DAY TRIPPIN'

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Irish poet Oscar Wilde opined in his 1899 essay, “The Decay of Lying,” that “Life imitates art far more than art imitates life.” The shortened version of Wilde’s quote — life imitates art — has become something of a go-to aphorism in the ensuing decades. But it seems to me life is no longer imitating art so much as it is imitating a reprise of Lewis Carroll’s Alice in Wonderland, and we’ve all fallen down the rabbit hole.

How else to explain the bizarre phenomenon of Fox News spending countless hours of airtime last week on the decision by the publishers of the Dr. Seuss children’s books to not reprint six titles because they contained ethnically insensitive or xenophobic content? You can easily look up the images in question online. They’re mainly racial-stereotype caricatures that were commonly used in the 1930s and 1940s, and it’s pretty understandable why the books wouldn’t be reprinted in 2021.

But that reasoning doesn’t adequately stoke the Fox News outrage machine. Nope. The real reason Seuss books are going away is because of liberal “cancel culture,” the current rallying cry of the snowflake right. To their credit, it’s a useful phrase, really one that can be applied to almost anything that is stopped or rejected.

The Commercial Appeal, for instance, has just replaced its long-running conservative cartoon, Mallard Fillmore (which “balanced” Doonesbury), with another conservative political cartoon, Prickly City, which features the adventures of a conservative young Black woman who once fell in love with Tucker Carlson. I am not making this up. Unless Wikipedia made it up.

At any rate, letter writers to the CA are predictably complaining that lame duck (literally) Mallard Fillmore is the victim of cancel culture. The truth is less outrageous: The editors at the CA, a privately owned company, decided to pull one conservative cartoon and replace it with another one. It’s kind of like when Beverly Hill SVU (or whatever) gets the axe from CBS.

Or like when thousands of Fox viewers demanded the resignation of Shepard Smith when he came out as gay. Or was that different?

But wait, there’s more. It turns out that the ancient plastic toy, Mr. Potato Head, is also a victim of cancel culture. And also the subject of many hours of pearl-clutching commentary in conservative media circles. How dare they remove the fedora and mustache of Mr. Potato Head?! What’s next, G.I. Josephine?

It’s kind of like when conservatives went nuts and boycotted the Dixie Chicks after they criticized George W. Bush. Or was that different?

Cancel culture has also become the rallying cry of conservative Republicans on Capitol Hill. Last week, in referencing public attitudes toward COVID, President Biden said, “The last thing we need is Neanderthal thinking. That in the meantime everything’s fine, take off your mask. Forget it. It still matters.” The nerve!

Thankfully, our own Senator Marsha Blackburn was quickly on the case, defending the downtrodden Neanderthal people on Fox News: “Neanderthals are hunter-gatherers. They’re protectors of their family,” she said. “They are resilient. They’re resourceful. They tend to their own. Joe Biden needs to rethink what he is saying.”

No one had the heart to tell Marsha that Neanderthals have been extinct for a few thousand years. I mean, except for a few descendents in Congress, the ones who tried to cancel the last election. Or was that cancellation different?

Senator Ted Cruz asked Attorney General nominee Merrick Garland how he felt about cancel culture in a Senate hearing. Garland responded: “I do not have an understanding of the meaning of the term sufficient to comment.” Which sounds about right.

Shouty Ohio Congressman Jim Jordan demanded that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi hold a congressional hearing on the pressing national crisis of cancel culture. She ignored him, thereby missing a golden opportunity to schedule such a hearing and then cancel it at the last moment.

That would have been artful.
NEW U.S. ATTORNEY
First Assistant United States Attorney Joseph “Joe” Murphy Jr. succeeded former United States attorney Michael Dunavant last week as the acting U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Tennessee.

Per precedent, Dunavant stepped down from the position following the change of federal administration. The Memphis resident was First Assistant to the office and was able to assume the title through federal law.

Murphy is a graduate of Lambuth College and the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law. Murphy has served as an assistant U.S. attorney in the U.S. Attorney’s Memphis office since 1989.

STATE: EXPIRED VACCINE NOT HARMFUL
A state health official said no harm will come to Shelby Countians who received an expired COVID-19 vaccine from the Shelby County Health Department, though the shot may be less effective.

Dr. Lisa Piercey, commissioner of the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH), said last week that many from the Memphis area have contacted her office recently, worried they received an expired dose of the vaccine. Piercey said many have a paper record of their vaccine from the health department that shows their shot had expired, sometimes more than two weeks before they received it.

Piercey said her office investigated, and she believes many of these instances can be linked to a clerical error by the health department. Many sheets with an expired date were printed and taken to a vaccine site here, she said. However, TDH is not “resting on that assertion as a final decision. We’re verifying those cases ourselves.” But she said TDH believes the “vast majority” of the cases were clerical.

“Nothing bad is going to happen if you get an expired vaccine,” Piercey said. “The worst thing that can happen is that the vaccine is not as effective as a temperature-controlled or unexpired vaccine would be.”

ZOO REBUTS ‘WORST’ RANK
Memphis Zoo ranked eighth on this year’s annual “Worst Zoos for Elephants” list published last week by an animal rights organization, but zoo officials said their elephant program meets and beats professional standards.

In Defense of Animals (IDA), a California-based international animal protection organization, has released its “Worst Zoos for Elephants” list every year since 2004. Memphis Zoo made the list in 2020 mainly on the September death of elephant Tyranza. IDA said the elephant was 56 when she died.

“Memphis Zoo touted Tyranza as being the oldest African elephant in North America — but this isn’t saying much,” reads the report. “… zoos cannot defend against one undeniable fact: all research shows elephants die far younger in zoos than in the wild.”

Zoo officials said theirs is a “highly respected elephant program that exceeds both expectations and requirements by the [Association of Zoos and Aquariums, AZA].”

“One key facet of our program is allowing the elephants to have choice and control over their environment and we allow our elephants the choice over whether or not to shift onto exhibit, what yards they’d prefer to inhabit, and whether or not to participate in training sessions,” the zoo said.
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Michael Barringer
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The poet Wallace Stevens posits that the human imagination is the ultimate means of connection with the world, that all of our myths, stories, and cultural explorations are residual experiences of our need to make sense of the world.

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When the aging Raleigh Springs Mall was pegged for renovations, Tom Marshall, CEO of OT Marshall Architects, was excited to take on a project in an area that was near and dear to his heart.

A Raleigh native, he remembered the initial construction of the old mall.

"I'm from Raleigh, and as an architect, I remember riding my bicycle to the mall and watching the construction. It was the largest thing being built in my day, so it was an exciting thing," Marshall said. "The mall was sort of the community icon. It's where we all went to enjoy ourselves, where we went to meet our friends."

Marshall and the city of Memphis launched planning and construction on the new Raleigh Springs Civic Center in 2018. A lot of care went into retaining the community feel that the former mall had brought to the neighborhood. Shops were replaced with a public library that doubles as a communal meeting place. A trail and lake were also created to provide a safe place to walk. But the defining feature of the Civic Center is its skate park.

Designed by world-renowned skate park developers Wormhoudt, the skate park sits at one end of the lake and attracts a myriad of faces. And while the park has become a neighborhood staple for youth, the idea was initially pushed for by the elderly residents of Raleigh.

"The Raleigh Community Council realized that the future rests with the youth, and so they wanted to bring diversity to the area," Marshall said.

"This is probably one of Memphis' most diverse areas. There's a large number of African American, Caucasian, and Hispanic Americans that come to the skate park. Young and old as well."

Before renovations, local skaters would use the mall as an impromptu hang-out spot. In doing so, they would bump into elderly members of the Raleigh community who used the area as a walking trail.

"It was the older folks in the community center that said, 'Hey, we need to give those poor kids a real place to skate,'" Marshall said.

"There was a lot of communication between folks that were inhabiting the mall for the purposes of their morning or afternoon walks and the skateboarders;" he continued, "and so we wanted to design something that integrated both."

Patrick Tionloc, a local skater who came to Memphis from the Philippines, said that he likes how the park gives skaters in Raleigh a place to call their own.

"I got into skating when I was in college in the Philippines, but I stopped skating when I got into the States because I didn't know there was a skate park in Memphis," he says. "I like that now there is a place that's really easy for the beginners who want to get into skating or for people that are experienced."
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A persistent issue in Tennessee government is that of whether state law should trump the preferences of local jurisdictions. Two tests of the proposition are now before the General Assembly. One concerns Senate Bill 29 by state Senator Brian Kelsey (R-Germantown). Passed last week by the Senate and pending in House committee, the bill would strike down local residence requirements for first responders.

Another measure, House Bill 1280, by state Representative Tom Leatherwood (R-Arlington), would outlaw partisan primaries for judicial or local political offices in counties containing populations greater than 500,000 (Shelby County and Davidson County). This bill is now before the Senate State Local Government Committee and the House Elections and Campaign Finance Committee. In a preliminary committee vote, the Shelby County Commission voted 7-2 last week on a resolution to oppose the Leatherwood bill.

Joining other bar associations statewide, the Memphis Bar Association issued a statement on Friday “strongly condemning” a Republican-backed Tennessee House resolution that would initiate a process to remove Nashville Chancellor Ellen Hobbs Lyle from office. House Resolution 23 (HR 23), said the MBA, “is as undemocratic as it is dangerous and flatly forbidden by the separation of powers principles enshrined in the Tennessee Constitution.”

The resolution, sponsored by state Representative Tim Rudd (R-Murfreesboro), has numerous GOP signers in the state House, and at least one Republican state Senator, Frank Nicely of Strawberry Plains, has indicated he will sponsor an equivalent resolution in his chamber. Ruling on a suit last year by Up the Vote 901, a Memphis group, and the state ACLU, Lyle ordered state absentee voting restrictions relaxed to allow universal mail-in voting in view of the ongoing pandemic. The state appealed, and her order was later modified somewhat by the state Supreme Court, but it resulted in the acknowledgment of COVID-19 as a factor weighing in favor of an absentee-voting application.

• It is hard to believe that I won’t get to see Drew Daniel again. Although he had become 40-something and thereby ineligible to be a member of the Young Republicans, he was given permanent status as “honorary elder” by that local group even as he rose in estimation among his party’s seniors, winning their Statesman Award in 2019 for the 9th Congressional District.

Though he was a legacy Republican from an established GOP family, he was an almost archetypal version of the youthful political activist — the eternal volunteer and doorbell-ringer — idealistic, dedicated, in for the outreach as well as the fellowship. He was somehow unmarred by the seamy, cynical side of politics and utterly uninvolved with anything slashing or over-ideological.

A persistent issue in Tennessee government is whether state law should trump local.

Drew died over the weekend, and this came as a total surprise to many who knew him. He apparently suffered from diabetes, a disease that, it would seem, figured in his demise. Granted, he was physically frail in appearance, though appearances could be deceiving. He was a runner and was used to running 10 miles a day. As recently as the big snow, he kept to that pace while the rest of us were shivering in our blankets. I always enjoyed seeing Drew on my political rounds. He was the sincerest and best kind of citizen, and as likable as anybody I’ve ever known. I don’t know how many friendships he had across party lines, but he deserved to have many.

• Former Memphian Hendrell Remus, who was recently elected chairman of the Tennessee Democratic Party, will have a homecoming of sorts on Wednesday, March 24th, when he becomes the guest speaker, via Zoom, for the Germantown Democratic Club, an unusually active group that is resuming its pattern of regular meetings, suspended during the pandemic, and hopes to be resuming in-person meetings in short order.
FINANCIAL FEATURE  By Gene Gard

No Bad Dogs
Is Bitcoin a worthy investment?

In the 1980s, Barbara Woodhouse published a book called No Bad Dogs. Clearly, she’d never met my dog, though I know what she was trying to say. Her point was that inexperienced owners are the problem, not the dogs themselves.

In the same way, short of clear frauds or Ponzi schemes, there are really no bad investments. Assets do what they’re going to do; whether or not we as owners have the experience and foresight to know if we’ll be happy with the eventual outcome is our problem.

Sometimes obscure asset classes get a lot of press, and none get more these days than cryptocurrency. This column focuses on Bitcoin, as it’s the leader and has features copied by most other crypto.

A few things to know about Bitcoin:

- It exists only digitally. All the stock photos of round coins with the Bitcoin logo are in circulation because journalists and others can’t think of anything better to use.
- Bitcoin miners — those who process transactions and create new bitcoin — are incentivized by being rewarded with more bitcoin. Just like mining gold is expensive, creating or earning bitcoin requires a lot of electricity, so it is scarce.
- Bitcoin uses advanced encryption technology so nobody can cheat. Transactions are final once logged; no chargebacks or help desks can reverse a clerical error.
- The number of bitcoin that will ever exist is limited and strictly controlled by the algorithm and cannot be manipulated using any known techniques.
- Bitcoin’s detractors point out that it is not backed or controlled by any government, so it is intrinsically completely worthless. Bitcoin’s supporters think this “statelessness” is a feature rather than a drawback, since modern currencies are easily manipulated or inflated and no currencies are backed by hard assets these days, anyway.

Does Bitcoin belong in your financial plans? Here are a few things to consider:

- Bitcoin is volatile — we would not be surprised if Bitcoin goes up 75 percent or down 75 percent this year from here. Plus 75 percent would be great, but the likely possibility of something going down that much is just not the kind of risk we like to take.
- Right now, the wave of positive returns for Bitcoin is due to increasing adoption and custody opportunities. If that were to suddenly change, particularly through the possibility of increased regulation, these impressive gains could quickly turn into devastating losses.
- For the long term, there are few better places for your money than in stocks. The power to own shares in companies that grow earnings over years has always been the simplest path to long-term wealth accumulation, and we think that will continue to be true.
- Consider: A dollar invested in the Dow Jones Industrial Average at the depths of the Great Depression is worth over $600 today. Bitcoin, gold, art, or most other alternative investments just don’t have the decade-in, decade-out promise that good old stocks enjoy.
- Since 1978, for example, gold has gone up tenfold and silver is up about five times since then. What a deal, right? Well, yes, but the real story is that the Dow has quietly gone up from 794 to over 30,000 during this period, almost a 40-fold return.
- Only time will tell if long-term holders of Bitcoin will look brilliant or absurd 43 years from now, in 2064. I for one believe a diversified equity portfolio will outperform Bitcoin. And I am certain that a diversified equity portfolio has a significantly lower chance of becoming worthless someday.
- Of course, I thought my dog would be much more obedient by now, too.

Gene Gard is Co-Chief Investment Officer at Telarray, a Memphis-based wealth management firm.
GOT CABIN FEVER? ENJOY A GETAWAY, WITHOUT GOING TOO FAR.

COVER STORY BY FLYER STAFF

DAY TRIPPIN’

After a year of quarantines, shutdowns, and cabin fever, a little road trip can really cure a vacation itch — without the time off from work, hotel fees, plane tickets, etc. that often accompany an actual vacation. With several options within a few short hours of the city limits, it’s easy to hop in the car, see the sights, unplug, and have some fun — and even be back home by sundown.

CALICO ROCK, ARKANSAS
My status as an angler is amateur at best, but when I was younger, my family used to make pilgrimages to Calico Rock in Izard County, Arkansas, to fish for trout in the White River. I’ve done well enough with lures and live bait, from the boat and from the shore, but I’ve never made the leap into the die-hard world of flyfishing. Whether I caught much or not, though, it was some of the most fun I can remember having.

As I recall it, as the water swirls around your rubber waders or the bow of your boat, it’s cold — piercingly so. The White River, fed from the depths of Beaver Lake, is famously frigid. It’s the kind of shocking chill that will jolt you awake, driving thoughts of the city and the job from your mind. All the better to tune into the quiet rhythms of the Natural State.

I made the three-hour trip to Calico Rock myself just a few weeks ago. Fishing season had not yet started back up, but I enjoyed myself hiking along the banks of the meandering Calico Creek. I snapped a few photos, thought about fishing trips of old and those still to come, and enjoyed the clean, crisp, cool air.

Of course, the adventurous Mid-Southerner venturing into the Arkansas wilds need not stop at Calico Rock. The Little Red River and the Black River are known to be excellent fishing spots as well; and Lake Ouachita, a jewel of a lake, is hard to beat for camping, hiking, and canoeing.

The weathered and largely unrestored main thoroughfare also remains, with a few plank buildings and a rustic gas pump and board sidewalk. You can visit local galleries and shops, drop into Carter’s Store for “dry goods,” and, if you’re willing to hang around on the front porch until a table opens (a pleasant experience, usually), you can eat at Jenkins Fishing Service on the White River.

TAYLOR, MISSISSIPPI
The rustic village of Taylor is, as Faulkner called it, “a postage stamp of native soil.” It’s also a nice day-trip destination — about 90 minutes from Memphis — offering a melange of vintage small-town structures, local art galleries, and memorable food, both plain and fancy.

The story goes that in the 1970s, when real estate prices started rising in Oxford, a number of painters, potters, musicians, and other refugees moved to Taylor, giving it a cachet of bohemia that still remains. The weathered and largely unrestored main thoroughfare also remains, with a few plank buildings and a rustic gas pump and board sidewalk. You can visit local galleries and shops, drop into Carter’s Store for “dry goods,” and, if you’re willing to hang around on the front porch until a table opens (a pleasant experience, usually), you can eat at Jenkins Fishing Service on the White River.

— Jesse Davis
some of the famous catfish at Taylor Grocery & Restaurant. You can also take it with you if indoor dining is still not an option you’re interested in.

If catfish isn’t your thing, you’re in luck. You can sample some fine Southern fusion cuisine — and maybe an artisanal cocktail or two — at Grit, which is located in the new Plein Air development, not far from Taylor’s main drag. (Which is a very small main drag, for the record.) The homes in Plein Air are classic Southern design, with front porches and lawns, sort of like Seaside in Florida or Memphis’ Harbor Town. It’s a nice neighborhood, and “The Mill” is a popular site for weddings. There are a couple of shopping opportunities in Plein Air, as well. And the drive back can be fun, if you explore the backroads. Which is what Faulkner would recommend.

— Bruce VanWyngarden

REELFOOT LAKE — Tiptonville, Tennessee

I’m on my vintage Indian Scout with the sun on my back and the wind in my hair. Helmet be damned. The daydream comes to a sudden halt with four words, “Are we there yet?”

I came back to reality driving a 2014 minivan with two “I’m bored” preteens and a “Where are we going again?” septuagenarian.

Earlier at home, my 7- and 9-year-old nieces uttered the words “I’m bored” one too many times. Aunt Juju sprang into action loading everyone in the car for another infamous “crazy aunt” mystery trip. On these trips, I don’t say where we are going; It’s a surprise. Thirty minutes in, someone always asks, “How long until we get there?”

I look at my phone and say, “In about when-we-arrive hours.”

The 7-year-old was wearing a tie-dye sweatshirt with Christmas tree pajama pants. Reelfoot Lake in Tiptonville, Tennessee, is about 100 miles through some quaint small towns and, luckily, has a relaxed dress code. Bald eagles, a gorgeous lake, and fried chicken at Boyette’s would be the best continued on page 12
HOLLY SPRINGS, MISSISSIPPI
A day trip for me means eating. A trip to Holly Springs, Mississippi, ensures lots of good eating. And more.

A must is Phillips Grocery, known for its hamburgers made with secret ingredients. I like to eat on the porch and drink a Nehi grape or orange with my burgers at the restaurant, housed in a circa 1882 saloon. They also have a great chicken sandwich.

Marshall Steakhouse, a massive restaurant owned by Randall Swaney, is a shrine to beef. In summer, catch a show on the outdoor stage. You also can eat outside at one of the many tree-shaded picnic tables.

For fabulous catfish, barbecue, and other cuisine, visit Clancy's Caf{e in Red Banks, 10 minutes from Holly Springs going toward Memphis. Desserts include cakes made by owner Tyler Clancy's grandmother.

Places to go between eating include the Marshall County Historical Museum, which is a scaled-down version of American Ninja Warrior and find a Youth Ninja Course — a very hungry for Boyette's, but we did see eagles necessitating a stop at Sonic. No one was soon, and the kids got hungry hours ago, the bald eagle tour, the park was closing and the route is only two hours. We missed Best take Highway 51; it's more entertaining; only is this route an extra hour, it's boring.

Venture less than an hour away to Tupelo to see more Elvis. This is where his childhood home is located. And grab something to eat at one of Elvis' former hangouts, Johnnie's Drive-In.

Finally, on your way to and/or from Tupelo to Holly Springs, get an extraordinary homemade apple or peach pie at Flick's Truck Stop in Potts Camp.

— Michael Donahue

THE CLINTON PRESIDENTIAL MUSEUM AND LIBRARY — LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS
Though it has, like other national installations featuring historical government archives, undergone temporary closure, the Clinton Presidential Library and Museum in Little Rock should be on anybody's future list, and should be generally available soon, given the advent of multiple vaccines and, as of early 2021, intensified anti-COVID policies at all levels of government.

Located just off the first interstate exit at Little Rock, as one heads west on I-40, the library stands in cantilevered splendor on a 30-acre park. Inside, it contains archival collections and research facilities, as well as mementos galore of the 42nd president's time in office: photographs and videos of key historical moments and artifacts of Clinton's travels as chief executive, along with replicas of documents ranging from important treaties to personal correspondence with the likes of Elton John. And yes, a saxophone.

Visitors have the opportunity to go interactive, sitting at exact replicas of the cabinet table in Clinton's White House conference room and at the famed Resolute desk in an Oval Office space that models Clinton's taste and, we learn, has been largely replicated in Joe Biden's choice of decor. And not just sit; both of these historical spaces are outfitted with easily operated audio-visual reminders of the events, both momentous and personal, that occurred there and can be re-experienced by the visitor.

A lot of history here at one's beck and call, and close by! — Jackson Baker

DELTA BOUND
Memphis is lucky to have, right on its doorstep, nothing less than the crucible of America's greatest music. That would be the Mississippi Delta, of course, and for anyone hankering to get out of town, it can be the perfect escape. Thankfully, barrel-
anyone?) is COVID-safe.

Along the way, watch for the signs of the Mississippi Blues Trail (msbluestrail.org), which alert travelers to significant locations in the music's history. One of the first you’ll see stands in the cemetery where Memphis Minnie is buried, just west of Walls, where she grew up. Others are found near Tunica, Clarksdale has over a half dozen, and that’s just the beginning.

Stopping off to soak in the Delta landscape, while learning blues history, is a glorious escape on a sunny day. But the blues museums along the way are also an option. In one recent trip to see several Delta museums, I had them all to myself. The Delta Blues Museum in Clarksdale, the Grammy Museum in Cleveland, and the B.B. King Museum in Indianola, among others, can provide hours of education and entertainment.

But there’s more to the Delta than just music. See the current Delta Magazine for a comprehensive guide to public art in the region, from murals to sculpture to architecture. The area is bursting with creativity, as spaces like the Mississippi Arts and Entertainment Experience in Meridian, the Mathews-Sanders Sculpture Garden in Cleveland, or the H.C. Porter Gallery in Vicksburg make abundantly clear.

Meanwhile, those who love non-musical history have plenty to discover, starting with the multi-state Civil Rights Trail (civilrightstrail.com), which has many markers and sites through the Delta. Greenwood sports the Museum of the Mississippi Delta, covering prehistory, Native American life, art, agriculture, and the Civil War.

But beyond such curated experiences, the simple art of walking and exploring can thrive in the Delta, whether it’s taking in the historical downtowns of Clarksdale, Greenwood, or other towns, or — my favorite — exploring cemeteries. To sit beside Robert Johnson’s final resting place outside of Greenwood, as dusk sets in, makes for a day trip that reverberates deep in the soul. — Alex Greene

WILSON, ARKANSAS

With the redevelopment and building boom going on in Downtown Memphis and other parts of town, you might be forgiven for not looking too far outside the Bluff City Bubble. But if you avert your gaze slightly, you’ll catch a glimpse of a small-city renaissance happening just 45 minutes up I-55.

The town of Wilson, Arkansas, (population hovering just under 1,000) has been reborn over the last decade since the Wilson family sold its land to The Lawrence Group in 2010. The group, which has experience running wineries and vineyards, is revitalizing the former logging and sawmill town into a Delta tourist hotspot.

The city’s 21st-century approach is built around the Wilson Wine Experience, which includes frequent six-course thematic dinner events curated by Norbert Mede and Chef Roberto Barth. Set at different historic locations around Wilson, Mede’s keen taste for good vintages meshes superbly with Barth’s unique approach to Delta cooking.

Those with a bit more thirst can focus on one of Wilson’s weekly wine tastings, and easily spend the better part of a day catching some music at The Grange at Wilson Gardens, or diving into the free Hampson Archeological Museum, which contains artifacts of the pre-Colombian people who inhabited the Delta from 1400 to 1650.

Even if wine (and it’s some good wine) isn’t your thing, there’s something for everyone in Wilson, and there’s even more on the horizon. Month by month, the city adds more activities to its roster, including a crawfish festival slated for the end of April. So keep an eye on the calendar; if you need a quick escape, it’s always a good time to visit Wilson. — Samuel X. Cicci

Chalkfest
March 13 - 20
Chalkfest is back and virtual!

Get out the chalk, hit the sidewalk, and share all your masterworks on social media.

Tag your museum in your art for chances to win fun prizes.

#Chalkfest2021
@brooksmuseum
Many readers may remember when Pan Am Flight 103 exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland, in 1988, leaving a permanent scar in the form of a massive crater — and a life-affirming catharsis.

Students of University of Memphis Theatre and Dance will engage the audience with traditional Greek elements of tragedy in a modern production. The play seeks to reevaluate how we deal with hate in our world and shows us how vital a final gesture rooted in love can be.

Madisen White, a freshman at the U of M, landed the leading role in The Women of Lockerbie. An unexpected change in her educational plans gave way to this amazing opportunity. The Memphis native attended high school in Temecula, California. Planning to earn her college degree in San Francisco, the pandemic altered her itinerary. Her parents felt it would be best for her to come back home to Memphis to attend college. She agreed. Memphis recognized her talents by casting her as Madeline Livingston, the character who lost her 20-year-old son in the crash.

“The events are real, but the characters are fictional,” White says. “The characters are representational. My character represents a grieving mother who has lost a child.”

White’s voice openly elicits the raw feelings of her character. She hesitates when asked about the other characters, finally exclaiming, “I don’t want to give anything away!”

Seems there might be a lot more to this performance.

What White does want the public to know: “The performance is about healthy grieving and the fact that grieving does take time. You need a community to grieve.”

THE WOMEN OF LOCKERBIE, ONLINE FROM UNIVERSITY OF MEMPHIS THEATRE, MEMPHIS.EDU, THURSDAY-SATURDAY, MAR. 11-13, 7:30-10 P.M., FREE.
Several local artists are in the running to snag Grammy Awards this coming Sunday, March 14th, including many familiar local names, such as the North Mississippi Allstars, Don Bryant, Bobby Rush, and West Memphis' Yebba. But there's another Memphis native in the running whose name is not as widely known: Rykeyz, aka Ryan Williamson. Such is often the fate of producers.

And yet it's no small feat to capture the brass ring of the No. 1 R&B track in the country, as Rykeyz did with "Slow Down" by Skip Marley featuring H.E.R., nominated for Best R&B Song and featured on Marley's Higher Place, which is also nominated for Best Reggae Album. I reached out to Rykeyz in L.A., where he now lives, to get the scoop on his Memphis roots and how he came to be one of the most sought-after producers in contemporary music.

Memphis Flyer: You've said you were already a gigging musician around Memphis before you attended Berklee College of Music in Boston in 2003. How did you come to it at such a young age?

Rykeyz: I was serious, probably, from the womb, man. 'Cause you know, my dad is one of the great Memphis musicians: Ernest Williamson. He played keyboards with everyone you could think of and is probably best known for producing the 1991 hit by Wendy Moten, "Coming Out of the Rain," with Nikos Lyras. He and Niko had a production team and did a bunch of stuff together. So I pretty much grew up in studios, sneaking into his sessions. I just soaked all that in. And my dad always had a thousand keyboards set up in the house, so I would always go through the sounds. I was obsessed with sounds and with drums. Mostly I was a drummer. I started in the marching band at Cordova High School. I was always obsessed with old music. I was that kid who didn't know any of the songs on the radio at the time. I was always studying the greats instead, like the Beach Boys — I was obsessed with the harmonies — or Steely Dan, or Earth, Wind & Fire. I was a band guy. Then, once I moved to Boston, it really opened up my ear to the current music, like hip-hop and R&B.

Memphis Flyer: Was that when you started producing tracks?

Rykeyz: At Berklee, I said, "Let me get into this production thing." And I excelled at that quickly. Making tracks around campus, I had a writing partner, and we were the main cats at Berklee. Back then, there were only two or three cats doing it. We had our own little label and signed some people at Berklee as artists. Then I had an internship at Island/Def Jam, and I sent one of my tracks to an artist at the label named Razah. It ended up becoming a single very quickly. I was still interning, and I had a song on the radio! Ne-Yo signed me to his production company, and I learned a lot with him. Then I moved to L.A., and within four months, I had a publishing deal with Sony Music Publishing. So here we are today.

Memphis Flyer: How did you come to produce "Slow Down"?

Rykeyz: He's Bob Marley's grandson. Skip's A&R, Jermi, said they'd been trying to work with everybody, but he didn't have any chemistry with anyone. They didn't know what to do with him. So I said, cool, let's do it. When the session came, I tried to catch his vibe. I played a drum pattern I had, and this bass line, and Skip started flipping out! And then everybody immediately started writing. The vibe and magic just came together and I think we had the whole song done within an hour. Then we thought, man, wouldn't it be crazy if H.E.R. got on this? I added a live horn section, and that was all she wrote on that one.

Memphis Flyer: You never take being nominated for granted, but at the same time, you'd like to win. We're going against Beyoncé, but we're actually coming in as the favorite. And then there's always next year. Another song, another artist. ■
CALENDAR of EVENTS:  
March 11 - 17

THEATER
Hattiloo Theatre  
From the Frontlines of COVID-19, online series that spotlights healthcare workers who share emotional insight of their critical work as they care for those who have been impacted by the virus. hattiloo.org. Free. Ongoing.  
The Night Watcher, the story of a woman who chooses not to have children, only to be pulled into the real-life struggles of kids of all ages, races, and backgrounds. $150 for four seats. Saturdays, Sundays, 2 p.m., and Fridays, 7:30 p.m. Through April 4. 37 S. COOPER (502.3486).  

OTHER ART HAPPENINGS
Open Registration for Apprenticeship at the Metal Museum  
All materials for the Black-smithing Apprenticeship are due by March 5 with award notification by March 19. The Foundry Apprenticeship deadline is March 12 with award notification by March 26. Through March 12. METALMUSEUM.ORG.  

Ongoing Art
Art Museum at the University of Memphis (AMUM)  
"IEA Ancient Egyptian Collection," exhibition of Egyptian antiquities ranging from 3800 B.C.E. to 700 C.E. from the Institute of Egyptian Art and Archaeology collection. Ongoing.  

Virtual Artists’ Talk for Local Black Artists at the Kroc Center, Thursday, March 11th, 6-7 p.m., krocmemphis.org  

Memphis Botanic Garden  
Memphis/Germantown Art League Spring Exhibition, through March 30. 750 CHERRY (636.4100).  

Memphis Brooks Museum  
"Power and Absence: Women in Europe," exhibition of works by women in Europe from around 1500 to 1680, known as the Renaissance and Early Baroque period. brooks museum.org. Ongoing.  
"Arts of Global Africa," exhibition of historic and contemporary works in a range of different media presenting an expansive vision of Africa’s artistry. Through June 21.  

Memphis Heritage  
"Newman to Now" Virtual Exhibit, exhibition of historic photographs taken by Don Newman between the 1940s and ‘60s and contemporary photographs of the same sites taken by photographer Gary Walpole to explore continuity and change in Memphis’ built environment. memphisheritage.org. Ongoing.  


University of Memphis, University Center Theater  
The Women of Lockerbie, the grief and anger due to the aftereffects of the 1988 Lockerbie Bombing lead to a life-affirming catharsis. The Women of Lockerbie asks the audience to reevaluate how we deal with hate. memphis.edu. Free with registration. Wed-Sat., Mar. 10-13, 7:30-10 p.m. 499 UNIVERSITY.  

Virtual Artists’ Talk for Local Black Artists  
The Dixon Gallery & Gardens  

Eclectic Eye  

Fratelli's  

The Salvation Army Kroc Center  
Local Black Artists, exhibition in honor of Black History Month featuring conventional and unconventional techniques with a variety of paintings, illustrations, and mixed media. Through March 26. 800 E. PARKWAY S. (729.8007).

L. Ross Gallery  

Memphis Botanic Garden  
Memphis/Germantown Art League Spring Exhibition, through March 30. 750 CHERRY (636.4100).  

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**CALENDAR: MARCH 11 - 17**

fusing primarily gold spheres. Through April 3.

**Mid-South Artist Gallery**
Mid-South Artist Gallery Artists, exhibition of work by Becky McRae, Sandra Horton, Jean Wu, Jon Woodham, Marina Wirtz, Michelle Lemaster, Pat Turner, and others. Ongoing.

**Tops Gallery**
"An Angle to the Place I Live In," exhibition of sculptural paintings by Erza Tessler that contend with both the physical and ontological limits of the medium. Through April 10.

**Comedy**
Chuckles Comedy Club Shuler King, $22-$46. Fri., Sun., Mar. 12-14, 6:45 p.m. and 8:45 p.m. 1700 DEXTER.

Hi Tone Live Weekly Comedy with John Miller, open mic-style. Free. Tuesdays, 8-10 p.m. 282 N. CLEVELAND (278-TONE).

**Lecture/Speaker**
"Bold Women Change History: The Women of Elmwood, Part One" Kim Bearden tells the stories of the women who are at rest in Elmwood Cemetery, via Zoom. Each of them has a unique story to tell. $10. Thurs., March 11, 6 p.m. ELWOOD CEMETERY. 824 S. DUDLEY (774-3121), ELWOODCemetery.ORG.

**On the Table: Activism in the Workplace**
In this session, New Memphis will explore social justice in the workplace and how employees and employers are expected to communicate their values. Free with registration. Wed., March 17, 6 p.m. NEWMEMPHIS.ORG.

**Reader Meet Writer: Gina Wilkinson**
Author discusses When the Apricots Bloom: A Novel of Riveting and Evocative Fiction. Free with registration. Thurs., March 11, 8 p.m. NOVEL, 387 PERKINS EXT. (922-5526), NOVELMEMPHIS.COM.

**Virtual Book Launch: Dr. Steven Gundry**
With an introduction from Arianna Huffington, world-renowned cardiothoracic surgeon and bestselling author of The Plant Paradox series launches The Every Paradox. $50-$100. Sun., March 14, 2:30 p.m. NOVEL, 387 PERKINS EXT. (922-5526), NOVELMEMPHIS.COM.

**TOURS**
**Ghost Walk**
The Historical Haunts Investigation Team explores the macabre and dark history of Downtown Memphis. $20. Saturdays, 8 p.m. THE BROOM CLOSET. 546 S. MAIN (497-9486), HISTORICALHAUNTSMEMPHIS.COM.

**Metal Museum Audio Tour**
Explore the newly updated Sculpture Garden and accompanying audio tour while adhering to safe social distancing. PWYC. Ongoing. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. METAL MUSEUM, 374 METAL MUSEUM DR. (774-6380).

**Old Forest Hike**
Walking tour of the region’s only urban old-growth forest. Second Saturday of every month, 10 a.m. OVERTON PARK, OFF POPULAR (276-1327).

**Walking Tour and Ghost Hunt**
Part walking tour and part ghost hunt. Tour the South Main district and investigate a well-known site which was the scene of the brutal murder of patrolman Edward Broadfoot in 1918. 13+, $25. Saturdays, 7:30 p.m. THE BROOM CLOSET. 546 S. MAIN (497-9486), HISTORICALHAUNTSMEMPHIS.COM.

**Expos/SALES**
Elmwood Store
Shop the Elmwood store online for books, cards, mugs, and more. Ongoing.

**The Perfect Wave: Digital Boat Show**
Fully digital, immersive experience aimed at engaging with consumers in this dynamic boat show season. Free. Through Aug. 31. EXPERIENCEMASTERCRAFT.COM.

**WE Consign**
Featuring a large selection of furniture, rugs, crystal, sterling silver, antiques, and other treasures benefiting the Woman’s Exchange of Memphis. Mondays-Fridays, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Through April 16. WOMAN’S EXCHANGE ART GALLERY. 88 RACINE (327-5681).
Novel Virtual Book Club
For more information on joining book club discussion, visit website or follow on social media. Members can get 10 percent off this month’s book to have shipped or pick up curbside. Free. Third Wednesday of every month, 7-8:15 p.m. Novel: 387 Perkins Ext. (922-5926).

Virtual-T
Weekly Zoom gathering for anyone 18+ who identifies as a member of the trans or GNC community. For login information, email shauptman@outmemphis.org. Tuesdays, 6 p.m. outmemphis.org.

SPECIAL EVENTS

A Skating Party
Enjoy a fun date night or meet new people with Relationships Uncensored. DJ Sweats will bring the music. Come ready for a dance contest. $10 Sat., March 13, 9:30 p.m. CORDOVA SKATING RINK, 7970 CLUB CENTER (755-0221), facebo...<br>
Cheesecake Whiz

Chris Mosby is an artist when it comes to desserts.

Chris Mosby made his first cheesecake when he was 14. It was for his mother. And it was a disaster. “I overcooked it so bad,” Mosby says. “The milk solids and fat had separated. It split and cracked on the top. It was just terrible.”

His mom just said, “Thank you,” Mosby says. She didn’t eat it. “Thank you, Jesus. I think she’d be sick if she did.”

Now pastry chef at Hen House Wine Bar, Mosby, 26, a native Memphian, began cooking simple dishes when he was 8. “My mom helped at first. And once I started getting stuff down, I started branching out and doing other stuff.

“To me, cooking is pure creation. You take whatever and make it into anything. There’s no defining lines. I’m the type of guy who wants to rewrite the book on reinventing the wheel. So if I can find a different way to do something, I’m going to do it ‘cause it’s just fun.”

Mosby also enjoyed art — until he saw the piece he entered in a high school show. “The teacher made adjustments to my work. I didn’t like this.”

He was livid. “I was thinking, ‘This could never happen in a kitchen.’ Cause the worst thing to do with a dish when it’s done is for someone else to put some hot sauce on it or something.”

Mosby decided to focus on cooking. He went to work at Rafferty’s, where he rose from host to server to bartender to cook. He got a shot at making dishes after he moved to Old Venice Pizza Co. (now Venice Kitchen). “One of the owners was saying how he didn’t like the desserts they were getting, so I was like, ‘Hey. If you’re not happy with the desserts, I could come in and make something. If you like it, I could come in on Sunday and put it on the buffet.’

“So I did cinnamon rolls. And they went bananas: ‘This is the best cinnamon roll we ever had.’ We’ll do this on Sunday.”

They then let him make whatever buffet desserts he wanted to make. “I went crazy,” Mosby says. “I made donuts, scones, Danishes. After a couple of months, I ended up doing cheesecakes.”

He also worked at Firebirds Wood Fired Grill in Bartlett. The restaurant, which is part of a chain, had its own mini cheesecakes, but Mosby added his touch. “Normally, you’d just put it on a plate, put some whipped cream and a mint leaf on it, and send it out. I thought that was boring.”

Mosby began decorating the cheesecake plates. “I’d get different sauces and fruits and do all kinds of different designs. I wasn’t making the cheesecake, but I was doing stuff other people can’t.”

He began working at Hen House in January, but not as the pastry chef. That changed after executive chef Matthew Schweitzer asked him to embellish one of their desserts. “We had a strawberry cake. He said, ‘Hey. I need a strawberry compote on this cake. Can you do it for me?’” Mosby took sugar, lemon juice, and strawberries and cooked them until the strawberries broke down. It passed the test.

But Mosby came full circle with his desserts when Schweitzer asked him to make a cheesecake for Hen House co-owner Michaela Dockery’s upcoming birthday. “It was funny,” he says. “I had literally just perfected my cheesecake for Mother’s Day. I made cheesecake for my mom.”

He made his “most basic cheesecake” for Dockery. “The original recipe. Just cream cheese with a little bit of lemon juice and lemon zest as acid to make it fresh. The crust is nutmeg, cinnamon, and cloves. Spiced.” Dockery loved it.

Hen House now offers Mosby’s chocolate cheesecake on the menu.

But getting back to Mosby’s mom. How did she like that cheesecake he made her for Mother’s Day — more than 10 years after he made that first cheesecake for her? “She said it was great.”

Hen House Wine Bar is at 679 S. Mendenhall, (901) 499-5436.
It’s really impossible to overstate how huge a star Eddie Murphy was in the 1980s. At the beginning of the decade, he single-handedly saved Saturday Night Live after the original cast — and the audience — had moved on. He made his big-screen debut in 1982’s 48 Hours, and two years later, he was so big he turned down Ghostbusters for Beverly Hills Cop, which became the highest-grossing comedy in history.

In 1988, Murphy, fully in control of his career, made Coming to America. The big-budget comedy ($36 million, or $81 million in 2021 dollars) was based on a character he created, Prince Akeem Joffer, the scion of a fictional African country who bucks the tradition of arranged marriage and comes to Queens in search of a liberated American woman to be an equal partner. It was directed by John Landis, the pop cinema genius behind The Blues Brothers and the heady Murphy vehicle, Trading Places. Landis perfected the hangout movie, where plot was secondary to gags and character moments to help the audience identify with the movie star, and created worlds you want to live in. Modern superhero movies take a lot from Landis’ approach. The film was a huge success, earning the 2021 equivalent of $790 million. Eventually, Murphy, with no more worlds to conquer, lost interest in stardom and drifted off to raise his 10 children. In 2019, Murphy mounted a comeback with the help of ace screenwriters Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski. Dolemite is My Name gave him the opportunity to play his idol, underground comedy legend Rudy Ray Moore. Directed by Memphian Craig Brewer, Dolemite was universally praised, and generated Oscar buzz. Most importantly, working with Brewer on material he cared about seemed to rejuvenate the reluctant superstar.

Exactly why Coming to America became an enduring classic, and what that says about the culture, is too big a subject to tackle in a newspaper review. (Come to my TED Talk!) One clue can be found in Black Panther. The vision of Zamunda, Prince Akeem’s fully functioning, wealthy African nation state, owes a lot to the comic book Wakanda. Murphy and Brewer use the long-brewing sequel as an opportunity to throw a hangout party in the aspirational African paradise. Most of the original cast is back, first and foremost Arsenio Hall, whose turn as Semmi, Prince Akeem’s put-upon sidekick, made him a star. The Murphy-Hall comic duo drove Coming to America as they played multiple roles, all of which clicked perfectly. Coming 2 America takes those characters out for a victory lap. The wisecracking old guys in the barber shop are now very old, but still cutting heads. Hall’s Reverend Brown is still saving souls on discount in Queens, and he now has a Za-
job of retracing Akeem’s arc from the original, choosing a romance with the peasant Mirembe (Nomzamo Mbatha) over an arranged marriage with Nexdorian princess Bopoto (Teyana Taylor).

Brewer is not a comedy director, but armed with Ruth E. Carter, arguably the greatest working costume designer, and Empire shooter Joe Williams, he creates a lavish Zamundan background for his stars to bust out the schtick. Murphy’s mainstreamed raunchy Black comedy, but much of what passed for edgy in 1988 looks crassly sexist now, even in the context of the ostensibly feminist elements of the story. The sequel tries to strike a more inclusive tone by teaching Akeem the same lessons about the drawbacks of the patriarchy his father learned during the Reagan era.

Coming 2 America lacks the depth of Dolemite Is My Name, but it never aspires to reach it. This is a pop confection whose only goal is to entertain as broadly as possible. Everyone from Murphy on down looks like they’re having the time of their lives, and when you visit Zamunda, you may find their happiness infectious. Coming 2 America is streaming on Amazon Prime.

FILM  By Chris McCoy

EMISSIONS

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The Big Hypocrisy

The Senate GOP has made duplicity a core policy.

We all know about the Big Lie. Now we face the big hypocrisy.

Let’s begin with Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell’s incredible announcement that if former President Trump is the GOP nominee for president in 2024, he will endorse him. Talk about hypocrisy. A little more than a month ago, McConnell said Trump was “practically and morally responsible for provoking” the January 6th riot at the Capitol. “The people who stormed this building believed they were acting on the wishes and instructions of their president,” McConnell said on the Senate floor, for all to hear.

Likewise, after the ransacking of Congress, Senator Lindsey Graham announced he was done with Trump: “Oh my God, I hate it … but today all I can say is count me out. Enough is enough.” Graham now says Trump is going to “dominate the party for years to come. … There is no way we can achieve our goals without Trump.”


Now, let’s go beyond hypocrisy. Last week, Senator Ron Johnson blamed “fake Trump protesters” for the violence at the Capitol, citing a right-wing blog as his source. Johnson is promoting a lie and he knows it. The fact is that the rioters were Trump supporters. Senator Amy Klobuchar called Johnson’s comment pure “disinformation.” Republican representative Adam Kinzinger called Johnson’s remarks a “dis-service to the people he serves to continue lying to them like this. It’s dangerous and it must stop.”

But here is the most glaring hypocrisy at the current moment: Republican opposition to President Biden’s $1.9 trillion proposed spending plan to deal with the damage done by the COVID pandemic.

The principal objection from GOP senators is that the bill will drive up the deficit. Yet almost all of these same Republicans agreed to explode the deficit when they voted for Trump’s policies: a combination of tax cuts and spending that added twice as much — $3.9 trillion! — to the deficit, according to the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget, a nonpartisan group.

This kind of hypocrisy is apparently contagious. Look at how badly it is infecting young Senate Republicans Josh Hawley, Ted Cruz, and Tom Cotton: All three delight in demonizing liberal, coastal elites, but each of them holds not one but two degrees from elite, coastal universities.

They don’t bother to apologize for the hypocrisy. They know their political ambition will not be rewarded by truthfulness or by working across the aisle to better the lives of their constituents. Their political role model is Trump. They don’t see a role model in a man like former Senator Bob Dole, now ailing with cancer, who worked with Democrats to pass Social Security reform and the Americans with Disabilities Act. The fact is, they can’t remember a time when Washington worked.

A December national survey of voters from the conservative Ripon Society and The Tarrance Group found that 95 percent of voters say they want Biden and Congress to work together more closely to solve important national problems; 86 percent of voters “strongly” support this goal.

But as long as GOP politicians see their path to power in saying whatever excites the right-wing echo chamber, the hypocrisy factor in Congress will continue to grow.

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