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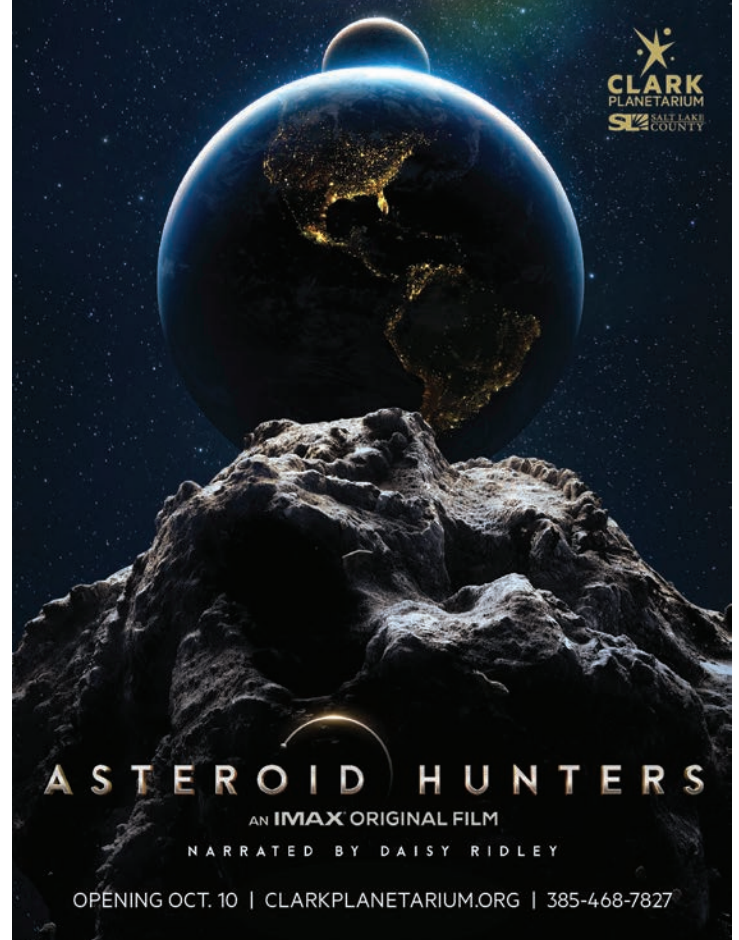
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ABOUT THE COVER: For our annual *Local Distilleries & Spirits* issue, **Chuck Landvatter** depicts **Alan and Julia Scott** as the mad genius and chemistry wizard behind *Waterpocket Distillery*. Check out his art at chucklandvatter.com and read about the dynamic distillery on page 8.

Em Behringer

Contributor Limelight
Contributing Photographer



Em Behringer has been an irreplaceable member of *SLUG*'s photographer team since October 2022. She and her camera have traveled across the Salt Lake valley to capture the essence of many underground communities, from outdoor organizations to activist groups to underrated bars and restaurants. Check out her shots of *Waterpocket's* Fruita Triple Sec and SLC's best street tacos on pages 8 and 20, respectively!

Harper Haase

Contributor Limelight
Senior Staff Writer



An exceptional writer who likes to play by her own rules, Harper Haase has been covering local and national music for *SLUG* since November 2021. Her versatility is clear from her album reviews that span all genres of music, but her unmistakable voice shines through the most when it comes to indie, hip-hop and R&B. Read her interviews with *Localized* headliners *Roses On The Moon* and *Øutset Bandits* on pages 24 and 26!

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Ben Miller, Nate Schwartz

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Advertising Sales:

John Ford,
Community Development Manager:
johnford@slugmag.com

Angela H. Brown:

sales@slugmag.com
SLUG HQ: 801.487.9221

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Paper Boats: Contemporary Voices From Gaza

“Creation is a matter of existence and resistance.” –Hanan Habashi, *Paper Boats* co-creator, Gaza City.

Paper Boats is a collaborative project from **Angela H. Brown, Adela Rahmati, and Tamrika Khvtisiashvili** in partnership with the *Skidmore College* MDOCS Storytellers’ Institute Forum. It was first published in August 2021 in the form of a hand-assembled, limited-edition zine including poetry, photography and visual art. As an avenue for 14 Palestinian women living in Gaza to share their artistic work outside of the Israeli-occupied territory and locked-down borders surrounding them, the book was sold at *Printed Matter, Inc.* in New York City and at a launch event at *Modern West* in Salt Lake City. Several Gaza co-creators attended the launch via social media. It took close to a year for the Gaza co-creators to be delivered a physical copy of the zine as it is extremely difficult to mail anything to the Gaza strip.



Paper Boats release. A second, limited printing of *Paper Boats* is now underway and available via pre-order at paperboatszine.bigcartel.com. All proceeds will go directly to the makers in Gaza. Follow @paperboats on Instagram for more information.

Paper Boats Gaza Team: Asma’a Abdu, Alaa Alhattab, Nour AlSaqqa, Israa Alsigaly, Kholoud Balata, Dina Erheem, Hanan Habashi, Raedah Habboub, Malak Hijazi, Sahar Kalloub, Malak Zakout, Amena Shabana, Haya Sahar Issa, Nadya Siyam.



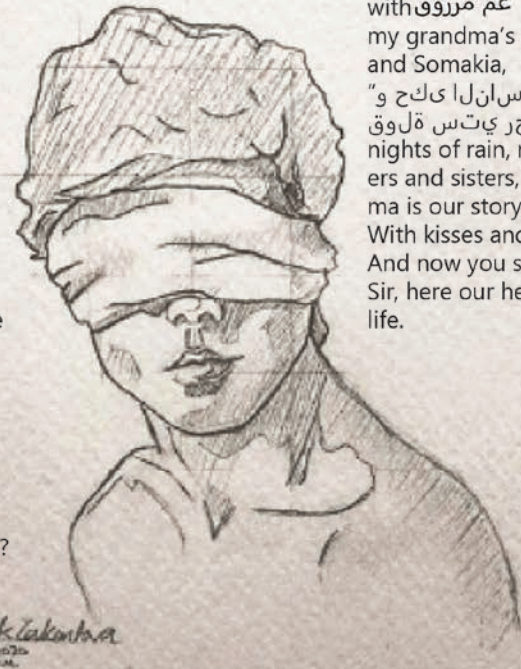
What does it mean to be a Palestinian?

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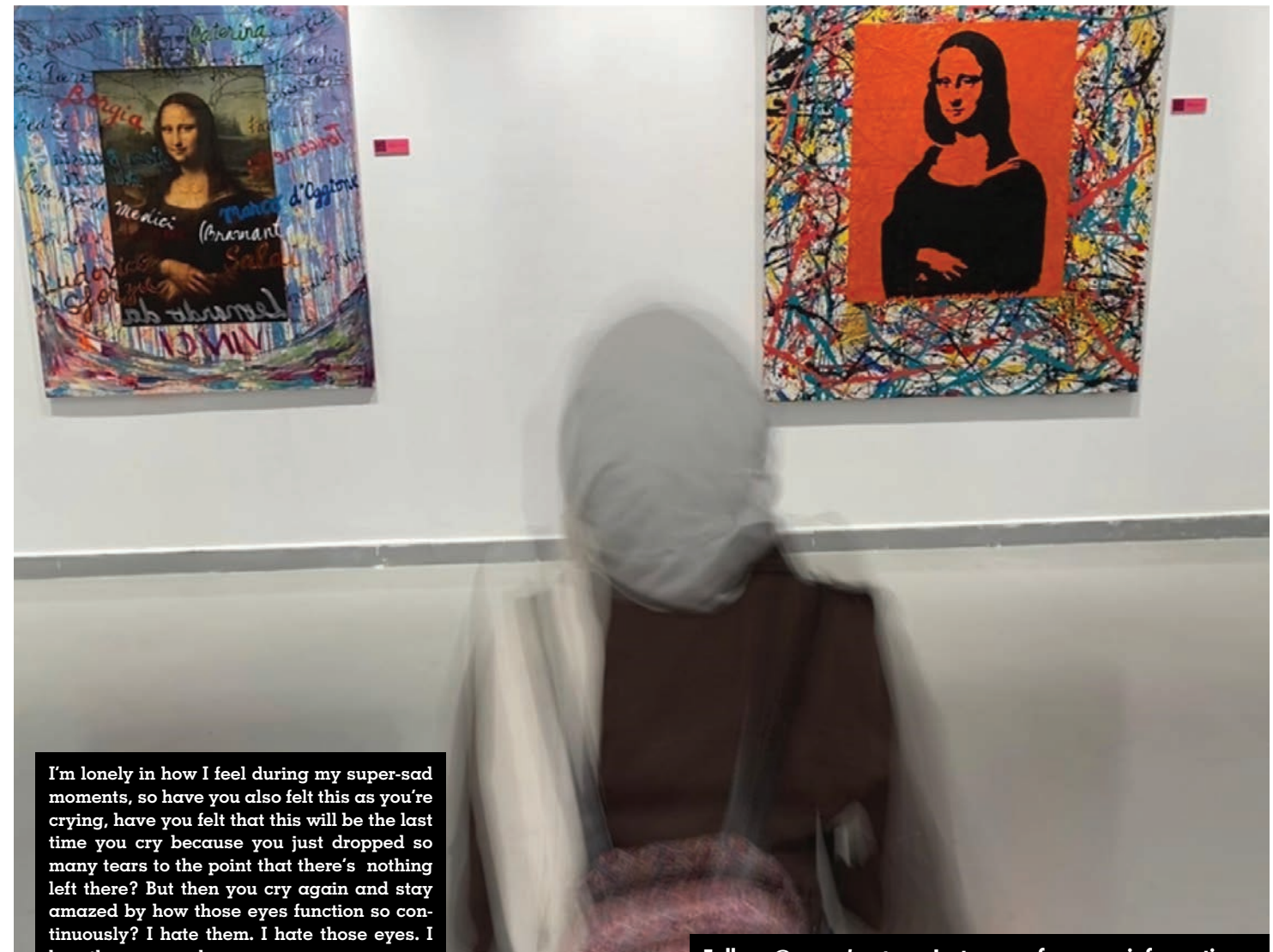
It means that my future is mysterious, unknown, the darkness hangs over my dreams, laughing out loud upon our broken hearts and my hope for survival is illegal. Just be silent, Or you will die.

It means I am a stranger in a wonderland, If you said, “I’m a Palestinian.” You are outside of the world ... It means you will be inside the box, It means that millions of hungry and poor people are trying to live.

The child sleeps with his tears, His candy fell down and down and down without any trace. The father returns most nights, The father returns with a disappointed face, The youth dies before he knocks the door. And in the end, do you think we are dying slowly?



If you walk in “Gaza,” you find the smiling faces, the tea with مرزوق عم my grandma’s Fattoush and Somakia, “لعل رطم لاجير و” “يهتنب ام يلا سان لا يكح و” “ريطا و يرحا يدب بابش ينعجر يتس علوق” nights of rain, meet my family around the fire, brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, and the grandma is our storyteller With kisses and hugs, we sleep And now you say to me “we are not living?” Sir, here our hearts are throbbing with the spirit of life.



I’m lonely in how I feel during my super-sad moments, so have you also felt this as you’re crying, have you felt that this will be the last time you cry because you just dropped so many tears to the point that there’s nothing left there? But then you cry again and stay amazed by how those eyes function so continuously? I hate them. I hate those eyes. I love them so much.

Follow @paperboats on Instagram for more information.

FRUITA TRIPLE SEC

The Latest Milestone of Waterpocket Distillery's Sensory Journey

By Mekenna Malan • mekenna.malan@gmail.com

The experience of touring *Waterpocket Distillery* is akin to wandering through a high-end perfumery. In the laboratory corner, walls are adorned with neatly stacked jars holding botanical treasures such as true cinnamon, bergamot and chamomile. Inside one of the stills—an apparatus used to distill liquid through heating and cooling to condense the vapor—fragrant coriander seeds swim in a batch of gin. In the heart of this aromatic haven, husband and wife duo **Alan** and **Julia Scott** craft spirits that mirror their deepest passions.

“We’re very boutique,” Alan says proudly. “We craft amaros, but we’re known for our botanical spirits. Triple sec is the latest addition to our lineup.” *Waterpocket’s* Fruita Triple Sec is crafted with only the finest aromatics. Key components include mace, orange petals, sweet orange and lemon pieces, cloves and dried peels of Haitian bitter oranges.

The Haitian bitter orange peel emerges as the pièce de résistance in Fruita Triple Sec, and for Alan, only the best will do. “We’re very dedicated to craft methods and real whole ingredients,” he says. “We source from multiple companies, but it has to be the right ingredient with the right aroma. Aroma is critical, and it’s particularly important with the triple sec. With so few ingredients, each of them has to work.”

Waterpocket employs multi-stage maceration processes in Italian macerators to extract flavors from the ingredients. Some of the maceration goes straight into barrels while the rest enters a still to undergo distillation. The two different methods of extraction create distinct profiles from the same botanicals. In the end, “you get more than the sum of its parts,” Alan says.

“You’re looking for mouthfeel; you’re looking for the truth of the original ingredients. Some of the artistry comes in what ratios you’re using, how they’re staged

during the maceration, how you distill it and what you’re putting in your distillation. Then, barrel aging allows the flavors to meld, rest and settle with just a tiny bit of oak.”

Alan notes that the origin of triple sec can be traced back to the Spanish conquistadors who introduced Seville oranges to the New World, where the plant evolved rapidly to adapt to the climate of islands like Curaçao.

Over time, the fruit became too bitter to eat, but the maceration and distillation of the exceptionally aromatic peels led to the creation of orange liquors. “Triple sec” became known as a neutral base spirit infused with delightful orange flavors. Then, “brands like Cointreau and Grand Marnier later built upon this concept, each innovating in their own unique way,” Alan explains.

For Alan, gaps between these iconic brands presented an opportunity to craft a distinctive triple sec. He started experimenting when he had extra citrus peels left from some batches of Pennellen Amaro. After several months of



Photos by Em Behringer

Waterpocket’s Fruita Triple Sec is crafted with only the finest aromatics including mace, cloves and dried peels of Haitian bitter oranges.



Alan Scott of *Waterpocket Distillery* is in the business of crafting delicious spirits that mirror their deepest passions.

meticulous formulation, the brew was ready to mix into margaritas and Mai Tais or to drink straight from a glass.

Prospective customers can find *Waterpocket’s* Fruita Triple Sec at select DABS stores, and many craft cocktail bars in the city proudly incorporate it into their offerings. Alan is excited about Fruita Triple Sec’s unique position, bridging the gap between the budget-friendly bottom-shelf options and the premium French imports.

What else is in the pipeline for *Waterpocket Distillery*? Alan offers a sneak peek: spiced rum crafted with Ugandan cocoa bean, dark-roasted coffee, whole cardamom pods, cinnamon sticks and Ugandan vanilla and a new amaro and an aquavit, which will be released under *Waterpocket’s* Snow Angel label.

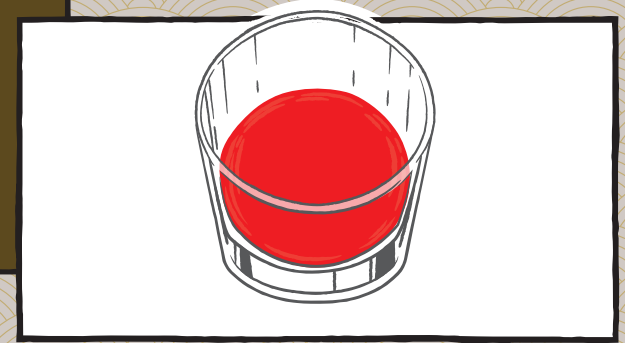
“In some cases, we feel that we’re involved in a creative process where we don’t know the end,” Alan says. “We’re discovering as we go, developing expertise, discovering new flavors and evolving our palates on our personal journey of connoisseurship. We’ve learned from everything we’ve made, and we believe the best days are ahead.”

Learn more about *Waterpocket Distillery* and its offerings by visiting waterpocket.co.

EXPLORING JAPANESE WHISKY AT POST OFFICE PLACE



Ohishi, *Takashi’s* house whisky from *Hinomaru Distillery*, carries notes of sherry, ginkgo nut and caramel.



By Joni Bianca • jbiancawrites@gmail.com

Japanese whisky seems to be repeating its own history here in Salt Lake: beginning as something small and specific then expanding to offer a huge variety. I spoke with **Richard Romney** of local bar *Post Office Place* about its rise in popularity, prevalence in Salt Lake City and what makes Japanese whisky so special.

Here’s a little history: Japanese whisky tends to be most similar to Scotch and is often crafted in the same way. Its ingredients may even be sourced from Scotland. However, while Scotch-makers focus on following strict tradition, Japanese distilleries expand their processes beyond the whisky norm, looking to diversify and perfect the flavors their spirits can express. Several aspects of the distilling process can tweak the taste of a whisky, from the water source used to the actual stills with which the spirit is distilled—especially the wood used to barrel and age the whisky. Many Japanese whiskies are barreled with local mizunara wood, adding a uniquely Japanese flavor and aroma.

Scotch’s influence on Japanese whisky dates back to the first malt whisky distillery built in Japan, *Suntory Yamazaki Distillery*. **Masataka Taketsuru**, who studied whisky in Scotland, was hired as the director of the distillery in 1923 and is now considered the father of Japanese whisky. His Shirofuda whisky, Japan’s first authentic whisky, transformed *Kotobukiya*, a store that sold imported wine into *Suntory*. *Suntory’s* popularity and success inspired other distilleries to open in Japan, leading to a vast range of Japanese whiskies available, including here in Salt Lake.

Romney, the general manager of sushi restaurant *Takashi* and sister bar *Post Office Place*, has been collecting and acquir-



Photo: Chay Mosqueda

Post Office Place has been collecting and acquiring Japanese whiskies for over 12 years, highlighting their incredible variety.

ing Japanese whiskies for over 12 years. Through years of bargaining with distributors and placing orders whenever possible, Romney has built an impressive library of over 30 Japanese whiskies at *Post Office Place*. *Takashi* even boasts their Ohishi house whisky from *Hinomaru Distillery*, a longtime distribution partner of *Post Office Place*.

Romney professes that there is a Japanese whisky for anyone who likes whisky, and it’s clear that *Post Office Place* is the spot to try them out. Their offerings include *Ichiro’s Malt & Grain*, a “world whisky” made of a blend of whiskies from five different countries: *Nikka Whisky From The Barrel*, a blend of single malt and single grain whis-

ky with a punchy ABV of 51.4%; the rare *Yamazaki 18-year* and its fruity younger sibling, *Yamazaki 12*; *Mars Iwai*, a well-balanced corn whisky; and, of course, *Takashi’s* house whisky *Ohishi*, with notes of sherry, ginkgo nut and caramel.

Post Office Place recommends that guests order whisky neat (no ice, just whisky in a glass), on the rocks or in the classic highball cocktail. Ordering your whisky neat will give you the most powerful impact of flavor. Having your spirit served over ice can help to dilute the whisky and reduce the sweetness of the spirit, allowing its bitter flavors to shine. Finally, the classic whisky highball came about as a way to more easily drink whisky with food, tempering the spirit with soda water and enabling you to better enjoy it with your meal.

Post Office Place is extremely proud to flaunt their large collection of Japanese whiskies, highlighting what Romney considers the most notable quality of Japanese whisky—their incredible variety. Because Japan has fewer rules regarding whisky-making, distilleries have been able to diversify their spirits in a number of interesting and delicious ways, making whisky from corn, wheat and even rice. *Post Office Place* particularly cares about highlighting smaller distilleries, and you’ll find detailed blurbs about each distillery they source from on their drink menu. They even offer half-pours (0.75 oz.) to make it easier to try as many different whiskies as you’d like.

Their enthusiasm goes beyond the *Post Office Place* menu, as all staff are highly trained to recommend the right whisky for each customer based on preferences. Visit *Post Office Place* to try them out for yourself—especially on a Wednesday when most of their Japanese whisky is 20% off!

At first, most patrons of ACME Bar Co.—previously known as *Campfire Lounge*—may have assumed the winter holiday-themed pop-up was a temporary spectacle to be dissolved with the rest of the holidays’ common embellishments. What visitors may not have anticipated is what makes the ACME experience continue year-round. The ceiling covered in Christmas lights and walls drenched in wrapping paper was memorable, but it is the co-owners’ **Mikey Edwards** and **Sam Miller**’s commitment to offering SLC a true and thoroughly curated form of escapism that keeps visitors coming back, no matter the season.

While ACME advertises themselves as a seasonal bar, there have only been two actual themes: “Season’s Drinking,” their winter holiday pop-up, and “Suckerfish,” a more tropical-forward theme running since January 2023. “The whole idea behind a seasonal bar was to create this moveable shell where we change the theme, menu, etc.,” Edwards says. “We decided that our efforts were best spent on diversifying our programming and opening our patio bar, ‘Cabana Nights,’ to add another element to the escapism.”

After purchasing *Campfire Lounge* in October 2022, the duo spent the following two months training what used to be the *Campfire* staff on a whole new world of cocktails, food and tropical drink culture. “Mikey managed a Tiki bar in Paris called *Dirty Dick*, and at the same time I was opening a couple of Tiki bars in San Francisco,” Miller says. “Once you get into the world of rum and classic Tiki cocktails, there’s nothing else in the bar world that really scratches that itch.”

At its origin, “Tiki” means “the first man” in Māori, who is known as the god or idol of the people of New Zealand. The first Tiki bar opened in Los Angeles in the ‘30s, and Tiki culture soon became a way for folks feeling stuck to momentarily step away from their lives and experience a tropical paradise. ACME hopes to carry on the traditions of Tiki and what they call “tropical drink

RUM, DON'T WALK, TO
ACME BAR CO.
TROPICAL PARADISE

By Bianca Velasquez
biancavelasquezslc@gmail.com

ACME co-owner Mikey Edwards is committed to offering SLC a true and thoroughly curated form of escapism that keeps visitors coming back.

Photos by Logan Sorenson

ACME Bar Co.’s expansive rum collection allows them to create tropical drinks such as this cocktail featuring rum, blue curacao and pineapple juice.

culture” in a way that doesn’t tokenize its Polynesian roots. “We are trying to usher ‘Tiki’ into the modern era as something that was created in the mid-century,” Edwards says. “[With ACME] we really want to dive into the world of escapism but separate ourselves from themes that are culturally appropriative.”

ACME’s lush, tropical environment is a solid form of escapism, but there’s nothing like a stiff drink to really transport you to a better place. ACME carries about 60 different types of rum along with their main tropical cocktails such as the Cobra’s Kiss (\$16) that includes lilikoi, lemon, orange juice and both absinthe and rum, or the Black Magic (\$18) that simply has “all the rum, all the citrus, all the spices.” Through ACME, Edwards and Miller hope to show SLC and the world how incredible the rum spirit category is. “I special order rum almost weekly to keep the bar stocked,” Miller says. ACME mainly focuses on sourcing rum from the islands of Jamaica, Martinique, Haiti, Barbados and St. Lucia. ACME also offers a weekly rum tasting on Thursdays to educate and share their knowledge within this spirit category. “Our favorite is *Neisson Distillery* in Martinique who makes rum agricole, which is a fresh-pressed sugarcane juice distillate. They cut sugarcane fresh from the field and ferment it immediately,” Miller says.

Miller and Edwards note that ACME’s existence as of this year is only a test project. After their upcoming Christmas pop-up in December, ACME will go through a remodel and a rebrand, eventually resurfacing as *Remora*. While there aren’t many details yet on what *Remora* will be, the focus on escapism will stay at the forefront. So, whether you are visiting ACME for their weekly Monday Night Motown, Wednesday Karaoke, Thursday Rum Tasting or Sunday Supper Club, know that you aren’t just going to any bar, but a different world. Visit ACME at 837 East 2100 South in SLC or check out their menu online at acmebarcompany.com and on Instagram @[acmebarco](https://www.instagram.com/acmebarco).

FINCA

PINTXOS BAR

GOING WHERE THE GIN FLOWS

By Paulina Burnside
paulina@burnsides.org



Photo: John Taylor

Finca Pintxos’ gin bar carries over 15 gins, and their drink menu features several carefully proportioned and garnished gin and tonic pairings.

A new watering hole has opened up in downtown Salt Lake. A Basque-style bar featuring classic and seasonal gin cocktails, *Finca Pintxos Bar* is **Scott Evans**’ latest project in what has become a career of bringing authentic Spanish food to Utah. Evans is the operator, founder and sommelier of Pago Restaurant Group, which has opened *Pago*, *Finca*, *Casot*, *East Liberty Tap House*, *Emigration Cafe* and the latest, *Finca Pintxos Bar* (pronounced peen-chos).

Evans’ interest in Spain began from a young age as he grew up with Spanish-speaking relatives and learned the language in high school. During his early travels backpacking, skateboarding and snowboarding around Europe (working construction in London when money ran low), Evans grew to love Spanish food and drink. The then lack of authentic Spanish food in Utah is how Evans was able to pair his passions with the start of his career in the restaurant industry. “I want to expose Utah and Salt Lake to what the world has that we don’t have,” says Evans.

As a sommelier who embarks on annual trips to Spain for wine tours, Evans is highly knowledgeable about ciders, spirits and beer. Evans also pushed the cider program at *East Liberty Tap House*. While his efforts are primarily dedicated to curating wines, Evans sees gin as the next drink to become popular in Utah. Evans partly credits his relationship to gin to the winemakers that he has met across the Atlantic.

“Every time I would go to Spain for a wine trip, there would be a gin component,” Evans says. “Every winemaker would make a gin and tonic—they call it gin tonic, or gin tonica.” Over time, Evans noticed Spain’s ubiquity of gin tonics. While many Spanish drinkers may feel at home ordering a classic gin tonic, Evans thinks that the drink is fit for Utahns as well, given that the main botanicals in gin—juniper and sage—are native to our state.

Evans enjoyed gin tonics for years before the ideal opportunity to open a pintxos bar came to him. While attending a wine fair at *Solitude Mountain Resort* in early April of this year, Evans learned that an ideal location for a Basque-style bar was available during a conversation with the previous owner of the space.

Evans had the space painted and updated and the signs changed, and now he is the owner of a bar that’s not much different from the gin tonic bars that he frequented in Spain. Individual small plates called pintxos (essentially Basque tapas) are served hot or cold on the narrow bar and are priced from \$2 to \$14. Included on the pintxos menu are classic foods such as croquetas and tortilla española alongside dishes such as datil with bacon-wrapped dates, blue cheese, almonds and spiced honey. Traditional Spanish tapas—which are portioned for sharing—are priced between \$9 and \$35 and include foods native to Spain such as patatas bravas and pulpo con gambas. Don’t forget dessert: churros with chocolate dipping sauce or flourless chocolate cake.

To pair with the food, and more importantly, to give gin a space on the counter, a menu was crafted and a specialty tonic was conceptualized. Evans reached out to **Alan Scott**, co-owner and lead distiller at *Waterpocket Distillery*, with the idea for a collaborative gin tonic at *Finca Pintxos Bar*. “He’s been working on a special recipe to pair with his *Waterpocket* gin just for us to celebrate gin tonics,” says Evans. While the special drink is still in the works, Pintxos carries over 15 gins and even a few vermouths. The drink menu carries several gin and tonic pairings that are carefully proportioned and garnished—these are for the purists. More playful drinks include orange wine sangria and cocktails such as gin with grapefruit puree and tonic.

To learn more about *Finca Pintxos Bar*, including exclusive information on upcoming events, visit fincasl.com and subscribe to their email list.

The First Annual Daq Off: Creative Cocktails by SLC Bartenders

By Asha Pruitt • asha@slugmag.com

On August 21, bartenders of all experience levels gathered at *Bar Nohm* to compete in the daiquiri-based Daq Off, the first cocktail competition in years hosted by the Utah chapter of the **United States Bartender's Guild** (USBG). Five judges blind taste-tested each daiquiri, evaluating the drinks on creativity, flavor and presentation. Out of the 17 contestants, two bartenders stood out: First Place winner **Tyler Fernberg**, representing the Sugar House extension of downtown dive *Quarters Arcade Bar*, and People's Choice winner **Andrew Robertson**, representing the chic twin bars *Ivy & Varley*.

Midwestern-brewer-turned-Utah-bartender Tyler Fernberg has a simple philosophy when it comes to creating new concoctions: "I always like to put the good in the dumb," he says in reference to his process of taking a goofy idea and elevating its presentation. Pop culture is his biggest inspiration in mixing drinks, from music to childhood cartoons. He says, "I'll have a funny scene or a song stuck in my head, and [I think], 'how do I turn that into a cocktail?'"

The idea for Fernberg's winning watermelon gazpacho daiquiri came in part from *Seinfeld's* famous episode "The Soup Nazi." Most of the time, he doesn't think consciously about flavor profiles and proportions. He says, "I was really just throwing everything together, and then afterward my palate kicked in, without even thinking

about it." Fernberg started by blending red bell pepper, cucumber, tomato, watermelon and basil for a sweet and savory summer soup. Next came two kinds of rum—Hamilton White 'Stache and Neisson Blanc Rhum Agricole. For the finishing touch, he poured the mixture into a hollowed-out bell pepper and added a slice of bread on the side. "You can't have gazpacho without toasted bread," he says.

Though he's been bartending for less than three years, Fernberg has already made a name for himself in national cocktail competitions. The SLC bartending scene is "heavily underrated," he says. "It's tough because of the laws and everything that we have to be restricted by, but it doesn't hold us back from being creative."



Tyler Fernberg's unique cocktails at *Quarters Arcade Bar Sugar House* are often inspired by pop culture.

Another relative newcomer in the local bartending community is Andrew Robertson, who was drawn to the profession because of the vast amounts of knowledge it requires. "Something that really grabbed my attention was the prep side of things and [understanding] the chemistry behind everything," he says. "It's a perfect blend of art and science." Robertson has attended almost every bartending class hosted by USBG Utah. "There's so much to learn; there's no room for arrogance," he says.

Robertson worked in behavioral health in Idaho before pivoting to a career in bartending about a year and a half ago. "I worked in wilderness therapy, so we would make teas with a number of different things you can find out there," he says. Before the Daq Off, Robertson climbed Kings Peak where he

foraged wild yarrow, spruce bark and tips and chanterelle mushrooms—all of which grow naturally in the Uinta Mountains—to make a tea as the base for his daiquiri. "I tried to go as local and sustainable as possible," he says.

He then combined *Distillery 36* Spiced Brigham Rum and *Sugar House Distillery* Silver Rum with honey and agar-clarified "super juice" of a lime, which "multiplies the juice you get out of one lime by eight." Finally, Robertson presented the drink in a terrarium bowl decorated with moss. His favorite part of bartending is the people, so winning the People's Choice award meant a lot. Putting "a smile on someone's face or a sparkle in their eyes" makes all the difference, he says. "Sharing that sense of discovery is really important for me."



Photos by John Barkiple

Andrew Robertson bartends at *Ivy & Varley*, where he creates cocktails using local, sustainable ingredients.



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HOPPED SPIRITS A COVID-INSPIRED EFFORT TO SAVE THE BEER

By Rachel Brooks • rachel.brooks94@gmail.com

In the spring of 2020, amidst grocery store brawls over toilet paper and endless Zoom meetings, hundreds of kegs of craft beer across Utah sat untapped, approaching their expiration date. In an effort to save the beer, local breweries reached out to grain-to-glass distilleries, such as *Beehive Distilling* and *Sugar House Distillery*, offering them kegs to turn into distilled spirits. Because while beer may spoil, spirits do not.

In between batches of hand sanitizer for first responders and vulnerable groups, *Sugar House Distillery* made a few rounds of hopped spirits with their next spirit rendition, Experimental Series #2, which released this October. Made from kegs of a doppelbock from a local brewery, *Sugar House Distillery* distilled the beer, then aged it in six used American Oak Char No. 3 barrels—three bourbon and three rye—for a total of three years and 82 days. The hopped spirit is 108 proof and features the delicate sweet and fruity notes found in German-style malty beers with an added caramel color from the barrels.

“We just didn’t know what to expect,” says **James Fowler**, founder and owner of *Sugar House Distillery*. “The reason they’re sending it to us is because they can’t sell it. [We thought] well, we could try to make whiskey out of it, and that’s going to be years

down the road. Let’s still try to capture something from it.”

Similarly, *Beehive Distillery* took 150 various kegs from *Uinta Brewing Co.* that were in danger of being dumped and distilled them together to create their Spirit of The Hop. After it was run through the still multiple times, the clear spirit was then aged in three new American Oak barrels for just under three years. The 100 proof hopped spirit, colloquially called “beerskey,” features subtle herbal and floral hop notes, adding complexity and sweetness to the classic oak bite of an American whiskey. Spirit of The Hop was released in May 2023 in 550 glass bottles featuring a honeycomb pattern.

“I knew it would be weird, but we might as well throw it in [the still] and see what the hell happens,” says **Chris Barlow**, one of the founders and co-owners of *Beehive Distilling*. “It tasted really funky right off the still, but it mellowed out a lot in the barrel.” While this was *Beehive’s* first foray into hopped spirits and distilling beer, the journey was nearly identical to their whiskey-making process. “Whiskey is essentially beer,” Barlow says. “It’s usually a different grain, unless you’re doing a wheat whiskey or a barley whiskey, but it’s essentially the same process.”

While neither spirit can technically be called a whiskey due to the addition of hops, these “distilled spirit specialty beverages” honor the techniques of American whiskey in unique liquors that can’t be recreated. “We never work with hops in the distilling world; hops are [used] to flavor beer, not spirits,” says Fowler. “But the smell that was coming off the still was so floral—the most incredible thing you’ve ever smelled.”

Sugar House Distillery and *Beehive Distilling* each offer lineups of spirits and canned cocktails featuring local ingredients such as corn and grains grown in Utah and Southern Idaho. Both distilleries proudly distill their own spirits on-site with their grain-to-glass method, collaborating with other local distilleries, breweries, farmers and companies. Their collaborations with local breweries during the pandemic exemplify the camaraderie of Utah’s brewing and distilling community, as well as the passion for the craft both Fowler and Barlow display.

Sugar House Distillery’s Experimental Series #2 and *Beehive Distilling’s* Spirit of The Hop can be purchased at their respective on-site stores for \$69.99 each. Both are available in limited quantities.



Sugar House Distillery’s owner and founder, James Fowler.

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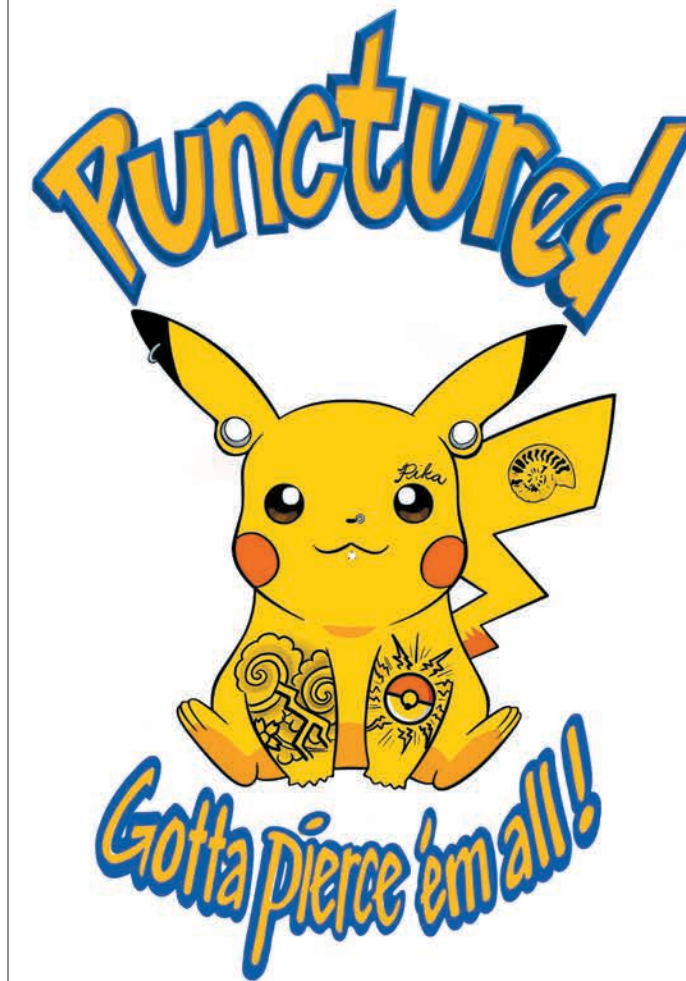
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Chris Barlow, one of the co-owners of *Beehive Distilling*.

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BUZZ FREE BUDS

Sober Squad Provides a Space for the Sober Curious

By Elizabeth Leach • elihanlea@gmail.com



Sober Squad members (L-R) Grace Vesely, Kendra Campbell, Kolten Schnell, CJ Robertson and Alex Fogg chat and enjoy alcohol-free drinks at Renourish Kombucha Tap Room.

Sober Squad is a local group founded by Paige Holmgren and Kolten Schnell with the intention to create a “community that is sober curious, or who actively don’t drink,” according to Holmgren. In circles where going out on the weekend and having a cocktail is the routine, there may be friends who feel friction with the pattern. “Sober Squad was created so people who live a similar lifestyle can meet each other,” says Holmgren.

While the concept of abstaining from alcohol often conjures up reasons associated with religious affiliations or even addiction, Sober Squad is dismantling misconceptions of sobriety by offering a space for sober curious discussions to take place. Alcohol can function as a social binder, which then can make statements such as, “no, I don’t drink” ironically taboo. “Sobriety exists outside of recovery. Not drinking can be a normal thing in life. Sober Squad isn’t like AA—no one comes to identify how long they haven’t been drinking,” says Schnell. While Sober Squad welcomes and invites those who are in recovery, it’s also for those who are just interested in finding a space to learn more about sobriety.

“Sober curious folks may actively drink but still join [our] activities that are not surrounded by drinking [alcohol],” says Holmgren. “We welcome totally sober people and people in recovery but we also

welcome people who are reevaluating their relationship with alcohol—anyone who is interested in a lifestyle with less alcohol.” Holmgren explains the phrase through her own experience, saying, “I went through a phase [of] being sober curious. I drank when I wanted to, but I was curious about a lifestyle without alcohol as the center. I quit drinking when I was 23. Sober curiosity can be an indicator of life without drinking,” she says. Schnell adds, “There is a lot of pressure in society to drink to have a good time. At [Sober Squad], there is a place for everybody within sobriety, and it’s a spectrum. Everyone can reevaluate their relationship with alcohol.”

Part of investigating and testing new boundaries with alcohol is having a supportive environment to socialize without boozy pressure. Once Schnell and Holmgren began discussing and putting together the foundation for the group, the need for more sober environments became clear. Holmgren says, “Our KPIs [key performance indicators] for Sober Squad were first to ensure there was interest. Once we had 30 people interested in joining a group, we figured we could expand the idea, and put more time and energy into it.”

It quickly became apparent to Holmgren and Schnell that many people in Salt Lake City were interested in and excited for a

sober-focused group and participating in sober-focused activities. Once it became clear that there was a need for a group like this, Sober Squad had its first meet up at *Curiosity* (a zero-proof bar in Salt Lake that recently closed its doors). Sober Squad continues to focus on similar gathering places that offer cocktails and spirits without alcohol to enjoy activities such as meeting for mocktails, enjoying N/A beers or N/A ciders, coffee meetups, game nights and snow and ski days. Being curious about sobriety is really just the first step in seeing what a life without alcohol looks and feels like. Exploring these life choices can be simpler when one is surrounded by like-minded people who can provide support or advice on the journey. Many of the attendees of Sober Squad have differing experiences of sobriety yet each found community within the group.

If you’re interested in joining Sober Squad, you can follow them on Instagram @sober-squad.sl.c and check out their GroupMe linked in their bio. GroupMe is a messaging platform where Sober Squad events and meetups will be discussed and members can chat about topics based on varying interests, enabling folks to build friendships within the sober community. Popular spots to find alcohol-free libations in Salt Lake City include *Second Summit Cider*, *Backdoor Bar* and *Renourish Kombucha Tap Room*, among other locations.



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TIME FOR A BIGGER MACHETE: Mezcal's Slow but Steady Progress with the DABS

By Alton Barnhart • altonboy2009@gmail.com

2016 marks a major turning point for *Wahaka Mezcal's* acceptance in state liquor stores. To fully understand how notoriously difficult the Utah Department of Alcoholic Beverage Services (DABS)—formerly known as the DABC—can be, *SLUG* sat down with Francis Fecteau, wine broker and owner of *Libation, LLC*, to discuss the trials and of mezcal in Utah. After years of rejection and a complete reprogramming of the distinction between mezcal and tequila, the DABS finally allowed sales for the tantalizing drink to hit the shelves. *Wahaka* is still in full stride, having garnered a cult following since its discovery. The thrill-seeking drinkers can't get enough of the spirit, which is historically made from dozens of agave species, harvested with a machete and roasted in clay ovens. However, Fecteau notes that the journey for mezcal itself is just getting started.

Before 2016, mezcal was commonly lumped in with tequila, disappearing into the thrashing sea of reposados and blancos. Those with a keen eye and fortified taste buds, however, can fully indulge in the diverse categories that mezcal conceives. "If anything, the thirst for mezcal had proceeded to grow, through leaps and bounds ... especially with the trade," Fecteau says. Seven years later, the DABS has recognized the increasing demand for the artisanal spirit, yet they have oversaturated the market

with generic spirits. Where one mezcal meets the shelf, an abundance of analogous tequilas of various shades and prices will follow suit. "They'll be adding more \$50 blanco tequilas, which is like adding more vanilla flavors to the ice cream market," Fecteau explains. It's this so-called "vanilla-fying" that causes great distress to the mezcal market, and in turn, dampens smaller local companies from gaining that visibility.

Another major hurdle that artisanal mezcal producers must tackle is copycats—half-assed, bootleg batches from global mega-brands such as *Casamigos*. Through outsourcing ingredients and rushing production, Fecteau charmingly refers to the process as "the bastardization of something good." He warns, "They're just generating mezcal because it's super hot right now."

For those who want to adventure out of their comfort zone and understand how well-crafted mezcal can be, Fecteau calls back to distinguishing a real mezcal from a fraudulent one. Many might try to compare it to tequila with its smoky and robust nose, but for Fecteau, that's a red flag for a gutter swill. "Mezcal doesn't taste like smoke. To me, it tastes like plants and flowers," Fecteau explains, comparing the flavor profile to a botanical spice. "Thanks to *Wahaka*, mezcal has awakened my imagination more than any [other] spirit." To simultaneously show support for mezcal and local businesses, Fecteau also recommends checking out local bars and restaurants showcasing mezcal on their back walls. To fully

capture your spiritual hunt, start by slow-sipping at *Lucky 13* or consider sampling a mezcal with a luxurious entree at *Lake Effect*. Other notable mezcal producers found in Utah bars include *El Jolgorio* and *Macurichos*. "Obviously, the worst place to look for mezcal is [a place where] it's not on the shelf," Fecteau laughs.

Though mezcal's future may seem cloudy, Fecteau sees it bright with high hopes and high beams. Of course, the "nature of the beast" will always give the public the spirit they think they need through commercials and publicity, and DABS will always present obstacles for more alcohol companies to navigate. However, Fecteau believes the campaigns will only last so long before the public is bored of shoveling those same bottom-shelf products. "People will never let go of their corporate brands—they need their 'binky' or 'blanky,'" Fecteau says. "... but there will always be those who seek out the kinky, the new, the different when they have a genuine fascination for [all spirits]." As we venture on through the tangled jungle of Utah's liquor laws, one must carry the knowledge and daring personality to cut through the brush.

To seek out more recommendations on inspiring spirits and pairings, follow Francis Fecteau on Instagram @libationslc.



Photos by John Barkiple

Francis Fecteau recommends checking out *Lake Effect's* collection of artisanal mezcal.



Wahaka Mezcal has garnered a cult following since it first hit Utah shelves in 2016.

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TACOS DON RAFA + STREET TACOS

By Dylan Bueche | @kimjongdyl



Tacos Don Rafa boasts the title of Utah's first taco stand, originating in 1998.

Photo: Em Behringer

I was going to write an article about taking LSD and spending a day in REI, but upon learning that VICE is now defunct, I leapt at the opportunity to get drunk and eat tacos for SLUG. This hard-hitting premise brought your loyal correspondent to two taco joints—the absolute institution that is *Tacos Don Rafa* on South State, and *Street Tacos* on 400 South, a new one for me. In the spirit of the article, I grabbed my least-employed friend, an armful of Pacificos and began to safely and legally navigate the town in search of great, late-night food.

Although it is unfair to reduce these two establishments to simply “great food to eat while drunk,” they do happen to be some of the few food options open after 9 p.m. in this sleepy, parochial town. And after all, man cannot live on *Pie Hole* and

secondhand smoke alone. I have been paying my respects to the *Don* for years and have been rewarded greatly for my loyalty with the slightest shimmer of recognition from the employees when I flex my extremely limited Spanish. I regularly order the Burrito Sin Carne (\$7) for its mighty heft and ability to carry me through the day, but some combination of booze and the crisp night air of the busy intersection gave me the courage to sample something new. I opted for the Tacos al Pastor (\$2), and my companion ordered the Chicken en Mole Tacos (\$2).

Due to my impaired state, I couldn't distinguish between the two on the plate, so we both tried one of each. They were fantastic. The tacos arrive heavily seasoned on a white corn tortilla, a blank canvas you can sex up to your liking at the adjoining cooler full of all the accoutrements you'd expect. I went for lime, pico, onion and a few radishes on the side—so basically todos—as well as a selection of the sauces ranging in heat from sour cream to decently spicy. Nothing is labeled, which lends the experience a quiet coolness and understanding of those who get it and those who don't. Y'all, we only have a few good years left on this planet, and tacos taste better on a Styrofoam plate.

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Street Tacos, despite the name, serves tacos indoors—off the street, in a building that can only be described as “still haunted by the ghost of the '90s *Wendy's* that more than likely originally occupied it.” Emboldened by our earlier success, I decided to try a few tamales on top of the tacos here. They had more veggie offerings, so we ordered Tacos Nopalitos and Tacos Rajas (\$3.49 per)—a creamy, cheesy poblano taco.

The tortillas are made from a richer, yellow corn flour, slightly larger than traditional street tacos. The Nopalitos were less flavorful than I was hoping, but they are a cactus, after all, and still make for a solid veggie option. The creamy poblanos made a strong impression. If I could go back—

and I will go back—I'll get three more of those. I can't wait for whoever I drag with me to say, “Where the hell are we, and how long has this place been here?”

The Verde Tamales (\$2.99 per) were fantastic, and I got one Chicken Green Chile and one Tamales de Elote. The sweet corn tamale basically tasted like cornbread, which surprisingly may have just been too much corn for this midwesterner, but the Chicken Green Chile was really solid. There was a blur of different colored sauces, and I remember liking the green one.

It was an odd place to find oneself, and I feel like the nature of being on 400 South

lends itself more to the drive-thru, but at the end of the day, everyone should try eating street tacos indoors at least once.



Photo: Em Behringer

Street Tacos on 400 S. is open until 3 a.m. on Friday and 4 a.m. on Saturday—perfect for late-night feasting.



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I EXIST BECAUSE THEY SURVIVED

Artists Unpack Assimilation at Material Gallery

By Lina Boyer

lina.boyer22@gmail.com

For artist Bianca Velasquez, reconnecting with her ancestors through art was a journey that began by accident. Rather than throw away the canvas she tore while painting, Velasquez began to repair it with a needle, thread and beads. "It just grew, and I filled the entire canvas with beading," she says.

Despite creating art her whole life, this was the start of something new. After her family immigrated to the U.S. from Honduras, much of their history and tradition was left behind under pressure to assimilate. Even though the beadwork was deeply reminiscent of the traditional artwork made by her ancestors, Velasquez still felt distanced from the form.

"I [felt] kind of unethical for using such a traditional medium because I haven't done the work to connect with my lineage and my ancestry. As a product of assimilation ... I felt like I was appropriating my own culture by beading, which is such a crazy concept that I'm still unpacking," she says.

It wasn't until a conversation with Jorge Rojas, local artist and co-founder of new South Salt Lake art gallery *Material*, that Velasquez began to consider beadwork as a pathway for reconnection. Rojas describes her work as "primal," a word that resonates with Velasquez. "I'm connecting to something spiritual that is healing me and healing generational trauma that goes back and back and back," she says.

When Rojas joined forces with multidisciplinary art collective **801 Salon** for a new installation, Velasquez's beadwork was an obvious choice, and when considering



Photo courtesy of Kelly Tapia-Chuning

Tapia-Chuning's blankets symbolize her identity as a mixed-race woman, weaving together both Indigenous and European traditions.

the theme of what it means to assimilate—especially from a Latinx perspective—artist Kelly Tapia-Chuning came to mind.

Tapia-Chuning has been making art that explores her personal and familial history for much of her life. After her great-grandmother's passing in 2021, she began recording her family's history, uncovering the lost pieces of her lineage. As a mixed-race Chicana with Indigenous ancestry, Tapia-Chuning shares a similar experience of losing familial identity to colonization.

"My family is very much assimilated," Tapia-Chuning says. "I didn't grow up within a proud Mexican family ... being mixed-race myself, it felt like two opposing forces. I always had a hard time accepting my identity." This feeling, she explains, is exacerbated by the fact that much of the Indigenous history and culture in the U.S. has been made inaccessible by mainstream, racist ideology that deems it unimportant.

The desire to uncover her family's history and unpack what it means to assimilate

Velasquez creates vibrant beadwork as a way to reconnect with the traditional art made by her Honduran ancestors.



Photo: Dominic Jordon

led Tapia-Chuning to examine the Mexican blanket, an object she grew up around that served as an anchor within her household. The history of the blanket itself is symbolic of what it is to be mestiza, created with both Indigenous and European traditions. Tapia-Chuning relays that it was also used by the Mexican government after the Mexican Revolutionary War to perpetuate a homogenous Mexican identity, one that erased Afro and Indigenous cultures.

"I started dismantling them and taking them apart, and it originally was an act of mourning, but it turned into an act of reclamation. What does it mean for me, as a mixed-race woman of Indigenous descent, to be putting my labor into these blankets?" she says.

Sharing a space for the upcoming installation at *Material* gallery has been a source of inspiration for both artists, and a chance to see themselves through each other's work. "While we have different mediums ... a lot of what we're trying to dissect is coming from the same place," Velasquez says of their collaboration. Tapia-Chuning smiles and adds, "The first time we connected, it felt like our souls connected."

The exhibit is titled *Sangre Mia*, or "My Blood." Summed up into a sentence, Tapia-Chuning describes a central motif of the installation: "I exist because they survived." *Sangre Mia* opens Nov. 11 with an artist talk at 5 p.m. and general admission at 6 p.m. at *Material*, located at 2970 South West Temple. Keep up with the artists on Instagram @biancavelasquez.tv and @kelly_chuning.

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Blending genres is no new feat in the music industry, and local bands **Roses On The Moon** and **Øutset Bandits** both utilize the individuality of their band members, stories and backgrounds to make dynamic and soulful music. Show up at *Kilby Court* on Thursday, November 16 to see opener **CLUB MUNGO** at 8 p.m. (doors open at 7 p.m.) and join the crowd of joyful faces celebrating authentic, talented musicians native to Salt Lake City. There's a \$5 entry fee to this month's *SLUG Localized* show, which is sponsored by *Riso-Geist*.

Roses On The Moon

By Harper Haase
harperhaase@gmail.com

If you go to your favorite local music venue searching for a song to lift your spirits, chances are you'll find **Roses On The Moon**, composed of brothers **Bobby B Mac** and **Vehnu Moon**, bringing the energy. In Bobby's words, "bring your dancing shoes, drink some tea—because you're going to be screaming the whole time—and bring a change of clothes, because by the end of the set you'll be sweating through [it]. If you're coming to a **Roses On The Moon** concert, be prepared to have some fun." Their goal is for the audience to have as much fun as they do on stage—it's always a shared experience.

While the duo serves joy, energy and inspiration through each psychedelic, indie-pop beat, the band was formed

through a solemn past. The brothers teamed up to form **Roses On The Moon** after they both lost a daughter this past year. Growing up together in the Rose Park neighborhood of Salt Lake, Bobby has been a musician for 10 years while Vehnu has been making music for about two. Heartbroken and grieving, the two decided to create something from their suffering, hoping to make music for people who might have gone through similar experiences. This was also how their band name was born: "Roses" because they are from Rose Park, and "Moon" because of the meaning of their last name, honoring the family roots from which the band grew.

Though only a band for less than a year, **Roses On The Moon** has played at almost every local venue in Salt Lake, participating in multiple festivals, opening for other artists and hosting their own solo shows. Much of this is due to their incredibly supportive management team, whom they were excited to thank during our interview. "We would not be able to do half of this without them," Vehnu says. Bobby adds, "Our team is all women, so that's why we're organized

and why things work well." We laughed, but I could tell they were genuinely thankful.

When Vehnu first began making music, he would write and edit a song to perfection before stepping into the studio to record it. For their most recent album, though, the writing process shifted: The brothers head to the studio, put on a beat and write and record on-site. They both find that creativity flows better this way as they can tap into "every emotion [they're] feeling right then and there," Vehnu says. Bobby explains that if he wrote a song and recorded it later, it would be hard to "recapture that vibe [he] was feeling while writing." This technique leaves little room for editing, and the band credits their engineer **Chris Jensen** at *Red Light Recording* for providing honest feedback in real time. His critiques help them know when they should push themselves harder and when the music is already something special. "You can't just have 'yes men'" in the studio," Vehnu says.

At the end of our conversation, they leave me with a promise: "Stay tuned for 2024." After stepping into the first stages of growth as a band this year, they feel confident the second year of **Roses On The Moon** will be an even bigger move forward. If there's ever a reason to support a new artist, **Roses On The Moon** has it all—their history, authenticity and local roots are so magnetic that the incredible music feels like a cherry on top. Even though their show schedule is heavily booked this fall, the duo is stoked to bring something fresh, fun and exciting to *SLUG's* November *Localized*, so be sure to come out to the show to check out what they have in store. Follow them on Instagram @rosesonthemxxn for updates.

(L-R) Bobby B Mac and Vehnu Moon find that their creativity flows best if they put on a beat in the studio, write lyrics and immediately record it.



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Øutset Bandits

By Harper Haase
harperhaase@gmail.com

Øutset Bandits are a community. Composed of about eight members, the group takes a cooperative approach to music: If you're in the band, you pull your weight, and every member of the family-like structure works hard to make the magic happen. I had the pleasure of meeting with three core members **Saco**, **Andrew** and **Mal** to chat about their music career thus far as part of Øutset Bandits.

They showed up to our interview wearing stylish outfits from local clothing brand YSK, owned and designed by two of their friends and co-collaborators. Each member is a solo musician as well as a member of the Øutset crew, having each found the group through mutual friends in the Salt Lake music community. The band was formed around 2016, though some members didn't join until more recently.

Saco is the "modest one," Mal jokes, mentioning that Saco claims he's not that good but is "low-key the best." Saco does most of the music engineering and producing while simultaneously singing and writing. Mal joined the group around 2018 with a drive to book shows and grow their presence. He and Andrew both love writing and rapping; Saco loves to make them sing. Their voices are well-balanced, and the artists speak to the versatility of their music.

They miss the collaborative nature of music, lost in recent years to the rise of copy-paste trap sound. "I feel like you don't get [collaborations] enough in rap today," Saco says. "People find their style and stay in that box." Øutset Bandits

maintain their dynamic style by pushing one another and welcoming diversity in their members. "We all listen to different types of music," Mal adds. They unanimously agree that if you could only listen to one Øutset Bandits song, it should be "Tendencies."

Each member of the group possesses a deep passion for music which shows in the way they talk about it and through how they live their lives. Mal specifically mentions that this creative outlet allows him to be vulnerable in ways he wouldn't be able to otherwise. One of the band's most vulnerable moments came when they lost a crucial member, **Thompson Kamara**. He was the "face of the band ... the glue," Mal says.

Kamara's passing in December 2020 has been a motivating force for the band as they continue to work hard in his name. The group puts on a tribute show for his birthday every July and contribute to the Thompson Kamara Hope Foundation to give back to the world in his name. Organized by his mom and supported by the Øutset family, the foundation supports small communities in Africa to honor Kamara's family heritage. Follow Øutset Bandits on Instagram

@outset.bandits to stay up to date on TKHF events.

Øutset Bandits maintain a sense of humility that is rare in talented artists. They jump on every opportunity to uplift fellow band members, strive to make honest music rather than gaining clout and they care about their fans. "We don't even consider them fans, we just consider them friends of ours," Mal explains. "We're so supportive of other people ... we want to recognize you as a person, not just as a fan." The band is endlessly grateful for every opportunity that comes their way, both big and small.

The group aims to create a tight-knit, comfortable ambiance at their shows. They describe their live performances as always being "stuffed to the brim with people, everyone smiling, happy, a bunch of pretty faces," Saco says. "No drama, no fighting—just good music." The group radiates genuine connection and inspires hard work, authenticity and talent in Salt Lake City, reminding the local scene what it means to create music from the soul. The band recently released the single "Bandit Freestyle" and are excited to play something previously unheard at November's *Localized* show.

Clockwise from the top: Andrew, Saco and Mal emphasize collaboration between members of their dynamic, eight-person group.



Photo: Jess Gruneisen

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Mike Brown's Utah Jazz Season Preview with Ben Anderson!

By Mike Brown • mgb90210@gmail.com

By the time this article drops, we'll already be a few games into the 2023-24 Utah Jazz season. I've done my own season previews for *SLUG* in the past, but this year I wanted to get some perspective from someone who (shockingly) knows more about hoops than I do and is a bit closer to the team, so I got in contact with Jazz podcaster **Ben Anderson** for an interview. The closest I've ever really gotten to the Jazz team is knowing that I had sex with the same girl as **Earl Watson**.

If you don't know who Ben Anderson is, I'll tell you: He's a young skater-punk-turned-basketball-nerd (just like myself) who now hosts a morning radio show (unlike myself) on *KSL Sports* from 10 a.m.-12 p.m., which is 97.5 on your dial. He also produces a weekly Jazz podcast called *Jazz Notes* that he hosts with some guy named **Chandler**—who is Ben's friend, but not from *Friends*—offering great insight on the team and their interaction with the fans. Ben rattles off stats so fast on his shows that I was pretty sure he was an AI robot built in **Elon's** lab or something. He assured me he is not.

I hit Ben with some tough questions that I felt us Jazz fans deserved to know, and he did not disappoint. The first question I asked him was if our new, second-year Head Coach, **Will Hardy**, was microdosing. Ben told me that he is not but explained that Will does have a calm demeanor and a good sense of perspective and humanity about him that other coaches don't seem to have. That being said, and given how good Hardy's rotations and post-game interviews were last year, I'm still not fully convinced he's not popping 20 mg. of boomers for breakfast.

I then wanted to know which Jazz player is most likely to buy beer for our new star rookie, **Keyon-**



Illustration: Kit Liechty

As the Utah Jazz season approaches, Mike Brown sits down with Jazz podcaster Ben Anderson to chat about the good, the bad and the Jazz.

te George. The kid is underage and someone's gotta provide the brews. The answer is likely one of our European players, **Luke Šamanić.** Where he's from, you can basically start drinking once you're tall enough to reach the bar. It wouldn't be a moral conflict for him to break America's stupid drinking laws. My guess would have been our Finnish superstar **Lauri Markkanen**, but like I mentioned earlier, Ben covers the Jazz for a living, so he would know better than me on this.

I asked Ben about our somewhat new General Manager—or CEO of the team, if you will—**Danny Ainge.** He's Mormon so you know he's got a lot of angry church ball in him, but Ben told me that he's actually a really nice, down-to-earth guy. He even slapped Ben on the ass one time. This all checks out from my perspective.

Speaking of rich Mormons, we also talked about Jazz owner **Ryan Smith**, who is my age but has a little bit more money than I do. When he bought the team, the logo patches on the players' jerseys were for 5 For The Fight, an organization Smith created to help

fight cancer. It raised a butt-load of money and the logo patch is changing this year. So, did Ryan Smith finally cure cancer? Nope. It sucks, but it's still around. Also, Ben and I both agreed that we are pretty sure Ryan Smith does indeed pay his tithing, which is a shit-load of money, as opposed to a butt-load.

Since Ben hangs around the team so much, I needed to know who the funniest Jazz player is. Turns out, it's our standout rookie from last year, **Walker Kessler.** I forgot to ask Ben to give me any examples of dirty jokes I could use for this article, but I was kinda hammered during the interview. Either way, I thought for sure it would be **Jordan Clarkson** (my current favorite Jazz player), but Ben assured me that Clarkson is definitely the coolest player and would probably be the most fun to hang out with. I mean, the guy is an NBA player who is sponsored by *Lululemon*, hangs out at fashion week and doesn't give a fuck. I respect that perspective on life.

Follow Ben Anderson on Twitter—fuck, I mean X—@*BensHoops* and @*KSLsports*.

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