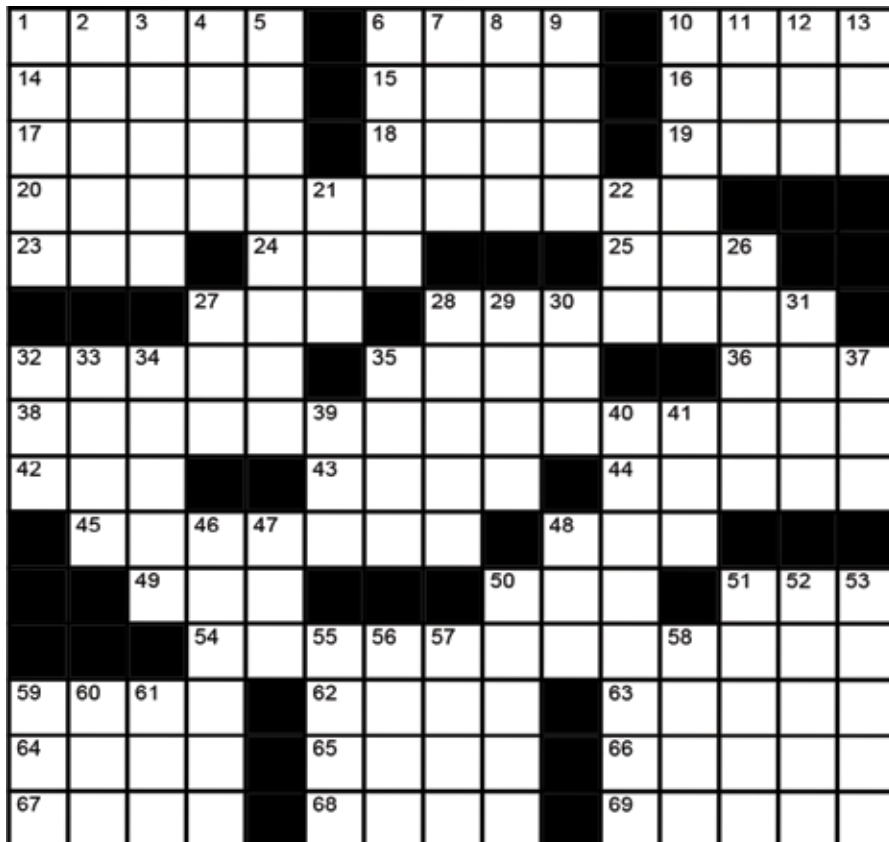
LUCID formed in 2019 when a group of friends decided to bring their talents together to form a band. Members of LUCID have been cutting their teeth on this project, as it's each member's first band — some of them even learned how to play their instruments during this musical journey. *KITCHEN GROOVES* contains that raw energy that a new band can exude, and where some projects fall apart with an amalgamation of different genres and techniques, LUCID makes it work. The album kicks off with "The Sand & The Syrup" a laid back beach haze tune that includes enchanting harmonies. As the album progresses there are hints of synth-driven pop on "Homicide" and "Hellhound," harder-edged guitar and driving keyboards on "Bad Trip Blues" and "Cocaine & Waffles," punk aesthetics on "Slur Check" and "A.C.A.B.," and Southern rock grooves on the song "Collard Greens." Some comparisons can be made to Alice Bag or Yeah Yeah Yeahs, yet it's hard to classify LUCID's overall sound. The themes and energy of *KITCHEN GROOVES* are that of a young band with a progressive message. — Larry Wheaton



TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK



CROSSWORD



Across

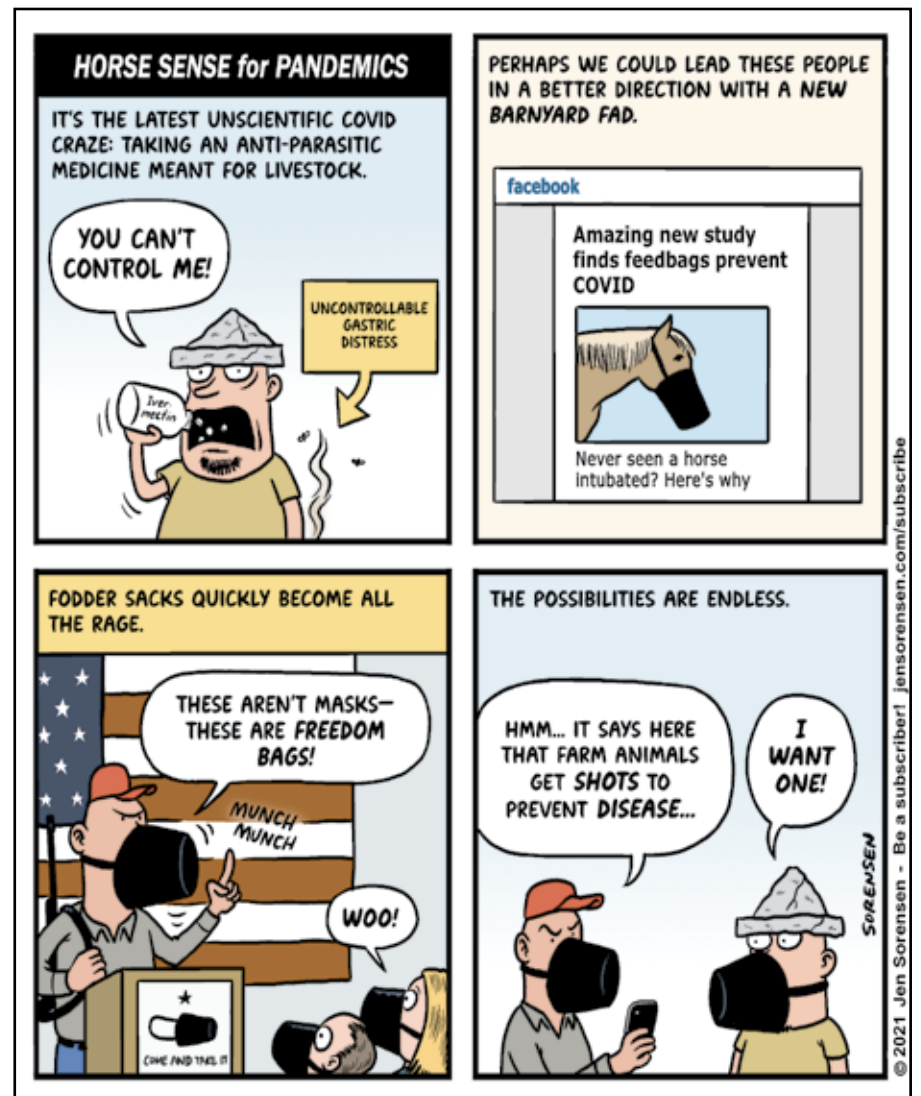
1. Jerk
6. One may be pulled out of a bed
10. Questlove hairdo
14. E'en if
15. Dance that men often do shirtless
16. Think ahead
17. Lip-puckering, as kraut
18. Mineral plentiful in kale
19. Dracula accessory
20. South Korean debut of 1985
23. Go ____
24. Traditional source of material for a sherpa's coat
25. Ginger ____
27. "____ Explain Things to Me" (Rebecca Solnit book)
28. Admit defeat
32. Up
35. "____ she blows!"
36. Key near Ctrl
38. Capital that lies about 15 miles from the body of water for which it was named
42. Org. for good drivers
43. Like pink cheeks
44. Adler who outwitted Sherlock Holmes
45. Most tasty
48. Celebrity with a namesake cereal in the '80s
49. Kvetchers' cries
50. What "pizza" means in Italian

51. Company with the most U.S. patents per year since 1993
54. Homer's angry outburst when Bart misbehaves ... or a hint to this puzzle's theme
59. Rice-shaped pasta
62. 1946 role for Fonda or 1994 role for Costner
63. Early ____
64. Oaf
65. Lawyer's clever question, say
66. Mexican civilization known for its colossal head sculptures
67. Preppy clothing brand
68. Without much thought
69. Impoverished

Down

1. One of the Obamas
2. Exaggerate for effect
3. What some musicians carry
4. Molt
5. Encounter for a reef diver, maybe
6. Alternative to an eggbeater
7. Coin in the Trevi Fountain, perhaps
8. Musk who, in 2021, was named the world's richest person by Forbes
9. Carvey of "Wayne's World"
10. High-level H.S. math class
11. State with 1,350 miles of coastline: Abbr.

12. Genre for Megan Thee Stallion
13. It's next to nothing
21. Swimming gold medalist Thorpe
22. Bronze
26. Delight
27. Nasdaq, e.g.: Abbr.
28. Where VapoRub may be rubbed
29. Risqué
30. First name of the first man in space
31. Panache
32. Reptile seen in hieroglyphics
33. High-priced Japanese beef
34. Avis competitor
35. 17 of Laila Ali's wins, for short
37. Not just "a"
39. "____ we there yet?"
40. Trunk item
41. Mongolian shelter
46. "Heavens!"
47. "Sorta"
48. "Cool" amount
50. Lightweight boxer?
51. Response to "Who's there?"
52. Run
53. What a lenient judge may show
55. Mythical creature seen on old Bhutanese stamps
56. Thing with three feet
57. Like some traditions
58. Bananagrams piece
59. Kimono sash
60. Cartoonist Chast
61. Petting ____



Answers to last puzzle



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MUSIC

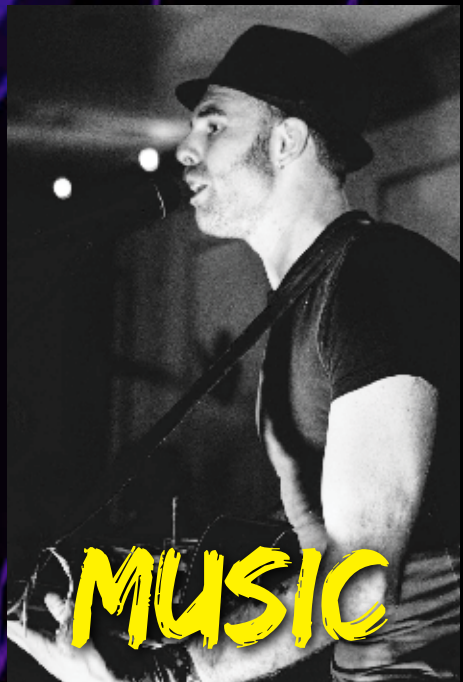
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FOOD



DRINKS



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