his appears to be a remarkable year for Buffalo. We elected Byron Brown mayor; hockey is back and the Sabres are having a thrilling season; waterfront development is finally getting traction; Marv Levy returned to the Bills; Studio Arena sent a play to Broadway and appointed a promis-ing new artistic director; Congressman Brian Higgins won his mega-million-dollar fight for us against the New York Power Authority; City Honors High School was ranked fourth in the country among public schools by Newsweek; and, probably most important, a majority of people are beginning to realize that a casino in downtown Buffalo would be about as smart as eating rat poison for dinner.

This is also a remarkable year for the Artvoice Best of Buffalo survey. Between our mailin paper ballots and the spiffy online ballot (designed by our clever IT guru Dave Kleinschmidt), we found ourselves tallying more than 75,000 entries. In fact, the response was so overwhelming that we had to move the issue back a week so that we could continue tabulating all the votes. We've finished the counting and the top nominations are printed here for all to read. While most categories have five nominees, you will notice that some have more. In those categories that have more than five nominees, there were just such an incredible number of votes cast, and the races were so tight, that we felt the nomination list had to be expanded to recognize the strength

I would like to commend the Artvoice staff and interns for making sense of some of the ballots. We always have voters who misunderstand the concept of Best of Buffalo, voters who tell us Green Day or U2 are their favorite band and Angelina Jolie is their favorite actress. Forget those. Understanding what a voter has written on a legitimate entry can be more challenging than one might think, too. For example, someone, perhaps fond of bellybuttons, chose the Navel Park as the Best Tourist Attraction.

Names are often butchered almost beyond recognition. Channel 7 newscaster Keith Radford showed up as Keith Bredford, Keith Radcliff, Keith Rathman, Kieth Radston and "Keith the-guy-with-the-tan on 7." Talking Leaves Books received a great number of votes. However, many of those votes appeared as Falling Leaves, Turning Leaves, Counting Leaves, Reading Leafs and so on. Similarly, Rust Belt Books appeared as Rusted Root Books or Rusty Belt Leaves.

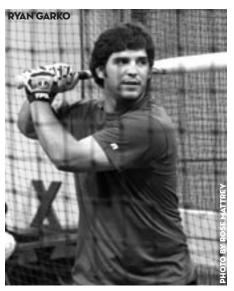
Perhaps, since I'm talking about book stores, this would be a good time to make it clear that while Barnes & Noble and Borders both received a great number of votes, the Artvoice survey is not intended to highlight national chains. Rather, it is to bring attention to places, people and businesses that are unique to Buffalo. While Barnes & Noble is an excellent store, and Starbucks has decent coffee, and many people like McDonald's fries, these chain stores offer the exact same product whether you're in Albuquerque, Seattle or Rochester. Apparently some people missed the notice printed on the ballot in all caps: "NO CHAIN STORES_VOTE LOCAL.

Please take note that the finalists are listed in reverse alphabetical order, not in the order they finished in the balloting. Winners will be announced at the Artvoice Best of Buffalo Party this Monday, May 8, 6-9pm at the Town Ballroom. Admission is free, so is the food, and music will be provided by Babik and the Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus. Come one, come all.

-jamie moses



: NOMINEES ARE LISTED IN RANDOM ORDER:



it weren't for the Sabres, what else would there be to talk about? There is hardly a politician in Western New York who did not receive at least one vote for Best Politician, which proves that every public servant has a mother collecting press clips somewhere. On the other hand-or maybe this is the same handthere is hardly a politician in Western New York who did not receive a vote for Worst Politician. which proves that after every election there is a sore loser. The city's new mayor, after just 100 days in office as of the closing of the Artvoice polls, had managed to land on both lists-which proves that everyone is watching **Byron Brown** closely. It's worth noting that, excepting perennial finalist Sam Hoyt, the finalists for Best Politician are all new to their offices. Optimism?

ell, well-people and politics. If

Kevin Gaughan lived up to both his reputations-good citizen and gadfly-by finishing as a finalist on three lists: Best Community Activist,

Best Unelected Public Servant and Most Eccentric Citizen. If only he'd placed in Best Buffalo Sabre and Best College Sports Team, Gaughan would the Mark Spitz of the People & Politics

Best Buffalo Sabre, of course, is a work in progress—the post-season continues and there is plenty of opportunity for new heroes to emerge. But we think our finalists, all except Martin Biron who did not play, had a good series against Philadelphia, and the winner...well, let's just say he made

It's a little early in the spring to ask our readers to name a Best Buffalo Bison, it's true, but the Artvoice staff was chagrined that Buster-valuable as he is-was a finalist in this category. We suspect it means that too few people take advantage of the cheap seats at Dunn Tire Park. Really, Buffalo—take an afternoon off this summer, buy a bleacher seat, a hot dog and a beer and get to know your hometown team.

Finally, our Drag Queens—a furious contest this year, so close and rife with ties that we list the top eight finishers instead of the top five. This race is far too close to call. Who will emerge victorious: Vanity Vogue? Vicky Vogue? The indefatigable Chevon Davis? V? You'll have to attend the Artvoice Best of Buffalo Party on Monday, May 8 to find out.

Best Buffalo Bill

Willis McGahee Takeo Spikes Mary Levy JP Losman Brian Moorman

Best Buffalo Bison

Torey LoVullo Tim Laker Ryan Garko Coco Crisp Buster the Bison

Best Buffalo Sabre

Ryan Miller Maxim Afinogenov Martin Biron Daniel Briere Chris Drury

Best College Sports Team

University at Buffalo men's basketball Niagara University men's basketball Medaille College women's basketball Canisius College women's basketball Canisius College men's basketball

Best Community Activist

Tim Tielman Robert Kresse Michele Johnson Kevin Gaughan Harvey Garrett Eugene Abrahamson Camille Hopkins Ani DiFranco

Best Drag Queen

Vicky Vogue Vanity Vogue Malibu Jayme Coxx fanta-see island Chevon davis Armani

Best Entertainer

Tom Stahl The Stripteasers Terry Buchwald Malibu Lance Diamond



Most Eccentric Citizen

The lady wrapped in white who walks Elmwood The deer lady Kevin Gaughan Jimmy Griffin Eric Starchild

Best Patron of the Arts

The Knox family M&T Bank Charles Penney Cecile and Stephen Biltekoff Ani DiFranco

Best Politician

Satish Mohan Sam Hoyt Mark Poloncarz Byron Brown Brian Higgins

Worst Politician

Tony Masiello Tom Reynolds Joel Giambra George W. Bush Byron Brown

Biggest Waste of Taxpayer Dollars

Joel Giambra Every other overpaid politician Endless feasibility studies for Peace Bridge, traffic on Main Street, waterfont development, etc. Bass Pro Any money spent on a casino in Buffalo

Best Unelected Public Servant

Michele Johnson Kevin Gaughan Judy Einach James Williams B. Thomas Golisano

Best Use of Taxpayer Dollars

Waterfront development and greenway Streets maintenance and repair Police and fire departments Buffalo school reconstruction Arts funding