

Winnipeg Free Press

# ARTS • LIFE

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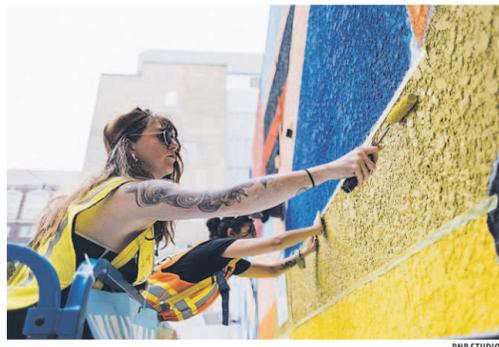
SECTION C



Artist Bria Fernandes is accustomed to smaller projects with oil and canvas, but is confident and excited about completing *Dreamscape* on McMicken Street.

RUTH BONNEVILLE / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS

## The walls are ALIVE



Laura Lewis paints Vancouver-based artist Priscilla Yu's mural *Crane Dreamscape* behind the Dollarama at 295 Portage Ave.



Along with the two large murals (including *Crane Dreamscape*, above) Wall-to-Wall will install 13 pre-printed murals across the city.

Annual mural, cultural festival returns with two large-scale murals, concerts, 13 smaller murals

EVA WASNEY

THIS is the biggest canvas Bria Fernandes has ever worked on. "It's ginormous," says the Winnipeg fine arts student while taking stock of how much wall is left to paint in the tunnel at McMicken Street and Ellice Avenue.

The artwork, called *Dreamscape*, is part of the eighth annual Wall-to-Wall Mural & Culture Festival and is a colourful return to live mural-making, which organizers put on hold last year owing to the pandemic. Fernandes' submission is one of two large-scale projects being painted in Winnipeg's core this month — the second mural, coincidentally called *Crane Dreamscape*, is by Vancouver-based artist Priscilla Yu and is being installed behind the Dollarama at 295 Portage Ave. It's not just that the canvas is large, it's also that the medium and subject

matter are a world away from the oils Fernandes typically uses to paint realistic figures for gallery shows. The mural features a cartoonish woman surrounded by bright, trippy flora and fauna. She is outside her comfort zone, but that's not necessarily a bad thing. "I know I can do it, but it's still really scary," she says, noting the parallels between her experience and the design. "(The mural is about) being thrown into an unfamiliar situation in life and this is where growth and opportunity can arise in this weird land."

Fernandes is currently studying at the Alberta University of the Arts and has previously been involved in Wall-to-Wall as a mural assistant. This is her first time leading a mural of her own creation and she's glad for the painting help from other local artists and mentor Mike Valcourt, who painted the original mural on the McMicken Street tunnel in 2000. (As a health and safety precaution, the festival is working with a small group of muralists, all of whom have been fully vaccinated.)

● CONTINUED ON C3

## Spears gets engaged, shows off four-carat ring

BRYAN ALEXANDER

BRITNEY Spears and Sam Asghari are engaged.

Spears, 39, and Asghari, 27, announced their engagement on Instagram on Sunday, hours before the music world hit the red carpet for the 2021 MTV Video Music Awards. "I can't (expletive) believe it," Spears wrote on her Instagram account below videos showing off the four-carat ring with shocked expressions. Spears added six engagement ring emojis and six exclamation points to her announcement. "Look at that, do you like it?" Asghari asked of the ring in the short video, to which Spears replies, "Yesss!" The ring has a four-carat round brilliant stone in a platinum cathedral setting and is engraved inside the band with "lioness," Asghari's nickname for Spears, the company Forever Diamonds NY said in a statement. Asghari's talent manager Brandon Cohen confirmed the news in an email statement saying, he was "proud to celebrate and confirm the engagement."

"The couple made their long-standing relationship official today and are deeply touched by the support, dedication and love expressed to them," the statement said. Asghari posted his own photo of the two kissing on Instagram, with Spears holding up her engagement ring finger. The ring was described as "one of a kind" by New York City-based designer Roman Malayev. Just before posting the photo Sunday, Asghari wrote in his IG Stories, "Biggest news... Can't wait to share." Nick Lachey of 98 Degrees reacted to the surprise engagement news from the MTV VMA's red carpet. "Only Britney could steal the show at the VMAs without even (being here)," Lachey said. "It's awesome for (Britney). We came up with her, so to see her happy — finally — again, and engaged is an awesome thing." Paris Hilton, Willie Gomez and thousands of fans congratulated the couple on social media. But actress Octavia Spencer weighed in with some advice: "Make him sign a prenup," she commented on Spears'

post. Her suggestion garnered nearly 1,000 replies, and even Asghari addressed it on his Instagram Story. "Thank you everyone who is concerned about the prenup!" he wrote alongside laughing face emojis. "Of course we're getting iron clad prenup to protect my jeep and shoe collection incase she dumps me one day." Asghari and Spears have been a couple for the last four years after meeting on the set of Spears' *Slumber Party* music video in 2016. The couple made their red carpet debut together in 2019 at the premiere for Quentin Tarantino's *Once Upon a Time in Hollywood*. Spears has been married twice before, tying the knot with first husband Jason Alexander in Las Vegas in 2004 for 55 hours. The couple quickly had their union annulled. That same year, Spears married her backup dancer Kevin Federline, with whom she shares two sons, Sean Preston, 15, and Jayden James, 14. Spears filed for divorce in 2006, which was granted the next year. Alexander, who was Spears' childhood friend, was arrested last month

at Nashville airport for a misdemeanor attempted air security violation, according to online records. His bail is set at \$2,500, and he is due back in court on Sept. 24. Spears has made headlines as of late due to her ongoing legal battle against her father, James (Jamie) Spears, whom she wants to remove as co-conservator of her estate. The engagement announcement comes days after Spears' father filed a petition with a Los Angeles judge seeking to end the conservatorship, a legal arrangement that has given him control over the pop star's estate since 2008. The singer told a judge in June she wanted to marry Asghari and have a baby with him during an impassioned plea to end the conservatorship. But Spears said she hadn't been allowed to remove an intrauterine device for birth control or even drive with Asghari. Legally, Spears can get married, but the conservatorship must approve it as with other major life decisions.



Britney Spears and Sam Asghari announced their engagement on Sunday.

— USA Today

Annabelle Wallis plays Madison in the delightfully dank horror film *Malignant*.

# Tasteless, dark, sadistic and a whole lot of fun

## MOVIE REVIEW

### MALIGNANT

Starring Annabelle Wallis and Maddie Hasson  
 ● Grant Park, Kildonan Place, McGillivray, Polo Park, St. Vital, Towne  
 ● 14A  
 ● 111 minutes

★★★½ out of five

### RANDALL KING

YOU'RE reading a review of the movie *Malignant* a few days after its Friday release because, like so many horror movies before it, *Malignant* apparently did not screen in advance for critics.

For decades now, studios have often treated horror fare as material best left unseen until opening day, because most movie critics tend to be prejudiced against it. (There is some justification for this.)

But this time, the joke was on the studio — Warner Bros. to be specific.

Critics ended up liking the film quite a bit. On Monday morning, the film's score on review-aggregation website Rotten Tomatoes score was 75 per cent favourable. Audiences, curiously, were less impressed, with an audience score of just 50 per cent, so advance screenings would have only enhanced the movie's box office prospects.

The funny part is that the film's director, James Wan, was one of the few

filmmakers deemed worthy enough to have risen above the no-preview policy. Wan started out co-creating the somewhat sleazy *Saw* series before branching out into the more respectable realms of studio horror with the *Conjuring* franchise — ghost stories embellished by big-money visual effects.

The success of these films has seen Wan take on high-profile non-horror franchise entries including *Aquaman* and *Furious 7*.

On the face of it, *Malignant* looks like Wan in retrograde, flirting with the sadism and overall outlandishness of the *Saw* movies.

It starts with Madison Mitchell (Annabelle Wallis of Wan's *Annabelle* movies) living a domestic nightmare as she returns home from her job to a wastrel husband (Jake Abel) who slams the pregnant Madison against the wall in what we assume is a typical act of abuse. That's when things go topsy-turvy for Madison as she becomes paralyzed and is forced to bear witness to a home invasion by a spectral figure who leaves hubby dead and Madison in a state of trauma.

But more attacks ensue, with victims including a doctor (Jacqueline McKenzie) specializing in deformed children. An investigating police officer (George Young) is baffled, but Madison's sister Sydney (Maddie Hasson, who starred as one of a trio of psychos in the Manitoba-lensed satanic-panic thriller *We Summon the Darkness*) rises to the occasion to launch her own



Annabelle Wallis, left, and Maddie Hasson play sisters trying to unravel a mystery.

investigation into the links between Madison and the doctor.

Suffice to say the solution to the mystery is a bit of a doozie.

It's also great fun. Not to give anything away, but Wan's sources of inspiration range from late-'80s-era Stephen King to a certain Frank Henenlotter cult classic. One scene, which sees Sydney visit an abandoned cliffside sanatorium, would seem to be a delightful shout-out to *The House on Haunted Hill* remake, of all things. Eschewing the tastefulness of his

most recent horror movies, Wan's *Malignant* is an entertaining entry, a breath of delightfully dank air. The director found a way to score some shocks without necessarily resorting to *Saw*'s lurid kills or *Conjuring*'s million-dollar jump scares. Indeed, the movie may be the purest synthesis of all of Wan's talents, the elaborate comic-book action of *Aquaman* very much included.

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## OTHER VOICES

There's no way to watch this deranged followup and not conclude that Wan's back where he belongs.

— A.A. Dowd, *AV Club*

Wan's final twist is so maniacal and so (and this is a compliment) deeply and thoroughly stupid that it more than makes up for the minor missteps along the way.

— Alison Shoemaker, *Fox 10 Phoenix*

If you must see *Malignant*, a theatre might honestly be the best bet. That way at least you can laugh along in utter shock with your fellow theater-goers.

— Lindsey Bahr, *The Associated Press*

It's hard to say whether a film this bonkers "works" or not, but it's impossible not to admire both the craft and the extravagant bad taste behind its go-for-broke energy.

— Andrew Barker, *Variety*

Can a movie that's deficient in just about every way be redeemed by an original twist? In the case of "Malignant," the answer is ... sort of.

— Michael Ordoña, *Los Angeles Times*

Wan takes big swings, and the humor and bloodletting come in equal measure. It's silly, it's outrageous, and it's a blast — an imperfect but wildly entertaining throwback to a bygone era of horror.

— Meagan Navarro, *Bloody Disgusting*

# Dude abides: Jeff Bridges' cancer in remission

## CHRISTIE D'ZURILLA

LOS ANGELES — Jeff Bridges returned to his blog Monday with good news: His cancer is now in remission, nearly 11 months after he revealed his lymphoma diagnosis. And his COVID-19, the disease you didn't know he contracted back in January? That's getting better too. Finally.

"Lots has gone down since my last installment," Bridges revealed in his usual handwritten notes posted on his website. "My cancer is in remission — the 9" by 12" mass has shrunk down to the size of a marble." That's progress from when he reported in January that it had "drastically shrunk."

Unfortunately, that same month, Bridges and his wife, Sue, were exposed to COVID-19 at his chemotherapy infusion center, he announced Monday as he published thoughts from March that he had held back until now. "Soon after," Bridges wrote on March 28, they both "share an am-

balance to the ICU," where she spent five days in the hospital, and he, with an immune system weakened by the chemo, was there for five weeks.

"My dance with COVID makes my cancer look like a piece of cake," he wrote in March, but didn't publish until now. He said he held back on the entry "until I got a handle on my COVID." Now, he said, the respiratory illness is in the rearview mirror.

"COVID kicked my ass pretty good, but I'm double-vaccinated & feeling much better now," the Oscar winner wrote. "I heard that the vaccines can help folks with Long Haulers. Maybe that's the cause of my quick improvement."

Bridges gave credit to his physical therapist, Zachary Wermers, with whom he's been "concentrating on getting me off of the oxygen assistance, which until recently I've been needing to walk around. The sound it makes reminds me of Darth Vader."

But the 71-year-old said he had a

goal, which was to walk youngest daughter Hayley down the aisle at her August wedding.

"Thanks to Zach & my terrific medical team I was able to, not only walk Hay down the aisle, but do the father/Bride dance with her WITHOUT OXYGEN," Bridges wrote.

Bridges is nominated for the best supporting actor Oscar in *Hell or High Water*.

Next stop? The actor says he's excited to get back to work on the FX/Hulu series *The Old Man*, which went on production hiatus shortly after his 2020 cancer diagnosis and is now due out in 2022.

"It's lookin' good," he said of the show, in which he plays the titular "old man" who used to work as a CIA agent, now lives off the grid — and is being pursued by an assassin.

— *Los Angeles Times*



Actor Jeff Bridges

## MURALS • FROM C1



Welcome to Canada by artist Esther Calixte-Bea.

She's also grateful to festival organizers from Synonym Art Consultation and Graffiti Art Programming for the opportunity.

"It feels special that they chose me," Fernandes says. "Everything (Synonym) does is great... they're adding colour to the city in places that people won't normally go."

The Wall-to-Wall festival runs through the month of September and features a series of in-person events and public art installations.

In addition to the two full-scale murals, the festival will be installing 13 pre-printed panel murals across the city. The photographs, paintings and digital illustrations were created by Manitoba and international artists and selected from more than 200 submissions.

The festival has partnered with Martha Street Studio to present the show *gathered together*, which runs

at the gallery at 11 Martha St. until Oct. 8. The exhibit features work by artists Lido Pimienta, Chief Lady Bird, Isaac Murdoch, Whess Harman and Lapiztola. This Thursday, Pimienta — a Polaris Music Prize winning musician — will be speaking about her visual art during an online talk with the Uniter Speaker Series at 7 p.m. Visit walltowallwpg.com/gathered-together for details.

On Sept. 25, Peg City Car Co-op is hosting a celebration and fundraising event for Wall-to-Wall at The Beer Can at 1 Granite Way. Local drag artists will be performing throughout the evening and \$10 beer and tacos coupons are available, with a portion of proceeds going to the festival.

Visit walltowallwpg.com for a full list of events and mural locations.

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Water yourself too by artist Azka Ahmed at 640 Broadway.