

**NAVIGATING
THE NEW
NORM
INSIDE!**



OPINION:
**WHY PARTYING THIS
HALLOWEEN WILL
BE A NIGHTMARE**

P.5

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POLICE BLOTTER

10/8: Suspicious Person/Arrest

Officers responded to McEniry in reference to a suspicious person. One subject was transported to Mecklenburg County Intake and issued a trespass order.

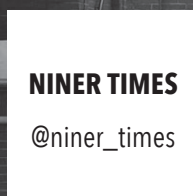
10/8: Accident/Property Damage

Officers responded to the EPIC oading dock in reference to an accident.

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Photo by Niyathi Sulkunte

Spring 2021: 'not unlike where we are now'



NEWS

University officials to announce the revised spring calendar this week

by Megan Bird
News Editor

For many, the spring semester might seem like a lifetime away, but plans are already in the works for how to deal with the coronavirus during spring 2021. According to Assistant Provost Leslie Zenk, the University will announce the official spring calendar this week.

Academic Affairs originally considered three revisions to the spring calendar, one with spring break and the other two with a few "mental health" days instead. Originally, department chairs and Provost Lorden preferred to cancel spring break in order to reduce the risk of travel-related virus transmission. After strong push back from the student body including a resolution passed by the Student Government Association (SGA); however, it appears the University intends to preserve spring break.

Now, a proposed calendar would start the semester on Jan. 20 as planned with some in-person courses until March 26. Students would have spring break until April 2, after which all courses would be moved online, including final exams May 7-13.

"I believe that the preservation of spring break is absolutely critical for the mental well being and academic success of all students," commented Student Senate Pro Tempore Dick Beekman. "I commend Chancellor Gaber for working with student leaders to find a way to preserve this critical break while also protecting the campus from a COVID-19 wave that could result from holiday travel. These times are difficult, and while there will never be a perfect plan that fully meets the needs of all parties involved, close collaboration between admin, faculty, staff, and students ensures that all voices are being heard. It is my fervent hope that we can continue working together as we continue navigating these difficult times."

During a Fall Planning Advisory Group meeting on Sept. 30, Provost Joan Lorden said she expects next semester to be "not unlike where we are now." This could mean that certain courses like labs and primarily freshmen classes would be offered in person with the rest taking

place online. There is no specific goal for how many courses would have a face-to-face component; however, based off of the fall 2020 semester, the registrar predicted that approximately 13,000 students would have at least one course with a face-to-face component. Students will be able to opt for a remote-only semester when they begin registering for classes on Nov. 30.

SGA President Tahliah Sampson told the Niner Times that she appreciates Chancellor Gaber and Provost Lorden including student leaders in the planning process.

"You can tell they value our input and what's best for the student body," Sampson added. "I haven't seen this from other universities."

Where we are now

This draft of the spring 2021 calendar largely mirrors fall 2020. Courses began remotely on Sept. 7 and some classes moved to in-person delivery on Oct. 1. Classes will move back online following Thanksgiving break.

UNC Charlotte has reported 4,071 cases of COVID-19 among students and staff since the fall semester began. The University has consistently reported around a 1% positivity rate for tests conducted by the Student Health Center. On Oct. 7, Mecklenburg County reported a 4.9% positivity rate, classified as minimal community spread. The plurality of cases are still coming from the 20-39 age group.

On Oct. 2, the University's wastewater detection program detected the first potential outbreak in an on-campus residence hall. All residents and staff associated with the dorm, Holshouser Hall, were tested and only one person was positive for COVID-19.

Experts warn that cases could worsen before the start of the spring semester with more people staying inside due to the cold weather and the dual threat of the flu. Much could change over the next 14 weeks.

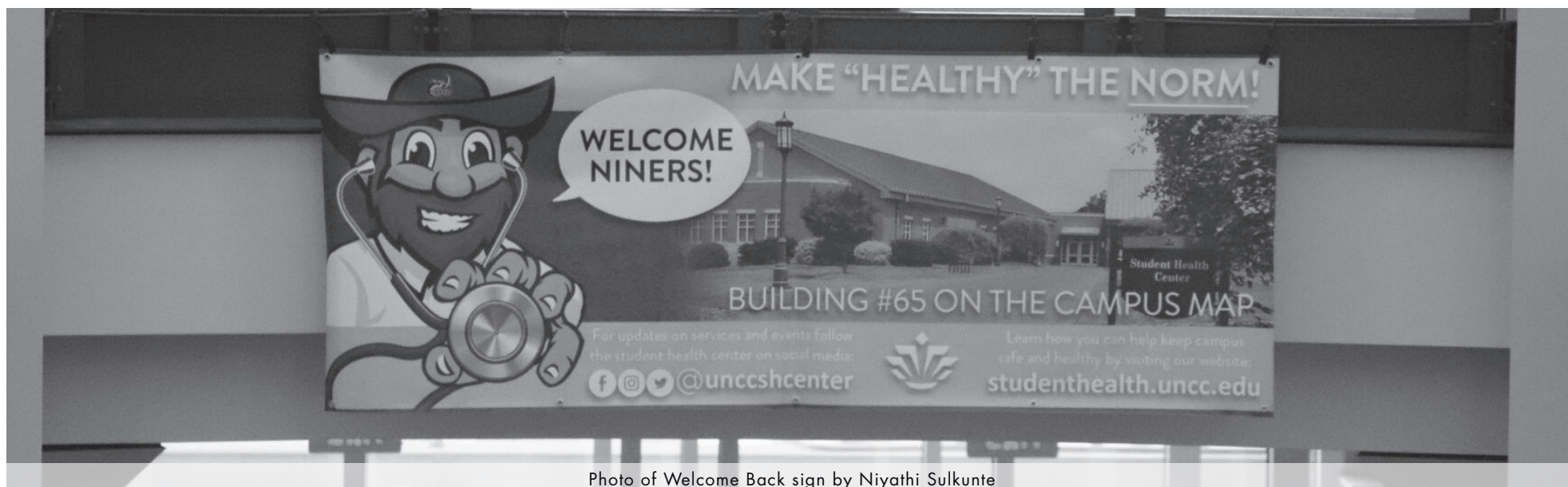


Photo of Welcome Back sign by Niyathi Sulkunte



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Two UNC Charlotte students awarded Charlotte “Inno Under 25”

Adonis Abdullah and Samra Kanwal were honored in inaugural Charlotte Inno award

by Nancy Carroll
Intern

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Photo of Adonis Abdullah
courtesy of Belk College of Business

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Photo of Samra Kanwal
courtesy of Samra Kanwal



OPINION

WHY PARTYING THIS HALLOWEEN WILL BE A NIGHTMARE

There is drinking Corona and then there is getting it

by Hiral Patel
Opinion Editor

Photo of 2019 Haunted Union
by Chris Crews

For college students, Halloween is the highlight of the year. It's no secret that most of us spend this holiday dressing up, partying and getting wasted. Unlike every other year, this year will have consequences. Not because of the deadly hangovers, but because of the deadly virus. I know I sound like a cop, but let's be honest: college students cannot go without partying. That's why several universities around the nation have closed down and gone fully remote. I doubt this article will stop anybody from partying, but I do want to outline the detrimental effects that you could be a seed to if you don't take this pandemic seriously.

On Sept. 1, before the semester started and on-campus students moved in, the Mecklenburg County Health Department notified the university of an off-campus cluster of eight students. Logically speaking, that number could have exponentially increased as off and on-campus moving has continued. It hasn't even been a full two weeks since in-person classes have started and we already have a potential COVID-19 outbreak. The University sent out a Niner Notice on Oct. 5 explaining that COVID-19 was detected in the wastewaters of a particular residence hall. WSOCTV found Holshouser Hall to be the infected dorm. The notice further explains that "the University has since completed 155 COVID-19 tests of students

and staff in the impacted area. Based on the tests, the positivity rate is less than 1%, and no clusters were found." They are still continuing to contact-trace and monitor the wastewaters around campus.

Before and after the University went into session, we have already observed multiple cases. According to the UNC Charlotte COVID-19 dashboard, from Sept. 7 to Oct. 4, there were 53 positive cases. What makes college students think that others or themselves will be immune when going out during the biggest party season of the year?

The World Health Organization states that "the coronavirus pandemic is now being driven by people in their 20s, 30s, and 40s who don't know they are infected." We go out as if there was never a pandemic, hence the surging increase in cases after spring break earlier this year. Having no symptoms doesn't mean that you don't have COVID-19, it could just mean that you have an asymptomatic case. According to Medical News Today, "A preliminary study suggests that more than 80% of people aged 20 and under may show no symptoms after contracting SARS-CoV-2." You could be COVID-19 positive and not know or you could be surrounding yourself with people who are unaware that they are positive. Partying has caused schools in our very own state to shut down. East Carolina, UNC Chapel Hill and NC State had all

taken precautions to reopening schools, and students wanting to party caused these schools to shut down. ABC 11 reported on Aug. 12 that East Carolina Police had to shut down about 20 parties in one night, one of them with nearly 400 students.

A student from Appalachian State passed away due to COVID-19 complications. The Appalachian State SGA released a statement saying, "Our actions affect so many more people than ourselves, and it is important for us to remember that just because we cannot see the impact of our actions, they are still there."

You are not invincible and it won't hurt to miss out on an annual holiday this year. You could infect students who have underlying conditions that you never knew about, or you could infect people of different age groups that are more vulnerable than you are. UNC Charlotte is going above and beyond with their reopening guidelines after observing the outcomes of many neighboring universities. They started class later than most universities and made it online for three weeks. After reopening schools, they haven't failed to enforce safety measures such as social distancing. They have only reopened campus to a select number of courses, they have made a pandemic kit to provide to every student and they even have a protocol to quarantine students that have been exposed to or

infected by COVID-19. In addition to the contact tracing and Niner Health Checks, Dr. Gibas of the College of Computing and Informatics has been leading a study to test wastewaters all over campus to detect potential COVID-19 infections to see if it has reached students. So take the Niner Pledge and actually stand by it.

And if you have already gotten COVID-19, I have some news for you. There is a chance of reinfection. According to Stat News, there have already been several cases of reinfection in Belgium, Netherlands, Hong Kong, and the United States in Nevada. What I'm trying to say is, you are not immune.

I enjoy partying too, and Halloween is the best time for it. However, we are in the middle of a pandemic of an airborne virus. It is selfish to even think about partying while cases and deaths have been increasing. According to the Mecklenburg County COVID-19 Data Releases, Mecklenburg County has the highest number of cases in the state. We should be smart and not contribute to this statistic. Follow the safety guidelines: monitor your health and symptoms, get tested, wash your hands, social distance six feet apart, and wear a mask. Remember that it won't kill you to miss Halloween as much as the virus could kill you.



UNITED IN GOLD



Charlotte Athletics announce United in GOLD initiative

by Bryson Foster
Staff Writer

The Charlotte 49er athletic department announced The United in GOLD (Growing Our Leaders in Diversity) Initiative on Oct. 2nd. The Initiative is dedicated to ensuring its students, staff and coaches understand social issues, systemic racism and how to be a positive part of change.

"We are so inspired by our student-athletes, coaches and staff who have united to affect meaningful change in our department, on our campus and in our community," said Charlotte athletic director Mike Hill. "I'm especially proud of the strength, grace and leadership shown by our student-athletes as we work with them to make a positive impact on society and cultivate personal growth in us all."

The goal of this new committee is to improve the circumstances that the black community faces as well as others that have been affected by racism and discrimination.

This is great for the university as it will fix many issues that are current in the university and the greater black community in general.

The committee consists of both players and coaches, as well as Charlotte athletic staff. Some of those who are involved include Charlotte's women's head coach, Cara Consuegra, football coach Will Healy, cross country runner Paul Arredondo, basketball coach Ron Sanchez and Ellinor Sudow, who is playing for the 49ers' women's golf team. There are 22 members overall.

Charlotte is not afraid to talk about these issues and this will be present in brand new town hall meetings. These meetings will be with members of local law enforcement on how to reach an understanding. The meetings will also consist of talking about voting education and many open dialogues.

This will allow for athletes to be able to be their own advocate on issues that affect them personally.

The athletic department also produced a video that featured student-athletes from several different sports speaking on what the new program will do for them and 49er athletes.

"United in GOLD allows me the opportunity to improve my leadership skills while being a part of change for my fellow brothers and sisters," said women's basketball student-athlete Dazia Lawrence.

These conversations will immediately lead to change on not just the campus level but the community level as well. The athletic department understands personal investment and open conversation will lead to change.

"The way our student-athletes, coaches and staff have opened up and have been

vulnerable with conversations about race and what we can do together and individually to invoke change is truly heartfelt," said Executive Associate Athletic Director Ragean Hill. Hill is the co-chair of the United of GOLD committee.

The United in GOLD vision statement asserts the following: We know that we must support our words with sustained action and commitment. We will stand and fight for a better and more inclusive Charlotte for all. We will engage the nine pillars of awareness which can lead to change: engage, vote, serve, learn, speak, listen, act, share, and support.

"We are United in GOLD – for change... for culture...for Charlotte," the United in GOLD press release stated.



The Charlotte 49er baseball team wears United in GOLD t-shirts during practice. Photo courtesy of Charlotte Athletics.

FIVE TAKEAWAYS FROM CHARLOTTE'S FIRST WIN OF 2020

CHARLOTTE'S OFFENSE EXPLODED FOR THE 49ERS' FIRST WIN OF 2020

by Cameron Williams
Staff Writer

After a tough loss to Florida Atlantic last week, the 49ers were on a mission to get their first win of the season when they faced the North Texas Mean Green on Saturday, Oct. 11. It was a successful night in the Longhorn State for head coach Will Healy and the 49ers as they rolled to a resounding 49-21 victory, as Charlotte captured their first win of the season.

There were many things to takeaway from this game, some positive and negative, so here are five takeaways from Saturday's game against North Texas.

Superman or Chris Reynolds?

Junior quarterback Chris Reynolds could do no wrong in Saturday's win. Reynolds completed 68% of his passes and scored two touchdowns through the air. Reynolds used his hands for more than throwing as he caught an 18-yard touchdown pass on a trick play for the 49ers first score of the game. Reynolds would finish with 290 yards passing and three total touchdowns. This has come to be the norm for the junior quarterback and he will look to continue his dominance as the team progresses through the season.

No Benny LeMay? No problem!

After losing LeMay to the NFL, Charlotte's run game was phenomenal in the win Saturday as they rushed for 291 yards total for the game and four rushing touchdowns. Leading the way for the Charlotte rushing threat was senior running back Aaron McAllister. Rushing for 140 yards on only 12 carries, McAllister was the main force for the 49ers rushing game. Tre Harbison III also asserted his dominance with 51 yards rushing with a touchdown as well. Calvin Camp and Chavon McEachern were the two other 49ers accounting for



The Charlotte 49ers celebrate after a big play at North Texas. Photo courtesy of Charlotte Athletics.

rushing touchdowns in the game. Having several guys who can carry the ball proved to be huge for the 49ers Saturday.

Too many big pass plays for the Mean Green

As great as Charlotte's offense was, their defense gave up a lot of big plays in big moments. On several occasions the 49ers had North Texas in second and long or

third and long situations and would give up a big play either on the ground or through the air. North Texas quarterback, Austin Aune, had 382 yards through the air completing over 50-percent of his passes. It did not prove to be Charlotte's demise this week but it could be something that hurts them going forward if they can't contain their opponent's deep passing attack. This is something that the 49ers will look to improve upon going forward.

Penalties proved to be an issue for Charlotte

Charlotte had 12 penalties for 75 yards in the game Saturday. Several of these penalties came on the offensive side of the ball. False start penalties would thwart several of the 49ers good drives. Penalties are a crucial part of the game and when limited it normally leads to success. A big pass interference penalty came late in the 3rd quarter against the 49er defense putting the Mean Green offense in a great scoring position which they later converted just four plays later cutting the game to just two scores with the fourth quarter looming. Had a crucial penalty like this come when it was a one touchdown game the outcome could have been very different.

Charlotte won the "Battle of the Clock"

The 49ers commanded the time of possession. Charlotte had the ball in their possession for 37:53 compared to North Texas who only possessed the ball for 22:07. Thanks to several long touchdown drives and forcing many North Texas three-and-outs, Charlotte was able to win the battle of the clock and keep the ball out of their opponent's hands. This proved to be crucial in the second half when North Texas was in desperate need of scores. Time of possession is something the 49ers should continue to key in on because it seemed to be a major factor in the win Saturday.

Now that Charlotte has the monkey off their back and have gotten back in the win column, coach Will Healy and the 49ers will try to replicate a 2019 season where they went 7-5.

The 49ers take on Florida International at home on Oct. 17 at 8 p.m. on ESPNU.



Radicalize your range

7 books about race and its impact on society

by Julianna Peres
Lifestyle Editor

Amidst these social changes, it's more important than ever to familiarize ourselves with concepts that we may not have thought about before. It is on us to educate ourselves. These are a few resources on race equity, theory, politics, and philosophies:

Black Skin, White Masks by Frantz Fanon

Fanon was the first black psychologist to uncover the concept of post-colonialism. He made it clear that he was writing for the colonized population, those who were enslaved by Europeans, in order to make those individuals understand that they are human. Fanon named this book *Black Skin, White Masks* because of his theory that black people were forced to "act white" in order to be recognized as an individual.

"When people like me, they like me 'in spite of my color.' When they dislike me, they point out that it isn't because of my color. Either way, I am locked in to the infernal circle."

My Mother Was A Freedom Fighter by AJA Monet

Monet writes of all the things there are to be angry about: so many black and brown kids, boys with sisters who hang the stars on the hooks of their splayed fingers as they are killed by police, by society. It's all about the society. Monet sees the remarkable in the typically dismissed. These poems are heartbreaking, raw, and real.

"I was a time between time. When humans owned humans, bones blew in the wind chime. My grandchildren swallow the sounds of weeping words and wait for a witness."

Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia by Sabrina Strings

Strings makes a compelling argument for the racialization of fat phobia over the past few centuries. She argues that the modern beauty standards, and medical interference, were only created to further stigmatize black bodies. Using examples from Renaissance art all the way to scientific journals, Strings creates a terrifying image of how long, and how aggressively, black women's bodies have been criticized.

"Racial scientific rhetoric about slavery linked fatness to 'greedy' Africans."

Like One of the Family by Alice Childress

Told in vignettes, these are the voices of Mildred and her friend Marge. Mildred talks of her work as a maid and a housekeeper. She's outspoken and remains true to her own moral compass.

"Some people want the kind of heaven to go to where nothin' but top-society folk was to be found. People who worked for a livin' with their hand would be excluded from this place 'cause you would have to be terrible rich and trace your family tree with important names in order to get in. there would dwell princes and kings and billionaires and such. They would see nobody but themselves!"

Killing Rage: Ending Racism by bell hooks

bell hooks writes about the

importance of ending sexism and racism in the same breath. She is a prominent feminist theorist who authored these essays in order to examine the psychological trauma that black people and women have been through in the United States.

"While it has become 'cool' for white folks to hang out with black people and express pleasure in black culture, most white people do not feel that this pleasure should be linked to unlearning racism."

Are Prisons Obsolete? By Angela Davis

Davis, the very same who spoke at UNC Charlotte recently, speaks on the abolitionist movements that have taken place over the course of American history. At times, the jargon is a bit difficult to understand, but the message is clear: if racial segregation could be put to an end with social movements and calls to action, why can't police brutality and the racially-charged prison industrial complex be put to rest as well?

"Because of the persistent power of racism, 'criminals' and 'evildoers' are, in the collective imagination, fantasized as people of color."

Dear Martin by Nic Stone

I had the pleasure of meeting Nic Stone at a conference a few years ago and I asked her one question: why was *Dear Martin* written from the perspective of a wealthy black boy attending a private school when that isn't the norm? She replied: "because he identifies with Martin Luther King Jr.; his economic privilege doesn't protect him from

racism. He isn't just a 'rich kid'; he's a rich, black kid. Justyce (the protagonist) questions his own blackness; that, in and of itself, is another way that society divides the black community within itself."

"Yeah, there are no more 'colored' water fountains, and it's supposed to be illegal to discriminate, but if I can be forced to sit on the concrete in too-tight cuffs when I've done nothing wrong, it's clear there's an issue. That things aren't as equal as folks say they are."

Bonus: Ain't I A Woman by Sojourner Truth

This speech centers more on the rights of women than racial equity, but Sojourner Truth was a prominent feminist and abolitionist. She was a black woman who knew the importance of fighting against social injustices.

"Life is a hard battle anyway. If we laugh and sing a little as we fight the good fight of freedom, it makes it all go easier. I will not allow my life's light to be determined by the darkness around me."

HANGOVER HELPERS

Easy recommendations to prevent or cure a hangover

by Madison Dobrzenski
Editor-in-Chief

We've all been there. You drank a little too much, and now it's 9 a.m. and you're nauseous, exhausted and loud noises make you want to punch a wall. Whether you're extremely prone to hangovers or only get them once in a blue moon, you may want to know what can cure, or even prevent them.

Prevention:

The easiest way to prevent a hangover is to not drink too much. Easier said than done, this step in prevention cannot go ignored. Drink responsibly. Pay attention to how you feel and only drink as much as you can handle. There's never a reward for drinking the most.

A major cause of a bad hangover is dehydration, so one way to prevent a hangover is to drink equal amounts of water for however much alcohol you drink (or even more water if you can). This may not sound realistic, but it is one of the simplest ways to prevent a hangover. It pays off to be the one at the gathering that takes the time to hydrate between drinks.

Another key to preventing a hangover is to eat. We've all realized we hadn't eaten much, and continued to drink anyway. However, whenever I do this I regret it the next morning. It is not worth it. Eat a damn dinner. Nourish yourself before you drink. Future you will be happy that you made a wise decision.

One last piece of advice when it comes to prevention of a hangover, take an over-the-counter painkiller before bed. I prefer Ibuprofen, but Tylenol, Aspirin or Advil are also good contenders. Note: This step is only safe if you've properly eaten and hydrated.



Someone with a headache, photo courtesy of Adrian Swancar via unsplash

Treatment:

If you've followed all the prevention measures, but you still found yourself with a hangover the next day, here are some tips for you.

Sleep

If you are able to put off any of your responsibilities, let yourself sleep in. Some people disagree with this and say that you should stick to whatever your routine is, but I disagree. Rest is a good way to treat your hangover. If you wake up feeling out of it, drink a glass of water and go back to sleep.

Pedialyte

For my 21st birthday, my big brother bought me two things: my drinks for the night and a bottle of Pedialyte. My birthday was the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, and we stupidly signed up for a 5k on Thanksgiving. He said Pedialyte would be a lifesaver, and he was right. Pedialyte is like Gatorade on steroids. Since then, I like to pick up a Cherry Punch Pedialyte with my beer when I'm at the store.

Over-the-Counter Hangover Relief

If you're considering over-the-counter hangover relief, I recommend Goody's Hangover Powders. These magical packets contain aspirin

and caffeine, and are fast-acting since they are powder. You can either mix the powder with water or put the powder directly into your mouth and chase it with water. Either way, they've come to my rescue on multiple occasions.

Throw up

This may be gross, but someone has to say it. If you feel like you have to vomit, just do it. This is one of the most immediate treatments for a hangover. No one enjoys it, but we all know we almost always feel infinitely better afterwards. If you try to and can't, then try to eat something light. There may not be enough in your stomach.

Salty food and soda

A classic hangover cure: Salty, greasy food and caffeine. My recommendations for salty food are crackers, potato chips, fries, and breakfast food. If you drink soda, this is the time for your favorite soda. The caffeine, sugar and carbonation will give you a little bit of energy, but it's not enough caffeine to terribly dehydrate you.

Please note: We at the Niner Times do not condone underage drinking, binge drinking or the crossover of the two. However, I recognize that hangovers sometimes happen. It's life. I hope these tips help you realize that although hangovers are miserable, they don't have to be the end of the world.



A&E

'ANIMALIA' CIRQUE AND DANCE SHOW

Caroline Calouche & Co. perform cirque and dance in unique ways during the pandemic

by Emily Kottak
Asst. Features Editor

Caroline Calouche & Co. is Charlotte's only aerial and contemporary dance company and school. The company was founded by Caroline Calouche in 2006; Calouche is the Artistic and Executive Director. The company's most recent performance was "Animalia," an outdoor action-packed dance and circus act featuring several highly skilled artists from the company.

"Animalia" focused on several animals including fish, panthers, koalas, monkeys, snakes and butterflies.

"Everything in the world right now seems to be so serious and heavy," Calouche said. "We wanted to make it a light and fun show for both kids and adults."

The show was both educational and entertaining by showing through dance and cirque how different animals act. Acts included aerial silk, trapeze, tumbling and dance. Aerial silk is a type of performance in which one or more artists perform aerial acrobatics while hanging from a fabric. Artists climb the suspended fabric and will use the fabric to wrap, suspend, drop, swing and spiral their bodies in and out of various poses and positions. Trapeze acts can be performed solo, double, triple or as a group act. Trapeze is commonly found in circus performances.

The show was followed by a Q&A session where the audience could ask performers questions or anything they were interested in knowing. This was fun for both kids and adults that attended and it created a good connection between attendees and performers.

It was wonderful to see how excited kids got when they got to ask one of the "animals" a question or talk to them or take a picture with them after the show. The costumes were nicely

done and did a great job of indicating what the animal was.

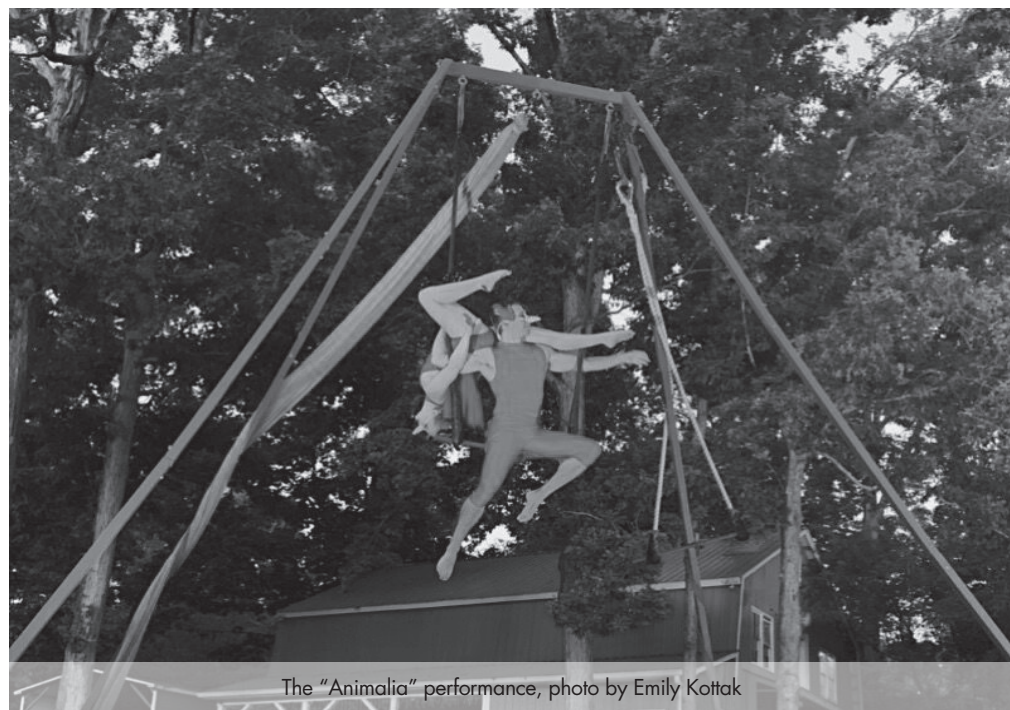
Caroline Calouche & Co. has not let this trying pandemic rob them of performing. "Animalia" took place outside and was the perfect family atmosphere in which attendees could bring their own blankets/lawn chairs and food while watching the show. The event was also live-streamed so people could watch from home.

The "Animalia" show was first performed in June. Rehearsals for the newest "Animalia" show started roughly a month before the show's debut. Training, however, is an entirely different story. It can take years to train for dance circus. Director Caroline Calouche has been doing circus dancing for 32 years.

"Animalia" performers were of all different ages, the youngest being 16 years old. One performer in fact has only been training in dance cirque for 2 ½ years. Though training can be lengthy and rigorous, Calouche suggests that it is never too late to start.

During these difficult times, it is crucial to support local businesses and companies. Especially local dance companies where it is difficult to hold performances and shows during this time.

Caroline Calouche & Co. has two upcoming live virtual shows that will be performed in the school's studio theater. On Nov. 21-22 the show "Dance and Circus For All" will be performed. Caroline Calouche will be collaborating with local and national dance and circus artists. Styles of dancing ranging from contemporary to hip hop to ballet will



The "Animalia" performance, photo by Emily Kottak

be featured.

From Dec. 19-20 the company will be performing "A Christmas Carol." It will be a live virtual Christmas show so viewers can watch and partake from the comfort of their home, which is perfect for the coming holiday season.

The company is a resident company of Blumenthal Performing Arts Center and their home theater is Booth Playhouse which is a smaller 400 seat theater inside the bigger one.

This was a very memorable experience because though this pandemic has taken away many aspects of our lives, Caroline Calouche & Co. found a creative way to still reach their audience and perform. It was very nicely done and it was great to see such an exciting show performed in a very unique way.

Tickets for upcoming Caroline Calouche & Co. performances are available for purchase online.



Photo of Caroline Calouche,
courtesy of
<https://www.carolinecalouche.org/>

NEW YORK FILM FESTIVAL REVIEW:

MANGROVE

A timely, effective, and haunting look into an incident that's all too familiar

by Gabe Lapalombella
Staff Writer

The latest film to premiere in Steve McQueen's "Small Axe" anthology, "Mangrove" is one of the year's most moving films. It tells the story of the "The Mangrove Nine," who were put on trial in 1970's London for inciting a riot at a protest. The trial involved various challenges by the nine to the legitimacy of the judicial process. All nine were eventually acquitted, and the incident became one of the most well-known acknowledgments of racially charged hatred amongst the Metropolitan police. That certainly doesn't make this an easy sit, since the real horror is realizing this still happens, but it's one that needs to be seen. Coming off of the previous "Small Axe" installment "Lovers Rock," McQueen spins the story in an entirely different way here. While "Lovers Rock" followed the pursuit of happiness and joy in his heart as a filmmaker, here we follow his anger and rage.

Intentions as strong as those would not work here without a stellar group of performances amongst the cast. Shaun Parkes as Frank Crichlow, who runs the Mangrove restaurant where most of this drama takes place, is a force of nature on screen. The anger, strength and general rage he feels in such a nightmarish circumstance feels so raw and real that it's entirely engaging. Letitia Wright as Altheia Jones-LeCointe, the leader of the British Black Panthers in the 1960-70s, is more compelling than she's

ever been as a fighter for a worthy cause. A particular scene late in the film's courtroom section shows she is so much more than Shuri from Black Panther. Besides just being a renowned physician, she is incredibly moving as a fighter for freedom. Sam Spruell as the corrupt and racist PC Frank Pulley, is another haunting performance since it feels like someone we've recently seen in the news. It's not necessarily the most nuanced performance, but one that strikes you with a cruel fear.

Even in the smaller roles of the "Mangrove Nine," McQueen lets all of his actors make the most of the material. From two members of the nine having a baby and dealing with being in the public eye, to simply being the busboy of the Mangrove,

all of the cast pays respect to these real people. Their humanism brings another layer of depth to how an audience connects to their plight. It's a unique approach on McQueen's part because he is pulling off a tonal balancing act. Especially in some of the more brutally realistic moments, being able to connect emotionally makes later moments more effective. However, none of this would work without the direction behind the camera.

McQueen is known for rather serious and emotionally involving stories like "12 Years a Slave," "Shame" and "Hunger." Those films really took their time and put an audience through a metaphorical emotional ringer that can sometimes be tough to watch. "Mangrove" isn't

an easy sit, but one that really satisfies in the emotional payoff. He is a director who knows his strengths and puts them on full display. Compared to "Lovers Rock," this is a tighter narrative with more in its structure. In "Lovers Rock," the film's laggy nature served the story, here the lag takes away from the emotion. It's a rather small qualm, but one that really stops the film's momentum where it should be soaring.

Some may consider "Mangrove" to be McQueen sticking in his narrative wheelhouse, but that isn't a bad thing. His movies are made with an intent to emotionally move an audience, even if it is through anger. Here, he accomplishes that very thing and makes even the mundanity of the courtroom a source of incredibly severe tension. If something with such a heavy subject matter as this doesn't seem appealing, there's nothing I can say to convince you. This is the type of film that clearly sets out what it wants to do and accomplishes it with an iron fist. When it drops on Amazon Prime in Nov., look no further if you want to take an emotional journey.

Rating: 4/5



Image from "Mangrove" film Courtesy of Tribune Studios

What is NT listening to?

Hey, I'm Brandon Mitchell, an Asst. Layout Editor for Niner Times. My music taste changes every day, and I have a playlist for almost every genre and mood. I wanted to share my country playlist here, because I think the genre's reputation has been unjustly tainted by racists and bigots. However, I think I'll save that for a future article. Instead, I'm sharing a revised version of one of my favorite playlists, "Bugs and Blossoms." It is my go-to for when I need to relax or reflect. All the songs in it remind of nature in some way, and that's where I feel the most at peace. It's meant to be versatile but intimate. I've used it as company on a long walk, a study-aid and background music at get-togethers. The lyrics of each song are rich enough to be dissected and applied to your current situation in life. The melodies are somber and encourage detachment. Listen to this playlist for the first time outdoors and actually listen to it. After that, listen to it whenever you need it and sometimes when you don't. I hope you enjoy!



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