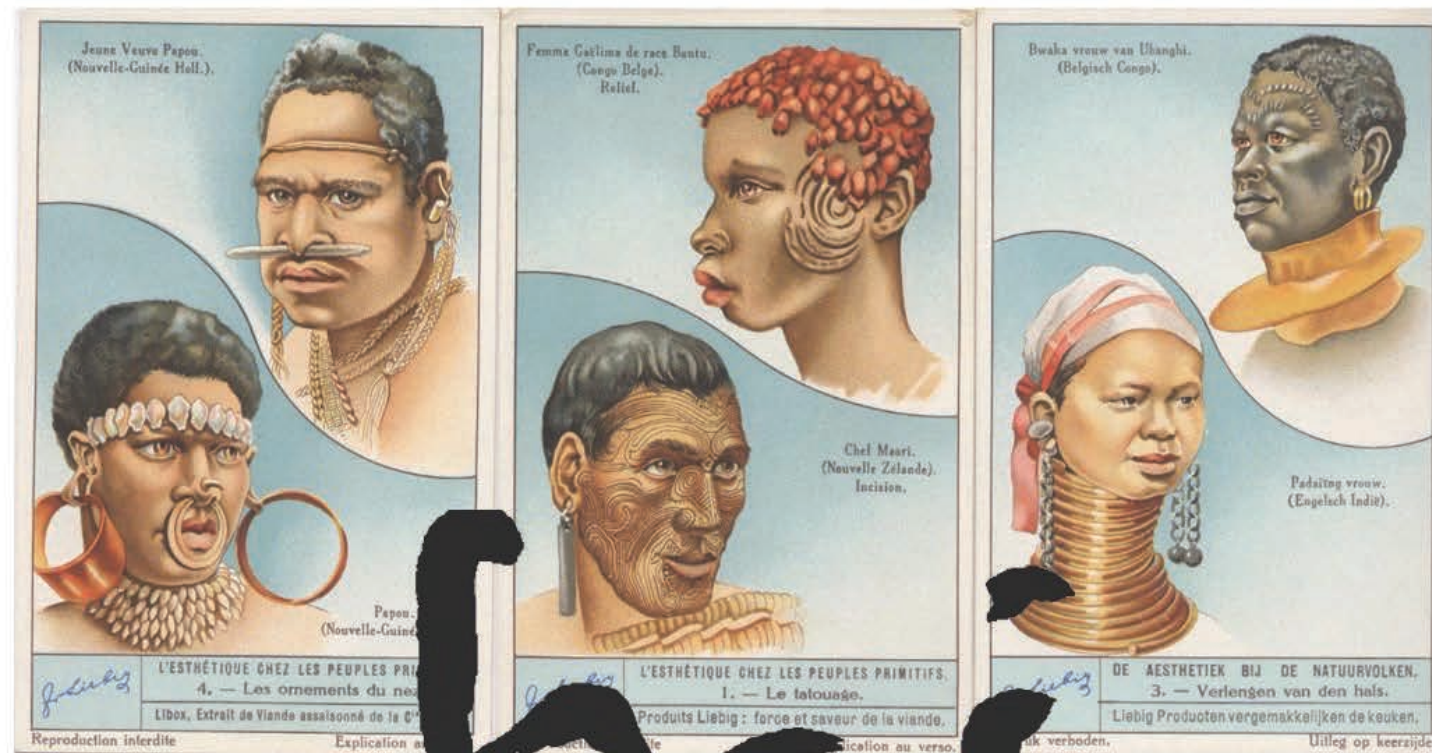


SLUG MAG



WE, THE PIECES: LOCAL LEADERS IN OUR COMMUNITY



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ABOUT THE COVER: For our *Local Leaders* issue cover, **Chris Owens** expresses the collective work that leaders put in to comprise an altruistic, inclusive and mutually empowering community. Each hand contributes a piece to our social and cultural mosaic. You can find more of Owens' art on Instagram @monkee1895.

MORGAN KELLER

Contributor Limelight
Events Assistant



Beginning her role as the Events Assistant right before our current global pandemic, Morgan Keller has contributed to *SLUG Magazine* with her innovation, flexibility, creativity and relentlessness, executing successful and safe events during the COVID-19 crisis. In her first year at the magazine, Keller has taken part in planning events such as *SLUG Cat*, *SLUG Picnic* and *SLUG Virtualized*. With her skill set and passions transcending her role in events, Keller is always up to helping the team succeed in a variety of departments, where she has demonstrated her strength in being a jack-of-all-trades. Keller is a valuable addition to the *SLUG* team, and we look forward to more of her accomplishments!

HANNAH MCBETH

Contributor Limelight
Contributing Writer



With her jubilant and gracious approach to writing, Hannah McBeth has been covering community stories for *SLUG Magazine* since December of 2019. McBeth has a penchant for writing about SLC's local arts community, and the passion, respect and care with which she reviews and analyzes each exhibit provides a key part of our local arts coverage. Working hand in hand with her passions for writing and reading, McBeth is a self-proclaimed "book worm" and also serves as a Marketing and IT Manager at *Melissa's Books* and has played a large part in their pivots through COVID-19. For this issue, check out McBeth's feature on **Ashley Finley**, a local birth doula, on pg. 6.

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SLUG Mag stands with you in demanding equality and justice for all.

An Acronym for Salt Lake UnderGround, *SLUG Magazine's* mission is to amplify Salt Lake City's thriving alternative and underrepresented music, arts, lifestyle and events subcultures with thoughtful media coverage and exclusive event curation.

SLUG Mag recognizes the long history of racism and discrimination that continues to live in the independent arts and lifestyle communities we exist within and cover, not just here in Salt Lake but across the country. We're working internally to review our processes and practices to reevaluate whether we're truly accomplishing our core mission of diversity and inclusion across all the fields and disciplines we cover.

If you have any comments, questions or feedback for us, please reach out to our Executive Editor, Angela H. Brown, at: angela@slugmag.com.

DOULA

ASHLEY FINLEY

LEADS BY CARING FOR BIPOC PARENTS' SPIRITS

Hannah McBeth
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Ashley Finley always felt the calling to help babies, especially Black babies, to be born.

Photo: John Barkiple

If you asked a room of people to list the traits of a leader, chances are you would hear responses that reflect society's perpetuated myth of a militant hero—a trend **Ruth Ben-Ghiat** describes in *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present*. But the reality is that these "leaders" often break more than they fix, and the aftermath of their reigns are cleaned up by the real powerhouses of our communities: the people who provide medical, nutritional or emotional care. Ashley Finley, Co-Founder of the *Black Lives Matter* Salt Lake City Chapter, is a refuge for BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color) communities in her work as a reproductive care advocate and a Birth and Postpartum Doula registered with the **National Black Doulas Association**. A doula is a perinatal support for birthing mothers and their families who works with midwives and doctors. Three years ago, Finley started *Sacred Sister Doula* because she says she'd "always felt a calling to help babies, especially Black babies, to be born." From pregnancy through the postpartum period, Finley shows that the most important human roles and actions start and end with love.

When Finley moved to Utah eight years ago from Los Angeles, she noticed that the communities of color in the state were underserved and overlooked. When she made the decision to pursue becoming a doula, finding ways to fill the gaps in healthcare for people of color was a central goal. "My grandmother was what we call a granny midwife. She helped all her sisters and cousins give birth deep in the rural south. I feel really connected to that lineage and I always have," Finley says. "I've been really blessed [in] that when I started this work, I specifically put

out the intention that I wanted to work with marginalized groups, so working with black women, queer parents, parents of color and people who don't often have access to advocacy that a doula supports."

One of the most intimidating factors for BIPOC parents in Utah is that, chances are, their medical providers don't look or talk like them. This can make them feel that their birth or other medical concerns are not taken seriously. "Medical language can be such a barrier and really inaccessible to folks who are not in the medical field," she says. "One of the things I do is help folks understand the information that their care providers are giving to them in a way that is accessible and broken down."

This aspect of Finley's work as a reproductive care advocate became especially important in the summer of 2020 when hospitals decided to limit the number of people who could be a part of the births in an effort to curb possible COVID-19 exposure. Doulas were left out of the "birth team," forcing future moms to choose between their doula and their partner/parent. In light of this, Finley worked with the *University of Utah* hospital to advocate for doulas as essential elements of birth teams, especially with the unique considerations of BIPOC parents. She was successful, and the *U Hospital* now recognizes doulas as official members of birth teams.

Even in the pregnancy phase, Finley's role goes deeper and more spiritual. "I do a lot of meditation, movement and what you could call prayer, where we talk to whatever power the client believes in, if they do," she says. Taking an approach that unites care of the mind, body and spirit, Finley says, "When I'm with clients, I try to bring it deeper than just the physicality. Because birth is a really

spiritual experience, and so I [help them] be tapped into that spiritual experience all the way through—from pregnancy, to the birth, through the postpartum."

Giving birth is scary and difficult, though sometimes it can be the postpartum period when pain, change and isolation may throw new parents into depression. Finley says, "Postpartum depression is a huge issue for all parents, but especially for parents who don't get access to the resources that could help them. The first thing I hone in on in the postpartum area is 'how is your spirit?' Having a baby is a really beautiful thing, but it's also a really hard thing," says Finley. "One of the hard things, especially with people who are pushed to the margins, is that they don't get to be heard. They don't have the luxury (and it shouldn't be a luxury!) to process this huge life event. I'll say, 'How can we get a meal train going? Who can come to drop off a meal and not stop to talk?'"

Besides the many amazing roles Finley works in as a doula, she is also an accomplished poet. In her poem "Brave New Home," she says: "I want to build myself into a home for you, want to stretch out my arms, pull you in close, hold you tight, let you know that there is shelter here." The truth is that so many of society's troubles might be cured by extending this simple and powerful feeling to people who are struggling. Simple acts of care and love, and listening to those so often pushed to the margins are how real leaders are born.

You can get in touch with and learn more about Ashley Finley on Instagram @findafinley and @sacredsisterdoula, or visit sacredsisterdoula.com.

Among the individuals in our state championing social justice, growth and change is **River Jude August**. An avid motorcyclist (among many other things) and living in Salt Lake City with their partner **Jo**, their three kids and four dogs, August serves as a leader in the effort to defend gender-expansive rights. A pioneer in undergoing pivotal gender-affirming surgeries, August has also made several legal achievements, such as being the first in the state of Utah to legally change their gender marker to the neutral "X" on their ID.

Setting the precedent that every gender-expansive and transgender individual has a unique gender journey dictated in part by their surroundings, social constraints, privilege and resources is important when discussing matters of self-actualization. Like many other transgender folx, August's realization came much earlier than the actualization of their true gender and sexuality. "I would say my earliest memory of when I knew I wasn't the gender I was assigned at birth was when I was four or five years old," says August. "I found myself gravitating toward things that were more masculine. And how I wanted to present and how I wanted to be did not align with the binary gender and the gender presentation I was assigned and forced into."

Aligned with August's positive changes in their environment, they began to publicly share their authentic self in their mid-20s, publicly coming out as gay at the age of 26 and transgender at 33.

In 2014, August started taking steps towards surgically transitioning. Between that time and now, alongside the medical guidance of the *Transgender Health Program* at the *University of Utah*, August has received top surgery and hip masculinization surgery, both performed by **Dr. Cori Agarwal**; a phalloplasty (the third in the state but first at the *Huntsman Hospital*) performed by **Dr. Isak Goodwin, Dr. Jeremy Myers & Dr. Cori Agarwal**; and countless follow-up surgeries that have been affirming but carry their own challenges. "As free as it is to have my shirt off at the lake, I'm still vastly concerned," says August. "I am worried people might immediately put the pieces together, placing a target on my back ... Sometimes I am concerned about my safety and of those who I am with."

In conjunction with the physical undertakings and complications that can come with gender-affirming surgeries, the emotional tug of war between gender euphoria and being able to manage realistic, post-surgery expectations is a constant. "With my bottom surgery, I have grown and felt so much euphoria over the

River Jude August

GENDER ACTUALIZATION IN UTAH

By Bianca Velasquez

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Photo: Maralee Nielsen

By making way for innovative gender-affirming surgeries and more, River Jude August builds pathways for gender expansive rights.

past year. On the other side, I've dealt with so many complications and I will have to always navigate not having the full functionality of most cisgender men," says August.

Frequently left out of the conversation about healthcare protections are the rights of marginalized folx who don't identify as femme and/or as a cisgender woman but have reproductive organs bearing the right to equal care. "Even through my gender journey and my access to really good care, I also had really traumatic care," says August. During one of August's surgeries, (with a provider/network unaffiliated with the *U of U Transgender Health Program*) their doctor put August

in surgical menopause and made them permanently sterile, with the experience ending in a malpractice lawsuit.

"Oftentimes I think trans folx and gender-expansive folx are so used to either no care or shit care, and so when we do get some sort of care, it can be misconstrued as really great care," August says.

Their polarizing experiences shed light on the work that needs to be done not only for trans and gender expansive folx, but that this is also just one part of the larger dialogue toward eventual healthcare equality for all marginalized groups.

While the road has been both rewarding and challenging for August, they value the importance of sharing their own story to help those in search of guidance and reassurance along their own path. "Before I publicly came out as transgender, I was quietly researching on Youtube these gender-expansive folx sharing their gender journey," says August. "That gave me direct access to what I was feeling and experiencing. As shy as I am, and as anxious as I get about sharing my story, I know that those YouTube videos were so formative for me."

After all the emotional work, resources and physical recovery August has experienced, they say that, "Even though it is sometimes taxing and hard, I want other people to see what I'm going through and be able to relate to it, or maybe it will help inspire someone who might be struggling with their own authenticity. And for those folx who don't feel that they are gender-expansive and/or rooted in their cisgenderedness, for them to humanize trans and gender-expansive folx."

Standing on the sidelines of August's journey are the individuals who gave them the immeasurable support to pave their own path toward actualization and authenticity. August's community played a major role in being able to accomplish these gender affirming goals, and August holds immense gratitude for them. Countless fundraisers, donations and different forms of allyship, along with the support of an expansive healthcare team including their therapist, **Dr. Lee Beckstead**, has made this transition a possibility for August. Through this course, and even through losing their ability to have their own biological children, August has found a way to build family and community, as well as medical and legal pathways to help guide those in search of actualizing their authentic self. Follow River Jude August on Instagram at @lilonetaffynrem.

Igniting Empathy with An Other Theater Company

Brittnie Gallegos • gallegosbrittnie0319@gmail.com

Photos courtesy of An Other Theatre Company



Clockwise, from top left: Dorsey Williams (actor), Shelby Noelle Gist (An Other Theater Company Artistic Director), Incachi Ovuoba (actor) and Alec Powell (Music Director) serve on a panel discussing the topic of Black identity in the theater world.

Jordan Kramer (top) and Laura Elise Chapman (bottom) in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*.



Kacey Spadafora and Taylor Jack Nelson, the two co-founders of An Other Theater Company, had a love for theater starting at a young age. They both found themselves more attracted to the acting side of theater initially, but as time progressed, they found that production was the obvious path. Spadafora dabbled in self-directing his own shows while he went to school at Utah Valley University—he realized that if he wanted to see the shows he desired, he'd have to make them himself. Similarly, Nelson studied theater at Utah Valley University and became increasingly involved with Spadafora and his unprecedented theater exploits in Utah County. There was potential for the theater scene in the area to go beyond the usual family-friendly, G-rated musicals. Spadafora says, "That's a very limited scope of what theater has to offer, so we wanted to broaden those horizons." The two founded An Other Theater Company in 2017 with the shared vision of an all-accepting theater in the valley that they both love so dearly.

Joining Spadafora and Nelson on their journey are Shelby Noelle Gist and Liz Joyner. Both of these company members started out supporting An Other Theater by attending shows and holding season tickets. Gist auditioned for the company, and was eventually welcomed as the Co-Artistic Director. She directed her first play with the company, *Something to Cry About*, this past November. Joyner had similar origins with the company when she applied and was accepted into various roles around the theater. Her more recent title is Production Manager.

The name An Other Theater Company defines this team as creatives and as people. Spadafora says, "When we came up with the name, it was half-joking," but also says that the name is far deeper than the pun and exemplifies that the company focuses on "the other." Joyner expands on this, saying, "It means that we will center the voices of the marginalized. That we will priori-

tize art that disturbs the comfortable and comforts the disturbed." Otherness is simply defined as the state of being different, essentially becoming "the odd one out." For An Other Theater, these stories of the "othered" are centralized around Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+, fat, disabled and immigrant issues. Through acceptance and community, the company hopes to open minds with these stories and inspire empathy in their audiences.

As the theater members reflect on how they've grown, Spadafora and Nelson mention that they now know more about what it takes to run a theater company. However, they also acknowledge all the time and effort it takes to put on a single show within their framework. Gist reflects on the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Ahmaud Arbery and how theaters began to look within to change company culture. Gist, the first person of color to join the company, says, "I found that this company has the compassion and humility to change so much in such little time, to create space that is intersectional and forever adapting," another astounding way that this small theater company is fostering positive change within the community.

Recently, An Other Theater Company has started a monthly panel series for minoritized creatives in theater. The main goal of these panels is to produce a safe platform for others to share their ideas regarding certain topics or identities in theater such as the roles of BIPOC, LGBTQ+ and disabled individuals in theater. A moderator leads the discussions and asks panelists questions that vary between panels. Each speaker shares wisdom and advice regarding discrimination, representation, positive experiences and necessary change.

Through these panels and more, there has been a strong—albeit small—community built around

An Other Theater Company. An intimate space between the stage and the audience generates a feeling of interconnectedness that some other theaters lack. An Other Theater Company strives to positively represent everyone involved with their shows. In particular, Joyner speaks of erasing white-washing and other discriminatory casting practices from theater altogether. This also includes the conscious practice of casting marginalized actors in roles where the character doesn't traditionally call for it. "There is no 'default' human, and we should stop casting as though that were the case," Joyner says. Theater, like many other types of art, has the ability to create empathy, and An Other Theater Company is set on creating empathy for the "other."

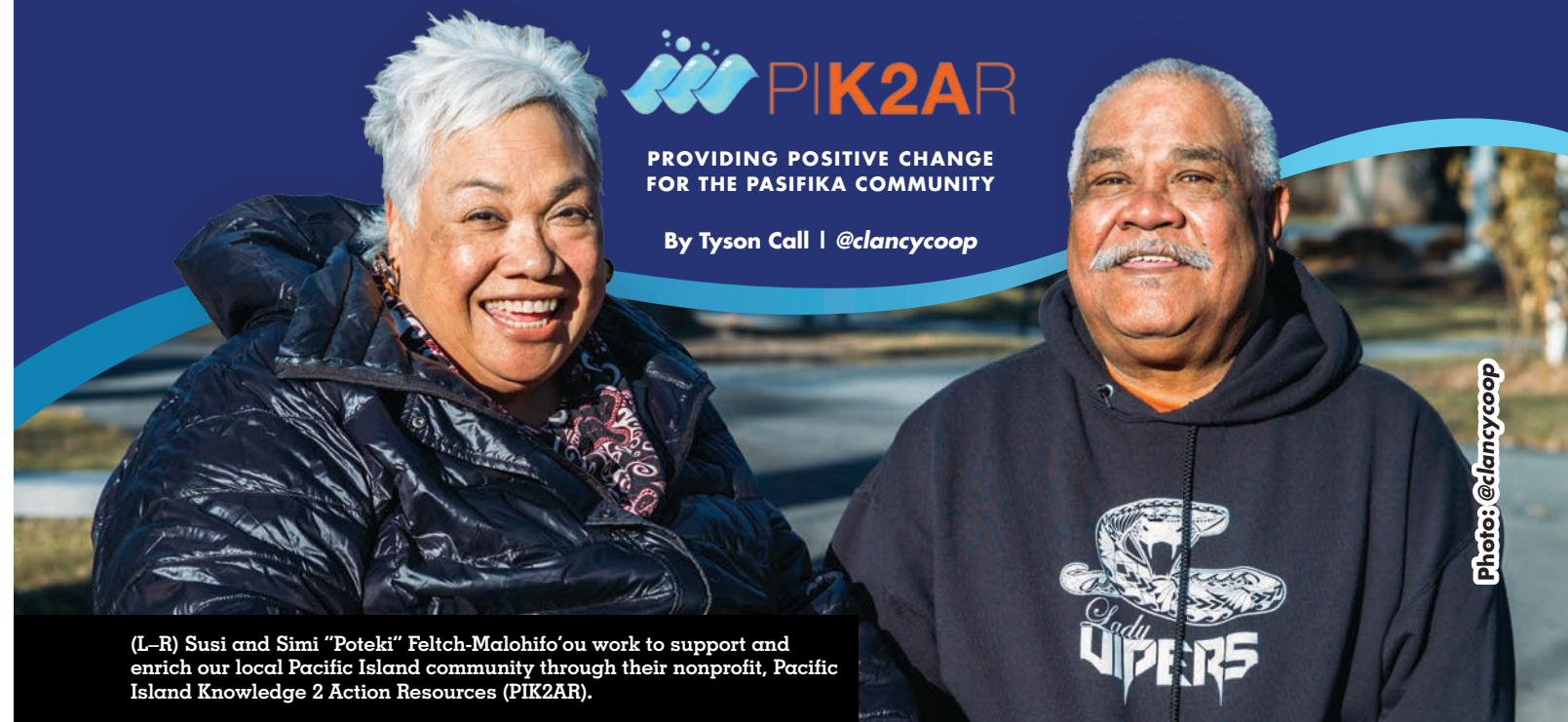
An Other Theater Company is also unique in the way that they select their shows for the season. Seasons are quickly picked for each year, and there is a selection mandate that requires a certain percentage of the shows written by women, LGBTQ+ and BIPOC individuals. One show that doesn't fit into the requirements above is also put on each year. The theater's Artistic Directors choose members for a selection committee where shows would be pitched. Due to COVID-19, the theater has decided to keep its doors closed to traditional theater experiences, opting for safe, distanced shows. The pandemic has caused An Other Theater Company to think outside the box when it comes to performing, but they've already been on the ball. They produced two streaming shows, *Odd Shaped Balls* and *Something to Cry About*, shown in April and November, respectively. There was also a drive-in production of *Last Train to Nibroc*, where two actors performed outside with microphones as the audience circled around and listened in on a radio station.

More information on these innovative and inspiring shows can be found at anothertheater.org.



PROVIDING POSITIVE CHANGE FOR THE PASIFIKA COMMUNITY

By Tyson Call | @clancycoop



(L-R) Susi and Simi "Poteki" Feltech-Malohifo'ou work to support and enrich our local Pacific Island community through their nonprofit, Pacific Island Knowledge 2 Action Resources (PIK2AR).

Photo: @clancycoop

CONTENT WARNING: This article addresses issues of domestic violence. Please take that into advisement as you read and share.

When Susi Feltech-Malohifo'ou moved back to Utah 10 years ago, she found something that troubled her. In the 20 years since she'd last lived here, little progress had been made in and around addressing domestic violence within the Tongan/Polynesian/Pacific Island community. She and her husband, Simi "Poteki" Malohifo'ou, began a quest to educate themselves, which led to the creation of KAVA Talks (Kommitment Against Violence Altogether) and PIK2AR (Pacific Island Knowledge 2 Action Resources).

"Our programs, events and services are an ecosystem that is built on the foundation of our Pacific Island values—God, church, family, community, restorative justice and reciprocity," says Susi. "We are about it! Our delivery of services and processes stem from the positive Pacific Island cultural norms and traditions."

KAVA Talks is a monthly Tongan/Pacific Islander, male, domestic-violence advocacy group. Their mission is to help raise awareness about domestic violence and to provide the necessary resources to those who need it. The KAVA circle provides a safe space to discuss personal and governmental issues. In the past few years, it has expanded into providing sexual-assault prevention and healing resources.

Although originally started as a men's group, PIK2AR now also offers a program called Women's EmpowHERment that meets each week, offering different groups for women of all ages. They also offer a group open to all women, regardless of background or location. These are now offered virtually due to COVID-19 health guidelines. PIK2AR also offers 24/7 support with access to case managers and community health workers.

The impetus for the creation of these programs was the pairing of Susi's own experience with domestic

violence in a previous relationship and Simi attending the Asian American Pacific Island Violence Prevention Conference in San Francisco. "He was motivated by the thought that women can do anything (a Tongan cultural value, women rank higher than men), and if they were going to solve this problem in our community, the men who are the majority of the abusers had to stop, and men within the community needed to hold men accountable," Susi says.

PIK2AR also provides support and promotion for the arts through Pasifika Enriching Arts of Utah (PEAU). Their programming includes monthly, online demonstrations of traditional Pacific Island cooking; a weekly, online writing group called PEAU Lit; and Utah Pacific Island Film Series, which offers free Pacific Island films. In 2012, the Governor of Utah declared August as Utah Pacific Island Heritage Month; during this time, PEAU highlights all the Pacific Island communities and educates on the similarities and differences between the cultures.

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone, and the Pasifika community has been seriously impacted. PIK2AR has been working to alleviate some of the challenges of this time. "We have distributed \$20,000 to Pacific Islanders that have had a death in their family and/or contracted COVID ... in \$400 increments for rental assistance, free internet for six months, distributed 150 computers to school-aged children, created two culturally relevant COVID PSAs in three languages, created a PPP/EIDEL webinar in three Pacific Island languages, [are] currently distributing COVID Care Kits and children's winter coats and will begin educating and distributing rental assistance anywhere in Utah," says Susi. PIK2AR also offers Pacific Island Business Alliance (PIBA), which supports socially responsible micro-enterprises and small businesses.

Susi recently ended her six-year tenure with the Utah Cultural Alliance. There, she joined forces with other members of the Board of Directors to help fight systemic racism, with the intent of making Utah arts more inclusive, accessible and equitable. "I am a Community Health Worker," Susi says. "I love working with grassroots community members and began as the UPHA [Utah Public Health Association] Co-Chair a few months before the pandemic started. Community Health Care workers have proven their value and strengths during the pandemic. We possess skills and tools that are not taught at universities, and if they are, many cannot apply them because the strengths of a CHW are their experience of living in their community, [having] built relationships; [they] are trusted; many are bilingual and understand their cultural norms."

If anyone wants to get involved with PIK2AR, they can volunteer, participate in the programming, volunteer as a Board member of the Advisory Council, mentor, teach a skill or promote PIK2AR to others. More details on these opportunities can be found at pik2ar.org.

One may wonder how Susi manages to be so prodigious in her contributions, but likely only until you hear her describe herself in her own words: "I am a trans-racial adoptee, ex-felon, overweight, woman of color, serial micro-enterpriser that lives with a mental illness that has survived domestic and sexual violence that received Utah's FBI Director's Community Leadership award," she says. "I love people, and we live in one of the best countries in the world with many opportunities to be who we want to be. My passion is to walk with others, to help others find their higher ground, to find their value, their voice, their confidence to live their best life."

Black Refractions

By Parker Mortensen



Chakaia Booker, *Repugnant Rapunzel (Let Down Your Hair)*, 1995, rubber tires and metal. The Studio Museum in Harlem, gift of Friends and Family of Chakaia Booker, 1996.7. © Chakaia Booker. Courtesy American Federation of Arts. Photo Credit: Nelson Tejada.



Mickalene Thomas, *Panthera*, 2002, rhinestones on acrylic on birch panel. The Studio Museum in Harlem; Museum purchase with funds provided by the Acquisition Committee, 2003.10.9.
© 2018 Mickalene Thomas / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Courtesy American Federation of Arts. Photo: Zalika Azim.



Barkley L. Hendricks, *Lawdy Mama*, 1969, oil and gold leaf on canvas. The Studio Museum in Harlem; gift of Stuart Liebman, in memory of Joseph B. Liebman, 1983.25. © Estate of Barkley L. Hendricks. Courtesy of the artist's estate, Jack Shainman Gallery, New York and American Federation of Arts.

Through April 10, the *Utah Museum of Fine Arts* is hosting *Black Refractions: Highlights from the Studio Museum in Harlem*. This exhibit surveys nearly a century of work by artists of African descent, featuring 100 works from 80 artists. *Black Refractions* speaks to the wide range of experiences that constitute how Blackness exists in our country while also giving the opportunity for Black people to see their individual, affective experiences refracted onto canvas. **Meligha Garfield**, Director of the *University of Utah's Black Cultural Center* partnered with *UMFA* in the programming and outreach for this exhibit and appreciates the scope of the show: "Global Blackness is so incredibly diverse, and I think this exhibit showcases that," he says. "I also love that it's from Harlem, being a New York native myself."

The Studio Museum in Harlem, who owns the *Black Refractions* collection, aims for—and indeed is known for—catalyzing and promoting work from artists of African descent. Founded in 1968, the studio was conceived at the height of the civil rights and Black Power movements and uses *Lawdy Mama*, an oil and gold leaf on canvas by **Barkley L. Hendricks** from 1969, as its key art. The figure's afro, enriched by the gold leaf underneath it, is both dark and vibrant. It beckons toward the era in which the *Studio Museum* began and its goal of fostering safe social forums for communities and artists to view and interpret art together. The safety of such a physical forum is something we may have taken for granted in this present day before public gatherings became limited—now the opportunity to engage with such a collection imparts a renewed sense of privilege.

For Garfield, Jordan Casteel's *Kevin the Kite*man hits home. In the piece, Kevin sits on a bicycle decked in kites of various kinds—hawks, wings, rainbows, an anime mermaid. Behind him is a state office building engraved with and named after **Adam Clayton Powell Jr.**, the first African American to be elected from New York to Congress. "An amazing feat," Garfield says, "but based upon the missing letters in his name, this symbolizes what's often the neglect and disregard for preserving Black history and culture in this country."

Garfield sees his own history in Kevin, both as a Black person and as someone from New York. "When growing up in Rochester, I often felt the city was consistently in between seasons," he says. "We were always on the verge of something great, but not quite there. We wanted the big city feel of New York City but did not want its population density or taxes. We wanted to be a cultural hub but disenfranchised those who brought it. The man in this piece signals that with his winter clothes and kites that are often associated with the spring season. In a way, he's a walking contradiction."

"I would also say the man in this artwork represents a piece of me: someone who grew up poor in the inner city of grey skies and organized crisis," Garfield says. That phrase—organized crisis—sticks out to me. The aims of the *Studio Museum in Harlem* and the *U's Black Cultural Center*—to catalyze the careers of artists of African descent, to fight global anti-Blackness and to generally strengthen the connections of the African diaspora—coalesce in this collection.

Otobong Nkanga's *House Boy*, a 2004 watercolor, ink and acrylic on paper work, struck me through its commentary on Black bodies as a source of house labor. The lower body stands intact and acts as a grounding stake not for the upper body but for the four mechanical arms, each holding a garden implement. It's a stripped-down, functional imagining of the body. What you might see as overbearing social commentary in modern sci-fi or cyberpunk as here finds strength in its specificity and focus on the instrumentalization that Black bodies have actually experienced.

My favorite piece is **Mickalene Thomas' *Panthera***. Made of rhinestones on acrylic, a black and purple panther lays in a soupy heat, surrounded by branches that drip with blue-and-pink tatters. The panther's teeth and face, almost human-like, register an uncomfortably familiar sense of fatigue and warmth. With the way purple rhinestones bleed from the landscape into the panther, the whole image feels as though it exists from a perspective I've never seen before. I'm reminded that to someone else, that perspective will be familiar, personal.

Black Refractions will be on display at the *UMFA* through April 10, 2021, though visiting hours have changed (and are subject to change). Currently, the museum is open Wed. 10 a.m.–8 p.m. and Thurs.–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m. The 10a.m.–11 a.m. hour is reserved for seniors and high-risk individuals. To help prevent the spread of COVID-19, gallery capacity will be limited, and visitors are required to reserve tickets in advance at umfa.utah.edu/visit.



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For **Isabel Cueva**, practicing immigration law is personal. Cueva's father came to America when he was 16 years old and obtained residency, but many obstacles prevented the rest of his family from following. When she was 8, her parents made a life-changing decision: Her family would cross the border illegally. Of this experience, Cueva says, "I kept telling my mom, 'But we have passports! Why do we need to hide?'" As Cueva learned more about her family's situation and immigration at large, she began to understand her mother's position more clearly. Today, Cueva is a successful founder of her own immigration law practice in her now-home state of Utah, the *Cueva Law Firm*. But it took overcoming unimaginable trials, a never-ending oasis of hard work and a whole lot of perseverance for Cueva to become the successful woman she is today.

As soon as Cueva and her family safely reconciled in America, her father submitted the paperwork that would recognize Isabel Cueva as an American citizen. Yet it wasn't until six years later, when Cueva was 14 years old, that her paperwork would be finally approved. She recalls how the tumultuous pathway to citizenship wore on her parents and the many hardships they faced as they fought for freedom and acceptance in their new home. Cueva makes special note of an immigration lawyer from Utah County who took advantage of her family and the little savings they had, leading to a devastating financial and emotional aftermath.

Fortunately, a newly licensed attorney who lived next door guided the Cueva family through the complex labyrinth of immigration law and helped them recover. After seeing the impact this attorney had on herself and her family, Cueva decided to model her practice after his: She dedicated her life to keeping families together just like he had done for hers. Cueva says of this goal, "I knew I wanted to be the type of person little girls could look up to and remember in a positive way. That attorney changed my family's lives forever, and I know I have done the same."

After Cueva graduated high school, she attended the *University of Utah's S.J. Quinney College of Law*, where she interviewed for **Judge William L. Nixon** at the Executive Office for Immigration Review. Cueva spent most of her time writing bench briefs, where she discovered the critical impact attorneys have on immigrants' lives. "Some attorneys would go into hearings completely unprepared, which resulted in people getting deported [and in] families being torn apart," she says. "Witnessing this broke my heart. I can still hear the screams and sobs of a little girl who attended her father's final court hearing who was ordered deported."

This experience marks when Cueva decided she would devote herself fully to her cases,

Cueva Law Firm

By Theadora Soter

A Story of Success

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Photo courtesy of Cueva Law Firm

With the *Cueva Law Firm*, (L-R) Susana Maldonado, Isabel Cueva, Sage the office dog, Alexandra Johnson and Caroline Ramos work to provide the immigration-law landscape with a much-needed dose of empathy and understanding.

never failing to do everything she can to save a family. When Cueva graduated from law school, she was offered a position in Seattle, Washington, where she handled deportation cases and prepared detained clients for their court hearings. She stayed in Washington until a national law firm in California recruited her to start its immigration division. Of this life-changing experience, Cueva says, "I built that from the ground up and realized I could branch [out] on my own. This is when I started the *Law Office of Isabel Cueva*."

Cueva Law's mission is simple: "We help keep families together," Cueva says. "We offer honest advice. I don't sugarcoat anything. I will always tell my clients the truth. I arm them with knowledge so that they can make an informed decision that is best for them and their family." And that is exactly what she has done. *Cueva Law Firm* focuses on family-based immigration, meaning that they assist spouses, children and parents of U.S. citizens in petitioning for their relatives to remain in the United States. They have also helped DACA applicants, crime victims wanting to apply for visas and abused spouses of U.S. citizens with self-petitions. On top of her own relentlessness, Cueva notes that she couldn't succeed the way she does without her hardworking team, who she

claims are "three of the greatest paralegals of all time": **Alexandra Johnson, Caroline Ramos and Susana Maldonado**. And despite the demanding tasks of their day-to-day lives, they don't forget to put their feet up, play a little and marvel at the incredible work they have accomplished.

Cueva Law Firm has kept countless families together, from the two sisters from Central America, who were scheduled to be deported before Christmas despite being born in Utah, to the little boy that called Cueva looking for help because his mom had died and his dad had been picked up for deportation. There have even been times when the family Cueva kept together was her own, as when she was able to help her aunt, uncle and sister obtain their residencies after living in America and meeting with various immigration lawyers over multiple years.

The work *Cueva Law Firm* does is at once tumultuous, exhausting and rewarding. Summing it up, Cueva says, "It is emotionally draining. It is demanding. We have to be on task every minute of every day. But when you know you are truly making a difference in the lives of others for generations to come, it makes your work have value." Find more information at cuevalawfirm.com.



THE WEST VIEW IS YOU

By Ben Trentelman
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As we see many communities expanding and growing around Salt Lake, it's important to ask who defines a community. For years, Salt Lake City's Westside, the area west of I-15 between 2100 South and 2800 North, has been viewed by other city residents through ethnic, income and crime-related stereotypes—as the proverbial "wrong side of the tracks." For **Charlotte Fife-Jepperson**, Co-founder and Managing Editor of *The West View* and nearly 50-year west-SLC resident, these notions of community identity drive her to provide a vessel for the Westside community to define itself through the free, regional newspaper, *The West View*.

If you are a resident or business operating on the Westside, you may be familiar with *The West View* because a new issue arrives in your mailbox once every fall, winter and summer. Flipping through the newspaper, you will find a wide range of volunteer-produced content that Fife-Jepperson describes as "a mix of hard news (stories about serious issues and hot topics such as homelessness, evictions, calls for police reform, the U.S. census, elections, addiction, education, etc.), soft news (human-interest stories, business and nonprofit features) and opinion pieces where the author gives their perspective on a specific topic, or shares a personal story."

Salt Lake's Westside is host to an ethnically rich population where you can expect to hear a range of languages from around the globe. While there are many different groups present, aside from rubbing elbows in line at the post office, there may not be as many opportunities to better understand who our Westside neighbors are. "Engaging and connecting diverse populations in Salt Lake City is part of our guiding mission," Fife-Jepperson says. "Our paper is a reflection of our community. Readers can expect to see people of all different shades of skin and walks of life throughout the paper, as they will while walking through our neighborhoods or strolling through the

aisles of our grocery stores."

Turner Bitton, Executive Director of *The West View's* nonprofit producer, **West View Media**, says it is defined "first and foremost by community connection. Our volunteers, board members and staff are also our neighbors." Fife-Jepperson—along with her husband, **Chad Jepperson**, and **Edie Trimmer**—started the community newspaper in 2000 when they wanted to provide a counter-perspective to the local media narratives at the time, which painted a negative view of the Westside. "We had a lot of pride in our neighborhood and wanted to highlight the incredible people, projects, places and history that were a part of it," says Fife-Jepperson.

The newspaper predates the connections neighbors find on social media now, and has served an important role in connecting and aligning Westside neighbors on important issues. "It was also a way to invite Westside residents to get more involved in their community and with their local community councils," says Fife-Jepperson. This communal empowerment and amplification encourages and enables community members to become active in combating misconceptions and advocating for themselves.

Stories of a sixth-grader reflecting on her experience with virtual learning, an aspiring tattoo artist and the support she receives from her family, and a close look at the "Fleet Block" murals depicting victims of police violence and their relevance to the community are a few examples from the recent edition as to how *The West View* shares the community experience of Westsiders.

Support for the publication has increased as Bitton has helped acquire additional funding and grants, which has allowed for expanded distribution. "Because we mail to every business and household in SLC's Westside, we reach everyone—not just subscribers and the usual consumers of news," says Fife-Jepperson. "We reach folks who may not have digital access to news and

information. We provide content in other languages, primarily Spanish, to reach non-English-speaking neighbors." Their expanded reach and wide representation has made *The West View* a powerful resource for individuals in the community with limited connectivity and language barriers in providing accurate information on COVID-19, local politics and other important issues.

Fife-Jepperson also wants SLC residents to know that anybody who has a connection to SLC's Westside can provide content. Community members interested in contributing or helping to drive the direction of the publication are also invited to attend monthly newsroom meetings, which are currently virtual. You can RSVP through Facebook events at facebook.com/WestViewMedia or by emailing charlotte@westviewmedia.org.

Many Westsiders may find themselves in the position of defending their community against common stereotypes or feeling forlorn amid apparent, disproportionate development of East Side communities with resources while the Westside sees less desirable development such as a new prison. *The West View* is here as a reminder to all of Salt Lake City that there is a culturally rich and closely knit community that exists here, which can be found in numerous cultural centers, varied ethnic cuisines and an intermixed global population. "The Westside has historically been undervalued or seen as a dumping ground, and we want to change that by shining a light on this part of the city," says Fife-Jepperson. "We want to be recognized as the culturally rich, integral part of Salt Lake City that we are."

As the paper continues to help the Westside community represent themselves in media, *The West View* invites readers to follow them on Facebook, @WVMNews on Twitter and @thewestview on Instagram. You can learn more about *The West View* and find archived editions at westviewmedia.org.



(L-R) Managing Editor Charlotte Fife-Jepperson and Executive Director Turner C. Bitton strive to let SLC's Westside reflect itself as a culturally rich community in *The West View* publication.

Photo: Jessica Bundy

BUILDING ROME:

Navigating Trans Identity with Natalie Day

By Alexis Perno
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How do you build Rome? Certainly not in a day, and for YouTube educator Natalie Day, it's one video at a time. From 4 years old, Day knew her Rome: her identity as a transgender woman. Her path to self-acceptance has been long and storied, and as she struggled personally, Day documented her transition journey through her YouTube channel, *grl bydesign*. Being in the public eye hasn't always been easy, but Day is dedicated to spreading messages of love. "What I hope that people take away from my channel, from my life, from my avenues of communication, is that we're all human beings," Day says. "Simply validating people, loving people, accepting people for who they are will take us further than anything else. Never give up on hope."

Building Rome took time. Even after Day's medical transition, societal pressure led to struggles that ranged from mental health to professional and economic issues. As the anxiety grew too much to bear, Day began detransitioning, reversing the gender-affirming surgeries and hormone therapy she had undergone.

In this dark time, Day's video journey began on Facebook with a video she posted explaining how transitioning had been the worst mistake of her life. Despite the portrayal of regret, somewhere, Day knew detransitioning wasn't a step toward connecting with who she really was. One safe space changed everything. Day says, "My therapist was like, 'you're a transgender woman. You can choose to be that, to find peace with yourself and finally grow in that way, or eventually, you're probably going to be a suicide statistic.' The more I thought about it, I just realized I don't want to be a statistic. I do want to be happy; I deserve to be happy."

As Day found herself, she also began to acknowledge her unique position to use her story for good. In response to



Photo: LmSorenson.net

Through her YouTube channel, *grl bydesign*, Natalie Day has used the power of storytelling to empower others seeking gender affirmation.

the previous Facebook video, Day posted a YouTube video called, "Detransitioning- The BIGGEST MISTAKE of My Life!!" "I made that video with the intention of helping someone who was struggling, because I know detransitioning is something a lot of people consider," she says. "You could try and be a different person, but at the end of the day, who you are is who you are. It's an intrinsic nature that you cannot fight day in and day out ... your entire life."

Views racked up fast. As much as she wanted to help others, Day soon realized that her own mental health had to take a priority. With the video gaining more than 1.4 million views, Day received hate like she had never before. The backlash didn't stop her, though. Instead, she says the hate has given her "rhino skin," allowing her to stand up no matter the cruelty. "I am a transgender woman. There's nothing I can do that will ever change that, and we need to look introspectively more and truly be the people who we are," she says. "That's more important than anything because if you can be authentic to yourself, then you can find authentic love."

Anxiety has kept Day from uploading consistently, but as she works through the struggles, Day hopes to post more videos and create a space where differences are valued, uplifted and held as something beautiful. "My belief is that sometimes people just need to see a glimmer of hope to keep moving forward, so I try to do things that hope can build upon in order to move forward," Day says. "As far as my YouTube goes, eventually, I would like to

just be a positive voice, an influential voice of teaching, love and support."

Although Day's faced challenges, it was overcoming those challenges that have made her who she is. "Even though my journey was unconventional and it was different than any story I've ever heard, I had to go through all of those experiences to be able to grow in the ways that I needed to because honestly, had I not detransitioned, I never would have come to a place of acceptance," Day says.

And no matter how far she's come, Day says she will always be a vessel for lessons. What keeps her going in the face of bigotry and ostracization? Another simple mantra: "It has to get better; it's going to get better," Day says. "That's something that's just played in the back of my mind like a recorder every step of the way. This may not be perfect right now—this may not be easy right now—but eventually, things will get better."

Things really did get better. Finally, Day is happy in the Rome she's built. Her story is not finished, and neither is Day's endeavor to inspire others on their own journeys, both trans and cis alike. "When I say it gets better and life can come full circle, it's true; it can," Day says. "I didn't know what my life would look like at the end of it all, but peace, happiness, authenticity and self-love are more important than anything else. The rest will find you."

You can follow Day's story through her YouTube at *grl bydesign* and her Twitter @*grlbydesign*.

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VIRTUALIZED

By Jamie Christensen jamiec1331@gmail.com



(L-R) Devin Richie, Nate Richie, Caine Wenner, Lexie Wilson and Emma Roberts come together with sounds that each individual member of the band identifies with.

Photo: @robtookthis

"We wanted a name that was simple and didn't give any indication of what genre we played in. Sometimes when you hear the name of a band, you know exactly what genre they'll be in, and we wanted to avoid that so we could go in any direction we felt like," says **Devin Richie**, addressing the name of SLC band Herring.

Ultimately, this quote embodies exactly what Herring represents through their sound—a unique separation from genre labeling. The five-member ensemble creates sounds that do not fit into one specific category. "What you hear—especially with the new songs we're writing—is the unification of all our ideas into a song that makes us excited," says band member **Lexie Wilson**. Herring's music is a coming-together of the sounds that each individual member of the band identifies with. The end result is a multi-genre tracklist that can appeal to all those who appreciate ardent musical talent and good vibes.

Herring first began as a duo project in 2017, consisting of **Caine Wenner** on drums and Devin on vocals and guitar. Wenner has been involved in music since his youth, eventually playing in other local bands such as **Anthropology**, **Anodos** and **The Gontiks**. Coming together to form Herring, Wenner and Devin produced the band's first, self-titled album close to two years ago. And after adding on the three other members—**Nate Richie** and **Emma Roberts** on guitar and Wilson on bass—the five-piece is working toward Herring's second album.

"Herring was a Caine-and-Devin project for a long time, and they wrote the first album themselves," says Wilson. "Caine was in school and Dev was unemployed, so they spent nearly every day just jamming and sharing ideas (also skateboarding and home-brewing beer)."

The other three members came on naturally: Wilson notes that she and Devin are dating, as are Wenner and Roberts, while Nate is Devin's brother. She says, "We started playing music together because Emma and Nate are very experienced, unique guitarists, and I think Caine and Devin were excited to bring [Emma and Nate's] artistry into album number two. And I'm just the cute bassist (fingernails emoji)."

Each member of Herring brings in a specialized element to create their sound. Wenner notes they are all multi-instrumentalists to an extent, meaning every member contributes and gives inspiration to different elements of new tracks and ideas. He says, "Other music projects I've worked on over the years vary pretty widely, from math rock to synth pop and lots in between. Since we take a collaborative approach to songwriting, a lot of different styles end up making it into our songs through each of our own musical histories."

Wilson says, "We're a close-knit group of friends with similar tastes in music, and we use differences in tastes to challenge the vibe of the music we write." Devin recognizes that Herring's sound naturally progressed from an indie-rock taste into more of a post-punk direction.

"Our collective sound has evolved into an art/space rock/punk with a sprinkle of shoegaze," says Roberts. "Herring's sound has become distinctly more 'moody.'" With multiple minds dedicated to the creation process, Herring is able to create innovative tracks with enhanced instrumentals and elevated songwriting.

The progression and evolution of Herring's sound can also be traced back to each member's distinct musi-

SLUG Mag's Virtualized: An Online Concert Featuring Utah Bands provides an opportunity for locals to once again hear the consistently sweet vocals and instrumentals of their favorite SLC musicians. This month, be sure to check out the virtual live show Feb. 19 that will celebrate *SLUG Magazine's* 32nd anniversary and feature Herring, **Ivouries** and **The Painted Roses**, three incredible acts that are bringing pop and rock to you. What better way to enjoy samples of shoegaze and bedroom pop than when it is delivered straight to your home?

cal influence(s), ranging from **Pixies** to **Wolf Parade** to **Primus** to **The Smiths**. "I'm inspired by artists who bring a unique, minimalist sound to a project where the other guitar or bass is taking the lead," says Nate.

Due to self-isolation during the pandemic, writing future tracks for Herring's upcoming album and regular jam sessions had come to a halt. The band was previously on pause for the better part of 2020, but they have hopes for a new album by early 2022.

And though COVID-19 has been a setback to their growth, the band notes the SLC music scene has been especially welcoming as Herring takes its first steps. "Salt Lake City has such a vibrant music scene with countless great bands," Wenner says. "The strong sense of music community is a huge benefit not only for the motivation to create but also to be able to play shows with these people."

Be sure to tune into *Virtualized* on Feb. 19, and keep an eye out for new music from Herring on their Instagram **@herringtheband** and on common streaming services.

Think late-'80s, early-'90s pop ballads—a dangling earring, a deep V-neck with dark hair curling over the nape, synchronized dance moves and a music video with moody choreography and pink overtones. This was my first impression of local act Ivouries—but I soon found out their sound is more malleable, bending and filling the space of whatever environment they want to live in for that specific track. The four-piece collective creates music that is both warm and chilled, a mix of energized pop and bedroom electronics.

Ivouries began as a solo project for **Jaxon Garrick**, now lead guitarist and singer, as he crafted and performed music in his mom's basement. Then, the realization sprung that he would need backing musicians as the project gained momentum. Garrick says, "I was horrified of playing a solo set and then got my friends to play with me, and the lineup we have now just really works. It just felt natural and took a bit of pressure off of me."

Finding musicians was also a natural process, as Garrick met keyboardist **Adam Fuller** and lead-bassist **Casey Schrader** in elementary school, while drummer **Devin Mitchell** was scouted through SLC's local music scene. "I knew Devin was a sick drummer, and what I loved about him was his embrace of the changing musical landscape we were all facing," Garrick says.

Garrick understands the significance of having band members that are genuine and able to relay their own opinions and critiques. Having grown up together—besides Mitchell—and expressing similar musical intentions, the four-piece is able to produce content in a creative space that is candid and open. Garrick says, "It's really nice to be able to come together and make something that I could never have done on my own."

Garrick also notes that the band members share a similar disposition in how they view electronic music. Having experienced criticism in the past, finding members that appreciated how computerized sounds and electronic productions could elevate the band took precedence. "A lot of my friends were really snooty about, like, Ableton and other computer music-production stuff because it wasn't 'real,' and I hard-disagreed with that," he says.

As their sound bends and morphs into whatever creative landscape they decide to display, Ivouries hope that most listeners can find a leg to stand on, but pleasing everyone has never been their top priority. "I would hope everyone could find something they like ... I think everyone loves a good hook, though, and we try hard to make our music have that pop flair because we all love it," Garrick says.

Although the band takes on different musical identities, it's fair to say that the main genre they fit into is pop. "It's like pop, but anxious and kinda moody," Garrick says. With an understanding of the Salt Lake music scene, Ivouries fill a more abrasive-pop niche gap—Garrick notes there may be a lack of that sound in the city, as some artists might be afraid to squeeze into this specific label. Progressing as a collective in Salt Lake poses challenges and benefits for artists, but as a pop band, Ivouries notes some of their fanbase is isolated due to Utah's strict liquor laws and venues' 21+ allowance. As a band grows, there are only so many venues available, so cutting

off the lifeline that is the bubblegum-pop-excitable, under-18 audience can be detrimental.

Against these obstacles, Ivouries say that performing and advancing in an area such as Salt Lake has several advantages. "One of the benefits is the tight-knit community. It's really cool to be able to talk to venue organizers directly and work with people on a very personal level," Garrick says. "People really hype each other up and aren't afraid to like artists that have a bunch of different backgrounds and genres." Garrick first began playing in varying rock bands until Ivouries' conception, where their energetic pop sound took over—they then began playing with soul bands such as **Joshy Soul** and **Brooklyn Kohl**.

Now a fine tuned four-piece, Ivouries have grounded themselves in an area full of opportunity and astounding local talent. To stand apart from the crowd in their live performance, Garrick notes that—while it may sound trite—they really try to lose themselves in their music while onstage. He says, "There is a beautiful moment live that I always strive for, which is everyone in the crowd and onstage ... experiencing the same thing at the same time and are surrendering themselves to it."

Though times of isolation and hunkering down for quarantine have proven troubling, Garrick notes that while it has been difficult, a pause for self-exploration has been helpful. In terms of Ivouries, he says "I've just been really taking music more seriously, and the upcoming Ivouries stuff will be real different in terms of ... effort and boldness."

Be on the lookout for new music from Ivouries—they can be found on Spotify and other streaming services—and follow their social media handles: **@ivouriesmyspace** on Twitter and **@ivouries** on Instagram. Also, make a point to tune into *SLUG Mag's Virtualized* show to watch Ivouries perform on Feb. 19 at 8 p.m. and celebrate *SLUG's* 32nd anniversary!

VIRTUALIZED

By Jamie Christensen • jamiec1331@gmail.com



Photo: Angie Petty

(L-R) Devin Mitchell, Jaxon Garrick, Casey Schrader and Adam Fuller create bedroom electronic pop music that originated in Garrick's mom's basement as a solo project.

Education & Inspiration

BLUE SKY INSTITUTE

By Audrey Lockie • audrey@slugmag.com

One of the most crucial roles a leader can play is that of the egalitarian educator; the leader who not only alleviates pain but instills their followers with the strength and knowhow they need to carry an enduring activist legacy further than one person could ever reach. The *Blue Sky Institute*, a local, volunteer-based nonprofit, uses education and community engagement as the foundation for a wide array of grassroots projects and mini-organizations that benefit the livelihood of our state's ecosystem, its residents and its defining community pillars. **Tom King**, one of the founders of *Blue Sky*, finds that the core principle connecting the organization's many tendrils lies in its tagline: "Nurturing Education for the Advancement of the Welfare of All Life."

At the core of King and co.'s work with *Blue Sky* lies a dedication to undoing the glut of miseducation that the powers that be drill into the public. "The founders perceived a lack of education in a number of significant areas regarding important aspects of humans living successfully on earth," says King. "Another way to look at it is that widespread ignorance exists regarding aspects of our species' existence, and such ignorance results in enabling actions that are inimical to the best interests of the species *Homo sapiens*, as well as countless other life forms that share the world with humans."

It wasn't that the Utah public was acting with conscious ill-intent, but rather that the structural forces surrounding them—public schooling, biased media, self-serving bureaucratic dishonesty—worked against the citizens' educational interests. "There was a perception [among *Blue Sky*'s founders] that this widespread ignorance was due to a lack of effective educational opportunities and programs, and [we] determined that one step toward rectifying the underlying problem of ignorance would be through the establishment of an educational nonprofit organization that could develop and implement innovative educational strategies geared towards alleviation of at least some of the profound ignorance and misconceptions that threaten our species (as well as tens of thousands of other species) with extinction," says King.

Blue Sky Institute began with the *Oldtime Songsters* program, an initiative dedicated to working with underprivileged children and adolescents to rehearse a program of decades-old songs to perform at local senior-living and care facilities. "This helped educate at-risk youth of the value to be realized from acts of kindness they could do for the elderly," says King, the seed idea of community engagement that drives all of *Blue Sky*'s current projects.

Since these early days, the *Blue Sky Institute* has expanded like a wad of dough on a blistering summer day. They now spearhead or have assisted with the development of over a dozen local initiatives, events and more. From their decade-strong *Dirt2Table* project, which provides support for and education about sustainable eating and home-grown produce, to the *Annual Community Coat Exchange*, a clothing drive held every year on Black Friday that collects and distributes winter clothes for Utah's unsheltered population, *Blue Sky* maintains their people-first, education-forward mission. Details on a host of other initiatives with foci ranging from environmental (1 *Planet Environmental Stewardship*) to abolitionist (*Blue Sky*'s fiscal sponsorship of **Decarcerate Utah's** Community Bail Fund) can be found on the organization's website, blueskyinstitute.org.

"Education means alleviating ignorance," says King. "It means facilitating the development of knowledge, critical-thinking skills and dispositions. It means inspiring the passion to want to know how things work, and what impacts each of us has on the rest of the world." More than through the tangible benefits the *Blue Sky Institute* offers (clothes, food, wildlife and freedom where there wasn't), the collective's true power comes from their construction of an empathic web that extends beyond their own actions—quite literally, perhaps, in teaching the public to fish and sanctifying the dictum that "knowledge is power."

King says, "We see every incremental increase in knowledge and the skills and ability to use tools to alleviate ignorance as an increase in the likelihood that our species can succeed in learn-



Blue Sky Institute Co-founder Tom King views the organization's education initiatives as a means of teaching Utahns how to build a brighter future for our state.

ing to live in balance with the vast web of life upon which our species is utterly dependent for survival."

While such work—against both purposeful and incidental societal ignorance, against the threats of neocapitalism's greedy piledrive through social welfare programs—always entails an uphill battle, King and the rest of the *Blue Sky Institute* remain hopeful about the road ahead. "In various ways, the future looks like a continuation of the growth and evolution that has occurred thus far in our history," King says. And the driving force behind these progressive actions is the necessary sacrifice of each and every volunteer. "The execution of all of our educational activities is 100% volunteer-powered," says King, noting that extra hands are always appreciated. "People can also join our various projects on social media and spread the word about our initiatives."

Blue Sky's revisionist pledge of allegiance (their "Pledge to Life") best sums up their range of activist initiatives and educational campaigns, a creed that erases the religious and nationalistic hypocrisies of the all-too-familiar ode and replaces them with principles of communal love, togetherness and respect: "I pledge allegiance to all life / In its interdependent diversity / And to the Planet upon which it exists / One World, under the sky, undividable / With harmony and balance for all."

Find more information at blueskyinstitute.org. If you are interested in volunteering or otherwise becoming involved with *Blue Sky Institute*, you can reach out to info@blueskyinstitute.org.

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When I set out for *Hong Kong Tea House* in downtown Salt Lake City, I didn't know I was driving toward a comforting feast that would fill my stomach and calm my winter day anxiety—but it certainly did. This great dim sum (Cantonese dumplings) spot made for a delicious lunch that was perfect for improving a windy and dreary December day.

I ordered my food over the phone, and with my spouse driving, we went to pick up our lunch, which *Hong Kong Tea House* serves until 3 p.m. every day. The original plan was to drive home and eat there, but the food smelled so good—and most of it was so portable—that we couldn't withstand the temptation of eating with our hands on the windy drive back home. Paired with the folky sounds of **John Prine**, these dumplings made for a perfect pick-me-up.

The compact dumplings made for easy eating and tided us over until we got home and tried the less car-friendly sesame chicken. Everything was hot, fresh and brought complexity in texture and flavor that was so fun to eat.

We started with the Fried Shrimp Balls (\$5 for four), and they were the perfect start to our meal. The fried balls were surrounded by crunchy strips of wonton wrappers that made for a cute, golden-brown veneer, giving us sneak-peeks of the shrimp inside. The outside was so crispy that on the first bite it burst, letting the filling of moist, flavorful shrimp escape onto my tongue. These came with a sweet-and-sour sauce that carried an undertone of warming spices. The only downside to these fried balls was that they were a little messy, but they were so good

***Hong Kong Tea House's* Fried Shrimp Balls (Right), Steamed BBQ Chicken Buns (Left) and Pork Dumplings (Top) make for a hearty dim sum meal.**

that I was committed to tracking down every crumb as they spilled back onto the takeout container and into the folds of my sweatshirt.

A softer offering came in the form of the Snow Pea Leaves Dumplings (\$4 for three). Encased in a translucent, white rice-paper exterior that showcased the dark green snow pea leaves and a whole pink shrimp, these dumplings were incredibly soft with a light bite offered by the shrimp. The greens were slightly bitter, which brought a great balance to the sweetness of the shrimp and the slight nuttiness that hit at the end of the bite.

Another steamed choice are the Pork Dumplings (\$2.95 for four). These little dumplings were bite-sized and tasty. The pork inside was well seasoned and had the slightly bouncy texture of a sausage mixed with onions and bits of savory mushrooms. The outer wrapper was so soft that it melted in my mouth and gave way to the tender pork. The overall flavor was reminiscent of family dinners with meat and stuffing, something comforting and familiar.

The last bits of savory dim sum I ate were the Steamed BBQ Chicken Buns (\$2.95 for three). These dumplings consist of a more breadlike dough and a meaty filling. The bread is steamed, white and sticky, with little cracks that reveal the red-brown barbecue chicken enclosed within. The sweet and almost floral bread pairs well with the savory tartness and slight spice (though no heat) of the chicken. The chicken itself is tender but still firmer than the bun, allowing it to bring a little contrast to the feel of the complete dish.

As it turned out, we needed to try our dessert on the way home as well. The Fried Sesame Buns (\$2.95 for three) are light-tan balls with sesame seeds coating the outside, creating a crisp exterior in contrast to the interior, which encases a gooey and sweet sesame paste in its soft and slightly chewy bun. This dumpling has a slight sweetness that builds as you eat it and is almost peanut-buttery in flavor, tout-ing toasty notes from the fried sesame seeds. Every bite is texturally complex as you get crispness, chewiness and the pleasant stickiness of the center. Lighter and less sweet than many desserts, the fried sesame buns quietly beckon you to try just a little more.

Upon arriving home, we finally broke into the Sesame Chicken Lunch Special (\$6.99), which comes with ham fried rice, an eggroll and two fried wontons. By this time, we were honestly pretty full but still willing to try the last few things from our lunch. The egg roll was crispy, sweet and savory, with notes of honey that complemented the bitterness of the encased vegetables. Nestled under the egg rolls were the wontons and lightly breaded sesame chicken. Together with the wontons, this made for a texturally interesting bite—the sweet-and-savory sauce provided tang and moisture to the crispness of chicken and wontons. The sauce also provided a sticky surface to the chicken, making it easy to eat the ham fried rice and chicken in a single bite.

Hong Kong Tea House is a great local spot for comforting food that will make you smile even on the dreariest of days. Give them a try next time you're craving something savory and delicious.

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SAVE THE KIDS

FROM INCARCERATION

TRANSFORMATIONAL ACTIVISM BREAKING THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE



By Tim Schoof | t.schoof7@gmail.com

(L-R) Save the Kids Southwest Chapter members National Coordinator of National Week Against School Pushout Chelsie Acosta, Bella Ochoa, Brock Smith, Regional Coordinator Wes Wesson, National Director of Personnel Mac Allred, Jahne' Johnson and National Director of Outreach Anthony Nocella.

Save the Kids (STK) is a nonprofit devoted to keeping youth from being institutionalized in the carceral system. Since its founding, STK has grown into a national, volunteer-driven organization with six regional chapters. Nationwide, STK spearheads a huge slate of projects working toward a more just and humane system. Located in Salt Lake City, the Southwest STK Chapter hosts educational classes and panels that explore transformative justice, stigmatized youth subcultures and the plight of the modern justice system. They also feed and provide socks for unhoused people in Pioneer Park, offer letter-writing programs for Utah inmates and organize other events, including protests and conferences.

The genesis of STK's mission began in 2009 when **Jason, Ali, Jarir** and **Amond**—four African American teens aged 16 and under—met at the Hillbrook Juvenile Detention Center in Syracuse, New York. They recognized the dire need for an organization that would save youth like them from being trapped in a punitive, abusive system. STK and its mission to end the school-to-prison pipeline appealed to that fundamental need. In a few years, STK established educational workshops, an urban garden and a hip-hop studio at Hillbrook, providing young people with engaging, enriching experiences during the prime of their emotional development.

"The school-to-prison pipeline pushed tens of thousands of youth out of schools and into the juvenile justice system. Once an individual is caught in the criminal and juvenile system, it's nearly impossible to escape," says **Dr. Anthony J. Nocella II**, STK's National Director of Outreach and a *Salt Lake Community College* (SLCC) criminology professor. "Save the Kids focuses on supporting all youth; however, the four groups most often caught in or targeted by the school-to-prison pipeline and juvenile justice system are youth of color, youth with disabilities, [LGBTQIA+] youth and youth who are economically disadvantaged."

STK features an impressive range of national and regional programs. The organization sets itself apart as a community leader through its diverse

membership, volunteer-oriented approach and its many partnerships. Previously incarcerated people come together with academics, mentors, legal professionals, policymakers and others, united in the pursuit of transformative justice that would radically alter the way criminal justice and many other facets of society function.

STK relies on volunteers and cooperation with other groups to make projects happen. "We are hip-hop in that we do a lot with very little," says Nocella. "We are a fully volunteer organization ... We don't depend on money for youth justice; we depend on people in the community to care." STK volunteers collaborate with dozens of other major nonprofits to fight for shared goals, such as **Black Lives Matter**, **GreenPeace**, the **NAACP** and the **ACLU**, which carry over to localized partnerships in SLC. In addition, they partner with smaller grassroots groups, including protestors at Standing Rock and LGBTQ+ activists. Coordination, passion and grassroots organizing drive STK's progress.

Activism and cooperation power STK's mission of transformative justice. The emerging practice of transformative justice views conflict beyond the conventional victim/offender duality, instead viewing people as individuals within communities. From that perspective, transformative justice techniques, such as conflict-transformation workshops, grapple with the deep-rooted causes driving conflict in the first place.

"Transformative justice is not about destroying and building anew, and it's not about creating win-lose solutions common to social revolutions in which the oppressed become the new oppressors," Nocella says. "Instead, transformative justice asks that *everyone* and *everything* change—we as individuals, as well as our systems, structures and relationships." Their philosophy also drives academic work that studies transformational justice and youth subcultures like punk, lowriding and hip-hop. "We believe [that] to end the incarceration of youth, we must embrace the

cultures that [they're a] part of and find the beauty and power of them, rather than the negativity," says Nocella. This holistic approach helps break down conventional understanding of punitive justice.

Utah presents a challenge to Nocella and his colleagues at STK. "Here in Utah, there is an overrepresentation of youth of color in juvenile detention," says Nocella. To combat this, the Southwest Chapter has organized youth-justice workshops at numerous Utah colleges and universities, including the *University of Utah* and *Salt Lake Community College*. They host youth open mics and take disadvantaged kids on trips into the outdoors, giving youth access to experiences they may not have had otherwise. Southwest STK has also coordinated vigils in remembrance of those killed by police violence in partnership with Black Lives Matter, protesting injustices of the criminal justice system.

There are plenty of ways to get involved and learn more about STK. On Feb. 19, STK will be hosting the *7th Annual Transformative Justice and Abolition Criminology Conference*, which is open to the public through Zoom, with more conferences coming later in the year. "We also founded the *National Week of Action Against Incarcerating Youth*, which is every May and falls on **Malcolm X's** birthday, **Biggie's** birthday and **Brown v. Board of Education**," Nocella says. "It's May 17–23, 2021, this year."

STK also offers a library of publications that explore transformative justice. The *Poetry Behind the Wall* book series shares firsthand perspectives from within the prison system. The *Transformative Justice*, *Lowrider Studies*, *Punk Studies* and *Hip Hop Studies* journals are peer-reviewed periodicals, all available on STK's website. Nocella has written several books in the past, including a new one focusing on hip-hop studies that will be out soon. STK is a grassroots organization that relies on volunteers, and people interested can apply for volunteer and intern positions through their site, savethekidsgroup.org.



SKATE

Some of you might know this as the "Leo Romero rail," due to the frontside he did as his last trick in the America video Made: Chapter One back in 2013. Christian Bourne had a similar idea for his last trick in the new *Shit Vortex* video by **Wizard Winn**. Lots of roll-ups and three tries later, Christian was celebrating the completion of his newest part. The new *Shit Vortex* video should be out now. Look it up!

By Weston Colton • [@westoncolton](https://twitter.com/westoncolton)

Christian Bourne – Backside 50-50 – SLC, UT



LOCAL MUSIC SINGLES ROUNDUP

This February, turn toward your ever-reliable music community to help cure the winter blues. Whether you need to shake off the frost with the heat of **KAL MARA** and **Vinnie Cassius** or hunker down with a mass of blankets with the comforting empathy of **Rainy Dawn** and **The Sportsman**, hopefully these four songs prove helpful in taking your eyes off the gray, grim outdoors.



FERRARI \$MOKE

“xanncag3”
Self-Released
Street: 08.20
FERRARI \$MOKE = Freddie Gibbs + Travis Scott + Bill \$aber

A delightfully dark gem hidden in a shitstorm of a year, FERRARI \$MOKE’s “xanncag3” is a track that uses its production, execution and video to develop a uniquely ominous atmosphere. Using a mix of ambience and melancholic trap elements, the beat on “xanncag3” mixes beautifully with the delivery of the vocals. The energy in this song allows it to work both for turning up or turning down. FERRARI \$MOKE radiates a swagger on this one that makes him stand out amongst the crowd, and creates excitement for what’s to come. Don’t sleep on “xanncag3”—it’s a must listen. (P.S. Check out “expenses” while you’re at it.) —*Connor Brady*



KAL MARA

“Middle”
Self-Released
Street: 12.20
KAL MARA = Tove Lo + Zella Day

After a two-year hiatus, local artist KAL MARA has released a brand new single, “Middle.” The song begins with a low-pitched, almost fuzzy-sounding oscillation. KAL MARA’s ghostly voice fades in, murmuring quietly until it becomes loud and articulate. The words pulsate over an electronic melody and steady drumbeat. The lyrics “Blue shirt black tie / Legs spread pants tight” are steadily repeated by MARA’s double-tracked vocals. In the song’s second half, the song releases into a quick-paced, almost panicked tone. The words “find me in the middle” close the song, echoing seductively into silence. Overall, “Middle” is intriguing, well-produced and just plain sexy. It’s an exciting reintroduction to this fluorescent artist. —*Avrey Evans*



Rainy Dawn

“Something in the Water”
Self-released
Street: 10.23
Rainy Dawn = Maisie Peters x The Oh Hellos

Acoustic duo Rainy Dawn’s “Something in the Water” expresses what a child endures when living with an alcoholic parent through heartfelt lyrics. Stormy imagery such as, “Take a look at the bottles / Dragging you under when you’re down,” expresses the desperation of addiction, and the song’s music video drives these sentiments home by depicting a son’s struggle with his abusive father. Both **Launa Rain** and **Lyndi Wadsworth** bring their vocal chops to the table, sporting smooth tones and impeccable harmonies. The duo creates sweeping momentum and emotional intensity using just acoustic guitar and their voices. Though their style is stripped-down, Rainy Dawn is out to create big, passionate sound. —*Mekenna Malan*



The Sportsman + 90sbride

“Make It Work”
Swamp Rock Records
Street: 12.11
The Sportsman + 90sbride = Wizard Apprentice (Keep It In, Keep It Out) x The Unicorns

Per **Julie Andrews’** wisdom, sometimes a little sweetness helps us swallow the bitter pill. On The Sportsman’s collaborative track with Seattle’s 90sbride, “Make It Work,” a sugary indie-pop instrumental serves as our spoonful of sugar for 90sbride’s all-too-familiar quandaries: the perils of adulthood, the never-ending quest for identity and self-worth, and the pressure of having to go it alone. The verses, delivered in a sing-song quasi-rap, read like diaristic confessions of daily struggles before 90sbride settles into melodic resolve for the chorus: “Lost time / So precious now / We’ll make it work / Work somehow.” It’s rough out there, but sometimes all you need is a little foot-tapping tune and a healthy dose of reassuring self-love. —*Audrey Lockie*

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LOCAL MUSIC REVIEWS



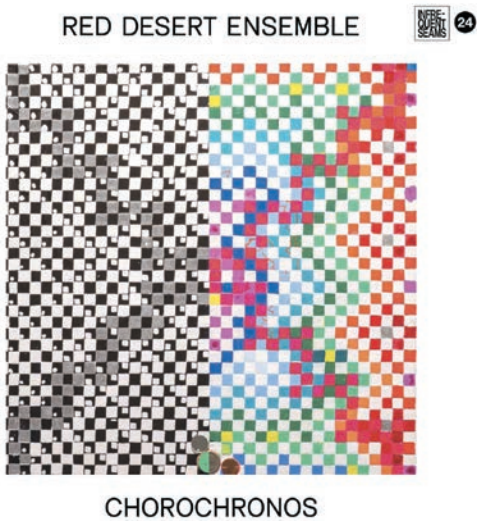
FreeDream – Elemental Art
(Self-Released, 04.13)
FreeDream = Incubus + Soundgarden
–Kenz Waldon



Markeza – White Elephant
(Self-Released, 12.26)
Markeza = Cilver + Paramore
–Emilee Atkinson



**Portal to the God Damn Blood
Dimension – Rotten Fruit;
Regular Orchid**
(Self-Released, 09.15)
PTTGDBD = Acres + Keaton Henson
–Marina McTee



**Red Desert Ensemble –
CHOROCHRONOS**
(Infrequent Seams, 12.18)
Red Desert Ensemble = Michael Pisaro +
Sarah Hennies
–Audrey Lockie

BEER OF THE MONTH

By Chris and Sylvia Hollands
chris.hollands@porchdrinking.com
sylvia.hollands@porchdrinking.com

This is the Pilsener
Brewery: Hoppers Grill and
Brewing Co.
ABV: 5%
Serving Style:
64-ounce growler



Walking into *Hoppers Grill and Brewing Co.*, you're immediately greeted with a wall of medals honoring the good work this long-standing Utah brewing establishment has earned in its many years of business. You will notice that one of the first of those awards is for their popular regular brew, a pilsener appropriately titled, "This is the Pilsener." As this award was achieved in 2007, you can still clearly see the top-level lineage this beverage carries—and has carried—for over a decade-and-a-half. In a business dominated by fast and trendy brew styles such as Hazy IPAs and Pastry Stouts, it's always refreshing to see a solid lager on the menu. More and more, we find ourselves gravitating toward these simple and delightful brews. Pils is a go-to style in our household and has been for years now. When you don't want to overthink what's going on with a beer and, well, just have a damn beer, we encourage you to do a little throwback and get refreshed.

Description:
We picked up a growler from the brewpub and got it filled with this month's beer. It's so nice to have fresh, cold beer ready for consumption. As we got home, we poured the beer into a nonic pint glass with a little bit of vigor to activate

the carbonation and see what was going on. The beer pours a clear, pastel yellow. A head forms from a billowy, clean white foam, which may have been accentuated by the aggressive pour. On the nose, we pick up faint notes of honey and light melon. This pils delivers a medium mouthfeel with low levels of carbonation. The flavor is clean, with hints of sweet bread and wheat alongside floral notes. The beer finishes with a sweetness from the German malts and minimal, enjoyable Noble-hop bitterness. This is the Pilsener is a beer well suited for all occasions and is good to sit right next to many of our other favorites in this style in our fridge.

Overview:
Hoppers Grill and Brewing Co. has been an important component of the Utah brew scene since 1996, when the brewpub became the first of its kind in the south end of the Salt Lake Valley. We can recall visiting this fine establishment numerous times over the years when we wanted to grab a tasty bite and enjoy a nice drink or two with some friends. This is the Pilsener is the most awarded of all of *Hoppers* offerings, having won awards at several different, important beer events, including the *Great American Beer Festival* and the *International Beer Awards*. The awards came early, but some of them have come as recently as 2019, which says a lot about the staying power of a fine beer.

As we picked up the pils, we also grabbed a second beer called Drifter, another lagered brew. And just like the pils, it's also a fine beer. When you head to pick up some 2 Row Hazy IPAs and some *Bohemian* lagers, make sure you keep on truckin' just a little farther and snag some beer and a bite from *Hoppers*. It's always worth revisiting and reminds us to stop taking the simple things for granted because—let's be honest—a good pils is not really as simple as it tastes.

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By Bob Plumb • @bobplumbphoto



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Censor
Director: Prano Bailey-Bond
Silver Salt Films
Premiere: Jan. 28, 10 p.m.
—Audrey Lockie



Cryptozoo
Director: Dash Shaw
Fit Via Vi Film Productions
Premiere: Jan. 29, 1 p.m.
—Patrick Gibbs

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Barkley L. Hendricks, *Lowdy Mama*, 1969, oil and gold leaf on
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