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QUEEN CITY NERVE



JAZZ HANDS

Mo' Betta Thursday's mix of seasoned and up-and-coming acts enlivens Confluence 2025

NEWS: What to know about the transit tax vote ◊ **PG. 4**

ARTS: Central Impact spotlights Charlotte skate scene ◊ **PG. 6**

FOOD: Falling in love with La Lima ◊ **PG. 11**

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Voters will decide on Mecklenburg County's new transit tax on Nov. 4. Photo by Grant Baldwin

OFF THE RAILS

Exploring both sides of the transit tax debate

BY ANNIE KEOUGH

It was 1998 when Mecklenburg County residents voted in favor of the 2025 Integrated Transit/Land Use Plan, an ambitious strategy aimed at expanding rapid transit throughout the area.

The plan instated a county-wide half-cent sales tax that went toward the formation of the Charlotte Area Transit System (CATS), paving the way for construction of the LYNX Blue Line and Gold Line while expanding bus networks.

When Robert Dawkins first heard about the plan back then, he was thrilled. He was eager to see Charlotte grow into a great, big city rather than let the train of opportunity pass by.

The recommended system plan proposed 28 miles of bus rapid transit (BRT) guideway, 21 miles of light rail transit (LRT), 11 miles of streetcars and 29 miles of commuter rail infrastructure.

In 2007, the Blue Line officially started running its 9.6 miles from Uptown to I-485, later extending 9.3 miles and connecting UNC Charlotte to Uptown. The Gold Line became North Carolina's first streetcar system with its first phase in 2015 before completing Phase Two in 2021 to encompass a 4-mile long streetcar line with 17 stops.

While the 2025 transit plan was reworked and extended for five years in 2006, those involved with the plan knew before 2013 that there was not enough revenue from the half-cent sales tax to fund it, according to Shannon Binns, founder and executive director of nonprofit organization Sustain Charlotte.

As the years went on, Dawkins, now the political director for Action NC, a local nonprofit working to reduce poverty, underdevelopment and social and economic inequality, watched as the promises made to extend the Red Line commuter rail to Huntersville fell through, then the center transit lane down Independence Boulevard was never completed.

Nearly three decades after the 1998 transit plan referendum, a new transportation tax will be on your November ballot. The 1% transportation sales tax would raise the sales tax from 7.25% to 8.25% to fund transportation infrastructure.

While supporters of the tax promise faster commutes, increased job access and better roads, opponents like Dawkins urge voters to think about Charlotte's history in following through with those promises.

What is the transportation tax?

The NC Senate passed the Projects for Advancing Vehicle-Infrastructure Enhancements — now the Public Access to Valuable Equity — (PAVE) Act on June 26 and Gov. Josh Stein signed it into law on July 1, leaving the final decision to Mecklenburg County voters in November.

The PAVE Act, approved by the General Assembly and sponsored by Republican state Rep. Tricia Cotham, gives Mecklenburg County the authority to apply the 1% sales tax increase and use the revenue to fund transportation projects such as roads, rails and buses.

The generated funds from the tax will be split 60/40, with 60% of revenue going toward the foundation of the Metropolitan Public Transportation Authority (MPTA) and the infrastructure it will oversee and 40% going toward road development across different municipalities.

The MPTA would use the net proceeds from the tax for "financing, acquiring, constructing, operating, and maintaining any combination of real and personal property for a public transportation system," the PAVE Act said.

No more than 40% of the MPTA funding can be spent on rail with the remaining funds going to bus service.

The CATS Metropolitan Transit Commission adopted a new transit plan, called the 2055 Transit System Plan, in May that aligns with the funding the sales tax increase would generate. The plan includes Better Busing practices like 15-minute arrival frequencies and synchronized traffic lights to reduce congestion.

With the funding appropriated to road development, the city doesn't just want to build more roads, Binns said. The money could go toward narrowing lanes to dissuade drivers from speeding, retrofitting streets with safe bike lanes separated from traffic or adding sidewalks.

While the CATS' new shared-ride service, CATS Micro, was named as a priority, the Silver Line East, a light rail that would run from center city through the town of Matthews and into Central Piedmont Community College's Levine campus, was removed from the original bill, causing consternation among town leadership there as well as community members in east Charlotte.

The bill also specifically references the construction of the Red Line, which will use the existing Norfolk Southern rail line to create a 25-miles commuter rail line connecting Uptown Charlotte to the downtown areas of Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson with potential to extend into Mooresville.

The construction of the Red Line is a long awaited promise that city officials continued to postpone, but their hands were tied, Binns insisted.

In 2021, a sales tax increase was proposed by the Charlotte MOVES Task Force, created by Mayor Vi Lyles to identify the city's transportation and mobility needs. The task force concluded that in order to fund Charlotte's transit plan, a one-cent sales tax increase was necessary.

The sales tax increase was stalled for the years to follow because north Mecklenburg towns like Huntersville, Cornelius and Davidson would not support it until there was a guarantee that the Red Line they had voted for in 1998 was going to be built.

Because sales taxes in North Carolina can only be raised at the county level and not by individual cities, the city of Charlotte needed the other municipalities in Mecklenburg to be in support.

The issue then was that the city did not own the tracks that the Red Line was to be built on.

In 2006, CATS and the owner of the Norfolk Southern rail line, Norfolk Southern Railway, came to an agreement that Norfolk Southern would allow CATS to use its railway for future commuter rail projects including the Red Line.

Seven years later, Norfolk Southern retracted the agreement. Without ownership of the railway, Charlotte was forced to put the project on hold until Norfolk Southern suddenly agreed to sell around 22 miles of rail line to the city in 2024.

With the north Mecklenburg towns on board, the city had to convince the Republican-led state legislature to authorize the inclusion of a referendum on November's ballot.

Given that the General Assembly has a "roads-first philosophy" according to Dawkins, the initial transportation plan allotting transit 80% of revenue from the sales tax to go toward completing the 2030 transit plan and 20% going towards bus, bike and pedestrian improvements.

The GOP refused to authorize the plan unless it included more money for road infrastructure. Thus, the city compromised with the 60/40 plan.

While the benefits of the plan are obvious, Dawkins warns about the cost attached.

"You also have to tell people to not sell them all on the great stuff without telling them the bad pieces," he said, "and to make sure that they're prepared and you don't do anything that will have externalities that will run these unintended consequences [and] come back and hurt people."

Impacts on the community

Sales taxes were chosen as the way to fund the transit plan because that's a broad-based tax, meaning the cost is spread among everyone who buys consumer goods, Binns said.

"It generates far more revenue than really any other source, because it's such a broad tax," he said. "The task force knew that the sales tax was almost the only way we could generate the level of funding that we really need in our community because we have underinvested in transit for so long, there's a lot of mobility needs and there's a high price tag to go with that."

The Redress Movement, an organization dedicated to redressing longstanding systems of segregation, announced its opposition for the tax, warning that it will disproportionately fall on lower-income communities while the transit investments are likely to further gentrification and segregation.

In an article published on the Redress Movement's website, organizer Greg Jarrell said that sales tax increases are regressive by nature and cost lower-income households a greater share of their income than higher-income households.

"The data suggests this would be a $132/year-$240/year tax increase for lower- and middle-income households across Mecklenburg County," Jarrell wrote. "This regressive tax focuses transit investments on roads and light rail, which doesn't help the majority of low-income transit users, who are bus riders."

The North Carolina Budget & Tax Center (NC BTC) found that the sales tax impacts those at the lowest income — less than $21,600 per year — as they spend 6.6% of their income on sales and excise taxes while the highest income earners — more than $697,400 per year — pay just over 1% of their income.

North Carolinians with poverty-level incomes already pay nearly $1,400 a year in sales taxes, according to NC BTC. Should the transit tax be approved, the city of Charlotte estimates that those families will pay an additional $130 a year.

Binns told Queen City Nerve that opponents of the tax who claim that the increase will negatively impact low-income communities are missing the fact that folks struggling with poverty in Mecklenburg County already pay an exorbitant amount of their income toward transportation.

According to the city of Charlotte's State of Mobility Report, 76.6% of Charlotte workers drive alone to work while 23.4% travel by some other mode. This is due in large part to the continued underinvestment in infrastructure that provides an alternative to driving like walking, biking and riding public transit.

The report also found that the highest concentration of low-income households coincides with the almost 13,000 households that have no

access to a vehicle in Mecklenburg county.

By investing in this transit tax, Binns said folks could be less reliant on owning a car and provide a more efficient, reliable bus network for those who don't have access to a vehicle.

"That's a game changer for a low-income household in terms of cost savings," he said. "They'll be able to reap the benefits from the sales tax immediately and they'll have a reliable, affordable way to get to work in the places they need to go."

Tonya Jameson, director of civic engagement with Leading on Opportunity, told Queen City Nerve that her organization is supportive of the referendum because access to transportation gives people access to jobs.

She referenced a 2018 study by economist Raj Chetty that found that children raised in areas with around 15-minute commutes tend to earn more as adults. It also found that reducing local commute times, among other aspects, were predicative of a 7% increase in adult income.

"There's just an undeniable link between the ability and access to transportation and access to opportunities," she said.

Despite the proposed restorations, the organization's main clientele will still suffer, Dawkins said. He argued in an Action NC Twitter post that folks will be paying more in taxes for a bus to arrive a few minutes early to get them to a job that doesn't pay them enough to make ends meet.

Is displacement inevitable?

While the 2025 Integrated Transit Plan prioritized economic growth by integrating a rapid transit system with land-use planning to attract businesses and people to the areas surrounding it, the plan failed to preserve the low-income housing that was already in place, displacing entire communities of people.

The new housing developments constructed along the light rail system also became too expensive for the people that lived in the areas where they were built.

After the Blue Line opened in 2007, in the census tract that encompasses the Parkwood station and the area of NoDa closest to the Blue Line station, the white population increased by 25% between 2010 to 2020, according to Jarrell. The Black population decreased by 32% in the same decade.

"Now we're here again, and they must not have learned from it because they haven't bought any space on the lines that [they're] telling people are gonna exist," Dawkins said. "So now the developers have already bought that. So where's the displacement and gentrification money?"

The rail investments approved by the NCGA, including the commuter rail Red Line, have prioritized wealthy, majority-white northern suburbs to be built first, Jarrell said. Out of the 10 proposed stops, the line will only serve two majority-Black neighborhoods.

The Silver Line light rail would also serve mostly well-resourced areas with the only three stops in disinvested neighborhoods being the ones closest to the airport.

While an original proposal in the transportation plan would have served diverse neighborhoods near Sharon Amity and Idlewild roads, the General Assembly cut a number of the east Charlotte stops.

"We know from past experience that while gentrification may temporarily look like integration, if left unchecked, it ultimately results in the displacement of people of color and an exclusive, majority-white neighborhood," Jarrell said.

Binns and Jameson agreed, however, that there is no stopping the inevitable.

"I think an important fact is that displacement is already occurring and whether or not the Silver Line or the Red Line are built, it's going to occur to some extent, unfortunately, it's just a matter [of] how fast it happens," Binns said. "If the sales tax passes, could the displacement happen a little faster? Yes … but's it's not going to create displacement that wouldn't have occurred either way."

"We could not do the sales tax, which means no improvement to our transportation system, right?" Binns said. "Nothing to reduce congestion, nothing to provide more affordable, reliable transportation for those who can't afford a car and the displacement will still happen."

"That doesn't mean we should not do anything," he added. "We should pass the sales tax to help low-income people and people of all incomes have better transportation options."

Dawkins has no ill will against Sustain Charlotte or other supporters of this tax because, at the end of the day, they're all representing progressive organizations that see the tax through different scopes, he said.

Though very few believe this tax is the perfect solution to Charlotte's transportation issue, they believe it is better than nothing.

"All the people that always tell you something is better than nothing are the people that, if it doesn't work, can go back to doing what they're doing, [but] not the people who relied on it," Dawkins said. "If you're the person that's house got displaced, you're the one with the nothing.

"Poor people shouldn't be asked to pay for their own displacement," he added.

The majority of folks Action NC works with are low-to-moderate income earners that rely on busing as their main mode of transportation.

If the economy takes a hit the same way it did in 2008 and the sales tax doesn't cover the city's mobility plans, Dawkins predicts that busing will be the first service to see cuts.

He doesn't believe that CATS, the city or the tax's supporters thought through the guarantees that they've made to people while rushing through the development of the bill.

He also worries that because the bill leaves funding allocation to each Mecklenburg municipality and does not go into specifics on exactly what they must spend the money on, it will be hard to hold anyone accountable for any broken promises if the referendum passes.

Dawkins proposes that officials take more time to figure out the best long-term plan.

"My point is, if you don't do it right you're going to hurt people to the point where you can't go back and fix the damage that you've done," he said.

Voters will decide on whether to approve the sales tax increase to fund the city's transit plan on Nov. 4, with early voting beginning on Oct. 16.

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The Kilborne photo gallery in 'Central Impact.' Photo by Ryan Pitkin

A BLACK SHEEP IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Central Impact showcases Charlotte's skate scene

BY RYAN PITKIN

When Josh Frazier opened the original Black Sheep Skate Shop in a space he sublet from the Charlotte Art League on Camden Road in what was then the underdeveloped neighborhood of South End in 2003, his immediate vision didn't go much farther than providing gear to Charlotte's fledgling skate scene.

What he hadn't imagined was that, more than two decades later, he'd be curating a skateboarding exhibit at the Mint Museum, one of Charlotte's most prestigious arts institutions.

The Sept. 20 opening of Central Impact, a collaborative exhibit curated by Black Sheep and national skateboarding nonprofit DeckAid at Mint Museum - Randolph that serves as a national retrospective and collectors' archive while also showcasing Charlotte and the South's strong skating culture, marked that unexpected milestone for Frazier.

"I felt like we were sneaking in the back door in some respects," Frazier told Queen City Nerve. "I never expected to be in the Mint Museum," Frazier said. "It's the first art museum in North Carolina and the premier museum in the area, so we were thrilled to get in there."

As a leading figure of Charlotte's skate scene for the past quarter-century, Frazier capitalized on the moment.

On the night of the opening, hundreds of local skaters and supporters showed up to Moo & Brew across from Black Sheep's store on Lamar Avenue for the premiere of 5301 CLT's latest full-length skate video, It's Always Something, the third such film sponsored by Black Sheep.

The shop also released its new collaboration with Converse, which is featured in the exhibit itself along with past Nike collabs, and an open skate session at Kilborne DIY, the east Charlotte spot borne of the displacement from Eastland that led to the formation of the Charlotte Skate Foundation (CSF).

With a segment of Central Impact also dedicated to Kilborne DIY, proceeds from the exhibit will go to CSF, which advocates for, creates, maintains and preserves public facilities for skateboarding in the greater Charlotte area.

While skateboard deck art anchors the exhibit, as the Mint website reads, "At its heart, the show honors skaters of the Southeast: professionals, local legends, and hometown heroes whose creativity and commitment pushed the scene forward."

"What I was trying to do is just trying to spotlight on many different decades and crews and squads and people that have contributed to Charlotte skateboarding over the last 30 plus years—whether it be from the '80s, '90s, 2000s, photographers, filmmakers, artists I was trying to give those guys as much spotlight and credit and the opportunity to be on the wall in the Mint Museum as I could," added Frazier.

The weekend in whole served as an opportunity for the members of a community who have long felt like black sheep to take center stage.

Skateboarding as art

Launched in 2013, Deckaid has helped curate at least 11 skateboard exhibits across the country in an effort to create awareness of skateboard art history, with an emphasis on supporting marginalized youth. Central Impact is the first such exhibit held in the Southeast.

Frazier first reached out to the organization in the pre-COVID era, around seven years ago, to express interest in collaborating on a Deckaid exhibit.

"I've just been trying to stay in their ear and let them know that I was a fan of what they had going on and really wanted to bring something like that to our community as well," recalled Frazier. "So about a year and a half ago, they said, 'You know what? We'd love to do our next show, and we're partnering with you guys on it to do it in Charlotte."

Tim Anderson, co-founder of Deckaid, began collecting skateboards from the 1990s sometime in the early 2000s and went from filling up a closet to two closets to a basement. The first time he shared his collection publicly was as a benefit to help a community skate park, and that's where the idea from Deckaid came from.

For Central Impact, Anderson submitted a chunk of his own collection but also tapped a number of regional collectors in hopes of curating an atmosphere that paid proper homage to the Carolinas and the broader Southeast.

Frazier contributed a number of items he had collected over the past two-plus decades, from sneaker collabs to local photos and skate videos, and Anderson went to work curating the one-of-a-kind exhibit.

Central Impact features rare boards, original artwork and archival media from the 1980s to today, highlighting the evolution of skate culture both locally and globally with works from artists like Sean Cliver, Marc McKee and Andy Jenkins, to name just a few.

Some of Frazier's favorites in the exhibit include McKee's work from the 1990s with skater Mark Gonzales and a segment that shows the original sketches or artworks that were used in the design process displayed alongside the finished boards.

"The artwork is one of a kind," Frazier said. "It's amazing that some of those things were taped back together. They were ripped up and someone saved them from being destroyed in the trash at the screen printers and things like that."

Frazier estimated that some of the rare boards in the exhibit are valued at around $5,000 while some of the original artwork is worth tens of thousands of dollars.

The idea of showing Central Impact in the Mint Museum lends credibility to such art, Frazier said.

"To have some exposure to people who maybe wouldn't necessarily think about art in the context of skateboarding and to give some exposure and shine to those guys [who do the art], that was really cool for us," he said.

The Kilborne DIY segment of the exhibit also showcases a number of local skateboarders and photographers, ensuring as many folks shared in the shine as Frazier and the team could fit in.

Building the scene

The Central Impact exhibit comes at a time when skateboarding in Charlotte appears to be at a turning point.

In 2022, when the skaters who built the Eastland DIY park over a number of years were displaced from that site and left with nothing, many skaters told Queen City Nerve that they had long felt ignored by the city's leaders.

While that feeling may not have changed per se, thanks to the work of the Charlotte Skate Foundation, a grassroots group of skaters that formed in response to the Eastland DIY displacement, the crew now has a county-sanctioned skate park at Kilborne Park where they can build out without any concern for redevelopment around the corner.

"Our mission does not stop at Kilborne," reads the CSF website. "We envision a more skater-friendly future for the city of Charlotte, and will advocate tirelessly for it."

The nonprofit hopes to expand to other sites throughout the city, building a network of DIYs to supplement the city-built skate parks that are scheduled for construction over the next several years.

With a few hundred folks rolling in from around the city and across the region for Central Impact's opening weekend, gathering at Kilborne and the Moo & Brew movie premiere for shared community and culture, Frazier continues to advocate for the skate scene he's helped to boost since opening his humble shop in 2003.

He may never have envisioned making it to the walls of the Mint Museum, but what's clear is that his vision for the future continues to evolve alongside the scene.

"A lot of people traveled in from outside the region for this, we got a lot of great feedback from people in terms of their thoughts on our scene," he said. "They were impressed with our scene and impressed with the video and the art show and things like that. So I think we're going to get one of the stronger scenes in the Southeast."

At this point, we'd posit that it's already here.

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Skateboard deck art in 'Central Impact.' Ryan Pitkin

INFAELITH

Oct. 3 • 7:30 p.m. • The Long Room, 1111 Central Ave. • $15 • thelongroomcharlotte.com

In February, Mariah van Kleef dropped her sultry subterranean single "Infauna," which served as a foretaste of INFAELITH. This one-night-only, genre-blending interdisciplinary event enfolds the singer-songwriter's examination of sirens, demons and goddesses — a pantheon of female divinities who have been buried under centuries of brittle patriarchy — within an evening of music, art, dance and mythology. Van Kleef, named Best Vocalist in Queen City Nerve's 2024 Best in the Nest issue, is joined by musicians Jason Cline, J. Michael Scriven, and Korey Dudley; dancers Janis Lenet Rodriguez, Maria Mira Bella Ortiz, and Sarah Vitorio; and artist Victoria Byers.

HOLA CHARLOTTE FESTIVAL

Oct. 4 • Noon • Tryon Street, Uptown • Free • holacharlottefestival.com

Now in its 16th year, Hola Charlotte Festival is the largest Hispanic heritage festival in the Queen City. The event offers authentic Latin cuisine, dance performances and a Cultural Pavilion and Latin American Village, both showcasing heritage and art. The musical bill is headlined by award-winning Puerto Rican merengue singer Elvis Crespo. Joining Crespo on the main stage are local salsa ensemble Sabrosalsa; cumbia, merengue, salsa and bachata purveyors Furia Tropical; Axion y Cenko; and DJ Wiz. The fest's cultural stage features rock-en-Espanol trio MoFungo, merengue hip-hop duo Julio y Rafa, and local Latin fusion band Ultima Nota.

'WITCHES NIGHT OFF'

Oct. 6 • 7:30 p.m. • Booth Playhouse, 130 N. Tryon St. • $37 • blumenthalarts.org

Witches Night Off is a cabaret benefiting RAIN, which supports the health and well-being of people living with HIV/AIDS in our community. The event brings cast members of the Broadway national tour of Wicked to Booth for a spellbinding evening of music and laughter. Performers who portray the singing and dancing denizens of Oz will be bolstered onstage with a guest appearance by NYC drag sensation Sutton Lee Seymour belting out a selection of non-Wicked material. The entire talented ensemble is putting on this superlative show on their night off, proving that there truly is no rest for the wicked.

NEIL DEGRASSE TYSON

Oct. 7 • 7:30 p.m. • Ovens Auditorium, 2900 E. Independence Blvd. • $98 and up • boplex.com

Recently, Neil deGrasse Tyson said that 3I/Atlas, an interstellar object the size of Manhattan that's hurtling through our solar system at 130,000 miles per hour, is not a nuclear-powered alien spacecraft, and that the Trump administration's plan to build a nuclear reactor on the moon after cutting science programs to the bone and nearly gutting science education is kind of stupid — we're paraphrasing here. Tyson is a Harvard-trained astrophysicist lecturer and author, and his "StarTalk" show is one of the top 10 most popular science podcasts in the U.S. He's sure to have interesting things to say at Ovens.

CANCEL CULTURE COURT : 'THE PEOPLE VS. BIRDS'

Oct. 9-10 • 7 p.m. • Starlight on 22nd, 422 E. 22nd St. • $15 • starlighton22nd.com

Cancel Culture court is an interactive courtroom comedy-variety show that puts pop culture on trial. With The People vs. Birds, the comic ensemble is sure to ruffle a few feathers as it roots out bad eggs. Bad dad jokes aside, special witnesses include Emmy-winning, National Poetry Slam champion Bluz, Hardy the Goose from the Carolina Waterfowl Rescue and comic Christine McLennan, all of whom will be on hand to see that our feathered frien-emies are brought to justice. J&J Juices Jamaican food truck will be on site serving hand-pressed juices, jerk chicken and vegan options. A portion of proceeds go to Carolina Waterfowl Rescue.

DAISHA MCBRIDE, DALI, EASTSIDE BROTHA

Oct. 10 • 8 p.m. • Evening Muse, 3227 N. Davidson St. • $17-$20 • eveningmuse.com

Nashville-based hip-hop artist and songwriter Daisha McBride fuses rap, R&B, soul and country into witty, rhythmically rangy tunes that are surprisingly sprightly. Her clever lyrics, complex beats and easygoing flow are evident on recent single "Irish Goodbye." An accompanying video shows McBride playing the song for her doubtful father and gaining his approval, plus an infectious smile. On tunes like the pensive building late night gem "Addikted," Louisiana-born and classically trained singer-songwriter DALI establishes a vast vocal and emotional range. Charlotte's Eastside Brotha marshals weird bubbling samples, a cool club at closing time vibe and bright, swinging jazz accents on the ebullient "HELLUVA TIME."



Daisha McBride
Via Facebook
10/10



INFAELITH (Pictured: Mariah Van Kleef)
Photo by Victoria Byers
10/3

CHARLOTTE VEGFEST

Oct. 11 • noon-6 p.m. • Victoria Yards, 209 E. 7th St. • $35-$50 • facebook.com/CharlotteVegfest

Predicated on the proposition that supporting the community, encouraging compassion and protecting animals is a winning combination for everyone, Charlotte VegFest launched in an Uptown parking lot in 2012 with a handful of vendors offering delicious and nutritious plant-based food. Since then, the fest has grown to more than 200 vendors and thousands of visitors each year. The family-friendly event celebrates a healthy, sustainable and compassionate lifestyle while exploring the benefits of vegan living. The festival gathers together national, regional and local veg-minded businesses for a broad mix of old and new favorites.

SHAKI TAVI, BOTTLED UP, EGO DEATH MACHINE

Oct. 12 • 9 p.m. • Snug Harbor, 1228 Gordon St. • $12 • snugrock.com

Shaki Tavi is the DIY rock vehicle for Oklahoma-born, LA-based singer-songwriter Leon Manson. The group's 2025 LP Minor Slip is powered by uplifting tunes like the backbeat-driven "Breaker," where building guitars and an insistent melody push through a thicket of percussion to deliver a message of hard-won self-acceptance. On tunes like "Pripiyalab," Bottled Up founder Nikhil Rao crafts an infectious combination of Italo, funk and new wave for dancing on the edge of a precipice. On its 2025 single "The Temple," Charlotte's Ego Death Machine fuses progressive rock, metal-infused jazz beats and shards of pure noise into a maelstrom of sound that swings.

UNA NOCHE

Oct. 12 • 2 p.m. • The Long Room, 1111 Central Ave. • $35 • thelongroomcharlotte.com

DC-based tango duo Arco and Aire perform their new album, *Una Noche Entre Suenos*. The duo, Heyni Solera on bandoneon and Maxfield Wollam-Fisher on cello perform contemporary Argentine tango. This performance is a collaboration with Charlotte-based choreographers who have made pieces specifically for the new record, straying from the formal constraints of the tango dance form, working with the idioms of modern, ballet and hip-hop. But purists needn't worry, The Long Room founders Sarah Hayes-Harkins and Matthew Seneca will be performing a traditional tango. Local hero Megan Payne is among a stellar lineup of choreographers contributing work to show. More a unified performance than a variety show, dancers include Raven Barkley, Lauren Bickerstaff, Ginny Coleman, Luke Csordas, Sarah Hayes Harkins, Kate Micham, Sara Miller, Matthew Joseph Seneca, Alyce Cristina Vallejo and Alex White.

GOOD NEIGHBOURS, NICKY YOURE

Oct. 14 • 7 p.m. • Amos' Southend, 1423 S. Tryon St. • $25 • amossouthend.com

English indie-pop duo Good Neighbours is a collaboration between songwriter Oli Fox and rocker Scott Verrill. Inspired by the euphoric indie rock bands of the early aughts, the pair crafts infectious hits like debut single "Home." Here chipper keys, hazy vocals and an ascending melody summon a mix of melancholy and nostalgia, harkening to the glory days of MGMT and Peter, Bjorn and John. Southern California singer-songwriter Nicky Youre draws on pop and R&B to craft catchy singles like "Girls Girls Girls!" that would have fit seamlessly on 1970s AM radio.



Harvey Cummings II will perform at the Confluence iteration of Mo' Betta Thursdays. Photo by Brandon Jones

JAZZ HANDS

Mo' Betta Thursday's mix of seasoned and up-and-coming acts enliven annual music event

BY PAT MORAN

Harvey Cummings II does not claim the annual Confluence music conference and artist showcase in Charlotte was his idea, but he did have some early input on the event when it was still in its preliminary stages that proved integral as Confluence enters its fourth year.

An award-winning saxophonist, pianist and songwriter, Cummings remembers sitting in on meetings in 2018 with Robert Krumbine and Rick Thurmond of Charlotte Center City Partners, both of whom would prove instrumental in launching and fostering the event, which takes place at various venues across the Queen City from Oct. 8-10.

"I said … we need a dedicated music conference," Cummings recalls. "We need stuff where people can learn about the business and … how to advance and elevate what they do."

Team Cumming's concept of a symposium with a music festival spotlighting the vibrant sounds of the region, you have a pretty good definition of Confluence, which takes its name from the place where two rivers meet and combine currents into a bigger waterway.

Produced by Music Everywhere Charlotte, a nonprofit launched by CCCP and headed by Thurmond with a goal of growing Charlotte's music scene and economy, Confluence launched in 2019 at the US National Whitewater Center.

After a four-year pandemic-imposed hiatus, the event returned in 2023 with an expanded palette of conferences and shows. Confluence 2025 continues that trend with more than 25 workshops, mentoring sessions, panel discussions and networking events.

In 2024, the watershed musical event offered bills featuring rock, pop, folk, hip-hop and soul. All those genres are represented in Confluence 2025, with the crucial addition of a program showcasing modern jazz artists scheduled for Oct. 9 at Bo's on NoDa. The Confluence event will be a special iteration of an ongoing weekly jazz showcase called Mo' Betta Thursdays at the new beach bar located in the former Free Will Craft + Vine space.

Queen City nerve spoke with three jazz masters playing the Confluence showcase at Bo's — Cummings, Braxton Bateman, and Elijah Freeman of The Blackhawk Quintet — to get their thoughts on Queen City jazz, and how they jam, roll and flow with Confluence.

The making of a Mo' Betta Thursday

Charlotte trumpeter Braxton Bateman grew up in Charlotte surrounded by music.

"Family, school and church all played a part," Bateman says. "But what really sparked [my interest] was realizing how music made people feel. I loved that I could connect with people without saying a word, just through sound."

That pull has stayed with him ever since. Bateman's grandfather Edgar Bateman Jr., an accomplished jazz drummer, gifted Bateman a trumpet and the instrument became Bateman's voice. He counts Miles Davis and Stevie Wonder as early inspirations, and later artists like Anderson .Paak and Frank Ocean with showing him how to blend genres while staying true to his chosen instrument.

After attending Northwest School of the Arts for both middle and high school, Bateman went on to tour internationally with acts like B.B. King All-Stars and Jamaaladeen Tacuma, an American funk, free jazz and avant-garde bassist and composer.

"Touring early in my career showed me the level of professionalism it takes to move a crowd," Bateman notes. He credits his touring opportunities with helping to shape a style that is rooted in jazz but not boxed in by it.

"It's trumpet-driven, but it also leans into R&B, neo-soul and hip-hop textures," Bateman says. "I want it to feel like something familiar yet new."

At 27 years old, Bateman is still experimenting with his sound, recently incorporating vocoder into his repertoire. In his live shows, he uses the electronic instrument popularized by Krautrock pioneers Kraftwerk to add texture and color to performances and to make his horn sound almost human.

Bateman believes the city has shaped him and his music.

"Charlotte pushes you to be resourceful and authentic," he maintains. "There's not a huge [music] industry machine here, so you learn to create your own lane."

The lane Bateman created is Mo' Betta Thursdays, described in its Eventbrite listing as "a living, breathing jam session where the music leads and the players follow."

In partnership with Angel and Deanna Sargent, owners of the temporarily closed A-part[meant] Boutique + Gallery, Bateman originally launched the event at The Exchange at 36th, a market and bar in NoDa.

Drawing on the Sargents' art and fashion savvy, and Bateman's background in music, Mo' Betta Thursday aims to create a space where musicians can stretch out and audiences can feel part of the exploration. Bateman's goal for the popular event, which moved to larger digs at Bo's on NoDa earlier this year, is for it to become a community.

"Mo' Betta Thursdays is about making the city feel alive with live music and giving people a reason to look forward to Thursdays," he says.

A jazz saxophonist celebrates hard bop

Elijah Freeman, saxophonist and co-founder of local jazz ensemble Blackhawk Quintet, was born in New York but spent his childhood in Charlotte. He became a fan of early-2000s R&B artists like Anthony Hamilton but didn't start playing music himself until his family moved to Texas in 2013.

Inspired by his saxophone-playing father, Freeman picked up the instrument and honed his playing style in high school ensembles in Plano. He landed his first gig at age 15, playing jazz standards in a Dallas cafe.

In his junior year, Freeman took part Essentially Ellington, an event where his high school band played Duke Ellington's music at Lincoln Center in New York City.

When Freeman was 17, his father fell ill with multiple sclerosis, so his family made plans to return to Charlotte for his senior year in high school.

Through connections Freeman had made at Essentially Ellington, he learned about JazzArts Charlotte, a nonprofit established by Lonnie and Ocie Davis to promote an audience for jazz through education, performances and musician support.

The summer before moving back to the Queen City, Freeman attended a JazzArts Charlotte summer camp, where he met talented trumpeter Ariel Mejia. It would prove to be a turning point for Freeman, but before that would come he attended UNC Chapel Hill on a Kenan Scholarship to study music.

"I didn't graduate because COVID happened in the middle of my sophomore year," Freeman says. "The music programs fell apart. I [felt] like, there was no point in me being there."

At a low ebb, Freeman quit music and launched a commercial painting business. The venture was successful, but without music in his life he soon grew miserable. When Mejia called offering a gig at a local party, Freeman jumped at the chance.

The two friends started hanging out every day, practicing constantly.

"We workshopped this concept of being a horn duo," Freeman offers. "What if we locked in? It's like we breathe on the same level."

From there, Freeman and Mejia perfected a selection of soli, rehearsed solos that became the basis for some more fleshed-out tunes.

Soon the pair recruited a roster of rotating friends to form the Blackhawk Quintet. The makeup of the group depends on where the group is playing and who among their gifted musician friends lives closest to which gig.

At age 25, Freeman joined the US Army Reserve in December 2024. He currently plays in the 208th Army Reserve Band, based in Concord. He also plays a residency at Eighty Eights Coffee and Cocktails music lounge on Raleigh Street while continuing to guide the Blackhawk Quintet with Mejia.

The underpinning of the quintet's repertoire is hard bop, a jazz style developed in the 1950s as a contrast to the bebop played by greats like saxophonist Charlie Parker. Compared to bebop's fast tempos, angular melodies and complex harmonies, hard bop draws from gospel, blues and soul.

"It's the same harmonic concepts from bebop, but extended and pushed forward in its sonic boundaries," Freeman offers. "Hard bop is this lost generation of sound. Nothing past it, or before it, sounds like it."

The band's debut LP *Englewood*, which dropped in June, was devised to sound like it was recorded in 1958, Freeman says. The group's latest single "Stretch" was released in September.

A local legend weighs in

When he was a child, Harvey Cummings II was inspired by his mother's piano playing.

"That was my first taste of [music] — turning

noise into notes," he says. A prodigy, Cummings had perfect pitch, and he aced college music theory courses while still in 10th grade. At age 9 he picked up the saxophone and started playing at Charlotte juke joints like The Excelsior Club by the time he turned 13.

After attending Northwest School of the Arts, where he was classmates with saxophonist Adrian Crutchfield and drummer-promoter Tim Scott Jr., Cummings went to North Carolina Central University in Durham. One of his teachers there was revered saxophonist, composer and bandleader Branford Marsalis.

"He was harsh," Cummings remembers. "He told me if my horn could talk, it would have a speech impediment."

Benefiting from the tough love he received from valuable mentors like Marsalis, Cummings earned a Bachelor of Arts and a Bachelor of Music.

He has become a revered instrumentalist, songwriter and producer, performing for President Barack Obama, playing sax and keys for the Cartoon Network's animated show The Boondocks, and writing for the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.

His most recent producing gig has been with critically acclaimed rapper Mavi.

"I'm a hip-hop kid," Cummings notes. "Jazz was the first hip-hop."

An artist who has worked with a roster of homegrown talent including Elevator Jay, Cyanca and Erick Lottary, Cummings considers himself a national but still Charlotte-based artist — and he intends to remain that way. One of his stated goals is to bring a Grammy home to Charlotte.

"It's for Charlotte, more than me," he says. "Charlotte has never had a jazz instrumentalist do that type of thing."

Cummings notes that the Queen City has more than its fair share of award-winners, but they had to move away to accomplish their goals. (Cummings' colleague Crutchfield has come close with a Grammy nomination.)

Cummings plans to release his debut LP Only Child soon, coupling it with a tour. Thematically, he says the album relates to his family and his upbringing as an only child.

Even here, Cummings pays tribute to his hometown. The album's most recent advance single, posted on Cummings' website, is "Su Casa," a tribute to the Afrobeat parties held at Petra's and recently revived by local curator of all things culture Jasiatic at Levine Avenue of the Arts.

"I was trying to envision what [Nigerian musician and Afrobeat founder] Fela Kuti's music would sound like in 2025, and also [pay] homage to Su Casa," Cummings offers.

A Confluence of jazz artists in NoDa

Since Cummings was involved in Confluence since before its launch, he readily said yes when asked to play the combined Mo' Betta Thursday/ Confluence show on Oct. 9. He's no stranger to Mo' Betta Thursdays, having played as a special guest at the event before.

As an architect of Mo' Betta Thursdays, Bateman is thrilled to add the weekly jazz event to Confluence's musical offerings.

"I'm excited because it feels like a perfect fit — Mo' Betta has always been about bringing people together and Confluence is doing that on a citywide scale," Bateman says.

Freeman is also an old hand at Mo' Betta Thursdays, having played in the event's early lineup before doing his military service from January to June. Soon after returning to Charlotte, Freeman again played onstage for the event.

He said he was pleasantly surprised to be asked to take part in Confluence, promptly agreeing to commit Blackhawk Quintet to the show that brings his band onto the bill with Bateman and Cummings.

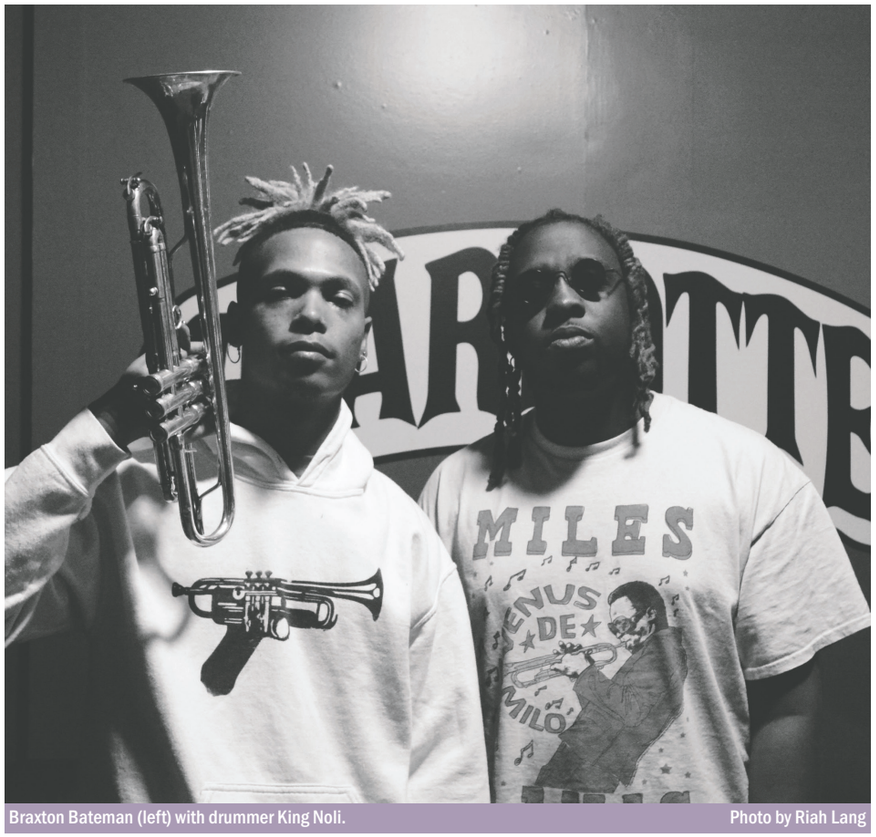
"Anything that we could do to get the message of love through music is the most important thing we can do for each other," Freeman says. "Confluence does just that."

"Confluence feels like the perfect way to align Mo' Betta with something bigger happening in Charlotte," Bateman notes.

"Every year [Confluence] grows, the circumference gets bigger," Cummings says. "I just want the word to get out on Confluence. It's a dope thing."

Jazz may be the ideal genre for an event bearing the name Confluence. If the blues is the wellspring of American music, then jazz is the headwaters, the swift running torrent nourished by ragtime, spirituals, field hollers, brass bands and classical music — all tributaries that make jazz the true American art form, a braided stream of musical and cultural currents ever flowing forward.

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Braxton Bateman (left) with drummer King Noli. Photo by Riah Lang

CHARTING A CONFLUENCE COURSE

Follow the flow with this guide to Confluence music shows

BY PAT MORAN

When the Confluence Music conference/festival rolls into town Oct. 8-10, it will bring performers and industry professionals to the Queen City for an array of panels, conferences and seminars held during the day at various locations. Come nightfall, Confluence becomes a music festival showcasing local talent at venues across town. Both types of activities are well worth your while.

Confluence is both homegrown and regionally targeted, aiming to foster music industry connections, highlight Charlotte's vibrant music scene and position the Queen City as a vital hub for the music industry throughout the Southeast.

That said, what's going on and where? Queen City Nerve has compiled a rundown of the musical gigs to help you roll with the flow. Visit confluencecarolinas.com for a look at the symposiums taking place throughout the city.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 8

Amos' Southend, 1423 S Tryon St.
7–10:30 p.m. Confluence kickoff party. Attendance is exclusive to All-Access and Confluence Plus Pass holders. Performances by Joe May and Time Sawyer

THURSDAY, OCT. 9

The Evening Muse, 3227 N. Davidson St.
7 p.m. – Misha Fair and The Smoke
8 p.m. – Low Groves
9 p.m. – Sluice

Neighborhood Theatre, 511 E. 36th St.
7:30 p.m. – Blue Cactus
8:30 p.m. – Skylar Gudasz
10 p.m. – Ashes & Arrows

Bo's on NoDa, 3701 North Davidson St.
Mo' Betta Thursdays featuring
Braxton Bateman
Harvey Cummings II
Blackhawk Quintet

FRIDAY, OCT. 10

Petra's, 1919 Commonwealth Ave.
7 p.m. – Jackson Harden
8 p.m. – Ali Forrest
9:30 p.m. – Dr. Bacon
10:20 p.m. – The Get Right Band

Snug Harbor, 1228 Gordon St.
7:30 p.m. – Nia J
8:20 p.m. – McKinney
9:10 p.m. – SOPHIA
10 p.m. – Oceanic
11:10 p.m. – Easy Honey

Jack's Live, 1801 Commonwealth Ave.
Performances from:
praise.
GAUXSTMAN
Tymain Robbins
Jasmine Tiarra
Yvonnee
Princeton
CVSH Da General
DJ Von Dutch

SOUNDWAVE

WEDNESDAY OCT. 1

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Slowhole w/ The Last Scene In Every Movie, theyslashthem (The Milestone)
Falling In Reverse (PNC Music Pavilion)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
Che (The Underground)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Josh Daniel, Jim Brock & Kerry Brooks (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*
JAZZ/BLUES
Jazz Night feat. DJAM Collective (Camp North End)
Lovell Bradford Trio Jazz Jam (VisArt Video)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Bo Staloch w/ Emma Ogier (Evening Muse)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
The Wailers (Neighborhood Theatre)
OPEN MIC
Singer/Songwriter Open Mic (The Rooster)*
Open Hearts Open Mic (Starlight on 22nd)

THURSDAY OCT. 2

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Subvertigo w/ Dosser, Jackson Fig, Plight, Catchbliss (The Milestone)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
Lil Tecca (The Fillmore)
Destin Conrad (The Underground)
POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Kenzie Cait (Neighborhood Theatre)
Sean Diaz w/ Pocket Vinyl (Petra's)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
Shana Blake's Musical Menagerie (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Whitey Morgan w/ Justin Clyde Williams (Amos' Southend)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
1st Thursday Folk Night feat. A.P. Rodgers (The Rooster)
COVER BANDS
Tony Tatum Tribute to Keith Sweat, Gerald Levert, Johnny Gill (Middle C Jazz)

FRIDAY OCT. 3

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Aim High w/ Boy Named Sue, Novumora (Evening Muse)
Niceae w/ Shadows Prevail, Devil In Disguise, Vanta, PostChaos (The Rooster)
Papa Roach & Rise Against (Skyla Amphitheatre)
Motocrossed w/ Dollars Taxes, I-26 Connector, Duhl (Snug Harbor)
POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Angry Baby (Cue @ Blackbox Theater)
Sidequest: A Lights Out, Foggy Dance Floor Rave feat. DJ RPG, B2B, FZXXX, Girl Brutal (The Milestone)
Yoi Toki feat. Yung Bae (The Underground)
JAZZ/BLUES
Rowan Big Band (Camp North End)
Larry Braggs (Middle C Jazz)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
Loe Shimmy (Neighborhood Theatre)
Thot Squad w/ Afrococoapuffs (Petra's)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
The Castellows (Amos' Southend)
Lily Rose (Coyote Joe's)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
Jacoozy w/ Logan Damery Quartet (Evening Muse)
Polyrhythmics w/ Sam Greenfield (Visulite Theatre)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Caleb Davis Band w/ Scoot Pittman (Goldie's)
COVER BANDS
Tosco Music Beatles Tribute (Knight Theater)

SATURDAY OCT. 4

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Rookie of the Year w/ DJ Skid (Amos' Southend)
Kublai Khan TX (The Fillmore)
Alpha Strain w/ asleepbeneaththesoil, No Sign of Life, Two Stoke, Stand On It (The Milestone)
Morrowville w/ Once Below Joy, Rothschild (The Rooster)
Cloakroom w/ JIVEBOMB, Destiny Bond, Scrlett (Snug Harbor)
Boombox w/ The Wormholes (Visulite Theatre)
Arcy Drive (The Underground)
POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Clawz (Cue @ Blackbox Theater)
The Thing With Feathers w/ Jeff Draco (Evening Muse)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Krista Lynn Meadow w/ Pluto Duo (Goldie's)
Mary Chapin Carpenter w/ Brandy Clark (Knight Theater)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Aaron Lee Tasjan w/ Jon Latham (Evening Muse)
kissing other ppl feat. Rachel Baiman, Viv & Riley (Petra's)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
JJ Grey & Mofro w/ Samantha Fish (The Amp Ballantyne)
Warp Street w/ Kaska Sun, Blush (Starlight on 22nd)
COVER BANDS
Pet Sounds Live: The Music of Beach Boys (Booth Playhouse)
Mandyl Evans: The Songs of Luther Vandross (Middle C Jazz)

SUNDAY OCT. 5

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Cuco (The Fillmore)
Hazy Sunday (Petra's)
Soul Sundays feat. Guy Nowchild (Starlight on 22nd)
6arelyhuman (The Underground)
JAZZ/BLUES
Scott Mulvahill w/ Bonner Black (Evening Muse)
CLT Blues Society (Heist Brewery & Barrel Arts)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
Uncle Charlie's R&B Cookout (PNC Music Pavilion)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Watts McCormick (Free Range Brewing)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Hollow Coves w/ Shallow Alcove (Visulite Theatre)
COVER BANDS
Taylorville (Neighborhood Theatre)

MONDAY OCT. 6

COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Cole Chaney w/ Kindred Valley (Amos' Southend)
Duane Betts w/ Palmetto Motel (Neighborhood Theatre)
JAZZ/BLUES
The Bill Hanna Legacy Jazz Session (Petra's)
OPEN MIC
Find Your Muse Open Mic feat. Malik Cruz (Evening Muse)

TUESDAY OCT. 7

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Equipment w/ See Through Person; Hey, ILY; Weymouth; Moving Boxes (The Milestone)
Soft Blue Shimmer w/ Ringing, Jackson Fig (Snug Harbor)
Novulent w/ Zeruel (Visulite Theatre)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
Oteil & Friends (Neighborhood Theatre)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
$uicideboy$ w/ Bones (PNC Music Pavilion)
Yungeen Ace (The Underground)
OPEN MIC
Tosco Music Open Mic (Evening Muse)
Open Mic Night feat. The Smokin J's (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*

WEDNESDAY OCT. 8

POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Wastoid w/ Bog Loaf, Dis, Lawn Enforcement, Pet Bug (The Milestone)
Jack & Jack (Neighborhood Theatre)
Twenty One Pilots (PNC Music Pavilion)
Dead Tooth w/ Designer, Comino (Snug Harbor)
John Maus (The Underground)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Zach Fowler w/ Austin Grimm (Evening Muse)
Josh Daniel, Jim Brock & Kerry Brooks (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*
JAZZ/BLUES
Jazz Night feat. DJAM Collective (Camp North End)
The Rod Harris Jr. Quartet (Middle C Jazz)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
The Brothers Comatose w/ Two Runner (Visulite Theatre)
OPEN MIC
Singer/Songwriter Open Mic (The Rooster)*
Open Hearts Open Mic (Starlight on 22nd)

THURSDAY OCT. 9

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Horse Island w/ Matt Knox, Joe McGovern (The Milestone)
True Lilith w/ Siichaq, Pressure Pointe (Petra's)
Mike V & the Rats w/ Good Good Grief, The Half That Matters, Queen City Rejects (The Rooster)
FUNK/JAM BANDS/REGGAE
Shana Blake's Musical Menagerie (Smokey Joe's Cafe & Bar)*
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Austin Snell w/ Brandon Wisham, Fox N' Vead (Amos' Southend)
The 502s (The Fillmore)
The Arcadian Wild w/ Fielder (Free Range Brewing)
Alex Williams Band (Heist Brewery)
Ashes & Arrows (Neighborhood Theatre)
Clay Street Unit w/ Valley Flower (Visulite Theatre)
MIXED-GENRE/EXPERIMENTAL/FESTIVAL
Confluence '25: Misha Fair and the Heights w/ Low Groves, Sluice (Evening Muse)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
Tee Grizzley (The Underground)
COVER BANDS
Dennis Reed: A Soulful Night of R&B Dance Hits (Middle C Jazz)

FRIDAY OCT. 10

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Winyah w/ Tobacco Road (Amos' Southend)
The Lenny Federal Band (Comet Grill)*
The Living Tombstone (The Fillmore)
East Viridian w/ Hollow God, Discoveries, The Johnstown Flood, Somnium (The Milestone)
HIP-HOP/SOUL/R&B
Daisha McBride w/ DALI, Eastside Brotha (Evening Muse)
JAZZ/BLUES
Luther S. Allison Quartet (Booth Playhouse)
Jackiem Joyner (Middle C Jazz)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Sons of the East (The Underground)
FUNK/JAM BANDS/REGGAE
Davis & the Love w/ Riverstone Duo (Goldie's)
Yo Mama's Big Fat Booty Band w/ Groove 8 (Visulite Theatre)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Brian Dunne w/ Dead Gowns (Evening Muse)
CLASSICAL/INSTRUMENTAL
Charlotte Symphony: Shostakovitch's Symphony No. 5 (Knight Theater)
MIXED-GENRE/EXPERIMENTAL/FESTIVAL
Confluence '25: The Get Right Band w/ Dr. Bacon, Ali Forrest, Jackson Harden (Petra's)
Lady Like Festival (The Rooster)
Confluence '25: Easy Honey w/ Oceanic, SOPHIA, McKinney, Nia J (Snug Harbor)

SATURDAY OCT. 11

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Sewer w/ Impaired from Plague, Hyperbeam, January Knife (The Milestone)
Junior Astronomers w/ MIDS, How Come (Snug Harbor)
POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Purgatory: Witching Hour (Amos' Southend)
Sub Focus (Blackbox Theater)
Ultraviolet Sapphic Dance Party (Petra's)
Latin Dance Party (Salud Cerveceria)*
JAZZ/BLUES
Luther S. Allison Quartet (Booth Playhouse)
Jackiem Joyner (Middle C Jazz)
SINGER-SONGWRITER/ACOUSTIC
Chris Taylor & the Rumor w/ Dustin Yager Duo (Evening Muse)
Joshua Radin (Neighborhood Theatre)
Ethan Regan (The Underground)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
Florencia & the Feeling w/ Elora Dash, Emanuel Wynter (Evening Muse)
COUNTRY/FOLK/AMERICANA
Watchhouse w/ Evan Honer (The Amp Ballantyne)
John Pardi (Skyla Amphitheatre)
LATIN/WORLD
Quique Escamilla (Evening Muse)
Marisela (Ovens Auditorium)
CLASSICAL/INSTRUMENTAL
Charlotte Symphony: Shostakovitch's Symphony No. 5 (Knight Theater)
OPEN MICS
Gig Night (Heist Brewery & Barrel Arts)
COVER BANDS
Knot Your Kind (The Rooster)

SUNDAY OCT. 12

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Rehash w/ Tigers Eye (Evening Muse)
Alestorm (The Fillmore)
POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Soul Sundays feat. Guy nowchild (Starlight on 22nd)
CHRISTIAN/GOSPEL/RELIGIOUS
Averly Morillo (Ovens Auditorium)
JAZZ/BLUES
Jesus 'Aguaje' Ramos & the Buena Vista Orchestra (Carolina Theatre)
Tom Braxton & Michael Fields Jr.: Tribute to Wayman Tisdale (Middle C Jazz)
Trace Casanova (The Rooster)

MONDAY OCT. 13

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Shaki Tavi w/ Bottled Up, Ego Death Machine (Snug Harbor)
FUNK/JAM BAND/REGGAE
The California Honeydrops (Neighborhood Theatre)
JAZZ/BLUES
The Bill Hanna Legacy Jazz Session (Petra's)
POP/DANCE/ELECTRONIC/DJ
Noah Cyrus (The Fillmore)
OPEN MIC
Find Your Muse Open Mic (Evening Muse)

TUESDAY OCT. 14

ROCK/PUNK/METAL
Good Neighbours w/ Nicky Youre (Amos' Southend)
Red Rocking Chair (Comet Grill)*
Gammacide w/ The Black Moriah, Nemesis, Razorgrave (The Milestone)

*WEEKLY EVENTS THAT MAY BE SUBJECT TO CHANGE.
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The Italo sandwich at La Lima. Photo by Darrell Horwitz

FROM PERU WITH LOVE

La Lima Sangucheria is the sandwich shop we've been waiting for

BY DARRELL HORWITZ

What's better than stumbling upon a new obsession? A recent lunch invitation took me to Google to search for any nearby sandwich shops, and the algorithm did not fail me when it presented La Lima Sangucheria near the top of the list.

Opened just off South Boulevard in South End in March, La Lima is the latest venture from chef Bruno Macchiavello and interior designer Alvaro Carrillo, the team behind Viva Chicken and the esteemed Yunta Nikkei. The Peruvian sanguchería has a modern, open, airy feel and a vibe that would fit nicely in South Beach — a vibe that Carrillo was purposeful in cultivating.

It's a small place with just 15 tables between the two rooms and the patio, along with an elevated table hosting six bar stools. You'll order from the counter when you first walk in, with four display boards offering the menu, then find your seat and await service if you're dining in.

I'm a sucker for a good sandwich, having gone on a search for the city's best for Queen City Nerve back in 2020, but I would place this new joint in another league.

Any good sandwich starts with the bread, and La Lima's menu boasts its pillowy, artisanal, crispy "Crystal Bread," aka pan de cristal, a traditional loaf from the Catalan region of Spain. If there's a better bread in Charlotte to build a sandwich on, please point me in their direction — and fast. It appears the bread gets a quick turn on the grill, giving it a crunch you can't help but crave.

I was greeted by the welcoming smile of Marco behind the counter on my first venture. I told him I wanted to try the chicharron sandwich, but that I was thinking of getting the Sakura, to which he gave an approving smile and said I had to try it, though he offered a few other suggestions for future visits. That's upselling with an eye to the future.

My selection consisted of crispy pork belly, sweet potato, micro cilantro and sarza criolla, a common Peruvian side made of thinly sliced onions marinated in lime juice that's similar to pico de gallo. It came with carretillero sauce made of aji amarillo pepper and a mustard base.

The tastes came in a slow burn, but the sandwich eventually seduced me with its tempting flavors. It was like a melody that built to a crescendo, the flavors getting better with each bite.

On my second visit, I stuck to my plan and ordered the Sakura, which comprises tuna tartar, crispy onion, daikon, micro cilantro and their spicy acevichado sauce — a mix of mayonnaise and leche de tigre, the curing juice in ceviche, that's been called "Peru's gift to sushi" but here acted as a gift from the sandwich gods.

The tuna tasted so fresh, I would have thought it was swimming just an hour before jumping out of the water onto the crystal bread. The crispy onion gave it a nice crunch, and the sauce took the flavor to another level.

The Sakura was one of the best things I have eaten in Charlotte this year, and possibly the best seafood in town. Sure, it's just a sandwich, and the Mona Lisa is just a painting.

I had been falling for this place since I first crossed the threshold, so I decided it was a safe bet to celebrate my anniversary there on a recent Saturday night, less than two weeks after first discovering it.

I still had two sandwiches Marco suggested I try on my list, so this time I went with the Italo — beef pastrami, stracciatella, arugula, EVOO, and rocoto honey, which consists of a spicy pepper sauce mixed with honey that you can pour on top or dip your sandwich in.

I took the plunge and dipped, creating a trifecta of sweet, spicy and salty in each bite. Once again, the sauce elevated the sandwich and brought things up a couple of notches.

According to Carrillo, Peruvians don't just eat sandwiches like they're only there for sustenance, they make it their own with sauces — dip, drizzle or pour them on for an extra kick. There is no wrong way; the sauces are meant to keep the party going in your mouth and La Lima has this down to a science ... or an art. Pick a study.

Wanting to try a side, I asked for a suggestion between the rustic potatoes and the crispy yuca; the latter came strongly recommended. It was okay, but the starchy, root vegetable wouldn't be missed if I had never ordered it.

My wife opted for the Sensei bowl, which consisted of honey tamari chicken, roasted veggies, avocado, a hard-boiled egg and cilantro lime rice as the main components. As a normally picky eater, "she liked it, she liked it," stealing from a famous commercial from days gone by about a picky eater named Mikey, for those of a certain age.

I enjoyed my few bites, but the sandwiches had a hold on me. I longed for the satisfying crunch of that bread. Once you have one, you'll be crawling the walls to come back for another. If you're not looking to save calories, a sandwich is the way to go.

Since we were toasting our anniversary, I opted for the pina brava, a tequila drink that includes pineapple juice and lime juice along with jalapeno syrup and ancho liqueur. It had the nice balance of spicy and tequila flavor I was hoping for when I ordered it.

We splurged for dessert, ordering two instead of our usual share plan. A display case to the left of the register exhibits a slew of delectable temptations that promise to have you loosening your belt. If you're swearing off sugar, it's best not to even glance in that direction.

All of La Lima's desserts are made in-house in small batches by the pastry chefs.

I opted for the torta de chocolate, because when chocolate is on the menu, it usually ends up in my mouth. I prayed the piece would come out more fudgy than cake-like, and my prayers were answered. It was worth the calories.

My wife ordered the key lime pie and I was transported back to Key West, where I had probably the freshest and tastiest key lime pie I can remember. La Lima's was sublime.

It was so good and tart, I stole a few more bites than I planned. Chocolate addict or not, the key lime pie will be my selection next time.

On my most recent visit with a friend less a few days later, I went with the Tusan sandwich, with marinated grilled steak, red onion, tomato, micro cilantro and that trusty carretillero sauce.

I won't bore you with how much I enjoyed it, but I can say that I did have vindication this time, as the friend who joined me ordered the same sandwich and agreed, "This place is great!"

He also ordered the rustic potato side that I was talked out of on my anniversary and this one hit home. I'm glad he offered a bite.

What can I say about this place that I haven't already said? I can't stop thinking about it. It feels like a new relationship, one where you can't wait to see that person again. Every date just keeps getting better until ... you put a ring on it. No other shoe to drop. No reason to leave.

To make things better, the service at La Lima is always superb and they even validate parking in a garage right down the street, which does add legitimate value in the heart of South End.

If this isn't the best sandwich spot in Charlotte, I don't know what is. It also might be one of the best restaurants in town, period. Turns out what we've really needed all along has been not any old sandwich shop but a sanguchería.

I'm in love.

INFO@QCNERVE.COM



La Lima Sangucheria Darrell Horwitz

HOROSCOPE

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OCT. 1 - OCT. 7

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Someone has some suggestions to offer regarding your new project. You might find them helpful. Remember to avoid speculation and stick with just the facts, Lamb.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) An old friend suddenly reappears. Whether this proves to be a boon or a bane in the Bovine's life depends on the reason for this surprising reappearance. Be cautious.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) Vital information finally emerges, allowing you to make an important personal decision. You can now move your focus to an upcoming professional development.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) You might not like seeing so many on-the-job changes. But some of them could open up new opportunities for the Moon Child's talents to shine to your best advantage.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) An apparently solid-gold opportunity beckons the Lion. But check to see if all that dazzle isn't just a sprinkling of surface glitter before making a commitment.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) A close friend could offer advice on how to handle a difficult family matter. But in the end, the decision has to be made based on what is best for you and those you love.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) Family problems are best worked out with all those concerned contributing suggestions that will ease tensions. Stay with it until a workable solution is found.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) Expect to hear more about an offer that has piqued your interest. You earn respect for insisting on solid facts, not just a fancy talk about potential opportunities.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) What seemed to be a reasonable workplace request might need to be defended. Don't fret. You have both the facts and a surprise ally on your side.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) A bit of capriciousness might be just what you need. Plan to kick up your heels in a round of fun and games with family and friends this weekend.

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) Although some of your plans might have to be put on hold, things do begin to take a turn for the better by midweek. Your financial crunch also eases.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Your financial picture begins to brighten by week's end. There are also favorable changes in your personal life. Someone you care for has good news to report.

BORN THIS WEEK: You seek balance, but not at the expense of justice. You would make a fine judge or do great with humanitarian work.

OCT. 8 - OCT. 14

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Someone from your past could arrive with welcome news concerning your future. Meanwhile, avoid taking sides in a workplace confrontation until you have more facts to go on.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) A decision about a relationship could have longer-lasting consequences than you might imagine, so be sure of your facts before you act. A trusted friend can help.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) A strained relationship could be restored with more personal contact between the two of you. Letting others act as your go-between only adds to the ongoing estrangement.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) New facts could mean taking a new path toward a goal you've been hoping to reach. However, be sure that all your questions are answered before you undertake to shift directions.

LEO (July 23 to August 22) This is a good week for all you fine Felines to turn your attention to some important considerations such as your health, your job situation, and the status of important relationships.

VIRGO (August 23 to September 22) Avoid making a quick decision about a matter that needs more study. Keep your mind open for possibilities, even if they don't seem plausible – at least not yet.

LIBRA (September 23 to October 22) You might welcome the emphasis on openness in relationships that mark this period. But it's a good idea to avoid sharing personal secrets with people you hardly know.

SCORPIO (October 23 to November 21) There are still some questions that need to be asked and answered before you can feel confident enough to make a potentially life-changing decision.

SAGITTARIUS (November 22 to December 21) Some lingering effects from a now largely resolved workplace confrontation could make things difficult for you. Act on this before it becomes serious.

CAPRICORN (December 22 to January 19) You feel like you're finally in control of your own life after months of making compromises and concessions you never felt comfortable with. Congratulations!

AQUARIUS (January 20 to February 18) No sooner do you decide to pass on one job offer than another suddenly turns up. This one might not have everything you're looking for, but it's worth checking out.

PISCES (February 19 to March 20) Congratulations! With Jupiter's strong influence dominating this week, don't be surprised if you get some good news about a troubling financial matter.

BORN THIS WEEK: You are usually kind and loving, but you can be highly critical of those who don't measure up to your high standards.

GO FIGURE!

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

	+		×		= 42
+		-		+	
	+		×	7	= 70
÷		×		-	
	+		+		= 15
= 12		= 5		= 4	

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

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Even Exchange

by Donna Pettman

Each numbered row contains two clues and two 6-letter answers. The two answers differ from each other by only one letter, which has already been inserted. For example, if you exchange the A from M<u>A</u>STER for an I, you get MISTER. Do not change the order of the letters.

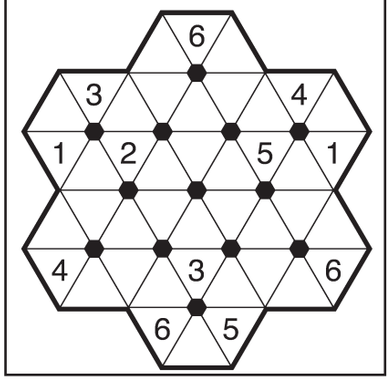
1. Babysitter	__ __ __ N __	Mrs. Reagan	__ __ __ C __
2. Travolta movie	G __ __ __ __ __	Pleat	C __ __ __ __ __
3. The very edge	__ __ __ N __	Refreshing	__ __ __ S __
4. Hardy's buddy	__ __ __ __ __ L	Supermodel Hutton	__ __ __ __ __ N
5. Echo	__ __ P __ __ __	Cook in the microwave	__ __ H __ __ __
6. Norris or Connors	__ H __ __ __	Chicken coop sound	__ L __ __ __
7. Perforate	__ __ __ __ C __	South Dakota capital	__ __ __ __ R __
8. Let down	L __ __ __ __	Lawn cutter	M __ __ __ __
9. French city	__ __ __ I __	Hair divisions	__ __ __ T __
10. Sweepstakes	__ A __ __ __ __	Tousle one's feathers	__ U __ __ __ __

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SNOWFLAKES

by Japheth Light

There are 13 black hexagons in the puzzle. Place the numbers 1 - 6 around each of them. No number can be repeated in any partial hexagon shape along the border of the puzzle.



CryptoQuote

AXYDLBAAXR
is **LONGFELLOW**

One letter stands for another. In this sample, **A** is used for the three L's, **X** for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each week the code letters are different.

ANH ZTNG, ANH YNT'W
OSXJ WN MJ ESPNHI, ANH
CHIW OSXJ WN PSZJ ANHD
PNWOJD STY ESWOJD VDNHY
NE ANH. – PJDAQ IWDJJV

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CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: **K** equals **F**

IVMB NVYZCL AYZ OMCC MQ
MDFA YKKXOHD IVY CXEHN
OYDQ FYDH BVMQ MQA YBVHD
KYYL? CXHZBHQMQB EHDQHC.

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TRIVIA TEST
BY FIFI RODRIGUEZ

1. TELEVISION: What was the name of the dog on "The Brady Bunch"?
2. U.S. CITIES: Which major U.S. city was called Yerba Buena until 1847?
3. GEOGRAPHY: Where is Bryce Canyon National Park located?
4. HISTORY: Where did the Renaissance begin?
5. MOVIES: What is the nickname of the serial killer in "The Silence of the Lambs"?
6. U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the 20th president of the United States?
7. GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: How many amendments are in the United States' Bill of Rights?
8. ASTRONOMY: What type of galaxy is the Milky Way?
9. MUSIC: Which rock band sings the theme song to "The Big Bang Theory"?
10. LITERATURE: What is the last name of the family in "Little Women"?

SUDOKU
BY LINDA THISTLE

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7					6	1	4	
9					7		3	
	1						6	
	2			1				
	4		8		2	9		
	8			5		4	2	6
1					3			2
4		3	9					8
								4

PLACE A NUMBER IN THE EMPTY BOXES IN SUCH A WAY THAT EACH ROW ACROSS, EACH COLUMN DOWN AND EACH SMALL 9-BOX SQUARE CONTAINS ALL OF THE NUMBERS ONE TO NINE.

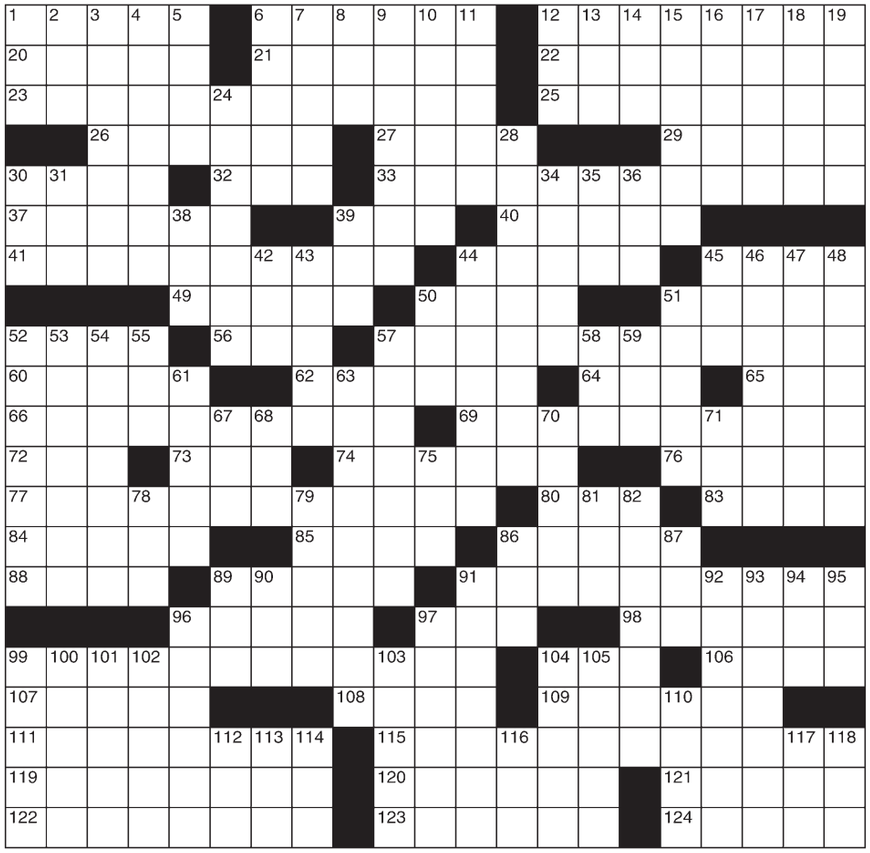


CROSSWORD
CAPITAL-GRAMS

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ACROSS
1 Slogan
6 Like horses offered for breeding
12 "You played well!"
20 Knot on a tree branch
21 Like Lowell's "day in June"
22 Anomalous
23 Creature in the Philippines' capital?
25 Former British prime minister Benjamin
26 Geronimo or Cochise
27 Voting "no"
29 Final inning, usually
30 Best Picture of 2012
32 "El —" (1961 epic film)
33 Horse-drawn carriage in Angola's capital?
37 Sobieski of the screen
39 — Plaines
40 Olympic swimmer Tom
41 Skating couples in France's capital?
44 Like charged atoms
45 Pear variety
49 Melodramatic
50 Privy to
51 Massey of old movies
52 Affliction for some war vets
56 Mineo of old movies
57 Pollen-bearing organ from a flower in Iran's capital?
60 Golfer Hale
62 Insect's egg capsule
64 Boise loc.
65 "State Fair" actor Ayres
66 Ring thrown at a peg in Ecuador's capital?
69 Public square in Bolivia's capital?
72 Abbr. on a navy vessel
73 Website ID
74 Showed up at
76 Narratives
77 Feudal lords in Greece's capital?
80 TV captain Jean- — Picard
83 Big shindig
84 Has to have
85 Like a desert
86 Workforce newcomer
88 Harper of "No Country for Old Men"
89 Doughnut-shaped
91 Small parasite in South Korea's capital?
96 Primitive-based kind of diet
97 "OB-viously!"
98 Striped stinkers
99 Comedian in Lesotho's capital?
104 — Fridays (eatery chain)
106 "Fancy —!"
107 Flared dress
108 Feudal toiler
109 "Who — thunk it?!"
111 Said "OK" to silently
115 Gym sweat-boxes in the Bahamas' capital?
119 Intimate chat
120 The second "S" of KISS
121 Prez Roosevelt
122 Back spot for a rider
123 Madrid's land, to its natives
124 "It's nobody — business"

DOWN
1 "Gigi" studio
2 — roll (hot)
3 Scarlet bird
4 Libyan port
5 Cantina pot
6 Popular beer from Japan
7 Not flabby
8 — Lanka
9 Mexican meat dishes
10 Ariel's planet
11 Letter before epsilon
12 Rove (about)
13 Kimono sash
14 Clip- — (some ties)
15 1996 presidential hopeful Bob
16 Bit of salt
17 Modify
18 Island south of Sicily
19 Nobelist Root
24 Says "OK" to
28 Tabby not leaving the house
30 Swiss peak
31 Singer Chris
34 Part of DKNY
35 — Baba
36 Fond du —, Wisconsin
38 Kin of -ette
39 Like a desert
42 Drivers' org.
43 Brand of coolers
44 Fills the lungs
45 Deli staple
46 "So chic!"
47 Allergic outbursts
48 Hot wax may be a part of it
50 Pluralized -y, often
51 Ill-suited
52 Pleasantly pungent
53 Fiduciary figure
54 Moves with a rustling sound
55 Morse click
57 Best Picture of 1997
58 Actress Long
59 Timber tool
61 They often precede verbs
63 Experienced via another person
67 String after P
68 Final: Abbr.
70 Target of the Salk vaccine
71 Petri dish site
75 Doc's Rx
78 Paper VIPs
79 Palace area for women
81 Country south of Braz.
82 Fahrenheit alternative
86 Snarky laugh
87 Deer relative
89 Letter before upsilon
90 Ending for schnozz
91 "Time to ride the waves!"
92 Beat in a mano-a-mano
93 Releases from one's grasp
94 Jamaican music genre
95 N.J. hours
96 Gussies up
97 Removes some rodents
99 Stately home
100 Solitary
101 Album's first half
102 Ewoks' forest moon
103 Detect
104 Creator of Tom Sawyer
105 Dutch cheese
110 Past due
112 Female goat
113 MSNBC anchor Cabrera
114 Vietnamese holiday
116 Mud bath site
117 Lime drink
118 Method: Abbr.



AERIN IT OUT

ONE HAPPY CAMPER

Room Service is a shining light in a Camp North End that has come of age

BY AERIN SPRUILL

If you'd asked me seven years ago whether Camp North End could turn into what it's becoming, I would've rolled my eyes. Back then, I was perched on abandoned factory parts at a Sofar Sounds show, sipping BYOBs in the middle of warehouses that looked like they may be home to a zombie or two.

At the time, the idea of rejuvenating the 76-acre site felt like yet another overly ambitious project — a graveyard of "bandos" foreshadowing the idea that developers might had bit off more than they could chew.

But every return visit chipped away at that doubt. First, it was returning to the familiar water tower corridor known as The Boileryard to buy cacti from an Airstream and realizing a few displaced city favorites had found new homes. Then it was celebrating QC Nerve's Editor-in-Chief Ryan Pitkin's engagement at NoDa Company Store's little sister, Canteen. Later, I placed an order at Gravity Sourdough Pizza Co. for their Friday pizza flights (RIP to the three-mini-pie special, on pause since August).

But my most recent visit sealed the deal: Room Service, the sleek cocktail bar and restaurant that opened in late 2023, proves Camp North End isn't just a destination — here, it's a daycation in the Queen City.

From a distance, the overgrown greenery and open-air steel trusses almost disguise Room Service's updated patio, as if the factory bones want to conceal their secrets just a bit longer.

Step closer and the courtyard reveals itself — airy, vibrant and buzzing with the kind of energy you don't expect from a once-forgotten nook. Inside, the vibe is boutique hotel chic; leather barstools line the bar, stacked shelves create a curated backdrop of liquid courage, and walls are dressed with just-so artsy clutter. Above, a constellation of disco balls catch the light just right.

It's undeniably stylish — the kind of space that makes you want to linger — but still, there's a whisper of side-eye. As someone who tends to get the ick from spaces that feel too curated, especially when paired with the promise of "your favorite hotel bar right in your neighborhood," I couldn't help but wonder: Is Room Service serving up substance or just lip service wrapped in factory grit made fashionable?

But we listen and don't judge, these days, right? I mused as I asked to sit outside, because lips might sell you the story, but the first taste always tells the truth.

The boo and I chose the side patio that runs along the now-unused railroad tracks, slicing through the development, where flowers bloom and native plants grow wild and free as if time had forgotten them. Our eyes followed the overgrown path to one of the most humble yet beautiful views of the city skyline — equal parts whimsical backdrop for an engagement shoot and eerie stage set, still waiting for the zombies I feared seven years ago to meander through.

My gaze shifted to signs of life. Staring at the viral Eggroll Company stall, the present-day vitality of Camp North End was hard to ignore. Shipping container cantinas splashed color against the factory's industrial frame, breathing new energy into its bones. Once hollow warehouses now pulse with flavor and character, every mural and hustler pushing his brand, a reminder that this space is no longer forgotten.

A golf tournament murmured from a patron's phone behind me, mingling with the laughter of young roller skaters gliding past. Next door, the low thrum of an event at The Revelry flowed into the background. And over it all, a parked car insisted on revving its engine while blasting 2000s R&B — because what's a summer afternoon without a little uninvited soundtrack?

All of it became a beautiful distraction on that surprisingly breezy late-summer afternoon, pulling me out of the anxiety over whether I'd made a day date mistake. Clearly, the patio itself was already doing some of the talking.

As a dirty martini girly who can't resist a blue cheese olive, I went straight for the "Backwater" ($15) — dirty vodka, brine, Graza, marinated olive and, of course, a dream team of blue cheese olives. Papi, meanwhile, discreetly indulged my lifelong Jurassic Park obsession by ordering the "Jeff Goldblum Drinks for Free" ($15) — Lunazul tequila, mezcal, blood orange, hibiscus, lime and orange bitters. We threw in two apple pie moonshine shooters for good measure, though the antique cupettes they came in weren't going to fool me — I swore I wouldn't be swayed.

Our lips tingled with surprise as the shock of balance settled in, each sip hitting a mark we didn't expect. The first creamy bite of the most perfect blue cheese olive was the closer for me, in its own right.

Surely, the smash burger and fries would disappoint after that high? Nope. The potato bun was beautifully crisped, the "party" sauce-to-topping ratio was chef's kiss and the fries carried the perfect crunch and seasoning. We left only crumbs.

Room Service didn't just pass the test — it earned a return trip. With cocktails that hit the right notes, food that refuses to play second fiddle and a patio that knows its role, it's a solid pick for the coveted "what should we do?" rotation.

Camp North End has plenty of players, but this one proves it's here to do more than take up space or cash in. As an extension of Black Moth Bars — already a trusted name in the development — why wouldn't it hold its own? In the end, Room Service delivers a little escape in plain sight, right where the city's past and present meet.

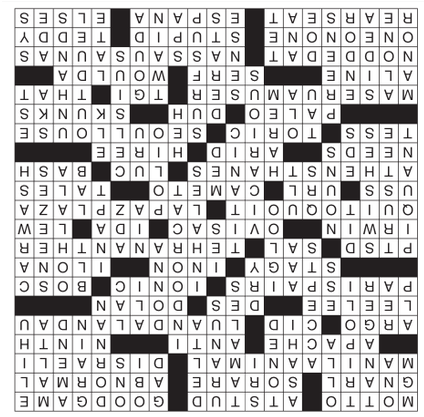
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Outside of Room Service at Camp North End. (Photo by Aerin Spruill)

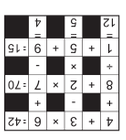
PUZZLE ANSWERS

7	3	5	2	8	6	1	4	9
9	6	2	1	4	7	8	3	5
8	1	4	3	9	5	2	6	7
5	2	9	6	1	4	7	8	3
6	4	7	8	3	2	9	5	1
3	8	1	7	5	9	4	2	6
1	7	8	4	6	3	5	9	2
4	5	3	9	2	1	6	7	8
2	9	6	5	7	8	3	1	4



Even Exchange
answers

1. Nanny, Nancy
2. Grease, Crease
3. Brink, Brisk
4. Laurel, Lauren
5. Repeat, Reheat
6. Chuck, Cluck
7. Pierce, Pierre
8. Lower, Mower
9. Pans, Parts
10. Raffle, Ruffle

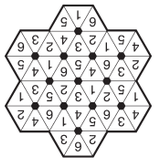


CryptoQuip
answer

What should you call an army officer who likes corn more than any other food? Lieutenant Kernel.

CryptoQuote
answer

You know, you don't have to be famous, you just have to make your mother and father proud of you. — Meryl Streep



Trivia Answers

1. Tiger.
2. San Francisco.
3. Utah.
4. Florence, Italy.
5. Buffalo Bill.
6. James A. Garfield.
7. The first 10 amendments (of 27 to date).
8. Spiral.
9. Barenaked Ladies.
10. March.

SAVAGE LOVE

NEED-TO-KNOW BASIS

Think of the children

BY DAN SAVAGE

I've been nonmonogamous for over five years and have been married for nearly 15 years, and now I need help telling my kids about the nonmonogamy. My husband and I have three kids together, the oldest of which is now 14 years old. My husband and I have not been sexually active for nearly eight years but we're best friends, fabulous co-parents and wonderful nesting partners; I still love him very much. I reclaimed my sexuality and intimacy about six years ago and have been in a relationship with a wonderful man for nearly four years. My husband, dad, sister and friends have all met and like him. I love him very much, as well. But my kids do not know that their mom is nonmonogamous! Being ethical is very important to me and telling them that I am "just going to see a friend" is wearing me down. I am concerned my oldest might see his mom holding hands with someone who isn't his dad or hear from a friend who saw us. I do not want to hide my relationships from anyone but have waited because I just don't know how to say it. What advice do you have for coming out to kids about being nonmonogamous? I am scared they will hate me or feel betrayed. Or worse yet, that it will change my relationship with them forever as we are very close.

Mulling Over My Secret

Most kids don't wanna think about their parents fucking each other, MOMS, and no kid wants to think about their parents fucking other people. But you're not just fucking this other guy, MOMS, you're in a relationship with him. You've taken steps to integrate your boyfriend into your life — something we all owe our romantic partners — and your boyfriend has been embraced by (most of) your family and friends. But you have to tell your kids, arguably the most important people in your life, that you're "seeing a friend" when you're heading out to see your boyfriend and that gloss — I'm not going to call it a lie (he's also your friend, right?) — doesn't square with your ethics and being ethical is very important to you and blah blah ethics blah.

So, here's an ethical question for you: If unburdening yourself — if no longer having to keep a secret from your kids — means shifting the burden of secret keeping onto your kids, is telling them the truth the more ethical choice?

Take your plan to tell your 14-year-old son but not your other kids; if you tell him but not his siblings, you'll be putting your son in the position of having to lie to his younger siblings or other people in your orbit who don't know. I'm no ethicist, but it seems to me that asking your eldest to lie for you is worse than continuing to tell him a glossy lie yourself until all of your kids are old enough to know that your marriage is companionate and that you have another romantic partner.

You could tell all of your kids at once — you could rip that bandage off — and there are poly parents out there who are out to their kids, who are fine. But do you live in a place where you can be out as an open or poly couple in your community? Because if you don't — if this is something your kids will have to keep from their friends, your neighbors, relatives who don't know, etc. — then you would be asking all three of your kids to lie for you. And while your eldest child might be able to wrap his head around mom and dad's marriage being loving, stable and companionate, knowing you're in love with someone else could make the younger ones worry their parents might split up at any moment.

So, I would ask you … what's more ethical: Waiting to tell your kids that your good friend is your boyfriend until they're all old enough to understand the complexities of adult lives and relationships — to say nothing of the complexities of their parents' marriage — or dumping some very complicated shit on them so that you can feel ethically pure?

If you do decide to tell them — all of them, all at once — you will need to pour on the reassurance. It won't be enough to tell them you and your husband are solid, MOMS, you're going to need to show them. And seeing your husband and your boyfriend interact without tension will help, but you shouldn't force your kids to interact with your boyfriend if they don't want to be around him and/or don't want him around.

And if you decide not to tell your kids until they're a little older, then you need to be discreet. That means no public displays of affection — no holding your boyfriend's hand — in places where your eldest or one of his friends might see you. You won't have to sneak around forever, but sneaking around right now, while your kids are young, might be the more ethical choice.

I'm a 40-year-old married man who has had one male lover (who is also 40 and married) since we met in college. We are not married to each other. We've both been married to women. We were best friends for several years before we had sex and began our sexual affair before we got married. Our wives and children are all friends, and we often take joint vacations together. In addition to having sex with our wives during these joint vacations, we also have sex with each other. Our wives and families are ignorant of this arrangement. We've only had gay sex with each other. We are in love with our wives, but we have admitted that we love each other more. While we have many more opportunities to have sex with our wives (all the time, at least in theory) we have sex with them one to two times a week. While we can't be alone overnight very often, we have sex five to six times when we do spend a night together. All the information I can find about bisexual men who are married to woman and sexually active with other males focuses on "hook-ups" and never on a relationship like ours. I know that there are variations in everything, but have you ever come across men like us?

Friends And Longtime Lovers

My first thought reading your letter: You should be less concerned about whether I've come across a relationship like yours, FALL, and more concerned about your wives or kids coming across the two of you fucking the shit out each other on one of your shared family vacations.

My second thought: This is a case for Dr. Joe Kort, the psychotherapist, sexologist and author who specializes in marital problems faced by couples in "mixed orientation" marriages.

"I am nonjudgmental and can even be supportive of a situation where a man has another guy or guys on the side," said Dr. Kort. "However, I draw the line when the wife knows the other guy and the guy is in their friend group, as it is insensitive and unfair to the wife. Many people will feel it's unfair to the wife that her husband is with anyone else, but it is more problematic when the two guys are the kind of friends who vacation together with their families."

There is a name for the kind of relationship you describe; two married straight-identified/straight-perceived men who only have gay sex with each other are in a "closed loop." The term was popularized by swinging couples where the men were open to their wives about being bisexual, Dr. Kort explained, and their wives consented to the arrangement, FALL, which doesn't describe your situation. (Also, if a "straight" married man is having sex with other men, it's important that he get the consent of his wife and take precautions to protect her sexual health. If the husband and wife are no longer intimate with each other, the man should be taking steps to protect his own sexual health and the health of his male partners, e.g., getting on PrEP, getting tested regularly, using condoms when appropriate, etc.)

Like me, Dr. Kort, who has written extensively about straight and/or straight-identified men who have sex with other men, is concerned about how this is going to play out when — not if — your wives find out.

"Given that they are doing this right under everyone's noses, discovery seems inevitable," said Dr. Kort. "And when they are discovered, the scale of this betrayal will make it very hard to recover from. The show *Grace and Frankie* made light of a similar situation — two old friends who were lovers leaving their wives for each other — but once exposed these things rarely go the way it did on that sitcom, where everyone remained friends. A revelation like this devastates everyone — including the men involved. When this comes out, their relationships with their wives and kids will never be the same."

Maybe you and your male lover will continue to get away with it and your wife and kids will never discover that you've been something more than close friends for decades, FALL. But if you want to up the odds of getting away with this — if you wanna take his loads and your secret to the grave — you gotta stop fucking the shit out of each other while your wives and kids are sleeping in the next room.

Follow Dr. Kort on Instagram @DrJoeKort. To learn more about his books, his practice, and his podcast, go to joekort.com.

Our teenage son does not allow us in his room. His room is sacred, and we must respect his privacy. And we do. So long as his room isn't filthy and doesn't smell, we never go into his room. He doesn't show the same respect for our privacy. Every inch of the rest of the house is his to roam through and there isn't a drawer or a closet he hasn't inspected. The issue is we don't want him using drugs and he believes it would be hypocritical of us to use drugs, hence his searching through our things for evidence that we're doing what we don't allow him to do. My wife and I are into BDSM. We don't practice BDSM at home, but our "date nights" involve getting a hotel room or going to a fetish club. We have gear and fetish attire that we keep in a locked trunk in a corner of the garage. We don't even open it at home! If we're going to a kink event, we toss it in the trunk and only open it after we get there. Well, our son found the key, rifled through everything, and was appalled and disgusted. We've relocated our trunk to a friend's place, at my wife's insistence. He's barely speaking to us and I'm not sure what to say.

Kid Now Knows

You could say this: "When you snoop, you sometimes find out things you don't want to know, you sometimes you find out things you don't need to know, and you sometimes you find out things you can never un-know. So, now you know some things about your parents you didn't need or want to know because you refused to respect our privacy the way you respect yours. And that's entirely on you."

And if you really wanna get under his skin — and you shouldn't want to (this is a humorous aside, not actionable advice) — you could say this: "Hey, have you seen the results of this study?" Researchers found that kinks may have a genetic component and could be heritable, e.g., your parents may have passed their kinks on to you, KNK, and you might've passed yours on to him. (That study came out in 1994, but there's been more research and more speculation since.) While an individual's unique life experiences play an enormous role in the formation of sexual fantasies and the cementing of kinks, mom and dad — the ones you get your DNA from — might pass kinks on to their offspring in the same way some personality traits can be passed on. It's just a theory, of course, but it would explain the huge number of letters I've received over the years from distraught young adults who ran into their parents at a fetish club.

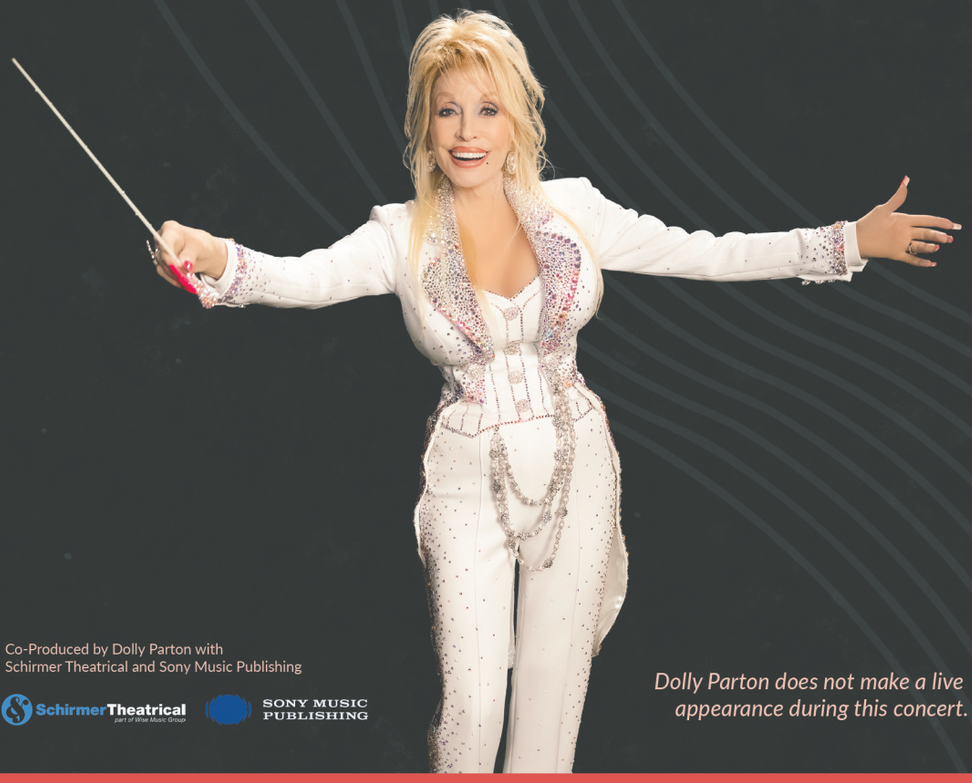
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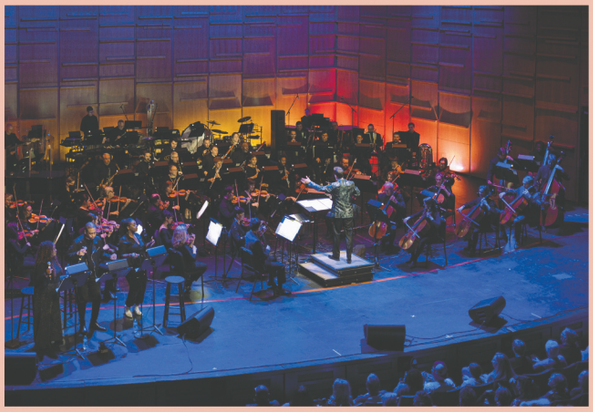
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