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VERMONT COUNTRY MAGAZINE

New nightlife destination in Bennington

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the tunes to town Page 12

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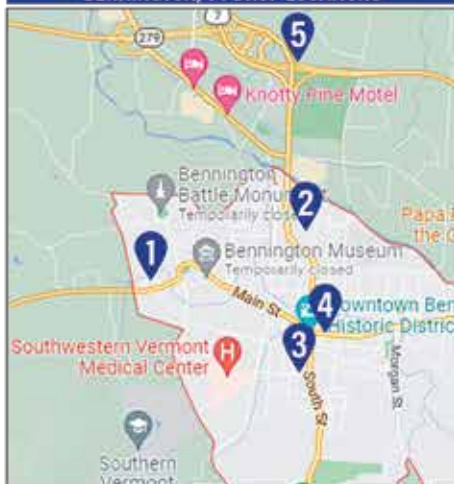
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Bob Audette has been writing for the Brattleboro Reformer for more than 17 years. Before that, he was a beat reporter in the Hudson Valley. He started out his career in journalism as a newsroom clerk for the Salt Lake Tribune, in Salt Lake City.



Gordon Dossett traded the traffic and urban ugliness of Los Angeles for the Green Mountains. He lives with his teenaged children, a cat and a dog, packing urban sprawl into one home. He likes making to-do lists and losing them.



Kathleen Hawes is a creative writer who enjoys morning cocktails and holding grudges. You can read her work in The Sun Magazine, The Massachusetts Review, and other rando publications.



Chris Mays is a reporter for the Brattleboro Reformer. He plays guitar in three groups and has a Yorkie named Lemon, who can be followed on Instagram @lemon_the_yorkie. He enjoys spending time in the mountains.



Makayla-Courtney McGeeney is a digital marketing consultant, journalist and photographer, and former staff writer for the Bennington Banner, Brattleboro Reformer and Manchester Journal. She enjoys lifting weights and keeping up with her two energetic cattle dogs.



Tory Rich joined the Manchester Journal in September. Though he went to high school in Bennington, 10 years living in the desert has him re-learning how to be a Vermonter the right way. Tory might not have a musical bone in his body, and he doesn't sound nearly as good as he thinks at karaoke, but he loves live music and is in awe of those with musical talent.



Dan Tebo is a Boston-based film critic whose work regularly appears on his mother's refrigerator. He works as a waiter and amateur archivist and runs a VHS blog with a readership in the high single digits.



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On the cover:

Trees tapped for maple
sap in Newfane. Photo by
Lylah Wright

In anticipation of warmer temperatures, new highs

By Gena Mangiaratti

Vermont Country

As I write this, it is “fool’s spring,” a muddy reprieve from New England winter. As a person not designed for temperatures under 70 degrees Fahrenheit, I am blissfully hopeful it will extend into real spring.

This foolery helped me get in the proper mindset for this issue, which focuses on actual spring in Southern Vermont and the surrounding area. With the cold temps lifting and the days getting longer, more people are inclined to go out in the evenings, including to see live music. In this issue, staff writer

Tory Rich profiles the Basement Music Series, a popular program in Bennington back from a two-year-hiatus, and points us to other venues around the region. Also, be on the lookout for Thus Love, the new punk sensation out of Brattleboro, with whom reporter Bob Audette sat down as the group prepared for its European tour. For those who love music but would prefer to enjoy from the couch, film critic Dan Tebo has

you covered with a list of music biopics.

For those looking for a timeless, quint-essential New England experience, our friend Bob Audette also chatted with the new owners of the Guilford Country Store.

Many people — organized and disorganized — see spring as a time for renewal (I am among the disorganized; we’ll see how my brethren and I do). For ideas to beautify your yard with the help of local businesses, correspondent Makayla-Courtney McGeeney spoke to a local landscaping company and a stone assemblage artist. Staffer Gordon Dossett visited with local nurseries



Gena Mangiaratti — Vermont Country

The author's cat, soaking up some warmer temps.



Gena Mangiaratti — Vermont Country

The author last spring.

to learn some of their tricks for vibrant plants, and reporter Chris Mays introduces a new flower business in Dummerston. Speaking of new growth, contributor Kathleen Hawes takes us along on a journey to procure mushrooms — yes, those mushrooms — in Vermont.

Whether you mourn the end of ski season or are grateful for the warmer temps, and whether spring is a time for cleaning or a time for messiness while the sun shines, there is a place for you here.

Gena Mangiaratti is editor of Vermont Country magazine. You can find her running around town, slipping on ice and mud on the same days.



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A woman with dark hair tied back, wearing a grey hoodie and blue jeans, is using a black leaf blower in a garden. She is standing in front of a house with light green horizontal siding. A tree branch is visible on the right, and a bird feeder hangs from a branch on the left. The garden is filled with green plants and some brown, dried flowers.

Beautify your home — *locally*

Garden follies and more

**By Makayla-Courtney
McGeeney**

Vermont Country correspondent

There's more to making a home than buying a property. There's landscaping, painting and other structural maintenance that really make a house a home. Whether you're looking to upgrade your outdoor living area, create a relaxing garden oasis or add a touch of artistic flair, you can achieve all of these goals by utilizing local businesses and embracing the beauty of nature and art.

One of the best ways to beautify your home is by tapping into local landscaping companies that use native plants and cultivars to attract pollinators.

Danielle Lacroix, the business manager and head gardener for Green Mountain Gardening, is taking advantage of downtime this winter by taking master gardening courses at the University of Vermont. This year, she's educating her clients on ways to encourage native and pollinator gardens in a movement called "rewild your yard."

"A lot of times, people are fearful of their gardens being messy," Lacroix said. "If you put in things like edging or a mowed path through a meadow, it can be well maintained and that's as simple as a cut edge in the grass or something more substantial like bricks or blocks or wood of some sort, rocks from the yard ... that makes it seem more intentional than letting the yard go wild."

Lacroix recommends keeping a notebook to track when and which plants bloom to make it easier to identify and strategize for landscaping needs.

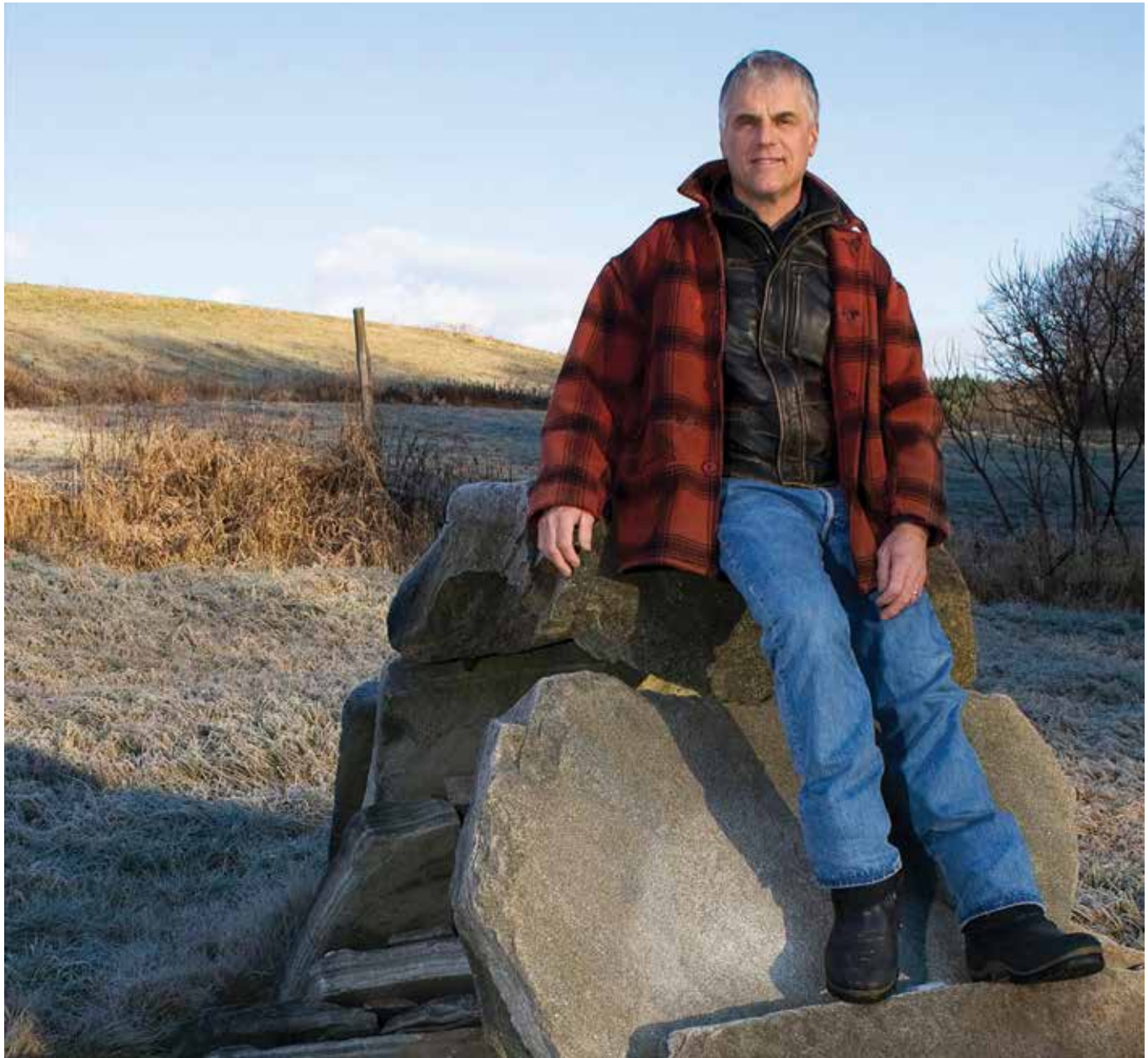
Another way to maintain garden appearance is by utilizing existing stone and other natural materials. Dan Snow from Dan Snow Stoneworks is an assemblage artist who almost always sources materials locally. His dry stone constructions range from

Vermont Country file photo

Previous and this page: Danielle Lacroix, the owner of Green Mountain Gardening in Brattleboro, clears leaves from a client's garden.







Zachary P. Stephens — Vermont Country file photo

Environmental artist and dry stone waller Dan Snow sits atop one of his sculptures titled “Portal” at a home in Dummerston.

staircases and bridges to garden follies and environmental art pieces.

Doing a little digging can lead to a major garden and lawn transformation while also adding structural art to the landscape.

“What is often the case is that there will be a collection of stones someone may be unaware of because it’s concealed by years of leaf litter that disguises it from view. It’s just a matter of exposing it,” Snow said. “Just doing that much can be an improvement.”

The advantage of working with dry stone is that there’s no use for mortar or wet masonry. It also negates the concern of carbon footprint, as long as it hasn’t traveled from another site, Snow said.

“From an economic standpoint, it’s a strong motivator to use material that’s already on the property or close by in the neighborhood,” he said.


Lacroix also considers environmental factors when working with her clients. She takes the natural route by avoiding pest and weed

control chemicals and does everything by hand.

“It’s just about knowing how to handle it and how to work with the space. We try to use the greenest method possible and get into the dirt. More often, there’s a natural predator you may not know about that could help with bugs and weeds,” she said.

Keeping it green, natural and local is important when looking for ways to upgrade a home or the land surrounding it while also benefitting the business community.


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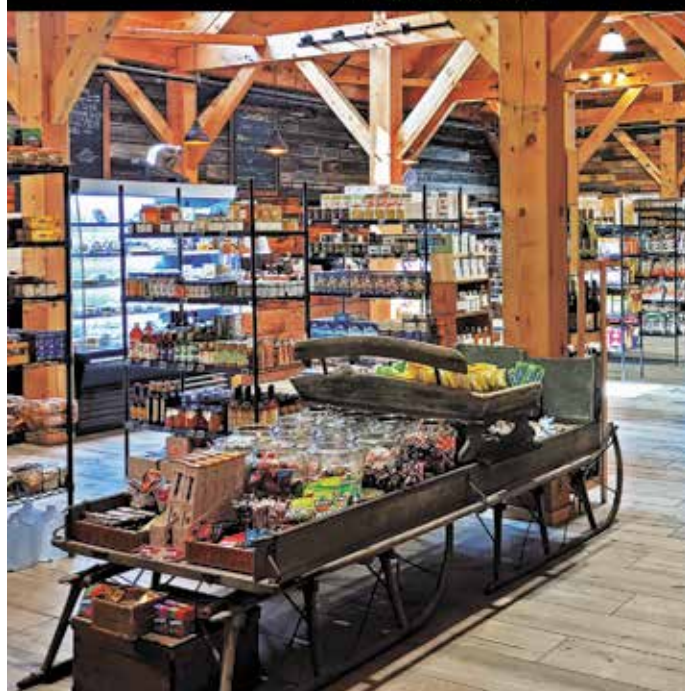
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LITTLE CITY CIDER CO.
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New nightlife destination in Bennington



Basement Music Series and Little City Cider bring the tunes to Bennington

By Tory Rich
Vermont Country

If you've been in the Bennington area over the last few years, one of the most common complaints you used to hear — fair or unfair — was about a lack of nightlife. Vermont Arts Exchange and Little City Cider are doing their part to change that in a hurry, and they are teaming up to be part of a resurgence in Bennington.

Matthew Perry, co-founder and executive director of VAE, has brought the Basement Music Series back to Southwest Vermont after a two-year hiatus due to COVID. Perry is intent on getting Bennington's live music scene back on track, and is off to a great start.

"So it's really a winter series, although we've done a lot of things in summer, as well," Perry said. "Winter is when we all need to get out."

And come out to Little City Cider the people have, thus far. Bennington has packed the house for Boston-based folk/rock band Session Americana's Jan. 28 show, and followed that up two weekends later on Feb. 11 for The Prescription (featuring the Side Effect Horns), Bennington's "one-stop choice" for anything from rock and R&B to jazz and swing.

"I was overwhelmed. It was a beautiful event. Everyone turned out," Perry said of the first show back, which created so much buzz that it sold out. "There were actually people scalping tickets. It was wild."

Photo provided by Mark Schiffner

Session Americana at Bennington's Little City Cider on Jan. 28.



Photo provided by Mark Schiffner

Session Americana played the Basement Music Series' first show after a two-year hiatus due to COVID.

The music series, most recently set up in the Masonic Hall on Main Street and in the Bennington Brush Company building, has moved its base of operations several times in its 18 years, and needed a new home following the pandemic.

Enter Little City Cider owner Greg Videtto. The Bennington native, who owned New England Custom Timber Frames and built houses for 23 years, decided it was time for a change and to chase a different dream. Videtto has been in the bar business before, as well. He owned Dog's Breath on Main Street in the late '90s-early '00s, and also a tavern out in Lake George.

This go-around, which began in September of 2021, Videtto started out focused on producing cider in his sprawling warehouse at 139 Shields Drive, across from Willow Park. His vision was always to open up the bar to the public and have some live music events, and the Basement Music Series has filled that need perfectly.

"If I were to open my business plan

up, it would say a couple of nice events a month," Videtto said.

"I think we were both nervous about what was going to happen. ... But as I said to Matthew (after the show on) the 28th, we sat by the fire and had a conversation after everybody left and I said, 'I feel like I'm riding on shirttails with somebody that's already built something ...' It's just like a dream come true for me, because it's exactly what I wanted."

Perry expressed plenty of appreciation for his new partner, as well.

"This partnership with Greg is a great model for a profit/nonprofit relationship," Perry said. "We're bringing him people, a different clientele that he normally doesn't bring in. We're getting a space. We're getting a playground."

"The more I work with Greg, the easier my job is becoming. I'm sharing the responsibilities with someone and I'm hoping to create a setup where we can do more, but it'll be easier."

Perry and Videtto have been able to combine their skills and resources for a symbiosis that goes far beyond the bottom line for both of them. Both are invested in Bennington's future.

"I think Bennington is going through a revitalization ... really a positive thrust forward," said Perry, a Bennington-area resident for the last 33 years. "So I think staying in Bennington, and being a part of that, is really important."

"It's been a joy to hear Matthew's ideas. It's been an awesome brainstorm," Videtto later added. "We've had some similar ideas, but I think we

Photo provided by Andrew Walker

Next page: Matthew Perry, left, and Greg Videtto.

"I was overwhelmed. It was a beautiful event. Everyone turned out. There were actually people scalping tickets. It was wild."

— Matthew Perry, on the first show





Ahmad Yassir — Bennington Banner

Matthew Perry (right), Greg Videtto (middle) and Jim Woodward pose for a photo at Little City Cider's first Basement Music Series show by Session Americana on Jan. 28.

both brought different things to the table to help create the environment we're trying for."

Videtto acknowledged Bennington has its challenges like any other town, but is more focused on being part of the ongoing solution than anything else.

"Let's look at the positive things here ... because it doesn't matter where you go, you're going to have the problems with drugs and everything else going on," he said. "I've been here pretty much my whole life, and (the revitalization) is pretty cool to see and be a part of."

Videtto's cidery is a little off the beaten path in Bennington, a couple of miles from Main Street and just off quiet East Road. While location and visibility might have been a disadvan-

tage at first when he opened in April 2022, it seems Little City Cider is just scratching the surface of its potential, picking up more steam after recently being granted a liquor license and as word of mouth of the new concert venue has spread.

"Definitely pulling people in a bit. It's amazing. We opened April 1 to the public, and I'll still see new faces every weekend," Videtto said.

It seems Perry and Videtto's collaboration is offering a little of something for everyone, and the warehouse being set out away from the rest of town is only going to work to their advantage, including becoming a venue for other events such as open mic nights, cornhole tournaments and even some events for high school kids to showcase their talents. Things

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Next Stage Arts: 15 Kimball Hill, Putney

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Zeke's Bar & Grill: 87 Parmenter Road, Bernardston, Mass.

Hawks & Reed

Performing Arts Center: 289 Main St, Greenfield, Mass.

are only looking up once warmer weather rolls around, as they won't have the same space limitations or noise ordinances to contend with as Videtto's last venture on Main Street.

"I knew I was going to (have a tough time) in the beginning, trying to get people out here," Videtto explained. "But I was trying to create a destination."

The Basement Music Series already has four more events scheduled at Little City Cider in the next two months. For upcoming shows, visit vtartxchange.org

All shows start at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6). Tickets are \$20 online, \$25 at the door and \$10 for students, and can be purchased on Eventbrite or at vtartxchange.org.

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Gather ye rosebuds

Southern Vermont nurseries prepare for spring



Lettuces grown in a greenhouse at Clear Brook Farm in Shaftsbury.

Stewart Cairns — Vermont Country

By Gordon Dossett

Vermont Country

Pure snow lies shoved off roads, lumped in piles like broken promises. We long for spring and summer warmth.

We may hear an alluring voice, expressing an age-old sentiment: “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may.” But before we can gather actual rosebuds, we need planted roses, and if we have them, we need to nurture them. So we flock to nurseries, a rite of passage in spring, seeking to plant and cultivate our gardens.

For many of us in the Northshire, a favorite spot is Clear Brook Farm, where owner Andrew Knafel and his team dance with the seasons, balancing customer desires, a shifting climate, and the needs of trees, shrubs, flowers, herbs, fruits and vegetables. When I met with him in January, it was a barebones, mostly dormant farm we toured. Clear Brook offers an every-other-week

deep winter CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) — boxes of produce delivered to those who request them. On the day of my visit, Becca Knouss, Rosie Oceanna and Adam Wigger picked greenhouse kale and lettuce. The farm called for some maintenance, such as mending the deer fences. (Knafel found out years ago — when he spotted some 45 deer in a 4-acre field grazing on his finely cultivated crops — that normal fences weren’t enough.)

Knafel took a winding path to Clear Brook. In high school, a friend pointed out a program that called for volunteering at a national park. That program (the Student Conservation Association) was the brainchild of Shaftsbury resident Liz Putnam (profiled recently in *Vermont News & Media*). Knafel was assigned to Zion National Park. “I felt so lucky to come across that program. ... It really did change the trajectory of my life.” Afterward, he worked at the Walker Farm and various other horticultural

spots until starting Clear Brook in 1995. From its small beginnings, it now employs 25 to 28 full-time employees at the height of the season, many of whom have worked at Clear Brook for years.

Work at the nursery begins in earnest in March with the core crew preparing the bedding, baskets and boxes. To amend the soil and add needed nitrogen, Clear Brook plants some fields with oats and peas and in spring, tills them under. Rye grass turned under also helps prepare the soil.

By April, half the staff is on. “Come May I can’t get enough help. I’m waiting for the college kids to get here. ... I’m holding on. Everybody does double-time.”

The soft opening is the last weekend in April; the full opening usually is the weekend before Mother’s Day. “We don’t look back till the end of August.”

Produce at the farm stand goes on sale in early June — strawberries,

greenhouse tomatoes, greens — all organic.

When considering when to plant, Knafel says to local gardeners, “You don’t gain much by planting early.” He cites an example. If you plant potatoes the first week of May, the ground is cold, so potatoes don’t have much early growth. By waiting a couple of weeks, the potatoes would sprout quickly and gardeners would have less chance of rot. “It’s just better to wait that extra week or two.” He’s had people lose a whole garden to frost by planting too early. “We don’t sell an insurance policy, I’m afraid.”

People ask him: “How do you get your stuff to look so good?” His short answer is: “Well, we’re professionals.” They know soil and water amounts. They have greenhouses. They have “tricks,” Knafel says, smiling.

Pressed to name one, Knafel cites Reemay row covers with hoops — a fine mesh to protect crops from bugs and provide a partial greenhouse effect. Plastic covers often keep in too

much heat. Another trick: early crops, for example, beets, are transplants, started in greenhouses, which gives a three- or four-week jump on the season. Sweet corn is all transplanted. Being organic, the corn has no fungicide on the seed. “New varieties rot really easily.” Using transplants avoids dead spots. Local gardeners can buy transplants, the same varieties that Clear Brook grows to harvest.

Some draws at the nursery are consistent year after year: strawberries in June, greenhouse tomatoes, sweet corn, greens. Peaches are the biggest seller not grown on site. Knafel cites Scott Farm in Dummerston as having some success with peaches and notes the Hudson Valley has better conditions for them. “Here [in the Northshire], it can be tricky.” Still, last year, a customer brought in a bowl of peaches grown from a tree bought at Clear Brook, and “they were amazing.”

Knafel has seen some trends in purchasing, citing Martha Stewart’s influence starting in the early 2000s in encouraging annual plantings beyond “your annual marigolds and petu-

nias.” In times of uncertainty, vegetable starts are huge. “The first year of COVID, we opened May 15 ... and we sold out of everything in two weeks.” That year — 2020 — was the nursery’s biggest “by a huge amount” up until that point. Online sales really didn’t succeed, but having open air markets allowed people to sidestep the closed-in spaces of grocery stores and buy good, fresh produce.

Mettowee Mint

Up north a bit in Dorset, the Mettowee Mint nursery hunkers down in winter but stays open Thursdays through Sundays — selling cut flowers, tropical plants and espressos to the public eager to commune with nursery plants and nursery people.

The name Mettowee Mint, by the way, harkens back to the local Mohican tribe, the area’s plentiful wild mint, and the copper mint that stamped pennies in Rupert briefly in the 18th century.

Owner Sarah Linford bought the Mettowee Mint three years ago — mid-COVID — and found, as did

Stewart Cairns
Vermont Country

Adam Wigger,
right, picks
kale with his
colleagues,
Becca Knouss,
far left,
and Rosie
Oceanna,
center, in a
greenhouse
at Clear
Brook Farm in
Shaftsbury.



Stewart Cairns
Vermont Country

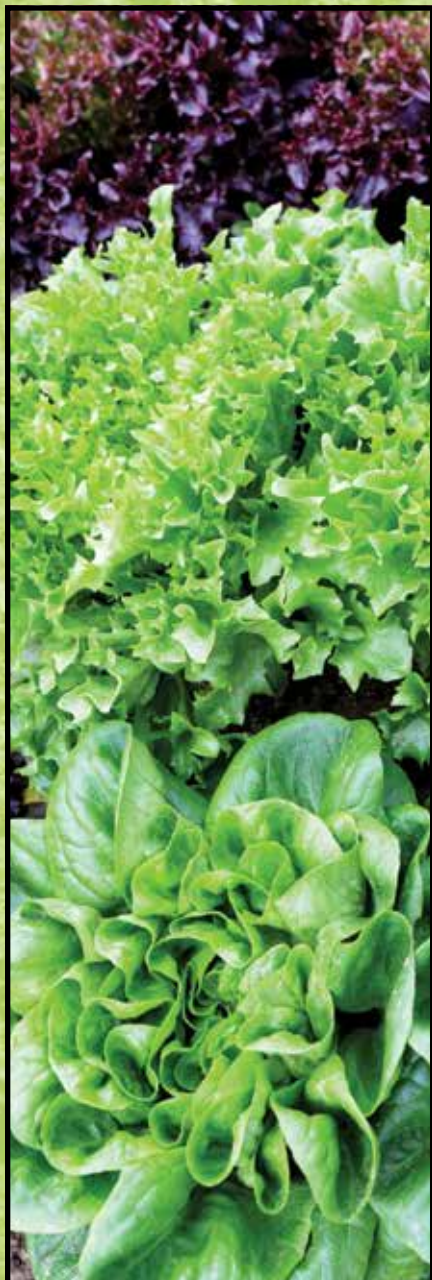
Andrew Knafel, owner of Clear Brook Farm in Shaftsbury, walks through one of his greenhouses which will be bustling when the growing season arrives (top), and one that thrives during the winter months, and includes spinach, arugula and cilantro (center).

Bottom: Knafel talks about this field of rye grass, and oats and peas in the field beyond, planted to combat erosion.



Stewart Cairns
Vermont Country

**Lettuces grown in
a greenhouse at
Clear Brook Farm in
Shaftsbury.**



Clear Brook Nursery, that many locals had a “new-found enthusiasm” for gardening when business opened up. Her nursery does a huge business in annuals since many customers like “lush, colorful” displays. Mettowee begins growing annuals on site starting mid-February. It has a dozen greenhouses and 16 acres. Surprisingly, last year, the nursery had an especially strong demand for black flowers.

Mettowee Mint has a range of perennials, herbs, shrubs and trees appropriate for the climate. A few gardeners plant in April — those with covered gardens or a green death wish — but in May, the public streams in, and “it’s a zoo for a little while,” Linford told me in a phone interview.

Given Mettowee’s year-round schedule, Linford is especially happy about a recent addition: a heating system supported by the Rural Energy for America Program and Efficiency Vermont. Its new wood gasification boiler, the result of a year-long procurement effort, provides efficient, environmentally friendly heating for all buildings on site.

Equinox Valley Nursery in Manchester is another option for local gardeners, but being in full hibernation, staff did not respond to interview requests.

Wherever you go for spring planting, “Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,” as poet Robert Herrick writes, “Old time is still a-flying;/ And this same flower that smiles today/ Tomorrow will be dying.” But in gardening, there is always next season, and the promise of spring and more rosebuds awaits.



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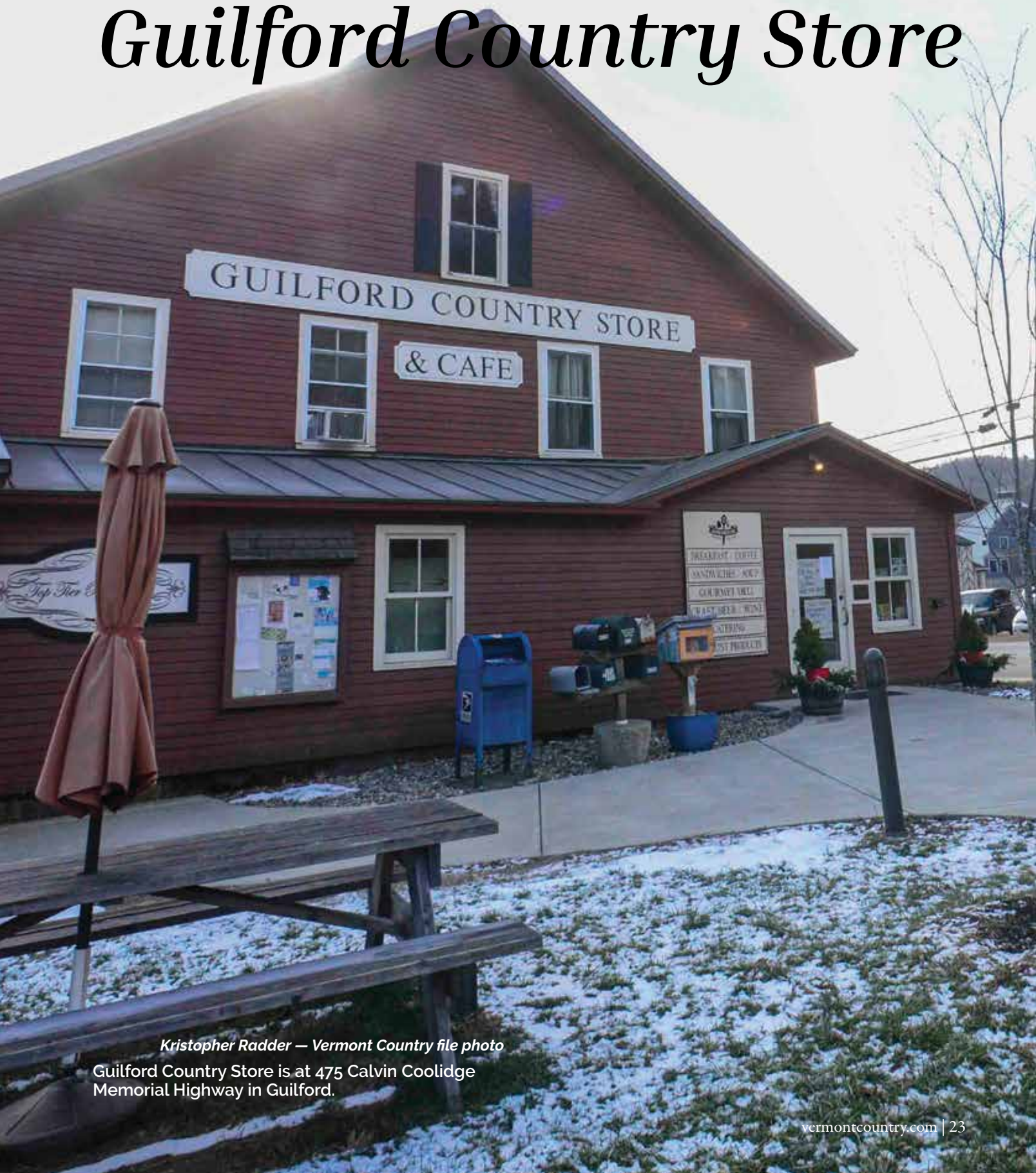
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Scones and muffins at *Guilford Country Store*



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country file photo

Guilford Country Store is at 475 Calvin Coolidge Memorial Highway in Guilford.



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country file photo

Ali West, one of the new owners of the Guilford Country Store, touches up the paint on the sandwich board at the store.

By Bob Audette

Vermont Country

GUILFORD — For Ali West, one of the new owners of the Guilford Country Store, stepping into the store is a return to her Vermont roots.

“I’ve been in cafes and delis since I was 15 when I worked at Hamelman’s,” she said, referring to Hamelman’s Bakery, which operated in downtown Brattleboro from 1983 to 1997.

West went right into the Air Force after graduating from Brattleboro Union High School. Later, she earned degrees in pastry art and design and food service management at Johnson & Wales in Miami, and for 25 years, she worked in cafes and delis around the country before returning to Brattleboro.

West recently gave her notice after seven years as food service director for Windham Southeast Supervisory Union.

She and her business partner and fellow Brattleboro Union High School graduate, Wayne Warwick, class of 1987, are now putting their spin on the country store in the Village of Algiers.

“We’ve been great friends the whole time,” said Warwick. “This was an opportunity we couldn’t pass up.”

For the past decade, Marc and Susanne Tessitore owned the store, in the 1817 Broad Brook House, which is owned by the Friends of Algiers Village.

Last summer, the Tessitores announced they were selling the business, which has become a hub of activity for Guilfordites.

The Guilford Country Store reopened on Feb. 1 under the stewardship of West and Warwick.

“I have an 8-foot deli case that holds 18 dishes,” she said. “We have

house-roasted meats and we always have shepherd’s pie, family size and individual, as well as lasagna, stuffed shells and sausage and peppers.”

Sticking around with sweet treats is Britni Christiansen and Top Tier Bakery, whose delectable cupcakes and pastries have been a staple in Guilford for a decade.

“She’s bringing more of her product in,” said West, “though I’ll be doing the morning bake because that’s one of the things I like, starting my day making muffins and scones. Do stop in and and get one of my maple scones. They will make your mornings much happier.”

Warwick said he is keeping his day job in IT, but he will be in the store quite often helping out.

“I have a stake in this company. I’ve done sandwiches in my past. I can do sandwiches in my future.”



*Kristopher Radder
Vermont Country file photos*

Will Wohnus, of Guilford, gets a muffin at the Guilford Country Store in Guilford on the reopening day of the store on Feb. 1.



Ali West, one of the owners of the Guilford Country Store, cooks fresh soup before the lunch crowd on the reopening day of the store on Feb. 1.



Raylene Dionne-Couture, a member of the kitchen crew at the Guilford Country Store, fills an order for a customer on the reopening day of the store on Feb. 1.

No need to wait to eat like a local

Go directly to The Oyster Bar, Kipling's Tavern and A Vermont Table



Photos by Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country

Downtown Brattleboro has the hot-spot eateries that we've tried out for you.

By Noah Hoffenberg | *Vermont Country*

BRATTLEBORO — Eating like a local. It's what you want whenever you visit a new town, whether you're a gourmand, foodie or plain old food lover.

Luckily, Vermont Country magazine has the inside track. How? We're the locals who have already experimented for you, everywhere. We know what's hot and what's not.

Stroll through light-bedazzled downtown Brattleboro on a temperate evening this spring, and you need look no further than The Oyster Bar at Peter Havens, Kipling's Tavern and A Vermont Table.



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country Magazine

Will Bissonnette pours a drink, as Zachary Corbin, owner of Peter Havens, and Julian Mikijanec hold a tray of fresh oysters at The Oyster Bar on Elliot Street in Brattleboro.

The Oyster Bar: They bring the sea to you

Start your night in Brattleboro with a drink and treat from the sea. The Oyster Bar opens at 3 p.m. — perfect time to get the fresh catch before the dinner crowds roll in.

Inside, saltwater fishing lures adorn the mantle, above a wide selection of local and imported beer, top-shelf liquors and a list of multiple drink specials.

But, you're here for the oysters and seafood. The sampled oysters on a recent visit were sweet and savory, tasting like the essence of the sea. The bar's Jonah crab claws are a fun opportunity to dig with one of those mini-forks. Its seafood sources vary, including from shellfish farms in Maine and Massachusetts.

Bartender Will is a master at his craft, whether creating a cocktail or recommending from the menu, which only adds to The Oyster Bar's warm and friendly vibe. It offers a mix of eats, from ahi tuna tartare to hand-picked tinned fish (eat that, too, shame-free, at the bar), as well as ceviche, a meat & cheese plate, and a slew of other gourmet treats.

When you visit, try a Switchback Slow Fermented Brown Ale, a nice break from the IPAs dominating the market. For other drinks, the bar has several specials, including enticers such as the Daisy or the Autumn Sunday.

The Oyster Bar is open from Wednesday to Sunday, from 3 to 10 p.m., with no reservations. Visit peterhavens.com/oyster-bar-menu.



Provided photo

Gabe Pessoa Monteiro, bar manager and co-owner of A Vermont Table, makes drinks.

A Vermont Table: When you want to taste fruit of the local earth

If it's a farm-to-table experience that you seek, then your next stop must be A Vermont Table.

"Come to escape the day-to-day for a minute and just take a breath and relax, and celebrate the experience of food and beverages and socialization," says Jamie Pessoa Monteiro, general manager and co-owner. "We have a little something for everyone."

Once a catering company, A Vermont Table opened late last year at 22-26 High St. It has a craft cocktail program, with classics and modern takes. Non-alcoholic cocktails and wines shine here for those who want a bar experience with clarity; speaking of which, clear ice is a special touch to the Table's drinks, too.

Its fairly priced meals lean into seasonal ingredients. A Vermont Table has a rotating menu with vegan and gluten free selections and always has "small bites" at the bar. Picture a bowl of Feijoada Brazilian Stew or Chickering Farm Pork Belly Ramen, to name a couple.

Of note: Its handmade pasta program debuted this winter. Of even bigger note: The bar works with sustainable, family-owned and female-owned producers, and does business with ethical distributors, too.

On Mondays, it's open from 4 to 8 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday, from 5 to 9 p.m.; and on Sunday, brunch and bar run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Reservations can be made online, and dietary restrictions are considered to make for the best dining experiences for all. Visit avermonttable.com.

Kipling's Tavern: New ownership, storied pub get rave reviews

Want on-point mixology, leveled-up pub fare and a vibe that feels way more 21st century than 19th? At Kipling's Tavern, new owners Bryan Gelke and Maggie Bernhard have breathed new life into the longtime pub, which they just reopened last year.

"I feel privileged and honored to continue this tradition in Brattleboro, this kind of historic watering hole/gathering place," Gelke said. "It means a lot to people and I'm humbled by that."

The tavern touts its bold side with indie music in the background, craft cocktails (ask for the Corpse Reviver) and other specials, plus lots of New England microbrews. Kipling's wines are sourced globally, and beer favorites are stocked, too, from Pabst to Guinness.

Pair a beverage with a fairly priced menu item, and your night is set. Try the chef's snazzy spicy Korean fried chicken ("O my!") or her Bull and Finch burger, with blue cheese and ("Mmm-hmm!" bacon).

The tavern is ranked at 4.7 stars on Google, where customers rave. Patron Emily Hexe says in her review that Kipling's is the only place she trusts to make a proper martini.

Google reviewer Colin McGahan notes: "Best restaurant and bar in Bratt, hands down."

Kipling's is open from Tuesday through Saturday starting at 4 p.m. The tavern closes a little later on weekends. Visit facebook.com/kiplings.pub for its full menu and food pics galore.



Peer in the windows of Kipling's Tavern, and you'll see a restaurant and bar built on hospitality.

This article is brought to you by the Downtown Brattleboro Alliance. The DBA supports and promotes the vitality of downtown Brattleboro through art, commerce, recreation and education. Visit brattleboro.com.

The joyful music of Thus Love

By Bob Audette

Vermont Country

BRATTLEBORO — One of Vermont's quietest traditions is also one of its loudest — music from the Green Mountains.

And from Phish to Grace Potter and the Nocturnals, Sam Amidon to Neko Case, Miracle Legion to the Arwen Mountain String Band, Vermont music has been sublimely innovative, as if it grew out of the very soil and was nurtured by the hands and the breath of thousands of musicians.

On a mid-morning, chill Sunday in January, the members of Vermont's newest sensation, Thus Love, sat in their collective space in a borderline-ramshackle, two-story wooden building left behind when Estey Organ Company closed up shop in 1960.

"People subconsciously gravitate to a spot like this," said drummer Lu Racine, who came to Vermont from Florida as a teenager when his mom moved to Windham County to attend the now-shuttered Marlboro College.

Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country
file photo

Echo Mars, guitar player and singer for Thus Love, stands on Lu Racine's drums while playing guitar during practice in Brattleboro in preparation for the band's European tour.









“When you be
yourself, it’s
always vibrant.”

— Echo Mars, *Thus Love*

And nearby Brattleboro was a magnet, not just for Racine, but also bassist Nathaniel VanOsdol, singer/guitarist Echo Mars and other trans-identifying, gender questioning people.

“It’s a small town with a lot of freaks and a lot of really, really nice folks,” said Racine.

“We play pretty loud punk music,” said VanOsdol, who grew up in Townshend. “But punk is a genre of music notoriously dominated by cis white men. To show up and be very loud, very queer, very trans ... as loud as possible to remind those people that they’re not the only ones who’ve had these experiences that we’ve had ... that’s what punk music is all about.”

Mars grew up in Northern Vermont before traveling south where she, Racine and VanOsdol eventually met up, forming *Thus Love* just weeks before the pandemic shut everything down.

During what Mars called “forced downtime,” they immersed themselves in their music, writing songs and recreating them a piece at a time, recording them in a studio in Buoyant Heart, their collective space on Birge Street.

They also recorded a video with a couple of friends around downtown Brattleboro for \$100. “Inamorato” was a sensation and a revelation, joyful and dynamic.

Mars’ antics are pure and delightful as she swings her guitar and belts out in a voice reminiscent of Baz Warne and Ian McCulloch.

Meanwhile, Racine and VanOsdol are implacable and focused, as any rhythm section worth its salt is, as Mars prances about, jumps up and down and leans into the camera.

To say the members of *Thus Love* got quite the bang for their buck with that video is an understatement. The band was quickly signed to a label,

**Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country
file photo**

Nathaniel VanOsdol, the bass player for *Thus Love*, plays the bass during practice in Brattleboro in preparation for the band’s European tour.



Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country file photo

Nathaniel VanOsdol, bassist for Thus Love, strums a guitar at the band's rehearsal studio in Brattleboro as the band prepared for a European tour.

got reviewed in Rolling Stone magazine and has been written about in publications such as NME, Broadway World, Alternate Press, Brooklyn Vegan and The Guardian.

VanOsdol called the band their lifeboat — with one semester left at Marlboro College, the school closed.

VanOsdol was able to finish that last semester, but Mars and Racine were on a ship that they gladly jumped aboard. “I was like, this is the moment, the opportunity.”

Late last year, Thus Love released its first album, “Memorial,” recorded at Guilford Sound with Matthew Hall and has been playing gigs in Vermont and along the East Coast.

In late January, Thus Love played two

shoulder-packed shows in The Stone Church in Brattleboro before jetting off to do shows in England, as well as in Dublin, Amsterdam and Paris.

The band members are grateful for the folks who have shown up for them, the people who make it possible for them to do what they love.

“It makes me feel like, wow,” said Racine. “That many people want to take time out of their lives to see us. That’s a gift, and it shouldn’t be taken lightly.”

“It can happen anywhere,” said Mars about Brattleboro and the band’s Vermont roots. “It doesn’t matter where you are. You can be, you know, a queer from Vermont and live in a rural town. And you can still make

dreams come true. When you be yourself, it’s always vibrant.”

While it’s true it can happen anywhere, you still have to have talent, and the members of Thus Love have lots of that quality.

But that’s not enough, either. You have to have a certain *je ne sais quoi*, a presence, an unapologetic flag in the ground, and that’s what makes Thus Love special.

“Everything in this world is hard,” said Mars, including making music that grabs people by the heart and soul.

“If I liked doing other things, I’d be doing other things, too. But this is the only thing that makes me want to be alive.”

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A writer takes us on a journey to find magic mushrooms in Vermont

By Kathleen Hawes

Vermont Country correspondent

Editor's note: Because of a production error, a draft version of this story ran in a past issue of the former UpCountry magazine. Below is the updated version.

STRIKE ONE

At a quaint New England farmers market nestled in the Green Mountains of Vermont, I tried to score some illicit drugs. Fiddle music played as barefoot kids romped through wildflowers. Chalkboard signs advertised raw milk cheese, hand-packed gelato, paraben-free bars of soap. With the mask mandate recently lifted, woodsmoke and pine needles never smelled more divine.

I loitered near a booth set with a dozen cardboard pints filled with soft brown ovals of local fungi. After inspecting the chalkboard for a long time, I tried to act casual. "Which one is the lion's mane?"

The lady behind the table thumbed the straps of her overalls and looked apologetic. They had sold out of everything, save the blue oysters. It was a shame, too, she said, because lion's mane was not only delicious cooked up on steak, but "excellent for improving brain activity."

This was my opening: "What about the other kind of mushroom? I've heard those are also good for your brain." I leaned in. "You know, like, the magic kind?"

The woman's husband, busy with a Venmo payment for the last pint of chanterelles must have overheard because he turned sharply. "We don't know anything about those kinds of mushrooms." His smile was tight. "Psilocybin is illegal in Vermont."

It was strike one in my pursuit of a totally transformative experience.

A while back, a friend told me he had a magic mushroom epiphany. "I



Associated Press file photo

A woman harvests magic mushrooms in a grow room at the Procure farm in Hazerswoude, Netherlands.

realized while I was high that I've suffered from social anxiety my whole life." He was breathless over the phone. "But for those four hours, I was absolved of a weight that I didn't even know I had. No internal monologue, no doubting myself. I never felt so free."

Now this friend keeps a quarter-pound of dried mushrooms handy in his freezer. Three mornings a week before he shaves, puts on a tie and heads to his cush job at a multibillion-dollar software company, he pops half a stem. It's called micro-dosing, and it is all the rage.

In the 1950s and '60s, "magic mushrooms" were closely studied by psychologists, neuroscientists and all sorts of academics in pursuit of

mystical experiences. Recently, I came across a 1955 article from LIFE titled "The Magic Mushroom." A caption reads: "A New York banker goes to Mexico's mountains to participate in age-old rituals of Indians who chew strange growths that produce visions." The article details two nights where the author, R. Gordon Wasson, trips his face off with some locals. The story is cringey for all sorts of modern reasons: othering, cultural voyeurism and appropriation, to name a few. Still, Wasson shows not just an open curiosity for psychedelic mushrooms, but a profound reverence, often referring to them as "the divine mushroom." He includes a collection of delicate drawings that depict various mushroom species, one of which caught my eye: a pale,

Associated Press file photo

Magic mushrooms are seen at the Procure farm in Hazerswoude Netherlands.

wispy stemmed toadstool that grows in volcanic grass. The name of the mushroom below the picture was translated from Aztec: “Children of the Waters.”

Then, late in the ‘60s, hippies ruined everything. Bad trips, mostly on LSD, resulted in big scares. Research on psychedelics became very uncool, thus, underfunded. In the 1970s, most psychedelics were criminalized.

But today, many Americans think these laws are antiquated. Stigma that once hovered around marijuana is old news. The catastrophe of the War on Drugs, a campaign that disproportionately affected people of color, has brought new awareness to the challenges that come with classifying certain drugs as addictive or more dangerous than others.

Anyway, it’s clear the social deviance once assigned to psychedelics is on its way out for other reasons. Coined by The New York Times as the “new Prozac,” psilocybin has been at the center of several medical studies, including one backed by \$17 million at Johns Hopkins, that claim the drug can be used to treat PTSD, severe anxiety, depression and even addiction. Oregon is now the first state to legalize psilocybin for therapeutic use, and a handful of other states have similar legislation on the table. The drug has been decriminalized in Washington, D.C., Oakland, Calif., and Denver. Some officials speculate that, in the very near future, magic mushrooms will be approved for therapeutic use by the FDA.

So, what’s taken the purportedly left-leaning state of Vermont so long to catch up? Surely, the Green Mountains are not exempt from real-world problems like addiction and mental illness. Winters here are long, and isolation is real. Seven months into the COVID-19 pandemic, state officials reported alcohol sales in Vermont were up 10 percent, despite that bars and restaurants had closed their doors. Across the state, the number of people in mental health crises doubled from the previous year. The more distressing elephant in the room: the opioid problem. Opioid-related deaths in Vermont went up 38 percent over the course of 2020. Could it be that methadone and suboxone, drugs used to treat

opioid and heroin addiction, just aren’t cutting it?

Still, if one is looking for alternative options, know that to get caught with mushrooms in Vermont could mean a felony conviction.

Of course, there’s nothing wrong with window shopping.

STRIKE TWO

Happy Mushrooms for Sad People is the tagline for Curative Mushrooms, a health and wellness website that offers “A Free Spore Syringe with Three All in One Grow Bags Delivered Right to Your Door.” On its Facebook page, I find tutorials for the beginner grower: Live Q&As that answer things like, “How do I tell when my grow bag is too dry?” as well as pertinent info on the federal law loophole that makes this whole business legal.

How do they get away with it? I am instructed to first purchase the grow bags, each filled with a layer cake of rye grain and fungal-dominant compost. After that, I have to click on a coupon code below to redeem my free spore syringe. The syringe kind of looks like a turkey baster filled with pee. Technically, it does not contain psilocybin, which is the compound classified by the federal government as a Schedule 1 controlled substance. My grow bags will arrive at my door separately (and discreetly) from the spore syringe. The magic won’t happen till I inject the spores into the syringe portals of the bags, wait three to five weeks for some healthy mycelium to colonize, and ... voila!

However, after much research, I soon realize it’s harder than all that. Temperature, light and humidity are make-or-break factors in mycelium success. There is also expensive equipment I’ll have to purchase. Since I am broke and own only a few withering houseplants, I conclude DIY is not my thing.

Not to worry. Rick Doblin says his organization will soon safely and legally administer happy mushrooms to sad people all over the world. Rick, founder and executive director of Multidisciplinary Association for Psychedelic Studies, is wispy-haired with kind eyes, and maybe a touch of

social anxiety himself. While I watch his TED Talk on my laptop, there are awkward pauses in his speech that make it hard to tell whether he’s terrified of public speaking or just burnt out from his own supply. Doblin has researched psychedelics since the 1980s, and explains that, unlike psychiatric drugs that must be administered daily and that only treat symptoms of illness such as addiction, depression and PTSD, just a few doses of psilocybin will treat the root problem. He also claims the profound experiences people have on psilocybin could be “an antidote to tribalism, fundamentalism and genocide.”

How shall these mystical mushrooms rid the world of misery and evil? Basically, by making you nicer.

Here’s how it works: The default network of your brain, in particular, a thin sheet of neurons called the claustrum buried in your neocortex, is believed to be responsible for consciousness and awareness; essentially, your ego. It filters information according to your priorities and personal needs. But, pop some ‘shrooms, and activity in that default network decreases. Your ego leaves the foreground, and takes a back seat. This is important because the exit of the ego allows you to see your customary perception of the world as just “part of a larger field of awareness.” Doblin analogizes the invention of the telescope; Copernicus

Associated Press file photo

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Associated Press file photo

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and Galileo’s discovery that, in fact, the earth was not the center of the universe. This awareness-shift creates a sense of connectivity to the larger world that can result in feelings of altruism and might even relieve fear of death.

Seems plausible. There are several medical studies, some of which date back to the ‘60s, where similar feelings of connectivity were reported by control groups after the ingestion of psilocybin.

Doblin hits his stride near the end of the TED Talk. The audience hoots approval when he announces folks at MAPS anticipate thousands of psychedelic clinics will open over the next few decades. That his specially trained MAPS therapists will soon administer MDMA, ketamine and psilocybin to people in search of personal growth, couples’ therapy, or mystical and spiritual experiences.

But if a few decades seems too long

to wait — if I really want to get my hands on some mushrooms now — there’s always Jamaica (the island, not the town).

STRIKE THREE

You know how it goes when you want to plan a psychedelic getaway. First, you figure out the basics: Beach or mountains? Adventure or relaxation? Psilocybin or ketamine? If you are a mushroom gal, MycoMeditations will intrigue. The website claims to bring “another level of relaxation and restoration to your psilocybin experience.” The most luxurious retreat option boasts glittering villas on the sugar white sand of Bluefields Bay. Included with my villa will be daily laundry service and my very own butler. Over the week, I will receive three doses of psilocybin; ground up, blended and encapsulated in .5-gram increments. Dosages will increase each time and are deter-

mined by body weight, personality type and one-on-one meetings with a Mycomeditations facilitator. After I spend the day unlocking repressed memories in a guided therapy session, appetizers will be served, followed by a “unique three-course meal curated by local chefs.” All of this: just \$8,950 per person.

Bleyksi from Illinois gives MycoMeditations five Tripadvisor emojis: “My first trip was out of this world — I felt unconditional love, even saw myself being born and my mom holding me for the first time with tears of joy. ... I asked the facilitator to come over and I squeezed Justin’s hand for probably 20 minutes. ... Additionally, the accommodations are comfortable. The hospitality is very nice, and some of the food was local and fresh. Ox-tail! Grilled lobster tail! So yum.”

Pharmacygirl3 weighs in with only two emojis: “There is no supervision in the evenings and guests are left

alone. This woman was hysterical in the ocean after dark and swam away from shore, leaving me and another guest to call to her believing she was drowning. This woman was allowed to scream and yell hysterically for several hours inside and outside the villas. At midnight I tried to reach a Myco staff member as the hysteria was frightening. No staff member at any time came to the villa to address the situation.”

Aside from the hefty MycoMeditations price tag and the whole screeching banshee on the beach thing, Jamaica is a long haul from Vermont. There are already posh clinics preparing for FDA approval of psilocybin in Los Angeles, New York, Atlanta, Houston and Chicago. Maybe it's best to wait till a psychedelic retreat pops up on a cow path near me.

Or maybe, waiting for Big Pharma to make fungi fungible is socially negligent and allows our shameful history of colonization and ruthless capitalism to deny the little guy what should

be a basic right for all humans.

That's what progressive Democrat and state Rep. Brian Cina tells me on a phone chat. Brian loves all things Bernie, dislikes moderate Democrats who are turning Burlington into a playground for the rich, and pushes the point that drugs like psilocybin must be decriminalized in Vermont before they are legalized for medical use.

“Humans have a sacred birthright to have access to plant and fungal-based medicine, and the government shouldn't get in the way of that.” He sounds passionate. Sure, there should be pathways for professions to administer these medicines, but that shouldn't be the only way to get access. “It's another way for the pharmaceutical companies to profit, and they are the ones that created the opioid problem in the first place. If these medicines are controlled by one or two companies, we run the risk of going down a pathway that shifts to oppression.”

Hard to disagree with Brian there.

Hallucinogens like ayahuasca and peyote have been used in religious ceremonies for centuries. There are religious exemptions for their use, meaning, right now the DEA is not breaking up the drum circle. But what happens when these drugs become legalized commodities?

Secondly, since psilocybin has undergone a few promising studies as a treatment for opioid addiction, the prospect that the very pharmaceutical companies who helped create this epidemic might soon hold lock and key on the cure, is troublesome. After my phone call to Brian Cina, I can't help but think of Rick Doblin's TED Talk promise that only specially trained MAPS therapists will be able to administer psychedelic drugs.

A 2-INCH HOME RUN

At great length I finally get my drugs the old-fashioned way: Instead of asking my 64-year-old neighbor for a cup of sugar, I hit her up for hallucinogens. She's resistant, says she's got to save her stash for a transformative couple's weekend planned with her new boyfriend. But I push, and she feels sorry.

As I stand in her kitchen and inspect a 2-inch shriveled toadstool on the counter, VPR spouts news about a new variant. I get gloomy with the thought of another winter in isolation. Four months into the pandemic, I picked up cigarettes after three years. Sleep became rare; red wine was not. For the first time in my life, I was prescribed a psychiatric drug, bupropion, to calm my anxiety. Also, to curb the smoking — which hasn't worked. In addition, the parallel timeline of U.S. political upheaval not only bolstered this anxiety but highlighted, for me, the suffering that arises when a monstrous ego refuses to exit the foreground.

Weirdly, political strife and a devastating virus made me more aware than ever how connected humans are — for better or worse. Everyone is swimming in the same giant pool, and if one person takes a piss, all of us drink it. Yet, as I stare down at this tiny mushroom on my neighbor's counter, I feel some comfort in a connection: Like, maybe loneliness is just a state of mind? Maybe we are all Children of the Waters.

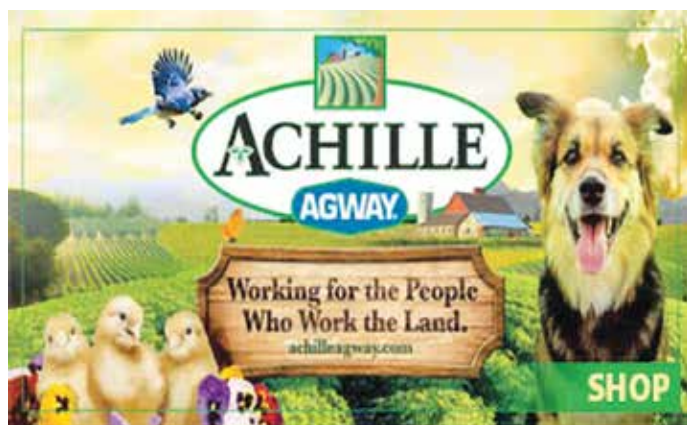


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There are several medical studies, some of which date back to the 1960s, where feelings of connectivity were reported by control groups after the ingestion of psilocybin.



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10 music biopics that hit *the right notes*

... yes, they used actual dolls in 'Superstar'

By Dan Tebo

There is perhaps no other film genre that openly courts disaster as fervently as the music biopic.

Tales of big screen music biographies being beset by miscasting, licensing issues or meddling estate holders are legion. The risk of alienating fan bases and tarnishing legacies always runs high. On the rare occasions where Hollywood gets things right, the skies rain Oscar gold, which helps explain why every actor who ever strummed a G chord wants to play a rock star.



Of course, the biggest obstacle is the simple fact that, with a few rare exceptions, most actors are not rock stars. Try as they might, most mere mortals lack the preternatural charisma to fully inhabit our larger-than-life music icons (see: Johnny Flynn in the unsanctioned 2020 David Bowie film "Stardust." Or better yet: don't).

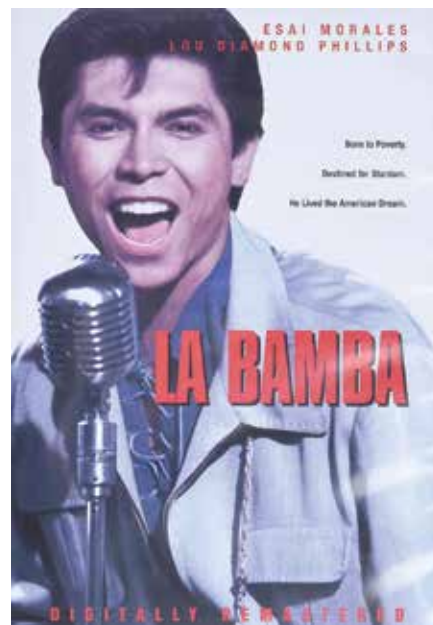
This season, we take a look at 10 films that, while flawed, still managed to cut through the static to serve up a respectable amount of rock 'n' roll fun.

Coal Miner's Daughter (1980):

Sissy Spacek's transformation into country superstar Loretta Lynn is still the performance by which all other actors-as-musician performances will be judged. Lynn, who died late last fall, was just 48 years old when this film was released and would go on to record for another four decades. I smell a sequel.

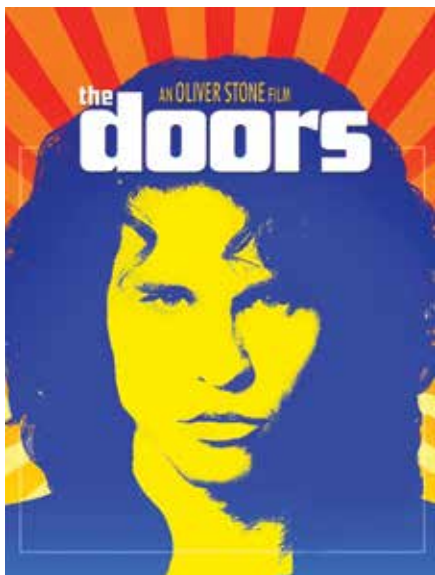
La Bamba (1987):

There are few bum notes in this heart-breaking look at Richie Valens, a budding Chicano musician whose life ended in a plane crash at just 17 years of age on



"The Day the Music Died." This one makes for a great double feature with Gary Busey's "The Buddy Holly Story." Still waiting on the Big Bopper flick, though.

Superstar: The Karen Carpenter Story (1987): If you find yourself unable to license music for your biopic, one solution is to simply go ahead and use the music anyway! That's what Todd Haynes did for this oddly

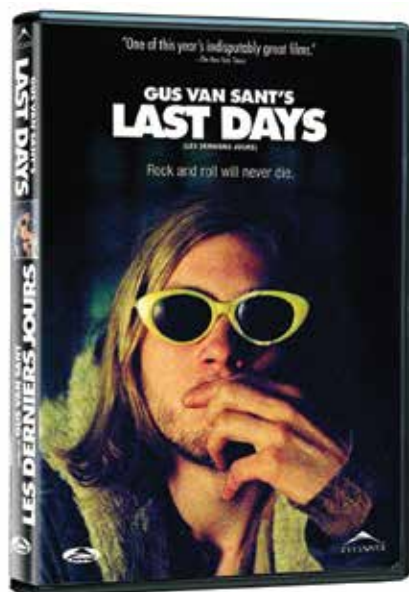


touching look at the tragic life of Karen Carpenter that stars Barbie dolls instead of human actors. Surviving brother Richard Carpenter was unamused and sued the film out of existence. Bootleg only.

The Doors (1991): Oliver Stone's frenetic orgy of a film is possibly the best rock biopic of all time. And also: the worst. The insufferable Val Kilmer turns the insufferable Jim Morrison into a preening, poetry spouting menace in a flick that

is so resolutely over the top that one can't help but admire it.

Ray (2004): While there's no rule that states that an actor or actress must possess the ability to sing and play like the musician they're portraying, it certainly doesn't hurt. In 2004, we lost the great Ray Charles, but also learned that the kid from "Booty Call" (Jamie Foxx) was a classically trained pianist who sounded exactly like him!



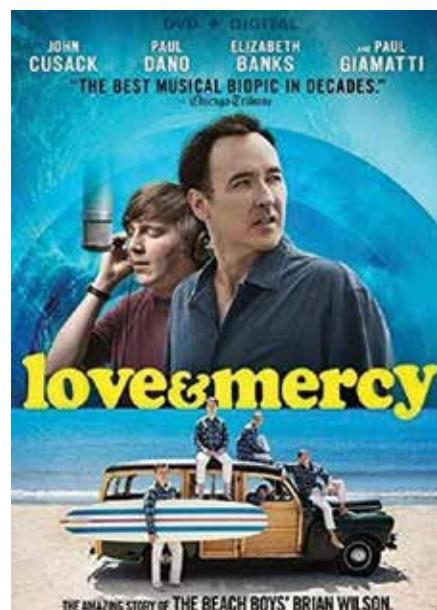
Last Days (2005): Courtney Love recently claimed that Brad Pitt was so upset she wouldn't allow him to play Kurt Cobain in a biopic to be directed by Gus Van Sant that he had her expelled from "Fight Club." Van Sant instead made a virtually silent film that follows a Cobain-ish rock star (Michael Pitt, no relation) as he loafs around an abandoned mansion for two hours before dying by suicide. Maybe you should just listen to "In Utero."

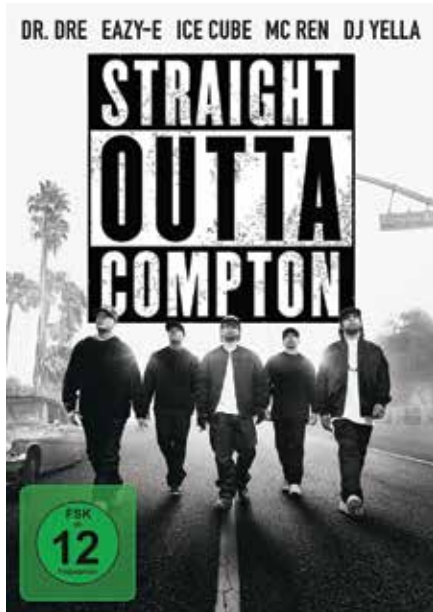
I'm Not There (2007): Perhaps recognizing that telling



the story of the most inscrutable songwriter to walk the earth was a fool's errand, Todd Haynes (him again!) gave us a nonlinear mood piece featuring six different actors playing Bob Dylan. It's equal parts spell-binding and unwatchable, not unlike a modern-day Dylan concert.

Love & Mercy (2015): This life-affirming sleeper hit gets my vote for the greatest rock biopic of all time. The reliably





brilliant Paul Dano soars (and sings and plays) as a young Brian Wilson and a woefully miscast John Cusack somehow pulls off biblically troubled

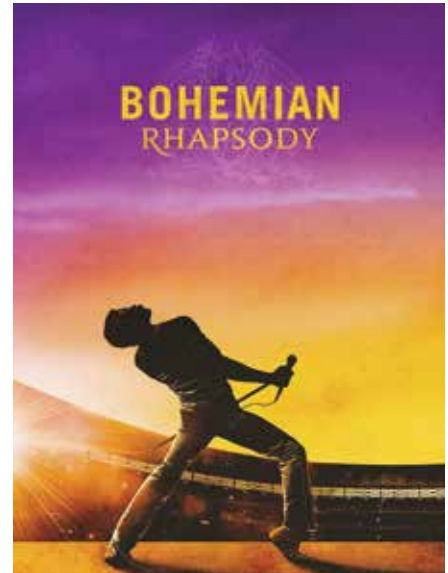
1980s Brian. Paul Giamatti nearly steals the show as Wilson's universally reviled psychiatrist/captor.

Straight Outta Compton

(2015): Dr. Dre and Ice Cube were intimately involved in the production of this sprawling look at the rise and fall of N.W.A. The result is overlong but always fiendishly entertaining. Paul Giamatti appears as slithery record mogul Jerry Heller, thereby cornering the market on real life music industry-adjacent villains for the year 2015.

Bohemian Rhapsody (2018):

The notoriously hedonistic members of Queen gave the world the PG-13 version of their story in this toothless film filled with scenes that play like bad



SNL sketches about British rock stars. The world, in turn, bought tickets by the tens of millions and awarded Rami Malek an Oscar for his portrayal of Freddie Mercury. So ... there's that.

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‘Dreaming of flowers’

Lucia Rising blooms as a business

By Chris Mays
Vermont Country

DUMMERSTON — Last year, Lindsay Richard made flowers available via a roadside stand in front of her residence on Route 5 in Dummerston between Brattleboro and Putney. That was the bulk of the business unless someone asked for a bouquet or arrangement.

Starting in mid- to late May, Richard will be offering a community supported agriculture or CSA program. Customers can pick up flowers at her home or the West Townshend Farmers Market on Friday nights.

“I had been dreaming of flowers over the course of several years before I started working for other flower farmers,” Richard said, recounting how she had been unhappy in an earlier career in textile design.

She worked for Walker Farm in Dummerston and two other cut flower farmers to educate herself. She also read and researched the topics.

Growing flowers from seeds, Richard said the bulk of her time is planning out crops by choosing colors and varieties. Part of that

Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country

Lindsay Richard, owner of Lucia Rising Flowers in Dummerston, puts soil into planters.

means seeking out what can bloom the entirety of the season.

“It’s really a year-round endeavor,” Richard said, “even though people imagine farmers have nothing to do in the winter.”

Having studied photography in college, Richard didn’t have an interest in commercial pursuits. She tends to think in images and narrative, which comes in useful when designing her website and other business materials.

As for being a small business owner, Richard is learning much on her own. She’s figuring out when it’s valuable to ask for input and when to pay for someone else for a task.

Richard refers to Lucia Rising, her business, as a “microfarm.” On about 0.25 to 0.5 of an acre on rented property, she deploys an urban farming model in which a very small space is used to yield a lot of flowers or crops that have more than one harvest. She built low tunnels, or what she called “basically a poor man’s greenhouse” to make her growing season last a little longer.

Her hope is to own land in the next year or two. For now, she said, she’s “growing with what I have, making it work.”

Starting out, the plan is to keep the CSA smaller to be on the safe side.

“I want people to feel like they’re getting a really good value out of being a member and they’re helping me move to the next stage with the whole endeavor,” she said.

With the roadside operation and an Instagram page for Lucia Rising to show what would be available, Richard found enough demand to

Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country

Lindsay Richard, owner of Lucia Rising Flowers in Dummerston, plants ranunculus.







Sprouts start to grow at Lucia Rising Flowers in Dummerston.

Kristopher Radder — Vermont Country

expand the business. She also started preparing flowers for weddings, as friends of hers were getting married.

“I want to do the aspects of the floral industry that I enjoy,” she said. “Being involved in really major moments of people’s lives has been really fulfilling for me.”

Richard came up with the name Lucia Rising as the project symbolizes positive changes she has made in her life over the last five or six years. Lucia translates to “light.”

“So to me,” Richard said, “it’s about light rising. I just feel I’m endeavoring to improve my life and I’m endeavoring to improve the lives around me in a natural, simple way — a real lofty goal, but that’s the goal.”

Richard is pairing up with Grace Farm, a female-owned, low-till vegetable and pasture-raised meat farm in Athens, so the two farmers can bounce ideas off of each other.

“Having someone to talk to about this process has been really exciting for me so far,” she said.

Someday Richard hopes to get into “more outlandish sculptural stuff with flowers.”

“I’m really curious about other people’s creative ideas about flowers and the possibilities there,” she said. “Otherwise, I’m open to collaboration. So far, when people have come to me for flowers, good stuff has come out of it.”

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