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**Sunday 2/23****stage**

**The Journey of the Noble Gnarble.** See listing for Saturday, February 22. Free, 2pm. Belmont Arts Collaborative, 221 Carlton Rd., Ste. 3. 326-0404.

**etc.**

**Big Blue Door.** Improv comedy from performers of all experience levels. \$10, 7pm. Belmont Arts Collaborative, 221 Carlton Rd., Ste. 3. bigbluedoor.net.

**Fame.** This musical drama from 1980 is gritty, tough, emotionally vibrant, and charged with enough youthful energy and spirit to put a satellite into orbit. \$10, 1:30pm. Alamo Draft-house Cinema, 5th Street Station. 326-5056.

**Monday 2/24****music**

**The Beethoven Experience with the Borromeo Quartet: Concert I.** A musical and educational experience marking the 250th anniversary of Ludwig van Beethoven's birth. \$25-42, 6:30pm. American Shakespeare Center, 10 S. Market St., Staunton. (540) 885-5588.

**Gin + Jazz.** Brian Caputo Trio brings the best players out of Richmond to the hotel lobby bar. No cover, 5:30pm. Oakhurst Hall, 122 Oakhurst Cir. 872-0100.

**Koda & Friends.** Whiskey-tinged Americana. No cover, 6:30pm. The Whiskey Jar, 227 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. 202-1549.

**Laura Leisring.** Virginia Symphony's principal bassoon player gives a concert. No cover, 8pm. Old Cabell Hall, UVA. 924-3052.

**Lifters.** Rock music for a weeknight. No cover, 8pm. Blue Moon Diner, 606 W. Main St. 980-6666.

**Matthew Willner.** Guitarist plays the blues with a rotating lineup of musicians. 21-plus. No cover, 10pm. Rapture, 303 E. Main St., Downtown Mall. 293-9526.

**Tuesday 2/25****music**

**Beleza.** Funkalicious samba soul with a splash of Latin jazz and Spanish flamenco. No cover, 7pm. The Bebedero, 225 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. 234-3763.

**Dr. Levine and the Dreaded BluesLady.** A night of music and ruminations on the evolution of blues music and its significance in American culture. No cover, 7pm. The Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, 233 Fourth St. NW. 260-8720.

**Jolie Fille.** Cajun-punk six-piece. 21-plus. No cover, 10:30pm. The Whiskey Jar, 227 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. 202-1549.

**Karaoke.** Show off your chops with host Jen Dville. 21-plus. No cover, 8pm. Rapture, 303 E. Main St., Downtown Mall. 293-9526.

**Mama Tried.** Grateful Dead-infused tunes to celebrate Mardi Gras. With Jason Burke Band. \$7-10, 7pm. The Jefferson Theater, 110 E. Main St., Downtown Mall. 245-4948.

**Ragged Mountain String Band.** See listing for Thursday, February 20. No cover, 6:30pm. The Whiskey Jar, 227 W. Main St., Downtown Mall. 202-1549.

**Tuesday Evening Concert Series.** The Venice Baroque Orchestra and mezzo-soprano Ann Hallenberg perform works and arias by Vivaldi, Handel, Torri, and Broschi. \$5-39, 7:30pm. Old Cabell Hall, UVA. 924-3376.

**dance**

**Tango Lessons.** For beginner and intermediate levels, no partner necessary. Free, 7pm. Tango on Water, 208 E. Water St. 202-9569.

# Artistic inspiration

## *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* beautifully illustrates the intangible



*Portrait of a Lady on Fire* slowly but confidently establishes itself as one of the best depictions of how vital the form and function of art is to the human experience.

By Kristofer Jenson

arts@c-ville.com

**H**ow wonderful it is to see a film about art that treats the creative process as an essential part of the human experience, free of the fetishization of suffering, or the detachment of genius worship. The narrative of Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* centers on the relationship between a painter and her subject, but it examines the miracle and tragedy of human creation of all kinds, including music, storytelling, recreation, and especially love.

Marianne (Noémie Merlant), a portrait artist and art instructor, is commissioned to paint Héloïse (Adèle Haenel) without her knowledge, at the insistence of her countess mother (Valeria Golino). Héloïse is engaged to a man she does not know, and had refused to sit for a previous painter following her sister's suicide. Marianne is introduced under the guise of a walking companion, stealing glimpses of her features when she can. When the first painting is complete, Héloïse rejects the work as made without true emotion. She then agrees to sit for a new painting while the countess is away, and in this time alone, the hints of attraction boil over. The painting of Héloïse's portrait becomes a time and space for the two women to express themselves. What was compulsory becomes voluntary, what was technical becomes emotional, and with the burden

of expectation removed, they discover new levels of freedom not allowed by their stations in life.

Sciamma's minimalistic direction brings out dimensions of the story that might have been lost in a more conventional film. The only music is diegetic, coming from a harpsichord, an orchestra, or a group of women around a fire. There is no villain, there are no twists, and no on-screen violence. There is sex, but the eroticism exists in all things: glances and stares, shapes, sounds, and silence. The only struggle is to find the best way to express emotions that have been suffocated, entombed by fear, sadness, past experiences, societal expectation. It is a simple love story told with elegance, sophistication, and masterful craftsmanship.

The creative process is often inadequately captured in film not because it is ineffable, but because it is so tangible. It is a great labor to have a film about an artist that is made with the same attention to detail that its subject demonstrates. Many filmmakers fall victim to the temptation of portraying an artist's life as a series of anecdotal struggles that culminate in the spark of creation, resulting in a great masterpiece. Artistic inspiration can come from anywhere and might be indescribable, but the act of creation, the form and technique used to create, and the feelings that creation evokes are as foundational to us as the process leading up to it. We don't memorialize ourselves and our emotions out of vanity. We do it out of necessity. 📺

## *Portrait of a Lady on Fire*

R, 119 minutes  
Violet Crown Cinema

**SEE IT AGAIN**

## *The Color Purple*

PG-13, 200 minutes  
Regal Stonefield 14 and IMAX  
February 23

**Alamo Drafthouse Cinema** 375 Merchant Walk Sq., 326-5056, drafthouse.com/charlottesville ■ **Regal Stonefield 14 and IMAX** The Shops at Stonefield, 244-3213. regmovies.com ■ **Violet Crown Cinema** 200 W. Main St., Downtown Mall, 529-3000, charlottesville.violetcrown.com ■ **Check theater websites for listings.**



So Raymond did what many entrepreneurs are forced to do at some point, global pandemic or not: She pivoted. Her employees began following strict social-distancing guidelines, wearing personal protective equipment, and performing increased cleaning procedures. The company started providing meals to the Boys & Girls Club, The Haven, and Feed the Frontline.

“For us, food is love,” says Raymond. “We have to take care of our community because they’re taking care of us.”

For nearly two years, Raymond has worked with Tara Eavey of 4P Foods and the Local Food Hub to increase NoBull’s distribution and customer base.

“I have seen local small businesses and farms go from thriving and fruitful, to an entity that is struggling to make it from week to week with non-existent sales,” Eavey says of the pandemic’s impact. When the COVID-19 crisis first began, 4P Foods realized it could serve farmers and small business owners like Raymond by continuing to order as much product as possible. Because of that shift, Eavey recently coordinated one of the organization’s largest orders of NoBull Burgers for its CSA members.

For now, Raymond can breathe a little easier. Her production team has better access to PPE, for example. And NoBull just expanded into two new markets—a natural foods store in Michigan, and Whole Foods in New York, New Jersey, and Connecticut. It’s a region Raymond had been trying to break into for years.

“Our retail sales are spiking, especially in the frozen foods category, since everyone is staying home and packing their freezer. Through all of this, we’re still producing,” Raymond says.

And it’s Raymond’s method of safe, organic food production that the COVID-19 crisis has brought to the forefront of many shoppers’ minds. In April, over 100 poultry and meat processing plants owned by corporations like Smithfield Foods, Tyson Foods, and Perdue Farms reported nearly 5,000 coronavirus cases. By the end of April, prices for meat and other animal-based food products had jumped by at least 8 percent.

Those numbers didn’t surprise Raymond; she hopes the crisis will remind consumers that what they put in their bodies matters. “I hope these events will guide people’s shopping behaviors towards ingredients they can

**“For us, food is love. We have to take care of our community because they’re taking care of us.”**

pronounce, farmers or owners they know, and putting a face to a name and how all those things matter,” she says.

Raymond believes nourishment is about finding a balance and eating intuitively. That’s always been her story, and it isn’t over yet. She feels confident that NoBull will be back on menus when restaurants are ready to reopen, and she takes pride in NoBull’s growth and grit in spite of the fragility and fear affecting consumer’s decisions. Pandemic or not, she still has big plans. ☺

# Staggering steps

## Zombie flick *Blood Quantum* takes on colonialism

By Kristopher Jenson  
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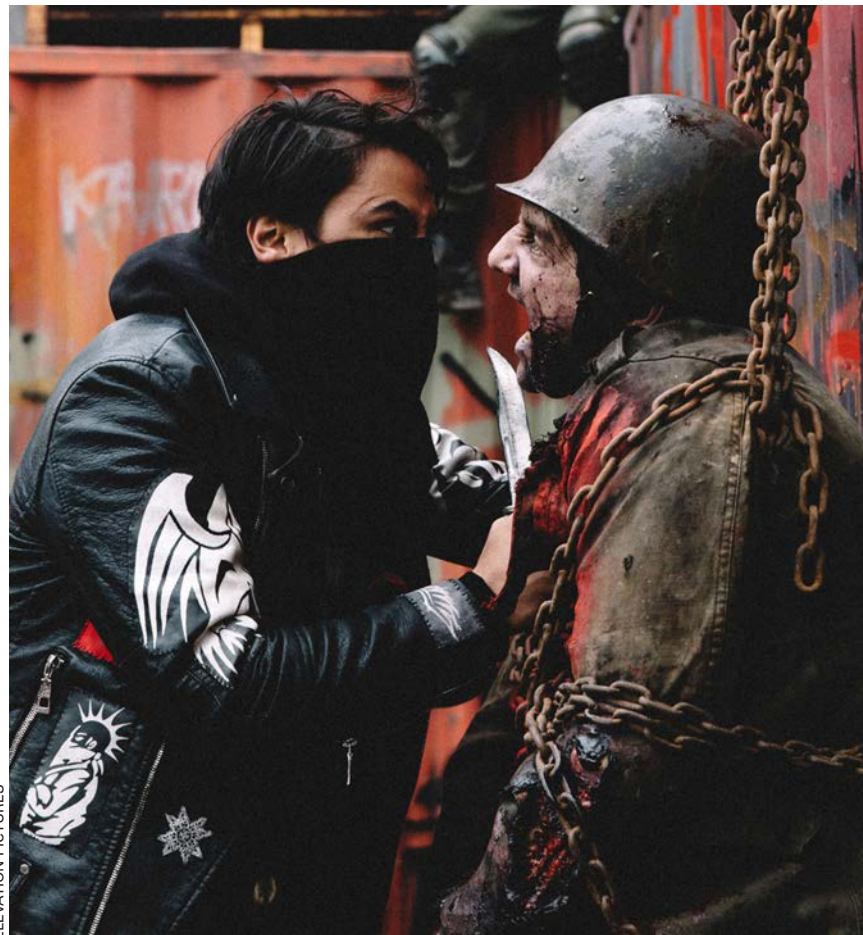
**L**ove them or hate them, zombie stories remain popular because they represent the nagging fear that the problems we allow to persist will eventually overpower us. Zombies are husks, barely recognizable as humans, possessing our shape and our need to consume but lacking morality, symbols of our collective failure as a society.

In the 52 years since *Night of the Living Dead* revolutionized the genre, many of those problems have remained unsolved, and are therefore frequent themes for zombie films: racism, consumerism, inequality, militarism, and a lack of faith in the institutions designed to protect humankind.

In *Blood Quantum*, from filmmaker Jeff Barnaby, the undead invasion parallels an even deeper, centuries-old tragedy: colonialism. A mysterious virus arrives by water and soon spreads to the entire region, confining the Mi’kmaq survivors to the Red Crow Reservation, where hordes of invaders are intent on wiping them out. (“Blood quantum” itself refers to laws first created in the Colonial era, the ratio of one’s ancestry that determines status as a Native American. The laws were often used to persecute, to facilitate extermination and forced relocation, and have been blamed for creating racism where none existed within tribes.)

The story is frighteningly prescient, not only given the current global pandemic, but as the Cheyenne River Sioux and Oglala Sioux tribes are battling with the governor of South Dakota for their right to maintain checkpoints on all roads leading in and out of their reservations due to coronavirus. Barnaby could not have predicted the specific events of today when he wrote and directed the film, which premiered at festivals last year, but it feels ripped from recent headlines.

As with many of the best horror films, *Blood Quantum* is scariest when it explores the plausible consequences of fantastical events. After the scramble to understand this virus, the Mi’kmaq learn that they are immune, and that the Red Crow reservation’s remote location is strategically useful in keeping out unwanted elements. But the immunity is no boon, as they are still in danger of being eaten alive, and geographic isolation means being confined behind metal walls until they die or are overtaken. The promise of staying alive is enough for some survivors, while others cannot envision a future within the fortress’ walls, succumbing to drugs, anger issues, and other destructive behaviors. Each solution only creates a new



Horror fans will find a solidly terrifying escape in the zombie feature *Blood Quantum*. The film has plenty of eerie parallels to the current state of societal conflict in reaction to the coronavirus.

problem; reservations did not erase the ills of colonization, and the strongest walls do not protect against self-destruction.

Barnaby shows his extensive knowledge of zombie film history, and draws on those movies’ stylistic innovations to build the foundation for *Blood Quantum*. But even the most seasoned genre fan will be taken aback by some moments, especially in the film’s first act. In the opening scene, we see gutted fish begin to flop on dry land, and it’s disturbing, even for a genre built on shock value.

The opening credits also pack an emotional punch, revealing structures like bridges and buildings from uncomfortable angles. You might not expect the sight of a bridge at a 90-degree angle to be so jarring, but when viewed in the context of an imminent catastrophe, it’s quite effective. The structures we’ve built, whether physical or institutional, have become hollow. At best, they are simply shapes in a barren wasteland, at worst, they hasten our doom. A bridge is no longer a bridge, it is a liability. A police officer has no more authority than a hooligan. Was it always this way? Was our existence always barely contained chaos, or had we fooled ourselves into believing we’d created order?

Of the zombie tales that came before, viewers might find the most similarity with “The Walking Dead”: a character-driven story where reckoning with the past is as vital as contemplating the future. Michael Greyeyes, who portrays former officer Traylor, was even featured on “Fear the Walking Dead” as Qaletqa Walker. Greyeyes is an excellent anchor for the film throughout; in his former life, his every action suggested a man frustrated by powerlessness, but bound by an unspoken moral obligation to try and make change. His son, Joseph (Forrest Good-

### *Blood Quantum*

R, 96 minutes  
Streaming (Shudder, Amazon Prime)

luck, *The Revenant* and *The Miseducation of Cameron Post*), frequently causes trouble with Lysol (Kiowa Gordon, *Twilight*), and though they commit petty crimes together, when push comes to shove it’s revealed how truly different they are. There are so many characters with terrific performances that the story might have worked best as a miniseries. But as it is, *Blood Quantum* offers plenty to enjoy and contemplate. ☺

**As with many of the best horror films, *Blood Quantum* is scariest when it explores the plausible consequences of fantastical events.**



the fuzz and distortion and other effects that are critical to the sound,” Hefner says. “I think the melodies are quite beautiful.”

Hefner brings a softer side to the band via his love of ’70s soul, and Parker says he’s embraced that music, at least in his singing voice. Not only does the Motown sound give Hefner and Wooten a place to lock in as a rhythm section, its R&B sensibility offers Parker’s oblique, pithy lyrics a chance to play off the band’s fuzzy guitar effects.

Awash in a profession known for verbosity—Parker studies medieval and Renaissance drama, while Hefner focuses on 20th century American lit and pop culture—the lead singer says his lyrical approach is an intentional departure from his day-to-day life.

“The whole point of this is it has allowed me an outlet and relationship to language that my professional life doesn’t have,” Parker says. “It’s an opportunity to have a much lighter, carefree approach. I don’t want it to be too cerebral.”

Most of the songs on *Kino* find that non-cerebral niche without falling into the mundane. The tracks are about relationships and loss, society and loss, finding oneself and, well, losing oneself.

Parker and Hefner say they don’t want their work in Mouzon Bigsby to be overly commercial. Both in their mid-40s, the bibliophiles-cum-musicians aren’t looking to sign a major record contract and tour the globe.

**“The whole point of this is it has allowed me an outlet and relationship to language that my professional life doesn’t have.” JOHN PARKER**

“When you decide what you are going to do for a living and pay the bills, you’re lucky if you can do something you love, but you are instrumentalizing what you love,” Parker says. “If we wanted to try to pay the bills, that would put a lot of pressure on us, and I think it would potentially hurt the music.”

At any rate, Parker and Hefner aren’t sure what to expect when the world emerges from its COVID-induced slumber and again celebrates live sounds. “I’m just hoping the venues are there. You hope they can hold out until it’s safe,” Hefner says.

The duo—sans Wooten—has been recording material for another album remotely, going back to their alt-country roots with Hefner now on pedal steel. They’re also sitting on a number of recordings from the original session avec Wooten.

Parker and Hefner would like to see Mouzon Bigsby back in the studio as a full-strength trio at some point, but before the pandemic clears, they’re just hoping to be back in the garage. According to Parker, it’s been too humid—a problem the songwriter grapples with esoterically in “Elon Musk.”

“What if Elon Musk can’t save us,” Parker sings on *Kino*’s finishing track. “What if after dark we go to the park / If it gets too hot we’ll stay in the car.”

Or stay in the house, for that matter. **C**

# Fresh take

***Get Duked!* confirms the genius of director Ninian Doff**



Ninian Doff’s chaotic comedy *Get Duked!* is an exhilarating romp through the Scottish Highlands that leaves viewers wondering what the fledgling director will do next.

By Kristofer Jenson  
[arts@c-ville.com](mailto:arts@c-ville.com)

**A**bout halfway through *Get Duked!*, there comes a moment when you realize this silly little comedy about a group of city-dwelling teenagers in the Scottish Highlands became a bold experiment in instinctive filmmaking. Right when it seems like things are about to fly off the rails, it’s clear that it was slowly evolving into a lawless social satire the whole time. The film hasn’t betrayed our trust by breaking its own rules, as many madcap comedies often do. It rewards our investment by proving it never needed rules in the first place.

This is British music video director Ninian Doff’s feature debut, produced from his own screenplay. Doff has a lot to say in *Get Duked!*, managing to fit more into 87 minutes than many filmmakers do in movies twice as long. It’s so dense that Doff needed at least four endings, *Lord of the Rings* style—narrative, political, emotional, and tonal—and each one of them is earned. With a film that covers so much terrain, it’s hard to imagine how he could possibly follow it up, but *Get Duked!* leaves little doubt that this is an artist with no shortage of fresh ideas.

The story concerns a series of disasters that befall participants in the Duke of Edinburgh Award, a fictionalized version of a real program. Three delinquents—Dean (Rian Gordon), Duncan (Lewis Gribben), and DJ Beatroot (Viraj Juneja)—are sent to the Scottish Highlands on a hiking trip as penance for blowing up a public restroom. They’re joined by Ian (Samuel Bottomley), a naive, homeschooled boy who volunteers for the

program to make new friends. As they make their way to camp, they’re pursued by a possible serial killer disguised as the Duke of Edinburgh (Eddie Izzard). The local police, already ill-equipped to deal with the case of a bread thief, misconstrue events until their suspect description is little more than a string of scary adjectives, all while never actually accomplishing anything.

*Get Duked!* made the rounds at last year’s festival under the name *Boyz in the Wood*. The new, less jokey title is better suited to the final film, but the original captures its spirit and its place in the history of British satire, with the likes of the sitcom “Spaced”—created by and starring Simon Pegg and Jessica Stevenson, directed by Edgar Wright, and co-starring Nick Frost—about 20-something Londoners mired in American pop culture, and the juxtaposition of their mundane lives with their Hollywood obsessions. (It propelled the team to films like *Shaun of the Dead* and *Hot Fuzz*, which are built on similar sensibilities.)

Setting *Get Duked!* in the Scottish Highlands taps into some of the same absurdity that makes “Spaced” so much fun. Nothing is supposed to happen here, yet it becomes the scene for drug-fueled underground raves with Scottish farmers, bored officers too eager to assume the role of supercops, bored hunters who pretend to be murderous aristocrats to act out a generational grudge, and commentary on how trying to help “troubled” youth has no basis in what they actually need. Along the way, the filmmaking joyously borrows from a number of genres, including action, horror, musical, even zombie. Changing the name to *Get Duked!* was

a good decision, but *Boyz in the Wood* says a lot about its intentions.

Many films like this fail in treating the depth of their characters as secondary to the loudness of their antics, and it’s in getting this right that Doff truly sets himself apart as a writer-director. He knows that we’re used to thinly sketched characters being reaction machines, screaming at scary things, laughing at funny things, while the selfish one says selfish stuff, the stupid one says stupid stuff, etc. In *Get Duked!*, not only do all four boys see real growth throughout the film, but even the most insane action is convincing. Doff is fully invested in the characters as people, and for a minute you may find yourself genuinely anxious about their fate. They are not simply the vehicle by which an opinionated artist conveys a snarky opinion, or a skilled technician

## ***Get Duked!***

R, 87 minutes  
Streaming (Amazon Prime)

shows off. These characters are strong enough to carry a film twice as long.

*Get Duked!* is a wickedly clever commentary on class and the state of Britain in a deceptively funny package, anchored by stylistic boldness and propelled by memorable performances and shockingly blunt anti-aristocratic commentary for a country that still has a monarch. Some have found Doff’s lengthy flights of fancy to be frustrating. I find them invigorating, like he knew he was breaking the rules, but believed in the material too much to care. **C**

AMAZON STUDIOS

