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From The Editors
The best part of waking up

For many of us, basic function is not on automatic drip — it requires a little more effort upfront. Tablespoons are measured and rounded, filters or beakers are loaded, water is boiled, and behold — life is poured forth. That first cup of coffee is our proverbial crossing over, whether we serve as our own medium or call upon a barista to necromance us. It could be safely argued that coffee is the one reason the zombie apocalypse hasn’t already happened.

If you’re merely looking to reawaken your brain and reanimate your flesh, you could roam a few blocks in any direction and likely stumble across a ration of this life-giving elixir. But if you’re seeking something more, an experience to embrace as you reclaim your consciousness, you may need to plot a more calculated course. Previously steeped in the no-frills tradition of the blue collar lifestyle, coffee has emerged as an artform. After a few false starts at the turn of the century, cozy coffee shops and small roasters have been frothing up newfound support around town.

Resident coffee-addict (and judge in the recent Erie’s Best Coffee competition) Nick Warren traces the beverage’s evolutionary road map through the foam, from the ancient Arabian Peninsula to American diner to today’s specialty brew studios. Writer Cara Suppa, who has seen a number of posh coffee shops come and go, sees staying power in Ember+Forge, which has perked the attention of downtown Erie since opening this past December. This is thanks in no small part to Ember+Forge proprietor Hannah Kirby, whose planning, dedication and foresight have already helped make her new business a local destination.

Others could afford to take cues from her decisive leadership, especially as we cross over into politics. Divides between party lines are bitterer than a pot left on the burner for too long, and in trying times where direction is needed more than ever, our policymakers need to wake up. Some need to rationally reanimate their flesh, you could roam a few blocks in any direction and likely stumble across the beverage’s evolutionary road map through the foam, from the ancient Arabian Peninsula to American diner to today’s specialty brew studios. Writer Cara Suppa, who has seen a number of posh coffee shops come and go, sees staying power in Ember+Forge, which has perked the attention of downtown Erie since opening this past December. This is thanks in no small part to Ember+Forge proprietor Hannah Kirby, whose planning, dedication and foresight have already helped make her new business a local destination.

Residents like Jim Wertz are among the first to embrace as a barista to necromance us. It could be safely argued that coffee is the one reason the zombie apocalypse hasn’t already happened.

As Erie City Councilwoman Liz Allen writes, it is boiled, and behold — life is poured forth. That first cup of coffee is our proverbial crossing over, whether we serve as our own medium or call upon a barista to necromance us. It could be safely argued that coffee is the one reason the zombie apocalypse hasn’t already happened.

Meanwhile, on a national level, the shock value of mass shootings seem to diminish, a disturbing trend noted by guest writer Morgan Williams, who experienced the scar of an active shooter first-hand on the grounds of McDowell High School. That’s about as close to home as it gets. Since the Sandy Hook tragedy in 2012, at least 239 more school shootings have transpired, including the recent massacre in Parkland, Florida. How much stronger a stimulant do lawmakers need to reconceive the need for change?

As Erie City Councilwoman Liz Allen writes, it takes work to become a friendlier neighborhood. It starts with communicating with and listening to one another — and maybe (probably) a cup of coffee.
Erie At Large: Habemus Mapam
Unfolding Pennsylvania’s new congressional maps, the 2018 midterm elections and beyond

By: Jim Wertz

For the uninitiated, Pennsylvania is a political mess. There are many problems — structural, financial, and partisan — that contribute to the Commonwealth’s collective political loathing and serial gridlock. But chief among the elements of its despair was a gerrymandered electoral map that included two partisan congressional districts infamous — described as having the shape of Goofy kicking Donald Duck with the connecting tissue of Goofy’s toe and the duck’s tail wide enough to be comprised of a single restaurant in King of Prussia, just north of Philadelphia.

The League of Women Voters sued the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in Commonwealth Court on behalf of 18 Democratic voters last June, arguing that the 2011 Pennsylvania congressional map represented a partisan gerrymander that discriminated against Democrats based on their political viewpoints.

Different from racial gerrymandering, in which voting districts are drawn to disenfranchise voters of a particular race or ethnicity, partisan gerrymandering occurs when the party that controls the legislature draws a map “to entrench that party in power and prevent voters affiliated with the minority party from electing candidates of their choice,” as defined in the petition filed by the League of Women Voters last year.

Some studies have called Pennsylvania the most gerrymandered state in the country. In some parts of the state this meant that a single county might have as many as four congressional representatives in order to carve out Republican strongholds. Pennsylvania’s congressional delegation is currently comprised of 13 Republicans and five Democrats even though Democrats have a 25 percent advantage based on total registered voters and most national elections are near even splits.

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court agreed with the League of Women Voters that the 2011 Congressional map gave Pennsylvania Republicans a distinct and partisan advantage. In an opinion delivered January 22 the court gave the General Assembly and Governor Wolf until February 15 to redraw the Commonwealth’s congressional districts.

The court ordered that the new map should follow county borders to the extent possible and it should not “divide any county, city, incorporated town, borough, township, or ward, except where necessary to ensure equality of population.”

The intent of that clause was to rejoin counties, like Erie County, which had been divided in the creation of the 2011 electoral map. Democrats were effectively neutralized by separating counties like Erie, which historically had been Republican-leaning in Congressional elections, and by distributing the Democratic base across multiple congressional districts.

The state Supreme Court rejected maps put forth by the Republican-led General Assembly, Pennsylvania Democrats, and the Governor’s office in favor of its map which splits fewer municipalities and makes more compact congressional districts than...
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Life doesn’t have to be a race
A Sense of Placement

We need to make our marks outside our comfort zones

By: Liz Allen

Eighteen years ago, after I had been widowed and remarried, my new husband and I were ready to buy a beautiful brick home in south Erie, until my parents intervened.

“Lizzie, I’m afraid you’ll be homesick,” sighed my mom. “I wish you would stay in the Fourth Ward,” my dad chimed in.

My mom’s notion that I might be ‘homesick’ if I ventured 2.6 miles south of my childhood home on Erie’s west side made me smile.

But her observation also reminded me of something that I hold dear about Erie: Our sense of place can be very specific, tight and telling — and sometimes confining. Collectively, we have a hard time adapting to change.

When my first husband and I moved back to Erie in 1984 after living four states away in the Midwest, it only seemed natural that my young family would settle four blocks north of the house where I grew up. We joined the same parish where my siblings and I had made our First Communions and Confirmations. My boys rode their bikes to the nearby drugstore where I once bought Popsicles and Mallo Cups for a nickel, and my husband got his hair cut at the same barbershop that my dad and my brothers patronized.

Of course, some things had changed since my parents moved to Lincoln Avenue in 1956. The butcher shop had become a convenience store, but that was OK, because we could buy lottery tickets there. A bicycle shop had replaced the ice cream parlor, and the bank branch, in a former supermarket, had changed hands several times. Still, the neighborhood character remained intact.

I understood what my mom meant when she suggested that I might be “homesick” if I uprooted myself from such a familiar setting. I would miss being so close to Mom and Dad that we could pop in for dinner or a game of pinochle, and my boys had grown close to their grandparents without actually living under the same roof.

I was a bit more puzzled, though, when my father said he hoped I wouldn’t abandon the Fourth Ward. I didn’t know the contours of Erie’s political boundaries back then.

But it strikes me now that my dad’s identification of neighborhood with ward is part of Erie’s story. Our world began on the blocks where we knew our neighbors and the proprietors of the corner store and the bakery. Our horizons expanded when we attended Catholic school in the late ‘50s and early ‘60s, where a family like mine, with six kids, was average-size. Big families had eight or nine children — and some as many as a dozen or more.

We had so many siblings that we always had playmates at home, and because my friends and I all had younger brothers, we always had enough players for sandlot baseball, even though I was a lousy athlete.

Those deep connections still pay off, as I learned recently.

Shortly after I was elected to Erie City Council, I sought out women who had held public office or who had worked in politics. They advised me to get fired up about issues I’m most passionate about, and to listen to the critics but not to let them overwhelm me.

But I still yearned for a mentor with experience in both journalism and politics — someone who would understand my need to ferret out all the facts and research the history of issues before weighing in or voting.

As I drove to church a couple of Saturdays ago at St. Paul Catholic Church in Little Italy, I was fretting about the odd intersection of journalism and politics in my life.

Halfway through Mass, I had an insight. Jerry Martin, the guy sitting in back of me, was from my home parish, St. Andrew’s, which is now partnered with St. Paul’s.

I remembered that Jerry’s grandfather, Joseph C. Martin, had worked as a reporter and an editor in between stints as an Erie City Councilman and mayor. J.C. Martin Golf Course is named after him, but his legacy goes deeper than that.

When I got home, I grabbed my copy of Erie, Pennsylvania Mayors, 150 Years of Political History, by William P. Garvey, to read about Martin in Chapter 13, “Erie’s interim mayors.”

Councilman Martin was elected mayor by his colleagues after Mayor Sherman Hickey Jr. died in office.

He served for 16 months as mayor but “chose not to run for a four-year term and instead returned to the newspaper business, his first love, in 1950,” according to Garvey’s book.

After Martin died at age 87 in February 1986, the Erie Daily Times eulogized him as “Erie’s man for all seasons.”

The editorial said that “getting the former mayor to say anything derogatory about any of his one-time opponents was like pulling teeth, difficult work. Martin preferred to laugh about the past controversies and tell about the good side of his foes.”

Martin himself had reflected on his
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-J.D. Power

LIZ ALLEN still lives only four blocks from her childhood home, but recently ventured to the Polish Falcons Nest 123 to sub as a bowler. She desperately needs to learn how to hit more pins after marking with a strike or a spare.

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Echoes of Parkland

The reality of gun violence in schools and the need for change

By: Morgan Williams

When I was in my freshman year of high school, we had a hard lockdown. Many of my friends who were in other classes at the time thought it was a drill. The people in my classroom and I knew otherwise. It was fourth block, the last block of the day. I was in history class, my favorite class, on the second floor. My friend raised his hand to ask if he could go to the restroom, signed out, and took a pass. Moments later, he came back into the classroom. I remember a classmate laughing, asking why he came back so soon. Not laughing, he replied, "There's a kid with a gun out there." Everyone in the classroom was now listening. Some kids chuckled, thinking our peer was joking. Nothing like that could possibly happen at McDowell. It could happen at other schools, but definitely not ours. Other children, like myself, froze. Regardless of our different reactions at his comment, a morbid sense of unity washed over us as an announcement went over the PA system a few seconds later, announcing to us that there was an active shooter, and we were all to go into a hard lockdown immediately.

When I was thirteen, a year before going into high school, a man named Adam Lanza killed his mother and went into an elementary school in Connecticut and killed 26 children and teachers before killing himself. I was shocked to my core. The name "Columbine" floated around in my head. It was an event we learned about as a tragedy in American history, but was now suddenly a reality years later. I remember going home and watching the news, but having to turn it off before my brother, who is three-and-a-half years my junior, came home from elementary school. My parents didn't want him to see the news. They were afraid that it would frighten him. When he came home, I looked at him and had to go into a different room because I remember imagining in that moment what it would be like to hear that it had been Chestnut Hill Elementary in Erie, Pennsylvania instead of Sandy Hook Elementary in a small town in Connecticut.

In 2018, at least 239 school shootings after Sandy Hook, the Parkland shooting occurred on February 14th. This time, I was not shocked to my core. This time, I did not turn off the news to hide my brother from the horror. This time, instead of tip-toeing around it at home, we didn't talk about it at all. We have become so desensitized to the latest school shooting that, if the survivors of the Parkland shooting had not mobilized in the way they did, I would likely have forgotten the name "Parkland" and its significance altogether by now. But they did mobilize. Not only do I still know the name of the town this shooting took place in, but I also know the names of Cameron Kasky, David Hogg, Sarah Chadwick, Jacqueline Corin, Delaney Tarr, and Emma González. They are students, survivors, and activists from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. In the days to follow the shooting, they—along with their other classmates—were ridiculed for mourning "wrongly," for taking to social media to let their stories and opinions be heard, and some were even ridiculed for taking pictures and videos in the school while the shooting was occurring and in the time that followed. The last part is one that sparked a lot of discussion the next day at my school. A lot of people...

TOMMY IN TOON — BY TOMMY LINK

So then... oh, I'm supposed to make a call. What time is it?

7:45

Thanks! I... wait, you heard that? You're playing music!

Well yeah, but you're RIGHT there.

...could you hear everything?

Hey, I'm sure that rash will clear up.
The day after, my friend texted me and asked what my thoughts were on the shooting. Thoughts swirled in my mind, ones of gun reform, our poor mental healthcare system, the culture of violence we live in, and many more. Through all that, though, one thing weighed the heaviest. It was my mom’s voice. The sound of her voice on that day years ago, on the second floor of my high school, when my back was pressed against a bookshelf, and I held my phone to my ear as my hand trembled. I had called my mom after the hard lockdown ended up only having an airsoft gun with the tip painted black to imitate a real gun. The lockdown made news and was spoken of for months after. Some kids shrugged it off, but for others that wasn’t such an easy thing to do. I know friends who have nightmares and anxiety attacks about it, even years later. I will never forget the sound of my mom’s voice that day. She picked me up from school and I can still remember what it felt like to feel her hands shake on my head as she held me to her chest. I know that my family and I are lucky, because when I said goodbye to my mom that day in freshman year, it wasn’t the last thing she heard me say. I know that this is not the case for every family out there. I know that 17 families in Parkland, Florida are mourning right now because even after Sandy Hook, not enough has been done to prevent mass shootings. This angers people, as it should. People across the country are frustrated because they don’t know what to do.

Listen to these kids. Listen to Cameron, David, Sarah, Jaclyn, Delaney, and Emma. Listen to all their classmates, teachers, and faculty. Listen to my classmates who, after the shooting, said they didn’t want to go the basketball game last week because it would be an ideal location for a shooting. Listen to the survivors and families of victims of the Sandy Hook and Columbine shootings, and all other school shootings that have occurred. Listen to my mom, a parent who got a call from her kid saying there was a shooter in her school. No student, teacher, or faculty member deserves to feel unsafe due to the threat of gun violence that is present in schools all across the nation. And to any and all politicians who don’t proactively work to make schools a safer place because it puts more money in their pocket, just know that children grow up to become adults who are capable of voting you out of office, and we will. We matter. We have a voice, and we will be the change.

Morgan is currently a senior at McDowell High School. She helped to spearhead McDowell’s participation in the National School Walk-Out on Wednesday, Mar. 14, for 17 minutes starting at 10 a.m. The peaceful demonstration will be also be taking place at most schools in the Erie area and throughout the entire United States. #nationalschoolwalkout
Erie's Roasted Boom

How specialty coffee could quickly become your new craft beer

By Nick Warren

It's growing and it's changing and it's evolving right before our eyes,” Max Marcoline said of the local coffee community. The Erie native, and Director of Sales and Marketing for the Millcreek Coffee Company happily confessed “I've been working with coffee for 20 years, and I literally learn something new every day.”

There's a new scene brewing, and it can be compared to: something new every day.”

For specialty roasters like us, and others like us, we’ve noticed our business is growing because people are becoming more intrinsically discriminating when it comes to what they want,” Marcoline reasoned.

“arly on people were just looking for more for, in exchange for a better product and experience.”

All of this paved the way for the ‘third wave' of coffee. For these smaller-scale coffee producers, coffee isn't just a drink, it's an art.

These new purveyors take pride in the artisanal quality of their process. They look at sourcing beans with a mind for fair-trade and workers rights. They develop their own roasting methods, and they revel in the bouquet of flavors presented in a deceptively simple cup of black coffee.

This overall movement is far from new in many larger US cities, and Erie is certainly no stranger to progressive, independent coffee shops — just ask anyone who remembers going to places like Cup-a-cocoa (in fact, that very same storefront, now the Mediterranean cafe Alkeme, has some fantastic coffee creations of their own).

The trend has been on a slow simmer, and just like a coffee roast, the heat is gradually rising.

For specialty roasters like us, and others like us, we’ve noticed our business is growing because people are becoming more intrinsically discriminating when it comes to what they want,” Marcoline reasoned.

“This in turn leads to small(er) coffee operations picking up the business subsequently. They're the next logical step, when drinkers think 'okay, now I'm going to be really particular about what I like,' or really open-minded, depending on how you look at it.”

The customers gain a level of ownership and pride in their personal preferences. Larger companies, by nature, are mostly limited to a handful of different blends, while some specialty roasters will have dozens of varieties to choose from.

One simple thing that business like Starbucks started doing was simply telling customers where their coffee came from. Even your casual enthusiast will give a nod of acknowledgment to blends from Columbia, Kenya, Guatemala, or Sumatra.

Matt Shay, founder of Happy Mug Coffee, underscored the importance of the source, known as the “origin,” explaining that “basically every origin has unique characteristics that aren't going to be found in other origins. Like in a beer, you have all these different kind of different hops, and people kind of understand that, but they might not understand that a blend of this origin and that origin will taste a certain way.”

Of course, not all coffee from a given country is created equal. Shay was quick to note that “every country that grows coffee tends to grow a certain set of varietals. If you think of coffee beans as apples, for example, there are all kinds of apples — McIntosh, Granny Smith, et cetera — very different. So in any country, they have certain varietals that do well.”

He added that “they also have different processing techniques which affect the final taste.”

Marcoline echoed a similar statement positing that “say you had a Sumatran coffee, you were a fan of. Well, Sumatra, for example makes a great many different kinds of coffee and not all of them are your favorite coffee, nor are you aware of all of these different coffees that Sumatra makes.”

No country has a monolithic taste. Couple that with the fact batches vary from year to year, even from that same plantation and, as Marcoline exclaimed 'you've got these really deep, interesting circumstances that so many people partake of and many of them don't know anything about it.”

For those that seek a 100 percent locally-made loop, the unfortunate fact is that by design, coffee needs to be imported. Marcoline explained that coffee can't be grown locally, so it has to be produced locally in other ways, because it has to come countries along the Equator, also noting that there is a small amount of coffee being grown in southern California. At this point, though, that product is still far from the level of its South American or African competitors.

Shay boasted that “we're able to showcase origins of coffee that you don't often hear about.”

“arly on people were just looking for more for, in exchange for a better product and experience.”

Though the origin is an extremely important piece of a coffee's flavor profile, it’s just the beginning. “The growers, the actual people that farm the land, these are often family operations — and keep in mind that we're almost exclusively talking about third world countries here — for them, coffee has to be picked by hand so it takes a large labor force,” Marcoline explained. To get a better grasp at the work involved simply by getting the beans, he broke down the numbers, weighing that “in general the number it takes to create a pound of roasted beans is about
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4,000 coffee beans. So keep in mind that each coffee cherry is picked by hand and has two coffee beans in it. That’s what’s interesting, the massive scope that it takes to create this thing that we in this country just completely take for granted.”

From there, it’s about getting the fruit of the cherries off of the coffee beans. Then the beans have to be dried before they can be bagged and shipped out, where they can keep for much longer time, years in fact.

At this stage in the game, these dried beans are known as “greens.” One look, and it’s easy to tell why. This is before the roasting process, where they look more like shelled pistachio nuts rather than the shiny brown beans that most people picture when they think of coffee.

As greens age, they can lose some of the subtleties that distinguish themselves from other beans. A Sumatran bean, for example, may lose some of those unique characteristics that originally made you a fan. After they’re roasted, however, it still tastes like, you a fan. After they’re roasted, however, it still tastes like coffee. It’s by roasting that some of those unique characteristics that originally made you a fan are preserved, and the metaphor stuck with him. We were both able to identify our preferences without hesitation (he likes the company Ernie Ball while I prefer D’Addario). For various reasons, the ever-so-slightly differences are evident to us, whether it’s their tactile feeling or their audible results. To a layman, they’re all basically thin wires with a cylinder attached, but like with any passion, the tools of the trade definitely matter.

It’s during the actual roasting process that each batch of beans acquires their particular taste palette. Essentially the cooking of the beans, heat is applied to greens at a steady increasing temperature for about 15 minutes, depending on the machinery. Less time and lower temperatures yield a lighter roast, while a darker one gets more heat for a longer span. From this simple window, roasters can dramatically vary what you end up tasting.

When roasted skillfully, lighter coffees often offer drinkers a delicately complex taste that some find more rewarding. A darker roast, however tends to be slightly bolder and more consistent, which accounts for it overall popularity.

When roasted skillfully, lighter coffees often offer drinkers a delicately complex taste that some find more rewarding. A darker roast, however tends to be slightly bolder and more consistent, which accounts for it overall popularity.

Nick Attalla, Vice President of Erie’s Premium Coffee offered his personal opinion, saying that “I like a nice full-bodied cup of coffee, but then again there are light roasts that are sweet mellow, and smooth. Everybody has their own taste.”

The most recent Erie’s Best Coffee event showed that Attalla and his associates may be on to something. Winning awards for the Best Flavored Coffee, Judges Choice and the People’s Choice, Premium Coffee was named Erie’s Best Coffee. “The community has welcomed us with open arms,” Nick Attalla expressed. “They’ve been so nice. I like to just bring a good cup of coffee to the community that’s not seven dollars a cup, you know?” he said with a laugh.

Finding the perfect roast is elusive and captivating. Reed reasoned that “we do small batch roasting, and the whole idea behind small batch roasting is more control. We can finely tune what our roasts are, where we’re at, much like craft beer or wine, there’s tasting notes, there are things that are hidden that different roasts bring out.”

Having previously tried his hand at winemaking, Reed concluded that “I like coffee roasting more, because I like instant gratification, with wine and beer you’ve got to wait and then taste it and then go back and try again, saying ‘well we’ve got a couple months to wait’ whereas with coffee you can taste it, and if it’s not quite there you can tinker with it, you can start it over, and 20 minutes later you’re ready to go.”

The comparisons to craft beer keep coming, a movement which from its start drew comparisons to wine tasting. It’s no shock that there are a few people in town seeking to bring all of those imbibable interests together, like Gisele Littrell, who will soon be opening up the Tipsy Bean in the Independence Hill district. “It’s been a long time dream. I’m just passionate about coffee and alcohol, so I’m combining those two passions together under one roof,” she said, chuckling. She described an “all day coffee shop with wine and beer, which will be open late nights, with music, poetry readings and more.” Littrell, owner of French Maids LLC, says they’re “also planning a delivery service and a charcuterie, sourced all from local roasters. There’s so many great roasters now locally.”

If it’s before 5 p.m., Nick Warren is probably drinking coffee at this very moment, black as midnight on a moonless night. He can be reached at nick@eriereader.com

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Grounds for Approval
Something new percolating downtown at Ember+Forge

By: Cara Suppa

I have a dorky confession to make upfront: When my high school girlfriends and I were juniors and seniors, we didn’t go out and party on the weekends. We weren’t getting drunk, smoking things and making questionable choices while doing so. Weather permitting, we would get dressed up and visit Erie’s coffee spots. Hey, we weren’t old enough for bars yet, but Sarah had her Plymouth Sundance, and for five Edinboro gals with big-city dreams, Erie was as sophisticated as it was going to get until we split for college.

There was Aromas, in what is now Casablanca Grill on Eighth. There was ultra-posh 1000 French, which served espresso drinks in those huge, round mugs the size of your face. And then there was our absolute favorite coffee shop, Poe’s, in close proximity to Forward Hall, in what is now the Independence Hill neighborhood on Peach. Seventeen years ago we guzzled cappuccinos and peppermint mochas and vanilla lattes, and we felt damn chic while doing it.

Now that I’m a freelance writer, grad student and parent, my perception of the glamorousness of drinking coffee has been taken down a notch since those halcyon days, but as a full-fledged inhabitant of the City of Erie, my appreciation for a locally owned coffee shop, with locally sourced beans — and some female bad-assery at the helm — has risen exponentially.

Enter Ember + Forge, the brainchild willed into existence by owner Hannah Kirby, whose appreciation for coffee shops led her from a career in engineering to owning and operating the downtown area’s only independently run, dedicated java joint, which officially opened its doors in late December 2017. “[It] always inspired me, seeing people coming together over coffee,” she explained.

Coffeehouses, as they were known, were popular in the Middle East in the early 1500s; Europeans, clearly...
impressed by both the concept and the beverage which gives the concept its name, took about 100 years to get around to copy the Persians, Egyptians and Turks, and facsimiles popped up all over the continent, beginning in Venice and spreading eastward. From the first, they were meeting places and social levelers, where men (and only occasionally women) could mingle regardless of social class or status, and trade information, political views and business propositions, or conversely, could just relax over a hot percolated beverage.

This rich history behind coffee shops, which has long brewed in the backdrop of Western culture, with coffeehouses of old often serving as silent witnesses to the men and women who stoked the dissent that toppled monarchical rule, is clearly not lost on Kirby, who told me she “…wanted to create a space for people to connect and share ideas over locally roasted coffee.” Kirby hopes that the shop will “anchor our downtown” and “support the growth and investment of other companies.” As it happens, Ember+Forge might not lead the Revolution so much as the Renaissance.

Clearly there is a strong local theme permeating all aspects of the coffee shop, starting with the manner in which Kirby and her team renovated the space, located at 401 State Street, and the way she has honored the building’s former life in its present incarnation. According to the shop’s website, “The building’s history as a chandlery, a place where candles were made and sold forms the ‘ember’ in the shop’s name, while ‘forge’ is a nod to the city’s history in manufacturing.”

A quality engineer at the LORD Corporation who for seven years performed tasks ranging from audits to working on the manufacturing floor, Kirby credits her background in engineering for training her in critical thinking, planning, efficiency and foresight, four qualities that would serve her well anywhere, but which give her an edge in both a city and a business which is prone to quick, flashy fireworks, followed by an even quicker fade-out (after all, none of those aforementioned coffee shops were still around when I moved into the City of Erie in 2012). And the downtown area, which is lively and vibrant, bolstered by great restaurant and bar locations and huge, thriving, well-populated business like Erie Insurance and UPMC Hamot, as well as foot traffic from Gannon students, by no means provides a shoeh-in for small enterprises seeking to capitalize on the location.

Yet Kirby explained, “There are challenges to being in a downtown environment, but they are significantly outweighed by the benefits of being able to fully engage with our community and support development of our downtown in a big way.”

Daunting as the process of opening a new business can be, Kirby has a dedicated team behind her, including her husband Sam and the support of the ATHENA Circle of Trust, a self-described “cohort of emerging female leaders who empower each other to develop executive and leadership skills and advocate for one another as leaders in the Erie community.” She has also devised an admirable business plan for her shop, which includes a simple but high-quality menu with locally roasted coffee served up via single-brew methods (as well as cold brew, espresso beverages and loose-leaf teas), plus plenty of community interaction, whether it’s through social media outreach or hosting events in the shop’s bright, modern space.

“Social media has been a great tool — especially when it came to building momentum before the official opening,” Kirby told me. Indeed, fans of the shop voted in Ember+Forge as a nominee for the Reader’s Best of Erie awards, under Best Local Coffee Shop — two months before Kirby even opened her doors.

If the present is any indication, the future of Ember+Forge is on the up-and-up, particularly as support from the community — and beyond — continues to roll in. Just last week, Kirby received recognition and acclaim for her work as a young, female entrepreneur contributing to the Erie community and its downtown area on American Public Media’s Marketplace.

In her remarks there, one statement was particularly telling in terms of Kirby’s vision for the shop: “And what would make this dream absolutely set in stone would be that two people come in and talk about an idea, and come up with a plan inside these walls and then execute it outside of them, [and] that really helps our city grow.”

Kirby and Co. plan to keep things fresh with an ever-changing line-up of events, including live music, a Yoga+Coffee series and participation in the next Gallery Night. When it comes to celebrating everything local, Kirby not only practices what she preaches, she plans, prioritizes and perfects — and keeps Erie’s tradition of coffee shops alive, well, and wonderful for the next generation of java junkies, revolutionaries and wannabe sophisticates.

Cara Suppa can be reached at csuppa@eriereader.com

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**Slam Dunk Donuts**

Close competition for coffee’s favorite companion

You can’t judge a donut by its cover — the glaze is just one component of what makes these three specimens delicious. Pictured from left to right are the Jack Frost, Mighty Fine, and H & K entries.

By: Matt Swanseger

A mug of piping hot coffee and the glazed donut — the two were made for each other. While the glazed ring has been at the center of many engagements, the glazed twist’s sleeker design is better suited to consummate the marriage. Luckily for us, Erie boasts three locally-owned shops that have presided over dozens upon dozens of such unions throughout the decades. As such, they know a good thing when they see it — the question now was would we know a good thing when we taste it?

The Erie Reader recently conducted a blind taste test at its State Street offices to determine the answer. Choosing our favorite iteration of the glazed twist was like choosing between supermodel doctor, supermodel lawyer, or supermodel entertainer (do you like your taste buds to get to eat donuts with them or not?). The recipe survived three generations of the Frost family until being passed on to new ownership in Darlene Cohen, who has been gradually expanding her three years at the helm. Her clientele just so happens to include Ember + Forge, coffee and the glazed twist’s new dream home (also check out the “donotti” — a donut-shaped reworking of biscotti). The runners-up (barely) were: H & K DO Nut Shop, 3712 W. Lake Rd. The H & K glazed twist also pleased our palates with a somewhat chewier, breadier dough and coarser grain sugar glaze. The west side is well-represented with this Millcreek staple.

Mighty Fine Donuts, 2612 Parade St.

Most of us had never questioned Mighty Fine’s dominance because it’s never given us a reason to — it’s always open and always delicious. Mighty Fine’s famed glazed twist dissolves on the tongue almost like cotton candy. Coffee offers plenty of perks on its own, but the fact that we get to eat donuts with them is the epitome of harmony.
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SATURDAY, MARCH 3
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Vs. OWEN SOUND ATTACK
Game time: 7:00 PM

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 7
Vs. FLINT FIREBIRDS
Game time: 7:00 PM

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Metropolitan Skies
The city is teeming with avian life

By: Mary Birdsong

The next time you’re downtown near the bayfront, look up at the smokestack remaining from the old Penelec substation situated by the Maritime Museum and the Blasco Library. If you see a small dark blob rising up from the rim or perched on the catwalk, what you are probably looking at is a peregrine falcon.

While many are familiar with conspicuous birds that are a daily sight such as American robins, blue jays, black-capped chickadees, house sparrows, mourning doves and more, the impression remains that to see the unusual or “exotic” birds, one has to go somewhere else, out in the country or into the woods. The way some news stories about unknown birds are reported — as rare out-of-place wild creatures coming into human space for a little while — continues to perpetrate the notion of them as oddities, kinks in the usual division between nature and us. The fact that peregrines have been around for nearly a decade now proves this is not true. As avian life goes, Erie is a paradise.

Besides the peregrines, other birds of prey live here year-round. Many merlins (a type of small falcon) now make their home in Erie and are breeding here as well. The first nest with two fledglings was confirmed in 2014. Bald eagles, too, are seen regularly over the bay and have been recorded near 12th and Pittsburgh, in the air over the Peach Street Wegmans, and flying over city neighborhoods. Screech and barred owls are regular residents wherever a good stand of evergreens support them.

Erie also sees an enormous variety of birds passing through on migration. Because of Erie’s location on what’s called the Eastern Flyway — an aerial superhighway birds use to migrate north and south — hundreds of thousands if not millions of birds can pass through here in the spring and fall each year. Many stop at Presque Isle State Park, but many others land in backyards, in parks and on the bayfront. Right now, waterfowl are already beginning their northern trip. On any given day, in open water on the bay you might find the likes of surf scoters, goldeneye, greater and lesser scaup, canvasbacks, redheads, buffleheads, three types of mergansers, two types of grebes, and common loons.

But why do birds like cities? Urban environments can offer great food resources. Train corridors make good open hunting grounds for rodents and small birds, the bay for fish. Those pigeons downtown make a splendid buffet for bird-eating raptors like peregrines that haunt the downtown area along with the bayfront. One of their favorite perches in the city is the Renaissance Building where feathers and feet can be found on the window ledges.

How they made it to the window ledges of downtowns everywhere is a story in itself.

All peregrine falcons living east of the Mississippi River are the descendants of a re-population effort after the insecticide DDT decimated the population. Like the bald eagle and other birds of prey, falcon numbers plummeted and, in fact, the eastern population of the bird was considered extirpated, or extinct. The greatest success in re-establishing the endangered bird came in the form of introducing young birds to the tops of city buildings where fewer predators existed. Their traditional cliff-top aeries posed too many risks for young falcons living east of the Mississippi River are the descendants of a re-population effort after the insecticide DDT decimated the population. Like the bald eagle and other birds of prey, falcon numbers plummeted and, in fact, the eastern population of the bird was considered extirpated, or extinct. The greatest success in re-establishing the endangered bird came in the form of introducing young birds to the tops of city buildings where fewer predators existed. Their traditional cliff-top aeries posed too many risks for young
Urban Threats

While birds have adapted to city life in many ways, they still face risks living around humans. One of the biggest risks is reflective glass windows. Large panes that mirror the sky or nearby trees fool birds into thinking they can fly “there.” Instead they hit hard glass.

In nearby cities, peregrines choose the ledges under bridges, too. The first bird to establish territory in Erie was reared on a noisy bridge in Cleveland, so when it chose inside the 160-foot tall dry dock building at Don Jon Shipbuilding and Repair for a nesting site, the place probably felt like home to him despite the high decibels of that industrial setting.

Soon, if you keep your eyes to the sky, you might actually see two peregrines flying above the bayfront as courship begins. The pair uses the smokestack as a launching platform for the dramatic aerial displays they perform before nesting. The breath-taking ritual includes flying closely together with numerous dips, rolls, twists, turns, and sharp dives.

And in April, they’ll start scouting inside the Don Jon building for a place to make their nesting site, which is not woven sticks and branches as we imagine for most birds. In natural settings and in nest boxes on city building, the “nest” is just a depression in gravel substrate. What the Erie peregrines use or how they design their site is not known, as the spaces they have used over the past years have never been examined due to their height of ledges they choose.

Sometime in June, new peregrines may be ready to test their wings. If you want to see them or any other interesting birds, all you have to do is look up.

Mary Birdsong can be reached at mbirdsong@eriereader.com

The male surf scoter is identified by its black plumage and striking facial features, including its uniquely shaped bill and white markings. The duck breeds near northern freshwater lakes, such as Lake Erie.

Another threat is the presence of cats (whether owned or feral) in the natural environment where they are considered a non-native invasive species, though many groups such as Alley Cat Allies disagree with that label. The evidence works against the pro-cat arguments. Research and tracking over the past two decade have led scientists to learn that cats have contributed to the extinction of 33 bird species world wide. In the United States alone, outdoor cats kill approximately 2.4 billion birds every year according to “The State of the Birds” report conducted by the U.S. Department of Interior in 2014.
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Tyler Smilo
Mar. 2 — 6 p.m. to midnight
Coming straight (no chaser) for those who may not have heard it yet, it’s a word that pairs well with most of what he has to say about his upcoming LP. The local singer-songwriter is set to release his third full-length, The Painter, on March 2nd, and coinciding with it is a record release show at Scotty’s Martini Lounge. For those who may need more than one word to comprehend Smilo’s abilities: a trail of raw, unfiltered, and above all, honest, folk music lines the artist’s past projects.

‘Audible Paintings’ with Tyler Smilo’s Album Release at Scotty’s

FRIDAY, MAR. 2

Organic” is the word Tyler Smilo chooses to describe his music for those who may not have heard it yet, and it’s a word that pairs well with most of what he has to say about his upcoming LP. The local singer-songwriter is set to release his third full-length, The Painter, on March 2nd, and coinciding with it is a record release show at Scotty’s Martini Lounge. For those who may need more than one word to comprehend Smilo’s abilities: a trail of raw, unfiltered, and above all, honest, folk music lines the artist’s past projects.

“I’m a painter by trade; there is art that I’ve made, but these canvases are blank and that’s how they’ll stay,” sings Smilo in one of The Painter’s standout tracks. Smilo has decided to refer to these songs as “audible paintings.”

“I believe my intended delivery is coming through more and more these days,” says Smilo. “Everything I write is very open and natural for me. It’s like I’m painting a self portrait through sounds. I like making music that provokes [thought] in the listener. I enjoy mind-numbing music, but it’s just not what I make.” In Smilo’s words, it’s easy to see where the album’s title came from, and in the music itself, it’s easy to hear the origin of words like “organic” and “honest.”

The Painter follows Smilo’s 2015 album, Dust in the Grave. A humble speaker when asked about his music, Smilo simply seems glad he’s able to play at all.

“I just want to thank people for listening,” Smilo says. “I’m glad it moves people. [I’m] truly blessed.” — Aaron Mook

9:30 p.m. to 2:30 a.m. // 301 German St. // 21+

Arts & Crafts Turns 10
THURSDAY, MAR. 1

Beer and art do not always associate with one another, but the two are more alike than you might think. For example, both beer and art often require a closer, more in-depth examination of their finer points for the greatest possible appreciation. Beer and art may also be something of an acquired taste, something for which a liking — or loving — is not instantaneous, but rather a gradual warming up to, often associated with the individual’s maturation. Finally, one might have to try all different kinds of both until they find one that catches their interest — and that’s okay.

Lucky for the Erie community, the Brewerie at Union Station’s Arts and Drafts festival comes around twice a year, giving established enthusiasts a double dose of what they love, and neophytes plenty of time to ready their tastes, with the knowledge that they won’t have to wait a full 365 days until their next opportunity to take in all that the event has to offer.

And what Arts and Drafts has to offer to the public is substantial, with each weekend getting better and better. This first edition of the bi-annual celebration for 2018 is especially meaningful, as it marks a full decade since artist Drew Kaufman headed the inaugural Arts and Drafts. Ten years later, the Brewerie will be bursting at the seams for three days, with live performances by 14 local acts, including ethereal songbird Brooke Sugrere, Rust Belt blues rock duo Bootjack, and Erie mainstay Matt “Broke” Boland. Complementing those luscious sounds will be over 70 local artists, whose work across multiple medias will provide a feast for the eyes (that can be purchased and taken home). — Cara Suppa

Thursday 6:30 to 10:45 p.m., Friday 6:30 p.m. to midnight, Saturday 5:45 p.m. to midnight /// 123 W. 14th Street // $3 after 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday /// brewerie.com

The Celtic Hooligans
Mar. 10 — 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Molly Brannigans Irish Pub, 506 State St. thecel-
Best Picture It: One Night in Hollywood

SUNDAY, MAR. 4

If you've been paying attention to Oscar season, chances are you already have your top picks lined up. This year, see if they prove accurate in style at the Film Society of Northwest Pennsylvania's One Night in Hollywood. The region's premiere screening party for the Academy Awards is now in its sixth year, and they're ready to roll out the red carpet once again for the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences' 90th annual ceremony.

Encouraging attendees to dress their best, the evening always makes for a healthy balance of elegance and fun. The event is a fundraiser for the Film Society, and helps to keep community events like the new series, Film Grain: Dinner and a Movie going. Guests will be treated to appetizers, as well as dinner, with wine from 6 Mile Cellars and beer from Lavery Brewing Co. on hand. The night will be hosted by YourErie / JET 24 / FOX 66's David Belmonto, and will feature games, Chinese auctions and more.

Though chances are the top honors will go to either The Shape of Water or Three Billboards Outside of Ebbing, Missouri, one thing's for sure (even more than Gary Oldman's and Frances McDormand's wins), this will be a night to remember. — Nick Warren

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Contemplate Genius in Lapin Agile with All An Act Players

FRIDAY, MAR. 9

When he's not portraying iconic silver screen roles such as the sadistic dentist in Little Shop of Horrors, or composing Tony-nominated scores for Broadway musicals or penning novels and essays, Steve Martin dips his toes into the playwriting pool. Okay, he is actually fully submerged, creatively, and it is actually the nature of said ability — creative genius — that Martin examines in his 1993 play Picaso at the Lapin Agile.

The marvelous players at the All An Act Theater are bringing this work to the Erie community, portraying such ingenious heavy hitters as Albert Einstein and Pablo Picasso, as they meet in France in 1904 and debate the merits of art, science, and talent, all while interacting with the less-famous but equally fascinating characters who populate the bar, the Lapin Agile.

Directed by veteran theater maven J.D. Mizkowski and starring some of the area's eminent stage talent, including Adele Crotty Gross and David W. Mitchell, Picasso at the Lapin Agile promises to give audiences an extraordinary night of comedy, insight and creative genius. — Cara Suppa

7:30 p.m. (see website for full schedule) // 652 W. 17th St. // $12 Adults; $10 Seniors and Students (cash-only at the door) // allanact.net/up-next
The Classic Sunday in the Park with George at Erie Playhouse

FRIDAY, MAR. 9 — SUNDAY, MAR. 25

The classic musical Sunday in the Park With George uses the life and work of painter George Seurat as its framework. Among his most famous paintings is “A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte,” which showcases masterful execution of the pointillist technique.

In an effort to better celebrate "the uniqueness of the Erie theater/art scene," the Erie Playhouse has announced a collaborative project with PACA, All An Act Theater and the Erie Art Museum to present three very special productions centered around the creation of visual art. Followed by Yasmina Reza’s Art at PACA and Steve Martin’s Picasso at the Lapin Agile at All An Act, the first of these is set to be an iteration of the musical classic Sunday in the Park with George, directed by Richard Davis at the Erie Playhouse.

The production, which the Playhouse calls "a masterpiece" and "one of the most acclaimed musicals of our time," is about the life and work of painter George Seurat. But according to Davis, it really is about so much more than that.

"It really is a non-conventional theater piece," says Davis. "At its very most basic, it is a story about how artists try to find a balance between their art and their personal life. It just happens to be set against this framework of George Seurat's life."

Though Davis doesn't have much of a history with the production, he says it's always been one of his favorites and a dream to work on.

"I love the story and I loved the conflict between George and Dot in the beginning, and how it takes four generations and George's great-grandson to settle that," says Davis.

Sunday in the Park With George opened on Broadway in 1984, going on to be nominated for an astonishing 10 Tony Awards. This production is the definition of standing the test of time, as after 30 years, it still seems to capture the same universal emotions among audiences. Davis has some ideas as to why.

"In general, people have difficulty making connections and maintaining relationships," says Davis. "[Composer Stephen] Sondheim is such an innovator, so ahead of his time that we are just catching up to his music now. And I suppose it’s always fun to create a painting live on stage." — Aaron Mook

Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // Dates, showtimes, and prices available online at erieplayhouse.org
**Kings Rook**

* Saturday, March 17
**Hooligans Ball**
+ Vibe & Direct
+ Electric Love Machine [Downstairs]

* Saturday, March 24
**Eric Brewer & Friends**
+ Grateful Dead Tribute
+ DJ Necco [Downstairs]

* Friday, March 30
**Tropicelic**
+ Litz [Downstairs]

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+ $2 FIREBALL 9PM-10PM

**CALENDAR**

Local Heavy Hitters Return and Reunite at BT

SATURDAY, MAR. 10

Christian metal band War of Ages remain one of the Erie underground scene’s most resounding success stories, with eight albums and an international fan base.

raised them, even after relo-
cating. The December 2017 release of Alpha marks the eighth studio album for the band.

Mixing up the genres for this show, Pittsburgh skapunk rockers The Code will be reuniting for a night. In

6 p.m. // 145 W. 11th St. // $15
Advance, $20 Doors

* FRI 03/02
  + Chromadrive
  + Space Junk
  + Cold Lazarus
  SAT 03/10
  + Charlie Wheeler
  + The English Project
  + The Paulisabilities
  SAT 03/24
  + Roots of A Rebellion

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==NO COVER FOR MEMBERS EXCEPT SPECIAL EVENTS==
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Christian metal band War of Ages is returning to their hometown, when they make Basement Transmissions the final stop on their “Alpha Tour”.

Arguably the most successful band to break out of the Erie underground music scene, War of Ages has maintained a highly active touring schedule, and fostered a strong international fan base, but always makes sure to come back and pay respects to the scene that neutrality or why the motion to remove it is so controversial, there’s never been a better time or place to learn than on at the society’s upcoming lecture, “Life in the Fast Lane,” hosted by speaker James Wertz, Ph.D. (Director of the Honors program at Edinboro University) — Aaron Mook

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org

**Adult Yoga Classes**

Mar. 1 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org

2232 Men’s Conference

Mar. 3 — 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.
Our Lady of Peace Church, 2401 W. 38th St. 2232men.com

**Community Call to Peace**

Mar. 4 — 4 to 9:30 p.m.
Oasis Pub, 3122 W. Lake Rd. matverie.org

**One Night in Hollywood**

Mar. 4 — 7:30 p.m.
Sheraton Erie Bayfront Hotel, 55 W. Bay Rd. film-societywpa.org

**Family Storytime**

Mar. 5, 12 — 10 to 10:45 a.m.
Edinboro Branch Library, 413 Plum St. erielibrary.org

**Microsoft Excel Essentials**

Mar. 5, 12 — 1 to 2:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org

**Presque Isle History Series**

Mar. 5 — 6 to 7 p.m.
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr. trecri.org

**US-Saudi Alliance: What Does the Future Hold for These Strange Bedfellows**

Mar. 5 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Edinboro University’s Dr. Baher Ghosheh speaks on the US-Saudi relationship throughout time and what the Trump presidency may mean for its future.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org

**Ombudsman Program**

Mar. 6 — 12:30 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org

**Basic Home Repair Tips**

Mar. 6 — 1 to 2 p.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworkserie.org

**Great Books**

Mar. 6 — 4 to 5:30 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org

**Examining Cancer Cells Through the Lens of a Developing Organ**

Mar. 6 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Dr. Justin Lathia, of the Lerner Research Institute at the Cleveland Clinic, will discuss the relationship between tumor cells and their adjacent cells in this lecture speech.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org

**Erie Torch Club Presents: Erie’s Humbling Weather**

Mar. 7 — 6 to 9 p.m.
Erie Torch Club welcomes Jet 24 meteorologist Tom Atkins, to speak about his early work experiences, tornado chasing and love of lake effect snow.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St. jeserie.org

**Gardening Workshops**

Mar. 7, 14 — 7 to 8:30 p.m.
Lake Erie Arboretum at Frontier Park, 1501 W. 6th St. leaferie.org

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Erie's cultural milieu will celebrate another milestone as the Erie Art Museum's Gallery Night program enters its 11th season. If you're passionate about art but your budget is not quite feeling the Louvre or jonesin' for the Smithsonian, you could not draw up a more perfect evening — free viewings, complimentary refreshments, and 16 participating locations.

The Erie Art Museum (home base) will debut five new exhibits: Urban Chatter: Textile Art by Sharon Kerry-Harlan (quilts and textile collages inspired by jazz), Divine Instinct by Gary Spinosa (iconography and religious art), Faces and Places (paintings by retired Edinboro professor James McMurray), Kids as Curators (art and exhibits by local middle school students), and First Class (works by Erie Art Museum instructors and students).

419 Artifacts: Art, not cotton, is the fabric of our lives. Check out THREADS, featuring work by Deborah Sementelli, as well as other fruits of the loom. — 419 State St.

Artlore Studio: Art inspired by myths, legends, folklore and fairy tales is the story of the night here. Thankfully, this is a fairy tale where you will not be eaten, but will have something to eat, thanks to Give A Crepe. La Crepe Erie. — 3406 W. Lake Rd.

Attic Rehab: All the treasures of an attic without the mustiness — Jack Quigley's Paint & Pattern features his recent watercolors and textile work on the building's ground floor. Upstairs in the Erie ClaySpace studio, view ceramic works until your eyes glaze over. — 1501 State St.

Blasco Library: The Chateau de la Surrealism Gallery will be deceiving guests with open arms. Trip over (figuratively) the work of Andrew Newton, Kris Risto, Jessica Stadtmueller, Mercy Maclay, Jason Amatangelo, Eric Fargiorgio, Ken Johnson, Jennifer Christina, Mckenzie Sprague, Corey Thompson, and Dylan Vanord. — 160 E. Front St.

Ember+Forge: Warm up to a cup of joe and Corey Thompson's Primary Winter, paintings inspired by the colder months. — 401 State St.

Erie Art Gallery: Multiple mediums and multiple artists mingle for Erie Works at downtown's latest exhibit space. — 24 W. Eighth St.

Schuster Gallery at Gannon University: Eugene Rutkowski (1936-1973) was controversial in his day for his modernist adaptations of ancient scripture. Appreciate his works in a new light at "Art of the Spirit." — 700 Peach St., First Floor

Glass Growers Gallery: Glasses more than half full with The Stimulation of Perception (photographs by Laura Gooley) and Find A Way (sculpture by Brian Pardini). — 10 E. Fifth St.

1503 Gallery at PACA: Experimentations in both sight (psychedelic art of Andrew Todd) and sound (a listening of the new one-wayness release RANDOM ORACLE, a live performance by Battalion of Cloudships). — 1503 State St., Second Floor

1505 Gallery at PACA: Be moved by painter Janine Utegg's oil-on-canvas collection For the Love of Farm Animals, featuring scenes fertile with pastoral charm. — 1505 State St., Second Floor

Lake Life: Heather Mitchell has arranged driftwood and beach glass into beautiful designs reflecting the wonders of our Great Lakes. — 3739 W. Lake Rd.

History of the City of Erie
Mar. 8 — 7 p.m.
Erie Maennerchor Club, 1607 State St. gcosere.org.

An Evening Honoring Steven McKenrick
Mar. 9 — 6 to 10 p.m.
The Brewerie will be offering two beers named after late Erie Firefighter Steven "Breeve" McKenrick for one night only, with profits going to the family in Steve's memory.
The Brewerie at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. facebook.com.

Jamie Kennedy
Mar. 9 — 6:45 & 9:30 p.m.
Jamie Kennedy is experienced in making people laugh. The stand-up comedian and actor, who has performed around the country and starred in major network shows, is now bringing his talent to Jr's Last Laugh Comedy Club. Kennedy stars as Dr. Callahan on NBC's Heartbreak voices several characters in SyFX's Legends of Chamberlain Heights. But perhaps his most memorable role was in Malibu's Most Wonted. He played Brad Gluckman, a white rapper in Malibu, which was a role he first portrayed in The Jamie Kennedy Experiment. — Tracy Geibel
Jr's Last Laugh, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.com.

41st Annual St. Patrick’s Parade Day
Mar. 10 — 2 to 3:30 p.m.
Join your fellow Irishmen and celebrate St. Patty's Day Euro-style for the 41st annual parade, kicking off the holiday with family and friends in the downtown area. St. Patrick Church, 130 E. 4th St. facebook.com.

How to Meditate: It's Not What You Think
Mar. 10 — 10 a.m. to noon
Plasha Yoga, 3330 W. 26th St. plashayoga.com.

Spring Fest
Mar. 10 — 11 a.m.

Board Game Event: Game On!
Mar. 10 — 2 to 4 p.m.
Lincoln Community Center Library, 1255 Manchester Rd. erielibrary.org.

Game Night attendees view an exhibit at the Erie Art Museum on Friday, December 1, 2017.

We Got Next Presents: Stan'em Comedy Extravaganza
Mar. 10 — 7 to 10 p.m.
Local entertainment space Erie Movie House will be holding their first stand-up comedy showcase on March 10th, and they want you to join in on the fun. “We are looking forward to bringing something new to our space and hopefully it will bring out some new people as well,” says co-owner Nicole Boivin. Presented by the Pittsburgh-based comedy podcast We Got Next, the showcase will feature six comedians including show hosts Eric Weber, Trey McDonough and Christopher Scivia among others. Doors for the showcase will open at 7 p.m. and the show will begin at 8 p.m. The show is also BYOB-friendly for those with a 21+ ID. — Aaron Mook

Exercise and Health Benefits with Chuck Bechtold
Mar. 12 — 10:30 a.m.
LifeWorks Erie, 406 Peach St. lifeworksere.org.

Tots in Nature Class: My One Little Cloud
Mar. 12, 15, 19, 22, 26, 29 — 9 to 10 a.m.

Preschool Nature Discovery Class: Tall Tall Grass, Small Small Pond
Mar. 12, 15, 19, 22, 26, 29 — 10:30 to 11:30 a.m.

STREAM Studio
Mar. 12 — 4:30 to 5:15 p.m.
Edinboro Branch Library, 413 Plum St. erielibrary.org.

Erie SeaWolves Job Expo
Mar. 13 — 9 a.m. to noon
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. eerievent.com.

Read to a Therapy Dog
Mar. 13 — 4:30 to 5:30 p.m.
Lincoln Community Center Library, 1255 Manchester Rd. erielibrary.org.

Erie Talent Share
Mar. 13 — 6 to 8 p.m.

Read to a Therapy Dog
Mar. 14 — 3:30 to 4:30 p.m.
Edinboro Branch Library, 413 Plum St. erielibrary.org.
Meet the new mobile site

www.eriereader.com

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Hosted by The Film Society of NWPA
Back in Black!: Black Panther is a Superhero Film with Some Smart Ideas
★★★★

We are now well into Phase 3 of Marvel’s Cinematic Universe and the company is finally letting directors put some unique ideas into their stories of costumed heroes punching bad guys. As a result, Ryan Coogler’s (Fruitvale Station, Creed) Black Panther contains some very interesting themes and storylines that sadly give way to the standard superhero action spectacle that is all too common in these types of films.

The film follows T’Challa (Chadwick Boseman), the newly crowned king of the super-advanced nation of Wakanda as well as its mysterious protector known only as the “Black Panther”. However, when he is confronted by a challenger to the throne (Michael B. Jordan), T’Challa begins to question his country’s ideals as well as the things his predecessors did in order to keep Wakanda hidden.

The film asks some very smart questions about isolationism in the face of global catastrophe as well as a nation’s responsibilities for helping those less fortunate. Unfortunately, these interesting ideas are thrown aside in the third act for the typical “good guys punch the bad guys” finale. Despite the meandering action and the unnecessary runtime, Black Panther does have some top-notch performances (especially Jordan and Lupita Nyong’o) and stylish visuals to make it an entertaining superhero flick ... though not quite the “revolution” that the studio has been promising. — Forest Taylor


Freedom isn’t Free: 50 Shades Freed is a Low Point in a Whole Series of Low Points
★

Before I begin this review, I’d like to mention that it has been a tradition for my friend and I to go to these films, sit up in the back and riff them to ourselves (thank you Emily!). So I was already going into 50 Shades Freed with a certain ironic detachment. That being said, I can still say without hyperbole that 50 Shades Freed is a new low for what a major studio will release to theaters.

The film picks up where the last one left off with the marriage of Anastasia Steele (Dakota Johnson) and Christian Grey (Jamie Dornan) and then follows them as they tour the world, act like entitled jerks to everyone and have lots and lots (and lots and lots) of sex. Eventually, because things are supposed to happen in movies, Anastasia gets stalked by a jealous ex-boss who may be hiding some dark secrets of his own.

Freed is by far the worst in the series but that’s also to the film’s advantage. It’s so bad that it can almost be looked at with a certain ironic detachment. That being said, I can still say without hyperbole that 50 Shades Freed is a new low for what a major studio will release to theaters.


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Answers to last issue’s puzzle

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Y E L L O W B R I C K R O A D
O N E A I D A H O
F A T H E R K N O W S B E S T
R O N T E R
S A L T N P E P A A B O N E
T R A C E E E L L I S R O S S
R E B U S S Y L L A B L E S
A N A E S L
P A N A M A C A N A L Z O N E
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Across
1. Irritated state
5. Recipe instruction
8. All thumbs
14. Car air freshener shape
16. Keep for oneself
17. “Allow me to assist”
18. Checked for fingerprints
19. Directive to Herman Melville to develop the title character of his final novel?
21. Start of a number of Keats titles
22. Safety device
23. Image in Tiananmen Square
26. Ring ____
27. “I Need a Girl” rapper’s incantation?
31. The Beatles’ ___ Pepper
32. Is sick
33. Summoned
34. “Where the Sidewalk Ends” poet Silverstein
35. “You can say that again!”
37. “Slumdog Millionaire” country
40. Popular tablet
41. Nordic airline
44. Bugs Bunny, when he’s foiled his nemesis?
47. Man who might tip his cap
48. Took courses
49. Marx’s “___ Kapital”
50. Songstress Lena
51. Someone who jumps over the remnant of a downpour?
55. “The magic word”
58. Go back further than
59. Office machine
60. Connects with
61. Alternatives to ‘Vettes
62. The Oilers, on NHL scoreboards
63. Hot times in Haiti

Down
1. Beer hall turn-ons?
2. Words from a nervous postman?
3. Goofy to the max
4. Beliefs
5. ____ code
6. Shoulder muscle, for short
7. “Maybe yes, maybe no”
8. GI’s mess work
9. Earsplitting
10. Golden State campus initials
12. #26 of 26
13. Jan. 1 till now
15. “And ____ the field the road runs by”: Tennyson
20. Fourposter, e.g.
23. One White of rock’s White Stripes
24. Pub pint
25. Outdated
27. Stop working for good
28. ____-equipped
29. Burned rubber
30. Skillet, e.g.
32. 1956 Gregory Peck role
34. Vicious of the Sex Pistols
35. Big galoot
36. Scratch, say
37. “... ____ woodchuck could chuck wood”
38. Bolt go-with
39. POTUS #34
40. “We should get going”
41. Butler, e.g.
42. Actress Bening of “American Beauty”
43. Sound systems
45. Milk dispensers
46. Unhappy
47. Hawn of Hollywood
50. Dirt movers
52. Played for a sap
53. It’s an OK city
54. Part of a flower
55. %: Abbr.
56. Upshot?
57. Prefix with -dermis
MUSIC REVIEWS

Ezra Furman
Transangelic Exodus
Bella Union
★★★★☆

Transangelic Exodus is a complex fun-house filled with playful and oftentimes mysterious. On its surface, it’s an exciting record, almost every one of its 13 songs replete with immediately catchy hooks and a jaunty, welcoming blend of garage rock and experimental indie. Ezra Furman’s fourth solo album, this is perhaps his most ambitious work yet, and — relatively — his darkest. There’s still a light air to Furman’s songwriting, but Exodus doesn’t plant itself as firmly in the cartoonish intensity that his earlier albums were content to thrive in. The childlike timbre of high-toned instrumentation veils the pain and frustration teeming under the album’s lyrics. There’s a loose storyline that begins with the opening track and the mythology is expounded in tracks like “From A Beach House,” and “Psalm 151.” The album’s title is quite literally the plot. A most ambitious work yet, and — rel-

American Pleasure Club
A Whole F*cking Lifetime of This Run For Cover Records
★★★★☆

Distanting himself from his past moniker, Teen Suicide, DIY figurehead Sam Ray claims to have grown up "with privilege and publicly on social media," recognizing missteps in his words and attitudes as a young 20-something. Now, with a new name and prerogative following 2016's bombastic It's The Big Joyous Celebration, Let's Stir the Honeypot, Ray dedicates all 36 minutes of A Whole F*cking Lifetime of This to creating something concise, (mostly) cohesive and above all, stunning. Ray has always had a knack for melody, even if his most abstract experiments had a way of hiding it, and that shines through in this album's straightforward songwriting (despite shapeshifting between tracks). Take the album's first five songs; following a lo-fi introduction, we are treated to emo power-pop ("this is heaven & id die for it"); an acoustic number ("all the lonely nights in your life") and a Frank Ocean-sampling electronic experiment ("lets move to the desert") all within the span of 14 minutes. Somewhere between a defining statement and a new beginning, A Whole F*cking Lifetime of This reflects the aesthetic and heart of a new generation of songwriters. — Aaron Mook

Rich Brian
Amen
Empire Records
★★★★☆

Born from the same space as friend and featured guest Joji (formerly known as Youtube's cal-

GoGo Penguin
A Humdrum Star
Blue Note/Decca
★★★★☆

GoGo Penguin's star is young, but it is hardly humdrum. These wildly inventive Brits have the appearance of a traditional jazz trio (pianist Chris Illingsworth, bassist Nick Blac-

Neglect a boy.
Teach him nothing about love, or empathy, or tenderness.

Emasculate him.
Make him feel worthless by bullying and ostracizing him.

Provide him with endless immersion in mindless violent media.

Fill the emptiness in his soul through connections in like-minded violent groups.

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JUST TOYIN’ WITCHA - by B TOY

Jr
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March 2 - The Route 6 Band
March 3 - Rick Magee and The Roadhouse Rockers
March 9 - Refuge
March 10 - The Four Kings & Queen
THURSDAYS • 8PM
March 1 - The Donnie Heath Project
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