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**DECEMBER 2017**

**ATLANTA'S BEST SOUNDING ROOM**

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| FEB 25-26 | ART GARFUNKEL |

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compiled by jeoff davis
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creative loafing’s, nov. 2, 2017, cover story, “donald glover for mayor: fear of a black mecca,” got strong, wide-ranging reactions. from calling us racists to saying we are irresponsible for endorsing a candidate who was not running, we got it all. some commentators even liked the story, while others exposed their own prejudices. we pulled responses from cl’s website, facebook, and reddit. so grab some popcorn and have a look.

Bmandoh:
the article was strange, but i understood what the author is describing. i’m sure there will be an influx of commenters here talking about racism against whites, or how discriminatory this article is because we’re all americans. but that doesn’t change the fact that the writer has a point, specifically about how every time black communities and cities build themselves into something, white america wants to move on it. it’s always going to be a touchy subject, but that doesn’t mean we can’t, or shouldn’t, talk about it.

Another ATLien: i’ve read creative loafing for many many years. this is without a doubt the most unabashedly racist rant i’ve ever read in this publication and lacking in reality. while the city of atlanta’s AA population may have declined, [the] AA population in the metro area has increased 50 percent overall. the metro area has one of the highest rates of AA home ownership, business ownership and average income level. Atlanta’s overall crime rate has declined greatly since the ‘70s ... Atlanta has the top-rated HBCUs in the country, and Georgia State has the largest number annually of AA graduates of any college in the country. for these reasons, the atlanta area continues to be a ‘black mecca,’ and no matter who the mayor of Atlanta is, that fact isn’t going to change. so what if it isn’t a ‘black’ city; it isn’t a white city either, and it never will be.

9191qw: atlanta is a very ‘racial’ place. that’s just how this city is. if you want to put your blinders on and...
DEAR MS. MAYOR,

Congratulations and happy holidays! Atlanta voters have entrusted you with the reigns to the city. Please don’t screw it up.

Let’s be candid; this ain’t an easy gig, and you’re gonna catch some flak. It’d probably be best for you to grow some thick skin and gear up for the onslaught of antagonizing to come. Complaints will be aplenty, and compliments and congratulations will be scarce.

That said, we’d appreciate it if you’d refrain from blocking us on Twitter. We’re going to call you out on your flubs. Hell, we might even be mistaken in our skepticism. Maybe we’ll jab at you for gaffes you didn’t make. Suck it up. You’re a public official, and we are the all-knowing citizenry whose rabble you’ll be obligated to entertain.

We know it is a lot to ask, but ‘tis the holiday season. It is a time of giving. So why not start stuffing our stockings, spinning the dreidel, or drinking from the unity cup so we have something to toast to at the start of the new year? We can make anything happen in this city if we work together and have the right priorities. The more creative and outrageous the better. The status quo is not the answer. So we’ve put together a list of holiday wishes for our Atlanta future — we hope you can grant us some.

We want to live in an Atlanta where improving our neighborhood does not mean exiling us from our neighborhood.

We want to live in an Atlanta where “affordable housing” isn’t just a buzz term, but a reality enforced by legislation.

We want to live in an Atlanta where all residents have access to free Wi-Fi.

We want to live in an Atlanta where we don’t have to look at monuments and street signs honoring white supremacy.

We want to live in an Atlanta where we are a true sanctuary city that welcomes refugees and refuses to turn residents over to ICE.

We want to live in an Atlanta where public schools are better than private ones.

We want to live in an Atlanta where school funding is not based on property tax rates, which leads to unequal access to education.

We want to live in an Atlanta where HIV and other health screenings are free and easy to access.

We want to live in an Atlanta where Grady Hospital’s emergency room does not have an endless wait.

We want to live in an Atlanta where $700 million of public money is distributed to 700 small Atlanta business owners instead of going to just one business owned by a billionaire to build a stadium we don’t need.

We want to live in an Atlanta where stadiums paid for by public money are allowed to be used by the public.

We want to live in an Atlanta where vacant, blighted properties are not allowed to just sit and fester for years.

We want to live in an Atlanta where homeless people can rely on city systems to land them jobs, healthcare, and a place to live.

We want to live in an Atlanta where drug addiction and mental illness don’t condemn someone to a life on the streets or in jail.

We want to live in an Atlanta where rehabilitation programs are available to those who need them whenever they need them.

We want to live in an Atlanta where jails aren’t jam-packed with poor people who have committed nonviolent crimes.

We want to live in an Atlanta where libraries receive as much funding as correctional facilities.

We want to live in an Atlanta where mental health professionals work with police departments so that every 911 call is not treated as a criminal issue.

We want to live in an Atlanta where the public defender budget is as big as the district attorney budget.

We want to live in an Atlanta where police don’t carry guns.

We want to live in an Atlanta where every citizen-cop confrontation is filmed and promptly published for all to see.

We want to live in an Atlanta where public art is everywhere.

We want to live in an Atlanta where more streets are pedestrian only.

We want to live in an Atlanta where street vendors aren’t treated as the enemy, and street musicians are encouraged.

We want to live in an Atlanta where public transportation is free.

We want to live in an Atlanta where we have the option of riding a gondola across the city instead of sitting in traffic.

We want to live in an Atlanta where big businesses are not wooed to the city by outrageous financial promises.

We want to live in an Atlanta where the growth of small Atlanta businesses is the priority.

We want to live in an Atlanta where mom and pop stores are valued and helped to survive and thrive.

We want to live in an Atlanta where architecture is bizarre and outrageous and interesting and beautiful.

We want to live in an Atlanta where Ponce City and Krog Street markets aren’t the new retail norm.

We want to live in an Atlanta where cell phones are illegal in some places.

We want to live in an Atlanta where one position on the city council is randomly chosen from the citizenry.

We want to live in an Atlanta where there are more free Atlanta festivals and Freaknik is an annual extravaganza.

We want to live in an Atlanta where Chad Radford programs one day of the Atlanta Jazz Festival.

We want to live in an Atlanta where issues of race and class are openly discussed.

We want to live in an Atlanta where we can borrow the latest technology at the library.

We want to live in an Atlanta where metal plates aren’t the solution to fixing roadways.

We want to live in an Atlanta where maintaining a strong economy is as important as maintaining a strong cultural identity.

We want to live in an Atlanta where Atlanta museums and aquariums and zoos have a free day once a week.

We want to live in an Atlanta where urban farming is encouraged.

We want to live in an Atlanta where we have a soul food museum.

We want to live in an Atlanta where the Beltline benefits the locals more than the property developers.

We want to live in an Atlanta where alternative energy is encouraged and subsidised.

We want to live in an Atlanta where green space is expanded and trees are hugged.

We want to live in an Atlanta where movies are shown in Piedmont Park on summer nights again — and every park gets as much care as Piedmont Park.

We want to live in an Atlanta where our city leads the nation in quality of life, not income inequality.

Love,
An anxious gaggle of Atlantans
unup on a cold winter morning. Lazarus Lake is standing next to a red Honda at the entrance to Frozen Head State Park in Wartburg, Tennessee, about an hour west of Knoxville. He’s wearing loose blue jeans, a flannel shirt, and a new pair of work boots. His long gray hair is pulled into a ponytail that hangs down his back. At a glance, he looks like a retired truck driver or a felon-turned-farmer.

“You’re late,” he grumbles. It’s 7:03 in the morning.

I hustle from my car to where he’s standing and apologize. He seems cold, distant, mildly annoyed by my presence. I’m not picking up an ounce of the humor or charisma I’d heard so much about. Maybe it’s just me. I’m here because he reluctantly agreed to let me tag along with him and his crew on their hike to the top of Bald Knob, the highest peak in Frozen Head. I explained that I was writing a big story on the Barkley Marathons — the world-famous ultra-marathon Lake founded and his life’s magnum opus. He wasn’t the least bit affected by the news. In fact, he seemed a little annoyed.

The seven-hour trek up Bald Knob, I am told, is far better than scaling Big Hell, Rat Jaw, or Bird Mountain. It’s better than The Bad Thing. We won’t have to cross Son of a Bitch Ditch, a 10-foot-wide, 10-foot-deep gouge in the dense forest. We’ll avoid Leonard’s Butt Slide, which propels you down at 45-degree gradient through several hundred feet of mud and

saw briars.

I’m dressed like I am about to footslog through the tundra: long underwear, long-sleeve wicking shirt, sweatshirt, hoodie, overcoat, blue jeans, leg warmers, gloves, earmuffs, and a red toboggan. I heard the weather can get down to freezing at the top of the peaks of Frozen Head, regardless of how tolerable the temperature is at the bottom.

We set out on the hike in silence. I linger a few paces behind Lazarus and his friend and colleague, Raw Dog. Thirty years ago, these two woodsmen founded the Barkley Marathons, a now infamous 100-mile footrace through some of the most unforgiving terrain in the country. Known to its many disciples as “the race that eats its young,” the Barkley is considered one of the most difficult ultramarathons in the world. The best runners in the world have tried and failed. Out the 1,000 or so runners who’ve attempted the race, only 14 people have ever finished. With 59,100 feet of climb, it’s the equiva-
lent of climbing Mount Everest...twice. That's more than any other ultramarathon — more than the 33,000 feet at Hardrock or the 45,000 feet at Nolan's 14. Most people refuse to believe a race held in the Tennessee backcountry could be so punishing, but to every runner's complete dismay, it most certainly is.

Since 1986, the Barkley has been operating entirely under the radar, rising from a casual underground affair to a cult obsession. Few even figure out how to enter the Barkley, fewer still come close to finishing it. Today, people come from all over the world for the chance to annihilate their minds and bodies in a 60-hour, 100-mile, sleepless, nearly impossible gauntlet through the merciless mountains. Lost and alone, they struggle through hallucinations, extreme cold, heat, thunderstorms, sleet, and rock-bottom exhaustion while they navigate vast stretches of sinister, unmarked woodland with only a compass and their prayers.

Year after year, a new mêlée of poor souls offer themselves to the Barkley gods. They volunteer to plummet into the depths of mental and physical agony crossing questionable waters, gaping ravines, and brutal cliffs in the dead of night. They train for years, for decades, to vie for a spot they usually don't get, then puke, bleed, and hyperventilate alone in the woods until the moment their body collapses or they make the decision to give up and go home with their hope and pride dragging like empty cans behind them.

And for what? For the chance to be anointed to the highest of ranks, for the chance to become something more than human, something unbreakable and invincible, for the chance to have their fearlessness fossilized in the annals of a near-impossible feat, and above all else, the reason they do it is for the chance to prove their worth, not to themselves, but to the figure they worship and revere.


The truth is, I didn't realize what I was getting myself into when I took the assignment to write a piece on the Barkley Marathons. I didn't know that I would end up venturing out into the vicious terrain myself. I hoped I might just be able to watch from the sidelines, cheer on the waning runners as I scribbled observations about endurance, prison culture, punishment, and the vast peculiarities of Southern culture. But as I got more involved with the people in the race, my perspective began to shift. The more I got to know him, I started to see Lazarus Lake in a strange new light. My story was not about the race at all.

It was about a man named Gary Cantrell.

On the ascent to the peak of Bald Knob, Laz's eyes are fixed like a hawk's on the rocky trail. He continually scans the ground for fossils, animal tracks, and rare stones. It's been about half an hour of hiking, and he's starting to warm up to me a little. He shares his extensive knowledge of geology in bits and pieces. He gabs about local landscape and the history of how this land was formed. He talks about Tennessee's three radically different geological zones, the rare flat limestone in the central U.S., and the uplift mountains that were created when the Smokies shoved across the continent 300 million years ago.

"If you look at the eastern U.S., from way up on the topo, it looks like you pushed a box across the carpet, and rolled the wrinkles in front of it," he said.

It's easy to see why a place like Frozen Head would keep him interested all these years. The park is an anomaly. The ground is striated in flat limestone, sandstone, shale, and coal. Haroar collect on bare branches like a million glass daggers, majestic and menacing at the same time. Frost-covered spider webs look like white lace tapestries strung sweetly between the trees. And while there is beauty in a few pockets of the park, much of the land is brutal and bleak. In a word: uninspiring. And that's a major part of what makes the Barkley so difficult. There are no stunning vistas and verdant flora in early spring when the race is held. It's wintry and barren with blankets of blinding fog. The landscape is a grey-brown slough covered in soggy leaves and years worth of brittle tree limbs. They look like millions of gray scratch marks on the ground, like something was clawing to get out. Trees like steel bars, thickets like razor wire — it is no stretch to say it's a certain kind of prison.

Laz is slowed by a limp in his right leg. He's 62 years old now. A life-long marathoner, he ran over 100,000 miles in 50 years. He's got the map to prove it, marked and highlighted with a network of road and trails. It helps him keep track of everywhere he runs. After so many miles, and a series of unfortunate injuries, he has a few tips on the sport.

"You don't have to eat to run," he tells me. "That's an old wives tale. We were designed for feast and famine. Most people of who have lived have been hungry most of the time. There's either plenty or there's nothing."

We're climbing over 2,000 feet to do what they call a "book drop." The Barkley is entirely unmarked, so Laz and Raw Dog hide books throughout the course to serve as benchmarks. When a runner gets to a book, she tears out the page that corresponds to her number, and brings it back to Laz as proof she completed the full loop. It can also help them locate a missing runner. By finding the last book page the runner tore out, search parties can narrow down where the runner might be. Though they typically won't go looking for someone until the full 60 hours are up. There are 13 books this year. The titles include: "What Did I Do Wrong?" "Confessions of a Virgin Sacrifice," "You Can if You Think You Can," and "How to Survive and Grow Richer in the Tough Times Ahead."

I ask him, why books?

"What else has page numbers?" he says. His cute pragmatism is a big part of his charm. He says the titles also serve as "entertainment." One year, to the runners' surprise, all the books were pornos. The Barkley has become so widely known for the tongue-in-cheek book selections that people now send him books in the mail — so many that he doesn't have to buy them for the race anymore.

On the side of the mountain, Laz stops in front of a faint impression of a paw print in the dirt.

"Can you tell dog tracks from coyote?" he asks, looking up at Raw Dog. "I can tell the skulls apart, but not the tracks."

Raw Dog steps over to look at the print. "Dog," he says in a soft voice. We continue walking. They often feed off each other like this, quizzing the other's encyclopedic knowledge of the outdoors. When Laz points out a patch of rhododendrons, Raw Dog says, "Those are mountain laurels." Laz suggests hiding a book in a birch tree, and Raw Dog says, "Now, Laz, that's not a birch." They've turned the wilderness into a scholarly pursuit, a form of art.

"Have you ever seen rose rock?" Laz quizzes me. "They are crystals formed in sandstone. They look like roses. I lived in Norman, Oklahoma, as a little kid, and it was one of the few sites that had them. Wël just pick them right up off the..."
Laz, whose real name is Gary Cantrell, spent his formative years, age 6 to 9, in Oklahoma. It was the first place that felt like home for him.

“There’s no hills, there’s no trees, and the wind blows all the fucking time — 15 to 30 miles per hour. Six months one direction, and for the next six months, it blows back,” he says.

Gregarious by nature, Laz talks about everything. He is an encyclopedic and funny, an endless fountain of information, anecdotes, and jokes. He never misses a beat in conversation. I’m starting to see why so many people are fascinated by him.

He tells me he moved around a lot as a child. His family came to Tennessee when his father got a job as an aerospace engineer in Tullahoma. For a boy who didn’t have much in the way of stability, it makes sense that he would be so fascinated with things like rocks and fossils — solid, permanent things.

I search the ground, too, but I’m not entirely sure what I’m looking for. Shiny bits of black glass shimmer beneath our feet. I bend down and pick up a piece about the size of a cigarette lighter. I hold it out in the palm of my hand.

“What is this?” I ask.

“That’s coal,” he says. “They’ve torn the mountains to pieces and destroyed the environment for that shit.”

I ask if it would burn if I lit it on fire. He says yes. Oh, yes.

The next time I meet up with Laz and Raw Dog, it’s early on a Friday morning for the final book drop at the Hardee’s in Wartburg. It is April Fool’s Day and, by no coincidence, the official start of the Barkley weekend.

The race will begin sometime between midnight and noon on Saturday; no one knows exactly when. All they know is that at some point in those 12 hours, Laz will blow a conch shell, which means the runners have exactly one hour to be at the starting gate. The race starts when Laz lights his cigarette. This keeps runners on their toes. Laz likes it that way.

When I arrive at Hardee’s, the sun still hasn’t risen, and the air is chilled and dew-damp. Inside, a group of white-haired men — retired, church-going, grandpa types — are seated around a large table in the middle of the restaurant. They’ve been eating breakfast here, every morning, at this very table, since the dawn of fucking time. They can remember all the various phases of branding and décor Hardee’s has cycled through over the decades; they can recount what year the restaurant got new booths, new light fixtures, new flooring. They know the Barkley well, and can always tell its arrival by all the strange new people who flood into the small town around April Fool’s Day, the day on which Laz purposefully chose to host the race, or as near to it as possible.

When Laz arrives, he orders sausage and eggs and joins the men at their roost. Media crews from France and New York are slowly trickling in. They look like aliens from a distant land with their hi-tech AV equipment and tight-fitting athletic wear. Laz ignores them. His particular brand of grungy, mountain-man fame is generally underwhelming to locals, yet ceaselessly exhilarating to clean-cut city dwellers near and far.

“In France, I’m a star,” he tells me. “In America, I’m thought of more as a homeless person.”

Last year, two independent filmmakers, Timothy Kane and Annika Iltis, made a documentary about the Barkley. Released on Netflix, it was a hit. Laz says the film got local people interested. Already, about 10 people from media outlets like CNN have shown up to start tracking Laz’s every move during the weekend.

“There’s a lot of attention on the event this year, and I have to go in front of all this media between teeth,” he says with a laugh. Shortly before the documentary came out and his popularity soared, Laz pulled his own teeth. He didn’t want to go to the dentist, so he decided to self-extract. He then advised that it would be good prep for the Barkley to pull your own teeth.

Teeth or no teeth, Laz doesn’t shy away from the camera. He’s a man of taglines, quips, and one-liners — a fact that belies his general appearance. Thus, the cameras love him.

As I spend more and more time with Laz, I start to see the character he’s constructed over the years. Laz’s public persona is a well-oiled machine. And it made me wonder: Who the hell is he really? Everyone worships him, and he’s built this cult fan base. What is it about him that makes everyone want in?

We’re at the infamous Brushy Mountain State Penitentiary, a 120-year-old maximum security prison in the nearby town of Petros, Tennessee. Buttercups and thistles frame the area in front of a towering metal entry gate. Even in their semi-wilted state, the flowers seem deceiving or sarcastic, like a throw pillow on a bed of nails.

Laz pulls up in a U-Haul and assures us the “woman with the keys” is on her way. His dog Little eats grass and throws up on the gravel. A few minutes later, Lisa Rutherford, a woman with short blonde hair drives up in a white truck. With a hoop of keys jangling from her hip, she slowly walks the gate open.

“Welcome to the end of the line,” she says.

For well over 100 years, Brushy Mountain served as one of the largest maximum security facilities in America. It closed its doors in 2009. Hidden in the rugged Cumberland Mountains, “The Castle,” as it’s known to locals, was built in 1866 and housed the most dangerous criminals of our time. The merciless land surrounding the prison made it the ultimate site for a lockdown. A TV news reporter once said it well: “Getting out of a prison is one thing, but getting out of Morgan County is something else.” As turns out, the story of one prisoner’s botched escape is the sole reason the Barkley exists.

James Earl Ray, who assassinated the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., escaped from Brushy Mountain in 1977 while serving a 99-year sentence for the 1968 murder. The first person to ever escape the prison, Ray and six other convicts escaped by fashioning pieces of pipe into a makeshift ladder, which they flung over a 14-foot wall. Two other inmates staged a fight to distract the guards while they made their way over the wall. Ray was found by bloodhounds and recaptured 55 hours later. In that time, two days and seven hours, he had only managed to get eight-and-a-half miles from the prison. Exhausted and covered in mud, he was returned to Brushy Mountain.

Inspired by the story of Ray’s attempt, Laz and Raw Dog wagered a mocking bet that someone could probably travel a hundred miles in those woods in the same amount of time. Thus, the Barkley was born.

After Laz duct-tapes a book to a metal bar behind the prison walls, we all sink around the creepy abandoned grounds: the basketball court, the laundry rooms, the windowless rooms used for solitary confinement, the gym built by inmates with rock from the quarry.

“There’s a theme to the décor,” says Laz. “They’re into locking you in.

Lisa takes us up to the old cafeteria, where, in 1998, an inmate named Tim Cross painted a series of murals that run around the entire room. There are gorgeous renderings of man-
THE KILLERS  
FRIDAY, MAY 18
ZEDD • PORTUGAL. THE MAN • GALANTIS • COLD WAR KIDS
BLACKBEAR • OH WONDER • TASH SULTANA • LAUV • LOST KINGS
ANDERSON EAST • DEJ LOAF • PUSSY RIOT • NOTHING BUT THIEVES • BANNERS
RON GALLO • THE GREEN • THE GLORIOUS SONS • CAROLINE ROSE • BONES

THE CHAINSMOKERS  
SATURDAY, MAY 19
HALSEY • LOGIC • ANDERSON .PAAK & THE FREE NATIONALS
ST. VINCENT • GROUPLOVE • BLEACHERS • MANCHESTER ORCHESTRA
TANK AND THE BANGAS • CASHMERE CAT • BHAMAS • NONAME • SAN HOLO
SON LITTLE • KASBO • SKIP MARLEY • GOLDFISH • R.LUM.R • MIKKY EKKO

KENDRICK LAMAR  
SUNDAY, MAY 20
ODESZA • SZA • FOSTER THE PEOPLE • AWOLNATION
SLIGHTLY STOOPID • LIL PUMP • THE STRUTS • GETTER • NF • GRETA VAN FLEET
WHEANT • ALICE MERTON • MAX • AJR • POOLSIDE • HIPPO CAMPUS • MELVV
ALEX LAHEY • WELSHLY ARMS • MANSIONAIR • SUNFLOWER BEAN • HOTEL GARUDA

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The Emory University Mental Health & Development Program is conducting research on the development of young adults with adjustment problems. The research is funded by the National Institute of Mental Health and the project director is Dr. Elaine Walker.

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- unusual perceptual experiences,
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Diagnostic psychological and physical assessments are conducted at no charge and volunteers are reimbursed for their time.

Call 404.727.7547 or email mentalhealth.research@emory.edu for more information.
Before we leave, she informs us of their plan to make moonshine in the prison — blueberry, blackberry, and butterscotch. They'll call it End of the Line Moonshine.

Friday night is the chicken feast. Laz and the other organizers have spent all afternoon setting up the sign-in tent, the license plate wall, and getting all the runners checked in. As everyone settles into their campsites, massive chicken thighs marinated Sam's Choice BBQ and Frank's Red Hot Sauce sizzle on the grill all night. When one comes off, another one goes on. Two industrial-sized cans of baked beans lean against a stump. All the regular Barkley attendees bring food, pot-luck style. At some point in the evening, a woman shows up to the feast with a birthday cake that says "Good Luck Morons."

Laz and Raw Dog's dark senses of humor define every aspect of the race — from its rules, entry fees, and traditions to the otherworldly camaraderie that exists among the generations of so-called "Barkers." Over 700 people applied to run the Barkley last year. Only 40 were chosen.

They've flown in with their friends and family from all over the world for this. Finland, Netherlands, Sweden, five from France, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Bolivia, Canada, New Caledonia. In its history, the race has brought in runners from India, South Africa, Mexico, Taiwan, Tajikistan, Japan, Ukraine, Lithuania, Russia, Hungary, the Antarctica Science Station, the list goes on—and all the US states except maybe North Dakota.

"They're hard to discourage; you can't know what it's like," Laz says.

Friday, the chosen runners each received a letter from Laz informing them of their selection. In the letter, he assures them their participation in the Barkley will "amount to nothing more than an extended period of unspeakable suffering, at the end of which you will ultimately find only failure and humiliation." He advises they can spend the months before the race training, but the time would be better spent putting their affairs in order. "Update your will, visit with friends and relatives, and otherwise tie up any and all loose ends. Should the unfortunate mental condition which led to your application for the 2016 Barkley Marathons improve, you might still escape by simply writing me and asking that your slot be passed along to some other unfortunate fool." He signs the letter, "May your god go with you, Laz."

Each year, the entry fee for the race is $1.60 and whatever random item Laz specifies; gold-toe dress socks, button-down shirts, a pack of Camel cigarettes. Last year it was flannel shirts, which is why he's always wearing a new one. This year the fee is "a cool T-shirt with foreign writing on it." Virgins, or first-time Barkley runners, always have to bring a license plate from their state or country to be added to the wall of plates. As the runners make their way to the sign-in tent, they all bring him the required shirt, the pocket change, and often another thoughtful and doting gift: rare coins from New Caledonia, a hand-painted portrait of Laz on the back of a license plate. A corporate bigwig from Nutella brings him a custom jar that says "Lazarus" instead of "Nutella." In return, Laz gives them their numbers, some vague course instructions, and a sheet of funny projections for how they'll do in the race.

As they sign in, I ask the runners why they've chosen to do the Barkley over other marathons. They all have one answer: Laz.

Kim, a 33-year-old first-time participant tells me, "It's all him." Steve, who has run the Barkley seven times, says, "You can't replace a guy like that. He's one of a kind. Laz is the Barkley."

Laz is one of the eight female runners this year. No woman has ever finished the race, though they continue to sign up each year. I ask one woman if she felt like it was possible for a female to finish. She says she doesn't think it is. I ask a lot of women the same question, and, to my astonishment, they all agree, citing the physical limitations of a woman's stride and build. Laz explains that the top male runners in the world finish the race with only minutes to spare. The most recent finisher — Jared Campbell in 2014 (no one finished in 2015) — came in just six minutes before the 60-hour cutoff. Laz says women just aren't fast enough. Yet still, against all odds, a handful of brave souls were willing to give it a shot.

When the runners are checking in, I notice Laz's hands. They are exquisite. His nails are perfectly manicured and the skin looks baby soft. It seems entirely incongruous with his otherworldly camaraderie that exists among the generations of so-called "Barkers." Over 700 people applied to run the Barkley last year. Only 40 were chosen.

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to cross the threshold of this gate, they should “make peace with your god” beforehand and ensure that all of their affairs are in order. He says that participating in this marathon will be the worst decision they had ever made, and he promised no one would tell a soul if they dropped out now.

“You’ve got 24 seconds to do the right thing and go home,” he says to the runners.

Then his tone moves from jocular to serious and heartfelt.

He lists several names of runners and friends of the Barkley who’ve passed away. “I want to read their names because they’re not here with us today, and they’re not going to be here with us again, but a little bit of them is out there.”

There is only a one minute left. Things fall to a hush. Runners become still. I hear one guy whisper to his wife, “This is so surreal.” Everyone’s eyes are on Laz, waiting for him to pull out a pack of smokes and light the starting cigarette. The irony of this scene is funny — all the lithe, non-smoking health nuts waiting with bated breath for this grungy dude to light up. Laz finally pulls out a cigarette, casually lights it, and the runners are off.

“There are less than 60 hours to go now,” Laz says with a smile.

The marathon itself consists of a 20-mile course through the woods. Participants are required to run five loops of that course, totaling 100 miles, alternating between clockwise and counterclockwise. According to Laz, it confuses the senses and ensures that runners never get a real handle on the course.

In my conversations with runners, this is what I learned about the Barkley experience. It taxes every aspect of their humanity. It touches their sense of teamwork, sense of humor, their compassion, and their ability to recover from deficits big and small. It’s far more than a physical challenge. They’re deciding about navigation continually; they have to know where they are at all times. When the runners arrive in Frozen Head, none of them know what’s out there. They can’t. There are things there that you won’t find anywhere else. Every part of them is required, without error — and if they make an error, it’s compounded quickly. Most trails and ultra-marathons have aid stations, cut-off times, and trail markers, so that if you train properly, you can do it. But not the Barkley. No amount of training can prepare the runners for it.

There’s a deep kernel in our shared human experience here. If you think about it, moving and walking is the very first thing we do. Aside from maybe digestion and involuntary activities, running, hiking and walking is what we do best. Two-time finisher Jared Campbell said that on the Barkley course, he felt stripped down to his elemental pieces, a sentiment that is echoed in various forms by many runners. At some point, every one of them finds themselves alone in the dark. They’ve got somewhere between 12 and 40 hours before they see another person, and they’re deeply fatigued while dealing with pain, fear, and joy. No matter how trained a runner is, there’s a devil on their shoulder saying, “This is for the birds.” The constant stream of self-doubt is loud in their heads. One must make the decision to go on every second of every hour. According to one runner, when you’re out on the course, there’s nothing else: All you can focus on is moving forward.

“There’s a lot of self-discovery out here, whether you’re running or not,” one runner said.

“What I thought was enough, wasn’t enough,” said a runner who came back after 16 hours on the course, unable to finish even the first of five loops.

As runners trickle in over the course of the next 24 hours, they bring their book pages to Laz and reluctantly decide to go out again. By the second loop, half the runners have given up. Only four of the eight women complete the first loop. Jen-nilynn Eaten, a 29-year-old from Salt Lake City, is the only woman among the seven runners who attempt a third loop. She and three other runners don’t make it, though. The only three runners who complete the third loop are first-timer Gary Robbins, 39, local boy John Kelly, 31, and Jared Campbell, 36, who finished the Barkley in 2012 and 2014.

By Monday morning, two days after they started, two runners, Kelly and Campbell, have come in from the fourth loop and set out on the fifth and final loop. The campsite crew is waiting on John Kelly — who is so local one of the mountains is named after his family — to come in from the fourth loop. Time is dwindling now. When they finally see him, he has around 12 minutes to come in and turn around and get back out on the trail.
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Any longer than that, and completing the fifth loop will be impossible. He’s barely walking. He has a walking stick in his right hand, another stick is dragging from his left wrist. His face is as white as paper, expressionless, gone. Everyone starts yelling and shouting about the time. He rests his body on the grimy yellow gate, and it’s clear he is not going to go back out on the trail. His crew starts gathering food. His wife is alert. She’s trying to help turn him around emotionally, trying to bring his spirits up. He can’t eat. They hold a bagel with cream cheese up to his mouth, but he won’t eat it.

“I need to sleep,” he says in a weak mumble. “I want to go to sleep. I should’ve slept when I was on the last loop.”

Everyone responds with encouragement, telling him he can sleep soon, but he needs to get his number first. He needs to at least start the fifth loop, even if he doesn’t finish. “You can sleep right there,” someone there, pointing at the ground just beyond the gate.

Laz stares at John’s vacant eyes and gives him the number purposefully. John purposefully takes it, and slowly walks around yellow gate. He saunters about 100 yards up the hill and starts circling around a spot on the ground like a dog. He lays down and goes to sleep.

Everyone watches him sleep. Laz walks away, saying nothing.

“Well call that the Upper Kelly Campsite,” says a spectator who finished the race a few years back. People laugh and go back to what they were doing.

John stands up after about an hour, dry-heaves, walks straight up Bird Mountain, and retrieves his final book page. My friend Tamara, who has been taking photographs the whole weekend, goes off in search of Laz to ask him a question. When she finds him, he’s sitting in the back of his U-Haul. His eyes are teary and bloodshot. He looks like he’s crying. She asks him if he’s OK.

“We just experienced someone giving everything they’ve got,” he says. His voice is quivering. “I’m sorry. I’ve got to compose myself.”

She realizes this the first time she’s seen the persona of Laz fall to the wayside. This is Gary now. Laz has left. But the moment, brief as it is, is too vulnerable, too real. Immediately, he makes some sort of joke. Just like that, Laz punches through. He’s back. Gary’s gone.

Around the 55-hour mark, Gary Robbins hitchhikes back into camp. The sounds of “Taps” playing on the bugle echoes through the campsite.

“For 55 hours I gave myself to the Barkley, heart, soul, mind and body,” Gary wrote on his blog. “I was all in. Nothing else in the entire world mattered for three full days, and I loved it. I did not reach the finish line of the Barkley Marathons but I got pretty damn close. As I mentioned leading into the race I knew it would challenge me in new and unforeseen ways and boy o boy did it ever. During the race I feel like I unlocked a door in my mind that led to a room I’d never entered before and in that room existed a near perfect version of myself, devoid of ego, free of judgement, removed from life’s minutia, steadfast in purpose, distracted by nothing, heart wide open with a complete inability to overreact to any obstacle that stood in my way. I wish I could be that person more often.”

Late Monday night with only minutes to spare before the 60-hour cutoff, Jared Campbell drags his body around the bend and places his hand on the yellow gate, becoming the only person to finish the Barkley three times. He clocks in at 59 hours and 30 minutes.

I visit Gary at his home several weeks after the Barkley. I want to know what he’s like when the race is over, when he’s not having to play the part of Laz. He lives out in the country, amid miles of rolling green hills, in a gorgeous home he built himself. He designed a lodging room on the second floor filled with beds specifically to house runners. His two dogs, Little and Big, roam freely around the property. After a back injury, he picked up dry stone masonry in lieu of other, more boring methods of physical therapy and rehabilitation. He built all the stone walls and steps on the property himself.

Gary and Sandra invite me inside. They are warm and open. Sandra invites me to sit on the couch, as she pulls out dozens of photo albums. Gary sits in a recliner in the living room as we thumb through decades worth of pictures: marathons, former homes, the children when they were little. One photo shows the family standing in front of Beach Hall Mansion, a dilapidated plantation house they lived in for a while. Sandra says there was no running water or heat. ‘They made do, Sandra says fondly. Gary says he used to pick up their kids’ toys from the road. He remembers a one-armed Skeleton being a particularly great find. In the photos, the young family looks bright and happy. Today, the couple flirts and jokes around in a way I imagine isn’t too different from when they were in their 20s. Sandra tells me about Gary’s love of jigsaw puzzles and his decades coaching Little League Baseball. Expecting a sarcastic response, I ask him what he thinks of the kids these days.

“People badmouth kids,” he says, “but today’s kids are great.

After a few hours of combing through their past, Gary gets up to make us his “famous” cheeseburgers. He uses Serrano peppers and his secret ingredient: curry powder. But before he starts cooking, he brings out a stack of books. They’re books he’s written about his relationship with his dog, Big. Standing at the kitchen counter, he tells me the story of how he found Big in the woods near his house. The dog had been shot and was waiting to die. Gary took him in and named him back to health. He says it was one of the most profound experiences for him, and since then, he’s chronicled his days with Big in the four-part book series, called “Big Dog Diaries.”

As we’re sitting down to eat, I finally get to ask the question I’ve been waiting to ask this entire time. What’s the story behind the name Lazarus Lake? I’m expecting some staunch biblical reference that points to the story of the rich man and the beggar Lazarus, or Lazarus of the Four Days. As it turns out, it’s just the name of someone who accidentally e-mailed some photo to him. Some time after he’d adopted the name, he was running through a small town and found the name again in a phone book. After some research, he discovered a real guy named Lazarus Lake. He was a farmer who lived in Boliver, Tennessee. He was born in 1922 and died in 2009 at the age of 87.

Before I leave Gary and Sandra’s house, I take one last look at the photo of Laz in the big white house: making something out of nothing. I think of all the kids he’s coached in Little League, and the runners who’ve pushed themselves to do amazing, impossible things.

While I’m really not one for cheesy endings, I simply can’t help but wonder, as I’m pulling out of their driveway, if the people who can make something out of nothing are the ones who become legends.

Perhaps the reason we seek their approval, their validation, want to be near them, taken under their wing, is because maybe, just maybe, they’ll make something out of us, too.
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act like ‘who even says black/white,’ fine. But that’s just not the reality we live in.

OffCascade: I feel like the writer and I agree with him ... I can’t wait to read the books about what happened to Chocolate City Atlanta. Very sad that we gave up our city like this ... The black Democrat bourgeoisie have sold out black people again, as usual, choosing wealthy developers over the poor and working class people.

Dillpickles007: I thought the article was well written, but as a white millennial in-town living Atlantan, I don’t really know how to feel about the sentiments it expresses.

I’m not trying to push black people out of the city, but I’m aware that I’m right in the middle of the gentrification wave the author is talking about. I don’t want to live up near the Big Chicken, but I also feel for old black couples getting priced out of the Grant Park home they’ve lived in for half their lives.

Tyler Parks: Y’all didn’t give up your city, just drive around any black neighborhood in Atlanta and see why anyone with money has fled, almost all local businesses are boarded up or the cashier is behind a bulletproof barrier that can withstand a grenade. White people didn’t do this like the article is suggesting ... Is the writer seriously upset that money is being dumped into Vine City and the West End? Is he seriously sad that ghettos are being rejuvenated? Has this writer ever actually lived in either of these hoods?

Mikegrier007: As a native Atlantan (Candler Road & SWATS) I fully get this and have had the same anxiety. The places such as Grady homes, Grant Park and Candler Park used to belong to older AA families. They push those people out and add high priced housing to run the people who were born there out.

StableChaos: [CL’s cover story] is racist garbage. Flip the races and imagine this was written in the 1970s by a white guy worried about Atlanta becoming more black. You’d call him a white supremacist and swear he was in the Klan.

Ryan Campbell: Beautifully written article that nails the problem with this year’s mayoral race.

Bmandoh: The point is that [black people] are poor because they’ve been second-class citizens up until 60-ish years ago and that means not being able to accumulate the kind of wealth that allows them to improve their communities. So white folks come back around, ‘revitalize’ an area, say ‘look at all we’ve done here,’ then shift the blame to the poor black communities for not investing in themselves with money they don’t have. ... And it’s not that they don’t want their communities to improve or be better, they just don’t want it to come at the expense of their displacement. Because that just perpetuates the cycle of poverty that they struggle to break out of.

Donald Schneider: I don’t see any impending erasure with the tired and garbage mumble rap scene and Tyler Perry’s direct-to-DVD bargain bin movies being churned out ad nauseamz. Whoever wrote this garbage needs to stay in whatever town they moved to.

Hailsouthern: Whenever I see comments that stoke division along racial lines, I used to get upset. But now I just know you’re a paid Russian shill. Go suck puny Putin’s pitiful peepee and leave our country alone.

Amanda Michael: The most genuine and real article I’ve read in a long time!

Oydave: What a load. There is so much learned knowledge that is totally wrong that I don’t know where to start.

Lindsay Pingel: Can [one] of you please get me a copy of this issue and mail it to me?!

Tomas Nosal: Is Donald Glover really running for mayor of Atlanta? 31

Comments have been edited for space and clarity.
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ATL'S MOTORCYCLE COMMUNITY UNITING FOR ONE CAUSE The baddest bikers in town are asking the community to help the less fortunate for the holidays. The Feeding Families for Christmas Food Drive, the G-U-Cycle Drive, Kickstand Promotions, and Westside Rydaz MC-ATL are asking for canned goods, bottled water, and new bicycles. Free. 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Sat. Dec. 16. 1085 Howell Mill Road N.W. 404-577-6155. www.nelsonmullins.com.

UGLY SWEATER CRAWL Several Buckhead bars are getting ugly once again with this bar crawl. Drink giveaways abound and those who make it to the last bar will get a commemorative T-shirt. Participating bars are Hangovers Buckhead, Lost Dog Tavern, and Kramer's Buckhead Atlanta. $18-$21. 5-11 p.m. Sat. Dec. 16. Buckhead Saloon, 3227 Roswell Road N.E. 404-963-7439. www.atlantabeerfestivals.com.

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PREACHER LAWSON After moving more than 20 times while growing up, Lawson dubbed laughter the universal language of all the places he'd lived. He began his comedy career in Orlando, Florida, and has been speaking that language ever since. $20. 8 p.m. Tues., Dec. 12. The Punchline, 3652 Roswell Road. 404-252-5233. www.punchline.com.

THEATER/OPERA


CHRISTMAS AT PEMBERLEY In a sequel to Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice, Christmas at Pemberley shares the experiences of the holidays, where shy Mary has become fond of an intellectual man. She must become her own heroine. $22-$30. 7:30 p.m. Wed.-Thurs., Dec. 6-7. Theatrical Outfit, 84 Luckie St. 678-528-2200. www.theatricaloutfit.com.

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A modern relic

The elegant new Reynoldstown spot harkens back to the shadowy social clubs of yesteryear.

BY ANGELA HANSBERGER

It's Friday evening in Atlanta. After an hour-long commute down I-75, the sun setting in the distance, I arrive at Reynolds' newest hotspot: Golden Eagle. Sitting there in the crepuscular light, it's a damn oasis. A friend who visited earlier said he wasn't sure what the place was going for. For me, it was immediately clear: a return to my roots, to a place that gives me that familiar they-don't-make-'em-like-they-used-to feeling.

Located inside the historic railroad depot that once housed H. Harper Station, Golden Eagle shares space with Muchacho, a daytime hideaway slinging tacos and coffee on an umbrella-filled outdoor patio out front. Entering through the bright green side door at night, you'll find a completely different vibe, reminiscent of the shadowy, wood-paneled social clubs of the rust belt; those Moose Lodges, American Legions, and Eagle Clubs in chugging steel and coal towns, where third-shifters once sought a dark escape to drink and dine in mystical camaraderie. In fact, owner Michael Lennox — who also owns Ladybird Grove and Mess Hall — created the watering hole in homage to his grandparents and the places they dined in their hometown of Pittsburgh. The result is something like acts one and three of The Deer Hunter, but with more art deco influence.

Though the initial exterior renovations upset some neighbors, designer Elizabeth Ingram (Marcel, Beetlecat, Superica Buckhead) has succeeded in creating a warm, clubby atmosphere that carries the retro concept and quenches the soul. The original brick is painted dark brown. Plaid carpeting covers the floor and green Velvet curtains drape from the ceiling. A sexy lounge area features crushed velvet seating, flickering candlelight, and eagle-topped golden mirrors. A beautiful wooden cabinet holds a reel-to-reel tape player streaming music. There is even a vintage metal electric heater — the same kind my own grandparents had in their breakfast room.

Culinary director Taria Camerino (Sugar Coated Radical, Ford Fry Restaurants) oversees a menu of throwbacks from yesteryear, like buttery garlic knots showered in Parmesan ($3.95) and grilled branzino for two ($29.95) with crispy artichokes and hearts of palm. A trio of oysters ($9.95) warmed with uni butter and topped with breadcrumbs, is broiled until brown and bubbly. A touch of the South comes by way of crispy shaved okra ($5.95) tossed in zesty lime salt.

Inside the fancy menu booklet, which matches the carpet's plaid, Golden Eagle is described as a Diner's Club and Sunken Garden. Shatteringly crisp with just enough kitsch, crab Rangoon ($4.95) is the right snack to pair with sips of a Mai Tai or Blue Hawaiian. Griddled sweetbreads ($10.95) are decent and plump but could use a marinade for more flavor and tenderness. Oft-overlooked classic pepper steak, or tavern steak au poivre ($19.95), fits seamlessly here. A generous portion of culotte (sirloin cap) sliced into thick slivers is bathed in a sauce of spiked cream, pan drippings, and pepper with a hearty stack of tempura-fried onion rings. Add a side of cheesy golden au gratin potatoes ($7.95) for a classic plate of indulgence.

The bar is Golden Eagle's focal point. Maitre d' William Bubier, formerly of Kimball House, directs guests to the grand U-shaped wooden edifice, backlit and surrounded by comfy leather counter stools. An antique cash register sits on the art deco back bar. Golden reading lamps are a lovely touch. Cushy teal fabric pads the knees of those in dresses — and many diners dress the part.

Bar manager Jeff Stockton (Empire State South) has created a cocktail program to match both the restaurant's design and the era by which it's inspired. "I wanted some fun tiki drinks, especially a blue drink," he says. "I wanted some approachable classics to balance more obscure classics." His beautifully illustrated menu of signatures ($11.95) and classics ($9.95-$10.95) is reminiscent of an old-school roadside diner's placemat of cocktails.

Riffs on an Old Pal, Vesper, and Sidecar are thoughtful and carefully balanced. Stockton's Birds of a Feather stirs together mezcal, cachaça, Luxardo bitters, Vermouth, violet, and a spritz of lime for a sort of dessert daquiri with floral aromas. Run Devil Run expertly mixes tequila and scotch — no, really. "I am always just trying to find a balance on the palate," Stockton explains, noting how the acid and grass of the tequila and the peat and butter of the Scotch come together. "The nuttiness of both orgeat and cacao played with the citrus and the spice of the bitters on top to tie it all together. People are constantly surprised by the flavor profile and even non-scotch or non-tequila drinkers can appreciate it."

The wine list is carefully curated with both Old and New World varietals. A glass of silky Domaine du Seminaire Cotes du Rhone, with rocky tannins and dark berry fruits, pairs well with the smoked bone marrow accompanying steak tartare ($14.95). Champagne is a fitting end to an evening here, and Laurent Perrier La Cuvee Brut is available by the half bottle ($40). With a soft mousse, high acidity, loads of citrus, and slight toastiness, it's as delicate and elegant as Camerino's chocolate truffle dessert ($8.95). Hibiscus poached pears perch on a circle of dense chocolate. Gold flecks sparkle atop.

Golden Eagle adds a bit more elegance than the scruffily beautiful rust belt haunts I remember, but its ability to harken back to eras past without getting hokey is admirable. Here, Lennox has blended the old with a bit of the new, and will no doubt attract neighborhood regulars and destination drinkers alike. As I left, I found myself humming Frankie Valli and smiling with nostalgia.
Let them eat brunch
What do peach mimosas, tofu scrambles, and entitled ambivalence have in common?

Just like any major city’s brunch scene, Atlanta brunching mostly means looking the part.

BY JILL IS BLACK

I’m a 30-year-old vegan with a thriving Instagram account, a mostly ironic wardrobe, and a job that I can’t really explain without the words, “Well, OK. Let me see how I want to say this...” So, of course, I brunch. I brunch a lot. In Atlanta, that means a quick Google search for who has the most outrageously distant interpretation of traditionally Southern food or the best options for parking or the greatest representation for my specific genre of being a person.

Once my goal is decided upon, I sit among friends who look like me or who like what I like or who charge their credit cards for the same concert tickets that I charge my credit cards for. We’re at an overpriced café (we would’ve preferred the outdoor seating area, of course, but that would’ve been an extra 30 minutes, and someone has to leave at 1:30) at a too-small table that we already waited 45 minutes for, and we’re pretending that the world isn’t a steaming vat of crowded corruption — with a dash of hope for flavor. Also, we’re pretending that we don’t have a role in keeping it that way.

You see, we take breaks from empathy, temporarily withdraw our names from the revolution guest list and add them to the waiting list instead, and sit around in entitled ambivalence at brunch. We consider the white peach mimosa and ask if anyone’s tried the Bloody Mary as we affirm each other’s quiet self-importance and community-approved escapism. When the food comes out (sage biscuits under shiitake mushroom gravy, tofu scrambles with sides of steamed kale, or maybe buckwheat pancakes topped with seasonal fruit compote) we lean over and ask, “Oooh, did you get ‘the thing’? I totally should’ve gotten ‘the thing,’ but I got this other thing that I sometimes get, but really, I always want ‘the thing.’ Do you think it’s too late for me to order ‘the thing’? No, no. Actually, I’m fine. This is good. No, seriously. This is fine.”

Just like any major city’s brunch scene, Atlanta brunching mostly means looking the part. I like to switch it up between “intentionally disheveled former farmer,” “I care about social issues but in a cute way,” and “I was up all night being a supportive friend and I had a little trouble parking, but look at these cool sunglasses I found somewhere.” It truly depends on the season, and every subculture has its own way of getting it done. Then you compete with the table next to you by being trendier or more contrived, and perhaps by talking louder than them as they generically critique Trump or complain about their nonprofit jobs and how much work they have to do but like, it’s rewarding to be somewhere so necessary, you know? And so it’s fine. No, seriously. It’s fine.

Whatever you do, the surefire way to win at brunching is to essentially ignore the traces of poverty around you by sighing and pointing out gentrification, but also by praising its cruel progress through your very presence in its spread. You can also blame other people for everything that bothers you by making lazy and dangerous generalizations as you wait for your extra side of Sriracha syrup. If those two don’t work — and they should — you can always fail to remember for a bit that one or more of your overly politicized identities could get you killed later on that afternoon. Strangely, pretending to be a modern, urban adult protects you from nothing except a necessary desperation for change and true authenticity.

But brunch is what we do, OK? And perpetually exhausted millennials seem to believe we deserve it. We deserve to see our friends at the end of a busy week spent pretending to do all that we can to right the wrongs of other people. We deserve to ask an underpaid server to help us move extra chairs to our table because we have three other people coming, so like ... yeah, now. We deserve a life that shouldn’t even exist in a city that believes it can thrive while thousands suffer. We deserve to dress up in identity costumes and eat expensive “alternative” food and play make-believe. Mostly, we deserve to not have what we enjoy questioned. Because after all, we’re doing our very best, right? No, seriously. This is fine.
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Room for conversation
Downtown’s Ébrik Coffee Room started as a business but became a community

BY ADJOA DANSO

One day, a regular at Ébrik Coffee Room walked in and slapped a magnet onto the pastry case. It read, “Syrians Welcome Here.”

“What do you think?” he asked co-owner Abbas Arman. “Sorry, am I putting you in hot water?” At the time, the Syrian refugee crisis was making headlines domestically and internationally. Abbas hesitated for only a moment. Two years later, the magnet remains.

Ébrik (or ıbrık, pronounced ay-BREEK) is the Arabic word for a traditional Turkish coffee pot — small with a long handle, often made of copper. Since Abbas and his two business partners opened on Park Place in February 2014, their Downtown coffee shop has become known for its social consciousness, sense of community, and all-around comfortable vibes. I fell in love with Ébrik during my first semester as a Georgia State grad student and instantly felt welcomed. Later, as an editor at Creative Loafing, I was grateful it remained just a short walk away.

The shop is one of the few places that illustrates how closely connected GSU and Downtown are. At Ébrik, students stand in line with university staff, police officers, construction crews, local office workers, and people who just need a place to hang out for a bit. “We didn’t understand that we would become part of a community,” Abbas says, “and even create our own kind of community.”

A SCAD graduate designed the original Ébrik’s cozy interior. Deep navy coated the walls. Reclaimed wood from West End’s LifeCycle covered the bar. Abbas says a Yelp reviewer described the space as “like your cousin’s loft.” He thinks the description is accurate. “It’s trendy and industrial and whatnot,” he says, “but it’s your cousin’s. Like, you’re home.”

Abbas and his brother, Ibrahim, also a member of the Ébrik team, grew up in Chicago with Palestinian parents. Abbas studied biology at Northeastern University but says he never did anything with his degree; instead, an entrepreneurial spirit led him to gigs like refurbishing electronics. After his family relocated to Atlanta, he moved here to be closer to them. The idea for Ébrik came when his sister, a student at GSU, mentioned that Downtown lacked independent coffee shops. Abbas asked around but says investors told him no one in the neighborhood would be interested in $4.50 cups of coffee or healthy food options. “They would try to patch it up with nice words: ‘Oh, the demographics are kind of different,’” Abbas says. “You know exactly what they’re talking about.” In this way, Ébrik’s existence is an act of defiance in itself.

The shop’s signature chalkboard changes regularly and has featured the words of artists and activists like Linda Sarsour, Rumi, Robin Williams, and Dick Gregory. An adjacent bulletin board holds signs that read, “Stop profiling Muslims” and “Palestinian Human Rights” alongside thank you cards from loyal customers and flyers for local social movements. Over the past year, Ébrik has become a safe haven for those on the fringes of Trump’s America. Everyone is welcome to join in on the fellowship, sipping craft brews, traditional Turkish coffee, Cuban espresso, and Persian tea. Air-roasted beans come from Land of A Thousand Hills and sandwiches and hummus are boxed in-house. Decatur’s Ratio Bakeshop provides cinnamon rolls, croissants, and other baked goods.

Many Ébrik employees began as customers. When hiring, Abbas looks for people who will maintain the shop’s warm and welcoming atmosphere. A second language is a plus; employees speak Arabic, Vietnamese, Portuguese, Spanish, and Somali, respectively. “I think we’ve all kind of lived in different spaces,” Abbas says. “When you speak another language, you have another culture in your life ... and that’s what helps us connect with each other and with others.”

Manager Julie Tran, a third-year journalism student at Georgia State, joined the Ébrik family the summer after she graduated from high school. It was her first real job, and she didn’t know anything about coffee. During the interview, Abbas asked her about a negative experience that she turned into a positive. Tran told him about evacuating New Orleans at 8 years-old because of Hurricane Katrina, and how writing about it inspired her to pursue journalism. “[She] went from this teenager right out of high school that didn’t really have much to talk about to somebody that had this life-changing experience,” Abbas says, referring to the interview’s turning point.

The value of Tran’s experience came back in an unexpected way one night in September, when a woman fleeing Hurricane Irma made her way into Ébrik. She stayed for hours until closing. “You could tell in her eyes that she was scared,” Tran recalls. “She didn’t know what to do.” So Tran and another employee lent the woman a charger for her dying phone, gave her their remaining pastries for free, and helped her look for an AirBnb.

That human connection, and her ability to pay it forward in someone’s time of need, touched Tran. When she told friends about the experience, one suggested she create a storytelling platform on social media, similar to Brandon Stanton’s Humans of New York. So Tran began posting portraits of Ébrik’s baristas and customers on the new @peopleofebrik Instagram account, sharing bits of info about who they are in the captions, from favorite beverages to personal mottos. “The photos are great, but it’s more [about] knowing people on a personal level,” she says.

The team’s passion for human connection is paying off. This past spring, Ébrik opened a second location on East College Avenue in Decatur, beside Agnes Scott’s campus. Next, they’ll debut a third in Sandy Springs. Abbas is mum on a potential opening date, but he’s confident that he and his team can continue to replicate the vibe that sets them apart.

In October, the original Ébrik moved two doors down into a spacious corner spot that once housed a beauty school. The new Downtown space, at 22 Park Place S.E., adds a serious amount of square footage — and even a second story — but it’s still the same old Ébrik.

“Hello! How you doin’?” Ibrahim calls from behind the wood-paneled bar as I walk in for the first time. The magnet is still there. So is the chalkboard; it simply reads, “grateful.” Hip-hop tunes mingle with the whirl of the espresso machine. I make my way past chattering students to a seat upstairs. It feels like home.
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All the Bob Dylans the world has known, perhaps the most persecuted was the proselytizing Dylan of "the Gospel years." From 1979 to 1981, Dylan, the prophet of the '60s, not only turned to Jesus Christ for his inspiration, he turned away from his own compositions, which inspired so many of his followers.

Slow Train Coming, released in 1979, reflected his newfound faith. Recorded with famed producer Jerry Wexler, it was a masterpiece. Eager to spread the Word, Dylan took his new band on the road. And for all the polish of the material on Slow Train Coming, Dylan stripped them of their sheen and let the fire-and-brimstone fly.

In Knoxville, Tennessee, Dylan was a changed man. Electric. Captivating. Dylan played the bulk of Slow Train Coming with a funkiness and zeal not found in the studio recordings. The core group of "Bible Belt" session players proved to be what Dylan needed to extol the fire burning in his soul.

Dylan introduced more songs on tour making his mission clear. "Solid Rock," "Saved," and "Pressing On," all later released on Saved, were ferocious in attack. Dylan spitting out lyrics as if his soul depended on it. By Shot Of Love, the songs were devotional, but written with the same sardonic wit and wisdom of his past. Shot Of Love detailed the intricacies of life on the straight and narrow. It also found Dylan facing off detractors with vehemence.

With a world tour supporting Shot Of Love, Dylan played Merriweather Post Pavilion in Columbia, Maryland. Dylan and band steamrolled into a bludgeoning version of "Gotta Serve Somebody," followed by "I Believe In You." Then, when seemingly familiar, organ lines began to be played, and the guitars joined in, Dylan spewed out the words, "Once upon a time you dressed so fine, threw the bums a dime in your prime didn't you?" The unexpectedness of the familiar lyrics forced the audience to its feet. Dylan's delivery of a vengeful "Like a Rolling Stone" affirmed what many hoped to witness: Bob Dylan was back!

Volume 13 in Dylan's "Bootleg Series," Trouble No More, focuses on this contentious period. The eight-CD, one-DVD deluxe edition is astounding. In addition to the prerequisite outtakes and alternate versions from various rehearsals and the late '79/early '80 tour for Slow Train Coming, to a night at London's Earls Court during the '81 tour, Trouble No More righteously captures the sound and fury.

Many songs appear for the first time. "You Changed My Life" and "Thief on the Cross" are gritty gospel songs at their best — and Dylan is unapologetic in the least. "The Gospel years" were a time to "shake the dust off of your feet" and not look back. To do so now offers insight into a compelling period of Dylan's career. Dylan continues to follow his muse, always growing in the process.

Read Tony Paris' weekly High Frequencies column at www.creativeloafing.com.
For nearly four decades, Gary Numan has remained a vital fixture in the evolution of British new wave and electronic music. Beginning with the U.K. success of Tubeway Army’s 1979 single “Are ‘Friends’ Electric?” and finding worldwide acclaim with “Cars” from his ’79 solo album The Pleasure Principle, Numan has chased his synthetic muse through an ever-changing landscape of technological change reinventing his style and image as the world changed around him. With his latest record, Savage (Songs from a Broken World), released in September via BMG, Numan has reinvented his enigmatic persona for the modern era by penning a dystopian tale set in a world ravaged by climate change. Before embarking on an upcoming North American Tour, Numan took a few minutes to talk about the new album, finding inspiration in President Donald Trump’s nefarious ways, and the changing face of electronic music.

What inspired you to write this tale about Global Warming and mankind’s survival?

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What inspired you to write this tale about Global Warming and mankind’s survival?

Around November of 2015, I started writing songs based around a science fiction novel that I was working on. I knew that I wanted to do a fantasy story on a desert planet, but I hadn’t decided on the theme yet. Later on, as I started looking for ideas to get me going, Donald Trump arrived. He started saying all these things about climate change being a hoax, and it suddenly made the global warming idea far more relevant than I had imagined before. The more I saw, the more I was inspired to write, and eventually the two ideas were sealed together.

Dystopian nightmares seem to be a theme across a lot of your records. What draws you to these kinds of stories?

It’s just something that I’ve always been into. I’m not sure that I have any great skill for writing songs that would be uplifting or happy. The happiest tune I’ve ever written was probably “Cars,” and lyrically that’s hardly a cheerful song either. Whatever musical skills I have, they seem lend themselves to that kind of music and those subjects.

So, we shouldn’t hold our breath for a Gary Numan utopian fantasy?

I think whatever I would turn out that was positive would be rubbish. [Laughs] When I listen to music that’s happy and bouncy, it just doesn’t touch me in the same way.

Are you planning on releasing the book you mentioned?

Well, the book is very much a work in progress still. Turning parts of the story into songs on the album really helped me to solidify structure of the book; so the novel is now far more advanced. But I’m really keen on getting back to work on the book — that’s my plan after this next touring cycle is done.

What kind of synthesizers did you use on the album? Do you still use any of the older analog synths with which people associate your music?

I actually don’t use any analogue gear anymore. The sounds on Savage are all very cutting edge, nearly all of the synths are done with digital software. We wanted a more virtual sound, so we used only the latest technology.

Being someone who helped bring the genre into the mainstream, what is your take on modern electronic music?

I don’t know much about current electronic music, to be honest. Funny enough, when Savage came out, Billboard banned me from the electronic charts. So if someone like me can’t make it on the electronic charts, than what is considered electronic these days? The industry seems to think if you’re not EDM or dance music that you’re not really electronic, and I find that staggering.

What can audiences expect to see on your upcoming tour?

Everything, even the older tunes, sounds like they’re from the world of the new album. We’ll play a few old songs, but they’re reproduced to fit with the rest of the new material. It’s quite heavy and contemporary — if anyone’s expecting a night of nostalgia, they just might be disappointed.
Hip-hop yoga
How one woman uses music to improve class diversity

BY JEWEL WICKER

I love yoga and I love rap, but I’m not sure the two should go together.

There are plenty of people who disagree, though. To get a better understanding of what the classes are like, I reached out to Jaimee Ratliff, a black woman who noticed she was commonly the only person of color in her yoga classes. She figured out a clever way to increase diversity using music. “It was an uncomfortable experience always being a token black girl in the class,” Ratliff says.

“After I got through with teacher training I wanted to find a way to introduce the classes to people of color and share what I was experiencing mentally, physically, and emotionally. Most of my classes are where people of color are now the majority.”

Ratliff took up yoga after being robbed at gunpoint in Columbia in 2015 as a means of coping with PTSD and anxiety. In many ways our stories are similar. I first started taking yoga for the same reasons after being involved in a traumatic car accident, but it wasn’t until I found the right instructor that the practice became beneficial for me.

Still, like Ratliff, I find that there are few people of color in my yoga classes.

“There’s a stigma that we don’t really deal with mental illness,” she says, noting that the wellness industry tends to feature imagery of white people, instead of people of color. “You would think we don’t take care of ourselves [based on stereotypes].”

I loved the idea of this but I still wasn’t sold on the idea of getting into Downward Dog as Future yells, “My little brother keep a stick on the seat, he gone brrt brrt brrt till your heart stop beating.” It knocks in my car, but I’m not sure a yoga mat is the place for that type of turn-up.

Search “Trap Yoga Atlanta” on Eventbrite and you’ll see that Ratliff is far from alone in her efforts to bring yoga to a more diverse group. California-based Yoga Bae has hosted a few Trap Yoga classes, and they deliver exactly what the title suggests: a blend of turn-up and relaxation. Ratliff wants to stand apart from yoga classes that play trap music, though.

The soundtrack for Hip-Hop Yoga features hip-hop music, yes, but you’re more likely to hear inspiring and uplifting songs, such as T.I.’s “Live Your Life” than Crime Mob’s “Knuck If You Buck” in one of her classes.

“I try not to play the [most] ratchet music out there,” she says. “I try to keep in mind that this is a yoga class. Even if it’s the most popular songs, there are some songs that I won’t play because of the lyrics.”

This year alone Ratliff has hosted a series of pop-up classes throughout metro Atlanta, in addition to classes at City Winery and Top Golf. She hasn’t released the schedule for 2018 yet, but if you’re interested I’d suggest signing up for her email list at jaimeeratliff.com/schedule. Classes tend to sell out soon after she announces them.

Read Jewel Wicker’s weekly Atlanta Untrapped column at www.creativeloafing.com.
SOUNDBOARD


Fri., Dec. 8

PLS PL5, HANK AND CUPCAKES, ELIJAH JONES. $8. 9 p.m. 529. www.529atlanta.com.
THE SUNDOGS CELEBRATE THE MUSIC OF TOM PETTY. $20. 8:30 p.m. Smith’s Olde Bar. www.smithsoldebar.com.

Sat., Dec. 9

CINEMECHANICA. $8. 9 p.m. 529. www.529atlanta.com.
TRANS-SIBERIAN ORCHESTRA. $48.50-$78.50. 3 & 8 p.m. Infinite Energy Center. www.infiniteenergyarenaduluth.com.

Sun., Dec. 10

JON MCCLAUGHLIN. $25. 6 & 8:30 p.m. Eddie’s Attic. www.eddiesattic.com.

Mon., Dec. 11

SHEPHERDS, KARAOKE. 9 p.m. Smith’s Olde Bar. www.smithsoldebar.com.
GARY NUMAN, ME NOT YOU. $25. 7:30 p.m. Masquerade. www.masq.com.

Tues., Dec. 12

FLATLAND CAVALRY. $15. 7 p.m. Eddie’s Attic. www.eddiesattic.com.
PRAIRIE, PEOPLE LIKE YOU. $10. 7 p.m. Masquerade. www.masq.com.

Wed., Dec. 13

PATTERSON HODD. $25. 7:15 p.m. 6 & 9 p.m. Eddie’s Attic. www.eddiesattic.com.

Sat., Dec. 16


Sun., Dec. 17

KNICKERS. $10. 6 p.m. Eddie’s Attic. www.eddiesattic.com.

Mon., Dec. 18


Tues., Dec. 19

NUMBER TWELVE LOOKS LIKE YOU, ROLO TOMASSI. $15. 7 p.m. Masquerade. www.masq.com.
DROWNED HOUNDS, WILLES, JACKHAGON. $9-$10. 7 p.m. Smith’s Olde Bar. www.smithsoldebar.com.

Wed., Dec. 20

JIM CRAVITY. $15. 7 p.m. Smith’s Olde Bar. www.smithsoldebar.com.

Thurs., Dec. 21

CHEN, AL LOVER, WAXPAPER. 9 p.m. 529. www.529atlanta.com.
LARKIN POE, CICADA RHYTHM. $15. 7 p.m. Terminal West. www.terminalwestatl.com.

View more concert listings online at clatl.com/events.
SOUND BOARD


Fri., Dec. 22


ILLUSTRATE, DR. CONSPIRACY + MORE. $8-$10. 9 p.m. 529. www.529atlanta.com. 404-228-6769.


Sat., Dec. 23


Sun., Dec. 24

Mon., Dec. 25
JUDY GOLD. $35-$42.8 p.m. City Winery. www.citywinery.com. 404-946-3791.

Tues., Dec. 26

KILo ALi. $15-$25. 8 p.m. Smith’s Olde Bar. www.smithsoldebar.com. 404-946-3791.


Fri., Dec. 29
PYLON REENACTMENT SOCIETY. $10-$12. 9 p.m. 529. www.529atlanta.com. 404-228-6769.


Sun., Dec. 31

WIDESPREAD PANIC. $92.25-$165.85. 9 p.m. Fox Theatre. www.foxtheatre.org. 404-881-2100.

MOON TAXI. $42. 9:30 p.m. The Tabernacle. www.tabernacleatl.com. 404-659-9022.


ELECTRIC AVENUE’S NYE BASH. $20-$30. 9 p.m. The Vista Room. www.thevistaroom.com.

Mon., Jan. 1

Wed., Jan. 3

Thurs., Jan. 4

Fri., Jan. 5


Top 20 Atlanta Albums of 2017

Head over to www.CreativeLoafing.com/Music to read CL’s music scribes weighing in all 30 of our top album picks for 2017.


10. Uniform | No Trending (State Laughter/Scavenger of Death)
It has been an excellent year for Atlanta music. Over the months and weeks leading into the holiday season, CL’s music scribes subjected themselves to rigorous debate and critical ballyhoo to settle on this list of the city's top 20 albums of 2017. Two of the titles we’ve selected are EPs, but their arrival sent tremors throughout the city's nightlife scene — enough that we would be remiss not to include them here. So without further ado, here is our list. Please dive in and give a listen to the music that’s kept our headphones buzzing and the office ambiance flowing all year long.

1. **Mastodon | Emperor of Sand (Warner Bros.)**

Mastodon has transcended time, trends, band shake ups, a floundering music industry, and Grammy snubs, all the while crafting a singularly massive baroque metal roar. *Emperor of Sand* pulls off the Herculean task of revealing wholly new dimensions hidden within the group's sound and songwriting dynamic — seven albums deep! For proof, look no further than “Show Yourself.” The album's lead single offers an easy access point into a disarmingly strong batch of songs that find strength in drummer Brann Dailor stepping up his role as vocalist. The change in palette brought about one giant stomp the Atlanta metal behemoths evolution, fleshing out vivid new dimensions in Mastodon’s sound, and charging headlong into the future. — Chad Radford

2. **21 Savage | Issa Album (Slaughter Gang/Epic)**

3. **EarthGang | Rags EP (Spillage Village)**

4. **Omni | Multi-Task (Trouble In Mind)**

5. **J.I.D | The Never Story (Dreamville Records)**

6. **Mattiel | Self-titled (Burger Records)**

7. **Cloak | To Venomous Depths (Season Of Mist)**

8. **Faye Webster | Self-titled (Awful Records)**

9. **2Chainz | Pretty Girls Like Trap (Def Jam)**

10. **Mastodon | Emperor of Sand (Warner Bros.)**

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SMOKE 911
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678.445.5550

ROSWELL
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770.992.4485

SANDY SPRINGS
6010 Sandy Springs Circle
Suite B2
404.256.1116

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flxprojects.org

Sorts by George Long
A sequential wheat paste mural & video installation
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710 Ponce de Leon, adjacent to BArm restaurant

Experience 30 square feet of state of the art viewing, with 70 flat screens showing all the games, all sports and all your favorite teams!

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770.790.8862
MON - THU 5PM-12AM
FRIDAY 5PM-2AM
SATURDAY 12PM-2AM
SUNDAY 12PM-12AM

art for now.
MIKE BIRBIGLIA

**Friday-Saturday. 12/15-12/16, Comedy**

Comedy's jack-of-all-trades is actually named Mike. A stand-up at heart, Mike Birbiglia's honest, anecdotal style has translated in flourishing fashion onto both the page and screen. Birbiglia has released multiple albums including Sleepwalk With Me, later turned into a best-selling memoir and his first feature film. His latest foray behind the camera was the ode to improv indie hit Don't Think Twice. Back on stage, the comedian's most recent shows, “Thank God for Jokes” and “My Girlfriend's Boyfriend,” were released as specials on Netflix. The New York-based jokesmith hits the road with an all new hour of stand-up on his aptly named The New One Tour. Due to popular demand, Birbiglia performs three shows over two nights at Center Stage. $39. Fri., Dec. 15, 7 p.m.; Sat., Dec. 16, 7 p.m. and 9:30 p.m. Center Stage, 1374 W. Peachtree St. 404-885-9782. www.centerstage-atlanta.com. — OLIVIA CATHCART
SATURDAY, 12/9

**Benefit: Light the Farm**

Since 2006, Truly Living Well Center for Natural Urban Agriculture has strived to increase food access and food sovereignty for all by creating shared green spaces and growing healthy food in urban communities. This holiday season, it’ll celebrate food’s power to bring people together with its annual holiday fundraising event, Light the Farm, an evening of hot drinks and cold weather in a Westside garden hung with twinkling lights. Admission is free to tour the garden, and the festival will include plenty of food, drinks, live music, children’s activities, and a local vendor’s market for shopping holiday gifts. Donations will help Truly Living Well bring its education programs to a broader community.

Free. 4-9 p.m. Sat., Dec. 9. TLW Collegetown Farm, 324 Lawton St. S.W. 678-973-0997. www.trulylivingwell.com/light-the-farm-2017. — ALEJANDRA GALLEGOS

**MIRACLE POP-UP BAR**

11/24-12/24, Food and Drink

Ho ho ho. The Atlanta version of this annual Christmas pop-up bar is stuffing your stocking this year with not just one, but two locations: Miracle on Monroe will be joined by Miracle Two at The Shops Buckhead. Expect a heavy dose of Christmas spirit with plenty of decorations, drinks, and old-school jams. The pop-up bar’s holiday cocktail menu will include spiced Muletide, Santa-quila, Jingle Ball Nog, and Naughty and Nice shots, served in Santa mugs and reindeer Collins glasses. A portion of the proceeds will go toward local nonprofit New American Pathways’ mission to rebuild refugee lives in Georgia.

**WEDNESDAY, 12/13**

**Southern Rock: Patterson Hood**

In the years since 2001’s Southern Rock Opera, the Drive-By Truckers’ concept album about Lynyrd Skynyrd’s pre-plane crash career, Patterson Hood claimed Ronnie Van Zant’s role as standard-bearer of socially conscious Southern rock. Whether rallying Athens’ music scene to protest a new Wal-Mart or penning left-leaning DBT numbers, Hood shatters misconceptions about Southern pride. Love for Georgia is shown by wanting a better tomorrow, not clinging to false narratives about the past. Considering America’s current socio-political climate, Hood’s progressive Southernness counterbalances the negative stereotypes that keep coming home to roost. Catch Hood playing one of two back-to-back shows in a more intimate listening room than the truckers’ larger venues.


**RIITZ**

**Tuesday, 12/12, Rap**

Rittz, a rapper from the North Atlanta metro area, has seen his buzz reach an all-time high. In September, he released his fourth studio album, Last Call. The release marks an amicable end to his record deal with Tech N9ne’s independently run Strange Music. Last Call features Rittz using his rapid-fire flows to tell stories, provide social commentary and share his own personal struggles. Rittz pulls heavily on the influence of Bone Thugs-N-Harmony with a Southern twist and rock-infused production to create a sound that’s far from cookie-cutter. With Sam Lachow and Eric Biddines. $20-$25. 8 p.m. Tues., Dec. 12. The Loft, 1734 W. Peachtree St. 404-885-1365. www.centerstage-atlanta.com. — JEREL MARSHALL
EDDIE’S ATTIC
Open Mic, every Monday  WWW.EDDIESATTIC.COM
515-B North McDonough St • Decatur 404.377.4976

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 20
PEACHTREE ENTERTAINMENT PRESENTS:
A NIGHT WITH CRAIG CAMPBELL
WITH SPECIAL GUEST, DREW PARKER
7:30 PM SHOW, 6:30 PM DOORS

SUNDAY DECEMBER 10
JON MCLAUGHLIN
THIS TIME OF YEAR TOUR
6:00PM SHOW, 5:30PM DOORS, 8:30PM SHOW, 9:45PM DOORS

FRIDAY DECEMBER 15
8TH ANNUAL CHRISTMAS EXTRAVAGANZA W/ RYAN HORNE, NATHAN ANGELO, DWAYNE SHIVERS (A.K.A. MICAH DALTON), & JONATHAN RICH
5:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS, 7:00PM SHOW, 8:00PM DOORS
7:15PM DOORS, 10:00PM SHOW, 9:30PM DOORS

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16TH
ROBIN MEADE’S HOLIDAY ‘ROUND ROBIN’
FEATURING SIXWIRE - TOYS COLLECTED FOR TOYS FOR TOTS - TWO SHOWS
7:30 PM SHOW, 6:30 PM DOORS, 8 & 9:45 PM SHOW

FRIDAY DECEMBER 22
JOE GRANDSEN
CHRISTMAS SPECIAL WITH FRANCINE REED
7:00PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS, 9:15PM SHOW, 8:45PM DOORS

SUNDAY DECEMBER 31
MICHELLE MALONE
NEW YEARS EVE SHOW!
7:00PM SHOW, 8:00PM DOORS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 4
THE BABYS
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS

THURSDAY DECEMBER 7
JACK SCHNEIDER
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS
MUTLU
9:15PM SHOW, 9:15PM DOORS

FRIDAY DECEMBER 8
JASON EADY
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS
PAUL MCDONALD
WITH SPECIAL GUEST, RYAN HARRIS BROWN
9:30PM SHOW, 9:15PM DOORS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 9
47TH BI-ANNUAL SONGWRITER’S OPEN MIC SHOOTOUT
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS

TUESDAY DECEMBER 12
FLATLAND CAVALRY & JOHN BAUMANN
7:30PM SHOW, 7:15PM DOORS

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 13
PATTERSON HOOD
7:15PM SHOW, 6:15PM DOORS, 9:30PM SHOW, 9:15PM DOORS

WEDNESDAY DECEMBER 13
SHOOTER JENNINGS & JASON BOLAND
LIVE AT AVONDALE TOWNE CINEMA
7:00 PM SHOW, 6:00 PM DOORS

THURSDAY DECEMBER 14
DAR WILLIAMS:
IN CONCERT, INCLUDING A READING AND DISCUSSION OF HER NEW BOOK “WHAT I’VE FOUND IN A THOUSAND TOWNS”
7:00PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS

SUNDAY DECEMBER 17
THE KRICKETS
6:00PM SHOW, 5:00PM DOORS
REBEL UNION
WITH SPECIAL GUEST, STACIA WATKINS
8:15PM SHOW, 7:45PM DOORS

THURSDAY DECEMBER 21
JOSHUA FLETCHER & CASEY HARPER
7:15PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 23
WILL KIMBROUGH
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS

TUESDAY DECEMBER 26
DAVID RYAN HARRIS
7:00PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS

DECEMBER 27 & 28
4 WHEEL DRIVE
FT. JORDAN RAGER, JON LANGSTON, COLE TAYLOR AND TRAVIS DENNING
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS, 9:30PM SHOW, 9:15PM DOORS

FRIDAY DECEMBER 29
ELI COOK
9:00PM SHOW, 8:45PM DOORS

SATURDAY DECEMBER 30
MIKE KILLEEN & THE BITTERROOTS
WITH SPECIAL GUEST, TOTAL BAE
7:00PM SHOW, 6:00PM DOORS
RAY SCOTT
9:00PM SHOW, 8:45PM DOORS

MONDAY JANUARY 1
JARED & AMBER
7:30PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2ND
THE ATTIC SHOWCASE
7:30 PM SHOW, 6:30 PM DOORS

WEDNESDAY JANUARY 3
ADRON
7:00PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS

JANUARY 5 & 6
PAT MCIGEE
8:00PM SHOW, 6:30PM DOORS

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Put The Freeze On Boring In The Bedroom!
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15% OFF w/3 Can Food Donation!*
Friday, Dec. 15
Holiday/Comedy:
A John Waters Christmas

Revered filmmaker and author John Waters, creator of Pink Flamingos, Hairspray, Dirty Shame and more, puts the “X” in X-mas with this critically acclaimed one-man show. Known as the “King of Bad Taste,” Waters travels the country every holiday season to deliver his crass, naughtily humorous monologue to all who have been naughty or nice. Flipping holiday tradition on its head, he discusses his extreme love for holiday horror stories, compulsive desire to give and receive perverted gifts, and a religious fanaticism for Santa Claus.

PUDDLES PITY PARTY
Thursday-Friday, 12/21-12/22, Pop

Riding international fame stoked by a series of viral YouTube music videos, and a meteoric run at mainstream stardom on “America’s Got Talent,” Puddles Pity Party brings Mike Geier’s battered suitcase full of tissues, glum-faced countenance, and baritone voice to Center Stage for a two-night stand. Albeit only one of several performing personas embodied by the enormously talented, preternaturally sized (6’-8”) Geier, Puddles has eclipsed them all. Who would have thought the saddest clown in the known universe singing a wacky mashup of the Who’s “Pinball Wizard” and Johnny Cash’s “Folsom Prison Blues” could capture the hearts and minds of so many?

$29-$44 (each night). Dec. 21-22. 7 p.m. Center Stage, 1374 W. Peachtree St. 404-885-1365. www.centerstage-atlanta.com. — DOUG DELOACH

FRIDAY, 12/15

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If you have ever wondered whether Prancer is the only gay reindeer, if it is appropriate to steal purses from graveyard parking lots while mourners leave flowers on Christmas Eve, or if Santa has ever been naked, this is the show for you. $39.50-$125. 8 p.m., Fri., Dec. 15. Variety Playhouse, 1099 Euclid Ave. N.E. 404-524-7354. www.variety-playhouse.com. — ARIANA NEWHOUSE

SUNDAY, 12/17

Noise Rock:
Whores.

Whores’s up-tempo and fully aggressive sound, exemplified by 2016’s Gold, packs quite a punch live. Loud, heavy-hitting riffs draw in listeners, who tend to stick around for singer
Bully

Wednesday, 12/13, Indie Rock

Since releasing 2015’s debut, Feels Like, Bully signed with Sub Pop and spent most of the group’s time tucked away in the studio, making cathartic indie rock. On the Nashville trio’s latest album, Losing, lead singer Alicia Bognanno channels tortured and triumphant versions of herself via songs such as “Feel the Same,” “Kills to Be Resistant,” and “Either Way.” Each song exposes the duality of emotional malaise as the group shreds through bad relationships, drinking habits, and the dark clouds of depression. Bognanno took the production helm on Losing, and though her attention to detail is keen, the album’s greatest victory is the evolution of her evocative shriek, a talent she has teased but never fully unleashed until now.

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may be difficult to believe. But it's real and true, so don't waste everyone else, too. I realize the onslaught of this strange grace times when what feels really good is in close alignment with yearning is simply about food, although it's possible your even insatiable. What's going on? I don't think this intense hungrier than usual. At times you may have felt voracious, tion of the worn-out and obsolete parts of your life. from the heroic fungi, Taurus. Expedite the decay and dissolu-
that they couldn't thrive. I invite you to take your inspiration forever. Some forests would be so choked with dead matter fallen leaves, piles of compost would continue to accumulate The fungi keep the earth fresh. Without them to decompose get any sex at all. P.S.: You'd be wise to start working on these next 12 months -- especially if you cultivate the kind of peace avoid people who have low levels of emotional intelligence. also experience deeper, richer emotions -- especially if you equal and always wield your power responsibly. I bet you will body is trying to compensate for a nutritional deficiency. At the very least, you're also experiencing a heightened desire to be understood and appreciated. You may be acting for a particular quality of love that you haven't been able to give or get. Here's my theory: Your soul is famished for experiences that your ego doesn't sufficiently value or seek out. If I'm cor-
rect, you should meditate on what your soul craves but isn't getting enough of.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): The brightly colored birds known as bee-eaters are especially fond of eating bees and wasps. How do they avoid getting stung? They snatch their prey in mid-air and then knock them repeatedly against a tree branch until the stinger falls off and the venom is flushed out. In the coming weeks, Cancerian, you could perhaps draw inspiration from the bee-eaters’ determination to get what they want. How might you be able to draw nourishment from sources that aren’t entirely benign? How could you extract value from influences that you have to be careful with?

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): The coming months will be a ripe time to review and rework your past -- to reconfigure the consequences that emerged from what happened once upon a time. I’ll trust you to make the ultimate decisions about the best ways to do that, but here are some suggestions. 1. Revisit a memory that has haunted you, and do a ritual that resolves it and brings you peace. 2. Go back and finally do a crucial duty you left unfinished. 3. Return to a dream you wandered away from prematurely, and either re-commit yourself to it, or else put it to rest for good.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): The astrological omens suggest that now is a favorable time to deepen your roots and bolster your foundations and revitalize traditions that have nourished you. Oddly enough, the current planetary rhythms are also conducive to you and your family and friends playing soccer in the living room with a ball made from rolled-up socks, pretending to be fortune-telling psychics and giving each other past-life readings, and gathering around the kitchen table to formulate a conspiracy to achieve world domina-
And no, the two sets of advice I just gave you are not contradictory.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): In accordance with the long-
term astrological omens, I invite you to make five long-term promises to yourself. They were formulated by the teacher Shannen Davis. Say them aloud a few times to get a feel for them. 1. “I will make myself eminently teachable through the cultivation of openness and humility.” 2. “I won’t wait around hoping that people will give me what I can give myself.” 3. “I’ll be a good sport about the consequences of my actions, whether they’re good, bad, or misunderstood.” 4. “As I walk out of a room where there are many people who know me, I won’t worry about what anyone will say about me.” 5. “I will only pray for the things I’m willing to be the answer to.”

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): To discuss a problem is not the same as doing something practical to correct it. Many people don’t seem to realize this. They devote a great deal of energy in describing and analyzing their difficulties, and may even imagine possible solutions, but then neglect to follow through. And so nothing changes. The sad or bad situation even imagine possible solutions, but then neglect to follow through. And so nothing changes. The sad or bad situation...
FICTION CONTEST 2018

Issue on stands January 4th!

On January 10th, join Creative Loafing and Write Club Atlanta to see the winning stories read live by the winners.

The Fiction Contest Party starts at 7p in the Highland Inn Ballroom and is FREE as always!

Is it hot in here, or is it just you?

www.CreativeLoafing.com
**Across**
1 Porkpie, e.g. 4 Joined (up) 10 Margarine containers 14 Gentle lamb 15 Make really mad 16 Sector 17 Country kitchen implement? 19 Had a hunch 20 1800, in movie credits that didn't exist back then 21 Really anxious 23 One who lessens the tension 24 Fidget spinners, for one 25 Like some fanbases 29 The Sklar Brothers, e.g. 31 Imperil 32 Blues guitarist ___ Mahal 33 Kind of committee 34 Pressly of "My Name Is Earl" 36 Gone by, as time 37 Actor Efron of the "Baywatch" movie 38 "The Simpsons" disco guy 40 Tabloid top- ics 42 Blues guitarist ___ Mahal 43 Country baseball squad? 45 Enhance 46 Part of UNLV 47 Show of respect 49 Burger chain magnate Ray 51 Century plant 52 Outspoken 53 Bracelet location, perhaps 55 Fundamental character 56 Fawning sycophant 57 "As You Like It" forest setting 59 Hardly open 61 Serling of "The Twilight Zone" 62 Poison ___ (Batman villain) 65 K+ or Na+, e.g. 68 Give in 69 Ant. antonym

**Down**
1 "[X] ___ like ..." (picture-based meme) 2 Carne ___ nachos 3 Bath powders 4 Politician who might be the Zodiac Killer, per a 2016 mock conspiracy theory 5 Head doc 6 Have ___ over one's head 7 Divine sustenance 8 Incited, with "on" 9 Spent, like a battery 10 Nod off 11 Coffee dispenser 12 "Full Frontal" host Samantha 13 Toothy tool 14 Antiaging material 15 Make really mad 16 Sector 17 Country kitchen implement? 19 Had a hunch 20 1800, in movie credits that didn't exist back then 21 Really anxious 23 One who lessens the tension 24 Fidget spinners, for one 25 Like some fanbases 29 The Sklar Brothers, e.g. 31 Imperil 32 Blues guitarist ___ Mahal 33 Kind of committee 34 Pressly of "My Name Is Earl" 36 Gone by, as time 37 Actor Efron of the "Baywatch" movie 38 "The Simpsons" disco guy 40 Tabloid topics 44 Antiaging material 45 Enhance 49 Burger chain magnate Ray 51 Century plant 52 Outspoken 53 Bracelet location, perhaps 55 Fundamental character 56 Fawning sycophant 57 "As You Like It" forest setting 59 Hardly open 61 Serling of "The Twilight Zone" 62 Poison ___ (Batman villain) 65 K+ or Na+, e.g. 68 Give in 69 Ant. antonym

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**Jonesin’**

"A Little Bit Country"—but only the very last bit.


**Solution to last month’s puzzle**

```plaintext
MASC STAHLL LINE OTTO MOMOA UBER VOOM UNIFY XENA ANIMAлы ДЕФИРATURE DECAF ATARI DOS ÁRIAS PATRIOS BROOK TOODAOF GMY VIOLA USSR WRAP ПОППУ ФОС LYNCH DOAH OATEN CAB HONDA TEERIE RODDOD SPINNERS MenuGoals DEMI ALEC ALBOM OPEED PAST BLES RYNE
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