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ERIE READER

Oct. 2026 // Vol. 16 No. 10 // Erie Reader

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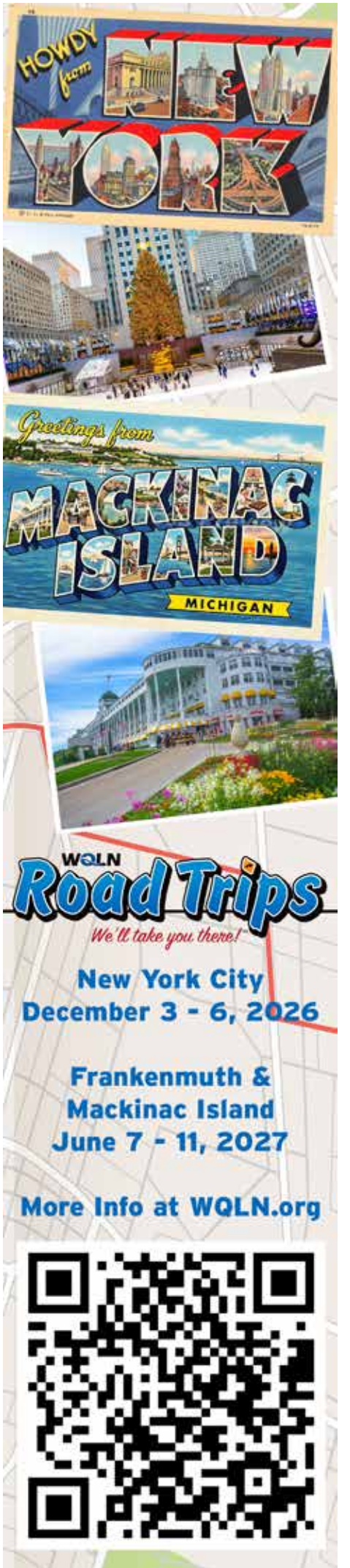
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From the Editors

Things that go bump in the night

The Halloween issue of the Reader is always one of our most celebrated and anticipated – everyone looks forward to embracing those eerie parts of our city, learning some spooky lore, while simultaneously enjoying a killer cover by the infamous "Monster" Mark Kosobucki – and this issue is no exception.

This month, much of our content hovers around those things that give us a chill – horror movies, graveyards, the macabre, and the like. In Jonathan Burdick's story this month ("Fright at First Sight: Why We Are Drawn to Fear for Fun" on page 16) he corresponded with three locals who have, in one way or another, made horror a regular part of their daily lives. Among discussions of their favorite horror genres, films, and books, he also talked about their horror origin stories. Everyone has one – it is a universal American childhood requirement to watch or read something that sticks with you, in some dark recess of your brain, for the rest of your life. Not everyone will turn that into a lifestyle, of course – but there is always that one memory. It might be the movie you watched at a sleepover that kept you from falling asleep that night (and maybe many subsequent nights) or that spooky story someone read to you with a flashlight at their chin. Even vintage episodes of *Unsolved Mysteries* or *The X Files* could be enough to cause childhood nightmares for weeks.

For me it was the movie *Lady in White*, released in 1988. I remember very little of the plot, actually, but there was one particular scene of this skeletal old lady, clad in white rags, eerily floating on a creepy-ass staircase. My childhood bedroom was in a loft-like space at the top of our staircase. You can probably already see how this went – little me would lie awake at night STARING at the top of those steps, convinced this raggedy lady was going to come floating up there at any moment. When art can get into your head like that, whether you're a horror fan or not, that's something special.

This month, I wrote a story about Erie's forgotten graveyards ("The Bones Beneath Our Feet: Erie's City of the Dead" on page 20) – and there are A LOT of them. Really, at any given time or place in Erie, you could be standing on a grave – given the number of people who lived, trod, and died on the land upon which Erie is built, throughout human history. I was talking to a friend of mine who grew up on Merline Avenue and distinctly remembers being freaked out as a kid by the abandoned cemetery a block away from her house, tucked into a little copse of woods directly next to a neighbor's house in an otherwise normal, residential area. This kind of space is primed for childhood terror – and local historian Mark Steg shares his own childhood story of getting scared out of his wits at this resting place – quite possibly his origin story – which eventually turned into a lifelong fascination with forgotten cemeteries.



IMDB

What's your horror origin story? Was it a scary movie (like *Lady In White*, pictured here, was for our editor)? Or a spooky tale you couldn't shake? Or was it a real life horror story, like the storm that hit Erie's northern neighborhoods last month?

I sometimes wonder what the horror origin stories of my own children will be. My teenage daughter has definitely gone through the slumber-party horror-movie fright initiation, but my 8-year-old son? He's not quite there yet. If you asked him about one of the scariest nights of his life, he might tell you about a storm that hit our neighborhood the night of Sept. 2, 2026: How the power went out in the middle of the night and stayed out for two more days, how he heard intense, howling winds, pummeling hail, cracking tree limbs, how he eventually woke up to a neighborhood in peril – and spent the better part of the next day hearing the grown-ups around him talking to neighbors, family, and friends about the destruction. About seeing a tree that crushed a house he knows, on the corner of our block, someone's bedroom, and how that person narrowly missed that oak tree's deadly 150-year-old destructive weight because they happened to be in the next room over. I also think about how many more destructive storms he'll have to endure throughout his lifetime – how many more ancient trees he'll see felled as a result of the changing climate and how little those in power seem to care about his future on this planet.

While I hope what he ultimately takes away from his storm experience are memories of neighbors helping neighbors, and a city coming together to get everyone back up and running and to safety as quickly as possible – I can't help but worry. I worry that every time the power goes out – or inevitably when another storm strikes – he'll remember that day in 2026 and the fear he felt. What keeps me up at night these days isn't that lady in white from my childhood – it's that the future, his future, so often feels scarier than a horror movie.





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The Reader Beat Recap: October 2026

A summary of September meetings

By Alana Sabol

The Reader Beat aims to cover city and county council meetings as well as other important government and community-related meetings. The following is a summary of each meeting for the month of September.

City Council Sept. 2: During the first meeting of the month, city council unanimously passed a resolution to formally adopt "Erie Outside: City of Erie Comprehensive Recreation, Parks, and Open Space Plan" as a shared vision and practical roadmap for maintaining, improving, and investing in Erie's parks to better serve residents today while preparing for future needs. "It made me sad to see that even our playgrounds were run down and our kids really don't have much to look forward to, so I really pushed to make sure that we're making our community spaces more representative of what we want to see in Erie," Councilwoman Jasmine Flores said.

County Council Sept. 8: Constituents spoke about the potential move of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) to the county executive's office, and the importance of selecting a director. Abdullah Washington, a sitting HRC advisory board member, expressed frustration at funding cuts made during the Davis administration and lack of appointments to the board. "In 2021, Erie County Council declared racism to be a public health crisis. This is the work of the HRC. These are the types of things that we are supposed to be addressing in this community," Washington said.

A resolution authorizing the County of Erie to enter into a contract with the City of Erie for Community Development Block Grant Funding in the amount of $65,000 passed unanimously.

City Council Sept. 16: Mayor Daria Devlin recognized the Department of Public Works for their hard work and commitment to the community following the extreme weather event that occurred Sept. 2 and 3 which uprooted hundreds of mature trees, damaged property, and blocked roadways. "Throughout this response and cleanup, Public Works employees demonstrated compassion, teamwork, and an unwavering commitment to serving the Erie community," Devlin said. Councilman Andre Horton also recognized the leadership of Mayor Devlin following the severe storm: "We've seen a spirit of unity, we've seen the residents stay calm. It's a true testament to your leadership and you should be applauded as well."

A resolution regarding the request for approval of a Waterfront Conditional Use for a new light manufacturing facility with accompanying office space and site improvement located at 1318 E. Lake Road, submitted by Porter Consulting Engineers on behalf of Enterprise Development Center of Erie County and the Nine Ships Company, passed unanimously. Council Member Tyler Titus commended the process of this specific project. "This was an example of when a project is working well, it includes the community and incorporates community input," Titus said.

> "Throughout this response and cleanup, Public Works employees demonstrated compassion, teamwork, and an unwavering commitment to serving the Erie community."
> – Erie Mayor Daria Devlin in an address to Erie City Council on Sept. 16 regarding Sept. 2 storm

County Council Sept. 22: During public comments, County Clerk Karen Chillcott spoke in favor of the Human Relations Commission (HRC) being moved to the county executive's office. "By moving the HRC, we have an opportunity to create stronger connections with the departments and services in Erie County," Chillcott said. "The ordinance needs to be revisited, but overall I believe the department is in a strong position to make this transition at this time."

Chillcott's comments were contentious among some constituents and the council. Constituent Theresa Imler said that by using her position title in her comments, Chillcott was acting inappropriately.

Other constituents emphasized the importance of looking into the conditions at Erie County Prison, including allegations of excessive use of force, poor sanitation, and poor medical care. "Transparency protects everybody. It protects the incarcerated individuals. It protects the corrections officers, the medical personnel, and the taxpayers of Erie County," Constituent Kaitlynn King said.

County Executive Christina Vogel addressed concerns over the prison. "It is not an organization without oversight. I have watched security footage when there are incidents that are brought to attention," Vogel said. "We're trying to change the morale, we are trying to change the culture. It's not going to happen overnight, but we have not abdicated that responsibility at all."

Coming up this month:
County Council: Oct. 6 at 6 p.m.
City Council: Oct. 7 at 9 a.m.
County Council: Oct. 20 at 6 p.m.
City Council: Oct. 21 at 6:30 p.m.



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Bird of the Month: American Kestrel

Small, Abundant, and Dazzling

By Mary Birdsong

Every birder has a good "lifer" story – the tale of how you saw a particular species for the first time. My husband's and my lifer, American Kestrels, came to us in memorable ways.

I saw my first-ever American Kestrel outside my office window in midtown Erie. I heard the excited alarm chatter of multiple birds, so I walked to the window to see what the fuss was. Perched in the tree no farther than 15 feet from me was a male kestrel with a mouse in its talons.

My husband Mike's was crazier. We had heard rumors that a kestrel was inside the west-side Lowe's enjoying an endless buffet of House Sparrows. We went with binoculars in hand and birded inside the store until we found it perched in the rafters. Yes, people were looking at us funny. The bird was eventually freed from the store and went on its merry way, no worse for wear. The moment is remembered fondly and is one of our favorite lifer stories to tell.

It's easy to be smitten with this bird, the smallest falcon in North America. With a wingspan of approximately 22 inches and weighing in at a mere 4 ounces, this kestrel is considerably smaller than the other common North American falcons, the Peregrine (weighing in at around 2 pounds with a 41-inch wingspan) and the Merlin (about 7 ounces in weight with a 24-inch wingspan).

And while all falcons have distinctive plumage, the kestrel stands out with its bright striped rufous coloring and boldly patterned head. Males are distinguished from females by blue-gray wings and a solid rusty tail.

Besides big box stores, they can be found in a wide variety of open habitats, from pastures and agricultural fields to parkland and many developed urban areas. Other than small birds, their main food items are insects and small mammals.

While they are still the most abundant falcon in North America, the American Kestrel population has declined by nearly half since the 1960s, according to the Peregrine Fund, a nonprofit whose mission is to conserve birds of prey worldwide. Scientists are finding multiple complex factors at work. Possibilities include loss of insects and other prey due to climate change and habitat alteration, non-native European Starlings that may be outcompeting the native birds for natural nest cavities, predation by larger Cooper's Hawks, and pesticides that are killing rodents and insects or weakening the falcons themselves. The most concerning of the pesticides are neurotoxic insecticides called neonicotinoids because they're potent, widely used, and spread up the food chain.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Don't be fooled by this wee falcon's size; he's as fierce as they come. This month, Mary Birdsong tells us more about the American Kestrel – whether you spot one in an open pasture or hanging out at your nearest big box retail store, this eye-catching bird is sure to get noticed.

Volunteers across North America are committed to providing nesting boxes and monitoring the birds' activities. And according to the Peregrine Fund, the species may be making a small comeback. Good news.

If you want to find one, drive some rural roads and look for small birds on utility wires keeping a careful eye on their surroundings. It might just be an American Kestrel. I don't think another one is going to be found at Lowe's anytime soon, though.

Mary Birdsong is the lead shorebird monitor for Erie Bird Observatory. Learn more at eriebirdobservatory.org. Mary can be reached at mbirdsong@eriereader.com

Edwina Tries... A Ghost Tour

Tour Erie invites you on a history walk for their Eerie Stories, Legends, and Lore Ghost Tour

By Edwina Capozziello

What's better than taking an evening stroll in Downtown Erie on a clear, 60 degree night?

CONTRIBUTED



Just in time for spooky season, Edwina tries out the locally-run Eerie Stories, Legends, and Lore Ghost Tour led by mother-daughter duo Heather and Lauren Cass, as they visit locations filled with frights throughout downtown Erie.

Taking that stroll while learning about historic deaths and spooky ghost stories. Enter Tour Erie, the brainchild of mother/daughter team Heather and Lauren Cass. The walking tour features our city's unique landscape and history, along with tales of ghosts, apparitions, battles, shipwrecks, and gruesome deaths – all just in time for spooky season.

A product of Gannon's Small Business Development Center and the Northwest Pennsylvania Innovation Beehive Network, Tour Erie allows the Cass gals to share their love for Erie with groups, one walking tour at a time.

As their website explains, they are "unabashed Erie cheerleaders," and their enthusiasm shows. While they offer tours at other times from June through October, I was thrilled to join on a perfect early fall night. The tour took just over 1.5 hours and is just a little more than a mile long, at a very comfortable pace with plenty of places to rest along the way. It is probably a little intense for younger kiddos, but isn't too terribly scary.

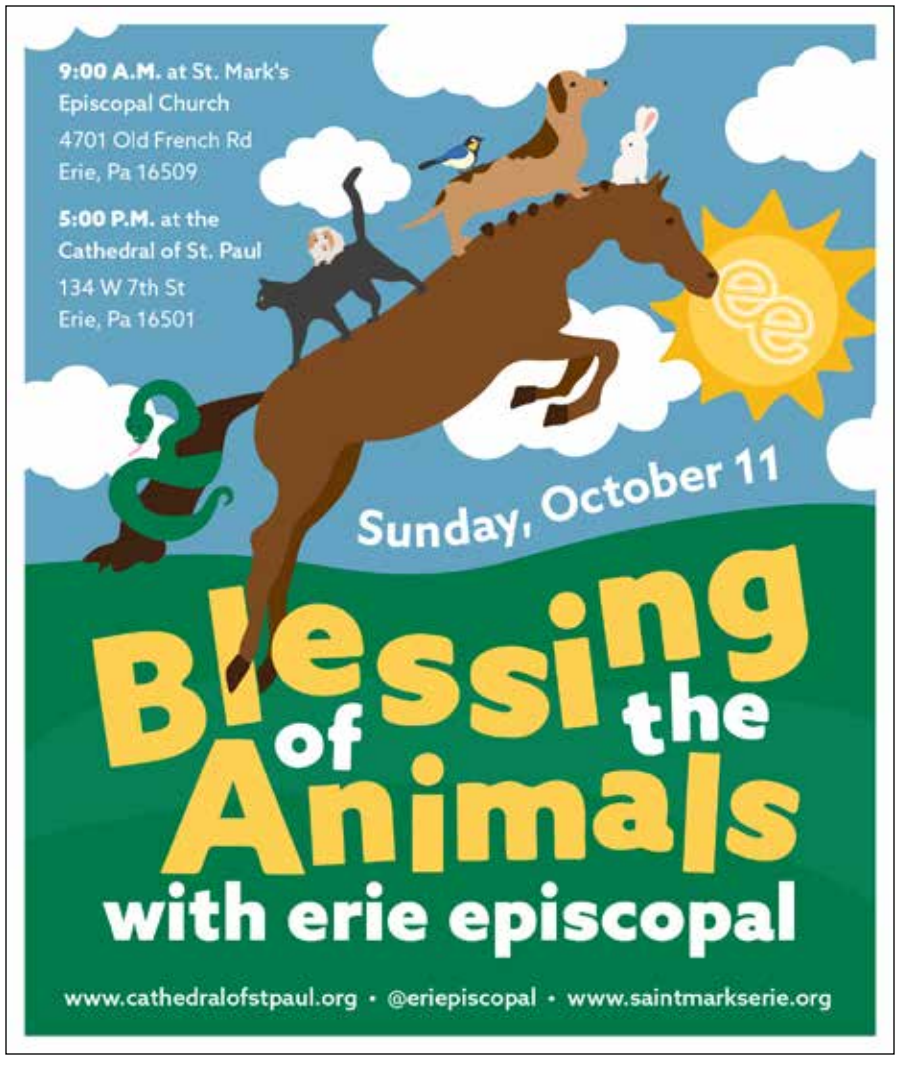
We met on North Park Row, just in front of the Flagship City Food Hall, and Heather and Lauren were both very welcoming and friendly. They went around the group to ask where people were from, and in addition to a large group from the Eastside YMCA, there were also visitors from Cleveland and Youngstown, Ohio. The tour had a perfect balance of Erie history and creepy stories, expertly delivered by both of our guides. They elegantly carried on, even when met with some surprise downtown characters.

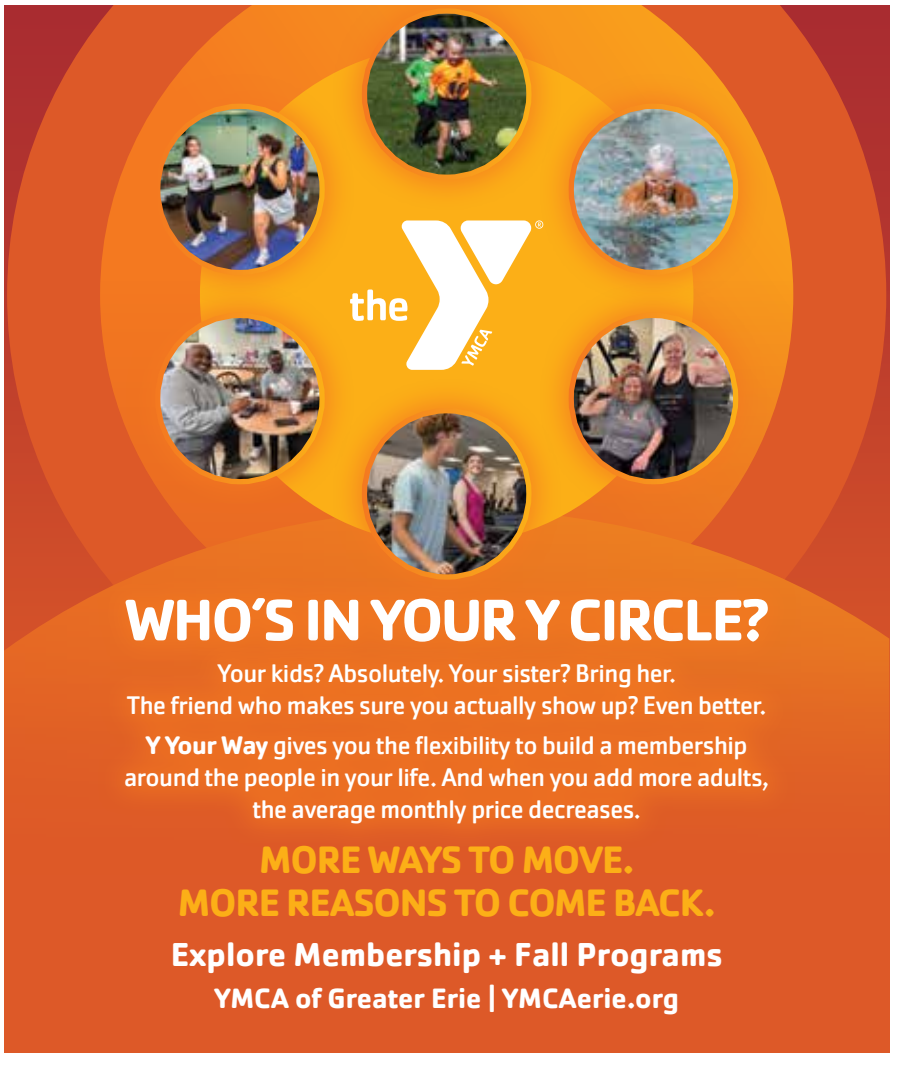
The Casses dealt with noise, interruptions, construction, and street closures with grace and kindness. It was a lovely walk – I would definitely take it again or join one of their other themed walking tours.

For more info or to schedule your tour, visit tourerie.com

Edwina is Erie's (self-proclaimed) biggest fan who loves being a tourist in our own town. If you have an idea of something new she should try you can email her at edwina.capozziello@gmail.com


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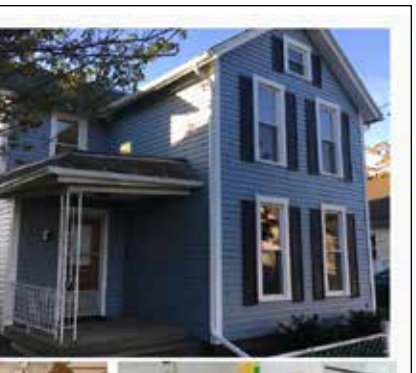
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Making a Small City Smaller: The Storm

What a summer of severe weather tells us about Erie's future under the worsening effects of climate change

By Dave Tamulonis

One thing I remember hearing from people when I moved here was how Erie could one day serve as a region that could attract climate refugees. A climate refugee is someone who moves from an area that has been heavily impacted by climate change into an area that is more protected from climate change-related weather events. Think someone moving from drought-plagued California to the Midwest for cheaper and better access to water. Erie, even in 2019, was discussed as an area that usually avoids major storms, tornados, and heat emergencies, because of its location on the lake with temperate winds blowing in from Canada. The winters, if anything, could get milder and this region would be relatively calm compared to Tornado Alley, the East Coast, and the states around the Gulf of Mexico.

The summer of 2026 proved that this region, while mostly protected from things like hurricanes, is definitely not impervious to the negative effects of climate change. From the worst wildfire smoke we've ever seen to multiple instances of severe weather to an extreme heat wave, Erie experienced some of its most devastating adverse weather in decades. So what did we learn from this year of weather, The Storm, and how we can best prepare our community for dealing with certain similar events in the near future?

First, we have to address The Storm, a supercell thunderstorm that landed on shore Sept. 2 around 11:30 p.m. and ravaged the West Bayfront, Frontier, and Little Italy neighborhoods in a matter of minutes, leaving more than 800 to 1,000 trees uprooted, thousands without power for multiple days, cars crushed, power lines downed, roads blocked and flooded, 15 parks and rec areas closed, and millions upon millions of dollars in property damage in its wake. The storm moved from northwest to southeast with a cloud column 60,000 feet high. The atmosphere's convective available potential energy (CAPE) throughout the day was around 2.5 times higher than the conditions that lead to average thunderstorms.

It began with lightning and soaking rain before a pressure change caused a microburst of hail and straight line winds of up to 80 mph across the entire West Bayfront neighborhood that caused widespread havoc as far as 5 miles inland. Particularly notable is the destruction to the Erie Cemetery, which includes several buildings and grave sites, and Frontier Park. The storm is, without a doubt, the most devastating storm in the last century for the City of Erie. The soaking rain beforehand loosened the soil enough so that the very heavy, old, and unstable trees filled with a full leaf canopy were even easier to blow down. It really was a perfect storm, in the most literal use of that idiom, and unfortunately hit the neighborhoods with the oldest tree canopies like a bullseye.

Was this storm made possible by climate change? Yes, full stop. A 2013 study published by the National Academy of Sciences showed that global climate models indicated huge increases in the occurrence of severe thunderstorm environments over the eastern United States in response to further global warming. It actually mentions an elevated risk for this very type of storm right in the abstract: "We also find that days with high CAPE and strong low-level wind shear increase in occurrence, suggesting an increasing likelihood of atmospheric conditions that contribute to the most severe events…" So 13 years later, we can confidently say these predictions are coming true.

> The summer of 2026 proved that this region, while mostly protected from things like hurricanes, is definitely not impervious to the negative effects of climate change.

Not only is this storm a direct result of increased greenhouse gases causing an overall increase in global temperature, but it leaves us more susceptible to the future effects of climate change because of the lost tree canopy. A dwindling tree canopy significantly accelerates climate change and the negative effects of severe weather. Living trees absorb carbon dioxide from the air and losing them leaves more greenhouse gases in the atmosphere to trap heat. There's also significant wildlife habitat loss, less cooling of the asphalt leading to hotter days, and an increased risk of flooding since roots are not in the ground to absorb soaking rain. Trees also hold soil in place and without them, fertile soil washes away much more easily. Losing a tree or two in a storm is one thing, but leaving hundreds of trees, by city estimates as many as 1,000, uprooted overnight over a 5- to 10-mile radius is a clear warning sign.

We've passed the point of no return. Most climate scientists today will say we are well beyond the point at which any intervention we take would significantly alter the course of climate change, global warming, and the severe consequences to come. With absolutely no end in sight to the ignorance and corporate greed driving industrial deregulation and now the push to create city-sized, water-guzzling data centers, it's hard to be optimistic about the future of Erie and everywhere else on Earth with the looming effects of climate change slowly revealing themselves over the next decade or so.

Erie is strong, though. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who helped in the wake of the cleanup effort. City crews from police, fire, public works, parks, streets, refuse, Department of Neighborhood and Economic Development, and the Mayor's office worked their tails off to clean up damage and communicate their efforts effectively to the public. Penelec sent extra crews to our region to restore power eventually. The City of Erie received assistance by declaring a State of Emergency and we had folks from Team Rubicon in town assisting residents with private property damage. A Multi-Agency Resource Center was held at the Salvation Army to provide assistance to residents with damaged property. The community came together in a major way to help each other, and thankfully no one was seriously injured or killed.

The only way we can hope to curb the impacts of events like this is to support and vote for candidates who take climate change seriously – who have actionable plans to safeguard our region from environmental deregulation, eschew corporate interests, oppose the building of data centers, and vote for state and federal assistance for climate-positive work. Things like assistance for the replanting of our tree canopy, increased support for adaptive vacant land reuse, urban farming and local food security initiatives, environmental justice work, investment in mass transit, and subsidies for renewable energy alternatives are all totally achievable policy objectives. Without significant action on all fronts and a major change at the ballot box, we Erieites may find ourselves to be climate refugees one day in the near future.

Dave Tamulonis is an educator and musician living in Erie. He is the director of grants at the City of Erie and lives in the West Bayfront with his wife Marissa, dog Esthera Minerva, and cat Cherry Blossom.



DAVE TAMULONIS

The devastation Erie experienced during the storm on the evening of Sept. 2 was unprecedented and could be an indicator of things to come – as no place on Earth is safe from the effects of climate change. Dave Tamulonis takes a look at what happened, how we're recovering, and how to advocate for change.

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Take Your Beer For A Walk: Bayfront Promenade

Spectacular sights accompany autumnal sips

By Jeff McCullor

As we roll headfirst into October, let's take a zip through one particular part of town that prompts us all to say out loud, "we actually get to *live* here?!" I'm talking about our wonderful bayfront, of course. Before the seasonal shift makes us hunt down warm indoor spots, let's grab a beer and earn our calories by getting in some steps along the edge of Presque Isle Bay. Ready? Let's hit it!

We'll begin at a handy parking area at the intersection of the Bayfront Parkway and Niagara Point Drive right next to the driveway to The Residence at Presque Isle Bay. It's a secluded little parking lot perfectly situated between the downhill path from Frontier Park and Erie's bayfront district. Pop open that barley pop, breathe in the crisp October air, and let's move east along the multipurpose concrete walkway. Oh wait, you took a sip or two already yeah? In case you hadn't, now is as good a time as any.

Along this route we'll pass by a boatload (chuckle) of watercraft being hauled out of the water this time of year as the boating season closes rapidly. You'll come across the entrance to Liberty Park and then Jr's on the Bay/Sloppy Duck Saloon. The Sloppy Duck has been a staple along Erie's waterfront for 23 years and I just learned the current owners are moving on, with new ownership coming in soon. We've all seen a solid music performance or enjoyed some seafood along the water here at some point, right? Cheers to you, Sloppy Duck!

As we roll headfirst into October, let's take a zip through one particular part of town that prompts us all to say out loud, "we actually get to *live* here?!" I'm talking about our wonderful bayfront, of course.

Next, let's continue heading east where you'll see a lot more boats in their seasonal return to dry land, eventually coming across the Lawrence Toth Pier. Next to the blue railings of the pier you'll see an historical marker commemorating Mr. Toth's commitment to equal and easy access to public waterways. He was never an Erie resident, but worked tirelessly from Harrisburg in the department of

JEFF MCCULLOR



Those of us who have lived in Erie most of our lives can find ourselves taking the bayfront for granted – take this as your sign to get out and enjoy our most stunning natural resource, with can in hand, as you take your beer for a walk alongside Jeff McCullor on the bayfront promenade.

environmental protection. Thank you for your efforts, sir. Cheers to you, Mr. Toth!

Heading farther east we're going to pass Port Erie Sports on your left, home to a great watercraft rental spot where you can rent anything from a stand up paddleboard to a family-sized pontoon boat. This time of year, it's a bit quiet, but the sunset views from their lot are stellar. Cheers to you, Port Erie Sports for being that friend with a boat, instead of us needing to purchase one!

So now, the finale of this trip. I trust you've been taking some all-important beer sips along the way. We'll continue along the walkway east, around the Bayfront Convention Center roundabout portion, until you reach the newly constructed traffic improvement project. Walking up to this part of town I have to say, I was impressed. You have to meander your way a bit to the top of the new construction but when you arrive just take it in. The whole point of this PennDOT project was to improve traffic flow and enhance pedestrian access to the bayfront district. You'll notice something impressive too, an honest-to-goodness *patio*, on the eastern edge of the new platform. What a solid place to watch Fourth of July fireworks (with a beer of course). And check out the landscaping! While not fully completed as of this writing, you can definitely tell this is an improvement to our city. Cheers to you, PennDOT and the many construction crews!

I hope you get a chance to stroll along our bayfront while the leaves are turning and the puffy telltale autumn clouds are rolling in. Thanks for coming along with me, keep drinking local!

Jeff McCullor is the co-owner of Erie Ale Works. He can be reached at jeff@eriealeworks.com



Gem City Style: Tethered: an Immersive Theatrical Experience

Shiara Pettis, Jasmine Nicole Williams, and Deepkala Ghale

By Jessica Hunter

JESSICA HUNTER



This month, Jessica Hunter sat down with three women from this year's production of *Tethered*, an immersive theatrical experience running through October. (From left to right) Actor Deepkala Ghale, co-writer Shiara Pettis, and actor Jasmine Nicole Williams spoke about what audiences can expect, what's new this year, and the work that goes into making immersive theater a reality.

This month, I met up with co-writer Shiara Pettis and stars Jasmine Nicole Williams and Deepkala Ghale at my downtown studio to talk about *The Lever*, Tethered's third immersive production, which turns the Davenport-Galbraith Mansion into the scene of a nonprofit board meeting gone very wrong – one that lets the audience decide how wrong.

The Lever runs Fridays and Saturdays through October at the Davenport-Galbraith Mansion (the Woman's Club of Erie) on West Sixth Street. It is produced in partnership with Erie's Black Wall Street. Founder and producer John C. Lyons couldn't make our interview and sent three collaborators in his place: Pettis, who has been writing this story since last November; Williams, who plays Miss Mina Sinclair, maître d' of the club at the center of the show; and Ghale, who plays Aastha Rai, one of the evening's hosts. None of the three were part of Tethered's first two shows. They are the new blood, and they root for each other.

Here is the premise: the show is "an interactive, multi-layered experience where audience choices directly influence the balance of power and the outcome of the story." The show is set "during the tense annual report meeting of a troubled nonprofit organization, where a hidden war unfolds between city elites and a burgeoning workers' resistance." You are a guest at that meeting, and over three hours the war comes out of hiding. You are not in a seat. You can follow a character up the stairs and into a parlor, abandon them for someone more interesting, or take your drink to the bar and eavesdrop. And what you and the rest of the audience decide to do will change how the night ends.

"You're not confined to a seat watching people on stage, which is really cool," Pettis told me. "But with that being said, you also can miss things." That, it turns out, is the point. Williams was emphatic that you should split from your group and avoid forming loyalties. "Don't sell yourself short," she said. "And don't get attached to one character."

I asked how one writes a script the audience is allowed to steer, and Pettis said the idea came from watching the news. "The current climate and state of affairs, the things we were seeing in politics – we just scaled it down to something as simple as a board meeting." The writers started meeting as a brain trust last November, and the story kept growing as the world kept changing, and as they kept an eye on Erie's own city council meetings.

What she and her co-writers (Lyons, Marty Nwachukwu, and Niecey Nicole) built is less of a script and more a set of rails. "The story is going to be the story," Pettis said, "but some of the verbiage will change depending on the situation." Every actor has a storyline and an objective. How much they engage with the strangers standing two feet away is up to them. But sooner or later, somebody turns and speaks directly to you, and, suddenly, you are in it.

Williams says that moment is the whole reason she's here. There is no fourth wall to hide behind.

What is it like locking eyes with a stranger mid-scene? "It fuels me," she said. "It gives me more to react to. It makes me want to engage more, and make sure I'm reaching the ears that need to be reached in my scene." The cast recently ran a mock performance for a test audience. "I was anxious," she admitted. "But it was comforting."

For Ghale, the lack of control is the appeal. She is a filmmaker who met Lyons at a screening of one of her student films – a low-budget project she'd had to act in herself after a cast member backed out at the last minute. That accidental performance is what got her the audition call. She came to the United States from Nepal three years ago, and this is her first immersive show. "When we're doing filmmaking, you have so much control over every scene, every dialogue, and you can always edit it in post-production," she said. "In immersive theater, you cannot. It makes it very exciting."

The character Aastha Rai, whose name means faith or trust, was born in a refugee camp in Nepal and came to the United States with her mother and cousin, part of a group that neither Nepal nor Bhutan would claim as citizens. "I cannot imagine being an unknown citizen in your own country," Ghale said. "She's a survivor." Aastha has spent her life walking on eggshells, obliged to everyone who has ever helped her, until colleagues at the nonprofit gave her a voice. "From a scared character, she becomes this brave woman."

Ghale paused, and then widened the lens. "In everyday life, we know we're powerful people. But there are times when our voices are suppressed, and sometimes we voluntarily have to suppress our voice." Aastha, she said, isn't only Aastha – everyone can relate to her.

Aastha's story also lives outside the mansion, in *Seized*, a companion audio drama attendees can listen to on headphones while walking her downtown route.

Williams' Mina is Aastha's opposite number: a young Black woman in a position of authority, "professional and poised and protective of her staff," navigating the power structure of the club. Asked how she stays in character for three hours a night when every night goes differently, she said the harder part is taking Mina off. "We respond to conflict in different ways, and I'm still wearing my Mina hat, and I'm like, okay, wait. Jasmine. You are not that girl." Mina, she said, does the things Jasmine wants to do. "And I do. But I think I do it when my patience has run out. She's already there."

That is not an accident. Pettis said that after auditions, the writers placed each actor where they fit best, then rewrote the characters around the people playing them, "so it wouldn't be so hard, for eight shows, three hours a night, to be like, all right, who am I today?" The writing room, she added, is all Black women except for Lyons, and Williams put it plainly: being a Black woman in the workplace is what put her in the headspace of Mina. "Mina's a baddie," she said, and nobody in the room argued.

The rewriting only stopped about a week before we talked. Pettis, whose degrees are in journalism and writing and who had never written for theater before this, is the kind of writer who hates to touch a finished thing. Lyons pushes. "I told him this was my yes year, so he took that and ran with it." She had only just seen one of her monologues performed. "We've been doing this for so long," she said, "and now it's all coming together."

Lyons sent along his own version of that feeling, "For the past two months the cast and crew of *The Lever* have been working tirelessly to breathe life into this story of the haves and have-nots," he said. "But for those of us on the writing team, this has been a 12-month journey that has reached heights we never could have imagined. Our cast and crew have created something special here, and now we're about to hand the reins over to our audiences and see what they create together. It's both nerve-wracking and tremendously exciting."

The mansion pushed them, too. *The Lever* was originally written for the Maennerchor building, where last year's show ran – and it moved to the Davenport-Galbraith late in the process. Marianne at the mansion gave them a tour and, Pettis said, "so much information" that they sat back down and rewrote it again. Everything you'll hear in the show about the house and about Erie, she told me, is true. "Nothing fictitious, other than the character names."

A few practicalities: doors open at 5:30 and the show runs from 6 to 9 p.m. There are stairs and no elevator, so wear sensible shoes. There is a bar with real drinks, tended by cast member Taylor Lorraine, playing a bartender named Taylor, so mind what you say while you order. A bracelet on the way in tells the cast how much interaction you're up for, and the rules are simple: no touching and no talking unless an actor invites it.

The cast has its own version of that bracelet.

I had asked what Lyons or the creative team said along the way that stuck with them, and Williams' answer wasn't anything anyone said. It was a ritual. Before every performance, the company circles up for what they call "fences and check-ins" – everyone says how their mind, body, and spirit are doing that day, then names their boundaries for the night, down to who may hug them and who may not. "I really look forward to these," Ghale said. "I come back from work and I'm exhausted. And then I go there and we talk and we share each other's energy and, oh my God, I feel so much better." It's a release, she said, and somebody usually ends up telling a funny story before they head into the house to spend three hours being someone else.

And there is a room, somewhere in the mansion, set aside for the audience. Because the ending is yours to choose, you'll be able to go talk it over with strangers before it happens. "That's all I can say about that," Pettis said.

Which brings me to my last question. What do they want people talking about in the car on the way home?

Pettis wants a changed mind. "A different perspective than the one they came in with. It's engaging, it's fun, but the idea is: think outside of yourself." Williams wants a return trip. "'Hey, when's the next show? We should come here again. Because we might have missed that part, or that part, or that part.'" Then she thought about it a little longer. There is a board member character, she said, she can't help liking. "That guy was pretty messed up. But I want to like him." Pettis smiled. "We wrote some of those characters exactly like that. You want to like them, but at the same time you're thinking, 'I don't think I can like you.' But you have the opportunity to be a better person."

Earlier, I had asked Pettis whose side she's secretly on, the elites or the resistance? She laughed. "That's not hard." The writers had written the resistance so well, she said, that somebody had to go back and fight for the elites. "Everybody knows whose side they're on in this room."

As for me, I'll be there on opening weekend, splitting up from my group and following whoever looks like trouble. Ghale is as new to this as I am, which she offered as an invitation: "Just all experience it together for the first time. Because it's our first time too." I'll take her up on it. See you in the mansion.

The Lever runs Oct. 2, 3, 9, 10, 16, 17, 23, and 24 // Davenport-Galbraith Mansion, 259 W. 6th St. // $39-$66 // For tickets and info visit: tickets.eriereader.com and tetheredimmersive.com

Gem City Style is a monthly column featuring an intimate profile of someone making a creative impact in Erie. If you or someone you know would make a good fit for a future Gem City Style, email jessica@eriereader.com.

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Fright at First Sight: Why We Are Drawn to Fear for Fun

Local horror buffs share their childhood gateway scares and current favorites

By Jonathan Burdick

JESSICA HUNTER



These folks, (from left to right) Lauren Shoemaker, Margaret Dieudonne, and "Monster" Mark Kosobucki, have made horror a part of their daily lives in one way or another. They discussed their own origins in the genre, their favorites, and more with Jonathan Burdick this month.

Many of us remember our earliest childhood scares: a creaking floorboard late at night, a flicker of a shadow that inspired the worst in our imaginations, a nightmare that seemed all too real. For some, it was from a story read to us or an episode of *The Twilight Zone*, or a movie we watched through our fingertips.

I remember vividly the first scary movies that I caught glimpses of before I was allowed. What I saw of *The Terminator* led to a nightmare where I was pursued by a relentless T-800 in a dark and rainy parking lot. The glimpses of the twin girls in *The Shining* left me more unsettled than frightened. The opening to *A Nightmare on Elm Street*? Forget ever sleeping again. But I did notice something early on. I sort of *liked* the feeling.

At my elementary school library, we had exactly *one* copy of *Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark* written by Alvin Schwartz and illustrated by Stephen Gammell. I borrowed it often. Really, as scary as those short stories were, it was Gammell's surreal illustrations that were the most haunting.

"Telling scary stories is something people have done for thousands of years, for most of us like being scared in that way," Schwartz wrote in the preface, adding that fear without danger is what made stories like his enjoyable.

Indeed, the ancient *Iliad* is filled with psychological and supernatural horror. The demonic Grendel haunts the epic Middle Ages poem *Beowulf*. Then, of course, many recall when they first discovered the dark and disturbing 19th century tales of the Brothers Grimm, revealing the *true* origins of beloved childhood stories. After the advent of film, silent films such as *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) and *Nosferatu* (1922) spooked and delighted audiences as each subsequent generation of filmmakers innovated and reinvented the genre for theater-goers.

Fear, filmmaker John Carpenter has said, is a universal language and scary stories contain both external and internal horrors. "Monsters in movies are us, always us, one way or the other," he explained in a 2011 interview. "The part that wants to destroy. The part of us that's vicious and cruel. We express these in our stories as these monsters out there."

Lauren Shoemaker, English professor, co-owner of Werner Books and Coffee, and 40 Under 40 Class of 2023 alum, holds a Horror Book Club on the second Sunday of every month at her and her husband's Liberty Plaza store. Literature, she says, asks us about the human experience of which fear is a significant part.

"[F]ear reveals much about some human universals as well as particular experiences based on our identities," Shoemaker explains. "While many of us might fear death or physical harm, some fears are tied directly to experiences of minority categories of gender, race, ability, class, sexuality, [and] age."

Horror stories can be an exercise in empathy. Shoemaker notes how *Rosemary's Baby* serves as "a haunting metaphor for the loss of control of one's body during pregnancy" and how the more recent *Natural Beauty* by Ling Ling Huang, a recent Horror Book Club pick, explores themes of beauty culture, colonialism, and capitalism.

Margaret Dieudonne, director of the Eerie Horror Fest and 40 Under 40 Class of 2024 alum, says that horror can "be a way for folks to learn about other cultures and what can be scary for someone else." She cites the popularity of 2025's *Sinners* and its reflection on the horrors of 1930s Mississippi *beyond* the film's vampires. Horror also simply gives the audience "a reason to experience a world that is more horrifying than what they have ever seen, so fantastical that their day-to-day doesn't seem as bad." It can help people process trauma and grief too – which since the passing of her mother, Dieudonne says, has helped her and her father.

"Lastly, it's a plain old adrenaline rush," she adds. A jump scare, she stresses, especially in a movie theater full of people, is just a whole lot of fun.

Illustrator and graphic designer Mark Kosobucki is the art director for the Eerie Horror Fest. He also designs the Erie Reader's annual Halloween issue cover. For him, horror is about the *escape*. "It's fun to sit down for 95 minutes and exit reality for a little bit," he says. Part of the enjoyment as one gets older is the challenge of chasing the thrill of those childhood scares. "Because," he continues, "nothing *really* scares you as an adult the way it did when you were a kid."

For Shoemaker, she traces her love of horror back to a childhood viewing of *Poltergeist* with her family. As she was 7 years old, perhaps not surprisingly, she hid behind the furniture during some of the more frightening scenes. After all, *Poltergeist* was one of the PG movies (along with *Gremlins* and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*) that inspired the creation of the PG-13 rating. It wasn't the maggots in the meat or the skeletons in the muddy pool water that scared Shoemaker the most either. It was the ghosts.

"The floating lights down the staircase and the furniture stacked in the kitchen were scenes I'd rewind to over and over again on the VHS tape we had of the film," she remembers. Her uncle tried to explain some of the special effects to help lessen the fright, but Shoemaker's childhood imagination got the best of her. For years afterwards, her bedroom was a clown-free zone and any television static left her unnerved.

For some, it's baffling that people actively seek out such spooky sensations. A 2025 YouGov poll found that horror is the *least* liked film genre. Almost half of Americans say they either dislike or outright hate horror movies. And yes, it can be difficult to explain. In Jason Zinoman's 2011 horror history *Shock Value*, he explains it as fear being personal. What frightens each of us is just as complex and nuanced as what we find funny or beautiful or moving. Fear also has the

ability to kickstart some internal instincts. "One of the central pleasures of getting scared is that it focuses the mind," Zinoman writes. "When you experience fear, you forget the rest of the world. This intensity fixes you in the present tense." If it's a good horror movie, it'll make you think. If it's a great one? It'll stop you in your tracks.

This is sometimes called *recreational* fear. It's terror experienced in a controlled environment. Your brain is processing something as dangerous and the adrenaline and flight-or-fight kick in – all while knowing that you are physically safe. It's like a roller coaster. You know the roller coaster will end soon just as you know you can close your eyes or turn off the movie if the feelings are too intense or overwhelming.

Horror also helps us understand the world around us. It often reflects the moment in which it is created. Michael Mallory, author of *Essential Horror Movies*, expounds on this idea, writing that the "enduring appeal of the horror film is because the nightmares they present are reflective of their times, tapping into society's collective fears at any given moment in history."

Horror is an extremely broad category too. The 2025 poll had respondents rank 15 different subgenres of horror along with decades. Comedy-horror, psychological, and paranormal rounded out the top favorites while (perhaps no surprise) gore, body horror, and torture were ranked at the bottom.

Most horror fans can easily identify their favorites. For instance, *Poltergeist* was the standard that Shoemaker measured other horror movies against for many years. She admittedly turned up her nose at slashers and horror-comedies. "I wanted that domestic disruption and spooky specters," she admits. She found gory violence and terror for laughs to be "cheap versions of the real thing" and only came to appreciate some of these other horror subgenres more as an adult.

Kosobucki started at a young age with *Tales from the Crypt* comics and the animated *Ghostbusters* television show. While it may have been marketed as a show for kids, it has some genuinely scary episodes. As an adult, he prefers those scary movies that don't take themselves too seriously. "*Evil Dead 2* is a perfect example," he says. "It's got its horror chops but I'm laughing at its ridiculousness." He also cites Frank Henenlotter's *Basket Case* (1982), *Brain Damage* (1988), and anything Roger Corman was attached to as other examples.

Dieudonne has core memories of her and her mother borrowing movies from the Miami-Dade County Public Library. She has fond memories of watching films like Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* and Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*. "[I didn't] even know the term 'horror' yet," she recalls fondly. "I was just getting a chance to hang out with my mom."

Nostalgia and the communal aspects are very much part of the horror movie experience. From childhood memories, to the shared gasps and yelps within a theater, or merely the quiet tension of watching a scary movie at home in a dark room late at night with



We all have formative memories of one of the first times a creepy movie scared us out of our wits – for some of us, these childhood frights eventually developed into a lifelong fascination with all things horror.



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For Shoemaker, supernatural horror films have simply become a language her family speaks, which she traces as far back as to when she and her sister bonded over books that they "wore to tatters" such as *In a Dark, Dark Room and Other Scary Stories* by Alvin Schwartz and the Scholastic Book Fair "deep cut of the late 1980s" *It's Halloween* by Jack Prelutsky, a childhood favorite she loves sharing with young people every Halloween.

As for what recent horror movies have really stuck with them? Dieudonne notes Curry Barker's breakout hit *Obsession*, as well as the adaptation of Stephen King's *The Long Walk*, which she said really pulled on her heart strings. Shoemaker seconds *Obsession* along with *Parasite* and *I Saw the TV Glow*, noting that they "are all examples of how experiences of fear are shaped by our identities." Kosobucki says he's always behind on current horror movies, but really enjoyed 2018's *Antrum: The Deadliest Film Ever Made*. "[It's] about two kids who are going to dig a hole to hell and it's hyped as a cursed movie that's supposed to kill you after you watch it," he explains. "I guess it's a delayed kind of thing," he adds with a shrug. "I'll let you know if I die from it or not."

For books, Dieudonne likes *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier as well as 2018's *Dread Nation*. "It's a revisionist history … that talks about what would have happened if the Civil War didn't end due to a surrender but instead because of a disease that turned corpses into zombies," she says. Shoemaker recommends *Stay Buried* by Jennifer McMahon as "great, spooky historical fiction" with a "New England autumn vibe" and also believes *I'll Watch Your Baby* by Neena Viel, which "highlights the structural obstacles for Black mothers with supernatural elements," didn't receive enough hype this year.

Perhaps the scariest part of our lives this Halloween season though is how much we are paying for everything nowadays. If you need a month to take a break from all the streaming subscriptions to save a few bucks, October is the perfect time, as there are *plenty* of free streaming options with creepy offerings – and those added advertisements make for the perfect time to pop some more popcorn or take a deep breath anyway.

> "One of the central pleasures of getting scared is that it focuses the mind. When you experience fear, you forget the rest of the world. This intensity fixes you in the present tense." – Director Jason Zinoman (*Shock Value*, 2011)

On Tubi, you can find classic episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, campy classics like *Killer Klowns from Outer Space*, *Fright Night*, and *Night of the Comet*, as well as more disturbing classics including *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and *Hellraiser*. The Roku Channel has two Alfred Hitchcock anthology shows or you can binge a Sam Neill tribute with *In the Mouth of Madness*, *Dead Calm*, and *Daybreakers*. PlutoTV has the most diverse horror library with options ranging from classic slashers like *Black Christmas* and *My Bloody Valentine* to psychological horror such as *The Changeling* and *The Stepfather* to more modern fare such as *Smile*, *The Babadook*, and *The Witch*.

Or, if you are looking for a communal experience, be sure to check out 1959's Golden Age horror *House on Haunted Hill* on screen at the Erie Playhouse presented as a fundraiser by Eerie Horror Fest.

Just remember, whether you're watching Linus skipping trick-or-treat to hold a vigil in *It's the Great Pumpkin, Charlie Brown* or Laurie Strode being relentlessly pursued by Michael Myers in *Halloween*, find that level of recreational fear that works for you… and then maybe push it just a *little* bit further this year.

Jonathan Burdick runs the public history project Rust & Dirt. He can be reached at jburdick@eriereader.com





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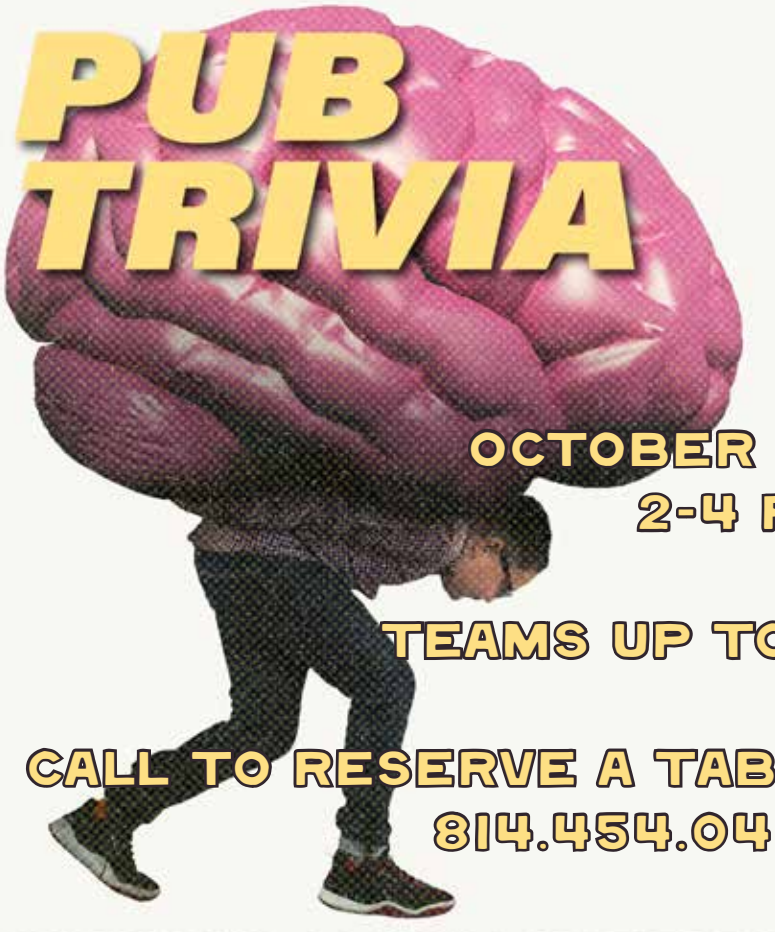


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The Bones Beneath Our Feet: Erie's City of the Dead

The history of Erie's lost cemeteries and what happened to them

By Erin Phillips



BRANDON MOST

What keeps a cemetery from becoming lost? Erin Phillips speaks with local historian and cemetery enthusiast Mark Steg about Erie's multitude of lost graveyards – where to find them, their histories, and how, so often, the souls within them are forgotten.

"It is a sad, but not at all times unpleasing duty to dwell in thought upon the City of the Dead." This is the opening line of the book *Erie Cemetery: A Handbook*, published in 1903.

As a lover of history, I often find myself, not unpleasingly, dwelling upon thoughts of the dead. Lovers of history in general, myself included, are also likely lovers of cemeteries. My personal love of exploring cemeteries is well-documented within the pages of this publication, particularly in the October issues (as I've covered the Erie Cemetery, the pet cemetery, Axe Murder Hollow, and the Weis Library cemetery, etc.). Local historian and scholar Mark Steg is also pretty passionate about historic cemeteries.

Steg has done extensive research into what are generally referred to as "lost cemeteries" in Erie. He initially became interested in researching them when, after graduating from Gannon with a degree in history, he spent some time in Germany with the ROTC. "It started dawning on me that these out-of-the-way places where tourists would have never gone are loaded with all of this incredible stuff: a Roman road or a castle in the woods. Then it clicked – maybe Erie has places like that. And it does." He explained, "I like cemeteries because they're real, tangible – probably the most tangible next to architecture – remnants of the historical past."

When one thinks of burial grounds in Erie, one often thinks of the historic Erie Cemetery, Wintergreen Gorge, Lakeside, or Trinity, or one of the long-standing Jewish cemeteries – but throughout Erie's history, burial grounds varied from long-forgotten well-established cemeteries to meager plots in people's backyards, and in the case of a large portion of human history, wherever someone happened to die.

I first started thinking about unknown or "forgotten" cemeteries when I arranged a historic biking tour of the West Bayfront for the Erie County Public Library's HistErie week (in partnership with Our West Bayfront and Preservation Erie). The home I was researching was one recently acquired by Our West Bayfront on Myrtle between Seventh and Eighth streets. It is a very old house, built in 1832, and in looking at a map of the City of Erie from 1851, I noticed that it was one of the only buildings on the block at that time and that the area behind it to the west was labeled as "cemetery," with the Erie Extension Canal flowing directly behind it.

This cemetery was mentioned, along with scads of other long-forgotten grounds, in an article written by Steg for the Erie Times-News back in the mid-1990s that was never published. Within this typewritten article, Steg catalogs a number of former burial sites in Erie, along with the one at Myrtle and Seventh streets, which was an Episcopalian site established around 1827. The remains that once reposed within what is now a bustling neighborhood were likely moved as development of the area began – most likely, according to Steg, to a plot near the Erie Insurance Arena (formerly the Louis J. Tullio Arena and the Erie Civic Center) before being moved again, and finally, to the Erie Cemetery.

That Civic Center Cemetery was one of the first community burial grounds established in Erie in 1805, spanning three lots around the southeast corner of Eighth and French streets. When the property was sold in 1862, the bodies were removed for re-interment at the Erie Cemetery. Local lore persists that there are still remains within the ground at this site. In that aforementioned unpublished article, Steg wrote, "All the bodies were supposedly removed to other locations. In actuality, they were not, and during the Civic Center construction in 1981, the remains of at least 14 individuals were found."

This is not at all uncommon. While this cemetery at the Civic Center site was well-documented, many other "forgotten" cemeteries are hiding in plain sight all throughout Erie. It is generally legal in Pennsylvania, with state permits and abiding local zoning laws, to bury human remains on private, church, or family property and the documentation, maintenance, and general respect for these grounds varies wildly depending on where one looks.

If we look way back to the Indigenous burial grounds that existed in the Erie area in the past, we can find that, to early white settlers, these areas were sacred only insofar as they were potential farmland. In an area once referred to as Warfeltown, named for the Martin Warfel family who once lived on the homestead around present-day East Avenue and Elm Street, roughly from East 18th to East 28th streets, there existed a known Native American burial ground just east of East Avenue. According to newspaper reports at the time, "This burial ground of the Eriez Indians became a popular site for schoolchildren and other researchers to search for skulls and other human remains." According to Bates' *History of Erie County*, "Directly south from the Martin Warfel place, and in the southeast corner of the city limits, was an Indian graveyard, where the boys of forty years ago (Bates' book was published in 1884) used to irreverently dig into the mounds and gather bones as relics." He continues, "The first field east of the burial ground was cleared in 1821, and for some years after it was a frequent thing to find stone hatchets and other rude implements of the aborigines. It was the custom for many years after the incoming of the whites, for parties of Indians to camp nearby and indulge in peculiar rites in commemoration of their ancestors … the mounds have all been plowed down, and no traces exist of this once sacred spot to the red men." (sic, 1884 text)

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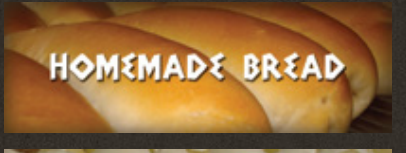
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ERIN PHILLIPS



In 2001, the site of the St. Mary of Czestochowa Cemetery on Merline Avenue was rededicated to memorialize the folks buried within with a pair of stones pictured here.

sorts of heritage sites has matured with time, the area in which I met with Steg suggests that development will nearly always win out over preservation, or for the archaeological, educational, spiritual, and cultural value of the artifacts that wind up lost to time.

Steg and I met up at one of the "forgotten" cemeteries he wrote about, in the parking lot behind St. John's Lutheran Church and home on West 23rd and Sassafras streets. Before there was a building here, there was a cemetery. In an Erie Daily Times article from 1933, it was dubbed "One of the Smallest Cemeteries in the World." Steg recalls, "I remember what it looked like – there were big slab gravestones written in German from the 1830s and 40s. The home here wanted to expand and, in Erie, expansion means parking lots. So they put a parking lot over this really unique thing. They took the stones and interred them in a crypt and put up this monument. But the people are still buried here, right under the parking lot."

That news article from the 1930s noted that there were "24 graves, nestled in a residential section at the yard of the Lutheran Home for the Aged, compris(ing) probably the most unique cemetery in the world and is destined to be maintained forever. The site, on which the home is now located, was given with the understanding that the land be used as a burial place. A court order several years ago held that if a portion of the property were maintained as a graveyard, conditions of the deed would be fulfilled. Hence the tiny cemetery."

While it is true that anyone can still visit this tiny area set in the northeastern corner of the parking lot – it has not truly been maintained as a graveyard, at least not a historic one in the sense that the gravestones and site were preserved to view. There is a bench and a memorial stone with the names of the folks buried there, right beneath your parked car.

Another "forgotten" cemetery hidden in plain sight in Erie is on Merline Avenue in a totally residential area. This spot was, at one time, wooded and mysterious with low-lying gravestones, dilapidated crosses, and a low fog. Steg has formative memories of this spot: "When I was a kid in the mid-'60s, I grew up in Glenwood, and this one kid who was known to stretch the truth told us there was a cemetery in the woods. We were about 10 or 11. I'll never forget it – it was all overgrown at the time, there was a path and I rounded a bend, and I see this cross sitting at an angle, another big wooden cross on the ground, and this ground fog – I must've jumped in the air, spun around, and ran out of there."

This plot is known as the St. Mary of Czestochowa Cemetery, or the Polish National Cemetery. However, the church dissolved around 1939 and the cemetery fell into disrepair (as evidenced by the experiences of Steg). Steg reported in that unpublished article from the '90s, "Eventually ... the city cut down the woods covering it, removed the mostly fragmented stones, and graded and reseeded it. It now looks like a lawn, but the bodies are still there." Then in 2001, the site was re-dedicated with an engraved memorial stone listing 34 names of deceased, although some records indicate that up to 80 burials took place at the site.

During our time at the site of one of the smallest cemeteries in the world, Steg pulled out a manila folder full of photocopied news stories, brochures from local cemeteries, and handwritten notes that list dozens of potential "forgotten" cemeteries, including examples from extremely early French graves, the foot of Parade being rife with human remains from various battles as well as being the site of an early hospital. He shared stories of soldiers who were executed for desertion and buried on Presque Isle (with skeletal evidence eventually surfacing in a storm), the infamous Rutledge grave purportedly still underground at 14th and Turnpike (near Union Station), the site of the former Harborcreek

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post office that was built directly on top of one of the oldest cemeteries in that area, the pauper's cemetery that was discovered during construction of Amsco around 21st and Pittsburgh and was relocated to Fairview, the cathedral crypt inside St. Peter's which houses the remains of a number of bishops, and so on.

Additionally, in searching for some local information on private graveyards throughout Erie County, I came upon a document published by the Erie Society for Genealogical Research, compiled by Dick Tefft, and published in 2005 that meticulously lists nearly every known site of a burial in Erie County. It is remarkable, as it contains well-maintained municipal cemeteries alongside notes about long-forgotten small family grave sites like the "Freeport Burial Ground" in North East, along with instructions to take Route 5 north onto Freeport 0.2 miles and take a left on Freeport Lane to a dead end. "The cemetery is in the woods about 50 yards and is only three stones." The book contains maps and GPS coordinates to each site. The research is astounding in its content as well as its abundance – it is a real possibility that the dead lie beneath our feet at any given location.

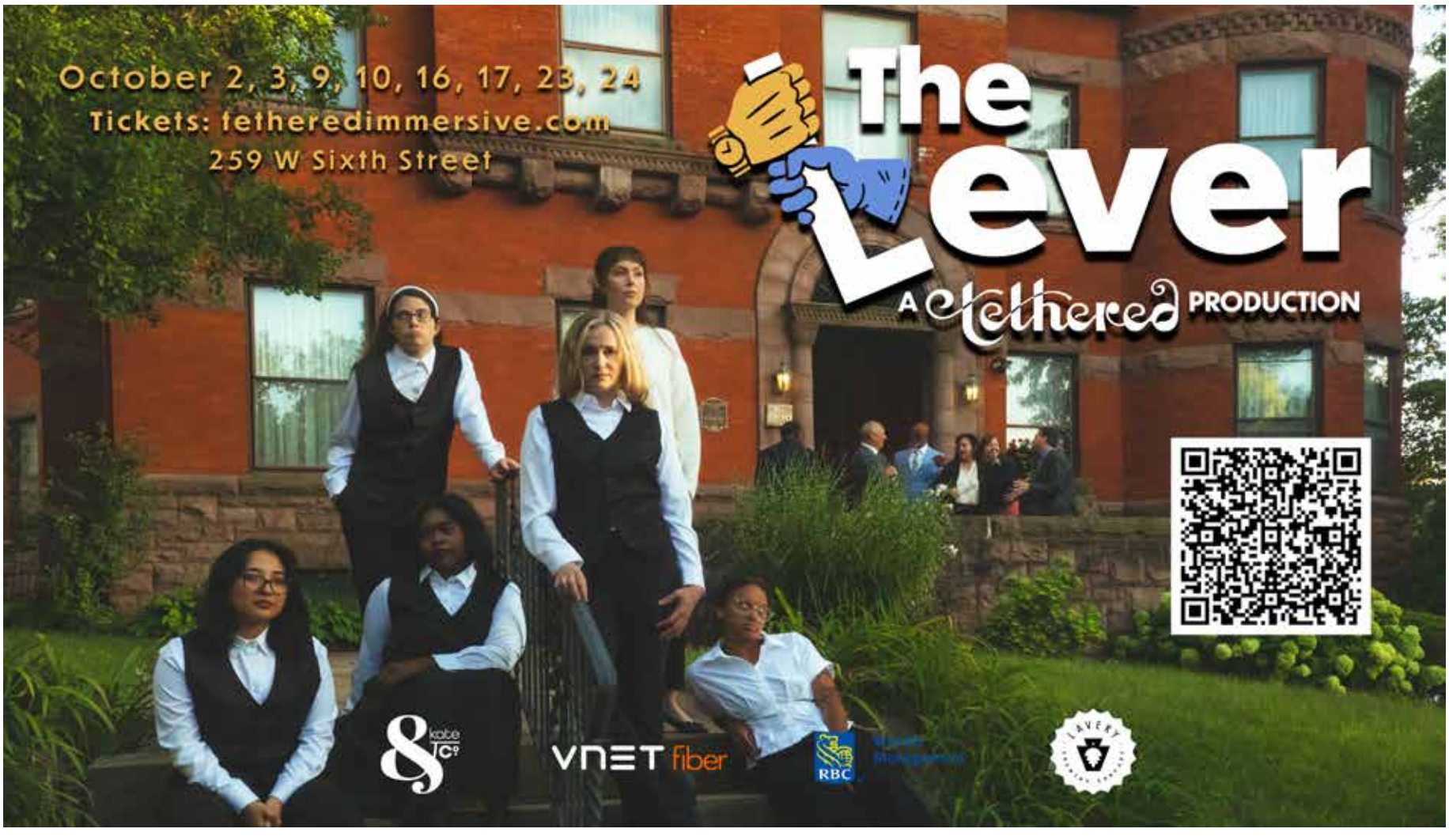
Steg mentions that part of what he loves about cemeteries is how, in looking at the history of them, one can see the shift in the culture around death. Early cemeteries were foreboding, mouldering, and intentionally scary – with sculptures of skulls and crossbones, reapers, and the like. They were meant to stand as stark, grim reminders of mortality and the consequence of sin. Then, post-Great Awakening, "The view moves to a rural cemetery, like the Erie Cemetery, and it's a more hopeful view of death – that opened up the whole idea of these places being more park-like."

Currently, our city's most beloved, historic, park-like Erie Cemetery established in 1851 – to which a number of bodies scattered throughout the city were re-interred to their final, pastoral resting place – is recovering from record damage incurred during the massive storm on Sept. 2, 2026. The cemetery is currently closed and will remain closed through November as crews work to clean up the damage – which has been described as the most severe the organization has experienced in its 175-year history. The cleanup is two-fold as crews work to clear the multitude of downed trees, many of which were as old as the cemetery itself, and then move to the repair and replacement of damaged gravestones. This unprecedented disaster is ultimately translating into an unprecedented cost to the organization and they're accepting donations to aid in the recovery, as many of the historic cemetery's stones no longer have living relatives caring for them. The best way to donate is to send a check through the mail to Erie Cemetery Association, 2116 Chestnut St., Erie, PA 16502.

Before I left Steg in that parking lot on Sassafras Street, I asked him: how do we keep a cemetery from being forgotten? He answers, "I think there's more awareness these days. Back in the day, they had no foresight, so they'd plow over cemeteries for farmland, especially the native mounds. But I know a lot of rural organizations have stepped up to maintain some of them. Or they've been handed off to local organizations, especially if there are veterans involved."

Off the top of our heads, Steg and I immediately came up with two sites that include cemeteries that are currently for sale – the St. James Evangelical Lutheran Church on Old Ridge Road between Fairview and Manchester and the Weis Library United Methodist Church, near Millfair and Heidler roads, and its attached cemetery. Even with a state law guaranteeing visitors reasonable access to cemeteries on private property – in 100 years, who will remember? If the stones decay or are removed, how will anyone know? Steg feels that public documentation will help, "I think there should be plaques or markers to commemorate, or make some kind of memorial out of the stones. Why can't we be more thoughtful? If there's no visual reminder of a place, it's forgotten."

Erin Phillips has a wacky idea to drive around to all of the forgotten cemeteries listed in Tefft's booklet. Anyone want to go on a spooky Sunday drive? She can be reached at erin@eriereader.com







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Global Summit XVIII Features Lineup That Questions Nation's Past and Future

America's semiquincentennial offers time for introspection

By Chloe Forbes, assistant director of publications at the Jefferson Educational Society



COLLAGE BY CHELSEA OLIVER

The Jefferson Educational Society has already gotten their 18th year of hosting the Global Summit underway. Chloe Forbes fills us in on all of the goings-on – detailing speakers and readings from 25 guests across 19 events, including a visit from former First Lady Michelle Obama at the Erie Insurance Arena.

As the nation marks its 250th year of independence from Great Britain, a number of provocative questions about the country and its future are on the docket as part of the Jefferson Educational Society's (JES) 18th annual Global Summit: How did the newly found "independence" of 1776 differ for those enslaved in the country? Can the U.S. maintain its republic for another 250 years? What are the greatest threats to our nation? How do we respond to other countries seeking independence?

Over the course of 19 events with over 25 speakers, the Global Summit will cover everything from international affairs to artificial intelligence, U.S. history, the power of storytelling in film and graphic novels, and much more.

"What makes the story of America both complex and complicated is that the telling of that story for so long has been limited to a few rather than the many," said JES Vice President Ben Speggen. "To better know our present, it's best that we come to know and understand the fullest version of our past."

"In a time when people often claim that the Constitution is 'under attack,' it becomes necessary to revisit our broader history, the challenges that have faced this republic and others, and what challenges are still ahead of us," Speggen remarked, adding that "hope and education are critical to improving the nation."

"We remain still far from a 'perfect union,'" he said. "Yet, that doesn't mean we shouldn't continue striving forward, creating space for more people to find more pathways to education in the spirit of helping to improve their lives at the individual level and the collective whole of the community."

His hope for this year is that people continue to use this access to world-class thinkers as a way to become better informed, more active participants in democracy and in their own communities.

Already, American conservative Hugh Hewitt and Steelers legend Terry Bradshaw tackled the first events of the Summit, as Hewitt spoke about President Donald Trump, the MAGA movement, and 2028 as the GOP prepares for what's next, and Bradshaw talked about everything football, drawing from his multifaceted and highly successful career.

The events include numerous collaborations this year, focusing attention both globally and locally. On Sept. 29, former U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine William Taylor joined Logistics Plus CEO and founder Jim Berlin for "Making a Difference: How One Erie-based Company Is Working to Shape Ukraine's Future" to talk about how Logistics Plus is working to rebuild Ukraine due to the ongoing war, including support through humanitarian fundraising, procuring and outfitting mobile medical units, creating economic investment partnerships, and assisting with energy logistics.

The Global Summit is hosted each year by the JES in cooperation with numerous sponsors, including Erie Insurance, the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine, and more. Find tickets and more information for these events at JESerie.org or by calling (814) 459-8000. As in previous years, students will be admitted for free with preregistration and proof of enrollment through the JES. The remaining events are planned through Nov. 19.

2026 Recipient of the Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award

Thursday, Oct. 1 // 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

This year's Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas honoree, Episcopal Bishop Sean W. Rowe was elected in 2024 at the age of 49 to serve as the church's chief pastor and CEO. He's not only known as the youngest to hold the position, but has also gained attention for his fresh perspectives. The Erie resident earned a doctorate in organizational learning and leadership from Gannon University and is known for his organizational reform that has focused on empowering local ministries and has also taken strong, high-profile stances centered on racial justice and civic resistance against government overreach.

The 'Godfather' of AI: Geoffrey Hinton on the New Frontier of Technology

Monday, Oct. 5 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

The "Godfather" of AI himself, Geoffrey Hinton was the winner of the 2024 Nobel Prize in Physics for his pioneering work in AI and is considered one of the most important thought leaders on the emergence of AI and its implications for business and society. His lecture comes during a faceoff between AI developers and political leaders over whether the technology is evolving beyond our ability to control it.

A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama

Monday, Oct. 12 // 6 p.m.

Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St.

After the sold-out success of former President Barack Obama last year, former First Lady Michelle Obama will join the lineup of Summit speakers this year. Ever since she stepped foot in the White House, she has been an advocate for poverty awareness, education, nutrition, physical activity, and healthy eating, supporting children and their families. She continues to share her story to inspire others, earning her the title of bestselling author and media mogul.

The US Constitution and Our Republic: Will We Keep It?

Monday, Oct. 19 // 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

In a time when the nation's attention is turning toward the founding fathers, CEO Emeritus of the National Constitution Center and law professor Jeffrey Rosen returns to Erie to talk about one of the most impactful founding documents, the U.S. Constitution. Rosen first appeared at the Summit 2021 and has since published *The Pursuit of Liberty: How Hamilton Vs. Jefferson Ignited the Lasting Battle Over Power in America* and *The Pursuit of Happiness: How Classical Writers on Virtue Inspired the Lives of the Founders and Defined America*, which he will draw on in his presentation.

The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life

Tuesday, Oct. 20 // 7 p.m.

Warner Theatre, 811 State St.

Simran Jeet Singh, author and executive director of the Religion and Society Program at the Aspen Institute, will expand on his book, *The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life* which explores the use of ancient spiritual principles to confront hate with love, find inner peace, and practice activism without burnout. This is a Gannon READS event.

Why the Transatlantic Alliance Matters: Protecting Ukraine's Children and Europe's Next Generation

Wednesday, Oct. 21 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

When the war escalated in Ukraine in 2022, Mariam Lambert left her job at the European Patent Office and co-founded Emile Foundation, a non-government organization focused on returning Ukrainian children it says Russia forcibly deported. Sally Painter, who will join Lambert in conversation about Ukraine's children and Europe's future, co-founded Blue Star Strategies, which advises global leaders on forward-looking foreign policy and has earned Erie-native Painter the title of trusted adviser in the European space.

America's Homeland Security: 25 Years After 9/11

Thursday, Oct. 22 // 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

It has been 25 years since Governor Tom Ridge got the phone call at his Erie residence that the country was under attack and that President George W. Bush needed him to lead a new agency that would become the Department of Homeland Security. Now, Jeh Johnson, U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security under President Barack Obama, and Fran Townsend, assistant to Bush for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism, will join Ridge to discuss how security has changed since Sept. 11, 2001.

Lake Erie Launchpad: Emerging Erie Entrepreneurs

Tuesday, Oct. 27 // 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

New to the Summit – this event is completely local, in partnership with the Erie Regional Chamber and Growth Partnership and Ben Franklin Technology Partners, and will showcase five to six Erie-based entrepreneurs making business presentations to a panel of investors and successful business owners with real funding on the line as Erie plans its next chapter.

Looking Back While Forging Ahead: Examining Erie's Economic Development

Wednesday, Oct. 28 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

Examine Erie's economic development through the lens of Stephen Leeper, the president and CEO of the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) who spent two decades turning $2 billion into a thriving city, and Erie Insurance CEO Tim NeCastro, who has used Leeper's blueprint as a model for the Erie Downtown Development Corporation.

March, Run, Vote: Graphic Storytelling and the Fight for Democracy

Thursday, Oct. 29 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

Learn about the power of pen and paper in the fight for democracy and justice as Andrew Aydin and Nate Powell reflect on what makes comics especially significant in a digital age redefined by generative AI. Aydin is co-author of the *March* trilogy and its sequel *Run* alongside Civil Rights leader and Congressman John Lewis, while Powell is the cartoonist who brought the stories to life.

***The 1619 Project*: Examining the Origins of American Slavery 400 Years Later**

Wednesday, Nov. 4 // 7 p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier

Join Pulitzer Prize, Peabody, and Emmy-winning journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones as she discusses *The 1619 Project*, which began as a piece in the *New York Times Magazine* and has since become a bestselling book, which centers on the argument that slavery isn't a chapter of the American story but its foundation, and that the nation's institutions still bear its inequities.

From the Revolution to World Wars, the Battles That Defined America

Monday, Nov. 9 // 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

Growing up moving from place to place due to his father's service in the U.S. Army, Rick Atkinson had an early fascination with combat. That paired with a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalism career produced narratives with some of the most granular detail ever written about the Revolutionary War and World War II. Join him as he discusses what happens when a nation must fight for survival and how that fight has shaped the U.S. for the past 250 years.

The Producers Behind Ken Burns' Award-Winning PBS Documentaries

Tuesday, Nov. 10 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

For decades, producer Sarah Botstein and David Schmidt have been behind the scenes of famous PBS documentarian Ken Burns' productions, shaping the body of work alongside Burns. They will expand on that work, discussing what it takes to turn archival footage and research into a medium that helps people understand history.

The Mingle Project: Restoring Civility in Our Society Through Gathering

Thursday, Nov. 12 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

In a time of political volatility and divisiveness, Michael Smerconish is taking his career of non-partisan politics to promote *The Mingle Project*, an initiative meant to bring people together again. Join him as he discusses the project further, drawing on his background in law and political commentary with research from his eight books.

A Post Election Conversation with Margaret Hoover

Tuesday, Nov. 17 // 7 p.m.

Jefferson Educational Society, 3207 State St.

The midterms this year are considered high-stakes and to be a barometer for the political temperature of the country. Political commentator, author, and television host Margaret Hoover will examine those election results, flexing her extensive background working in government then translating it in media to help the public better understand current events.

The Author of *Autocracy, Inc.* on How Dictators Are Working Together to Run the World

Thursday, Nov. 19 // 7 p.m.

Gannon University's Yehl Ballroom, 628 Peach St.

Anne Applebaum is a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian, journalist, and bestselling author whose work explores authoritarianism, democracy, and global politics. Her up-close look at government corruption, campaign language, and ongoing crises internationally provides vital insights as she discusses how current dictators are forming alliances for further domination.

For more information on these events and to purchase tickets, visit jeserie.org/global-summit-XVIII.

Chloe Forbes is the assistant director of publications at the Jefferson Educational Society and is a local journalist. Reach her at chloeforbes14@gmail.com. Reach Ben Speggen at speggen@jeserie.org.

KNOW BEFORE YOU GO

If you're planning to attend the Michelle Obama event at the Erie Insurance Arena, make sure to arrive early and pack light. Have your parking plans arranged ahead of time and be aware that security will be thorough and Erie Events' bag policy will be strictly enforced. This means no opaque bags larger than 5" x 8" x 2" or clear bags exceeding 12" x 12" x 6" will be permitted. There will be a shuttle service provided in partnership with the EMTA and once attendees are inside the arena, there will be no re-entry permitted.

We Haunt Eerie Days

One platform to promote best of the season

By Gretchen Gallagher Durney

It's time to get spooky, Erie.

Residents and visitors alike can now plug into one place that promotes county-wide fall fun throughout the month of October. From family fun to eerie lore and tours, and even the inaugural Erie Playhouse Ghostlight Halloween 5K through downtown on Halloween – there are tricks and treats for everyone loving this season and this great space on the lake.

If readers of a certain older, wiser age group think this branding rings a bell (recalling a celebration launched by Mayor Lou Tullio in 1976) why yes, "it's a nostalgic nod to the old We Love Erie Days," said Susannah Faulkner of Erie Arts and Culture, one of the partners behind the project.

Inspired by the phantasmagorical fanfare surrounding places such as Salem, Massachusetts, Erie Arts and Culture and its partners (including The City of Erie, the Erie Downtown Development Corporation, Eerie Horror Fest, and the Erie Playhouse) are looking to cement Erie's reputation as a spooky season destination city. "There's so much that's already happening and we want to capture it all in one place," Faulkner expressed. Giving credit to the Eerie Horror Fest (once highlighted in The New York Times), she and the team hope to build upon what's already being recognized here.

Central to their creepy-crawly curation efforts is their website (wehaunteeriedays.com). There, visitors can view upcoming events (several of which are featured in this issue), contribute to the calendar, and share with your friends and family via Facebook and Instagram. "We're keeping it fun this first year and seeing what evolves," Faulkner explains. "We are creating the tools so that the community can run with it."

And what would a promotional toolkit be without merch? Erie Apparel has played a key role in the Haunt Eerie visual identity thus far, including creating its logo. A We Haunt Eerie Days tee designed by Erie's own Mark Kosobucki (aka "Monster Mark") should be on Erie Apparel's shelves by the time you read this. If you're wondering what it looks like, you need only look at the cover of the issue you hold in your hands (claws? tentacles?)

We encourage you to keep your eyes (however many) peeled for everything else the crew conjures up in the month (and years) to come. Peace out, witches, and happy haunting, Eerie! See you around this spooky city in October!

CONTRIBUTED



The City of Erie along with a number of local nonprofit organizations like Erie Arts and Culture, the EDDC, the Eerie Horror Fest, and the Erie Playhouse have launched a centralized site for all things local, spooky, and, well, so very eerie called We Haunt Eerie Days.

Calendar Highlights:

Friday, Oct. 9
The Pumpkin Walk 2026
Featuring 1,100 illuminated carved pumpkins created by 52 local groups.
5:30 to 9:30 p.m. // Waldameer Park, 220 Peninsula Dr. // $5 // extension.psu.edu

Premiering Thursday, Oct. 22
Clue: Onstage
The beloved whodunit presented by the Penn State Behrend Theatre Club.
Multiple dates through Nov. 1 // 7:30 to 9 p.m. // Studio Theater at Behrend, 4701 College Dr. // $15 // sites.psu.edu

Friday, Oct. 23
Halloween Party at the Food Hall
Featuring costumes, live music, and seasonally-themed beverages and comestibles.
6 to 10 p.m. // Flagship City Food Hall, 22 N. Park Row // flagshipcitydistrict.com

Thursday, Oct. 29
The Vampire Circus
Feel your blood rush as you behold this mad spectacle of acrobatics, dark comedy, and magic.
7:30 to 10:30 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // From $50.88 // axs.com

Saturday, Oct. 31
Ghostlight 5K
A race through downtown Erie on All Hallow's Eve. Prizes awarded to best-dressed.
9 a.m. to noon // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // $45 // runsignup.com



PRESENTED BY

REBICH INVESTMENTS

'02 CHAMPIONSHIP NIGHT // SEASON 30



SEE THE '02 CHAMPIONS

Members of our 2002 championship team will be honored at the game.

SAT, OCT 24 // 6 PM

ERIE OTTERS VS. NIAGARA ICEDOGS

ERIE INSURANCE ARENA

THROWBACK JERSEYS

We'll take the ice in throwback jerseys honoring our 2002 champions.

TICKETS AT OTTERSHOCKEY.COM

A Big Event in a Big Space: NANA FEST at FEED Media Art Center

Four days of art and music

BEGINNING THURSDAY, OCT. 1

FEED.ART



The folks at FEED are pulling out all the avant-garde stops for their upcoming NANA FEST featuring action, artwork, and performances evolving constantly within a trio of spaces on the ground floor of the building.

The North American New Art Festival (NANA FEST) is a bold, ambitious undertaking. Expect four straight days of experimental media – mostly of the musical, digital, and audiovisual variety – for six to 12 hours per day, on three separate stages. Its intersecting events will be hosted by FEED Media Art Center in downtown Erie, a 50,000-square-foot former furniture store devoted to an expansive, chaotic repertoire of avant-garde art-making.

According to FEED's booking director, Nathaniel Hale Garnon, visitors can expect a "schedule of continuous, but not conflicting, fine art entertainment." Among the trio of deep, wide exhibition spaces on its ground floor, the actions, artworks, and performances will evolve constantly. "As one act is performing, others are setting up, tearing down, and staging," according to Garnon.

The entertainment itself is a mix of the local, national, and international, with "new experiences" as its unifying theme. Put differently, NANA FEST might borrow elements from rock concerts, art openings, film screenings, dance performances, and DJ sets – but the total experience will escape those classifications as well.

Erieites will recognize a few homegrown innovators, such as electronic music wiz Adam Holquist (aka onewayness), saxophonist Joel Hunt, and bassist Stephen Trohoske. Members of the FEED team are participating as well – expect media art from founder Benton C. Bainbridge and a musical performance from Garnon, his wife (Michalina Wilińska Garnon), and two New York-based innovators (Tomomi Imai and Yuko Fujiyama).

Collaboration will be key to many of the performances, which often balance sound, visuals, and eccentric technology. For example, Colorado-based experimental filmmaker Robert Schaller will premiere a new piece during Friday's programming, in collaboration with media artists Jason and Debora Bernagozzi. Schaller, founder of the Handmade Film Institute, has been making tactile, intimate films for decades, focused on "the materiality of the film medium itself," according to his website. Alongside his latest work, the Bernagozzis will physically move about the space while operating handheld projection screens, adding a performative element to what might otherwise be a passive viewing experience. In addition, Erie-based composer Ethan Hayden will perform a musical piece inspired by Schaller's film work.

NANA FEST has assembled an impressive list of established veterans within the contemporary avant-garde. Another example is Ben Miller, whose work in rock and experimental music spans more than 50 years. In 1977, he joined the art rock supergroup Destroy All Monsters, which (in its various incarnations) featured members of bands like the Stooges, the MC5, and Mission of Burma – as well as visual artists Mike Kelley and Jim Shaw. At NANA, Miller will lead a performance of Terry Riley's legendary composition *In C*, considered one of the masterworks of psychedelic minimalism. For fans of electro-acoustic innovation, the festival will also feature a collaboration between Baltimore-based noise musician Obie Feldi and M.C. Schmidt. Since the mid-'90s, Schmidt has served as one half of the electronic music duo Matmos, whose long, unusual resume features collaborations with Björk, an album built out of samples from medical procedures, an album produced entirely by sounds from the duo's washing machine, and an album featuring 99 guest musicians. Prepare for something unusual and surprising!

If this all sounds too highbrow for you, there's some down-and-dirty rock music as well. Pittsburgh's Microwaves are aggressive and math-rock adjacent, following in the angular footsteps of Steel City rockers like Don Caballero. Rochester's Bug Day is similar, opting for a less technical, noisy art-punk sound. Visitors can also expect the usual array of stationary art during the festival – FEED is full to the brim with screens, sculptures, and vintage TVs – so you'll never feel like a captive, passive audience.

> "Why can't Erie be a part of this? Why can't our city be recognized as an identity or platform for some of the most innovative art around the world?" – Nathaniel Hale Garnon, booking director of FEED Media Art Center

"The entire festival will also have extensive documentation for archival purposes," according to Garnon. "FEED is foremost a Media Arts Center, with vast video potential and we operate a regular livestream series liveFEED." So, expect its actions to find an afterlife online. In addition, as the festival concludes at 10 p.m. each night, time will be set aside for improvisations that are open to the public – and expected to go late. Finally, if four straight days of media art isn't enough for you, an event titled afterNANA will occur on Oct. 10 at 4 p.m., featuring experimental music from Weird Paul Petroskey, Bonnie Kane/John Loggia, Dei Xhrist, and A Map of Everything.

I asked Garnon about the ideas behind NANA FEST, and he cited the importance of artistic "scenes" in places like New York, San Francisco, and Seattle. This led him to ask himself: "Why can't Erie be a part of this? Why can't our city be recognized as an identity or platform for some of the most innovative art around the world?" Maybe by the end of the first weekend in October, it can!
–Dan Schank

NANA FEST will begin at 4 p.m. on Thursday, Oct. 1, and conclude at 10 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 4 // FEED Media Art Center, 1307 State St. // Starting at $39 // Tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

Does Love Really Conquer All?

PACA presents *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* Onstage

BEGINNING FRIDAY, OCT. 9

Martin Gray's got it all: a loving wife, a doting son, a highly sought-after prize... but Martin's got a secret, and it may just bring his whole world crumbling down. The Performing Artist Collective Alliance (PACA) is proud to present *The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?* onstage.

The Goat is a multiple award-winning tragicomedy about a 50-year-old man who, upon being interviewed and put on television for winning the coveted Pritzker Prize, reveals that he has fallen in love with Sylvia, a literal goat, and the fallout of such a confession. Written by Edward Albee, the play opened on Broadway in 2002, won a Tony, and was a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. It later received further accolades during its runtime in London.

While considered an absurd concept, this is not Albee's first work that has led to criticism. His other works, *The Zoo Story*, *The Sandbox*, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, *A Delicate Balance*, and *Three Tall Women* all examine aspects of the human condition. In this play's case, it asks the questions: "Where do we draw the line? When is enough enough?" For the modern liberal family depicted in *The Goat*, does bestiality cross that line? Is it considered enough? Or too much?

"They say for a musical to be successful, the audience has to leave humming a song. For a drama to be successful, or a tragicomedy such as this, they have to leave the theater talking about its ideas," Executive Director Mark Tanenbaum said.

Though limited in its runtime and casting (Jordan Gilmore as Martin Gray, Megs Harrison as Stevie Gray, Klovn Wabbel as Billy Gray, and Devin Chaney as Ross Tuttle), this production packs a punch, offering witty dialogue, action, and emotion into every scene. "In the midst of all the chaos and consequences, the show ponders if someone is in love, does that make everything else excusable? Can love forgive everything? Albee encourages these conversations and more," continued Tanenbaum.

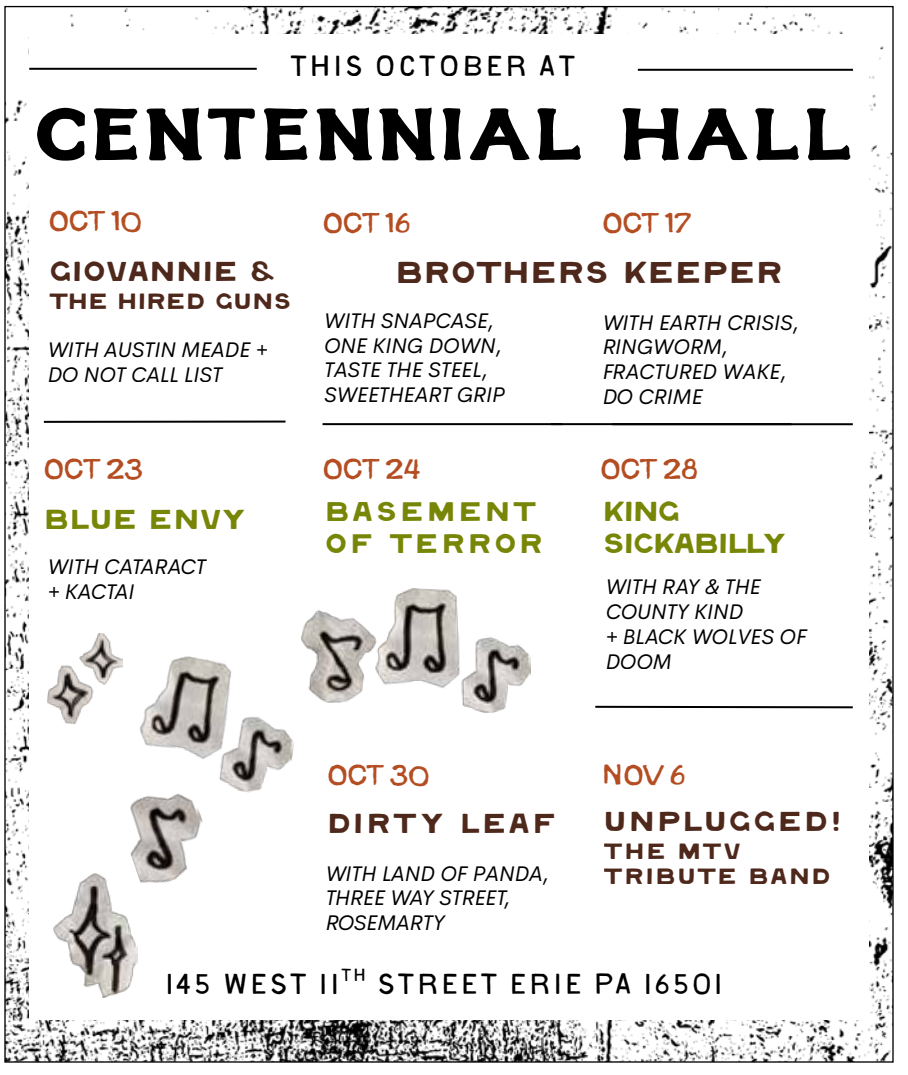
The show is intended for mature audiences. – Cassandra Gripp

Fridays and Saturdays, Oct. 9 through Oct. 24 at 7:30 p.m. // Thursdays, Oct. 8 and Oct. 15 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 11 at 2 p.m. // PACA, 1505 State St. // $20 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

M. HARRISON PHOTOGRAPHY



Join the folks at PACA as they present Edward Albee's Tony-winning play *The Goat or Who Is Sylvia?*











Erie Anime-Fest Comes to the Ambassador Center

Celebrity guests, cosplay contests, and more

SATURDAY, OCT. 10

Erie's fall convention season continues this month with the return of Erie Anime-Fest, this year at the Ambassador Center. Taking place after ComiCon Erie, the event offers a variety of anime-themed activities, including celebrity guests who have voiced characters in *One Piece*, *Naruto*, and *Cowboy Bebop*.

"Striving to be Pennsylvania's best and truest anime convention featuring fandoms of multiple genres, this show is not one to miss," the Erie Anime-Fest says on their website. "A roster of anime industry professionals and fandom-related celebrities are expected to be in attendance for fans to meet and greet."

A compilation of anime openings and endings lets visitors bask in nostalgia or discover something new, followed by panels featuring anime trivia, anime music videos, and a lip-sync battle. Video game tournaments run in a separate gaming area for an entry fee. Celebrity autographs and photo ops can be purchased on-site only, with pricing varying by guest. Festival attendees can also bring their own items from home for guests to autograph. Alongside manga and anime-based products, exhibitors will have video games, apparel, toys, and candy for sale. Erie-based artists focused on manga and comic illustration will also be selling their products in the Artist's Alley.

Cosplayers of all skill levels can look forward to the cosplay contest, with competition for Best in Show, Best Craftsmanship, Best Group, Best Performance, and Best Youth Cosplay. Contest registration and prejudging will take place during the convention. Judging criteria for the contest put a heavy emphasis on craftsmanship, so "build books" and in-progress photos will be taken into consideration. On-stage recognition will be given to both the person wearing the cosplay and the maker, if present. Registration runs from 10:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., and the contest begins at 4 p.m.

Guests for Erie Anime-Fest include voice actors Catero Colbert, Tiffany Grant, and Wendee Lee. Colbert is best known for his work in *Naruto Shippuden* as Killer Bee and Darui from the Cloud Village, as well as roles in *Bleach: Thousand-Year Blood War* and *Superman vs. The Elite*. Grant's work on the ADV Films dub of *Neon Genesis Evangelion* as Asuka Langley Soryu continued for more than 20 years, with additional roles in *One Piece* and *Fullmetal Alchemist*. Lee's roles include Faye Valentine in *Cowboy Bebop* and Kei in *Akira*, along with roles in *Dragon Ball* and *Kiki's Delivery Service*. –Thomas Taylor



ERIE ANIME FEST

Celebrate all things anime at the annual Erie Anime Fest, including celebrity appearances, vendors, panels, trivia, costume contests, video game tournaments, and more at the Ambassador Center.

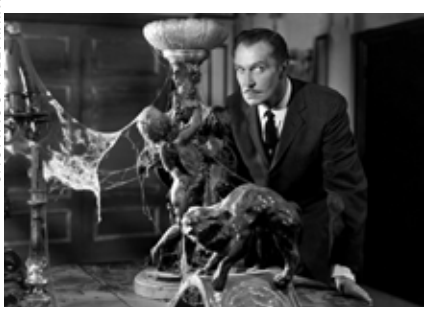
10 a.m. to 5 p.m. // Ambassador Center, 7794 Peach St. // $20 for adults // For tickets and info: erieanimefest.com

Eerie Horror Fest and Erie Playhouse Join Spooky Forces for Fundraiser

Catch *House on Haunted Hill* on the big screen

SATURDAY, OCT. 10

You might have heard the exciting news: The Eerie Horror Fest (EHF) is officially an independent nonprofit as of August. Now the less joyful news: to give themselves some time and space to regroup, the Horror Fest event won't be taking its traditional place this year, but instead plans to return better than ever in 2027. In lieu of a full-scale film festival, EHF is teaming up with the Erie Playhouse to host a spooktacular fundraiser, featuring a screening of the Vincent Price classic, 1959's *House on Haunted Hill*.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

The Eerie Horror Fest is taking a moment to regroup this year, but they're not leaving us in the lurch this spooky season. Catch a presentation of the film *The House on Haunted Hill* at the Erie Playhouse and help raise some funding for the Fest, as they plan to come back next year better than ever.

Of course, the EHF will do the most, including its own brand of Emergo – a set of in-theater devices that complement and enhance the movie-viewing experience – which was used for the original release of *House on Haunted Hill* (the OG version featured flying skeletons). This is where, aside from hosting the whole shindig, the Playhouse's expertise comes into relief, as the theater company will revive some classic Emergo techniques and create purpose-made ones, too.

Guests will want to arrive an hour before the screening, as both organizations will host a pre-show social hour, complete with local food trucks (like BBS Burger, Brats, and Sausages and SweetErie Ice Cream and Candy Mobile), fun cocktails, and spooky-themed snacks and fun. And because the EHF and Playhouse believe art is for everyone, ticket prices are offered on a sliding scale, starting at $20, then $30 (the suggested ticket price), and topping out at $40, for the most generous guests; all ticket proceeds go directly back to EHF. –Cara Suppa

Pre-show social hour: 6 p.m.; Film screening: 7 p.m. // Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. // Tickets: $20, $30, or $40 // For tickets and info: erieplayhouse.org

Celebrate *Cinematic Splendor* and *The Nightmare Before Christmas*

The Erie Philharmonic presents both Symphonic and Pops concerts for October

BEGINNING SATURDAY, OCT. 10

The Erie Philharmonic presents unmissable concerts in both its Symphonic and Pops series this October. Up first is a symphonic performance titled *Cinematic Splendor*, which is built around pieces that are "incredibly vivid and colorful, creating pictures in your mind," according to Erie Philharmonic Executive Director Bobby Pape. Music from Khachaturian's *Spartacus* ballet will open the evening, which "has all the drama, romance, and sweep of an old Hollywood epic." Guest soloist pianist Evren Ozel will then join the performance as he presents Grieg's Piano Concerto, which Pape describes as "instantly recognizable, devilishly virtuosic, and brimming with emotion."

"After intermission, we turn to Smetana's *Má vlast*, including *The Moldau*, which musically follows a river from its source through the Czech countryside. It's some of the most cinematic music ever written without a camera rolling, and a pretty spectacular way to start Daniel Meyer's 20th Symphonic Season," Pape explains.

Following this offering, the Erie Philharmonic presents itself in its most approachable way – by playing a live score along with a popular movie. This month, audiences will hear the music of Tim Burton's *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in keeping with the spooky season. These concerts offer an avenue to introduce children to the symphony in an entertaining, engaging, and truly impressive way. Pape explains, "These film concerts are tremendously popular, and they're also much more challenging than people might realize!" He continues, "The movie doesn't wait for the orchestra. To stay in sync, Music Director Daniel Meyer's podium is outfitted with a special video monitor showing both the film and a precise visual beat, and the entire orchestra follows him down to the second. It's an impressive feat."

When choosing a film score to perform, the Erie Philharmonic considers both the popularity of the movie and a soundtrack that can stand up to the caliber of talent of the Philharmonic's musicians. "*The Nightmare Before Christmas* is almost tailor-made for that. Danny Elfman – who, beyond his movie scores, has also written major works for the symphonic stage – created a score for *Nightmare* that is both musically fulfilling and essential to the personality of the film. It's quirky, dark, fun, theatrical, and incredibly colorful. And, of course, it's perfect for the weekend before Halloween," Pape said.

When choosing a film score to perform, the Erie Philharmonic considers both the popularity of the movie and a soundtrack that can stand up to the caliber of talent of the Philharmonic's musicians.

Whether coming for the Symphonic, the Pops, or both, attendees are sure to be impressed with the level of orchestral talent on display in Erie. – Erin Phillips

Cinematic Splendor: Saturday, Oct. 10 at 7:30 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // $19-$69 // For tickets and info: eriephil.org

The Nightmare Before Christmas: Saturday, Oct. 24 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Oct. 25 at 3 p.m. // Warner Theatre, 811 State St. // $19-$69 // For tickets and info: eriephil.org

CONTRIBUTED



The Erie Philharmonic offers two can't-miss concerts in October including the Symphonic Series debut of *Cinematic Splendor* followed by the Pops offering of *The Nightmare Before Christmas*.





Celebrate Erie's Preservation Wins with Preservation Erie

Annual awards paired with keynote speaker from Fallingwater

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 14

Local historic preservation group Preservation Erie will be hosting their annual Greater Erie Awards at the Erie Center for Arts and Technology (ECAT), the adaptively reused former Wayne Middle School building on East Sixth and East Avenue. This event will celebrate local preservation success stories, by awarding six local businesses/people who have taken excellent care of their buildings. The awards will be given in four categories: adaptive reuse, preservation excellence, education and advocacy, and design excellence. Preservation Erie board member and local architect Dave Brennan comments on the importance of celebrating local preservation wins, "The Greater Erie Awards create preservation positivity. Too often, preservation discussions begin when a building is threatened or facing demolition. The awards begin with success. They celebrate the people and organizations investing in Erie's buildings, landscapes, and cultural resources."

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



The folks from Preservation Erie present their annual Greater Erie Awards, highlighting successful preservation projects in our area. This year they welcome their keynote speaker: Vice President of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and Director of Fallingwater Justin Gunther, as he speaks on the importance of preserving modern architecture.

In addition to the awards presentation, the group will host a keynote speaker. This year's speaker is Justin Gunther, vice president of the Western Pennsylvania Conservancy and director of Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, in the Laurel Highlands of the Allegheny Mountains near Pittsburgh. Gunther's talk is entitled "Why Modern Matters," and he will examine and discuss the need for preservation of modern structures – those built in the mid-century through the 1970s. Brennan comments on this speaker choice, "Justin Gunther's message will ask us to broaden how we think about historic architecture. Erie has long recognized its commercial, industrial, and early 20th-century heritage, but our Modernist buildings represent another important chapter." He continues, "As director of Fallingwater, Justin brings a strong preservation perspective to this discussion. His topic ... can help us look beyond whether we simply like a building's appearance – to better understand the ideas, materials, technology, and optimism that shaped modern architecture."

Join the nonprofit for heavy hors d'oeuvres provided by Cali's West catering and beverages provided by Lavery Brewing Company, as they celebrate Erie's built history (from the Victorian to the modern) and uplift the conversation around preservation.

> "Preservation is not about resisting change but is about stewardship, creative reuse, and carrying meaningful parts of our community forward."
> -Dave Brennan

Brennan adds, "(The Greater Erie Awards) also remind us that preservation is not about resisting change but is about stewardship, creative reuse, and carrying meaningful parts of our community forward. Celebrating good stewardship encourages more of it and helps build appreciation for the places that tell Erie's story." – Erin Phillips

6 to 8 p.m. // ECAT Ada Lawrence Community Room, 650 East Ave. // $28 // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com or preservationerie.org

Erie Reader Book Club: October 2026

Rosemary's Baby by Ira Levin

SUNDAY, OCT. 25

The Erie Reader Book Club will be reading and discussing *Rosemary's Baby* by Ira Levin in conjunction with the Halloween issue of the Reader.

Each October, it is an absolute treat to get to choose a book that fits our spooky theme – from witchy vibes to horror classics, each year we decide on a story that fits the Halloween mood. This year's pick, *Rosemary's Baby*, is a classic psychological horror book that's equal parts creepy and brilliant, allowing the novel to become a classic of the genre.

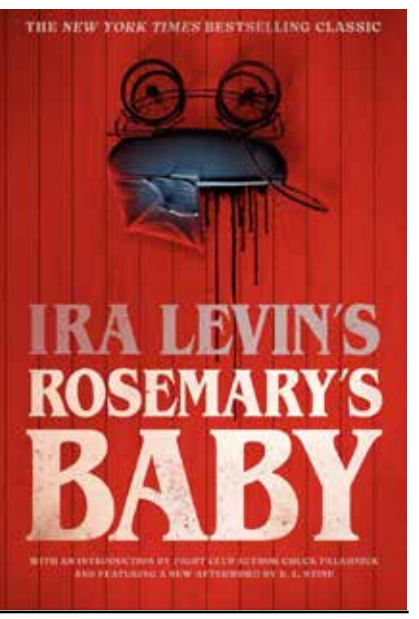
Originally released in 1967, the novel follows Rosemary Woodhouse and her husband, Guy, as they move into their new home at Bramford, an old New York City apartment building with a mysterious reputation. Wanting to start a family, Rosemary is held back by her struggling actor husband's insistence that they wait until his career begins to take shape.

After meeting their elderly and eccentric neighbors, the Castevets, Rosemary is wary of their interest, but her husband immediately befriends the elderly duo. Guy quickly lands a leading role on Broadway thanks to abnormal circumstances that render the lead actor unable to perform, and Rosemary becomes pregnant shortly after.

The Castevets interest in the Woodhouses only deepens thanks to her pregnancy, and as Rosemary finds herself becoming more isolated and frequently ill as the pregnancy continues, she begins to wonder if the Castevets and their circle of friends are not entirely what they seem.

Mysterious, unsettling, and downright eerie at times, this novel is the perfect read for this month's book club. Reader be warned, as the psychological horror contained within may make your skin crawl but will leave you wanting more. – Ally Kutz

1 p.m. // Werner Books and Coffee, 3608 Liberty St. // Free to join, cost of book not included // For more info: wernerbooks.com



Touch the Flames: Spotlight 814 Premieres *Murder Ballad* at Room 33

The New York City rock opera offers an immersive, high-energy experience

PREMIERING TUESDAY, NOV. 3

As the inaugural theatre production from Spotlight 814, *Murder Ballad* promises to be an immersive experience with soaring rock vocals and passionate live band performances.

"We hear them sing 'Someone's gonna die,'" the show's narrator says in the opener.

That's not a spoiler. It's in the title. Someone in the show is not making it out alive.

Telling the story of a dangerous love triangle in New York City, *Murder Ballad* features four main characters: Sara (Alexis Afton), Tom (Howard Lang), Michael (Curtis Jones III), and the narrator (Maeve Kirby). The story begins as Sara, a singer and bartender, meets Tom, a hotheaded actor and downtown NYC bar owner. They begin a raucous yet intense relationship that ends tumultuously. She then meets Michael, a much more stable NYU professor. As time goes by, they carve out a life and family on the Upper West Side before Sara once again crosses paths with Tom. The plot builds and escalates quickly, with the messy spiral of each character leading to a tragic culmination.

The rock opera debuted in 2012 with music by Juliana Nash, lyrics by Nash and Julia Jordan, and book by Jordan.

> Infectious, provocative, and raw, *Murder Ballad* marks a key moment in the local theater community.

"A good portion of *Murder Ballad* takes place in a bar in New York City," explains Ryan Dawley, artistic director of Spotlight 814 and 40 Under 40 alum. "I always imagined the set as a functioning bar, so Room 33 makes so much sense." With characters intermingling with audience members and staff, the show becomes a unique theatrical experience. "The action will not be limited to the stage. Actors will be moving throughout the entire space, including behind and even on the bar."

This production marks a significant evolution for Spotlight 814. Debuting in April 2023 as a podcast, Spotlight 814 grew to include regular contributors writing reviews of local theatre productions, providing a platform for long-form and in-depth discussions.

"It was always in the back of my mind that we would produce our own shows someday," Dawley admitted. "When we had the opportunity to do that with *Murder Ballad*, we had to jump on it."

In partnership with Room 33, the event will offer a special dinner theater menu of bourbon-glazed chicken over garlic mashed potatoes and roasted carrots in addition to an open bar at selected times.

The musical is directed by Zachery Hoffman, with James Wallace serving as music director, Julia LaCoe as stage manager, and Nicole Schneelock as assistant director and intimacy coordinator.

Infectious, provocative, and raw, *Murder Ballad* marks a key moment in the local theater community. – Nick Warren

Nov. 3, 4, and 5 // Doors at 6:30 p.m., Dinner at 6:45 p.m., Show at 7:30 p.m. // Room 33, 1033 State St. // $65.75 (dinner included) // For tickets and info: tickets.eriereader.com

CONTRIBUTED



The Best of Erie award winning podcast Spotlight 814 branches out into live theater with their inaugural presentation of Murder Ballad at Room 33, featuring a local cast and crew. (Left to right, back to front): Ryan Dawley, Curtis Jones II, Maeve Kirby, Alexis Afton, Howard Lang, Julia LaCoe, James Wallace, and Zachery Hoffman.



Complete the Cycle: Brother's Keeper Returns to Erie

30 years later, Mike Ski and Chris Bazan reflect on Erie's formative scene

By Larry Wheaton

CONTRIBUTED



It's 199sick all over again as Brother's Keeper returns to Erie 30 years later and takes the scene by storm – as they play two back-to-back shows at Centennial Hall with lineups that harken back to the days of Erie Hardcore yore.

Thirty years ago, the local music and arts community used to gather at hardcore and punk shows to hear local bands, meet up with like-minded individuals, and even learn something from one of the many zines that were scattered on tables at every show. This was a time before you could hear just about anything, at any time, with just a few taps on your smartphone. In 1996, the internet was still new, and for many teenagers and young adults, discovering new genres of music happened through word of mouth or being handed a flier, usually from someone in a band performing at the show being advertised.

Something was stirring in Erie and the hardcore scene that grew years earlier from punk roots, through bands like My 3 Scum and Lost, had bloomed into something new that drew hundreds of kids to local shows. By 1996, bands like Shockwave, Disciple, Digression, and Neverfall played to packed clubs to the point of constituting fire hazards in makeshift venues – but no other band could draw quite like Brother's Keeper, who could inspire a crowd to erupt into an intense mosh pit, with kids storming the stage to sing along to the songs they learned, only to then fling themselves off the stage onto their friends, who were also singing from the front of the stage.

It's now been 30 years since the aptly named "199sick" hardcore scene ruled Erie's underground, and Brother's Keeper have decided to make a surprise return to their 814 roots, featuring reunion shows and new music. Brother's Keeper will be playing two shows, Friday, Oct. 16 and Saturday, Oct. 17, both at Centennial Hall (145 W. 11th St.).

Erie Reader contributing writer Larry Wheaton sat down with Mike Ski and Chris Bazan of Brother's Keeper in the band's rehearsal space for their upcoming reunion gigs – they discussed the past, present, and future of Brother's Keeper, and the legendary Erie hardcore scene.

This interview has been edited for length. See the full version at eriereader.com

Larry Wheaton (LW): It's been 30 years since the release of *The Continuum* in 1996, which was also one of the biggest years for the Erie hardcore scene. It's also been 25 years since the release of *Fantasy Killer*. Were these the impetuses for the Brother's Keeper reunion?

Mike Ski (MS): Nobody ever thought that we would play again, but it kept getting brought up to me. Then I thought about it, and if there is ever a time to do it, it would be this year. Chris (Bazan) and I live in the same city, near Philadelphia, so we would see each other often. Eric ("EMS" Schauffele) and Bobby (Williams) were already in a band and Scott (Emhoff) lives in Philly, but we all really didn't all talk for a long time – not for any reason – so we just had to become friends again, and start hanging out. That was kind of a big inspiration for me – I really like hanging out with these guys and thought this could be something really fun to do, an opportunity to find our place back in the world of hardcore and music and have something to contribute to how f**ked up the world is right now.

I feel like we are all still punk hardcore kids; we still feel compelled to contribute as far as how crazy things are right now. So not only are we excited to hang out and play together and celebrate these records, but we also have another project and we released the first new music that we've made in a really long time … 25 years.

LW: The weekend of shows has quite the lineup. I would say maybe one of the biggest to hit Erie in a long time. Was it originally planned as two shows, or did that just happen organically after the first one was announced?

Chris Bazan (CB): I think yes, when we first thought of the idea of the shows, we knew that the Bunker was relatively small, but we didn't know where our place was in hardcore in general, let alone in Erie – in terms of whether people were going to give a shit or not. So, I think our thought was that we hoped that there could be two shows, that was part of the idea of it. We didn't fully know if it would pan out that way, but I think that's the way we planned it: let's do a show Night One, let's get these awesome bands together, while at the same time simultaneously booking Show Two, which is what we did.

I think our goal was to put together a really strong lineup, but also (perform with) bands that we are familiar with, like bands that we played shows with back in the day that we felt could create a line-up that looks, sounds, and feels awesome.

MS: Snapcase was a band that, if it wasn't for them, we wouldn't exist musically. Like as hardcore kids, they were the first bigger band to trade shows with us and they took me out as a roadie in 1994 – so that was the first time I left the Northeast, as a roadie for Snapcase. They are one of our favorite bands and biggest influences, so we have a lot of gratitude to them for agreeing to share the stage with us.

LW: So, Erie hardcore is well-known in the music scene. I have been in record stores across the U.S. and even Radiation Records in Italy, and when I tell them I am from Erie, someone working at the store asks me about our hardcore scene. Why do you think it has such an outreach and an impact in the underground music community?

MS: This is an observation I've only had years late(r). We grew up all thinking that if you wanted to be in a successful band, you had to be from New York City, LA, or whatever. Even as a person who lived in New York, I remember when Saddle Creek broke and then there were all these bands from Omaha and I thought that's so cool that there's this weird pocket in the Midwest that is breeding these amazing bands. I feel a big reason that phenomenon happened and perhaps why Erie is a good example: Erie was never a place that was handed things, and the people around at that time, not just us, but all the people that were participating, were really putting in a lot of work to make it happen. So I didn't take it for granted. When we were growing up, we were doing it in Erie because we wanted a scene to make something to do – there was just nothing to really do – and it was a cool thing to be a part of and witness and think about fondly after.

It was really a time when people weren't being selfish about it. They believed in the bigger idea of Lake Effect Hardcore and that fervor created an opportunity for us to trade shows with bands from Buffalo and Pittsburgh and Cleveland, and then I think that Erie Hardcore was the culmination of the region. It was otherwise a tertiary, skipped-over market, but then we made it a market.

CB: From a somewhat outsider perspective, because I'm not from Erie, I moved to Erie in 1996 to join Brother's Keeper, but I had been to Erie a couple times prior to that to see Brother's Keeper. At that point it was pre-internet, so the only way to find out about it was to maybe see something in a fanzine or hear by word of mouth. So, I was in Central Pennsylvania, drove up to Erie for a couple times to see shows, and when you drive up and you are a kid from somewhere else and you see this show with 400, 500 people and the walls are dripping sweat and people are going nuts at the Continental Ballroom – it feels like

the biggest thing in the world.

So when I joined Brother's Keeper and moved up here, and we went on our first tour and we're somewhere in the Midwest and there are 40 people at the show, you realize it's not the same everywhere. But here there was that "magic in a bottle" moment of everything just being off-the-hook. I would say that Erie rivaled the larger cities we would play around the country in terms of the number of people attending and the chaos that happened within that room when it happened. It felt like it meant something – and it did.

LW: The new music that's been coming out sounds great – what's the future for Brother's Keeper?

MS: Along with the new song we recorded, we have a full album of re-recorded old songs, that are career spanning, so it's like everything from our first six-song EP to *Continuum*, *Fantasy Killer*, and everything in between. So that's really cool for us as evidence that the songs were good and interesting – because they hold up on a modern produced record. We started peppering those singles out before the show, then the Erie show will be the record release for the physical album – then beyond that we are already writing new songs for after. A lot of this is ambition, but we wanted to give ourselves evidence that there was an appetite for it. We are motivated and excited to continue to make music and play shows.

CB: I think that first song that we wrote came along very easily for us. I think with current technology it was easy for us to send ideas back and forth and Mike would record vocals, then Bob would record drums, so that came along real easily. I think since then, we have been busy recording and now we want to get these current songs ready for the upcoming shows, but we will still write. Unbeknownst to some people, while Bob and Eric live here, me, Scott, and Mike live in Philly, so it's definitely every other month we get back-and-forth. We will get through these shows then home in on writing some new stuff, too.

LW: Are there plans for a tour, or playing some other cities?

MS: We got some interesting offers that we are thinking of taking. Not necessarily a tour, but...

The Brother's Keeper shows have both been moved from the Bunker at Lavery Brewing Co. to the adjacent Centennial Hall building due to an overwhelming response to the shows. Brother's Keeper are headlining both evenings with a packed line-up with some great hardcore bands that have all performed in Erie in the past. Friday Oct. 16 is Brother's Keeper with Snapcase, One King Down, Taste The Steel, and Sweetheart Grip. On Saturday, Oct. 17, expect Brother's Keeper with Earth Crisis, Ringworm, Fractured Wake, and Do Crime. This will be one for the books, and you don't want to miss this one, so start stretching now and wear sensible shoes because it's time to relive your younger days.

Doors both nights at 6 p.m. // Centennial Hall, 145 W. 11th St. // $41.86 for advance tickets, available for purchase online // For tickets and info: tellyourfuckingfriends.com

Some of the first shows that Larry Wheaton attended as a teenager were hardcore shows, including many by Brother's Keeper. He still has a collection of 45s from that era and continues his love of underground music to this day, both playing music and attending shows regularly. He can be reached at wheaton1138@gmail.com

"When I joined Brother's Keeper and ...we went on our first tour ... you realize [the enthusiasm is] not the same everywhere. But [in Erie] there was that "magic in a bottle" moment of everything just being off-the-hook. I would say that Erie rivaled the larger cities we would play around the country in terms of the number of people attending and the chaos that happened within that room when it happened. It felt like it meant something – and it did." – Chris Bazen of Brother's Keeper

October 2026 Events
ERIE EVENTS

Tues., 10/4	**Travis Tritt**	7:00 pm	Warner Theatre
Sat., 10/10	**Erie Otters vs. Ottawa 67's**	6:00 pm	
Sat., 10/10	**Erie Philharmonic Symphonic Series:** *Cinematic Splendor*	7:30 pm	Warner Theatre
Sun., 10/11	**Erie Otters vs. Barrie Colts**	4:00 pm	
Mon., 10/12	*Jefferson Educational Society:* **JES Global Summit, A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama**	6:00 pm	
Wed., 10/14	*Magic City Productions* **Fraggle Rock: Back to the Rock LIVE!**	6:00 pm	Warner Theatre
Fri., 10/16	**Erie Otters vs. Soo Greyhounds**	7:00 pm	
Sat., 10/17	**Erie Otters vs. London Knights**	6:00 pm	
Sat., 10/17	**Eerie Roller Girls**	2:00 pm	Bayfront Convention Center
Wed., 10/21 – Thur., 10/22	*Broadway in Erie:* **Mystic Pizza**	7:30 pm	Warner Theatre
Sat., 10/24	**Erie Otters vs. Niagara IceDogs**	6:00 pm	
Sat., 10/24 – Sun., 10/25	**Erie Philharmonic Pops Series:** *Tim Burton's The Nightmare Before Christmas in Concert*	Sat 7:30 pm Sun 3:00 pm	Warner Theatre
Wed., 10/28	**US Army Field Band & Soldiers Chorus**	7:00 pm	Warner Theatre
Thur., 10/29	**The Vampire Circus**	7:30 pm	Warner Theatre







Ms. Macabre Hosts Alphabetical Horror Show of Nightmarish Creatures

Enter the creatively creepy mind of local graphic novelist Adam Calfee

By Erin Phillips

What began as some character sketches of an R.L. Stine-obsessed 12-year-old has grown into a multi-year effort – a 300-page graphic novel masterpiece of the macabre… Ms. Macabre, to be exact. Adam Calfee, local animator, illustrator, writer, co-founder of MoreFrames Animation, and 40 Under 40 alum, began creating the outline for his book *Ms. Macabre's The ABCs of Nightmare Creatures* in 2019. But more accurately, he shares, "I've been working on the project for as long as I can remember, only maybe I didn't realize it at the time."

The book follows a ghoul of a librarian (Ms. Macabre) who works in a middle school phantom library. As human students stumble upon a magical portal to this bizarre bookish realm, they are taught an alphabetical lesson consisting of 26 monsters, specters, haunted objects, and nightmarish beasts throughout the night – and subsequently scared out of their wits. Each letter gets a full character storyline – K is for Krump the Crepuscular Creep or D is for the Dapper but Dangerous Dugareedoo, for example. Ms. Macabre introduces the creature, in lesson-like form, sharing its history and development, and ranks it with a video-game style profile, listing its individual strengths and weaknesses. "I had the idea that it would be fun to tie the concept together using a horror-host-style framing device, like The Crypt Keeper in *Tales From the Crypt*, or Elvira – and so Ms. Macabre was born. She is the head librarian at the William H. Harrison Middle School branch of the Library of Shadows – which is the secret, pan-dimensional, unstuck-in-space-and-time library – a door to which appears each midnight in the floor of your middle school's library room," Calfee explains.

The art style varies from page to page. As the backstories of each creature are shared, the art morphs to match, taking on the look of comic book-style pop art, old-timey advertisements, propaganda-style posters, crayon drawings, handwritten letters, and noir scenes – and it is all tied together with Calfee's signature and impressively detailed art style.

Although this is technically an alphabet book, the target audience is those who, ideally, already know their ABCs. Calfee explains, "We did some product testing with an early draft and it was very encouraging and validating to see how well it resonated with the kids. I was fielding follow-up questions about Unchie Bunchie the Underwear Goblin and Icy-Bella the Chilly-Foot Phantom for days."

This is the kind of fearful fantasy that tween-aged children love: the idea that something commonplace, like your school's library, is actually a portal to an unknown spooky universe touches on a fascination common to middle-grade kids. "I wanted to create something that evokes in readers the same type of feeling that I had when I was young reading the *Goosebumps* series from R.L. Stine. The target demographic, therefore, is myself at 12 years old," Calfee laughs. "I wanted something middle-grade appropriate, equally spooky and funny, and even educational. I like to refer to *Ms. Macabre's* as *Goosebumps* by way of *The Magic School Bus*."

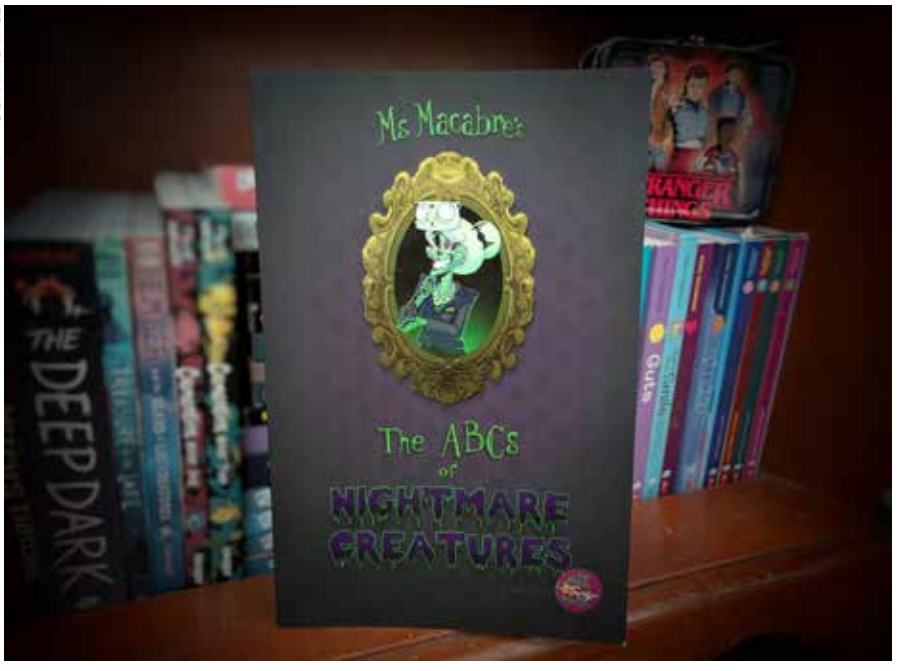
> "I wanted something middle-grade appropriate, equally spooky and funny, and even educational. I like to refer to Ms. Macabre's as *Goosebumps* by way of *The Magic School Bus*." -Adam Calfee

Calfee was able to get his book into full-color print thanks to support from a Kickstarter campaign started in October of 2025. "With the help of 94 backers (thank you, everyone!) I was able to successfully raise the funding necessary to cover the cost of an initial print run. A few local stores were gracious enough to stock copies," Calfee explains. Werner Books and Coffee currently has copies available, or readers can purchase a copy directly from Calfee's website, msmacabre.com.

Overall, Calfee says, "If you're a fan of secret, spooky, fun, fantastical things, *Ms. Macabre's The ABCs of Nightmare Creatures* has got it in spades. Whether you are or ever have been middle-school aged, this one's for you."

To learn more or order a copy, visit msmacabre.com. To read a serialized web-version of the book, visit webtoons.com

ERIN PHILLIPS



This Halloween, get to know Ms. Macabre and her legion of alphabetical ghosts and ghouls – the graphic novel brainchild of local artist, writer, and animator Adam Calfee, geared towards those who "are or ever have been middle-school aged."



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Maniacal Device
Caveman Thrash Metal
Self-released

★★★★½

Metal heads and Neanderthals can rejoice as one of Erie's heaviest bands have at last released a new album, *Caveman Thrash Metal*, their first full-length in three years. Maniacal Device is made up of local metal veterans who continue to bring classic thrash sounds of the late '80s and early '90s into the 21st century. Like many of their contemporaries, they combine a love of chunky guitar riffs and breakdowns with pop culture references that are meant to reflect on society's current state. The high-energy, short-song model sees the album clocking in at just under 20 minutes, with 13 songs about everything from drinking ("I'd Rather Drink"), record collecting ("Drastic Plastic"), close encounters ("Alien Invasion"), and movie references ("E Chu Ta"). Some standout tracks are "Ready For War," about what it takes to get ready to play a show and "Bruce Campbell" a song dedicated to one of horror's finest heroes. Maniacal Device shares a place in any metalhead's collection, alongside bands like Suicidal Tendencies, S.O.D., D.R.I., and Municipal Waste. Raise your beer and crank it up as *Caveman Thrash Metal* should be played at maximum volume, with little concern for your or your neighbors' hearing. – Larry Wheaton



In Addendum
Boom!
Self-released

★★★½

They don't call them growing pains for no reason. Erie's own In Addendum is composed of four teenagers that, with the addition of *Boom!*, already have two records under their belt. And it is, quite frankly, fascinating to hear them find themselves over the course of *Boom!*'s 30 minutes of relatively lo-fi alt-rock. The record itself is In Addendum's most cohesive piece of work yet while still allowing them to flirt with different subgenres – one minute, the band is emulating chaotic White Stripes riffs (opening track "Decorticate Me"); the next, they're incorporating horns into slacker jams ("No Country") or experimenting with jam band-adjacent noodling ("Dominoes"). *Boom!* features all of the DIY charm you would expect from a group this young (production included), but they shine most when their songs are heartfelt and simple, like on the acoustic highlight "Nothing to Say." As a whole, *Boom!* is an impressive collection of songs for the group, and if they stay the path, it won't be long before they grow into one of Erie's most promising rock acts. – Aaron Mook



Lanternflies
Lanternflies
Self-released

★★★★½

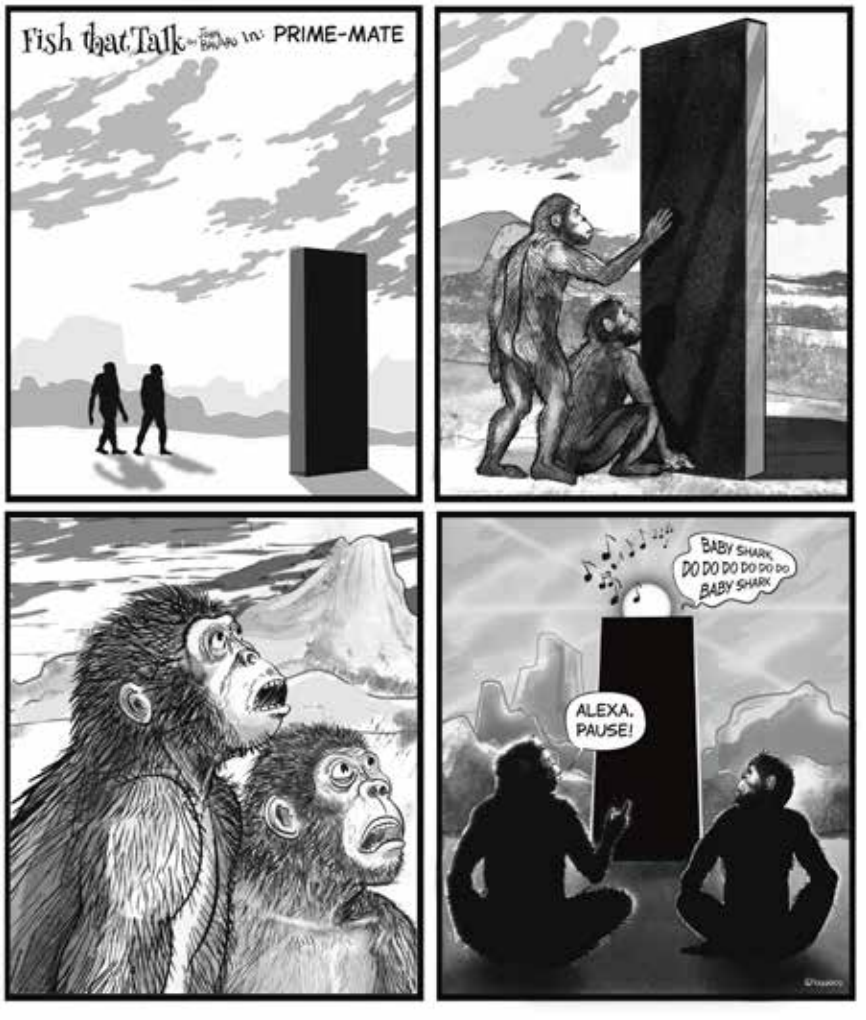
Bursting with alt-rock urgency, the debut album from Erie's Lanternflies hits all the marks. The depth of this recording is so rich and dynamic that you notice new details every time you listen to it. Elements like the echoes of a backing vocal track, the chime of an acoustic guitar fluttering against overdriven chords, or a harmonized guitar solo provide gorgeous color commentary to 11 memorable tracks. Perfectly at home with the college radio glory days of late '90s alternative rock, Lanternflies have the humor, intelligence, and originality that set them apart. Post-grunge alternative rock splintered in different directions, and Lanternflies take cues from some of its best results. They're kindred spirits with underrated bands like Nada Surf and Stroke 9, but with a rougher edge, employing clever lyrics and powerful sounds, like if Ben Folds fronted Dinosaur Jr. Evolving from the solo work of frontman Ben Robson, the band formed in 2024, playing their first show in 2025 with Robson on guitar and vocals, Ed Konopka on guitar, Andy Rogers on bass, and Brennan Dykes on drums. The album was recorded with Brian Glomskey at BFE Studios in Girard, with Robson mixing the tracks. From the radio-ready hooks of "Empty Eyes" to the muddy punk rock singalong of "Southbound Spiral," this album is highly invasive in all the best ways. – Nick Warren



This Is Lorelei
The Singer in My Band
Matador Records

★★★½

Like an iceberg at sea, This Is Lorelei is deceptively sprawling. This side project comes from Water From Your Eyes guitarist and producer Nate Amos, who has released a collective of 30 EPs, mixtapes, and compilations under this pseudonym. Even with such a back catalog, This Is Lorelei didn't escape from Chicago's independent music scene until 2024's *Box for Buddy, Box for Star*. That project, Amos' first studio album as This Is Lorelei, was a smashing success, garnering critical success and acclaim from folk and rock contemporaries such as MJ Lenderman, Hayley Williams, and Wilco's Jeff Tweedy, many of whom are making covers of his work. Two years later, This Is Lorelei is back with *The Singer in My Band*. Now signed to the iconic Matador Records label, the project presents a polished form of sound that still rings true to Amos' polymath abilities. His new batch of songs is his most country-leaning: a persistent twang and layer of dust line these tracks, born through his countless hours on the road with Water From Your Eyes. However, these sonic changes don't take away from the musician's skill. Songs like "Billy Came Back" and "The Kid With the Crown" contain this wondrous, driving groove that is indicative of an experienced songwriter. Whether a newcomer to the project or a Nate Amos enthusiast, *The Singer in My Band* is a solid entry into the This Is Lorelei canon. – Nathaniel Clark



MEMORIES OF CLARK

"COMMUNICATION"

BRAD PATTULLO ©2026 bradpattullo.com

CLARK WAS NON-VERBAL BUT HE USED MANY ALTERNATE FORMS OF COMMUNICATION.

AT FIRST HE USED *PECS* (PICTURE EXCHANGE COMMUNICATION SYSTEM), A SERIES OF CARDS.

WE USED SOME SIGN LANGUAGE, BUT HE LACKED THE FINE MOTOR SKILLS TO BE FLUENT WITH IT.

IT'S SIGNING TIME WITH ALEX AND LEAH!

EVENTUALLY HE GOT AN *AAC* (AUGMENTATIVE AND ALTERNATE COMMUNICATION) DEVICE AND HE STARTED TO BE PRETTY GOOD WITH IT.

I FEEL... HAPPY...

HIS PREFERRED COMMUNICATION METHOD WAS TO FIND RELEVANT YOUTUBE CLIPS AND PLAY THEM IN OUR PRESENCE.

ICE CREAM! ICE CREAM!

YOU WANT SOME ICE CREAM?



NEGATIVE WORLDS

"*CRYPTICAL ENVELOPMENTS*" BY NICK WARREN

HELLO KIDDIES! TONIGHT WE WELCOME A GHASTLY, GRUESOME, *GORGEOUS GHOUL*. IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S BEEN PUT IN TRACTION... IN A *TRACK SUIT*, NO LESS! HIS *MACABRE VISAGE* HAS GOTTEN MY *RED* BLOOD RUNNING *ICE COLD* - MY FAVORITE TEMPERATURE THESE DAYS! JUST SEE...

DUDE. IT'S NOT THE 1990S ANYMORE... YOU NEED TO CHILL. I'M JUST HERE FOR A FEW BUMPERS...

THE *SHEAR* AUDACITY! TAKE A *SWIPE* AT ME? I'LL RETURN THE FAVOR, WITH *FERVOR*! I CALL THIS TAWDRY TALE OF TERROR...

GOOD LORD! CHOKE...

BUMPED OFF! NYAH-HE-HE-HE-HE!

ED NOTE: ALL SEVEN SEASONS OF *TALES FROM THE CRYPT* ARE CURRENTLY STREAMING FOR FREE ON *TUBI!*

Mabeline's Poetry Corner

"Michelle"

By Mabeline "The Artist"

Michelle you seemed to have changed the way that other races will see our face... From now until the end of time... Your style and elegance... Has already raised the bar...

To limits so high... That they can't be charged... Whether it be Visa, Master Card or Discover... The only thing uncovered is the fact that... She'll never be... The breath of fresh air that you are naturally...

A Queen that was chosen to walk with a King... Hand selected by our Heavenly Father...Your steps were not only ordered... But they were followed...

I salute you for so many reasons... But mostly for maximizing past and present seasons... You are EVERYTHING THAT A WOMAN... should strive BECOME... At Your Best and that...you will always be.

Mabeline hosts and promotes a variety of community building programs that focus on the Art of Healing through poetry and writing, including Live Poetry at Cafe 7-10 and The Poetry X-Change at Werner Books and Coffee. She can be reached at gamewithmabel@gmail.com



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Deadline to purchase tickets Nov. 9

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- 21+ event
- 80 professionally decorated trees
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Five Films to Watch For From TIFF 2026

The 51st Toronto Film Festival offers some gems of world cinema

By Forest Taylor



TIFF.NET

Our resident cinephile Forest Taylor was able to attend the Toronto International Film Festival (or TIFF) for the second year running. He shares some standout films to watch out for in the coming year including (clockwise from top left): *Tender Loving Care*, *The Unknown*, *We Are Born Good*, *Stuffed*, and *Trash Mountain*.

September is a time that every cinephile should celebrate. It's the time when some of the most exciting film festivals in the world begin. The month gives us Venice, Telluride, and best of all, the Toronto International Film Festival. I was lucky enough to be a guest at TIFF for the second year running, and while the mood was not quite as celebratory as last year's 50th anniversary, King Street was still alive with festivities.

Some of the highlights at this year's TIFF include a long-awaited restoration of Ken Russell's controversial masterpiece *The Devils* and the opening of a brand new Criterion store at the Cinema Cellar. Along with the Vinegar Syndrome store, this inclusion makes Toronto the epicenter for physical media collection.

But, as with every year, the real stars of TIFF are the films, and we were given a vast array of highly anticipated new releases along with interesting curiosities from all over the world. Also, after the runaway success of last year's *Obsession*, the Midnight Madness selections were a hot draw this year. I got turned away from two sold-out screenings, so apologies in advance for my lack of coverage there. Like last year, I will be covering five of the films I saw at TIFF to watch out for in the months ahead. I tend to avoid the most hotly anticipated releases, so this list is mostly made up of the more obscure titles in the fest.

With the exception of one film, none of these titles have release dates in the U.S. yet, so look for them sometime next year (or maybe longer). Before I begin, I would like to give a shout-out to the volunteer staff at TIFF who work nonstop, keeping things running as smoothly as possible and who often take the brunt of the abuse when chaos inevitably strikes. There wouldn't be a TIFF without you folks.

And now I present to you my Five Films to Watch For from TIFF 2026.

1. *Tender Loving Care*

If ever there was a filmmaker who deserved every accolade and bit of praise heaped upon him, it would be Mike Leigh, and this film, his self-proclaimed finale, proves that he is the master of telling deeply humanistic tragi-comic domestic tales. This is the story of Amy (Kate O'Flynn), a recently single social worker who moves in with her best friend Rosie (Alice Bailey Johnson).

As she begins to search for what she wants in life, her relationship with her parents (Marion Bailey and Paul Jesson) changes when her father begins to show the first signs of dementia. The film is a deeply felt journey filled with truly lived-in characters carried by four incredible performances. It's everything you expect from Leigh, and nobody does it better. I hope he has a few more stories left in him, but if this really is his final film, it makes an amazing capper to an amazing career. *Tender Loving Care* comes to U.S. theaters on Dec. 4, 2026.

2. *Trash Mountain*

Kris Rey's simple, yet effective comedy/drama perfectly captures that push/pull dynamic of the things that keep us away from family, and the things that keep us tied to it. The story of a young gay man (co-writer Caleb Hearon) who travels from Chicago back to his hometown in rural Missouri to help his sister (Zooey Deschanel) search through the piles of trash to find their recently deceased hoarder father's social security card is a funny and heartfelt journey into everything that makes a family uniquely dysfunctional. Inspired by Hearon's complicated thoughts around his own father's death, the film is both personal and universal, carried by some whip-smart writing and terrific performances from both its lead and supporting actors. It shows us a relationship between siblings who not only love each other but deeply like each other as well. The kind of tender, personal story that independent film is made for.

3. *Stuffed*

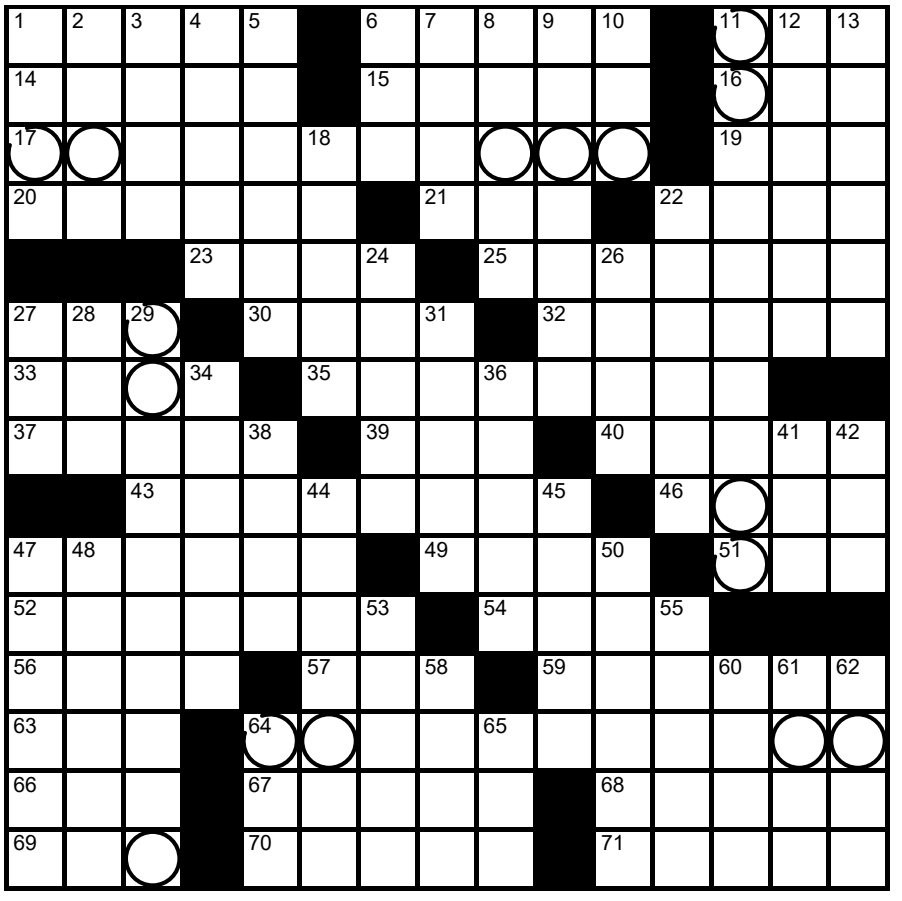
Sometimes I don't know what I want in a film until I see it right in front of me, and this Gothic horror/romance/musical is exactly what I needed! Theo Rhys' story of a taxidermist (Jodie Comer) who strikes a morbid deal with a lonely, depressed young man (Harry Melling) with seemingly nothing to live for is a darkly funny, yet surprisingly romantic tale that combines the best elements of Stephen Sondheim and heyday Tim Burton. Neither of the lead actors are professional singers, but the musical numbers are delivered with such passion and intensity that it becomes so easy to get enraptured. Also, despite the otherworldly nature of the story, the actors give us such sincere performances that ground us to this doomed romance. Sometimes, only at the precipice of death can we finally realize how wonderful life is, and this tale of love, life, death, and taxidermy shows us that truth in a uniquely emotional and hilarious way.

4. *The Unknown*

Arthur Harari's fantasy/thriller is a difficult one to recommend. It is a slow, methodical story that is equal parts disturbing and thought-provoking. It's a film that I haven't stopped thinking about since TIFF and it is easily one of the most fascinating films of the year. The story follows an anti-social photographer (Niels Schneider) as he becomes entranced by a mysterious woman (Léa Seydoux) at a party. His fascination for the woman takes a turn the next day when he finds that he has become her. Harari presents us with an intriguing mystery that asks hard questions related to identity, the loss of self, and what it truly means to inhabit a body. Inspired by the films of Michelangelo Antonioni, the film is ponderous, with a slow feeling of inevitability all around it. The two fantastic lead performances keep the story engaging and the sense of existential dread makes it more disturbing than a conventional horror film. If one can get on the film's wavelength, *The Unknown* is truly an experience like no other.

5. *We Are Born Good*

The feature film debut of Yeung Leung Chuen (L.C. for short), this film is a funny and empathetic little comedy/drama that shows humanity at its nastiest, but also its most sympathetic. The film follows a young woman (Chung Suet-Ying) who, after a terrible day, declares all-out war on a small restaurant after the owner (Yeung Wai-Lun) accidentally gives her the wrong order. That minor incident leads to total chaos as both people begin to try to ruin the other's life, all while their complicated personal lives unravel around them. The film is endlessly watchable, funny one moment, tragic the next. Each escalation will keep audiences engaged and the tender humanity involved lingers long after the story is over. The film is a celebration of the things that make us human: our messy, complex, occasionally hypocritical, but ultimately beautiful humanity. Exactly the kind of story that is needed in this age.





Across

1. Insect stage
6. Ovo-___ vegetarian
11. Sea-___ (Washington airport)
14. Cookies in sleeves
15. Circumvent
16. Offline, initially
17. Like some turbines
19. Abbr. after Elizabeth Warren's name
20. Curious person
21. Big name on LinkedIn, perhaps
22. "Heaven Can Wait" actress Cannon
23. Nitric or boric
25. Contributing some chips
27. Thanksgiving tuber
30. Sped along
32. Carlos Alcaraz's sport
33. Org. that provides financial services to military families
35. Word often seen on kids' art supplies
37. "The Divine ___" (Bette Midler album)
39. Lines from Keats
40. Pop culture cliche
43. Chipmunk in the green shirt
46. Leave out
47. Gracefully slender
49. Sandwich alternative
51. Means justifier
52. "So soon?"
54. Mars, to Greeks
56. Like doilies
57. "___ genius!"
59. Teletubby spelled with only two letters (no, not that one)
63. ___ precaution
64. Caribbean area where pirates plundered
66. Tire filler
67. Coat material?
68. Old Treasury offering
69. 1400, in old Rome
70. Narrow street
71. Foul

Down

1. Valleys, mood-wise
2. "I Am Not My Hair" singer India.___
3. Philosopher Descartes
4. Moscow Mule ingredient
5. Appearance
6. "The Good Wife" field
7. Sans opposite
8. Jazz pianist Chick
9. Connect with, in a way
10. Like seven, but not six
11. Respectable earnings
12. Fashion's Giorgio
13. Loud, metallic sounds
18. Constellation with a belt
22. Robert of "Killers of the Flower Moon"
24. "The Mystery of Edwin ___" (Broadway musical based on an unfinished Dickens book)
26. Send a message
27. "Tasty!"
28. "___ was saying ..."
29. Credit company with a logo resembling a Venn diagram
31. Financially support
34. Actress Benson of "Pretty Little Liars"
36. ___ firma
38. Facebook owner
41. Wrestling win
42. Abbr. at an airport terminal
44. Complex word?
45. "Downton Abbey" extras
47. Arabic word meaning "peace"
48. Pickle brand with a stork mascot
50. Mate of a "proud" avian
53. Bygone Yahoo address option that was easily confused with the Google version
55. Ballroom dance from Brazil
58. Only daughter of Elizabeth II
60. Asian country with no coastline
61. "___ Misbehavin'"
62. Serkis of "Animal Farm"
64. Relaxation spot
65. Suffix after conform

Answers to last puzzle

Z	I	P	I	T	■	I	C	E	D	■	W	H	A	T
A	M	A	N	A	■	R	O	V	E	■	R	I	L	E
H	I	S	S	L	E	A	D	E	R	■	E	T	O	N
A	N	T	I	L	L	E	S	■	M	A	S	S	E	S
■	■	■	D	E	M	■	■	L	A	C	T	O	S	E
A	S	H	E	S	■	P	S	A	■	E	L	F	■	■
L	A	I	■	T	H	I	N	G	S	■	E	L	K	S
A	R	C	H	■	F	L	O	U	T	■	D	U	N	E
N	I	K	E	■	C	L	O	N	E	D	■	C	E	E
■	■	A	R	I	■	O	P	A	■	R	I	K	E	R
J	O	N	S	N	O	W	■	■	W	E	S	■	■	■
O	L	D	H	A	T	■	E	P	I	S	O	D	E	I
B	I	K	E	■	H	I	V	E	I	S	L	A	N	D
I	V	E	Y	■	E	D	I	T	■	E	D	D	I	E
M	A	Y	S	■	R	O	L	E	■	R	E	A	D	S

THE JEFFERSON EDUCATIONAL SOCIETY PRESENTS:

GLOBAL SUMMIT XVIII

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22 - THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 19

TICKETS & INFO!

2026 HEADLINER



A Moderated Conversation with Michelle Obama
Monday, October 12 | 6 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena
Featuring: Michelle Obama



President Trump, the MAGA Movement, and 2028: What's Next for the GOP
Tuesday, September 22 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: Hugh Hewitt



Steeler Legend & Fox Sports Broadcaster Talks Everything Football
Thursday, September 24 | 7 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center
Featuring: Terry Bradshaw





How Erie is Shaping Ukraine's Future
Tuesday, September 29 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: Ambassador William B. Taylor (left) and Jim Berlin



2026 Thomas B. Hagen Dignitas Award Recipient
Thursday, October 1 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: Bishop Sean W. Rowe



The 'Godfather' of AI: Geoffrey Hinton on the New Frontier of Technology
Monday, October 5 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Geoffrey Hinton



The US Constitution and Our Republic: Will We Keep It?
Monday, October 19 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: Jeffrey Rosen



Gannon READS: "The Light We Give: How Sikh Wisdom Can Transform Your Life"
Tuesday, October 20 | 7 p.m.
Warner Theatre
Featuring: Simran Jeet Singh





Why the Transatlantic Alliance Matters: Protecting Ukraine's Children and Europe's Next Generation
Wednesday, October 21 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Sally Painter (right) and Mariam Lambert







America's Homeland Security: 25-Years After 9/11
Thursday, October 22 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: (from left) Jeh Johnson, Fran Townsend, and Tom Ridge

Lake Erie Launchpad: Emerging Erie Entrepreneurs
Tuesday, October 27 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: Erie entrepreneurs, innovators, funders, and investors





Looking Back While Forging Ahead: Examining Erie's Economic Development
Wednesday, October 28 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Steve Leeper (left) and Tim NeCastro





March, Run, Vote: Graphic Storytelling and the Fight for Democracy
Thursday, October 29 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Andrew Aydin (right) and Nate Powell



'The 1619 Project': Examining the Origins of American Slavery 400 Years Later
Wednesday, November 4 | 7 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center
Featuring: Nikole Hannah-Jones



From the Revolution to World Wars, the Battles That Defined America
Monday, November 9 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring:Rick Atkinson





The Producers Behind Ken Burns' Award-Winning PBS Documentaries
Tuesday, November 10 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Sarah Botstein (left) and David Schmidt



The Mingle Project: Restoring Civility in Our Society through Gathering
Thursday, November 12 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Michael Smerconish



A Post Election Conversation with Margaret Hoover
Tuesday, November 17 | 7 p.m.
Jefferson Educational Society
Featuring: Margaret Hoover



The Author of 'Autocracy Inc.' on How Dictators Are Working Together to Run the World
Thursday, November 19 | 7 p.m.
Gannon University Waldron Campus Center
Featuring: Anne Applebaum