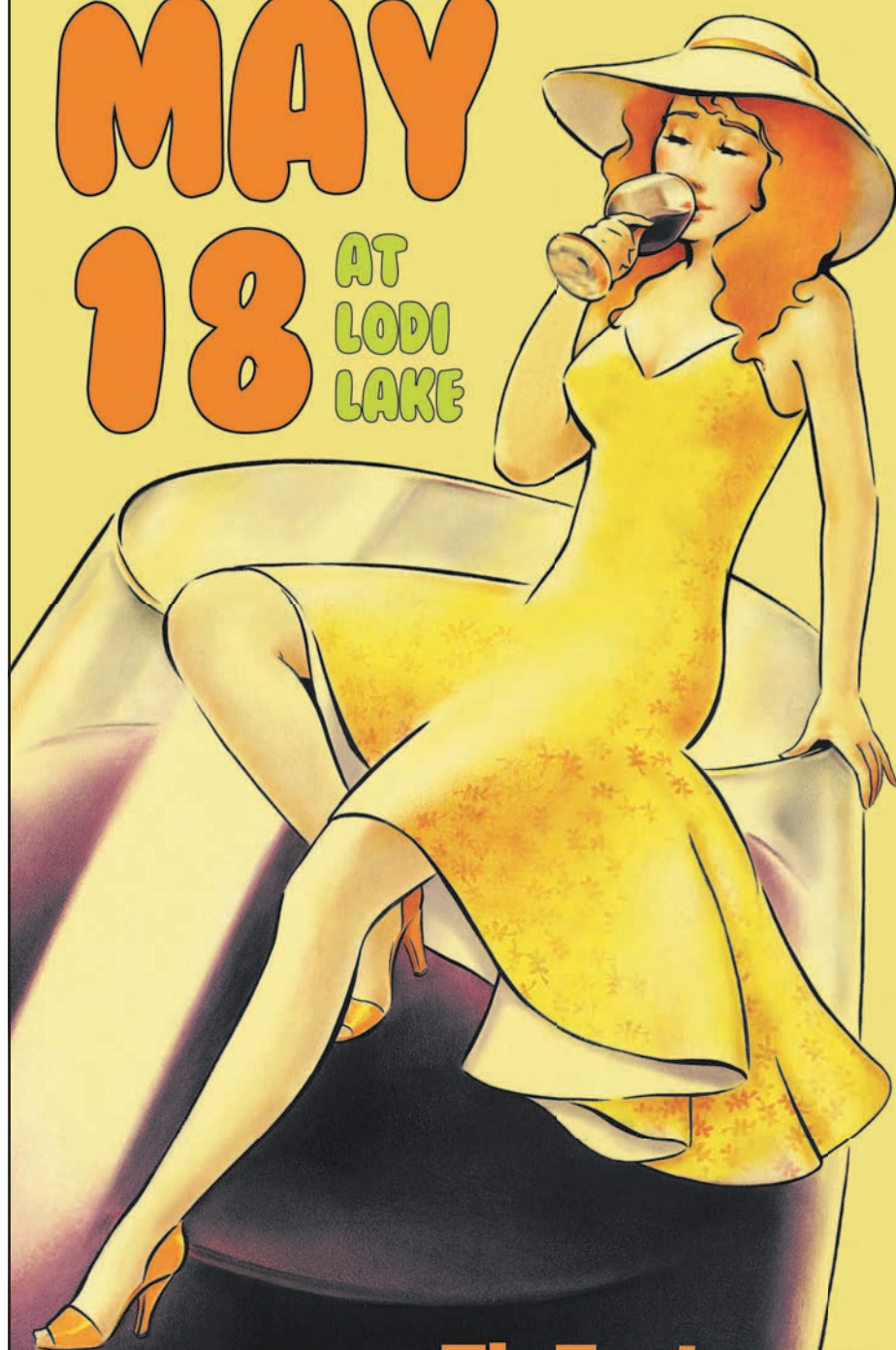


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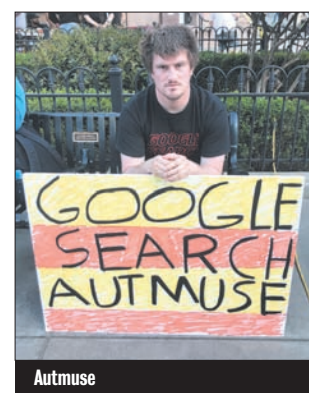
by JASON CASSIDY • jasonc@newsreview.com



**KETTLE CORN AND CHILL** Arts DEVO saw the sign reading, “Google search Autmuse,” and so he did. Standing in the middle of Fourth Street during **Thursday Night Market**—devouring a bag of kettle corn like I was mad at it—I typed “autmuse” into my personal supercomputer and landed on autmuse.com and the face on my phone was the same one staring over the large placard from a bench at the **City Plaza**. The dude’s name is **Joe Wesley**, aka **Autmuse**, a local musician/songwriter, and after I introduced myself, I asked him, “Why the sign?” He said, because it’s cheaper than buying an advertisement. Fair enough.

He went on to explain that Autmuse is short for autism music and that the songs he writes have “the ability to calm people with autism” (though he says he doesn’t know if anyone on the spectrum has tested its effectiveness yet). I went searching through the samples scattered around his website, but found that the easiest way to listen to his music was to pull up his page on **YouTube** (search “Autmuse Wesley”), where you can choose a playlist and experience the instrumental electronic tracks one after the other without clicking around.

I’m not that stressed of a person (other than when I’m destroying salty-sweet snacks in public), and intentionally “calming” sounds often have the opposite effect on me, but I have to say that Autmuse lulled me into a pretty chill state. My favorite was probably “Full Western Nightmare,” which was less calming than chaotically meditative with layers of chime loops piled atop one another (and with a striking visual of a frozen cartoon **Dumbo** very slowly floating across a forest background). Click on the “Autmuse music videos” playlist to hear his original compositions, or look him up on **Spotify** for an expanded selection.



**SONGS FOR A SOFTER SPRING** In addition to Autmuse, this past week I’ve also been digging into albums from two of my favorite contemporary bands: **Father of the Bride** by **Vampire Weekend**, and **UFOF** by **Big Thief**, both released last Friday (May 3). I am just starting to form my thoughts, but in general I already love both recordings. I bring them up now, somewhat prematurely, because this is music I want to recommend to my fellow weary humans. These are two smart, inviting records that offer a soft place to land as well as an opportunity to feel something.

I know so many tired people—some exhausted by unrelenting nonsense and nastiness, some overburdened with grief. These records aren’t escapes from any of that. Both address suffering, heartbreak and loss, but they are balanced by a fair amount of love, fun and beauty, and feature narrators—**Ezra Koenig** for Vampire Weekend and **Adrianne Lenker** of Big Thief—who are each responding to this shared life in engaging ways. The former from the point of view of a man who looks inward after witnessing a messed up world and moves through it all to a breezy beat and sunny melodies (hear the island guitars and hand claps on the ridiculously infectious breakup song, “This Life”: “Baby, I know pain is as natural as the rain/I just thought it didn’t rain in California”). And the latter from someone who’s emerged from the darkness to have an open and intimate conversation about the magic of it all while steeped in rich folk tones (hear the sweetly sad loping march into the great beyond on the incredible “Cattails”: “Middle of the river in a lawn chair/With your wrinkled hands and your silver hair/Leaving here soon and you know where/To where the cattail sways with the lonesome loon ...”).

**UFOF** is the more deeply realized of the two, and in fact, as great as some of its songs are, *Father of the Bride* is a little thin in a few spots (which is not fatal on a double album with 18 tracks). Big Thief’s album probably will end up being a legitimate masterpiece, but both are here now to offer some connection with art as well as a chance to just be real. □