

The local voice for news, arts and culture.

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ERIE READER

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ERIE'S BAYFRONT TAKES SHAPE

How the **Convention Center Authority**,
Scott Enterprises, and **Tom Kennedy**
are Shaping our Waterfront's Future


The Rant Returns to Erie:
An Interview with **Lewis Black**

Mushroomhead

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The Erie Reader is the local voice for news, arts, and culture, and is Erie's only independent, alternative newspaper. Founded in 2011, the Reader has quickly become the region's award-winning source for arts coverage, a strong cultural compass, and a dynamic resource for news and opinion. With a dedication to long-form journalism and a commitment to provoking thoughtful discussion, the Reader tells the stories of the people and places making and shaping Erie, while highlighting the events and issues influencing life in northwestern Pennsylvania. The Erie Reader is published every other week at The Corry Journal, 28 W. South St., Corry, Pa. 16407. The Erie Reader is distributed at over 250 high foot-traffic locations in Pennsylvania from North East to Girard to Edinboro. In addition to appearing in print, Erie Reader adds new content daily at ErieReader.com as well social media sites. All rights reserved. All content © Flagship Multimedia, Inc, 1001 State St., Suite 901, Erie, Pa. 16501. No part of this publication may be reproduced without permission. The opinions of our columnists and contributors are their own and do not always reflect that of the editorial board or organization. Direct inquiries to 814.314.9364 or contact@ErieReader.com.

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From the Editors

2014 began with a presage: Barely five days into the year, a man was shot in the chest at a private party at the East Erie Turners building. His name was Rashid Anderson, and his death marked the first homicide in Erie last year.

As we enter 2015 and look back over the past year, we find double-digit deaths by shootings and more than four-hundred reported shots fired. And as we finish crossing the threshold from 2014 to 2015, finalizing our year-end lists, concluding our reflections, and turning our sights finally to the future, we find Erie at a critical time in its history, where now more than ever, we need bold leadership willing to take action to move us forward.

Which sounds like old-hat at this point if you turn to our pages often for news and opinion. Yet potentially dynamic times lie immediately ahead — if we press, challenge, and demand greatness from those around us, particularly our elected officials.

In response to last year's first homicide, Mayor Joe Sinnott told Erie Times-News' Kevin Flowers that "anti-violence initiatives have worked to curb this stuff, but it continues. We have to have community involvement."

Community involvement is vital, and it works because it creates awareness. Sonya Arrington, who founded the Mothers Against Teen Violence initiative, is proof. After losing her son five years ago to violent crime, Arrington is unwavering in her campaign to combat these issues through her message of nonviolence.

But if 2014 taught us anything, it's that we shouldn't be willing to rely solely on the Arringtons of the world. We need our city leaders to be not just in front of the cameras and tape recorders; we need them to be on the front lines, meeting with the community they represent, addressing all of "this stuff" on the streets.

In short, we need more action, period. Otherwise, like 2014, 2015 will be The Year Of The Gun all over again and calling for bold leadership won't be old hat, it'll be no hat because we've worn thin the brim that's pulled down to shade the eyes of those throughout the city willing to settle for complacency.

The fact that media have already begun turning attention to upcoming local elections bodes well, because it affirms that people within

our community seek to be agents of change and emissaries of progress, and it reaffirms that people want to talk about it. What would augur even better for our community is to witness those seeking leadership in the future acting now, signaling that they're genuinely interested in the betterment of Erie, not just being in front of the lights and cameras that come with mounting a campaign.

Key things are in place this year, notably the conclusion of Destination Erie, which should help answer many questions, like: Where do we go from here, and who should take the reigns? Additionally, PennDOT has launched a study of our Bay-

With this issue, we've decided to begin 2015 with a comprehensive feature by Jim Wertz to look at where the bayfront development stands as we close the door to 2014 and explore what lies ahead in the coming months.

front Parkway, which should call us all to rethink and evaluate how we see the stretch of road looping our bayfront and how we utilize it.

And then there's the bayfront. Three developers — the Erie County Convention Center Authority, Scott Enterprises, and Tom Kennedy — are beginning to plot the future of our region's most valuable asset. With this issue, we've decided to begin 2015 with a comprehensive feature by Jim Wertz to look at where the bayfront development stands as we close the door to 2014 and explore what lies ahead in the coming months.

Each developer is at different stages, but each has a vision and is taking action. What is key to achieving the best possible outcome as we build upon this most precise parcel of land will be collaboration winning not just the day but the year over competition.

This message wouldn't be lost on those looking to make 2015 The Year Of Progress rather than the Year Of The Gun or another Year Of Complacency.

NOVA

Big Bang Machine

January 14 at 9pm
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Edison

January 20 at 9pm
on WQLN-TV 54.1

Street Corner Soapbox

Tom Corbett's last blow to Pennsylvania's Education

By: Jay Stevens

A judge this December granted the state's request to hand over all the powers of the York, Pennsylvania district school board to local businessman Dave Meckley, who has announced his intention in turn to hand over the schools to Charter Schools USA, a private charter-school management company. Barring a successful appeal, this will signal the first time in the nation's history that a for-profit corporation has run an entire school district.

This holiday season's gift-wrapped kick to York's – and the state's – groin is apparently outgoing-Gov. Tom Corbett's idea of spreading holiday cheer: Not content with merely gutting public education, he apparently wants to destroy it outright. Who knew he hated us so much?

The impending takeover is the end result of a series of politically manipulated events that started with Corbett's stripping of the state education budget the year he took office. Those cuts targeted the state's poorest school districts by eliminating grants and aid programs instead of making cuts across the board, and sent many schools into financial crisis, including York's, which suffered more than \$8 million in reductions.

And then this summer, the Republican-dominated state assembly passed a law that set a fairly low threshold for the state to intervene with "financially distressed" school districts – not school districts suffering *academically* – and gave the state sweeping powers to wrest control of schools from local school boards. Corbett used those powers to appoint Meckley "chief recovery officer" for the York school district after it triggered the law by asking for an advance on its state funding, and Meckley soon announced his plan for handing York over to Charter Schools USA.

The first thing you should know about charter schools is that they do not outperform public schools. In fact, charter schools hurt education overall.

A 2011 study of Pennsylvania charter schools by Stanford University's Center for Research on Education Outcomes – or "CREDO" – found that only 25 percent of those schools make gains in math and reading scores over their public counterparts, and nearly half were worse. Those performance numbers were dragged down by the state's cyber charter schools, which have been an unmitigated disaster – that same CREDO study found that *all* of the state's cyber charter schools performed worse than public schools.

That's hardly surprising, given the widespread fraud and mismanagement that plagues Pennsylvania cyber charter schools, which has cost the state at least \$30 million since 1997, according to the Center for Popular Democracy. Several state cyber charter



CHESAPEAKE BAY PROGRAM

CEOs have been imprisoned, indicted, or "retired" for fraud.

Even when charter schools succeed, it's at the cost of public education. While charter schools pick their students, skimming the best and least expensive students to educate, and receive taxpayer money for their troubles, public school students are burdened with the most difficult and most expensive students with funding that's constantly diminishing by monies poached by charter schools. Worse still, a number of studies have shown that charter schools increase racial and social stratification by favoring white and upper-income students, as well as fewer students with disabilities, for enrollment.

The second thing you should know is that for-profit charter school management corporations are concerned foremost with... well...profit, not education.

Charter schools' administrative expenses are typically higher than public schools' while spending less on students, as they dole out public money on lavish CEO and administrators' salaries. (One Pennsylvania charter CEO overseeing 500 students reported an income of \$241,000 – compared to a state superintendent's salary of around \$200,000, who supervises more than 5,000 students.)

Many charter schools, according to a report in the *Arizona Republic*, buy textbooks, maintenance and repair, and other services from the companies of board members and administrators. A prime target for cutting cost at charter schools are teachers. Not

Outgoing-Gov. Corbett signed over power of York district school board to businessman Dave Meckley, who then turned it over to Charter Schools USA.

unionized, charter school teachers are subject to lower pay and have no outlet to express grievances or concerns about working conditions. As a result, the turnover rate for teachers is high, some schools losing as much as 50 percent of their staff each year. But that may be part of the plan – newer teachers earn less.

Most charter schools aren't required to follow the same financial guidelines as public schools and often hide behind that opacity to profit at the expense of the students and out of the public eye. When a school district hires a for-profit management corporation to run their day-to-day affairs, that corporation isn't obligated by law to act in the best interest of the students or taxpayers, and isn't required to disclose its finances.

Like, for example, Charter Schools USA, which in Florida ran a real estate scheme to plump up profits at the expense of the school district. Charter Schools USA in one case, according to a Florida League of Women Voters report, purchased a former Verizon call center for about \$3 million, made minimal changes, then sold it to a front development group for \$9 million, which then leased it to the school district – run by Charter Schools USA – at an exorbitant rate, more than 20 percent of the school's budget,

Erie At Large

The Age of the Digital Voter

By: Jim Wertz

Voter engagement, or should we say the lack thereof, is the greatest threat to democracy in the United States.

The process of registering voters and then getting those voters to the polls is emerging as one of the great mysteries of the Western World alongside Stonehenge and why kids instinctively love the song "Let It Go" from the *Frozen* soundtrack.

There are a multitude of reasons why voter engagement is down. Chief among them is the fact that the process – the actual registering to vote – remains largely an analog enterprise in a digital age.

In the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, this means that you currently need to register in person at a county voter registration office and visit a number of state offices, including Armed Forces Recruitment Centers or Centers for Independent Living, among others. And voters must register 30 days before an election.

Young voters in Pa. are increasingly disenfranchised by this process, because it is less and less rational as the ubiquitously electronic app-centered world becomes their standard form of engagement.

The National Voter Registration Act of 1993 – also known as the Motor Voter Act – made it possible for voters to register and update their voter registration status when obtaining or updating their driver's license. Pennsylvania and 43 other states signed on.

It seems to be simple solution, but it was revolutionary in 1993, because it was the first time that the voter registration process came to voters rather than the other way around. Besides the motor voter law, voter registration in the U.S. largely remains a throwback to the nineteenth century.

Voters can now download an application from votespa.com, but there is currently no way to deliver the application electronically. Instead, voters are required to print the application and mail or hand-deliver the hard copy to the county voter registration office.

Young voters in Pa. are increasingly disenfranchised by this process, because it is less and less rational as the ubiquitously electronic app-centered world becomes their standard form of engagement.

Ageist critics will be quick to declare that young people aren't interested in politics



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

State Rep. Ryan Bizzarro co-sponsored same-day voter registration legislation.

electronic voter registration.

Like the Motor Voter Act, these bills are simple starts to resolving larger problems, but revolutionary in the context of contemporary voter engagement at the state level.

Critics of such bills cry wolf about voter fraud related to same-day voter registration and a host of other issues. But a study

and have therefore excluded themselves from the political process.

Nonsense.

According to the Pew Research Internet Project, most Americans had landlines and less than half of the country went online every day on the eve of the 2000 election. By 2014, nearly half of the homes in America were wireless only and most Americans were using mobile devices to "get news" and "talk politics" daily.

Indeed, mobile electronic culture is making people more engaged, not less. But there's a dangerous paradox that's emerging, because while people 18 to 29 years old are more politically engaged than ever, they're registering and voting less and less.

For the better part of a decade technologists, activists, and, in rare cases, politicians have discussed ways to modernize the electoral process. In a sense, they've struggled with the process of democratizing democracy, making civic engagement hyper accessible.

In 2012, Napster co-founder and former Facebook executive Sean Parker shared a stage with former Vice President Al Gore at SxSW to discuss ways that tech innovators could play a more significant role in encouraging their followers to be more civically engaged. Just ahead of the 2014 midterm elections, Parker announced the launch of Brigade, a tech startup aimed at boosting civic engagement in which he invested \$9 million.

But all the money in techtown can't save our political system.

Electoral reform is the solution.

To that end, State Rep. Ryan Bizzarro has signed on to co-sponsor legislation in the next legislative session that will allow for same-day voter registration, and he previously co-sponsored legislation to begin

by the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School Of Law concluded, "It is more likely that an individual will be struck by lightning than that he will impersonate another voter at the polls."

Perhaps the only problem looming larger than registering people to vote is giving them someone to vote for.

The largest group of registered non-voters in this country are political Independents. In Pennsylvania, this can be attributed to our closed primary system, in which registered members of a political party can only vote for candidates of that same party in primary elections.

Closed primaries effectively disenfranchise registered Independents, who are less likely to vote in general elections because they've had no choice in the selection of candidates.

In Erie County, open primaries could mean the balancing of political scales, as the power is stripped from our historically heated Democratic primary.

Don't get me wrong. As an onlooker, the Democratic primary is great fun and often better than primetime television. But for the vitality of the region, it may have exceeded its usefulness.

Allowing citizens to vote by candidate rather than by party in the primary election cycle also moderates campaign rhetoric. Instead of working to rally the party extremists, open primaries might foster pragmatic solutions for an informed electorate rather than dogmatic political bomb throwing from the folks on the fringe.

Now that sounds like a campaign-worthy revolution.

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leaving less for books, teachers, and education.

Which isn't surprising, given Charter Schools USA CEO Jonathan Hage is a veteran from the ultra-conservative Heritage Foundation and a crony of the Bush family, having worked for Jeb Bush's Foundation for Florida's Future. Profit is the prize. In an almost gross caricature of himself, Hage even owned a yacht called "Fishin' 4 Schools."

And he's just the small fry, the guy to set up the deals. Because Wall Street is circling, jamming its vampire-squid blood funnel into the privatized school market.

Thanks to a Clinton-era tax loophole, investors in charter schools located in "underserved" areas collect tax credits to off-

Wall Street is circling, jamming its vampire-squid blood funnel into the privatized school market.

set costs. Wealthy foreigners who invest in charter schools – as part of a plan to encourage foreign investment in development projects – can earn the right to buy U.S. immigration papers for themselves and family. As a result, millions are flowing into charter schools from private investment, and that money isn't being used to reimburse taxpayers.

The danger of these deep-pocketed investors eyeing schools as investment opportunity, with the York School District at its epicenter, is a massive privatization push into education, and the end of public education as we know it.

That's a crime. "Education, beyond all other devices of human origin," said public education's founding father, Horace Mann, "is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance wheel of social machinery." Without fair and equal education for all, our society will further splinter into the haves and have-nots. While the majority of our children suffer in the future educational fast-food franchises, ingesting subpar and unimaginative instruction, only the children of the ultra-wealthy will be dining at educational banquet tables, monopolizing the opportunities they bring.

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News of the Weird

By: Chuck Shepherd

Annals of Injustice

Richard Rosario is in year 18 of a 25-to-life sentence for murder, even though 13 alibi witnesses have tried to tell authorities that he was with them — 1,000 miles away — at the time of the crime. (Among the 13 are a sheriff's deputy, a pastor and a federal corrections officer.) The "evidence" against him: Two "eyewitnesses" in New York City had picked him out of a mugshot book. Rosario had given police names, addresses and phone numbers of the 13 people in Florida, but so far, everyone (except NBC's "Dateline") has ignored the list, including Rosario's court-appointed lawyers. As is often the case, appeals court judges (state and federal) have trusted the eyewitnesses and the "process." (In November, "Dateline" located nine of the 13, who are still positive Rosario was in Deltona, Florida, on the day of the murder.) [WNBC-TV (New York City), 11-21-2014]

Questionable Judgments

Pastor Walter Houston of the Fourth Missionary Church in Houston repeatedly refused in November to conduct a funeral for longtime member Olivia Blair, who died recently at age 93 — because she had come upon hard times in the last 10 years and had not paid her tithe. Ms. Blair's family had supported the church for 50 years, but Pastor Houston was defiant, explaining, "Membership has its privileges." (The family finally found another church for the funeral.) [Houston Chronicle, 11-26-2014]

A U.S. Appeals Court once again in September instructed government agencies that it is unconstitutional to make routine business-inspection raids without a judicial warrant. "We hope that the third time will be the charm," wrote Judge Robin Rosenbaum. In the present case, the court denounced the full-dress SWAT raid in 2010 of the Strictly Skillz barbershop in Orange County, Florida, for "barbering" without a license. (All certificates were found to be up-to-date, and in fact, the raiding agency had verified the licenses in a walk-through two days before.) [COURT-HOUSE NEWS SERVICE, 9-18-2014]

The Continuing Crisis

Disappointed: (1) Cornelius Jefferson, 33, was arrested for assaulting a woman in Laurel County, Kentucky, in October after he had moved there from Georgia to be with her following an online relationship. Jefferson explained that he was frustrated that the woman was not "like she was on the Internet." (2) In November, an unnamed groom in Medina, Saudi Arabia, leaped to his feet at the close of the wedding, shocked at his first glimpse of his new bride with her veil pulled back. Said he (according to the daily Okaz), "You are not the girl I had imagined. I am sorry, but I divorce you." [Herald-Leader (Lexington), 10-21-2014] [Daily Mail (London), 11-17-2014]

The recovery rate is about 70 percent for the 1,200 injured birds brought for treatment each year to the Brinzal owl-rescue park near Madrid, Spain — with acupuncture as the center's specialty treatment. Brinzal provides "physical and psychological rehabilitation" so that ea-

gle owls, tawny owls and the rest can return to the wild, avoiding predators by being taught, through recordings of various wild screeches, which animals are enemies. However, the signature therapy remains the 10 weekly pressure-point sessions of acupuncture. [The Local (Madrid), 12-12-2014]

Suspicious Confirmed

Even though one state requires 400 hours' training just to become a professional manicurist, for instance, most states do not demand nearly such effort to become armed security guards, according to a CNN/Center for Investigative Reporting analysis released in December. Fifteen states require no firearms training at all; 46 ignore mental health status; nine do not check the FBI's criminal background database; and 27 states fail to ascertain whether an applicant is banned by federal law from even carrying a gun. (After an ugly incident in Arizona in which a juvenile gun offender was hired as a guard, the state added a box on its form for applicants to "self-report" the federal ban — but still refuses to use the FBI database.) [CNN, 12-10-2014]

Two high-ranking Hollywood, Florida, police officers were absolved of criminal wrongdoing recently even though they had intentionally deleted their colleagues' names from Internal Affairs investigative records. Assistant Chief Ken Haberland and Maj. Norris Redding somehow convinced prosecutors that they were unaware the files were "public records" that should not be altered. The two are still subject to fines and restitution, but have been returned to administrative duty. [South Florida Sun-Sentinel, 12-11-2014]

Ironies

In October, Reynolds American Inc., whose iconic product is Camel cigarettes, announced it would ban employees at its North Carolina headquarters from smoking in the offices, relegating them to special smokers' rooms. (Critics of the company noted that Reynolds has for years staunchly denied that "secondary smoke" is dangerous.) (2) In September, Guintier Kahn, the South Florida dermatologist who developed minoxidil (the hair-restoring ingredient in Rogaine), passed away at age 80. Dr. Kahn himself had noticeable hair loss, but was allergic to minoxidil. [Associated Press via USA Today, 10-22-2014] [Associated Press via Washington Post, 9-26-2014]

Scenes

The owner of a wine shop in Highgate, England, said the thief who robbed him in September somehow placed him in a trance so the man could pick his pockets — and then, brushing past him on his way out, the man brought the shop owner out of the trance. Victim Aftab Haider, 56, pointed to surveillance video showing him staring vacantly during the several seconds in which his wallet was being lifted from his trousers. (2) In October in Scotland's Perth Sheriff Court, Paul Coombs was sentenced to 14 months in jail for a June home invasion in which accomplices conveyed Coombs' threats to the resident because Coombs himself is deaf and does not speak. [London Evening Standard, 12-5-2014] [STV News (Glasgow), 10-30-2014]

People Different From Us

Cry for Help: Calvin Nicol, 31, complained that he was obviously the victim of a "hate crime" when thugs beat him up in Ottawa, Ontario, on Nov. 1 — just because he is intensely tattooed and pierced, with black-inked eyes, a split tongue and implanted silicone horns on his forehead. (Though "hate" may have been involved, so far "body modification" is not usually covered in anti-discrimination laws. However, Nicol suggested one legal angle when he explained that "piercing myself and changing my appearance, and making me look like the person I want to look like is almost a religious experience to me.") [Ottawa Citizen, 11-15-2014]

Least Competent Criminals

Three women, whose ages ranged from 24 to 41, were charged with larceny on Black Friday in Hadley, Massachusetts, when they were caught in the Wal-Mart parking lot loaded down with about \$2,700 worth of allegedly shoplifted goods. The women had moments earlier begged a Wal-Mart employee for help getting into their car — because they had locked themselves out. (2) Michael Rochefort, 38, and Daniel Gargiulo, 39, were merely burglary suspects in Palm Beach County, Florida, on Sept. 25, but sheriff's deputies' case against them soon strengthened. While being detained in the back seat of a patrol car (and despite a video camera pointed at them), they conversed uninhibitedly about getting their alibis straight. [The Republican (Springfield), 11-29-2014] [South Florida Sun-Sentinel, 12-8-2014]

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In addition to having a well-rounded legal education, Rick Filippi has secured access to serve before the U.S. Court of Appeals (3rd District) and the United States Supreme Court. He also has experience in local politics, having served on Erie's city council from 1998 to 2001. Additionally, he was elected Erie mayor from 2001 to 2005.

Rick has made a career caring for the people, both in politics and in his legal practice. When you have an important legal problem, put Rick's experience to work for you.

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Erie's Bayfront Takes Shape

How The Convention Center Authority, Scott Enterprises, and Tom Kennedy are Plotting Our Waterfront's Future

By: Jim Wertz

Traveling the Bayfront Parkway from the west is a fairly hopeful journey. On the north side of the parkway, drivers see luxury housing, marinas, and, of course, access to the water, both public and private. Erie's waterfront is consistently noted as the region's most cherished asset. Gov.-elect Tom Wolf recently told the *Erie Reader* that "Erie is the Riviera of Pennsylvania" and that it's one of the "greatest freshwater ports in the world."

But in order to take full advantage of that identity, Erie needs to invest in both its transportation infrastructure for land and lake – and the waterfront generally.

To that end, there will be great change to Erie's bayfront in the next twelve to eighteen months, as public and private commercial development begin to take shape along the region's most prized parcel of land.

Our future, many believe, is incumbent upon the development of something notable, and notably sustainable, at the water's edge.

The Hotel Wars

The previous two years have been marked by the "Hotel Wars" being fought upon the properties surrounding the Erie County Convention Center.

It's all been a bit Hatfield and McCoy's, but here are the CliffsNotes to get us into 2015.

In late 2013, Scott Enterprises, which developed much of upper Peach Street, announced plans for the \$150 million mixed-use Harbor Place development adjacent to the Erie Maritime Museum.

Scott Enterprises has owned the property since 1999.

By all accounts, Harbor Place was a solid proposal, bringing together private offices, hotels, parking, and public pedestrian bridges to the top of the bluff, as well as walkways, skating rinks, and – wait for it – a much vaunted floating entertainment barge.

It was as much for Erie as it was for travelers and conventioners making their way through the Gem City.

This was the Scott's second serious attempt to open a hotel along the bayfront.

The first, an agreement between Scott Enterprises and the Erie County Convention Center Authority (ECCCA) for Scott Enterprises to build the Convention Center hotel, which is now the Sheraton Bayfront Hotel, fell apart in 2003 leading to lawsuits and a lingering foul taste in the mouths of both parties.

The Sheraton Bayfront Hotel became the lodge of record for the Convention Center and the Scotts retreated to their corporate offices on Upper Peach Street to revise their battle plan while continuing to develop property on Peach Street, starting hotel projects in Buffalo and other out of town markets, and most notably taking the reigns at Peek'n Peak, giving that resort a much needed infusion of attention and capital.

They returned to the bayfront in 2013 with Harbor Place.

With a grand announcement, the Scotts' Harbor Place seemed difficult to challenge. It brought to life much of the bayfront promise that has gone unrealized for decades.

That is, of course, until the ECCCA announced its plans for a second hotel associated with the Convention Center – the 191 room Courtyard Erie Bayfront Hotel and a new parking garage – on the site of the former GAF property. That ground has been



Above: An artist rendering of the view along Harbor Place promenade. Below: An artist rendering of one of the potential public spaces on the former GAF property.

broken and doors are expected to open in the spring of 2016.

The new hotels would not be competing, insists ECCCA executive director Casey Wells. They'd be complementary.

Nick Scott, Sr., president of Scott Enterprises, has publicly called the development "irresponsible."

Such rhetoric was part of a campaign to convince Erie County Council to reject a county guarantee of up to \$30 million in long-term financing, which would be used



in conjunction with a \$25 million state grant, for the Courtyard Erie Bayfront Hotel construction just as it had done for the construction of the Sheraton Bayfront Hotel in 2005.

The deal wouldn't mean that Erie County taxpayers would pay for the additional hotel, unless, of course, the ECCCA defaulted on its loans. In that case, the county – and thus county taxpayers – would be responsible for payment in full.

Think of it like a parent co-signing for their

kid's car. But in this analogy mom and dad are on the hook for \$30 million instead of a couple thousand bucks.

As an insurance policy on the ECCCA's commitment to the project, freshman County Councilman Jay Breneman brokered a deal in which the ECCCA would pay the county \$65,000 per year to supplant the tax revenue lost to the hotel's tax-exempt status. The Convention Center Authority agreed to the deal and County Council agreed to guarantee the loan, saving the ECCCA millions of dollars in interest thereby ensuring that Erie kept its \$25 million grant from the state.

The machinations behind these deals are complicated. The Scotts met on several occasions with members of County Council in support of private development. The ECCCA did the same on behalf of public development. At the end of the day, County Council helped leverage the public deal.

Remember, though, that this is not the first time that Scott Enterprises dipped its toes in the water of Presque Isle Bay.

A private development was announced in the late 1990s when it looked like the Commonwealth was going to sanction riverboat



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gambling. But gambling didn't come to the water – and neither did Scott Enterprises. Instead, it held on to the land for future use that by all accounts always included at the very least a hotel, and at best, something akin to Harbor Place.

In 2001, Nick Scott, Sr. entered into an initial agreement with the ECCCA to build a hotel and restaurant in conjunction with the construction of the Convention Center. At that time, it was planned to be built on the east bayfront at the same location where Harbor Place is now being proposed. Scott said that he was waiting for then-Gov. Tom Ridge to announce how much the state would contribute to the Convention Center

“We continue to move forward down there. I don't see it slowing down for any reason. It's just that these things take time, and we want to do it right the first time.”

construction. Ridge said simply, “it was not a matter of if, but when.”

Scott and the ECCCA ultimately failed to come to terms on the project. The authority ended its relationship with Scott and the ECCCA moved the Convention Center – and the Sheraton Bayfront Hotel – to West Dobbins Landing.

Scott Enterprises later paid the ECCCA \$1.3 million following a legal settlement in which an Erie judge initially found Nick Scott, Sr., liable for the Convention Center Authority's losses on the botched original deal.

In 2003, the Erie-Western Pennsylvania Port Authority committed to bringing a mixed-use development to East Dobbins Landing.

Then-mayor Rick Filippi told the *Erie Times-News*, “I've always seen our bayfront as a mixed-use development with plenty of retail, entertainment, commercial, and residential opportunities. I see it as a self-sustained destination point, and I think we'll get there in the next ten years.”

Yet here we are, twelve years later, with no development on the east bayfront and a great Scott plan that feels more and more contingent on state funding before it moves forward.

And while you're contemplating the lay of the land, don't forget about local developer Tom Kennedy's 54 room Bayfront Cobblestone Inn & Suites, which was announced mid-2014 and is expected to open this year.

The timeline for Harbor Place is, shall we say, fluid. The Scotts hoped to capitalize on City Revitalization and Improvement Zones, or CRIZ, money, which was a competitive grant from the state that ultimately was awarded to Lancaster and Bethlehem for the current funding cycle. CRIZ funds al-



Above: An artist rendering of proposed ECCCA development on the former GAF site. Below: An artist rendering of proposed Harbor Place Central Plaza in the winter.

Sandberg, who coordinated the city's first application when she was director of the city's economic development office, and Scott Enterprises Vice President Nick Scott, Jr. say the prospect of Erie's success in the next round of CRIZ funding is positive.

A CRIZ designation for the bayfront would rapidly accelerate the Harbor Place project.

However, the Scotts would still have to foot the bill for the private development, including hotels, office, and retail space.

And this is essentially the state of the Hotel Wars as of Dec. 31, 2014.

low regional tax dollars to be reinvested in the designated zone rather than going into the general fund in Harrisburg.

Erie's CRIZ application was denied because the city listed the Sewer Authority as the administrative agency, but the state said the Sewer Authority didn't qualify to administer the \$12 million grant, which would have helped fund walkways and other public infrastructure related to the Harbor Place de-

velopment if the bayfront was designated a CRIZ.

CRIZ applications will reopen in 2016, when the city plans to reapply. That is, unless Gov.-elect Tom Wolf pushes for changes to the CRIZ legislation. Both the Port Authority and Scott Enterprises are hopeful that a new governor means new CRIZ-related opportunities.

Port Authority Executive Director Brenda

The Master Plan

Despite the forward momentum along Erie's bayfront, it remains largely undeveloped.

The Port Authority is the overseer of the bayfront master plan. In that capacity, it monitors both public and private development on land and in the water. It has

participated in the construction of the Blasco Library and Erie Maritime Museum, marinas, and campgrounds. But perhaps the most notable illustration of its commitment to commercial infrastructure on the bayfront was the orchestration of the proposed relocation of GAF Manufacturing Corporation to facilitate the future development of projects related to the Convention Center.

GAF closed rather than relocate, but the outcome was the same. A prime parcel of bayfront property was cleared for commercial development.

As economic development initiatives trend toward retail, office, and hotel space along the immediate east and west of State Street, Sandberg says that much of the Port's future has to do with shipping and transport.

"It's making the Port of Erie a little more well-known throughout the Great Lakes for what our capacities are," says Sandberg.

But providing access to the port also means monitoring the flow of traffic and the future of the Bayfront Parkway.

PennDOT recently began a review of the Parkway, its capacities and its future. The next iteration of the stretch of road that

"All of the parties involved need to explore how we improve that connectivity. It's beautifully walkable in July, but not in January, and we need to make that a reality as we reach a critical mass on the bayfront."

runs from West Eighth Street on the West Side to the Bayfront Connector on Erie's East Side will be an important part of planning a successful region.

For example, the footpath that will bring pedestrians from the top of the bluff near Cranberry Street to a crosswalk at Liberty Amphitheater will mean that the flow of traffic will be interrupted by a traffic light whenever the public makes its way to the water. That path and that light will meet at the foot of Tom Kennedy's Bayfront Cobblestone Inn & Suites.

PennDOT is seeking public comment on the future of the Bayfront Parkway, but between the development of two new properties already underway and the potential for major development at Harbor Place, it



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Developer Tom Kennedy has five Cobblestone Inn & Suites planned for the region, one of which will be on Erie's bayfront.

say, 'Wow! That happened quick,' and be pleasantly surprised rather than go out there and tout it up and have nothing happen."

His market research has also indicated that the area between the Convention Center and the interstate could support another hotel and that the Bayfront Cobblestone Inn & Suites, when grouped with the Sheraton and ECCCA's Courtyard Erie Bayfront Hotel, will give the ECCCA enough hotel space to attract the larger conventions it's sought to bring to Erie.

"You've got to look at the market rates for these types of things," says Kennedy. "We had a feasibility study done

and we're a little bit different of a hotel. But when you look at what the Sheraton is getting from a room rate standpoint and what they're planning for the Courtyard and [Harbor Place], I think we're going to hit an interesting market."

Kennedy's hotel is different because its rooms generally have a price point below one-hundred dollars. He expects this to attract fishermen, boaters, and conventioners who may not want to pay the standard rates of the Sheraton Bayfront Hotel and the Courtyard Erie Bayfront Hotel, which will provide direct access to the convention site.

This market-based approach is also leading Scott Enterprises to consider extended-stay suites in its Harbor Place hotels. Kennedy has owned the property on the south side of the Bayfront Highway, across from the Sloppy Duck Saloon and Liberty Amphitheater, for approximately ten years. In that time, he explored building townhouses and offices on his parcel of land, but instead found the market ripe for hotel development.

The Bayfront Cobblestone Inn & Suites will be the second of five planned Cobblestone hotels in the region. The first opened in Corry in 2014 and a third will follow near Penn State University, The Behrend College in 2015.

But many questions still remain about the Harbor Place development.

After a rather audacious start in November 2013, the CRIZ rejection seemed to quiet the Scotts' campaign to rally community support behind their project.

"That hurt us," says Nick Scott Jr., vice president of Scott Enterprises. "If we start construction on the hotel or any other phase of the project, then that part of the project does not qualify for the CRIZ. But we are continuing on with our development

seems that the future of the roadway is pre-ordained. "My guess is that the Bayfront Parkway will need to be seen as a commercial street rather than an access highway," says Sandberg. "Improvements will have to be made and the question is what kind of improvements will be appropriate."

Improvements to transportation along Erie's bayfront seems to be the critical piece to the hotel and convention puzzle. Traffic lights at the Erie Water Works, at the Bayfront Convention Center, and at the intersections of State and Holland streets with the Bayfront Connector each interrupt the flow of traffic either for location access or pedestrian crossing.

PennDOT's planned evaluation of the roadway in 2015 will have to account for the new commercial space, in addition to industrial expansion and public transportation that will connect downtown with the bayfront. Once people are in Erie, for conventions or vacation, they need to remain mobile. If people only make it to the bayfront, but never see the downtown, the region still loses. If the area surrounding the Convention Center remains an island, closed off from the other great amenities throughout the city, public support for, and public interest in, the region's most prized asset may wane. Some conventioners will take the hotel shuttle busses or ride EMTA's cultural loop, but others will require more personal service. And if a first-time visitor leaves the hotel without their crib sheet on the rules of engagement with Erie's Yellow Cab, they're likely to leave Erie with other destinations in mind. Walkability of the bayfront and linking the downtown to bayfront development is a major issue facing all developers on our water-

front, public and private.

"All of the parties involved need to explore how we improve that connectivity," says Wells. "It's beautifully walkable in July, but not in January, and we need to make that a reality as we reach a critical mass on the bayfront."

It's the kind of chicken and egg proposition that developers and politicians alike would rather avoid. But doing nothing is no longer an option. Indecision returns Erie to 2003, looking forward to what the property could be in another ten years.

Hotels: 2015

"The largest complaint about bringing conventions here is hotel sprawl," says Wells. "There are plenty of rooms in the marketplace, but nobody wants to spend 20 minutes on a trolley or a bus going to and from the Convention Center to go to hotel rooms."

Wells's statement sums up why the ECCCA – as well as Tom Kennedy and Scott Enterprises – believes it needs, and can support, multiple hotel development along Erie's bayfront.

Convention planners are looking for increasingly greater numbers of hotel rooms in close proximity to the convention site.

"There were eight of those negotiations in 2014 and we're close to bringing those events here when we have the hotel rooms," Wells says.

Tom Kennedy agrees. In stark contrast to the Scotts' rollout of Harbor Place, Kennedy has quietly navigated the development process in order to prepare to break ground on his modest-by-comparison hotel.

"It takes some time to get your presentation together and you can't fight the process," Kennedy says. "I like to hear people

plans.”
 And those plans are expensive. That makes the CRIZ designation more important because it offsets the cost of building the public spaces – for which there is little or no return on investment – into a private development. The developed property is taxable and the taxes collected return to the site to offset some of the cost of development. The developer still foots the bill.

“In order to develop public places,” says Sandberg, “that’s a cost you wouldn’t have on Upper Peach Street or Harborcreek or Fairview or anywhere else. They’re not asking for assistance with typical development, but when you’re talking about turning areas into plazas and water fountains and ice skating rinks, that’s where the return on your investment can’t support those public amenities.”

The Scotts’ plans also include discussions with Hilton about which of its hotels is most appropriate for this location and the possibility of putting two different Hilton hotels under one roof. This is a stage that Scott Enterprises hadn’t reached in 2001 and was something of a point of contention in the agreement with the ECCCA because it led the Authority to question the commitment of Scott Enterprises to the Convention Center project.

“We continue to move forward down there. I don’t see it slowing down for any

reason,” Scott, Jr. says. “It’s just that these things take time, and we want to do it right the first time.”

If there is reason to be optimistic, it’s that 2015 will bring the type of development to the bayfront that has been a part of the regional vision for decades. For the first time in a long time, there is also new private development in the works along the bayfront, sparked in part by the public sector’s lead in the cleanup and redevelopment of the GAF property.

But the long-term goals of the Port Authority, the ECCCA, and entrepreneurs trend toward a continued expansion of private development once developers, like Kennedy and the Scotts, demonstrate the private capital potential for this dynamic corridor, where parallel efforts between public and private entities bridge the divide between developable space and true economic development.

“We don’t see ourselves, at the end of the day, owning the majority of the bayfront property,” Wells says. “We’re ultimately going to turn that over to the private sector because that’s where the tax dollars will be generated. It’s going to be a mixed-use facility because that’s what will work.”

Jim Wertz can be contacted at jWertz@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @Jim_Wertz.



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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Things Get Loopy at King's Rook with Abadon Faluz, The New Morning Sunrise, and Uncle Tony's Pizza Shop

Michael Egerly likes to throw his audiences for a loop. One minute, he'll be laying down a riff on his guitar, the next, he'll be knocking out a drum beat, adding different elements to a song

until it all comes together into one fully-realized tune.

Egerly is a one-man music-making machine under the moniker Abadon Faluz, carefully piecing together musical creations with a few different instruments and a know-how of looping (the act of recording different sections in order to repeat them through a song). The talented man known as Abadon Faluz – when he's not rocking out some alternative techno-folk as London Underground, that is – will headline a free show at the King's Rook Club Friday, Jan. 9, dabbling in themes like murder and mayhem during his self-described "Mississippi blood blues" songs.

The one-man-band will be joined by neo-folk outfit The New Morning Sunshine and the amusingly-titled jam/rock/folk/pop quartet Uncle Tony's Pizza Shop. So dig some looping goodness – and enjoy some pretty sweet music from a trio of acts as well – when Abadon Faluz, The New Morning Sunshine, and Uncle Tony's Pizza Shop take to the Rook's stage. – Alex Bieler

9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 9 // 1921 Peach St. // facebook.com/kingsrookclub

MUSIC

2Blue with Dave VanAmburg

Jan. 8 & 15 – 6 p.m.

Victor's Restaurant, The Bel Aire Clarion, 2800 W. Eighth St. jazzerie.com

Colony Clubhouse Band

Jan. 8 & 15 – 7 p.m.

Colony Pub & Grille, 2670 W. Eighth St. jazzerie.com

Mushroomhead w/ Like Monroe

Jan. 8 – 6 p.m.

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

Sean Patrick & The Newgrass Revolution

Jan. 8 – 9 p.m. to 2 a.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

2 For the Show

Jan. 9 – 6 to 9 p.m.

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

Abadon Faluz, New Morning Sunrise, and Uncle Tony's Pizza Shop

Jan. 9 – 9 p.m.

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

Frank Singer & Harry Jacobson

Jan. 9 & 16 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Anchor In, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com

Grunge Monkey

Jan. 9 – 9 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

C. Brown and JC Nickles Birthday Bash

Jan. 9 – 6 p.m.

PACA, 1505 State St. pacal505.com.

Doug Phillips Acoustic

Jan. 10 – 6 to 9 p.m.

The Anchor In, 3122 West Lake Rd. jazzerie.com

Raging Bulls

Jan. 10 – 9 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Vibe and Direct

Jan. 10 – 9 p.m.

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

Money Shot 2.0

Jan. 15 – 9 p.m.

Sherlocks, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

After Funk

Jan. 16 – 9 p.m.

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

Bus 17

Jan. 16 – 7 p.m.

Cafe del Soul, 4264 Avonia Rd., Fairview. 474.3914.

Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Jan. 16 – 7:30 p.m.

Cathedral Prep Auditorium, 225 W. Ninth St. facebook.com/eriechamberorchestra

Geek Army

Jan. 16 – 9 p.m.

Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presequeisledowns.com.

John Halmi

Jan. 16 – 6 to 9 p.m.

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

Midnight Voodoo Band

Jan. 16 – 9 p.m.

Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Broccoli Samurai w/ GNOSIS

Jan. 17 – 9 p.m.

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

French Kiss

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Sherlock's, 508 State St. facebook.com/sherlocksparkplace.

Geek Army Unplugged

Jan. 17 – 6 to 9 p.m.

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

Music at the Mansion

Jan. 17 – 7 p.m.

Erie Woman's Club, 259 W. 6th St. jazzerie.com

Killing Thing, Paile, Human Animal, and Sentenced

Jan. 17 – 5:30 to 10:30 p.m.

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

Stiletto

Jan. 17 – 9 p.m.

Presque Isle Downs Casino, 8199 Perry Hwy. presequeisledowns.com.

DANCE

Line Dancing w/ Selleena and Corey B

Jan. 7, 14 – 8 p.m.

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

Cirque du Soleil Choreographer Brings Diavolo to MIAC

Jan. 13 – 7:30 p.m.

Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu/events/diavolo.

FOOD & DRINK

Mug Club Year End Party at the Brewery

Jan. 11 – 1 to 5 p.m.

The Brewery at Union Station, 123 W. 14th St. brewery.com.

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Jan. 16, 17, 18, and 19 – 10 a.m.

Courtyard Wineries, 10021 W. Main Rd., North East. courtyardwineries.com.

Bocce Winter Classic and Lunch Buffet

Jan. 17 – Noon

The Brewererie at Union Station, 123 W. 14. St. brewererie.com.

"FROZEN" Lake Erie Wine Country's Winter Celebration

Jan. 17 – 1 to 5 p.m.

The Grape Discovery Center, 8305 W. Main Rd., Westfield, N.Y. lakeeriewinecountry.org.

Sushi Class

Jan. 20 – 7 p.m.

Lavery Brewing Company, 128 W. 12th St. laverybrewing.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.

Wonders of the Arctic

Ongoing – 11 a.m., 1, 3 p.m.

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

Winter Filmmaker Meetup

Jan. 8 – 6 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. filmsocietynwpa.org.

Royal Wedding

Jan. 9 – 7 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

The Big Lebowski Party/Festival

Jan. 10 – 4 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Angel and The Badman

Jan. 15 – 7 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

Vincent Price Classic Horror Double Feature

Jan. 16 – 7 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.

C. Brown/JC Nickles Host Birthday Bash at PACA – and Everyone's Invited

Birthdays are typically an event when the person being honored receives gifts from friends and family. Local musicians C. Brown and JC Nickles, however, are taking their special days to treat the community, as both of them will perform during a special Birthday Bash Friday, Jan. 9 at PACA.

"It's actually kind of weird, because I just sit back during celebrations and let everything else take place," says Brown, whose *The Charles Brown Project* was named one of the best local releases in 2014 by the *Erie Reader*. "I don't really like to do too much, myself, but it always feels good to give back on a day when people are supposed to give to you. It's all in good fun."

Brown and Nickles won't be the only people playing in the bash, as singer/songwriter Optimistic Apocalypse, metal group Mala Sangre, rapper Dice, hip-hop crew Rythem Ink, and heavy-hitting trio

Sudden Frost will all take the PACA stage to celebrate the talented twosome. After a three-hour open stage period kicks off at 6 p.m., the main performers will start showing off their sonic skills starting at 9, all while a mysterious person known only as "The Stranger" serves as host.

Don't be surprised if a few additional performing party guests show up as well, because Brown and Nickles have a lot of talented friends in the area. In fact, the duo might even have a few tricks for the night as well.

"I can't remember the last time I actually had an official birthday bash thrown for me, so I may pull the rabbit out of the hat here or there," Brown hints.

While you never know what Brown might be teasing (perhaps he'll even pull an actual rabbit from a hat, which would be cool), the Birthday Bash has plenty of excellent entertainment set up for the night, as well as food and drink concessions and a BYOB option for the adults out there. A small cover of \$3 gets you quality music, lots of laughs, and a chance to wish a happy birthday to two of Erie's favorite musicians. – Alex Bieler

6 p.m. Friday, Jan. 9 // 1505 State St. // pacal505.com

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CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Nü-Metal Legends Mushroomhead Return to Erie with Show at Basement Transmissions

2015 will be a big year for Basement Transmissions, as two monster shows are already booked for January, the first of which being host to Cleveland-based nü-metal band Mushroomhead Thursday, Jan. 8, and the second being melodic hardcore heroes from Canada, Comeback Kid, later this month.

As for the former of the two, Mushroomhead is known within the metal scene for onstage antics, myriad band members, and grotesque masks (on par with the stylings of Slipknot). Since forming in 1993, the band has gained a loyal following and achieved worldwide success, touring and playing festivals all across the globe.

The nü-metal crew's 2013 album *The Righteous & The Butterfly* peaked at No. 1 on the Billboard indie charts and featured the return of founding member Jason Popson, aka "J Mann," who had left the band in 2004 to take care of his father. I had the chance to speak with Popson about his history with the Erie scene, the revival and future of nü-metal, the difference between playing festivals and clubs, and Mushroomhead's upcoming show at Basement Transmissions on Jan. 8.

Tommy Shannon: I read that you used to also play in the band Integrity, is that right?

Jason Popson: I was actually in a band called In Cold Blood with the members of Integrity, which was basically Integrity with a different lead singer. We also worked on an album with the guys from Integrity called *Integrity 2000*, which came out in I think 1999. So we definitely have some affiliations, but I was never an official member.

TS: Around that same time, like the mid- to late-'90s, that's when Erie's music scene really started to gain some exposure.

JP: Yeah! Wasn't it Brother's Keeper that was from Erie, right?

TS: Yeah.

JP: Yeah, I remember Mike Ski from back in the day.

TS: So did you ever play in any of Erie's older venues with In Cold Blood or the earlier days of Mushroomhead?

JP: Not with In Cold Blood, but I did go to a show with the guys from Integrity. Integrity was playing in a VFW hall, or something like that. But back in the '90s, Mushroomhead used to come to Erie all the time. We used to play at Sherlock's - we have a long history there. We always loved coming to Erie; it was always a good time - the people at Sherlock's were great, and the turnout was awesome. A lot of kids couldn't go though, because of the bar. That's why a lot of the hardcore shows would be at the VFW, so the shows could be all-ages.

TS: Mushroomhead has played a bunch of festivals. Just this year you played Mayhem, Soundwave, and a festival in Russia during your first trip there. I've always wondered, what is it like going from those shows with thousands and thousands of people, and then going to comparatively smaller venues, like Basement Transmissions or Sherlock's, that max out at roughly a couple hundred people, or even less? Is that a weird transition?

JP: The one thing about festivals is that there's a lot more distance between the stage and the audience. I think we still love

the feel of playing in a club. The crowd is much closer, there's a lot more interaction, and you can look people in the eye, as opposed to just a sea of faces. I definitely think it's a little more intimate. There are pluses and minuses to both, and it's awesome to be able to do both, because we kind of get the best of both worlds.

TS: The last thing I wanted to ask you was not that nü-metal ever completely died, but lately it seems like it's going through somewhat of a revival with Mushroomhead releasing an album this year, as well as Korn, Slipknot, and Nonpoint. System of a Down even ended its hiatus. What do you think is different about nü-metal this time around?

JP: I guess if anything, it's maturity. I think all the bands you named have grown as artists, you know? I don't know if I ever con-

sidered us to be 'nü-metal,' just because by the time we got a major record deal, that's what metal was called, but we kind of preceded nü-metal. Like when we started back in '93, it wasn't even defined yet. But the minute you put a sampler (DJ) on stage, all of a sudden you were a nü-metal band, you know? [laughs] But I think all the bands you named are cool, and I think it speaks a lot about the musicians involved just being passionate and determined and their drive to keep this music going. — Tommy Shannon

Doors at 5 p.m., Jan. 8 // Basement Transmissions, 145 W. 11th St. // Presale Tickets: \$20; Day of the show: \$25 // facebook.com/basement.transmissions

com/ErieMovieHouse.

My Man Godfrey

Jan. 17 - 7 p.m.

Erie Movie House, 3424 West Lake Road. facebook.com/ErieMovieHouse.

VISUAL ARTS

Focus Fiber: 2014, Bacon Gallery

Ongoing - All Day

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

Higherglyphics: Annex Stairwell Project, Annex Stairwell

Ongoing - All Day

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

Styled by Adams: Streamlining America, Main Gallery

Ongoing - All Day

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

Mary J. and Fran Rosiak: APPLIED Images

Ongoing Jan. 10 to Feb. 25 - All Day

Glass Growers Gallery, 10 E. Fifth St. glassgrowersgallery.com.

Works By Jamie Borowicz, Hagen Family Gallery

Ongoing to Jan. 11 - All Day

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

Performing Blackness, Performing Whiteness

Ongoing beginning Jan. 20 - All Day

Allegheny College, 520 N. Main St., Meadville, allegheny.edu.

The Christmas Show, Schuster Theatre

Ongoing to Feb. 15 - All Day

Gannon University, 700 Peach St. gannon.edu.

The Art of Being Green/ Second Sundays

Jan. 11 - 2 to 4 p.m.

Erie Art Museum, 411 State St. erieartmuseum.org.

Confronting Injustice: A Woman's Voice, Cummings Art Gallery

Jan. 12 - 9 a.m.

Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38 St. miac.mercyhurst.edu.

THEATER

Elvis Lives

Jan. 11 - 3 p.m.

Warner Theatre, 811 State St. eriebroadwayseries.com.

Sleeping Beauty

Jan. 16, 17 - 7 p.m. & Jan. 17, 18 - 2 p.m.

Erie Playhouse, 13 W. 10th St. erieplayhouse.org.

The Merry Widow at MIAC

Jan. 17 - 12:55 p.m.

Mercyhurst University, 501 E. 38th St. miac.mercyhurst.edu/events.

COMMUNITY

Jimmy Dunn

Jan. 8 - 7 p.m. ; Jan. 9 - 6:30 p.m. ; Jan. 10 - 9:30

JRs Last Laugh, 1402 State St. jrslastlaugh.net.

Lewis Black in Concert

Jan. 9 - 8 p.m.

The Warner Theater, 811 State St. 452.4857

New Year's Resolution Walk Series

Jan. 8 and 15 - 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Presque Isle State Park, Ranger's Station. 733.7424

Erie PA Super Saturday

Jan. 10 - 10 a.m.

The Caring Place, 510 Cranberry St. highmarkcaringplace.com.

Millfair Christmas TreeCycling Event

Jan. 10 - 9 a.m. to noon

Millfair Compost and Recycling Center, 2301 Millfair Rd. jJames@millcreektownship.com.

Youth Training Day by EnvironmentERIE

Jan. 12 - 9 a.m.

Tom Ridge Environmental Center, 301 Peninsula Dr., Suite I. trecpi.org.

Lavery Brewing Company and The Erie Reader present Cards Against Humanity, Round 2

Jan. 13 - 6 to 9 p.m.

Lavery Brewing Company, 128 W. 12th St. laverybrewing.com.

Stars and Stripes Gymnastics Invitational Main Event

Jan. 17 - 6:30 p.m.

Bayfront Convention Center, 1 Sassafraas Pier. eriegymnastics.com.

MLK-ACE P.02.NY Basketball Showcase

Jan. 17 - 4 to 8:30 p.m. & Jan. 18 - 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Locations vary, full game schedule at eriemlk-ace.com.

Erie TimeBank Potluck Dinner/Meeting

Jan. 19 - 6 to 8 p.m.

Church of Christ, 2317 W. Grandview Blvd. tracy.a.burnside@gmail.com.

FUNDRAISERS

Fire N' Ice Cornhole Tournament

Jan. 17 - 10 a.m.

Harborcreek VFD Social Hall, 7275 Buffalo Rd. 899.0394.



RYAN SMITH

Cleveland's Broccoli Samurai is re-defining the term "jam-band" and they're about to rock the King's Rook stage with GNOSiS

The last time I caught new-groove collectives GNOSiS and Broccoli Samurai together in Erie – a little less than a year ago, on the then-crooked i's fine stage – it was like a warm little taste of the summer festival season showed up on State Street in the cold, old dead of winter.

When shows like that peak – and, man, that one peaked that night – it's a lucky, dance-happy, open marriage of sound and

sight and motion: Sweet, sweet, sweet.

Cleveland-based trio Broccoli Samurai had, at that time, already been well-established as one of the best electric-jam outfits playing anywhere around these parts. And they didn't disappoint that night.

But, and most impressively, GNOSiS – right outta sunny, little, nearby Edinboro – were just getting started at that point, having played out only a few times prior.

Really, as time keeps ticking by, both bands – melding together multiplicities of influences into soundscapes all their own – keep getting more progressive, going deeper and taking us further out. They're of that small, but growing, cadre of musicians and bands (think groups like Papadosio, Lotus, Consider the Source, Snarky Puppy, etc.) who are busy re-defining the term 'jam-band' for a new generation – and having a helluva lotta fun doing it.

So, almost a year later, and right after the kick-off of a whole new year, it's safe to say the sights, and sounds, and motions they bring will be about when the bands share the Kings Rook Club's downstairs concert complex stage on Saturday, Jan. 17.

There are pre – and after-parties featuring more live music from Two Bird Stone in the Rook's upstairs lounge, too, so, altogether, it's shaping up to be a sorta huge show indeed.

Take note, though, kids: This one's all for the 21-plus crowd – and for Kings Rook members and guests only. – Ryan Smith

Saturday, Jan. 17, 10 p.m. (no admittance after 2 a.m.) // 1921 State St. //facebook.com/KingsRookClub



HENRY MEYNELL RHEAM

Erie Playhouse kicks off 2015 with *Sleeping Beauty*

The magic of the holidays might be over, but there's plenty of enchantment to be found in Erie Playhouse's Youtheatre upcoming production of *Sleeping Beauty*.

Expect something different from the classic, Disneyfied *Sleeping Beauty* (both of the animated and Angelina Jolie persuasion). This musical adaptation features all the trademarks of the tale – magical fairies, a sleeping princess, and a handsome prince, but with all the added charm Youtheatre productions are known for.

We know the story: A king and queen fail to invite the evil sorceress to their

daughter's christening (can you blame them?). In response, the sorceress Trollina (with a name like that, you'd be evil, too) casts a spell on good-hearted Princess Melisande, forcing her into an everlasting sleep (some people just do not take rejection well!).

Trollina's spell stands to be un-done, however, by some helpful fairies and the kiss of the enchanted Blue Faun, who may be harboring his own royal secrets.

Sleeping Beauty is the second of the Youtheatre's three-play 2014-15 season, and features talented local youth in all the roles.

In an effort to bring the musical fantasy of *Sleeping Beauty* to all members of the family, Youtheatre will offer two special productions – a signed performance for deaf and hard of hearing Saturday, Jan. 17 at 2 p.m., and a sensory-friendly performance (typically for children and youth with developmental disabilities or on the autism spectrum) at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 24. – Sara Toth

7 p.m. Friday, Jan. 16, Saturday, Jan. 17, Friday, Jan. 23, Saturday, Jan. 24; 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 17, Sunday, Jan. 18, Saturday, Jan. 24, Sunday, Jan. 25 // \$13.50 // 13 W. 10th St. // 454.2852



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Erie Chamber Orchestra Celebrates Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. had a dream back in 1963, a premonition of freedom and equality that invigorated a crowd gathered around the civil rights leader during the March on Washington, D.C. King's words struck a chord that day – and still do more than 50 years later, as the news is full of footage of protesters decrying police brutality against African-Americans.

King's messages of harmony have led him to be included as

one of the most influential people in American history, and the Erie Chamber Orchestra will honor him Friday, Jan. 16 at the Cathedral Prep auditorium, just a few days before the national holiday created in the spirit of the important activist.

Celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will not be your normal concert, however, as the Erie Chamber Orchestra will offer up some new twists to the event, including a pre-show talk at 6:30 p.m. Music begins at 7:30, when the talented musicians will perform memorable works by American composers such as George Gershwin and Peter Boyer, all while mentoring program LifeThruMusic, the Martin Luther King Community Choir of Erie, Christian artist Jonathan Baker, and dancer James Dixon contribute to the event.

King's dream has inspired generations of Americans since 1963, and the Erie Chamber Orchestra will honor his battle for the triumph of the human spirit this January. – Alex Bieler

7:30 to 9 p.m. Friday, Jan. 16 // 225 W. Ninth St. // facebook.com/eriechamberorchestra



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

LA-based Dance Troupe Diavolo Brings 'Architecture in Motion' to MIAC

Jacques Heim, Artistic Director for Diavolo, describes the Los Angeles-based company's approach to dance as "architecture in motion."

At each event, arcs, ramps, blocks, and domes propel performers into motion. Diavolo offers a unique combination of aerobics, ballet, and martial arts, as dancers reckon with the simple, powerful structures that illuminate the stage. Iconic forms and motions are emphasized, as the company uses gravity and symmetry to generate drama. The performanc-

es feel mechanical and expressive simultaneously, adding energy and innovation to the familiar ways we all navigate an industrialized world.

Heim once worked as a choreographer with Cirque du Soleil, which provides a useful point of comparison. Diavolo's performances are equally spirited and unconventional, but there's less of an emphasis on theatricality. Don't expect animal costumes or complicated pyrotechnics. The aesthetic is modern and minimal – you'll feel more like you're in an art gallery than at an Italian carnival.

Though Diavolo's style is contemporary, you won't find them inaccessible. The stripped-down aesthetic keeps the focus on the performers and their athleticism. As they contend with a variety of architectural forms, the strength, fragility, and flexibility of the human form takes center stage. The stirring music can be fluid or bombastic, but never grating or overpowering. Expect engagement, not bewilderment.

The name "Diavolo" was inspired by the Spanish word for "day" and a Latin phrase meaning "I fly." Tuesday, Jan. 13, the company will take flight at the Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, following a complimentary beer-tasting from Erie's own Lavery Brewing Company. Any dance lover with a flair for the eccentric would be wise to come along for the ride. – Dan Schank

7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13 // Mary D'Angelo Performing Arts Center, 501 E. 38th St. // 824.3000



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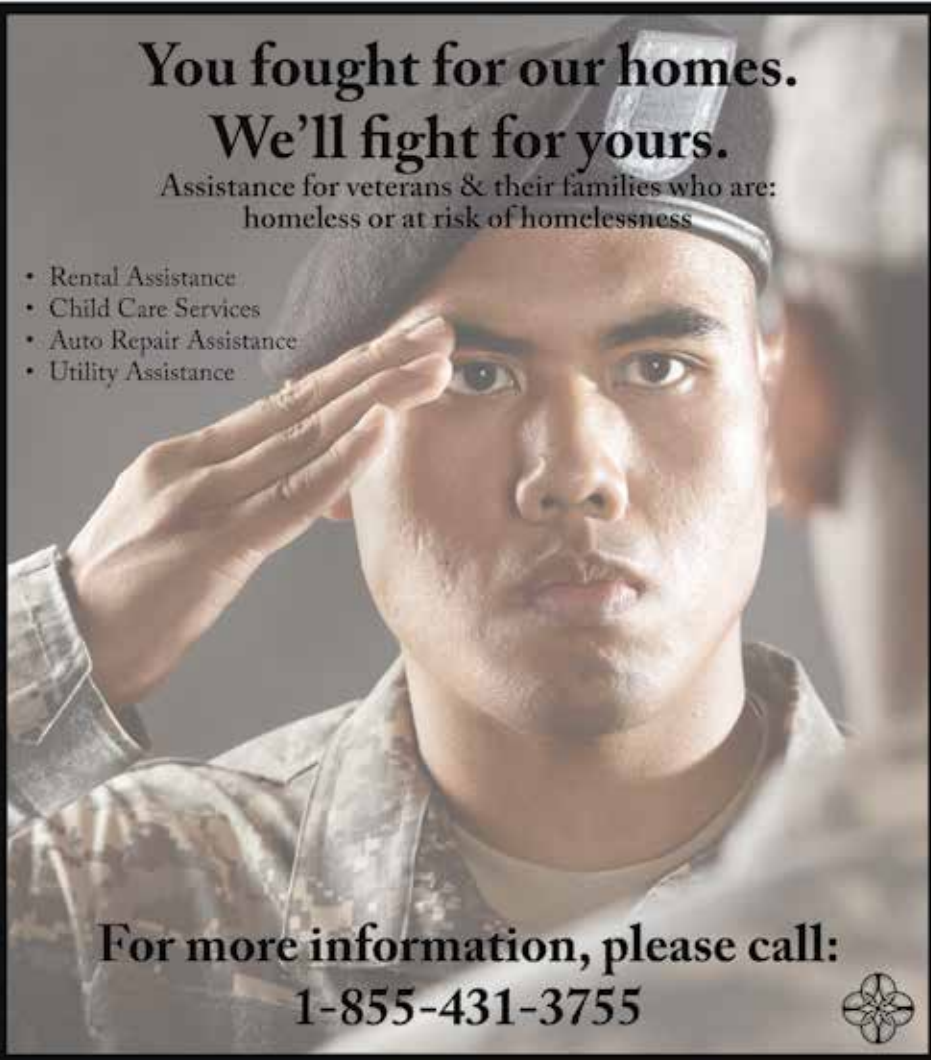
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The Rant Returns to Erie

Lewis Black Discusses his New Tour, Working with Pixar, Global Warming, and Ferguson

By: Ben Speggen

During a recent appearance on *Meet The Press*, Lewis Black described himself as a “social satirist.” Once you get him talking politics, it’s easy to see how he fits the mold: He’s sharp – both intelligent and clever, which he demonstrates in his ability to discuss politics and football in the same breath to make an analogy for how he sees the arenas of both through a thoughtful, comedic lens.

The Grammy Award-winning comedian is also self-aware, having recognized the *angry* reflection in the mirror and learning to not just trust it but to capitalize on it. A D.C. guy who got his start in theater as a playwright, Black, 66, found fame as “that angry guy,” with his touring stand-up routine and appearances on Comedy Central with his *Lewis Black’s Root Of All Evil*, and on *The Daily Show* with his “Back In Black” segments.

In fact, Black’s mastered the ‘angry guy’ thing so well that he’s starring in Pixar’s upcoming *Inside Out* as character actually named Anger.

And he’s still angry. About Ferguson. About the health care debacle. About politics in general and the fate of the world.

But at heart, he’s an optimist because he rants. And he rants because he cares, because he hopes other people out there care, too.

We talked about all that and more – like whether he’ll campaign for president – and what audiences can expect when his current tour, *The Rant Is Due: Part Deux*, comes to Erie Friday, Jan. 9.

Ben Speggen: The last time you were in Erie, it was Jan. 11, 2013. Do you have a thing for Erie in January? July’s pretty nice here – lots of sun, warm temps, great opportunity to hit the beaches.

Lewis Black: [Laughs] It’s part of my agents trying to see if they can kill me. To be honest, though, we roll through in January or February because when July comes, nobody in Erie wants to be indoors. You guys are like ‘Oh, hey, the sun’s out! F--- being inside!’

BS: [Laughs] You know us all too well! You’re no stranger to voice acting – having worked on shows from *Duck Dodgers* to *Harvey Birdman: Attorney At Law*. You’re back at it in Pixar’s *Inside Out* due to hit theaters in 2015. What draws you to voice acting?

LB: They asked me to do it, I like it, and it’s fun. I don’t get movies. I did three movies, and for some reason, I didn’t get any more movies, so this is a way that I can act. And I think I have a voice for it, and they seem to think so, too. There’s another one coming up, but I can’t talk about that yet because they’re still putting around with it, but it’s another big, animated featured. But I’m really excited about the [Pixar] movie and this experience.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

BS: It really seems like Pixar can’t miss. What was it like working with that studio?

LB: It’s phenomenal. They approached me five years ago and said they wanted to do this, and they sent me the initial drawings of what they saw as my character; then, they came and saw me when I was out performing and said, ‘Oh we went and saw you and this is great!’ so after that, they really tried to base my character and the animated figure around that. The first year-and-a-half, really nothing happened and then I started going there every six months to work on it.

It’s the one place I’ve been where you don’t see the entirety of the creative process at once, where instead you watch the whole of a creative process. You don’t get that anywhere else, because there you’re watching the people do the voices, watching the studio create the characters, and seeing them write the story, so that you get to see them create the background and see every step of the way and see why they make certain choices.

BS: Given your brand, it seems like a natural fit, but how did you feel about being a character whose actual name is “Anger”?

LB: It was funny. You create your own destiny, really.

BS: After listing your occupations, Wikipedia’s first bit of information about you is that you’re known for your ‘angry face’. Do you feel like the industry’s typecasting?

LB: [Laughs] You basically typecast yourself. I certainly can’t complain about it, you know? What I can complain about the industry, though, is the whole idea that you come up with the one thing they’ll be looking for – like especially early on when I was touring clubs. They’re thinking ‘We need to find an established character that we can put into a sitcom!’ and they didn’t know where to put me. They had no idea! [Laughs].

I did one or two different pilots a year and people were writing things for me for fifteen years, and a couple of them got done but most of them didn’t – they were like ‘Nah, we’re not interested’. So I had established this character, but I think I’m more versatile, and there are other things I can do – I mean, I can be a prick, I don’t have to yell to be a prick [Laughs]. I’ve found things outside of that mold, but that’s the mold and it’s made me a very good living.

BS: Do you feel like you’re mellowing out as you get farther into your career, or is the world just aggravating you even more now than ever?

LB: It gets worse [Laughs]. Part of it is really trying to get the anger focused. But I have to let the audience in on the fact that I’m angry, but I’m not angry at *them* – I mean, I play it, and I have to find ways to respond – in a way that still makes sense – to the things that I see. And the things that I see

Comedian and social satirist Lewis Black returns to Erie Friday, Jan. 9 at the Warner Theatre.

are getting more and more appalling.

BS: I think it’d be easier for people to peg you as a pessimist given the nature of your delivery, but I sense optimism in your tone and in the fact that you’re still ranting – possibly hoping that people are paying attention and that things will change. Would you agree?

LB: I do. I think that I’m optimistic. You can’t be angry if you believe that something better is out there, and I believe it’s out there. I believe that – at least in a half-way – that there’s a basic goodness in the American people, and I know that, because every time a catastrophe occurs, without the government asking, without anyone saying anything, a whole bunch of people get in their goddamn cars and drive across country to people they don’t know to help them out. It’s unbelievable.

BS: Like I’m sure many of your fans did, I came to be familiar with your work and style because of *The Daily Show*. Your knack for taking political and social issues and churning out such concise, rage-fueled commentary was really refreshing. I can’t help but ask you for your thoughts on Ferguson, Staten Island, and Cleveland.

LB: It is unbelievable that we’ve been

working under a Grand Jury System. Most people – hell, I didn't know how exactly a Grand Jury works – I don't think most Americans know that. And the fact that the legal profession and leadership allowed this to go on? How do you do that? It's unbelievable. To think that this hadn't happened before? That it takes this to bring it to our attention?

BS: Your current tour makes stops in those cities. Do you talk about Ferguson, Staten Island, and Cleveland?

LB: To be honest, I haven't been able to. The key word here is 'timing'. I haven't had the time to take the thought and make it funny.

BS: That reminds me of the clip on *The Daily Show* after the Staten Island non-conviction in which Jon Stewart said that if comedy is tragedy plus time, he 'needs more f---ing time'.

How do you know when enough time's been enough time with something like this?

LB: It's when I can process the thought and make it funny to the audience – and that's something I just don't know here. When I know something's funny, I go out and say it immediately, but I'm slow here. I have to get the thought first and then think: 'How can I get people to see this in a funny light?'

BS: Do you think we'll ever come to see any of this in a funny light in terms of your style of political satire?

LB: There's nothing funny in and of itself, but once you remove it from its context, you can make light of how stupid we are. Not about the deaths. Not about the police. But just how stupid we are in terms of how we operate.

BS: On to a cheery topic – you recently compared President Obama to Washington quarterback RGIII.

LB: [Laughs] Yeah, I did!

BS: Do you think we were excited in Obama's campaign the same way scouts were excited in RGIII's college career, and now that they've hit the big leagues, do you think they were busted picks, aren't living up to their potential, or are just in the wrong systems?

LB: I think, in regards to RGIII, he's mobile, so he needs to learn how to play ball that way. He needs to decide what kind of quarterback he wants to be. But I think Obama needed – in the same fashion... Okay, here's part of the problem: The Republicans punched him and ran at him immediately, saying from the very beginning that they weren't going to allow him to do anything. That was their game plan. But what he needs to do is to figure out how to do a

rollout, how to drop back for a Hail Mary. That's the way it works with what they're doing. You have to work against a scheme like that.

You can't work with the majority of congress – you made that choice; you went with health care and that's what you're going to get because you're working in extremes. Finally, we have some shitty package of health care stuff that hopefully some day will evolve into a good package of health care stuff.

BS: Do you think the changes to America's health care will be seen as Obama's greatest accomplishment while in office or seen as his greatest bumbling?

LB: I think the accomplishment is big – whether it'll be seen that way, I don't know. I think he blew off a lot of stuff by doing

that, but we needed to get that done at some point. Everybody else has it – I'm serious! When the rest of the world is looking at you, going 'are you kidding me?', you know?! If the United States was a person sitting in a classroom surrounded by so many other people going 'What the f---'s a matter with you?!' That person has to take a moment to self-reflect.

BS: Okay, let's cut to the chase: You're smart, politically savvy, an optimist, outspoken – what are the

chances we see the Lewis Black campaign to fix the mess in Washington?

LB: Nope. I don't want to sit around with those people. I don't want to talk to those people. I have no interest in that. When I was a kid, I wanted to do it. But I ended up on this route. But when I was a kid, these folks actually worked together, you know? And both sides had the same picture of America – and that made it work.

BS: Growing up in D.C. and witnessing that collaboration, when do you think that change occurred?

LB: I really can't place it in time since it slowly evolved – or devolved – to this. In part, it's because of the very genuine anger of the American people feeling disenfranchised. There's more and more and more disconnect in my lifetime between the people and the people who represent them. These people who live in Washington live in a bubble. They've always kind of lived in a bubble – they sat there when I was kid and looked out on Washington and saw the worst slums in the United States and didn't lift a finger. Nothing. So they've always been kind of disconnected, but now it's just astonishing.

I know about disconnected. I'm on a tour

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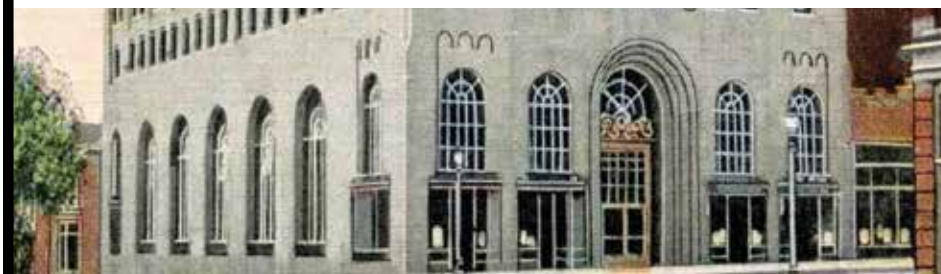
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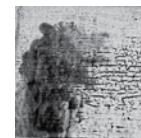
CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Smashing Pumpkins

Monuments to an Elegy

BMG

★★★



Billy Corgan would like you to know that he won't be stopping The Smashing Pumpkins anytime soon. "I will bang this drum to my dying day," sings the sole remaining member of the influential alt-rock band on "Drum + Fife," one of nine songs on their latest album *Monuments to an Elegy*. Unfortunately for people who love the Pumpkins' output in the '90s, Corgan's latest effort falls far short of the bar he set before the millennium. *Monuments* actually starts off promisingly with "Tiberius" and "Being Beige," a pair of tracks that highlight Corgan's trademark vocals over a bed of piano and power chords. *Monuments* begins to crumble, though, after those first two songs, especially when the cheesy sound effects and overbearing '80s sci-fi synths of "Anaise!" hit your headphones. There are glimmers of hope here, but Corgan's latest album certainly falls flat if you were hoping for anything close to his heyday. – Alex Bieler

Parkay Quarts

Content Nausea

What's Your Rapture?

★★★★



If the name Parkay Quarts looks awfully similar to that of garage-rock quartet Parquet Courts, you wouldn't be surprised to find out that both entities are pretty close to the same thing. Essentially a very slight departure for frontmen Andrew Savage and Austin Brown, Parkay Quarts is a sloppier version of Parquet Courts, which is not necessarily a bad thing for the slack-rockers. Savage and Brown are more interested in making wordy, brainy, beat-poet-loving punk than layered compositions, resulting in the sprawling monologue of *Content Nausea's* title track and the noisy squall of "The Map." The album certainly doesn't dwell on any one song for too long, shifting efficiently from one punchy track to another. Unfortunately for Parkay Quarts, it isn't dissimilar enough from Savage and Brown's Parquet Courts fare to really make *Content Nausea* feel like much more than a slightly repetitious, yet still pretty good b-sides project. – Alex Bieler

The Mike Longo Trio

Celebrating Oscar Peterson (Live in NYC)

CAP

★★★★



Jazz pianist Mike Longo's not among the designated "greats" (Corea, Hancock, et al.), but at 75 years old, he knows his way around the piano well enough to please anyone who loves the instrument. Longo has played with a long list of greats, including nine years with Dizzy Gillespie. It also happens that he studied for what he calls "an intense" six months with the man he is celebrating here. As Peterson urged him to be, Longo is his own man, although, like Oscar, he plays emphatically, except to apply a softer touch when appropriate. A strong blues feeling is ever-present, and Longo seems to relish a medium-tempo groove, yet he can go way up-tempo ("Sweet Georgia Brown") or caress a ballad ("A Child is Born"). With bassist Paul West and drummer Ray Mosca, the trio covers very well a highly listenable, nicely varied 13-song playlist (Ellington, Monk, Clifford Brown, Gershwin, etc.). – Bob Protzman

Tetema

Geoidal

Ipecac Recordings

★★★



Given that Faith No More's Mike Patton is known for his outlandish stage persona and penchant for vocal experimentation, it is not surprising that he teamed up with avant-garde composer Anthony Pateras, who has collaborated with a plethora of musicians himself. After sequestering himself in an acoustically-perfect monastery for two weeks with any number of percussion instruments and keyboards, Pateras recorded Patton's chants, groans, and drones to make an album of truly original soundscapes that will challenge the most ardent free improvisation fan. "Tenz" is one of the most accessible songs on the album (since many of the tracks can't really be classified as "songs," per se.) While at first the complexity of the rhythms and lack of defined song structure can be overwhelming, the music has few enough layers that it can be deciphered and enjoyed for what it is: two amazing musicians throwing the rules out the window and going wherever their muse takes them. – Bryan Toy

Black voices "Anger" in Pixar's upcoming *Inside Out*, which will be released this year.

it. If you *really* believe in the Bible, God gave you a garden you're supposed to attend to, you f---ing moron! There's a reason that "The Emperor's New Clothes" is a great fairytale, because it's true!

BS: [Laughs] Okay, seems we could go on for hours, but I don't want to hold you up. You're back with *The Rant Is Due: Part Deux*, the follow-up to your very successful *The Rant Is Due* tour. What's new this time around, and what can people in Erie expect from the show?

LB: There are different topics, like mental health, for instance. I took a trip to Europe, so I got to travel a lot this year, so I talk about that and how it allows me to get away from this other nonsense. I can be funny without being angry, per se. But I'm really trying to put the rest of this stuff into context.

The other things that we're doing, though, is that the last fifteen minutes the audience can ask questions or comment by sending them in, and I address them at the end of the show.

BS: Where can people get their questions and comments to you?

LB: TheRantIsDue.com. And they'll be told before the show. And we'll be streaming this out, so you can get it on your phone, your laptop, and more. It's high-quality.

BS: Mr. Black, thank you for your time. We can't wait to see you in Erie.

LB: You're welcome. It's going to be a delight; I really can't wait to get frostbite in 2015.

Lewis Black will perform *The Rant Is Due: Part Deux* at the Warner Theatre, located at 811 State St., Friday, Jan. 9. For more information about the tour and tickets, visit TheRantIsDue.com and ErieEvents.com.

bus. I go to a place, they drop me at my place, I get out of the tour bus, go into a hotel. Then they're gonna pick me up in a car and take me to a theater and then I get back on the tour bus and go back to the hotel. And then in the morning, I'll do the same thing again. Over and over again. Then eventually I'll get into a car that'll take me to a plane that'll fly me home, and I'll get in another car and eventually start again. That's a f---ing bubble, and those people live in that goddamn bubble and they need to get out of that f---ing bubble. And I find that that has to be the thing that I have to do.

BS: How do you get out of that bubble then?

LB: I live in New York, so the bubble gets burst [Laughs]. If I'm not stuck for time – and I try not to be stuck for time – and as long as it's not cold as tits outside, I go take the subway or get on the bus.

BS: The media – CNN, FOX News, MSNBC, etc. – get a fair share of blame. How are they affecting the bubble? Are they inflating it, popping it, ignoring it?

LB: I don't think they're helping. Do those media help? No. I'm tired of them. I need a channel that gives me a fact. I'd like to have a channel that during one day just repeats one fact and that's what they do for 24 hours. Here's a fact!

BS: [Laughs] I think you should start that channel.

LB: These stations now can then do their opinion of that fact, and they can base that on a different set of facts, like CNN can bring up three guys who tell us what the facts are and they'll all be completely different. This is the problem, though. Your interpretation of the fact can be different – like, Global Warming is either real or it isn't real – and we know the answer here. If 96 percent of the world's scientists are telling you one thing, chances are it's true – a fact!

Another thing is, just pay the f--- attention! If you've been on the planet, you see

Streamlining America 1934 - 1958

A Man of Extraordinary Vision

By: Pen Ealain

Step back in time to now. 2015, as it was imagined by the artists and designers of the 1930s, '40s, and '50s with its flying, bug-shaped cars, monorails, and domed cities that never really happened. One has to go back in time to see that America. You can go back to then right now at the Erie Art Museum and see one genius's vision of a bright future, a genius who lived right here in Erie, Pa.

Wilbur Henry Adams, like his contemporaries, had visions of the future that were grand. Adams, unlike most of us who have futuristic flights of fancy, could make his visions a reality because he was one of the most in-demand industrial designers of his day.

Before he was done, he recreated everything from pipe fixtures for Copes-Vulcan to bin vibrators for Eriez Magnetics. He even designed the world's most expensive bicycle.

Picture in your mind the streamlined, sleek futurist style of America as featured on the covers of so many old pulp science fiction magazines - aerodynamic, shiny, and bold. If your reverie takes you to a glassy retro diner with neon lunch counter, a jukebox in the corner, and a chrome soda machine, you are getting close to the design reality that Adams helped create for America. Now populate the town around your diner with soaring bridges, bullet trains, and voluptuous, curvy automobiles. Adams is present, standing right beside you with his million-dollar grin and a cigarette in hand.

Sadly, though, you can only talk to Wilbur Henry Adams in your imagination. He died in 1958 - too young and at the height of his career. But much about the man and his times can be gleaned from the Art Museum's current showing of his work.

When Adams left Erie to train as an architect at MIT, the idea that a manufactured product would be anything more than merely functional was a new one. Decorative design was the realm of the handmade. Trappings truly elegant, like a Montblac pen or a Tiffany vase, were strictly for the privileged class. Utilitarian devices for the masses, like bicycles, toasters, and stoves, were

marketed for their functionality not their beauty.

But in the 1930s, with the economy in the tank, sales needed any boost they could get, so manufacturers decided to get creative. They hired the best designers and artists they could find to design beautiful products for the middle class. And soon curvy, chrome, art deco refrigerators were quickly outselling their boxy wooden forbearers. This trend even extended to industrial goods. Water valves and electric conduit boxes started taking on an elegant appearance.

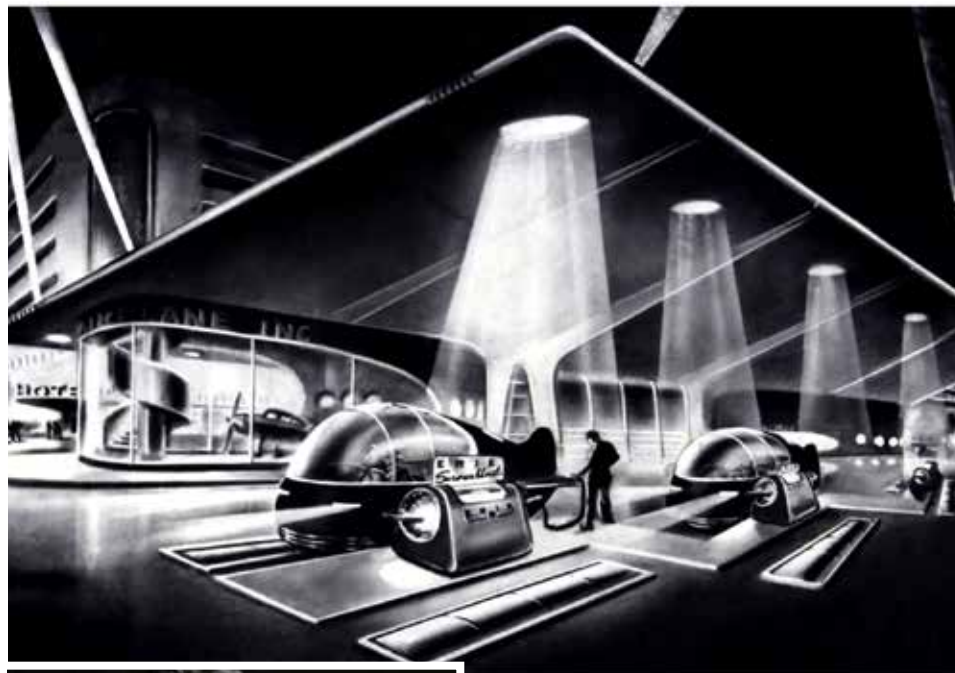
Such was the world that Wilbur Henry Adams entered into when he started his business in 1935. The companies making consumer products were more than happy to let someone with Adams' visual ingenuity have his way with nearly everything they made. Before he was done, he recreated everything from pipe fixtures for Copes-Vulcan to bin vibrators for Eriez Magnetics. He even designed the world's most expensive bicycle. The craving for stylish, futuristic design extended so far that Adams was hired by the Lamac Process Company to prepare a series of mock-ups for a rather surreal specialty device called a "shoe repair machine."

In the main gallery of the Erie Art Museum, you will find the colored pencil sketches for the shoe repair machine, along with meticulous and adroit drawings of tractors, toilets, and cars. One particularly clever toilet design has a lid that lets one display the bathroom reading material without danger of it falling into the waters below.

There are original layouts and blueprints for history's coolest double-decker bus, complete with bar and social lounge. A toy model of America's most iconic milk truck is on display in a Lucite case. That "Divco-twin" model truck was procured for this exhibit through the hard work of curator Alexa D. Potter, who spent weeks tracking down aficionados of Streamline Moderne design in hopes of finding Adams-designed treasures kept in pristine condition. The owner of the toy truck was not even aware that Adams had designed the prize of his collection until he was informed by Potter.

The jewel of the exhibit has to be the rare Goodyear Double Eagle Clipper Bicycle, which was loaned for exhibit only after the owner was assured by Potter that it would be in the hands of expert conservationists at the Art Museum.

Our enlightening trip back to the future is only possible because of Adams' daughter, Abigail Adams Greenway, who, after rescuing much of her father's remaining original artwork from destruction, spent years painstakingly preserving it for posterity. When she and former museum framing expert Joe Popp showed the collection to Erie



Wilbur Henry Adams (pictured below) designed grand visions of the future, like his illustration featured above, which are now on display at the Erie Art Museum thanks to Curator Alexa D. Potter and Adams' daughter, Abigail Adams Greenway.

He did design the iconic Skyway Drive-in Theater, which stood on Route 5 until it was torn down to make way for a subdivision in the early '80s. Also completed were many interiors for banks and taverns, but those designs, like so much of America's built environment, fell out of favor and thus were stripped and replaced with more staid and boring surroundings.

This is not to say that Wilbur Henry Adams is without a legacy. During his short life, he changed the face of America. It is also likely that the Art Museum itself would not be the institution we know today if he had not worked so hard on its behalf.

As president of the Erie Art Club, he tirelessly promoted arts and culture in Erie and helped save the Customs House from destruction. That building would later become the face of the Erie Art Museum on State Street.

Thankfully, that same museum is here to take us back in time to witness the future that Adams had envisioned for us.

Styled by Adams runs through March 30 at the Erie Art Museum, which is located at 20 E. Fifth St. Hours of operation are Tuesday to Saturday 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m.; the Museum is closed on Mondays.

Art Museum Director John Vanco, it didn't take much convincing to get him to agree that Erie needed to be made aware of the little-known genius who had made such an impact on the world around us.

If more of Adams' vision for Erie had come to fruition, we all would know his name. But alas, most of the designs he proposed for our city after he moved his business and family here went unrealized. His plans for a skyscraping municipal building, underground tunnels connecting much of downtown, and a floating amphitheater in the bay were never built.

The enhancements he planned for the peninsula are especially fascinating, incorporating causeways, bridges, and break walls.

Geeked Out: The Real Story Behind *The Interview*

How the Stoner Comedy Resulted in Presidential Action

By: John Lindvay

Some of you may have been distracted from roasting chestnuts over an open fire by the story surrounding the awkward release of the latest stoner comedy *The Interview*. Whether or not you were, let me get you caught up on what I am now labeling as one of the weirdest and most compelling marketing campaigns for a movie ever. At least I think that's what it was.

This story – the story behind the story – has it all: hackers, politicians, actors, constitutional rights, and poop jokes. *The Interview* is the latest from the comedic acting combo that is Seth Rogen and James Franco. Previously, these two busted up a drug lord in *Pineapple Express* and survived the “Rapture” in *This Is The End*. Their screen-time together dates back to the TV series *Freaks and Geeks*, which debuted in 1999, so the duo's chemistry's been well honed over the past fifteen years.

The two work together in their latest comedy as a talk-show host – Franco – and a television producer – Rogen – who get invited to North Korea to interview Kim Jong-un, who's a super-fan of Franco's *Entertainment Tonight*-esque program. Then the CIA gets involved and asks the affable misfits to “take him out,” since they'd have unfettered access to the communist dictator.

As it turns out, North Korea didn't appreciate being the butt of the joke.

Threats were made followed by more jokes – which had everyone laughing. Everyone but some hackers, I suppose. But I feel this



James Franco (seen above riding in a tank) stars in the controversial stoner film that's received global attention.

is a good point to make: Political satires with living dictators are old hat.

Back in 1988, we watched Leslie Nielsen kill all the living dictators and anti-American agitators in the first 3 minutes of *Naked Gun*. Gorbachev, Arafat, Castro, Amin, and Gaddafi all got trounced by a police lieutenant using his bare hands. And then there was the cult hit *Team America: World Police*, in which Trey Parker and Matt Stone use marionette puppets a la *Thunderbirds* to reveal Kim Jong-il as an alien cockroach. Simpler times... but I digress.

The series of events that followed involved a breach in Sony's corpo-

rate network, which they claimed to be North Korean hackers looking to damage the company and make good on the previously mentioned threats, around Thanksgiving. While North Korea denied the attack, it applauded the work of potential “righteous” supporters by giving Sony a proper “neener-neener.”

Then the media, now with its hands on droves of leaked emails, had a feeding frenzy. Meanwhile,

The Interview media appearances were slowly scaled back – until on Dec. 16 a threat was made against all theaters set to show the film. Seth Rogen and James Franco canceled all planned promotional appearances and some theater chains pulled the film. Soon after, Sony called off the theatrical and video on demand release of the film altogether.

Let me get you caught up on what I am now labeling as one of the weirdest and most compelling marketing campaigns for a movie ever. At least I think that's what it was.

Remember, this whole mess is over a dick-and-butt-joke film overlaid with drug use and low-brow gags. This would be crazy enough if it had stopped there, but it didn't...

Before long, you had actors/politicians/unsolicited strangers shouting about freedom of speech and how we can't cave to unsubstantiated terrorist threats, going so far that President Barack Obama weighed in and called Sony's actions misguided for backing down. Over a stoner flick!

The U.S. government then began looking to prove there was a link between the North Korean government and the original hack. But again, it didn't just stop there. On Dec. 22, all of North Korea lost access to the Internet. Rumors spread that the U.S. was behind

the outage. North Korea's Internet access was restored the following day – and if you are still following this mess like me, you are wondering... what the hell?

Sony – then pressured by fans, actors, moviegoers, and the U.S. President – announced Dec. 23 it would release the film in theaters and online on Christmas Day after all. So I did what any geek columnist following this story would do: I immediately rented the movie through YouTube and watched the film. And even though my wife joked about us getting hacked or bombed, we're both – unsurprisingly – still here.

If you are a fan of Rogen's and Franco's previous work, then *The Interview* is more of that same lewd, absurd humor they have been crafting over the years. I guess now if you wanted to, you could also watch it with some weird sense of American pride knowing that freedom of speech won in the end.

But after keeping tabs on the developments surrounding *The Interview*, I've come to believe that this was all just an amazing, well-orchestrated advertising campaign that won't be topped for years to come. We will look back and talk about that time the President chided a film studio to release a film that had an actor shoving a potato-sized metal container up his butt. Because that seriously can't be something that riles up chaos on a global level, resulting in threats and public admonishment of production companies from politicians, right?

Yeah... Only in America: That's the real story.

John Lindvay can be contacted at jLindvay@ErieReader.com, and you can follow him on Twitter @FightStrife.

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ER Sports

Ranking the Top College Bowl Games, and Predicting the National Champion

By James R. Lecorchick

I GUESS BEING A COLLEGE FOOTBALL fanatic means I don't fall into the category of whiner and complainer that there are too many bowl games, this being just the opposite for me, as I honestly wish there were more – a lot more. When I can turn on the television for two straight weeks and there is college gridiron action on, I am in heaven.

Simply put, there is no such thing as, "There's too much college football on the tube."

I love the matchups that I would never get to see if there weren't bowl contests, and I don't care if there are no "national championship implications" for every game, with some of the most exciting games being between two teams half the country has never heard of.

And this post-season has been the best-ever with numerous incredible comeback contests and the first-ever Final Four for a national championship run. There's no doubt this has been a historical time for improbable wins.

Before taking a look at the National Championship game, let's look back at some of the thrillers from this bowl season, and there are plenty.

My favorite five:

No. 5: MUSIC CITY BOWL (Notre Dame 31 LSU 28) – This one is personal because I am a ND die-hard, and I didn't think they would come within 20 points of the Tigers, maybe 30 points. However, not only did the Fighting Irish outplay LSU, they actually came up with a big play when it counted, putting an end to a very frustrating season.

When **Kyle Brindza's** field goal on the final play of the game went through the uprights, I was relieved – and ecstatic.

An exciting victory, and one over an SEC team that left me relieved – and again ecstatic. It will make the off-season a lot more palatable.

No. 4: ARMED FORCES BOWL (Houston 35 Pittsburgh 34) – Despite being extreme-



University of Pittsburgh named Youngstown Ursuline grad Pat Narduzzi its new head coach.

est in the game or not, it was flat-out enjoyable.

No. 2: COTTON BOWL (Michigan State 42 Baylor 41) – Many Cotton Bowl fans recall Notre Dame's famous comeback against Houston, the Fighting Irish paced by **Joe Montana**, as the most thrilling ever and

one of the best comebacks in all of college football. However, the Spartans took their place in history with the highest-scoring comeback ever when they scored on a 10-yard scoring toss with 17 seconds to play, MSU adding the decisive extra point.

The Spartans trailed 41-21 entering the final stanza, but they appeared doomed when the Bears lined up for an easy field goal with 43 seconds left that would've given the Texas team an insurmountable 44-35 lead. But the never-say-die Spartans blocked the attempt and then marched 81 yards in eight plays that ran just 48 ticks off the clock.

Former Cathedral Prep star **Delton Williams** caught one pass for five yards for State, while former Rambler teammate **Damien Terry** did not see any action.

No. 1: BAHAMAS BOWL (Western Kentucky 49 Central Michigan 48) – This could go down as one of the craziest bowl games ever, albeit witnessed by very few actually at the game or on television. However, count me in as one that saw the action in real time.

Central trailed 49-14 entering the fourth period before outscoring Western, 34-0, to pull within a single tally. CM scored a touchdown on the final play of the game on a play that's nearly impossible to describe, CM deciding to go for a two-point conversion

ly disappointing because of the presence of McDowell graduate **James Conner** performing for the Panthers in their loss, this was another beyond-amazing comeback for Houston. The Panthers were paced by running back Conner, a first-team All-American, and this was definitely a crowd-pleaser – and then some.

Pitt led 34-13 with 6:14 remaining in the contest, and while Panther fans were busy celebrating, the Cougars were busy mounting one of the greatest come-from-behind wins in college football history. While scoring 29 fourth quarter points, Houston had three touchdown passes in the final 3:41, including two onside kicks also being recovered.

No. 3: PINSTRIPE BOWL (Penn State 31 Boston College 30 in OT) – This is the kind of win first-year coach **James Franklin** needed to lay the foundation in bringing the Nittany Lions back to national prominence, PSU trailing 21-7 late in the third period and still behind 24-21 with 2:10 left in the game.

However, the resilient Lions booted a 46-yard field goal to tie the game on the last play of the contest and took advantage of an Eagles' missed extra point in the OT session to claim the win.

It didn't matter if you had a rooting inter-

rather than a conventional kick to send the thriller into OT.

WK finally won when the defense held, and the Hilltoppers were able to sneak out with a win. It was definitely a game for the ages.

Each team over 600 yards of offense, amazingly enough, and WK was unable to get even a single first down in the final period after being unstoppable the first three quarters.

I do want to point out that I mentioned on my radio show that I believed Ohio State has the most talent of the teams in the Final Four, and that the Buckeyes would upset Alabama. With that out of the way, it pains me to say, but I am sticking with the Buckeyes in another upset as OSU claims a national title.

I can't stand Ohio State or Coach **Urban Meyer**, but the Ashtabula-native can really coach. What he has done with a third string quarterback speaks for itself. Prediction: OHIO STATE 38 OREGON 35

Speaking of college football, many Pitt fans are excited with the naming of **Pat Narduzzi** as the new coach for Panther football, the Youngstown Ursuline grad heading up the very respected Michigan State defense the past eight years. And I agree, as I think he is a perfect fit for the Panthers.

The one question many local fans have is: How well will McDowell grad James Conner fit into the new system. Personally, I believe it will benefit the ex-Trojan even more.

Narduzzi believes in a rugged defense and a strong rushing attack. And what better start than to have a first-team All-American returning.

Conner had a sensational sophomore year and should have an even stronger junior season, which of course means: "Mr. Conner the NFL is on line one for you."

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