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BEN SOLLEE

The Popular Genre-bending Cellist and Composer Brings His Distinct Brand of Indie Folk to Erie

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Managing Editor:

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Contributing Editor:

Rebecca Styn

Editor -at-Large:

Cory Vaillancourt

Contributors:

Alex Bieler
Mary Birdsong
Pen Ealain
Rick Filippi
Eric Kisner
James R. LeCorchick
John Lindvay
Lili Morton
Dan Schank
Jess Scutella
Tommy Shannon
Ryan Smith
Jay Stevens
Rebecca Styn
Bryan Toy
Cory Vaillancourt
Jim Wertz

Publisher's Assistant:

Jessica Courter

Cover Design:

Leah Yungwirth

Photographers:

Ryan Smith
Brad Triana

Designer:

Leah Yungwirth

Design Intern

Liz Venuto

Writing Interns:

Michael Iverson
Christopher Sexauer

1001 State St. Suite 901
Erie, Pa., 16501
contact@eriereader.com

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From the Editors

Create a network, set your vision, and find your game-changer.

Those were three things Bruce Katz told a packed house at the Jefferson Educational Society Thursday, Nov. 6 during his Global Summit VI presentation: "The Metropolitan Revolution — The Future of Erie?"

He also stressed the importance of collaboration, told the audience that health, prosperity, and competitiveness will be determined at the city and metropolitan level, and that success in the 21st century lies in the hands of cities, not governments.

The Vice President of The Brookings Institution and Founding Director of the non-partisan think tank's Metropolitan Policy Program all but held a mirror up to the audience and asked those in attendance to take a long, hard look to understand the community's identity as we wallow in the midst of a post-industrial identity crisis. Manufacturing, he said, can aid both blight and flight. But it doesn't have to be the manufacturing of yesteryear; rather, it can be new and fresh and dynamic. Manufacturing, after all, is what we know (as a possibility, think: 3D printing).

Skeptical? Examine Northeast Ohio. Katz — very much a boots-on-the-ground kind of guy who visits cities to study them relentlessly — did, and he points to the region's ability to still *make* as its ability to *thrive*. They, simply put, have created a network, set their vision, found their game-changer, and they know what they're good at. Which is what is leading to Katz's "metropolitan revolutions," where cities become focal points by taking control of their own destinies, since as he warned, "no one is coming to save you." If you need proof, you needn't look further than Detroit. The city was left for dead, and if it wasn't for a group of millionaires and philanthropists, it most likely would be.

Yes, our industrial landscape may be a shell of its former self — businesses leaving, shrinking, and shutting doors isn't new — but the infrastructure is here. And yes, it's rusty, but perhaps it's time to get out the white vinegar and get to work in cleaning it up.

An easy — but important — first step is to emphasize, promote, and foster development with a *reason* — aside from jobs — for people to choose to live where they do: Arts and culture. That, Katz outlined, is what Denver did to create a strong, vibrant urban core. Couple that with the FasTrack commuter train running throughout the region and you get a marriage between easy trans-

portation and a convincing reason to visit *and* stay in the area. In short, Denver can market itself as two important Cs: Convenient and cool — which, according to Katz, is what keeps Denver from being more than a fly-over city with people en route to better, brighter, bolder places.

A third C to add to the mix in the mile-high city is collaboration. Rather than continually competing against each other, creating rifts within their communities, municipalities agree to work together for a common good and clear vision of growth, which cultivates development and prosperity instead of stagnation and atrophy.

But one doesn't have to look as far as Denver to have hope for Erie. Katz lauded Buffalo's thoughtful work with its health-care system that resulted in thousands of new jobs within the city. And young people, talented people, people thoughtful about their locales are more inclined to call Buffalo home because of the developing arts and culture scene.

If we go back to the beginning, there's still the task of creating a network, setting a vision, and finding a game-changer. Which is risky business, really. But the greatest risk, Katz warned in the Q&A following the presentation when asked to address Erie's risk-adverse nature, is taking no risk at all.

Taking risks isn't the same as gambling. Rather than leaving destiny to chance, to wish and dream that someone will do something, taking calculated risks can propel Erie forward. Soon, presentations will be made to make public "key recommendations" for Erie that may be some of those calculated risks. That is, Destination Erie: A Regional Vision is hosting six community presentations throughout the county beginning Monday, Nov. 17 and concluding Thursday, Nov. 20.

If you've been keeping track of the Destination Erie timeline, the plan is nearing the finish line. Soon, what comes out of this plan may be the future of Erie and the region.

It was refreshing to see some of the leadership from Destination Erie in the crowd at Katz's presentation, hopefully taking copious notes and setting up interviews afterwards. What would be even more refreshing would be to see at-capacity turnouts at each of the community presentations, to see citizens prepared with research and informed questions, to see collaboration, to witness networking, and to see the unfurling of a set, clear vision.

If we don't, Erie may become nothing more than a fly-over city.

Street Corner Soapbox

The Truth Behind the GOP's Midterm Elections Sweep

By: Jay Stevens

The American people went to the polls on Nov. 4, and spoke with one voice against liberalism, against the Democratic Party, and against the terrible, disastrous policies of President Barack Obama. The Republican Party and its ideals and policies have won an overwhelming mandate.

At least, that's what you'd think after listening to pundits and conservatives on Nov. 5. But that ain't exactly what happened.

To be sure, the GOP made tremendous gains in Congress. They picked up seven Senate seats and 12 House seats, and now have a majority in both bodies – the biggest Republican majority in Congress since 1929. (A significant historical date that should now send a shiver up your spine.) On the state level, too, Republicans have picked up several gubernatorial seats and won historical majorities in legislatures. There's no doubt the Republicans enjoyed significant electoral success.

But why?

Most are blaming the unpopularity of President Obama. But by most election-day measures – unemployment, economy, budget issues – Obama's presidency has been a great success. He stewarded the recovery from the Wall-Street-created crash that welcomed his presidency. Employment rates are at their highest levels since 2008 – and the country has enjoyed 49 straight months of job growth. Stock gains during the Obama presidency were nearly twice what they were in the 1980s under President Reagan. Obama rescued the domestic auto manufacturing industry. Under Obama, the Consumer Confidence Index has tripled, and the national budget deficit is down 6 percent of GDP since the George W. Bush administration.

When you consider the state of the economy when Obama took office, it's staggering we've come so far in so short a time. It's the kind of economic performance that prompted *Forbes* magazine this summer to wonder if Obama were the best President, economically, our country has had. (The answer: maybe.)

It's got to be health care, right? The Affordable Care Act – or “ObamaCare” – is a disaster, right? Certainly Republicans are treating it as such, and in August, a Kaiser Family Foundation poll found 53 percent of Americans viewed the ACA unfavorably – although that's down to 43 percent in its most recent poll. But the law has reduced the numbers of uninsured by as much as 11 million. And 75 percent of ObamaCare enrollees are “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their coverage, according to a Commonwealth Fund study. Evidence also shows that the bill has helped health care outcomes – especially among the young – and contributed to the slowdown of health

care costs.

Even on foreign policy, where Obama's leadership has at times seemed slow or muddled, the administration's actions have been a success. We're out of Iraq. We're drawing down in Afghanistan. And Obama's non-intervention in Syria seems all the more justified given the rise of ISIS among Syrian rebel groups – and even Obama's ability not to overreact to that group makes sense, given that it's hardly a threat to national security.

A majority of Americans agree with Obama in wanting comprehensive immigration reform and gun control. And the

By most election-day measures – unemployment, economy, budget issues – Obama's presidency has been a great success.

issues that Obama hasn't done well on – say, civil liberties: the NSA, federal whistle-blowers, the US assassination program – conservative voters don't care about.

But is Obama really unpopular? Currently, his popularity is at 42 percent approval rating, according to Gallup, which is only a few points lower than the average presidential rating for this point in a presidency. And Obama's approval rating is much ahead of House Speaker John Boehner's (28 percent) and Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's (21 percent) or even Congress' (14 percent). What's behind the sweep, then, if not Obama?

There's gerrymandering, of course. Because Republicans controlled more state legislatures after the 2010 Census, they were able to create more Republican-friendly Congressional and legislative districts. You don't have to look much further than

Pennsylvania for evidence of that, where Republicans won 13 of 18 Congressional House seats. That comes to 72 percent of the House districts in the state, a number far out of line with the 55 percent of voters who opted for Republican House candidates across the state.

But the real reason for the 2014 results is that Democratic voters did not turn out.

Consider: the 2014 elections drew just over 36 percent of registered voters, the lowest since the 1942 midterm election – one that occurred in the middle of a war. And those that voted in 2014 tended to be older and whiter than in the previous elections. According to NBC exit polls, 37 percent of the 2014 voters were over 60 – compared to 25 percent in 2012 and 23 percent in 2008. African-American, Latino and women voters were also more likely to stay home in 2014.

That turnout is partly due to Republican voter suppression tactics. Twenty-two states passed laws making it harder to vote – from tightening registration rules, to requiring photo IDs, to ending early voting, states targeted left-leaning voters in their voting laws.

But really the blame lies with the Democratic Party itself. That's the kind of turnout you'd expect for a political party that spent the last election cycle backpedaling as fast as it could from its accomplishments. That put forward no beliefs, ideas, or values. That, when given the opportunity to laud liberalism and its social and economic gains, instead turned to self-loathing. That abandoned its base, eschewed grassroots organization for big-money donors, and neglected state-level and local candidates.

Democrats in battleground states, like Colorado, told Obama to stay away from their races. Some Democrats even ran ads touting their opposition to Obama's policies. Louisiana Sen. Mary Landrieu, for example – who faces an uphill battle in a runoff election – decried Obama's energy policies in an ad. Sen. Mark Pryor of Arkansas – who lost his re-election bid – ran an ad against Obama's gun control proposal. Kentucky Senate candidate Alison Lundergan Grimes even refused to admit she voted for Obama in 2012.

You got the definite feeling that the only value high-profile Democratic candidates held dear was the desire to stay in office. Everyday Americans looking for representation in government were left in the cold and voted accordingly.

Obama just may be the best thing about this bloated, moribund, do-nothing, gutless version of the Democratic Party.

Jay Stevens can be contacted at Jay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Snevets_Yaj.

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Schedule Highlights

The Way I See It

To invest, or not to invest taxpayer money in the Public Safety Radio System – that is the question.

By: Rebecca Styn

First responders in many communities all over the country still work with inefficient and potentially dangerous radio communications systems – often due to financial constraints, because overhauling or rebuilding these vital networks is extremely costly. Erie is no different.

County Executive Kathy Dahlkemper has proposed a public safety radio system to be part of the County's upcoming 2015 budget, which is one of the most expensive items therein. With a total price tag of \$26.4 million, it makes up close to one-third of the \$96.3 million budget.

As part of this proposal, Dahlkemper wants Erie County Council to sign off on using \$10.5 million in county reserve funds to make payments for at least the first five years of a 20-year capital improvement bond. But County Council members have concerns about the financial aspects of the proposal, including concerns that not enough time exists to finish a funding plan for the safety system prior to the next council meeting (Nov. 18), when a budget is expected to be passed.

Dahlkemper said she hopes that other funding sources, including grants and private funds from businesses and foundations, could help pay for the new radio system. If that doesn't happen, Dahlkemper admitted that roughly \$2.1 million in yearly radio system debt would likely be paid with taxpayer dollars from the county's general fund budget. Erie County Council, though, has the final say on whether to fund the project.

To grasp the magnitude of the situation, the Erie County Department of Public Safety is charged with the duty of handling all 9-1-1 calls, the dispatching of emergency personnel, and the management of rescue services throughout the county. The inability of townships and cities to communicate with each other – or even the Department of Public Safety – since they each utilize independent radio systems remains a chief concern.

When the county established its present 9-1-1 center in May 1993, the task was to connect the local, municipal, and city communications systems (dating back to 1974 when Union City was the first community to go online) that existed within the county. Then in 2009, the 9-1-1 Center began providing dispatch services. Over the years, these updates and connections led to a Band-Aid solution via a "spider web" system of circuits and links being installed wherever and whenever a need arose. Today, Millcreek's departments operate on an ultra high frequency (UHF) while county departments communicate on a low-band frequency. Without a mechanism to connect the two, the parties still don't have the ability to fully communicate with each other.

Some areas of the county did not – and still do not – want to participate in having a pre-



TALUS

dominant dispatch center – which is another reason for the lag in a centralized system. The reasoning behind it could be an aversion to change that could cause confusion, in a field where any delay in action can literally be life threatening.

In September, McMurray-based MCM Consulting Group Inc., – which conducted a county-funded study of the radio issue – published its findings in a 57-page document that ultimately concluded that the current system is inefficient and should be scrapped. Under the umbrella of county dispatching responsibilities, there are 34 volunteer fire departments, two city (Corry & Erie) police departments, 19 municipal police departments, one sheriff's department, EMA, and EMS, all operating on either Low-band VHF, high-band VHF, UHF, or 800 MHz radio frequencies, without any real ability to communicate with one another.

There are plenty of silver linings should the county decide to make the proposed investment. Aside from the most pertinent – public safety – it ultimately will provide some cost savings. The current system requires the rental and maintenance of many radio sites; these rentals carry a total price of around \$209,000 per year.

But chiefly, this system would allow responders to communicate on common frequencies on the 20 communication towers throughout Erie County to be built over seven primary communication zones, with the city of Erie and Millcreek Township being their own separate zones.

The Erie County Gaming Revenue Authority may also offer a way to help offset a small portion of the financial burden. The authority's Multi-Municipal Collaboration grants program, which started in 2012, would be a fit to possibly help fund the project. Each grant must have a minimum of two parties, which could include a municipal government, municipal authority, the Erie Area

Public safety infrastructure is a costly, but worthwhile investment.

Council of Governments, or another inter-governmental group that operates in Erie County. If the county were to apply and be awarded the funds, they could receive upwards of \$100,000 to be used towards the project.

Yet the bottom-line questions remain: Is a total overhaul of the radio system necessary, and if so, at what cost should this overhaul be completed, and who should foot the bill?

The way I see it: Public safety is the top priority. The longer the county sustains the existing network for a short-term answer to a big financial question, the more money we are throwing away in the long-term in an effort to provide a "patchwork" to a current process that should most likely be obsolete.

While adapting to a new environment is not easy, if the money spent literally saves the life of one person, it will far outweigh the costs. I'm not generally a proponent of taxing and spending measures, but if a tax increase is necessary, this is one issue that I support as a taxpayer because this investment is worth the cost.

While the county receives some emergency services funding through wireline telephone surcharges, perhaps in the future they should consider having a public safety reserve fund for core public priority issues. This would prevent the county from dipping into reserves or increasing taxes – especially in a climate of tight budgets and increasing scrutiny. The need to protect the public will only grow in the future, and in the end, our ultimate goal should be to create a safer, more secure, and thriving community.

Love? Hate? Agree? Disagree? I want to hear from you. Email me at rStyn@ErieReader.com and follow me on Twitter @rStyn.

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finding
your
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PBS | ARTS
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CATS

November 21 at 9pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

In 2015, during his destructive reign as the Governor re-elect of Pennsylvania, the unstoppable corporate puppet **Cor-Bott** absorbed the immortal soul of our greatest hero - founding father **Ben Franklin**...

NOW THAT I POSSESS BEN FRANKLIN'S GENIUS, I CAN CONQUER THE ENTIRE COUNTRY! IMAGINE! PRIVATIZED SCHOOLS, LIBRARIES, LOTTERIES, TOLL ROADS, LAW ENFORCEMENT...



Cor-Bott! Don't you realize that you now have a soul? You can't just govern for the profit of your corporate overlords anymore! You have to govern for the people! Remember that you used to love democracy? You once believed Jefferson's words: "The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction, is the first and only object of good government."



...SO SORRY FOR ALL THE WRONGS I'VE PERPETRATED ON PENNSYLVANIA, HER LAND, AND HER PEOPLE!



BUT WAIT! IT WAS ALL JUST A DREAM! I LOST THE ELECTION! WHO KNEW THAT GRAFT, NEPOTISM, GREED, INEQUALITY, AND LAISSEZ-FAIRE CAPITALISM WOULD TURN PEOPLE OFF? NO FAIR! NO FAIR! NO FAIR!!!



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News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

Baby Beauty

Amanda Collins, 28, took "beauty pageant mom" to the next level (down) earlier this year when she entered her daughter Luna in Britain's UK Princess and Prince International — based entirely on Luna's ultrasound scan at age 20 weeks. Said Collins, "As soon as I saw her image on the screen ... I knew she was a stunner." Contest officials had accepted the scan application, and six weeks after birth, Luna was named runner-up in the Princess and Prince, and on top of that, four weeks later, runner-up in Miss Dreams UK. "All she has to do," said Collins, "is lie in my arms and smile as I stroll down the catwalk." [Daily Mail (London), 10-26-2014]

Recurring Themes

In September, at the annual 10-day Phuket Vegetarian Festival in Thailand (ostensibly promoting abstinence from eating meat), dozens of men pierced and sliced their mouths, cheeks and arms in religious devotion in a spectacle which, though blood-drenched, was supposedly free of pain (and subsequent scars) because the fanatics were in God-imposed trances. The display supposedly brings "good health, peace of mind and spiritual cleansing," and includes walking on hot coals and climbing blade-embedded ladders (both barefoot, of course), all to the accompaniment of fireworks and the ear-shattering pounding of drums. [Huffington Post UK, 9-29-2014]

Brad Culpepper played defensive tackle for nine NFL seasons and, not surprisingly, applied for disability when he retired, since his medical folder listed 14 MRIs, head and knee trauma and neurological and vision problems — which resulted in doctors declaring him "89 percent" disabled and the Fairmont Premier insurance company giving him a \$175,000 settlement. Fairmont sued recently to get its money back, claiming that Culpepper is, and was, "exquisitely fit," as evidenced by a September 2013 Tampa Bay Times feature on his gym workouts, and in his having earned a martial-arts Black Belt, and in his participation for 14 days in the grueling TV series "Survivor: Blood vs. Water" in 2013. [Tampa Bay Times, 9-17-2014, 9-19-2013]

Angry taxpayers and retail customers sometimes protest their debt by paying the bill with containers of coins (especially pennies), but what if a company did that to a customer? A court had ruled that Adriana's Insurance Services in Rancho Cucamonga, California, had unjustifiably ejected (and assaulted) 74-year-old Andres Carrasco from its office when he complained about a canceled policy, and ordered Adriana's to pay him about \$21,000. Consequently, in August, the still-irritated company dropped off at least 16 buckets full of coins at the customer's lawyer's office. [Los Angeles Times, 8-6-2014]

Several News of the Weird stories mentioned Body Dysmorphic Disorder sufferers who sought the ultimate treatment: amputation of healthy body parts on irrationally aesthetic grounds, led by castration-desiring men. Now, 15-year-old Danielle Bradshaw of Tameside, England, also wants a useful leg amputated — but not irrationally. Her "developmental dysplasia" caused the amputation of her useless right leg, but the resultant stress on the left one has weakened it, and besides, having taken up competitive running, she wants Oscar Pistorius-style blades instead of her current prosthesis, which slows her down. However, no hospital has yet agreed to perform the surgery, considering the leg's continued functionality and Bradshaw's young age. [Daily Mail (London), 9-18-2014]

Suitors Doing It Wrong

News of the Weird's stuck-in-chimney stories usually involve burglaries gone wrong, but when Genoveva Nunez-Figueroa, 30, was rescued by firefighters in a Thousand Oaks, California, chimney in October, it appeared only that she was unwelcomed trying to visit an ex-boyfriend. (The police report diplomatically had her intent as "unclear.") (2) In August, John Lind, 34, became the most recent frustrated admirer so infatuated with a co-worker that he was moved to ejaculate multiple times on her desk and into her coffee cup. He said he wanted her to "notice" him. [KTLA-TV (Los Angeles), 10-19-2014] [WCCO-TV (Minneapolis), 9-3-2014]

Perspective

The most recent "segregated sidewalks" dispute in a community with a large, strict Orthodox Jewish population occurred in September in the English town of Stamford Hill, when Haredi Jews, trying to remove temptations, placed sidewalk signs (for an upcoming parade) reading, in English and Hebrew, "Women should please walk along this side of the road only" (since sect members are forbidden even to brush against people of the opposite sex except for close relatives). The Hackney council ordered the signs removed because befuddled, sometimes outraged, non-Haredis complained. [London Evening Standard, 9-19-2014]

Florida is well-known not just for its "stand your ground" defense to the use of deadly force, but to the pro-gun interpretation given it by some judges and juries. On the other extreme, however, the legislature has enacted an unusually severe penalty for any "aggravated assault" that includes gunfire — a "mandatory minimum" of 20 years in prison. Lee Wollard, now 59, faces a 2028 release date because he fired a warning shot into the wall of his home in 2006 to scare off his 16-year-old daughter's boyfriend, who was threatening the girl. Judge Donald Jacobsen said in court that he disagreed with his own sentence, but that his oath required him to impose it. (In a similar 2012 News of the Weird Florida domestic violence "warning shot" case, Marissa Alexander, 31, remains in prison with a release date of 2032.) [CBS News, 10-5-2014]

Taking it To the Streets

In 2102, a van and a narrow patch of asphalt changed Bob Sonnenberg's life permanently.

By: Mary Birdsong

A bicycle commuter in Erie, Bob Sonnenberg was riding on the bikeway by the Bayfront Parkway, west of the Chestnut Street boat launch where it narrows quickly to less than four feet to the left of three planting beds.

Sonnenberg was on the left of one of those beds when a van struck his bicycle. He suffered multiple fractures in his upper left arm. Now, Sonnenberg no longer commutes on his bicycle and still suffers from pain.

There were two ironies to this event: The accident occurred four months after Pennsylvania enacted a law requiring motorists to give bicyclists a 4-foot berth, and it took place on what is considered one of the safest bikeways in the community.

One of Bike Erie's board members, Eric Brozell, says, "Erie is not, by any means, a bicycle- or pedestrian-friendly city. There are absolutely no bikeways that go south from the center of the city and the worst is upper Peach Street; there are barely any sidewalks let alone bikeways."

A recent improvement in bike infrastructure has been the installation of bike racks throughout the downtown and nearby areas, thanks to a design collaboration between the Erie Art Museum and other community agencies. Also, more employers have started providing secure long-term bike parking for their employees, and local buses now have bike racks installed for cyclists to use. In addition, automobile drivers are now more aware and tolerant of cyclists than they were a decade ago, according to Brozell.

But Erie still remains far from being a bicycle-friendly community. Cleveland and Pittsburgh have committed to making tra-



PAUL KREUGER

versing their cities safer for cyclists and are both bronze-level members of the League of American Bicyclists, an awards process that must be applied for and renewed every four years.

Earlier this decade, Cleveland adopted a bikeway master plan and established numerous trails and bike lanes throughout the city. In January, the planning commission

announced plans to more than double the amount of bike routes by adding 70 miles of dedicated lanes, trails, and pavement markings. The goal of the master plan is to connect every Cleveland neighborhood to a bikeway network.

This past September, Pittsburgh opened a protected, two-way bike lane on Penn Avenue going into the heart of the city, the street that topped the list of bicycle accidents in Pittsburgh between 2005 and 2009.

Why bother making Erie a bike-friendly city? Simple: because a bike- and pedestrian-friendly city is healthier.

It has been proven that the physical health of the community improves as people get more exercise, and less carbon dioxide is pumped into the air with fewer cars on the road. Cycling has been shown to improve mental health and productivity, as well, reducing costs for businesses.

It can also lead to health care savings. A study in the *Journal of Physical Activity and Health* found that the bicycle-friendly city

of Portland, OR, could realize \$7 to \$12 billion savings in health care costs by the year 2040, just by expanding its bicycling infrastructure. Portland holds one of the few platinum-level ratings from the League of American Bicyclists.

The non-healthcare-related economic benefits are real as well, if not more compelling. In Minnesota, for example, the Department of Employment and Economic Development estimated that, in 2009, the value of all goods and services attributed to bicycle riders' spending came to \$261 million, supported more than 5,000 jobs and helped generate \$35 million in taxes.

Studies nationwide have shown that bike-friendly cities have more thriving small businesses because cyclists (and pedestrians) are more apt to stop, investigate, and buy because they are more fully engaged with their environment. Bottom lines at retail shops often blossom handsomely, especially if cyclists have a convenient place to secure their bicycles.

Bike Erie is doing its part to increase the bike friendliness of the city. Members are working with The Downtown Partnership to create a bike-friendly downtown and with Erie Insurance to help it meet the needs of cyclists who work there. BE's Peddle Meddle program, provided by the Sisters of St Joseph, teaches bicycle mechanics and safety to 12- to 17-year-olds.

It also has a working relationship with Erie City Mission's Grace House, where it provides bicycles and safety information to women. "Maintaining a bicycle is far more economical than keeping an automobile on the road," says Brozell. "It's a great way for people in lower economic circumstances to improve their budget."

But, I hear you asking, what about Erie winters, the snowfall? How can we ever provide a bike-friendly environment with two feet of snow?

Perhaps the Scandinavians can answer that question, since every country in that region makes the top-ten list for most bicycles per capita. And they see some snow. If they can figure it out, so can we.

Mary Birdsong can be contacted at mBirdsong@ErieReader.com, and you can follow her on Twitter @Mary_Birdsong.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Wider and more clearly defined bike lanes (above) promote increased bicycle traffic and make cities and regions more bike-friendly by making them safer. Planters in the middle of bike lanes (below) create unnecessary obstacles and risks for bikers.

Considering the City

Desperately Seeking Supermarket

By Civitas members Lisa Austin and Stephen Sonnenberg

By definition, a food desert is a neighborhood without a grocery store within one mile. When Bradley's Shur-fine on West Eighth Street closes in a few weeks, downtown Erie will meet this criteria.

Residents without the means (or ability) to own and drive a car will have to find a ride for the four to twelve miles round-trip to the nearest grocery store: Erie County Farms (2256 Broad St.); Wegmans (6143 Peach St.); Yorktown's Giant Eagle (2501 W. 12 St.); Whole Foods Cooperative (1341 W. 26 St.), or a Tops Market (1520 W. 26 St., 712 W. 38 St. or 1702 E. 38 St.)

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 27,932 people live in downtown Erie: The northern boundary is Presque Isle Bay; the southern boundary is the CSX railroad tracks; The Bayfront Connector marks the eastern boundary; and Interstate-79 and the Bayfront Highway define the western boundary.

Transit advocate Julie Minich of All Aboard Erie reports that the best bus routes run during weekdays and that routes are "more limited" in the evening and on weekends – which is when most people shop for groceries. Minich warns that, without bus shelters, it can be "miserable" during rainy and snowy weather and that "groceries ... get soaked."

Sue Moyer, who lives and works in the downtown, notes that a "full-service neighborhood grocery store is important to the health of residents," especially those with a limited income, and she notes that "[the city of] Erie has a 29.2 percent poverty rate." Moyer says that elderly and disabled shoppers have great difficulty "carrying multiple bags" for several blocks over uneven and un-shoveled sidewalks.

While Farmers Markets are available in downtown Erie, they are seasonal and lack fresh meat, fresh fish, and baked goods. Instead of making a trek to a distant supermarket, many residents will shop at a mini-mart, a gas station, or a dollar store. Unfortunately, the highly processed products filling those stores contribute to health problems. The Center for Disease Control reports that "food deserts ... lack access to affordable fruits, vegetables, whole grains, low-fat milk..." and the American Nutrition Association notes that the fast food and "quickie marts" offer primarily processed, sugar-heavy, and fat-laden foods that foster obesity.

West Eighth Street is already in decline. When Bradley's Shur-fine closes, the vacant corner at Walnut and West Eighth streets won't help our beloved Pie in the Sky restaurant or Mueller's Key Shop.

Erie County Councilman Andre Horton says the closing of Shur-Fine is "heartbreaking." But is there a silver lining? More than 20,000 downtown residents are not living in poverty. Moyer notes that a market study done by the Downtown Partnership "showed



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

that some individual and family household incomes" are significant but are "spent outside city, because there are no places to spend downtown." But not enough people who have options actually shopped at Bradley's Shur-Fine, leaving us with two important questions: Why? and What can be done? A few years back, it was clear someone was

Contrary to the views of some of our leaders, dollar stores are not a sufficient source of food.

actually investing in Bradley's by cleaning it up inside, expanding the produce offerings, and cooking great meals, with their oxtail soup filling the store with a savory appeal. But there were problems. Theft was an issue, and a "wall of shame" featured photos from surveillance cameras – encouraging some shoppers to take their business elsewhere. Perhaps because of the losses, Bradley's prices are higher than big-box stores. Would law

enforcement be willing to prioritize attention at a future grocery store – or – could the community subsidize the costs of hiring a security guard?

Moyer explained that the PA Fresh Food Financing Initiative supported the costs of "employee training and security and loss prevention systems," the purchase of energy-efficient coolers and freezers, and in the art of arranging produce in "attractive displays...in the front of the store." But, State Rep. Pat Harkins reports that Gov. Tom Corbett cut funding to this program; perhaps Governor-elect Tom Wolf will restore this initiative.

Though Bradley's Shur-fine's location is passed by hundreds of commuters rushing into work each morning, commuters don't pass the store on their way home from work because West Eighth is a one-way street.

Why not rethink this one-way status? Seattle Urban Designer Dave Sucher encourages making all commercial streets two-way streets because "drivers tend to slow down when facing opposing lanes of traffic" – which helps local businesses. A two-way West Eighth Street might make Bradley's more attractive to an investor.

Any schoolchild knows that food, shelter, and water are necessary for survival. Lake Erie is full of water. A variety of market-rate and affordable shelter (housing) can be found downtown. But, contrary to the views of some of our leaders, dollar stores are not

Bradley's Shur-fine on West Eighth Street will soon shutter its doors, making downtown Erie a food desert.

a sufficient source of food. To promote good health, and to revitalize our city, we need a supermarket downtown.

Our community and elected leaders must work with the city's economic development staff to respond to this emergency. How about coaxing the Whole Foods Co-op on West 26 Street to open a location at Bradley's Shur-fine? Why not use the power of Gannon's small business students and Mercyhurst's interior design students to work with the International Institute and create a World Grocery Store? The "Our West Bayfront" organization would probably be willing to support this kind of project.

Are you the innovative entrepreneur who is willing to invest in a downtown supermarket, make some money and accept the appreciation of a city? Cultivating a grocery store in Erie's food desert is your – and our – challenge.

Civitas members can be reached at their website www.civitaserie.com, via Facebook at CivitasErie, by emailing Lisa@civitaserie.com, or by scheduling a Friday morning meeting at the Civitas office in the Masonic Building, 32 W. Eighth St.

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GILBERT STUDIOS

Ben Sollee

The Popular Genre-bending Cellist and Composer Brings His Distinct Brand of Indie Folk to Erie

By: Alex Bieler

Ben Sollee just can't stop working. The man that NPR's *Morning Edition* called one of the Top Ten Unknown Artists of the Year back in 2007 has been providing the public with plenty of opportunities to become familiar with his name, starting with his 2008 debut album *Learning to Bend*.

Just this year alone, the 30-year-old cellist and composer released his score for the documentary *Maidentrip*, was one of the artists who participated in the tribute to Paul Simon at Carnegie Hall in New York City, supported fellow musician William Fitzsimmons on the road, spent some time touring in Europe, and even performed with the

Charlotte Ballet.

Needless to say, he's a busy man - and that's not even mentioning his duties as a loving husband and father.

"I really love creating, and I hate to miss an opportunity to create and perform," Sollee said over the phone just a couple of days after having finished a small tour out to Kansas, now back home in his home state of Kentucky.

True to form, he's still working, having just gotten out of a meeting for a ballet production called *Postcards in America* that he's doing in Louisville. Soon, he'll be back out on the road for a short November tour, one that

culminates with a Thursday, Nov. 20 performance at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center at Mercyhurst University right here in Erie.

The show - proudly sponsored by the *Erie Reader*, by the way - is part of the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts & Culture's Live Performance Series, which has already brought impressive artists such as Anais Mitchell and William Close to The Flagship City. The night will include a performance by the local jazz-tinged folkies The Heliotropes in the D'Angelo lobby as well as samples from Lavery Brewing Company, both of which start at 6:30 p.m. Then the talented Mr. Sollee

Sollee will soon hit the road for a short tour, including a stop at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center.

will take the stage at 7:30 p.m., and the audience will be right there with him thanks to MIAC's special seating arrangement. You see, instead of being stretched out across the Performing Arts Center, this show invites the crowd to join him behind the stage curtains to witness Sollee's take on folk, bluegrass, R&B, and whatever styles the gifted musician decides to employ in his intricate arrangements.

"It's really nice, because you don't even have to work at breaking the fourth wall," Sollee said of the intimate seating arrangement. "It's a wonderful thing because you can really bring the audience into the fold and tell the stories and be a little bit more intricate with the arrangement of the songs, because the audience is right there with you. You don't have to communicate over 300 feet; you have to do it over 30 or 50 feet. That

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makes a big difference when you're talking about groove in a song."

Ever since he first picked up a cello at age 9 while growing up in what he called a "musically-rich family," Sollee has been a big proponent of a song's ability to create kinship between communities and make an impact in the world around you. It's part of the reason why he made his second album *Dear Companion*, a collaboration he did with fellow Kentucky musicians Daniel Martin Moore and My Morning Jacket's Jim James that focuses on the topic of mountaintop removal coal mining and the impacts it has on surrounding areas.

Sollee's not afraid to use his craft to speak out on what he considers important. In fact, just engaging other people through his music is a major point of emphasis for the extroverted musician, whether it's a crowd of 2,800 at Carnegie Hall or the 200 stage-dwellers at the D'Angelo.

"I feel in some idealistic way that [different creative outlets are] all pretty much the same thing; it's just connecting to other humans," Sollee said with conviction. "I see music as a social art form more than anything else. When you look at it from that perspective, you find yourself not really taking into account the scale [of the performance] or the venue as much as the people."

Given his desire to reach out to people through a variety of media, it's not too surprising that Sollee would want to connect with different communities off the stage as well as on one. What you might not guess is the tool he used to start reaching out to new areas: the Xtracycle.

The Xtracycle is a load-carrying bicycle that Sollee discovered after watching an advertisement on the now defunct channel



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Current TV. Like many nationally touring musicians, Sollee spent a lot of time moving about the country by van or plane, methods which provided fast travel but limited his chance to stop by many different areas that could be found between show locations. The

lost opportunities to check out these potentially interesting environments nagged at him, but then he discovered the utility bike and an idea came to the creatively-minded Kentuckian.

"I just thought to myself 'Holy crap, I can put my cello on there,'" Sollee said. "I decided I was going to do my first tour down to Bonnaroo Music Festival, which is about 330 miles from my hometown of Lexington, Kentucky. I called up the company and told them what I wanted to do, and they shipped me a bike."

Thus the *Ditch the Van Tours* were born. Although touring by bicycle provided a more environmentally-friendly method of travel, Sollee's first ride to the Manchester, Tenn. grounds that are home to Bonnaroo provided quite a challenge.

"The tour was really hard," Sollee said, a touch of weariness in his voice when he recalled the first bike voyage. "South is not downhill, so I really struggled because I hadn't trained for it, but at the end of the tour, I really felt like I had gone through some type of metamorphosis and really discovered some type of pace that made more sense to me than van touring and plane touring."

Ever since that first "Ditch the Van Tour," Sollee has been on a mission to do about a third of his touring on bicycle, travelling about 5,000 miles without use of motorized vehicles since his first trip back in 2009, despite the fact that bike touring is actually less profitable, even without extra expenses such as gas and vehicle repairs given that the trips take roughly twice as long with half the amount of shows as a normal tour.

Soon he'll be back out on the road, hitting

Sollee travels about a third of his touring miles on his special bicycle, the Xtracycle.

up stops in New England and the Midwest to put his warm compositions on display before reaching The Gem City for an intimate show that will allow Sollee to connect with the denizens of Northwest Pennsylvania. Some people may be dismayed due to the ongoing news stories involving greed, corruption, and terror, but Sollee looks into the light, knowing that we can make the world a better place if we put our minds to it.

"I believe in the inherent good of people," Sollee said. "You've got to be optimistic; I don't see how you can be any other way. The moment music stops exciting me enough to think that it can create connections and change communities, that's probably the time I should stop playing music."

Luckily for us, he likely isn't stopping any time soon. Sollee already admitted that he's got plans to work on another score for a documentary when he returns home after the Erie show, just another way for the creative musician to help spark a conversation through his craft.

Want to connect with Sollee when he comes to Erie? Head to miac.mercyhurst.edu to purchase tickets for an event that promises to be a wonderful and intimate performance by a critically-acclaimed performer.

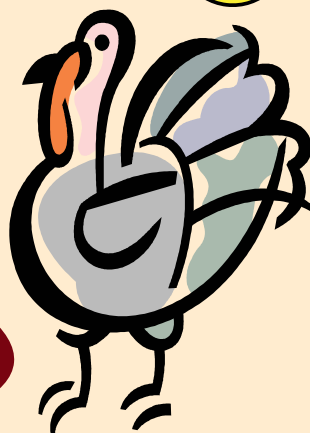
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Samite, an internationally celebrated flutist, is the founder of Musicians for World Harmony, a nonprofit that works with children and young adults in Africa – often child soldiers, AIDS orphans, and refugees; in short, the kids "who were exposed to the worst tragedies."

Aid comes to these communities in the way of food, medicine, and education, but "sometimes, we forget about healing the soul," Samite says, "and I think music has the power to do that." So in African villages, Samite and his nonprofit provide music therapy, and foster young talent when they see it, all to promote peace, healing, and humanity.

Samite knows the healing power of music; himself a refugee, he fled his native Uganda in 1982. Already a phenomenon in East Africa thanks to his prowess on the flute, when he finally settled in the United States in 1987 (he now lives in Ithaca, N.Y.), he brought his love of music with him.

After a weeklong residency in Erie working with local organizations, such as The Barber Center, the Mercy Center for the Arts, and ExpERIENCE Children's Museum, Samite will take the stage Friday, Nov. 14 at the Mercyhurst Institute for Arts and Culture for a one-night-only performance with Grammy-winning jazz and classical guitarist David Cullen.

The pains of Erie might not go as deep as those who Samite works to heal in Africa, but if music can act as a cathartic tool for those who have seen some of the worst tribulations the world has to offer, imagine what it can do for you. – Sara Toth

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Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 U.S. 6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

Glow Paint Party

Nov. 13 – 9 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. 453.7760.

Chris Higbee

Nov. 14 – 9 p.m.

Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Frank Singer Duo w/ Derf Hopsecger

Nov. 14 – 6 to 9 p.m.

Anchor In, 3122 West Lake Road. 833.1212.

Jackson Station Happy Hour

Nov. 14 – 5 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. 453.7760.

Matt Gavula

Nov. 14 – 5 to 7 p.m.

Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Me & Julio

Nov. 14 – 9 p.m.

The Brewerrie, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

Mike Egerly

Nov. 14 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Drive. uglytunatavern.com.

Salmon Frank

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Walker Recital Hall, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

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Nov. 14 – 7 p.m.

McCoy's Barrelhouse and Grill, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com.

Slaughter in the Meridian, Playoff Beard, Oh No! It's Mustard Gas!, JC Nickles, and Awake at Last

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The Beer Mug, 1108 Liberty St. 454.4753.

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Nov. 14 – 9 p.m.

King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Taylor Maid

Nov. 14 – 9:30 p.m.

Doc Holliday's, 7425 Schultz Road. dochollidays.net

Trans-Siberian Orchestra

Nov. 14 – 7:30 p.m.

Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. erieevents.com

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Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

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Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. basementtransmissions.com.

Mercyhurst University Jazz Ensemble
Nov. 15 – 8 to 10:30 p.m.

Taylor Little Theater, 501 E. 38th St. mercyhurst.edu/events.

Refuge
Nov. 15 – 9:30 p.m.
Doc Holliday's, 7425 Schultz Road. dochollidays.net

Shady Side
Nov. 15 – 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 U.S. 6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

Special Guest w/ Liquid Nixon
Nov. 15 – 9 p.m.
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Tchaikovsky's Fourth
Nov. 15 – 8 p.m.
Warner Theatre, 811 State St. eriephil.org.

The Cryptics, Crystal Methodist, Bad Faith, Archyway, Dysmorphia, and JC Nickles
Nov. 19 – 5:30 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.com.

2Blue
Nov. 20 – 6 to 9 p.m.
Victor's at the Bel-Aire Clarion, 2800W. 8th St. belaireclarion.com.

Ben Sollee
Nov. 20 – 7:30 p.m.
Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

Big Dog Acoustics
Nov. 20 – 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 U.S. 6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

Sean Patrick and the Newgrass Revolution
Nov. 20 – 9 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. 453.7760.

Bucket List
Nov. 21 – 9 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Chickstock featuring Claire Stuczynski, Brooke Surgener, and Whitney White
Nov. 21 – 9 p.m.
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Chris Mathers
Nov. 21 – 5 to 7 p.m.
Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

Dom & Tonya
Nov. 21 – 9 p.m.
The Brewerrie, 123 W. 14th St. brewerrie.com.

DJ Barry Carew
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McCoy's Barrelhouse and Grill, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com.

Frank Singer Duo w/ Phil Papatnik
Nov. 21 – 6 to 9 p.m.
Anchor In, 3122 West Lake Road. 833.1212.

Jackson Station
Nov. 21 – 7 p.m.
McCoy's Barrelhouse and Grill, 1013 State St. mccoysbarrelhouse.com.

Jeff Jensen
Nov. 21 – 6 to 9 p.m.
Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 U.S. 6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

Jesse Weston
Nov. 21 – 6 to 9 p.m.
The Ugly Tuna Tavern, 1010 Peninsula Drive. uglytunatavern.com.

Next of Kin
Nov. 21 – 9:30 p.m.
Doc Holliday's, 7425 Schultz Road. dochollidays.net

X-Whites w/ We Hit the Fan
Nov. 21 – 9 p.m.
Sherlock's, 508 State St. 453.7760.

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Geek Army
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Presque Isle Downs and Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presqueisledowns.com.

The HighLife w/ Dani and Marky G
Nov. 22 – 9 p.m.
King's Rook Club, 1921 Peach St. facebook.com/kingsrookclub.

Jerry Gaff
Nov. 22 – 6 to 9 p.m.
Anchor In, 3122 West Lake Road. 833.1212.

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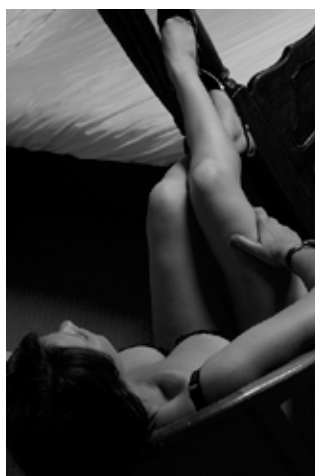
PACA presents *Venus in Fur*

Fun fact: Did you know that the term “masochism” was inspired by Austrian author Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's 1870 novel *Venus in Furs*? The book was a hit in the pop culture, with numerous film and stage adaptations since its release. In fact, Sacher-Masoch's work even helped inspire a play-within-a-play with playwright David Ives' Tony Award-winning work *Venus in Fur*, which will be on display for a two weekend run at PACA starting Thursday, Nov. 13.

Ives' take on the tale of female seduction and power features just two characters but packs in plenty of electric dialogue between its players. The story consists of Thomas Novacheck, a writer and director of a new adaption of *Venus in Furs*, and his struggle to cast the female lead. After numerous failed attempts, a new actress by the name of Vanda Jordan tries out, leading to an intense audition.

Directed by Mark Tanenbaum and starring Abbe Tanenbaum and Thaddeus McCants, PACA's production of *Venus in Fur* offers up six opportunities to witness lessons in the joys of power and sensuality from the minds of Ives and Sacher-Masoch. – Alex Bieler

8 p.m. Nov. 13-15 and 20-22 // 1505 State St. // pacal505.com



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CALENDAR

A Newgrass Revolution In a New Erie Venue

It's been eight months since State Street hangout the crooked i closed its doors for good. For lovers of local original music, it was a sad day when news hit that the establishment would be no more. Still, it's not all bad, because in the crooked i's ashes rose a new enterprise, one that would still be able to showcase area talent, but with a bit of a countrified twist.

McCoy's Barrelhouse and Grill has been putting its stage to good use since it opened earlier this year and will do so once again when Sean Patrick and the Newgrass Revolution make their way to 1013 State St. The bluegrass band has plenty of punch in their earthy Americana tunes, pairing personal and dark stories to fuel the band's own take on string music. Songs like the melancholy "Surrounded By Pines" and the jaunty "Downtown" will endear the group to people looking to head downtown for some good old-fashioned original tunes.

It's encouraging that the 1013 State St. address is still pumping out locally-crafted music, so head to McCoy's to see Sean Patrick continue a proud tradition of shows in a beloved space. - Alex Bieler

8 p.m. Friday, Nov. 14 // 1013 State St. // mccoysbarrelhouse.com



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Doc Holliday's, 7425 Schultz Road. dochollidays.net

Frankie and May, 1101 Peninsula Drive. frankieandmay.com.

Frank
Nov. 16 - 2 p.m.

Old School

Nov. 22 - 9 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. 453.7760.

Erie TimeBank Potluck Dinner

Nov. 17 - 6 p.m.

Church of Christ, 2317 W Grandview Boulevard. 636.0205.

Mercyhurst University, Taylor Little Theater, 501 E. 38 St. 824.3000.

Tom Stine

Nov. 22 - 6 to 9 p.m.

Sprague Farm & Brew Works, 22113 U.S. 6, Venango. sleepingchainsaw.com.

Thanksgiving Dinner Pairing

Nov. 21 - 7 p.m.

Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W Main Road, North East. 725.1314 x 215.

FILM at the Erie Art Museum presents 'Life Itself'

Nov. 19 - 7 p.m.

Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

DANCE

Interactive Dance Demo w/ DJ Brett Fallon

Nov. 21 - 9 a.m.

Gannon Yehl Ballroom, 124 W Seventh St. danceelitecompany.com

Light-Up Night Electric Parade

Nov. 22 - 5 p.m.

Franklin PA. danceelitecompany.com

FILM

Great White Shark

Ongoing - Noon, 4 p.m..

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Mysteries of the Unseen World

Ongoing - 2, 5 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

FOOD & DRINK

From Vine to Wine at Courtyard Winery

Nov. 12 - 1:30 to 3:30 p.m.

Courtyard Winery, 10021 W. Main Road, North East. 453.5072.

Wonders of the Arctic

Ongoing - 11 a.m., 1, 3 p.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Harvest Celebration Weekends

Nov. 14 to 16 - Noon to 5 p.m.

Lake Erie Wine Country, North East. lakeeriewinecountry.org.

FILM at the Erie Art Museum presents 'The Tribe'

Nov. 12 - 7 p.m.

Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. erieartmuseum.org.

Ladies Night

Nov. 14 - 7 p.m.

Presque Isle Wine Cellars, 9440 W. Main Road, North East. jbeal@piwine.com.

Edinboro Film Series presents 'The Devil and Daniel Johnston'

Nov. 13 - 8:30 p.m.

Pogue Student Center Scot Cinema, 219 Meadville St., Edinboro. 732.2000.

Thanksgiving Dinner

Nov. 16 - 3 p.m.



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Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St. 453.3758.

NPAA Schuster Gallery Exhibition

Ongoing – All day
Schuster Gallery, Gannon University, 700 Peach St. facebook.com/NPAAonline.

Erie Art Museum Focus: Fiber Exhibit

Ongoing – All day
Erie Art Museum, Bacon Gallery, 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477.

Erie Art Museum Karen Erst Exhibit

Ongoing – All day
Erie Art Museum, Holstein Gallery, 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477.

Erie Art Museum Wilbur Adams Exhibit
 Ongoing – All day

Erie Art Museum, Main Gallery, 20 E. Fifth St. 459.5477.

Greely Myatt Artist Talk

Nov. 13 – 7:30 p.m.
Doucette Hall 119, Edinboro University, Edinboro. 952.9161.

THEATER

Erie Playhouse presents 'Vanya & Sonia & Masha & Spike'

Nov. 13 to 16 & 19 to 23 – 7:30 p.m.
Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. erieplayhouse.org.

A Flea In Her Ear

Nov. 13 to 16 – Friday, Saturday 8 p.m. & Sunday 2:30 p.m.
Allegheny College, Vukovich Center, 520 N. Main St. Meadville 332.3414.

PACA presents 'Venus in Fur'

Nov. 13 to 15 & 20 to 22 – 8 p.m.
PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.com.

All An Act Theater Presents 'The Odd Couple'

Nov. 14 to 16 & 21 to 23 – 7:30 p.m.
All An Act Theater, 652 W. 17 St. 450.8553.

General McLane High School Presents 'The Phantom of the Opera'

Nov. 20 to 23 – 7 p.m.
General McLane High School, 11761 Edinboro Road, Edinboro 273.1033.

Il Barbiere di Siviglia

Nov. 22 – 12:55 p.m.
Mercyhurst University, Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38 St. 824.3000.

VARIETY

Friday Night Writes

Ongoing – 8:30 to 11 p.m.
Poet's Hall, 1136 E. Lake Road. 572.6077.

Victorian Holidays 2014

Ongoing – All day
Watson-Curtze Mansion, 356 W. Sixth St. 454.1813 x0.

Blasco Family Art Night

Nov. 12 – 6:30 p.m.
Raymond M. Blasco, M.D. Memorial Library, 160 E. Front St. 451.6927.

Facade Improvement Workshop



ALPHA VIOLENT

FILM screens gripping, unreleased *The Tribe*

As an expressive medium, film is unusually well-equipped to translate body language and to introduce us to unfamiliar worlds. In Ukrainian filmmaker Myroslav Slaboshpytskiy's debut feature *The Tribe*, both impulses are pushed to unique extremes. Set in a boarding school for deaf teenagers, the film contains no spoken dialogue at all – and no subtitles accompany the considerable use of sign language.

This doesn't make it a silent movie per se – there's plenty of ephemeral noise to supplement the action. But the central narrative, in which a young man named Sergey is initiated into a rough gang of student criminals, occurs without an audible word. Expect some graphic content in this one, as the main character endures brutal hazing rituals, finds employment as a pimp, and eventually begins a graphic love affair with one of the prostitutes.

Formally, *The Tribe* might call to mind the mechanics of early cinema. In content, it's closer to teen dystopias like Lindsay Anderson's *If...* or Larry Clark's *Kids*. If those don't ring a bell, a more familiar point of reference might be *Lord of the Flies*, where a lack of adult supervision leads to authoritarian chest-thumping.

The Tribe might not be the most diplomatic choice for your Wednesday evening, but it will stick to your ribs when you wake up the next morning. Come to it with a strong stomach and an open mind. – Dan Schank

7:30 p.m., Wednesday, Nov. 12 // FILM at the Erie Art Museum, 20 E. Fifth St. // facebook.com/FILMErieArtMuseum

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CALENDAR

An Event For Horrible People... But For a Good Cause

The tagline of the popular game *Cards Against Humanity* is: "A party game for horrible people." On Nov. 18 Lavery Brewing Company and the *Erie Reader* are teaming up to put on "an event for horrible people, but for a good cause."

Pat Miller, the pub manager at Lavery's, gave me that reworked tagline as insight into the event, for which he will be emcee. The quick and dirty is that it will be a sort of game show where ten teams of up to four players will compete in a large bout of *Cards Against Humanity* - with celebrity judges from both Lavery's and the *Reader*. Teams all register for \$20 with proceeds going to benefit local families in need this holiday season through Second Harvest Food Bank.

When I asked Pat about the initial response to the "event for horrible people, but for a good cause," he said the teams are filling up quickly and that he expects to pack the pub for this special occasion. Which is no surprise, since this particular pub doesn't have bright, glowing rectangles hanging on the walls, ruining the ambiance. Rather, it has become the spot to enjoy a locally-brewed pint while playing tabletop games with your friends. Pat mentioned that both proprietors and patrons of Lavery's alike love *Cards Against Humanity*, which is confirmed by the fact that there are several decks always present that people play on regular occasion.

Who are the celebrity judges you might be wondering? Representing Lavery will be Owners and Founders Jason and Nikki Lavery, and repping the *Reader* will be our very own Editors-in-chief Adam Welsh and Brian Graham. So mark your calendars, and get ready to enjoy an evening of great brews, fine foods, and a lively party game for horrible people doing something for a good cause. - John Lindvay

6 to 9 p.m. // 128 W. 12th St. // 454.0405

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Erie Together 2014 Community Forum
Nov. 18 - time TBD
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras Pier 455.1260.

Erie Maritime Lecture and Movie Series
Nov. 18 - 6:30 p.m.
150 E. Front St. 452.2744.

Community Singing Circle with Todd Crowley
Nov. 18 - 7 p.m.
216 Maple Ave, Corry. corrycommunitycalendar@gmail.com.

Erie Otters vs. Plymouth Whalers
Nov. 19 - 11 a.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. ottershockey.com.

Fireside Talk - Crows
Nov. 19 - 7 p.m.
Rotary Pavilion, Presque Isle State Park. trecpi.org.

Business After Hours - Gannon University
Nov. 20 - 5 p.m.
Gannon University, 130 W. Fourth St. 454.7191 x146.

Dave Coulier
Nov. 20 to 22 - Thursday 6:30 p.m. & Friday, Saturday 9:30 p.m.
Jr's Last Laugh, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Erie Bayhawks vs. Fort Wayne Mad Ants
Nov. 21 - 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. 790.5600.

Super Santa Saturday
Nov. 22 - 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Clown Hall, 512 Kelso Drive. 315.4788.

Thanksgiving on the Peninsula
Nov. 22 - 10 a.m. to noon
Lighthouse parking area, Presque Isle State Park. trecpi.org.

Erie Bayhawks vs. Fort Wayne Mad Ants
Nov. 21 - 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. 790.5600.

Decorate Your Own Christmas Wreath
Nov. 23 - 10 a.m. to noon
Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Drive. trecpi.org.

Nov. 13 - 8 a.m. to noon
UPMC Health Plan Community Room, 109 Boston Store Place. dbrennan@erie.pa.us.

Nov. 13 - 5 p.m.
Erie County Public Library, 160 E Front St. 451.6927.

Erie Bluffs After Dark Night Hike
Nov. 14 - 6:30 p.m.
Erie Bluff State Park, Route 5, Lake City. 833.7424.

PA State Yo-Yo Contest
Nov. 15 - 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafras St. mjeanneret@visiterie.com.

Cozy Christmas Craft & Vendor Show
Nov. 15 - 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 3108 Sterrettania Road. tstot@email.com.

Erie Otters vs. Kitchener Rangers
Nov. 15 - 7 p.m.
Erie Insurance Arena, 809 French St. ottershockey.com.

Bill Cosby
Nov. 16 - 7 p.m.
Warner Theater, 811 State St. 452.4857.

Erie Day School Art & Music Festival

No, I don't want to buy any of your kid's cookies that they're selling for school. I don't want one of their stupid coupon books, calendars, scented soaps, or sports memorabilia, either. But as far as school fundraisers go, this is something to which I will gladly contribute: Erie Day School's Art & Music Festival.



KIM RODRIGUEZ

"Erie Day School has so many links to the arts that we figured it would be a great spot to do this," said Steve Trohoske, jazz bassist and organizer of the two-day event that will benefit the 8th grade class at Erie Day. "Also, we don't have much of a 'festival of the arts' going on right now, so this might be a perfect time to start something, so we came up with the idea and Erie Day just embraced it."

Poets, dancers, and, of course, musicians will perform both Saturday and Sunday, and works by a host of local artists – including Lena Logvina and Sarah Millspaw, among others – will be available for purchase; so if you're looking to start your holiday shopping (ugh!) early, listen to some cool tunes by the likes of East Ave, Eric Brewer & Friends, PotWhole, Sean Patrick & The New Grass Revolution, World Of Music's School of Rock, Steve Trohoske's Bass/Drum/Bass, and Zack Orr all while helping out a good cause, well, I'll see you there – tickets are just \$5 for both days, and children under 12 are free. – Cory Vaillancourt
10 a.m. to 6 p.m. // Friday & Saturday Nov. 22 & 23 // 1372 W. Sixth St. // 392.2933 or 572.8876



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

King's Rook Club presents Chickstock featuring Claire Stuczynski, Brooke Surgener, and Whitney White

Three years ago, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame had a pretty cool exhibit on display titled *Women Who Rock*, a special show focusing on the impacts various femmes have had on the music industry. I'd start listing some of them, but there's a long list of performers with the XX chromosome that deserve to be mentioned and I do have to follow a word-count. So let's focus local, because Erie's going to have its own display of women who rock, except instead of historical memorabilia in a building shaped like a turntable, we'll be treated to a pretty stellar lineup of some extremely talented locals.

Enter Chickstock, a special Friday, Nov. 21 performance at the King's Rook Club featuring Claire Stuczynski, Brooke Surgener, and Whitney White, a trio of ladies who can put on quite a show.

"Sometimes you'll hear 'Oh, you're really good for a girl,' or people will think that someone is good because she's a girl," Surgener says of some people's perception of female artists. "No, just focus on the fact that I'm a good songwriter."

And write songs these girls can. The trio will be putting on a display for the free show, playing their own tunes separately, as well as joining together for a few choice cuts, a performance that should help inspire even more people to commit themselves to music.

"I have girls come to up to me, because I'll give them confidence to be like 'Wow, I guess I could do that,'" Surgener says. "When I was younger, girls weren't playing shows all that often, but now it's much more common, which is very cool. It's good for other girls to see and it's good for other people to see so that we're not always being stereotyped for having a vagina, but more so for the fact that we're just good."

You can see just how good Surgener, Stuczynski, and White are for yourself at Chickstock, a night dedicated to women who rock. – Alex Bieler

9 p.m. // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub

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Docksider Gets Freaky with Funk

He's a superhero – a magician – a bump-bump-bump music-makin' Freek.

With bass guitar in nimble hands – and the Bump Assembly beside him – Freekbass is bringing the funk to State Street when he and the band fly from their Cincinnati home base into the Docksider on Saturday, Nov. 15.

He was brought up and brewed up in the same funky hotbed that gave the world James Brown's King Records and Bootsy Collins and the Ohio Players – and that sure shows – but anyone who's at all familiar with Freekbass' signature funk knows he's doing his own thing, and doing it right.

"As much as I listen to Sly Stone, Stevie Wonder, OutKast, or George Clinton, I also listen to, groove [to], and feel groups such as Radiohead, Daft Punk, STS9 and DJ Shadow," he said in a *Relix Magazine* interview. "So, just like when P-Funk started and were influenced by groups like Zappa, Bowie, and The MC5, these groups of our era are what crawled into my funk."

His current album, *Junkyard Waltz*, features an eclectic collection of acclaimed musical guests like Mike Gordon, Buckethead, Bernie Worrell, Jen Durkin, and Gary "Mudbone" Cooper, whose sounds feel right at home alongside the mighty Freekbass.

And anyone who appreciates funk of the groundbreaking variety will feel right at home at the Docksider this Saturday night. – Ryan Smith

7 to 10 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15, // 1015 State St. // facebook.com/DocksiderErie



SONYA ZIEGLER

Kublai Khan invades Erie

When many people think of heavy music, bands like Metallica, Slayer, or Anthrax may come to mind. Younger readers might think of Slipknot, or the more underground savvy might start playing a Code Orange song in their heads. But with every generation of metal comes a new definition of what it means to be "heavy," and come Nov. 15, that definition will be made clear on the Basement Transmissions' stage.

Sherman, Tex.-based metalcore band Kublai Khan is making the trek up to Erie alongside Barrier and Gift Giver, to bring their brutal – and almost impossibly heavy – riffage with them. It's safe to say there won't be any shortage of open-note chugging and breakdowns that night.

Kublai Khan is touring in support of their album *Balancing Survival and Happiness* released on Artery Recordings earlier this year, featuring elements of both traditional metalcore and hardcore, sometimes comparable to Erie's own Domestic War.

Barrier and Gift Giver are similar in sound, although in my opinion, Barrier is the more interesting of the two, as Gift Giver relies too heavily on shock value in their lyrics.

Pine City, Pa.'s Take Over Soldiers and Agathist from Erie open up the bill, setting the stage for the night by playing two distinct styles (TOS being melodic hardcore and Agathist being slightly death metal) that if combined, would essentially create the same sound as the headlining bands.

In my opinion, Take Over Soldiers is one of the best newer bands in the general north western Pennsylvania region that I've heard in a while, but all of these bands are something not to be missed by anyone who appreciates heavy music, no matter what generation of "heavy" their come from. – Tommy Shannon

6 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 15 // Tickets \$10 presale \$12 day of show // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // facebook.com/basementTransmissions



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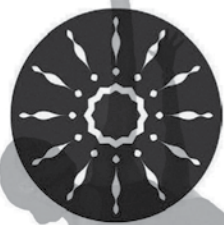


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MUSIC REVIEWS

Run The Jewels

Run The Jewels 2
Mass Appeal

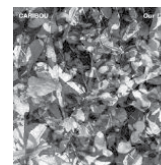


★★★★★

To say that hip-hop fanatics were excited about the release of *Run The Jewels 2* would be an understatement. I mean, this is a fanbase that raised over \$40,000 to have *RTJ2* remixed with cat noises (true story). That being said, super rappers El-P and Killer Mike easily met expectations on their blazing second album. Nobody is safe from the dynamic duo's fiery tongues, from tyrannical cops to Donald Sterling, with the latter being roasted at the end of the blistering "Lie, Cheat, Steal." *RTJ2* packs a powerful 11-track punch, with Mike and El blasting out of the gate with the impassioned "Jeopardy," never slowing down on bangers like the thumping "Blockbuster Night Part I" and the powerful – sonically and lyrically – "Early." From the scorching verses to the inspired production, *RTJ2* is a massive success from a duo that seems to be having more fun than anyone else in the business. – Alex Bieler

Caribou

Our Love
Merge



★★★★★

On *Our Love*, Dan Snaith's sixth album under the name Caribou, the Canadian musician tackles the topic of love, of course, which results in 10 tracks full of intimate compositions that still manage to be quite danceable. Album opener "Can't Do Without You" makes for four minutes of hypnotic dance music that, unless you happen to hate when lines are constantly repeated, should leave you grooving to the shifting track. Fellow single and title track "Our Love" impresses with its ability to maintain its beat throughout the slow-burner of a track. *Our Love* rewards with successive listens, as Snaith imbues a lot of subtlety in the album's intimate tracks, providing nuanced shifts where some artists may have gone for bombast. With some contributions from artists like Owen Pallett and Jessy Lanza, Snaith's tribute to his vision of love is a success. – Alex Bieler

Sloan

Commonwealth
YEP ROC



★★★★

So, you've never heard of Sloan? That's because you live 30 miles too far south. In Canada, where the band has been touring and getting radio play for more than twenty years, they are a household name. They are the steadfast rockers of the North: A grungy, straight-ahead heavy rock/pop-garage band that is never pretentious – a kind of a low-budget Oasis, without the glitz or oh-so-superior attitude; instead, just four guys making catchy and accessible rock 'n' roll. Embracing Canada's philosophy of individual liberty, each individual member of Sloan has the freedom to write their own songs, which are then recorded by the group. Since this is a double album, that means they each get four or five tunes. This makes for a surprisingly unified record musically, if not thematically. The only big miss is "Forty-Eight Portraits" – a seventeen-minute sleeper that could have been cut down to a very happy three minutes. Hey, when a band has 200-plus songs, not every one can be a winner. – Bryan Toy

The Lower Eastside Connection

The Lower Eastside Connection
Self-released



★★★★★

Alas! The previous iteration of the Lower Eastside Connection that you once knew is no more; regardless, the solid repertoire of catchy, energetic, funky tracks on this disc – including the accidentally appropriate, anthemic paean to the now-demolished Heman Janes mansion that seemed to be everywhere this past summer, "Oubliette" – are strong enough to survive the departure of keyboardist/singer Pat Troester, because the core of Erie's reigning "hippie-hop" kings (vocalist Jonny Evans, drummer Chris Head, guitarist/vocalist Dan Head, and bassist Pat Roche) remains intact. While the loss of such a key member may have crippled lesser bands, the LEC will more than make due with the addition of Justin Tapper on guitar and sometimes-electronica artist Adam "onewayness" Holquist on keys, which could lend some interesting (and much-needed) new angles to the old favorites on this album. So mourn ye not for the LEC – the king is dead; long live the king! – Cory Vaillancourt

Pro Wrestling: Alive and well in Erie, Pa.

Local organization celebrates 7th anniversary

By: Cory Vaillancourt

Professional wrestling is a succulent cocktail wiener of truth wrapped in a delicious, flaky crust of theatrical bravado.

Much like deceased(?) comedian Andy Kaufman (who famously did a performance-art stint as a woman-wrestling, red-neck-baiting, overly-litigious New York City asshole), that succulent, delicious, flaky treat is junk food for some, and sustenance for others – so much so that professional wrestling has grown from its Steinbeckian Great Depression-era roots as a barnstorming carnie show into a multi-million dollar worldwide entertainment juggernaut.

Now I don't know about you, but when I think about multi-million dollar worldwide entertainment juggernauts, I immediately think of World Wrestling Entertainment – the ubiquitous wrestling league helmed by the McMahon family for more than 60 years that has spawned such colorful cultural figures as Andre the Giant, Hulk Hogan, the

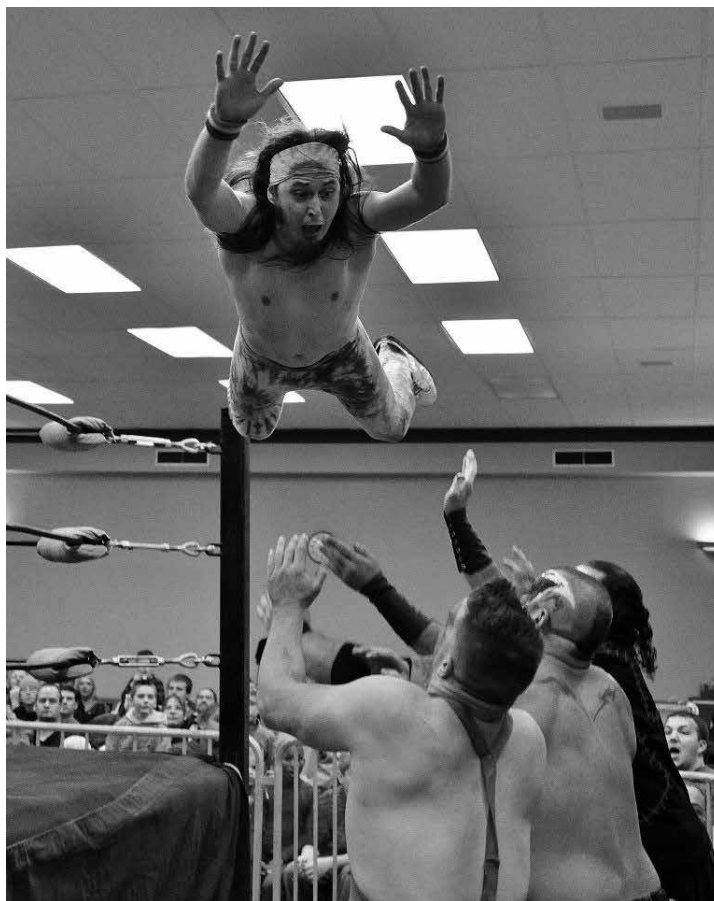
Professional wrestling has grown from its Steinbeckian Great Depression-era roots into a multi-million dollar worldwide entertainment juggernaut.

Iron Sheik, and the Undertaker.

Vince McMahon & Co. have undoubtedly taken wrestling to new heights in the past half-century, but if you look closely, near the edges of the gigantic shadow cast by this megalithic multimedia conglomerate, you'll see – in the tiny social clubs and dingy darkened bars and drafty high school gymnasiums, in hundreds of cities across North America – that beneath that gigantic shadow thrive a plethora of small, independent leagues, like Pro Wrestling Rampage right here in Erie.

“Pro Wrestling Rampage is the best wrestling bang-for-your-buck anywhere going,” says Jamie Scott, owner of the promotion. “We pride ourselves on being high-action, high intensity entertainment.”

PWR does a monthly show at the Saga Club, generally on the second Saturday of the month, while also performing various random shows as opportunities arise – like last summer's event in conjunction with the Erie Sea Wolves baseball team at Jerry Uht Park, during which a ring was set up on the field and wrestlers from PWR squared off against each other. These events can involve up to 30 “personalities” – including wrestlers, managers, announcers, referees, and handlers;



however, PWR itself boasts nearly 60 participants in all, some of whom come from as far as Toronto to appear at events like their upcoming “7th Anniversary Spectacular.”

“It's going to be spectacular,” Scott deadpans. “We have two of Erie's best wrestlers going one-on-one for the Heavyweight Title. Big League John McChesney will defend his belt against [former tag team partner] Omega Aaron Draven.”

As though the existing intrigues of that storyline aren't sufficient, McChesney delicately implied to me that he would get the better of his friend-turned-foe during the aforementioned contest.

“I'm gonna beat that dude's ass,” he tells me by phone one bleary eve, “because I am the man of Erie Pennsylvania.”

“Big League” is a great example of the Kaufmannesque and Kafkaesque duality of this endeavor – a highly trained, highly dan-

gerous individual who morphs into and literally lives his character. When I questioned him on such routine banalities of real life as his day gig and how he got into wrestling, he acted like I was an idiot who was questioning the very sun in the sky.

His day gig, he told me, is being Big League. All day. Every day.

And he's always been a wrestler, just like the universe has always been here since the Beginning, since the Alpha.

But can Big League best “Omega?”

I plan on showing up to this 7th Anniversary Spectacular to find out. If you do, too, you'll also catch the main event: A steel cage tag-team title match. Krimson and War Child – known as the “Dead Wrestling Society” – will defend the belts they just won last month against the men they took it from – “Homegrown Heroes” Bigtime Bill Collier and Jimi the Hippie.

“They've been feuding since this summer,” Scott tells me. “It's been getting violent, and really, there's no end in sight with these two



The Pro Wrestling Rampage 7th Anniversary Spectacular will take place on Nov. 15 at the Saga Club, the location of PWR's monthly shows.

tag teams. We had to put them in a cage because one of the referees got injured during one of their matches, last month.”

Krimson – a deranged, Joker-like figure – blew some sort of red mist into the referee's face, temporarily blinding him.

“He won't be back for some time,” Scott says of the unfortunate ref.

Regardless, Scott is optimistic and insistent about the future of professional wrestling in Erie. Through the matches PWR holds, and the promo videos they shoot, PWR is reaching a hungry fan base eager for bigtime wrestling in a small-town atmosphere.

“We're hungry,” he says of the company's long-term goals. “We're not going to rest on our laurels, because we haven't made it yet.”

PWR's 7th Anniversary Spectacular takes place on Saturday, Nov. 15th at the Saga Club, 3828 Washington Ave. Doors open at 6:15. Tickets are \$13, \$11, \$10, and \$5 for students under 16. For more information, check out www.Facebook.com/ProWrestlingRampage.

Email Cory Vaillancourt at cVaillancourt@ErieReader.com or find him on Twitter @VLNCR. Kay Fabian contributed to this report.

Tom Green – Still Crazy After All These Years

Comedy legend makes first Erie appearance

By: Cory Vaillancourt

Although comedian Tom Green first gained international notice with his rude, crude, and socially unacceptable brand of jackassery in the late '90s with his uproarious gag-based MTV talker, *The Tom Green Show*, his comedic roots lie in standup. Performing in Ottawa-area comedy clubs as a 15-year old, Green honed the razor-sharp wit that would one day lead him to guest-host for David Letterman, appear in several movies, and grace the cover of *Rolling Stone* – all before the age of 30.

Nowadays, Green hosts a popular podcast as well as a weekly TV show on Marc Cuban's AXS-TV network, but he still continues to blur the line between art and life in much the same way Andy Kaufman did (does?), and has been experiencing a bit of a resurgence as a standup comedian of late. Accordingly, he's about to make his first-ever performance in Erie, and I recently had the chance to chat with him – which was, ummm, interesting... as you'd probably expect from a guy who once painted stripes all over his parents' house while they were on vacation.

Cory Vaillancourt: Hi, Tom Green; thanks for your time today.

Tom Green: Hey, great to talk to you.

CV: I'm excited to talk to you because I saw *Freddy Got Fingered* in the theater years ago, and what I've always wanted to ask you since then is if I could have my money back.

TG: [Laughing] No, it's too late for that.

CV: Awwwww... Alright. Have you been to Erie before?

TG: I have not, but I'm looking forward to it.

CV: Oh, it's great, you'll love it. And...

TG: So you're one of the people who didn't get *Freddy Got Fingered*?

CV: I didn't get *Fingered*.

TG: You're sort of like a middle-of-the-road kind of guy? You like your comedy bland, do ya?

CV: I've certainly never been accused of being a Paul Reiser fan.

TG: [Laughing] The movie was definitely designed to make fun of people who are closed-minded.

CV: Well, you did win a Razzie for that, and I think you were the only person to ever show up and accept the award?

TG: Yeah, well, that's the worst award show in the history of award shows. They were never even able to get a TV deal for that show, so the Razzies should give themselves a Razzie for having never succeeded as an awards show.

[Growing slightly agitated] But negativity in our society permeates throughout everything, right? It cuts through everything. Negativity is very pervasive in our online society, so it's easy to make fun of things that are different, but the fact is, anybody



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

who's done any sort of research on the matter knows that *Freddie Got Fingered* is a hugely popular movie worldwide, has millions of fans, and is a very profitable film, which is more than can be said for most films that come out of Hollywood. It's made lots and lots of people laugh, made over \$35 million on DVD alone, and it was a very low-budget movie.

So it's one of those things that like, negativity can sort of permeate through the internet and people like yourself can end up getting false perceptions, when it's completely the opposite.

So hopefully you don't write that in your article, that *Freddy Got Fingered* was not a good movie, because a lot of your readers will probably think that you don't know what you're talking about.

CV: I guess I'll leave that up to them.

TG: Absolutely. You will be amazed at how many people love the movie. I've basically been touring the world for the last 6 or 7 years doing standup, and at the end of my shows I shout out a line from the movie and the entire audience begins shouting out their favorite lines from the movie and it's a hilarious experience when you realize that every city in the world – whether it's Sydney, Australia, or Melbourne, New York City, Chicago, or Erie, Pennsylvania – you have thousands of people who have memorized every line in the film. It's kind of be-

coming a modern-day *Rocky Horror Picture Show*.

CV: Perhaps I'll have to give it another shot before you get here, and I'll let you know how that works out.

TG: Sure!

CV: So if you're done crucifying me on *Freddy Got Fingered*, let's talk about your comedic style, which has always been a bit provocative in an Andy Kaufman kind of way and seems to be mostly about putting people into awkward situations.

TG: Well, *Freddy Got Fingered* was an example of that. It was definitely something that was supposed to make people uncomfortable, and you have a large segment of people that are laughing at the discomfort of some of the middle-of-the-road people in the audience who don't know what to expect next or can't believe what they're looking at. That's really the joke.

So I take it you're not a fan of Andy Kaufman either?

CV: It's sacrilegious to say such things to me, Tom.

Kaity [Tom's assistant, who is monitoring the call]: Cory, we're going to have time for just one more question.

CV: How's *Tom Green Live* on AXS-TV doing?

TG: Yeah, we're having a great time, we're loving it. Tune in every Thursday.

CV: And what can people expect from

Tom Green: Comedian Tom Green rose to fame in the '90s with his Andy Kaufman-esque brand of comedy on the *Tom Green Show* but is returning to his stand-up roots, as he's on tour now, which features an upcoming stop in Erie at *JR's Last Laugh*.

your upcoming performance here in Erie?

TG: It's going to be hilarious. We're going to have a great time. If anyone's seen the special I did on *Showtime*, they'll know what to expect – it's sort of a high-energy, ridiculous, stand-up comedy show with lots of crowd interaction. I really look forward to seeing everyone there. It's like a party – lots of jokes and good times. We'll drink some beers and just celebrate life together with a bunch of people who want to come out and enjoy some absurd comedy.

Tom Green appears at Jr's Last Laugh, 1402 State St., on Friday, Nov. 14 and Saturday, Nov. 15, where he'll perform two shows each evening. For more information on Tom, visit www.TomGreen.com. For tickets, log on to www.JrsLastLaugh.net or call 461.0911.

Cory Vaillancourt can be contacted at cVaillancourt@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @VLCNRT.

Geeked Out

Mercyhurst Intelligence Professor wants to help pre-entrepreneurs with Quickstarter

By: John Lindvay

By this point in time, I'm sure many of you are aware of the massive crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. It has democratized project funding and has changed the game for many entrepreneurs with little to no start-up capital looking to fund their first big project. Kris Wheaton, an intelligence professor at Mercyhurst University, wants to leverage crowdfunding platforms, like Kickstarter, to help usher in more pre-entrepreneurs into our area and help them get their first project off the ground.

The program is called Quickstarter. The goal is to help address many of the larger issues that plague our region: Stunted growth of new businesses, lack of entrepreneurship, and brain drain.

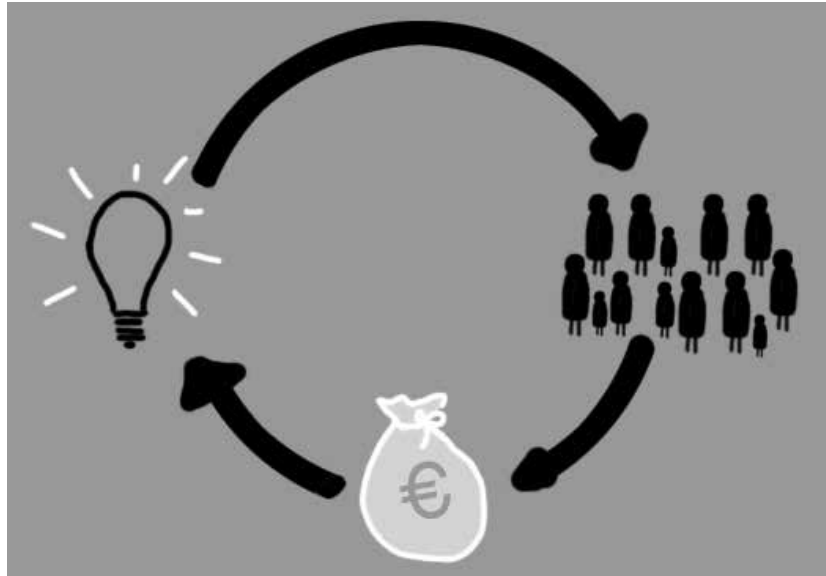
There are many organizations already looking to aid in this effort, but Quickstarter is different.

While most nonprofits in the region are eager and ready to help small-business owners take the next step in growing their businesses, there is a lack of what Kris calls "pre-entrepreneurs."

"The difference between what I am trying to do and what they do is captured in the differences between a person who wants to run a business and the person who just wants to get a project done," Kris explains.

That is, Quickstarter is geared to those individuals who have little or no experience and want to learn the ropes while delivering on their project.

Kris thinks that this will synchronize nicely with institutions already in the area that operate as business incubators/accelerators. A successful Quickstarter could then feed into these larger nonprofit operations and help grow our economy in areas that will offer a wider variety of work other than more traditional areas, like manufacturing or insurance. In some ways, this program could groom the next generation of businessmen and women who will help drive our economy in the coming years – all through



ROCIO LARA

crowdfunding platforms, which in Kris' experience, draw in money from outside the region.

The prospect of having funds enter our region through crowdfunding for projects is good news considering the current business climate Erie faces with the looming exit of major employers, like GE. Kris adds that when money comes in through crowdfunding, it is easier to keep the money inside our city's economy. In his own experience with his two successful Kickstarter campaigns, he partnered with other local businesses, such as Silkscreen Unlimited and Printing Concepts, to keep his costs low while delivering high-quality products to the backers who pledged from around the world.

This is something he wants to foster even further, as Quickstarter begins in earnest with its goal of facilitating between 10 and 25 projects in its first year – all while utilizing local businesses to help these pre-entrepreneurs work on projects that are sourcing funding from outside our community.

A benefit to going down the path of crowdfunding is that it often moves faster than traditional business startups do. "A new company has to craft a marketing message and develop a business plan," Kris says. "With crowdfunding, you have to do the same thing, but the reaction is far more immediate and far more market driven."

And ultimately, he adds, that by the end of a campaign, a prospective business owner will know if he or she has a viable product.

And it's no secret that Erie – a city home to four colleges – is rife with young and industrious individuals with ideas of their own. Hell, any night at the Plymouth Tavern you will hear at least five people tell you something Erie desperately needs. Quickstarter can be their path to actually committing to some of the talk that spills so easily out of their mouths and is left all too often lying on the bar.

Currently, Kris is running the first Kickstarter that is being conducted under the Quickstarter program. Perhaps you are familiar with Erie's own pop-up Thai restaurant, Like My Thai, run by Michael and Elisabeth Augustine. Right now, they are running a Kickstarter to change from a pop-up to a brick-and mortar-restaurant within our city. They have already hit their funding goal and are trending to surpass it by 500 percent before the deadline for contributions hits.

So how about it: Anyone got any bright ideas and want to try and get it crowdfunded? Quickstarter may just be what we need to turn ideas into new businesses.

John Lindvay can be contacted at jlindvay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter at [@FightStrife](https://twitter.com/FightStrife).

Verizon Wireless Under Fire for Ad-Targeting Program

By: Brian X. Chen

Google and Facebook are not the only companies tracking your online activities to customize ads. Verizon Wireless has recently come under fire from privacy advocates for running a similar program on its cellular network.

Verizon quietly started its ad-targeting program two years ago and this year teamed up with other data management and advertising companies. Late last month, Jacob Hoffman-Andrews of the Electronic Frontier Foundation noticed the program and sounded the alarm.

"Verizon users might want to start looking for another provider," he wrote in a blog post on Monday about the program, which involves injecting a header containing a unique, anonymous identifier into a Verizon Wireless user's request for a web page. "Indeed, while we're concerned about Verizon's own use of the header, we're even more worried about what it allows others to find out about Verizon users."

Verizon's ad-targeting method groups these identifiers into different buckets of demographics and interests, so if a website is looking to serve certain ads to a specific type of customer, it will look for those buckets and serve up those ads.

Here's the kicker: Even though Verizon allows users to opt out of the program by calling a phone number or changing their privacy settings, Verizon keeps tacking an identifier onto the customer's web browsing for "other authentication purposes," such as logging in to Verizon's apps, according to the company.

A Verizon spokeswoman declined to comment but pointed to a company document explaining its marketing program. In the document, Verizon says it frequently changes the anonymous identifier to protect customer privacy. The company adds that it is unlikely that websites and ad companies could create profiles on customers, because the identifiers change often.

The Electronic Frontier Foun-

ation says it is concerned that Verizon could be violating a federal law requiring phone companies to keep customer data confidential. In September, Verizon agreed to a \$7.4 million settlement with the Federal Communications Commission, which found that Verizon's landline business had failed to inform two million customers of their privacy rights, including the ability to opt out of marketing programs.

Mr. Hoffman-Andrews said in an interview that he was concerned about what marketing companies and government agencies like the National Security Agency could do with these web-browsing identifiers. They could stitch together someone's anonymous identifier with web cookies to create a detailed profile that follows the person's web-browsing activities, even after Verizon generates a new anonymous identifier for the user, he said.

Verizon is not alone in its effort to expand into mobile marketing. AT&T acknowledged that it was testing a similar program, which involved inserting a numeric code into a user's web requests. This code would change every 24 hours, and if AT&T goes forward with the program, it will allow users to opt out completely, meaning the identifier would stop being inserted altogether, according to Emily Edmonds, a director of corporate communications for AT&T.

"Many different companies use advertising identifiers today, including handset and operating system manufacturers," Ms. Edmonds said in a statement. "We believe that we would be providing industry-leading privacy protections."

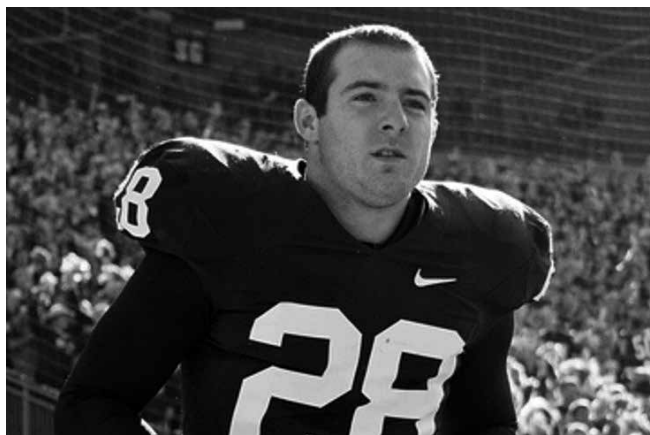
The Electronic Frontier Foundation said it was weighing its options for taking action against Verizon. It could file a complaint with the F.C.C., file a class-action complaint or ask state attorneys general to investigate the matter.

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ER Sports

Addressing the Future of Athletics in the Erie School District

By James R. LeCorchick



General McLane standout Drew Astorino went on to become a three-year starter at Penn State University after a fateful call from Joe Paterno, who offered him the squad's last scholarship.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A SHORT TIME ago, Erie School District Superintendent **Jay Badams** called and asked me to be part of a steering committee to look into the future of athletics in the district, and for a variety of reasons, I was delighted.

Just for starters, I was excited that the superintendent was interested enough to address this issue that borders between disgraceful and almost laughable. I could never understand why alums, parents of current students, athletes, and people that are just plain concerned about high school sports in the City have not been displaying outrage the past 20 years about the situation.

So to make myself perfectly clear, I responded immediately to Badams' request with a resounding "yes," as I have been an advocate of this type of action for many years. I was honored and delighted to be asked, and I would've also been extremely hypocritical not to accept.

The first – and maybe only meeting (I'm not sure about this) – was held recently and lasted a little more than two hours. I was incredibly impressed with the group of about 15 people that was assembled, the group definitely united in the common goal of making sports teams in the district better, as well as attempting to come up with a solution of how to get more young people involved in athletics.

Many years of experience were represented in this group, and the wisdom – and passion – was evident with the many ideas that were floated around during the session.

Ofentimes with a group this large, two hours isn't nearly long enough, but everyone had their say and listened intently to the other members, even if they disagreed. There's no doubt everyone shared a common feeling that the negativity regarding athletics in the Erie School District had reached epic proportions.

I do not want to slight anyone in attendance, but four people that shared extremely pertinent information (from my viewpoint) were: former City Athletic Director **Gus Picardo**, current AD **John Dahlstrand**,

and **Kenny Brasington**, who has great insight, as he has been on both sides of the ball (pun intended) as a head football coach and a high school principal in the ESD.

The old saying "that's easier said than done" could pertain here, as there are many outside influences that have to be considered when dealing with public schools, including the PIAA (and that's a story – or a series of stories – that would be best left for another time). However, there were numerous problems identified and many solutions offered. I know these problems need to be addressed, but it's only possible to deal with a few at a time. Also, some of these items are nearly impossible to deal with for a variety of reasons, including the ever-popular "lack of funds."

I have personally selected my top two negatives and fully believe the solutions are extremely doable – and can get done without any expense. That's correct! And I do mean without the outlay of any cash whatsoever. That would be a beautiful thing nowadays.

The only problem is that it will take some guts from the Erie School Board, and that is always extremely iffy when talking about a political bombshell situation or two. A gutsy move from politicians and the correct thing to do aren't exactly synonymous.

NUMERO UNO – This is inevitable: Consolidation.

There is not enough talent to go around for three schools, and actually there really isn't enough to have two very successful programs in the city. Ideally, there should be sports in just one school, but that is never going to happen, so athletics in two schools is the best solution at the moment.

Actually, there are at least five teams in the district that didn't have enough athletes to fill out rosters.

I believe there should be an east-side school and a west-side school, and the only logical solution would be to take athletics out of Central Tech and have teams at East High School and Strong Vincent High School, SV and East both retaining the current names and keeping the tradition of the schools

past.

It would be hard for the alumni of Central Tech to accept, but feelings need to be put aside when running a business – and education is a huge business. Check the taxpayer dollars being spent on public education.

The Academy Alumni had to witness their school close, and then the Tech faithful lost their school when it was changed to Central and then Central Tech. I felt bad when my grade school (St. Andrew's) was shut down, but I knew it was the correct move and I didn't run out and start a campaign to keep it open.

It had to be done, and I accepted it.

There is only one problem in eliminating athletics from a high school: The fact that it's a political bombshell – and I'm not sure the Erie School Board has the intestinal fortitude to make the move, as proven a few years back.

Everything was in place several years ago to move athletics out of Central High School, but the Board buckled under pressure from some Central students and parents and some alums. Hopefully, they have toughened up in the past few years and realize the situation they are in charge of has become the laughingstock of the area.

The one argument that will be heard is there will be less teams and consequently less athletes participating. This is entirely incorrect, as more students will come out to be part of a winning program instead of being associated with losing teams that are getting crushed.

There are exceptions to the trend (boys basketball is solid), but not enough to negate this move.

This must be done!

NUMERO DOS – I hate to admit when I'm wrong, but I was sort of wrong on this one: The C-average rule.

When it was first instituted, I thought it was a great idea, and it was, for a while. However, times have changed, and it's now time for this rule to also be changed.

I don't know if the Erie School District had done a study to see if this rule has worked – shame on them if they didn't – but, without having any data to work with, I believe this move has outlived its usefulness. Now that the number of potential athletes participating in high school athletics has dwindled dramatically, the ESD has to try and reach out to all potential athletes.

Over the past 30 years, I have seen many athletes coming out of eighth grade just disappear off the charts. When I inquired as to where they went, I was told they didn't feel they were capable of maintaining a C-average and subsequently dropped out of playing sports.

Needless to say, the other option was running the streets rather than be in a structured setting after school. This needs to be repaired.

As I said before, I hate to admit being wrong, but I was wrong!

Fortunately, this can be dealt with extremely easily. With one vote by the Erie School Board, this rule can be changed to coincide

with the PIAA eligibility rule that is not as stringent as the ESD.

Unfortunately, this will also call for a gutsy vote by the board. Will they be tough enough to make the right decision? Time will tell.

Also, I would like to point out that school board member **John Harkins** was at this steering committee get-together and appeared concerned and ready to address the serious issues.

In my heart, I believe he cares and will make the correct decisions.

RECENTLY, I ran into former General McLane and Penn State star **Drew Astorino**, and it reminded me that he is definitely one of the finest all-around athletes to ever perform in the area, the ex-lancer star leading GM to state championships in both football and basketball – in the same school year. An almost unheard of happening, ever, in the state of Pennsylvania.

While flying under the radar as one of Erie's best, he also was virtually unnoticed coming out of high school after his senior football season despite the incredible year he had.

While a guest on my *Sports Blitz* show, the proud General McLane grad explained how he had accepted a scholarship offer to Kent State but had it rescinded when he told the Ohio school he was going to look around.

To make a long story short, despite his incredible credentials at GM, he was left with one offer – a potential scholarship to Iowa. However, on the day he was going to call the Hawkeyes, **Joe Paterno** called him at home and informed him the Nittany Lions had a scholarship to offer.

Astorino was thrilled and immediately told the coaching legend he would gladly join the PSU program. Basically the Edinboro-native went from an afterthought (he received the last scholarship PSU had to offer) to a three-year starter. This may've been a surprise to Penn State fans elsewhere, but not to the area fans, who knew Astorino as a great athlete with great character and desire.

One of the humblest and classiest young men I met in my 40 years of covering sports, he is a role model that coaches from every high school – and grade school – in the area should introduce to their student athletes.

Personally, I think he would be a great coach, but then there's no doubt he's going to be successful at any venture he pursues.

When I introduced him on the radio, I said, "I want to welcome Drew Astorino who led General McLane to state championships in football and basketball." He explained, "I helped General McLane, with many great teammates, win two state championships."

Astorino, whose brother Matt is a starter on one of Gannon's best football teams ever (see a trend here?), is a Territory Manager (North Atlantic Pet Sales) for Boehringer Ingelheim.

James R. LeCorchick can be contacted at JRLSportsReport@gmail.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @JRLSports.

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