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FROM TREE TO TABLE



WITH OAK CITY CUSTOMS



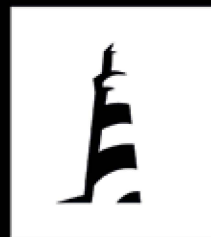
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TRIANGLE DOWNTOWNER MAGAZINE — ISSUE 178

- 4 Oak City Customs – From Tree to Table
- 8 Jack the Radio – New Album Release
- 9 From the Publisher
- 10 Dix Park Sunflowers
- 11 Crossword Puzzle

ON THE COVER: Dylan Selinger and his Oak City Customs Team.

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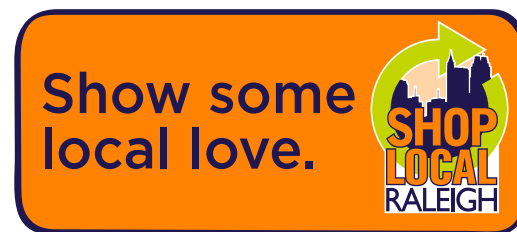
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Live edge resin wood table



Oak City Customs' owner, Dylan Selinger



OAK CITY CUSTOMS From Tree to Table

BY CRASH. S. GREGG

Approaching the entrance to Oak City Customs, a 14,000-square-foot facility nestled in the heart of Zebulon, I notice the faint aroma of freshly hewn hardwood and the melodic hum of machinery. OCC is a Raleigh area-based enterprise that has elevated the art of woodworking and metalworking to modern new heights. Here, a cadre of skilled artisans wield their tools with deft precision, coaxing raw materials into beautiful works of function that transcend mere utility.

At the helm of this endeavor is Dylan Selinger. As we started our tour of their production facility, I asked him for some personal background. "I grew up in Wilmington and moved to Raleigh to attend NC State University in Business Entrepreneurship. Straight out of college, I founded Crank Arm Rickshaw after working for Raleigh Rickshaw." [For those of you who have lived in Raleigh for more than a decade, at one time, downtown Raleigh was filled with rickshaws that carted visitors around town, a truly unique service that is genuinely missed]. "After two years, we opened Crank Arm Brewery, and I was an operating partner in that business for about four years. I'm still involved in the brewery, but not daily. In 2015, I found myself with a wood and metalworking hobby that started

consuming a lot of my time. That led to side work and projects for folks while I was bartending at Crank Arm. Work just kind of kept coming in. The hobby slowly and organically turned into a full-time job. I hired a friend, Justin, about a year into it, and we continued making wood and metal projects for clients."

As we continue our tour of their production facility, Dylan describes the continued evolution of Oak City Customs. Those first few years started as a humble home garage shop in Southeast Raleigh," he recounts. "We discovered a glaring need to repurpose natural material regularly headed to landfills, recycling centers, and even burn piles. Large trees were being taken down every day and scrapped due to the lack of anyone able to collect and process these trees into usable material. This realization was the official foundation for our endeavor and the formation of our tagline, 'From Tree to Table,' which truly represents our core mission statement."

The early years found Dylan and his small team relying on a few essential tools and a lot of elbow grease. However, as their reputation for quality and unique designs grew, so did the demand for their products. Locating quality materials and forging relationships with local tree services

paved the way for growth. By the following year, they had upgraded their sawmill, driving cross-country to the West Coast to acquire a specialty wide-capacity slabbing mill.

"Later in 2015, we acquired a small sawmill and began slabbing logs in my backyard," Dylan recalls. "We spent considerable amounts of time cutting and stacking material to air dry while researching the ins and outs of the entire lumber-making process. There was a lot to learn, and we just dove into it." Not content to rest on their laurels, they fabricated a highly specialized log trailer, allowing them to obtain downed logs on-site that were too large for tree services to move in one piece.

"In 2016, we really picked up steam, working on residential and commercial projects in the wood and metalworking arena," Dylan continues. "This allowed us to fully outfit our small garage shop. Business kept picking up, and we kept growing. It was an exciting time for Oak City Customs, with great opportunities to work on commercial bar and restaurant projects in Downtown Raleigh and throughout the Triangle while continuing our work for our retail customers."

As their reputation grew and orders poured in, it became clear that their humble workshop could no



Massive aluminum suitcase build for Youtuber Mr. Beast



Butcher block countertop

longer contain their ambitions. In the spring of 2017, they decided to take a leap of faith, recognizing that their “Tree to Table” mission demanded more space and manpower. By the fall of that year, amidst all the new business activity, Oak City Customs had relocated to their current, much larger facility in Zebulon. With the addition of two more employees, they established a permanent sawmill setup and efficiently air-dry lumber outdoors with the aid of a forklift – a seemingly small yet logistically significant feat.

Over the next two years, the expansion continued unabated, with the shop growing to more than 14,000

square feet of dedicated space, encompassing a metal fabrication shop, woodshop, paint and finishing areas, and a lumberyard equipped with two state-of-the-art kilns. It was during this period that Oak City Customs homed in on its product offerings, solidifying its position as a purveyor of heirloom-quality furnishings and architectural elements.

Their current 18-person team grew in tandem with their physical footprint, and the workflow within the shop began to coalesce into a professionally maintained production process. From 2019 through the present day, Oak City Customs has continued to push the boundaries of

what’s possible, adding an impressive array of machinery to their arsenal, including two 52-inch-wide belt sanders, three CNC machines, a massive panel clamp rack, central dust collection, a CNC press brake machine, and – in a crowning achievement – the largest wood planer on the East Coast.

As of 2024, Oak City Customs stands as a veritable powerhouse, equipped with a dedicated design team, production team, and installation team, each working in harmony to produce heirloom-quality furnishings that are as beautiful as they are sustainable. They continue to work >>>

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Wood slab coffee table



Covered metal pergola

on projects that utilize salvaged trees, a testament to their unwavering commitment to environmental stewardship.

From those modest beginnings, Oak City Customs has grown with an impressive array of capabilities that would make even the most seasoned woodworker or metalsmith green with envy. Their sawmill, capable of cutting slabs up to an impressive 63 inches wide, works in tandem with two custom-built, dehumidification-style kilns that can dry as much as 11,000 board feet of wood per month. Their lumberyard boasts over 100,000 board feet of air-drying slabs and boards.

As a hardwood supplier, Oak City Customs regularly stocks a diverse array of species, from the mighty oaks and maples to the warm tones of poplar, cedar, sweet gum, cherry, and walnut. It caters to both retail and wholesale clients with an unwavering dedication to the highest quality.

As my tour of the shop weaves through the bustling workshop, I witness all sorts of custom creations, where the rhythmic dance of chisels, planes, and routers orchestrates a masterpiece of form and function. Employees harness the power of heavy machinery, coaxing shapes from raw wood and bending metal into sleek, curvaceous forms for Oak City Custom's diverse clientele.

Some notable Oak City Customs projects include the tables, bars, shelves, and interiors for all Dram & Draught locations, as well as work for Crank Arm Brewing. Dylan

and team also crafted a massive community table for the Zebulon and Morrisville Fire Departments, with plans for a similar piece for the Knightdale Fire Department. These projects showcase their ability to create functional and aesthetically pleasing pieces that enhance the spaces they occupy.

Their work is not limited to small-scale pieces. For instance, they recently completed all the plaza-level decks between the Glenwood One and Glenwood Two buildings, a significant project that showcases their ability to handle large, complex tasks. Another impressive piece was a giant live-edge kitchen island, measuring 14 feet long by 5 feet and 2.5 inches thick, which required ten people to move. Like many others, this project highlighted the company's ability to combine functionality with striking visual appeal.

As we delve deeper into the workshop, Dylan proudly showcases the company's arsenal of state-of-the-art equipment, each machine a marvel of engineering prowess. The centerpiece, a towering 52-inch-wide double-sided planer, is a true behemoth, capable of flattening and surfacing entire tabletops with a precision that rivals a surgeon's scalpel. Nearby, a massive belt sander and orbital sander work in tandem, transforming the planed surfaces into mirror-smooth canvases, ready to receive the artisan's final touches.

"But that's just the beginning," Dylan explains. "Our

metalworking capabilities are equally amazing." He gestures towards a 200-ton CNC press brake, a marvel of modern engineering that can bend thick metal plates into graceful curves and intricate shapes with computer-controlled precision. Beside it stands a plasma cutter, its searing torch capable of slicing through steel like a hot knife through butter, rendering even the most intricate designs with digital accuracy.

As we continued, Dylan talked of Oak City Customs' involvement in a diverse array of projects, from creating rustic live-edge tables for discerning homeowners to outfitting entire restaurants and bars with their signature blend of rustic charm and industrial elegance. "Our strength lies in our versatility," he asserts. "We can handle everything from one-off custom pieces to large-scale commercial projects."


Dylan's pride is palpable as he recounts the company's recent collaboration with Novo Nordisk Pharmaceuticals, where they were tasked with reclaiming and repurposing some of the finest trees from the company's sprawling 100-acre property. "It's projects like these that truly exemplify our ethos," he added. "To breathe new life into these majestic giants, transforming them into functional works of art that will grace the halls of a cutting-edge facility – that's the essence of what we do."

But the true magic of Oak City Customs extends far beyond its mastery of craft; it lies in its unwavering

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commitment to fostering a sense of community and environmental stewardship. Dylan is proud of their involvement with local organizations, from crafting a custom conference table for the Frankie Lemon Foundation to spearheading tree-planting initiatives that offset its environmental footprint.

One critical aspect of their craftsmanship is the attention to detail. Every piece created by Oak City Customs undergoes a meticulous process from design to completion. The team works closely with clients to understand their vision and then brings it to life with precision and care. Whether it's a custom dining table or a large-scale commercial installation, the same level of dedication and skill is applied.

"We're not just creating furniture or architectural elements," he asserts. "We're crafting heirlooms – pieces that will be cherished and passed down through generations, carrying with them the stories of those who made them and those who will love them."

In the machine shop, a massive "gold suitcase" project is underway for Mr. Beast, owner of YouTube's largest channel and whose headquarters are in Greenville, NC. Other projects underway include Clancy & Theys and The Raleigh Architecture and Construction Company.

"As of 2024, we are equipped with a design team, a production team, and an installation team dedicated to producing heirloom quality furnishings. Our bread and butter has always been in repurposing and recycling local materials, like taking downed trees and turning them into tables. This is our work in its simplest form, which

is where the company started. A big part of what we do is sawmilling and kiln drying service. We produce a lot of our own lumber that we use in our clients' products. We're able to provide that service for others, which is pretty neat. It takes a lot of equipment to do that whole process. "From tree to table" really is our tagline and our main gig. Not every product uses some kind of lumber that we produce, but a lot of it does."

"We have 18 people on staff here ready to serve our customers, and we're open six days a week from 8am until 6pm (Monday – Saturday). Visitors can come in and buy materials or consult about a custom project. Our customers range from homeowners to commercial CEOs, contractors to architects, and everything in between. We can make custom cutting boards for \$200, live oak slab dining room tables from \$3000 to \$10,000 and up, all kinds of custom furniture, outfit an entire conference room or restaurant/bar, build outside signage, and a lot more. We're locally owned and pride ourselves on creating handmade products using as many sustainable materials as possible."

"About 25% of our work is manufacturing services for other shops. Folks coming in who want to run something through the planer, use our shop services, or buy materials like slabs, wood, or metal by the foot. About 50% of our revenue is probably commercial work, doing bigger jobs for housing developments or apartment complexes, such as handrails, signs, and all kinds of semi-custom higher-end projects. And then I would say the other 25%

is residential or commercial sales, like a dining room table or a conference table."

Before our tour ends, Dylan shares one final insight that encapsulates the essence of Oak City Customs: "We don't just offer products; we provide an experience. When you step through our doors, you become part of a community – a community of creators and innovators who share a deep respect for the natural world and a commitment to leaving a lasting, positive impact."

As I leave the bustling workshop, I feel a sense of respect and admiration for the team at Oak City Customs. In a world increasingly dominated by mass production and disposability, they stand as a testament to handcrafted excellence, exemplifying the qualities of sustainability and a deep appreciation for the materials that shape our world.

Their creations adorn many of the spaces we inhabit, from the rustic live-edge tables that grace our dining rooms to their sleek architectural metalwork in our offices. Each piece is a testament to the enduring power of human ingenuity, a tangible reminder that beauty, function, and environmental stewardship don't have to be mutually exclusive. 📍

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Jack Is Back:

Jack The Radio New Album Release: *Under Lonely Light*

BY CLIFF BUMGARDNER

American roots rockers Jack The Radio are back with a soaring collection of new tracks in *Under Lonely Light*, the band's first studio album in four years.

The Raleigh-based four-piece "blend rock and blues sensibility with Americana, folk, and country" to create a new South sound that's at once familiar and wholly their own. Besides frequenting Triangle stages alongside the likes of the Avett Brothers and American Aquarium, their Southern influence has gone national through film and television, featuring on hit shows *Modern Family*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and *Resident Alien*, to name a few. Their last album, *Creatures*, was released in 2020 to widespread praise.

The new record features ten original songs, including "Roads Paved in Gold," which was first released on streaming in 2023 and featured on *No Depression Magazine's* Best Of playlist. Never-before-released tracks include "Evergreens," "Take Your Ball and Go Home," and the narratively potent "Warbirds," the album's longest number.

"The initial spark for a lot of these songs can be traced back to lockdown in 2020 and early 2021," guitarist Danny Johnson says. "While we were apart, [songwriter and vocalist] George [Hage] would send out demos, and songs that caught the group's ear would slide to the top of

the pile for more work... Once we were able to start getting together in person, we were able to figure out where all the pieces fit."

Johnson and Hage co-produced the album out of Johnson's home studio, a first for the band and something Johnson describes as "a fulfilling experience – if a bit challenging to never be more than a few quick steps away from adding an overdub or working on a mix."

Even Johnson's wife and daughter were enlisted into the process, adding backing vocals on a few tracks. "I think they realized it's all part of living within shouting distance of where tracking is happening," he says.

Durham-based keyboardist Charles Cleaver sat in with the band, adding Hammond organ, piano, and electric piano on half the songs.

"With so much time spent behind the desk on this one, I was happy to hand over some key duties to someone like Charles, who elevates any song he touches," Johnson says.

In all, *Under Lonely Light* took four years to create, carrying the band through the worst of the pandemic era as festivals canceled and venues shut their doors – an experience Hage says "led to a lot of introspection and deeper and sometimes darker lyrics."

That introspection is felt on tracks like "Save Me From Myself" and "Earth's Last Goodnight." But despite the

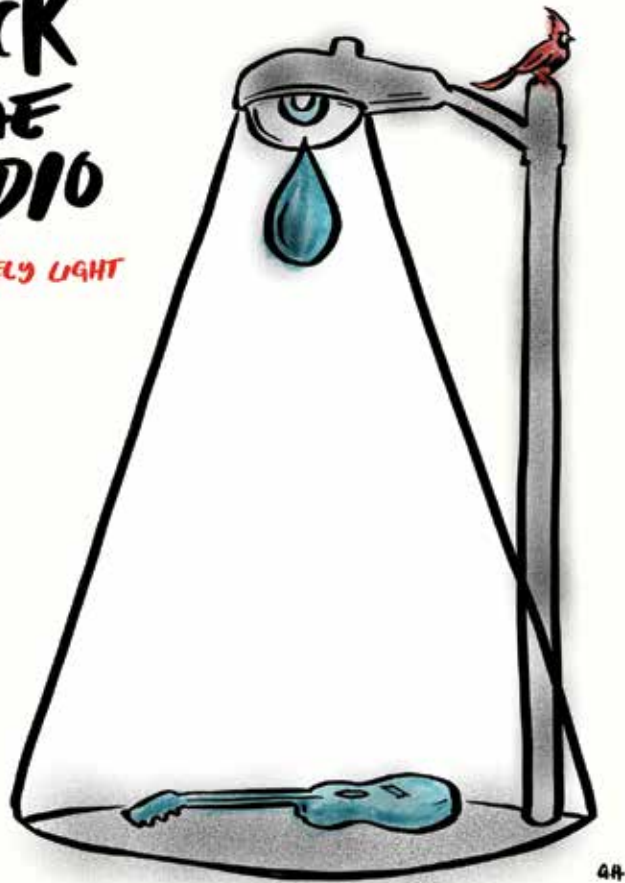
long shadow cast by the pandemic, the album has plenty of sunshine. "Fast Fun," a dancey love letter to the days of vinyl, continues the throwback vibes with a 90s-inspired music video featuring the band in recognizable Raleigh spots, including 2112 Percussion and Schoolkids Records. The track even has its own beer, as the band teamed up with Trophy Brewing Co to create the "Fast Fun" Helles Lager, made with 100% NC Pilsner malt and Whole Leaf Crystal Hop additions. The brew dropped at JTR's album release concert in June and is now available at Trophy Brewing locations around town.

All the local flair makes a fitting home for Hage, who away from his writing and playing duties with Jack the Radio has made a name for himself as a designer and illustrator. Look up and around downtown Raleigh and you're likely to see his distinctive work towering above the restaurants in Transfer Co. Food Hall or accompanying the winter festivities at Red Hat Amphitheater's yearly skating destination The Rink.

To celebrate the release of *Under Lonely Light*, Hage has combined his passions in a 24-page comic book that brings the musical world of Jack the Radio to the page. The comic features interviews with Tradd Moore (*Silver Surfer*, *Doctor Strange*, *Batman*) and Esoteric (*Czarface*), plus comic strips by Chris Anderson and Pat Rooks, and

JACK THE RADIO

UNDER LONELY LIGHT



Album cover for Under Lonely Light, the band's first studio album in four years

illustrations by Mark Laszlo, Josh Alvarado, and Keith Ross (*Tiny Concert*).

"My hope is the comic continues to highlight the crossover and love music and art – specifically illustrated art and comics – have for each medium," Hage says, noting the history the two forms have shared through music videos, album covers, and even concert posters. A six-page comic based on "Fast Fun," illustrated by Greg and Fake (*Santos Sisters*), expands the Jack The Radio universe and introduces a new character dubbed the Celestial DJ, whose influence will surely be felt across future JTR albums and books.

It's all a part of the many-faceted musical and fictional multiverse Hage and company have created in Jack The Radio. With *Under Lonely Light*, that multiverse grows larger and brighter still.

Stream or purchase *Under Lonely Light* on CD or vinyl at www.jacktheradio.com or in person at *The Pour House Record Shop*.



Trophy Brewing Jack The Radio special edition brew "Fast Fun" Helles Lager



From the Publisher

Calling all passionate writers! Do you have an undying love for all things local, helping to promote small business, or perhaps you're a big supporter of a particular Triangle city, town, or area? Dive into some of our article topics below and see what sparks your fire:

- Spotlighting vibrant local businesses
- Unveiling the latest culinary delights in new restaurants
- Connecting at dynamic networking events
- Capturing the essence of art gallery exhibit openings
- Delving into the realm of technology and innovation
- Unleashing the entrepreneurial spirit
- Engaging in thought-provoking artist and musician interviews
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- Immersing in community business events
- Highlighting the arrival of new Triangle companies
- Discovering new startups
- Exploring venture capital and angel investing
- Advocating for sustainability and social responsibility
- Celebrating inspiring success stories
- Fueling economic development
- Empowering others to grow their businesses
- And so much more.

If you're ready to join our passionate team, send us a message to writers at welovedowntown.com. Share with us what ignites your passion and don't forget to include a few links or examples of your work. We look forward to collaborating with you to craft compelling stories that showcase all the greatness throughout the Triangle. Let's bring the local community to life through the power of your words and images!

Cheers,
Crash

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With Judd Apatow at the Teen Cancer America fundraiser



Sunflower Fields Are Back at Dix Park

What and where are the sunflowers in Raleigh?

Calling all sunflower lovers and Instagram-worthy photo addicts – the gorgeous fields of sunflowers are back again this year at Dorothea Dix Park. First planted by the City of Raleigh’s public utilities department in 2010, a beautiful five-acre batch of sunflowers blooms each year during July at Dorothea Dix Park, where approximately 100,000 seeds were planted in early May.

In past years, sunflowers served a purpose beyond just acting as a beautiful summer hotspot. The City of Raleigh harvested them to create thousands of gallons of biodiesel, which was then processed into fuel to run its tractors, trailers, and farm equipment. Now, the flowers are left to live out their lifecycle as excellent pollinators for bees, birds, and other wildlife.

Expected peak bloom time

The Dix sunflowers should be in peak bloom in early July and likely stay in viewable condition for about two to three weeks. Over the next month, more than 100,000 visitors will check out the bright yellow fields. In past years, the park has held small weekend events during peak bloom with food trucks, music, and beer – dates to be announced soon on the Dix Park website.

Need to know info

- It’s peak summer weather, so expect it to be hot! Sunscreen, bug repellent, and a water bottle are always good ideas.
- Temporary restrooms will be available near the sunflower field entrances.
- Accessible indoor bathrooms are expected to be available at the newly opened Dix Park Visitor Center (<https://dixpark.org/stone-houses>).
- Plenty of free parking is available (see map image).
- Accessibility information about Dix Park can be found at <https://dixpark.org/accessibility>.

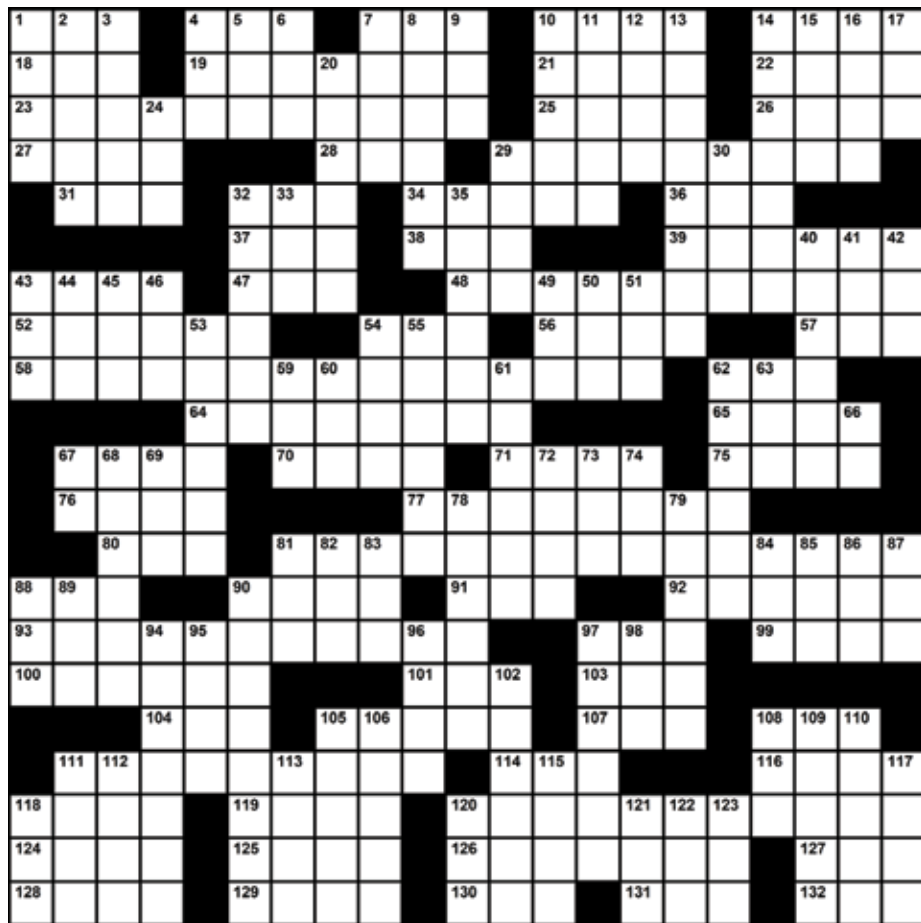
- Early in the morning or late in the evening are the best times to visit.
- You can walk through the sunflower fields on the designated paths.
- The fields are a mix of dirt, grass, and some rocks. Closed-toe shoes are recommended for your safety.
- Pets are ok (on a leash!).
- The sunflowers are for everyone, so please don’t pick them to take home. 🚫

Portions of this article originally appeared on the visitRaleigh.com website and are featured here through a collaborative partnership with *Visit Raleigh* and *Triangle Downtowner Magazine*. *The Greater Raleigh Convention and Visitors Bureau (aka Visit Raleigh)* is the official and accredited destination marketing organization for all of Wake County. For more things to do in the Raleigh area, check out www.visitraleigh.com.





Want to win a Downtowner T-shirt? Email us a photo of your completed puzzle to xword@welovedowntown.com. We'll pick a random winner each month. Need a hint? For all past puzzle solutions, visit: <https://bit.ly/xword-answers>. No cheating!



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“Does it make the world go round”

ACROSS

1. Some Heisman Trophy winners, abbr.
4. “Yabba dabba ___!”
7. Good cholesterol that clears arteries
10. Peace symbol
14. Appeal for help
18. Shoe specification
19. Curse
21. Shed
22. Eye, at the Eiffel Tower
23. Financing
25. Money
26. Stab
27. Clearasil target
28. Man-mouse link
29. Resembling sweet stuff from a hive
31. Cow chow
32. Affectedly demure
34. New Zealand inhabitant
36. Box top
37. Talking Heads hit, “___ She Was”
38. “Put ___ Happy Face”
39. Washed away
43. Schnozz
47. Rejections
48. Outwardness
52. NY prison
54. Annual meeting
56. ___ bit (slightly)
57. Half a blackjack
58. Broker’s measurement
62. Bad color for the books
64. Life, for one
65. Words from Wordsworth
67. Tangerine and grapefruit hybrid

70. Excel command
71. Timeline divisions
75. Letters at Camp Lejeune
76. Cordon ___
77. Spotted beetles
80. It supplies notes
81. Mafia’s high finance
88. BBC rival
90. Betting game
91. Nightfall, to bards
92. Sanctuary
93. Facebook, Twitter, et al
97. Vow taker
99. Hardwood sources
100. Spanish chef’s concoction
101. Dictionary abbreviation
103. TV drama settings
104. Auction bidding target
105. Outback call
107. Kansas river
108. ___-Wan Kenobi
111. Dollar in slang
114. Roll of bills
116. Provide money for
118. Kermit’s species
119. Respectively
120. Intransigently
124. “The Simpsons” daughter
125. Construction location
126. Refuse to follow
127. Bert Bobbsey’s sister
128. Hyalite
129. Hurly-burly
130. Fox hole, e.g.
131. Range units, abbr.
132. Overwhelming admiration

DOWN

1. 1988 country album
2. Castaway’s first sight

3. Legume family flower shrub
4. “___ Spiegel” (German news magazine)
5. Prefix meaning “egg”
6. Engine need
7. Next in line
8. Electric generator
9. Pants part
10. Interior scene
11. Rial spender
12. Clamper
13. Colorless, flammable gas
14. Justin Bieber, e.g.
15. Security breach
16. Article for Mozart
17. H.S. subject
20. London insurance giant
24. E or G, e.g.
29. Sham
30. Old money
32. Little cracker with a topping
33. John Lennon sang “Woman” about this lady
35. Lacking iron, maybe
40. Crown
41. List-ending abbreviation
42. Salon job
43. Humanities degs.
44. Biblical verb suffix
45. “Now ___ theater near you!”
46. White wine aperitif
49. Smidgen
50. Mrs. sheep
51. Dinosaur’s last name
53. Atomic number 55
54. Box elder
55. Like some giants
59. T.L.C. givers
60. Much-watched judge in 1995
61. Old record need
62. Stirs up
63. Mag. positions
66. Columbia locale
67. ___ 40 rock group
68. Peek
69. “Live and ___ Die” movie
72. Pitcher Nolan
73. ___ Dhabi
74. Baltimore daily
78. Nautical response
79. Polish seaport
81. Madam, slangily
82. Neighbor of Wash.
83. Silent signal
84. Ham sandwich bread, often
85. “___ Follow the Sun” (The Beatles)
86. Fourth O.T. bk.
87. Baseball V.I.P.’s
88. Internet provider, for short
89. ___ man (unanimously)
90. Lethargy
94. Criminal
95. Hand cream ingredient
96. It’s fine
97. Must
98. Address with a dot
102. Beginner, slangily
105. Dry area plants
106. Reddish yellow
108. Many times, in verse
109. ___ Park, Calif.
110. Wife’s mother, e.g.
111. Suitcase
112. “The Horse Fair” artist Bonheur
113. Switch’s partner
115. Pt. of PGA
117. Physics term
118. Mrs. Andy Capp
120. Roulette bet
121. Technology giant
122. Celtic rival
123. Cries of regret

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