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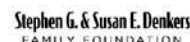
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If you’ve seen a viral post from @slugmag since February 2024, it’s thanks to Hazel Paul. From silly TikTok videos to high production event coverage, her grasp of SLUG’s brand beyond fleeting trends continues to grow our audience. Read her interview with hair stylist **Stevo Graves** on *SLUGMag.com*!

Jandro Hickmon

Contributor Limelight
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Jandro Hickmon’s enthusiasm, leadership and love for all things unconventional and underground make him a stellar addition to the Brand Ambassador team. Check out his dark, unsettling art on Instagram at @jandros.world and find him manning the SLUG booth at *Localized*, *SLC Twilight* and other cool events!



Second Annual Local Fashion Issue: SLUG celebrates the diverse community of apparel designers, vintage shops and beauty innovators disrupting the mainstream fashion industry and keeping Utah stylish. SLUG Photographer **Derek Brad** shot this month’s cover at *Essential Photo Supply*, featuring **Felix Diaz**, **Jaemen Cobb** and **Arthur Diaz** wearing “Echo Wanderer” by **Rakee Chen**. Read more about her designs on page 8!

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At the intersection of streetwear, digital fashion and original storytelling lives SCHNABBIT: a whimsical, wearable universe dreamed up by multi-disciplinary designer Rakee Chen. With roots in China, a fashion education earned in Atlanta and a current home base of Salt Lake City, Chen's work is as global as it is

imaginative. Her clothing brand SCHNABBIT isn't just a label, it's a narrative. And at its core is a rabbit with crocodile DNA.

"It started with two characters," Chen explains. "Rabbit Peach and Crocodile Avocado. They were based on me and my friend Qi, and we created them as toys back in 2019." As the duo continued to collaborate and evolve their illustrated universe, the characters merged to become SCHNABBIT, a hybrid creature that now serves as the face of Chen's brand. "It's kind of like our mascot, and also our story."

The story is told through a fusion of comic-style prints, adorable collectibles and streetwear clothing designed to be as unique as the story the brand was born from. Chen first began by

putting her drawings on T-shirts. "I wanted to make my art wearable," she says. And as her design skills evolved, shaped by her background in costume and industrial design, so did the world of SCHNABBIT. Now, Chen brings her characters to life not just on cotton, but in 3D animations, toys and digital fashion runways.

In fact, SCHNABBIT made a splash at a digital fashion show in London last year,

THE RABBIT WITH CROCODILE DNA RAKEE CHEN'S SCHNABBIT

By Jordan Turner
jordanturner1221@gmail.com
Photos by Roberto Valdez

with a short animated film that served as both a fashion presentation and narrative introduction. "The clothes help share the story, but the story is always the core," she says.

Chen's many projects include the *Dune*-inspired sculptural collection "Echo Wanderer," which appears on the cover of this issue. SCHNABBIT, though, is grounded in streetwear culture rather than high fashion. Think cotton basics in fun colors with vintage distressing and, of course, illustrative graphics with her signature characters. "SCHNABBIT is all about comfort, creativity and storytelling you can wear," Chen says.

Chen's storytelling isn't limited to fashion. She's also working to bring SCHNABBIT into the world of animation and comics, hoping to let the characters take center stage. "I want people to know the universe and the bunny, not just me," she says.

Rakee Chen, the creator behind SCHNABBIT.

That collaborative spirit extends to everything she does. The recent SCHNABBIT runway appearance saw Chen's work featured alongside drag queens and kings, DJs and rappers — many of whom Chen met through *Utah World Fashion Week*. "I love working with other creatives," she says. "If someone does music or anime or anything, we can inspire each other. It becomes more than fashion." Her dream collaborator? "Willow Smith," she says, without missing a beat.

Next up for Chen is a major appearance at *New York Fashion Week* on Sept. 11, where she's planning a runway show in collaboration with music tech brand LiberLive alongside her own designs. The show will feature live guitarists and singers as well as models dressed in Chen's custom

work, each holding a guitar while walking down the runway. Chen will also be participating in this year's *FASHIONCLASH Festival* in the Netherlands in November, showcasing her designs in an unconventional theatrical setting.

Back in Utah, Chen is also using SCHNABBIT for good. She's preparing for a charity fashion

show to raise funds for children with cancer and hopes to bring joy and storytelling to young audiences through her playful bunny world. Her advice for new designers? Stay curious and stay consistent. "Learn the software," she says, referring to tools that power her digital fashion work. "And give your brand at least five years. It takes time to build something real." But most importantly, she says, have a signature. "I can tell people what SCHNABBIT is in one sentence: a bunny with crocodile DNA," she says with a smile. "That's our story."

Follow Rakee Chen on Instagram at @cherrakee_ or shop her brand online at schnabbit.com.



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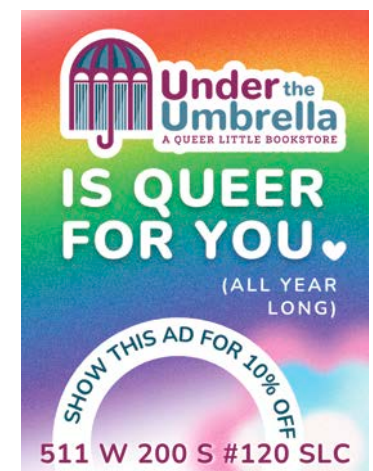
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CURRICULUM GIVES

LESSONS ON TELLING STORIES

WITH CLOTHES

By Cam Elliott • cameronchelliott@gmail.com

Photos by Derek Brad

If you are ever wondering what the coolest people in Salt Lake City are up to (besides the team here at *SLUG*, obviously) then you should go to *Curriculum* in the eclectic 9th and 9th neighborhood, across the street from the iconic *Tower Theatre*.

If you're lucky, you may just run into *Curriculum* founder and owner **Chad Tovey** — but frankly, it's a joy to meet any member of their staff that is hand-selected by Tovey himself.

As soon as you enter the boutique, you are filled with the sense that absolutely everything you see has been pored over with an immense amount of care. From the bespoke leather boots and stylish knit jackets to the fine home and bar wares, you can tell that whatever the light falls on is of the utmost quality.

I was lucky enough to sit down with Tovey and discuss the beginnings of *Curriculum* as well as what is next for the exciting Salt Lake brand. We sat in the store's lounge area, a moodily lit sitting room with an impressive setting of hand-made boots on a table in the middle. Throughout the store rests a deep, rich aroma of Black Oud incense from Japan which is, of course, hand-rolled in keeping with the store's artisan nature.

"I've been in retail my whole life, since I was 15 years old. I worked in a grocery store, I worked for Nordstrom for a long time, but I always wanted to do something smaller," Tovey says, flanked on his right on the low leather couch by *Curriculum* Brand and Design Lead **Luke Crowley**. "It's really cool to be able to meet the customers, get to know them, and talk to them. We have such a high rate of customer returns to our store. It's so cool to be able to see

people grow up and have that communication relationship that is more than just a transactional piece — where you see someone one time and then they're gone."

Tovey and Crowley were emphatic in expressing that *Curriculum* is not just a store where people go to buy things, it's a place where you can hear and be heard and become part of a community fixture. "I feel like a lot of people come here because Chad [Tovey] has built a relationship with them, a lot of the people around here are friends of the shop," Crowley says.

This care and passion rings loudly in the stock they carry. "Our philosophy is: You buy it and use it for the rest of your life," Crowley says. "A huge part of [the stock we carry] is a good story — how it's constructed, where it's constructed, where the inspiration came from. I mean, the shoes that we're looking at over there," he motions to the boots in the center of the room, "the boots have history. A brand founded in 1917, the boots are made by hand from Cordovan leather ... Some of the garments we carry too, [like] sweaters from Mexico that are handwashed in a river before they are shipped," Crowley finishes. "The brand we carry from Mexico," Tovey interjects, "said 'You may find pieces of twigs because we wash them in the river and some customers don't like it.' I said, 'Oh my God, I hope there is a twig in every sweater they send us,' because it has that story."

It is obvious that there is a resounding passion in everything Tovey, Crowley and the *Curriculum* team does, but the crown jewel of the store is their scents. Of course, they carry incense and candles from all over the world, but



Chad Tovey put together one of the most unique menswear stores in SLC with *Curriculum*.



the real treat is their fragrance tags — the scents are personally chosen by Tovey and Crowley and sold from a charming refurbished cigarette machine. I personally recommend the Protagonist scent, but any of their carefully crafted fragrances are a guaranteed delight. Discover more and shop their wares online at curriculum.shop.



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MAEKShift

is Sustainable Handmade Fashion
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By Kyle Forbush
forbushkyle@gmail.com

Photos by Jovvany Villalobos

MAEKShift is most well-known for whimsical clown couture designs.

Stepping into *Unhinged*, a unique shop in the heart of Sugar House, you realize immediately that there's much to take in. Amidst the visual cacophony of locally crafted wares filling the racks and displays, you might even miss the stairs on the right, which lead down to a handmade fashionista's paradise.

Orange polka dots, zebra stripes, denim on upcycled denim, white sheer and ruffled, multi-colored patchwork clown attire — there are endless options for limitless sensibilities. The basement space is home to an impressive selection of handcrafted clothing and goods carefully created by two sustainable fashion designers: **Chelsey Cummings** of Vintage by Chelsey and **Kimber Watson**, owner and creator of MAEKShift.

Watson's sewing station sits in a cozy corner. She sources fabrics and textiles from estate sales, thrift stores and any odd bottomless bins she can find, launders everything, then crafts and sews MAEKShift pieces just feet away from where they're sold. The materials Watson uses are all upcycled, otherwise condemned to a landfill or some other industry standard of non-biodegradable disposal or storage.

MAEKShift stands for "Moxxy, Authentically, Ethically Created & Sourced" combined with "Kimber." It's a unique acronym for a novel brand that Watson has worked to perfect for over 10 years. But the true beginning of her journey goes back even further. "I've been doing this forever. My grandma taught me to sew when I was 8," Watson says. "When I worked at Hot Topic, I would buy their extra-large T-shirts and turn them into other things."

It was also while working at Hot Topic that Watson found she couldn't align herself

with fast fashion. "I was very successful in the business. I got promoted all the time," she says. "But I would see kids who would beg their parents to buy \$75 jeans and \$20 dollar T-shirts and I had such a hard time selling it to them, because I knew as soon as they washed it once, it was going to shrink or fade."

Watson once held the self-proclaimed status of scene kid, heralding inspirations from Midwest emo, **Avril Lavigne** and **Karen O** from the **Yeah Yeah Yeahs**. But the fashion available in malls contrasted starkly with



Chelsey Cummings (left) and Kimber Watson (right) both sell their clothing out of the basement shop at *Unhinged*.

the impressions left to her by **Memaw**. For one thing, Watson always wore vintage. She says she loved **Lucille Ball** and was driven to recreate that vintage, patterned aesthetic from an early age. This required knowing her way around a sewing machine and possessing a vision beyond the graphic tee, verging into more personalized territory.

Some of Watson's most popular pieces are from the eclectic line of MAEKShift clown couture. She runs the gamut with these creations, from ruffled, button-up tops to jester hats and colorful, plaid balloon pants. "I can take any fabric I want and turn it into my idea of a whimsical creation," Watson says. "And what I really like to do is take that fun, whimsical clown idea and sort of translate it into everyday clothing as well."

Now, MAEKShift is a way for Watson's creative vision and love of dress to pass to others. "I try to inspire people to step outside of their comfort zone just a little," she says. This way, Watson encourages people "to gain their own personal style that's a little more like who they really are." The philosophy is essentially blending the personal and the utterly unique, a stylistic attitude that changes how you feel about yourself. "I like to inspire people to be excited to get dressed every day," Watson declares. "Even if it is a little bit more challenging at first, eventually it just becomes second nature."

Follow Kimber Watson on Instagram at @maekshift.kimber for updates on MAEKShift releases and to submit commission requests. Or pay a visit to the basement of *Unhinged* to see the kaleidoscopic spectacle for yourself.



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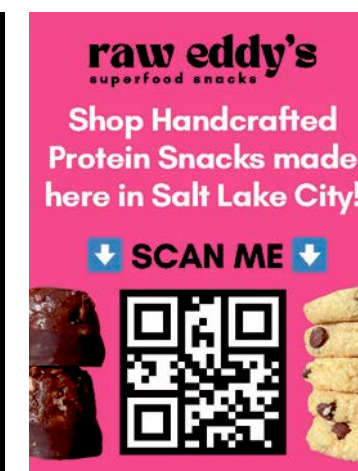


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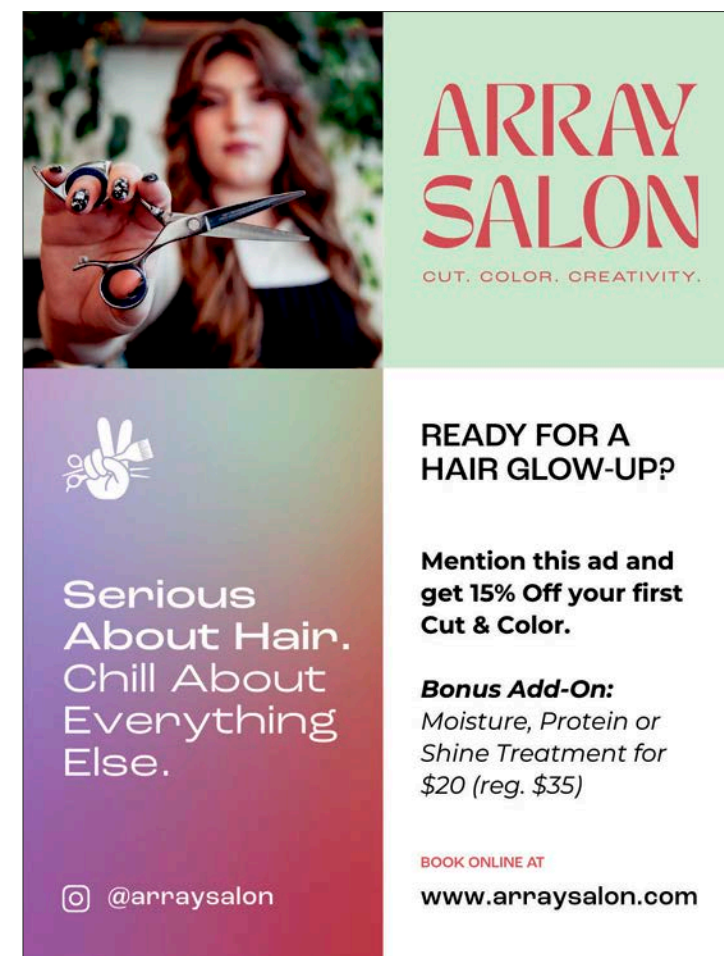



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By Cherri Cheetah • wildhoneymagazine@gmail.com

A Third Space for Excellence in Vintage Sportswear

Remember going to the mall as a teenager, browsing racks, laughing with your friends and just enjoying the moment? That's what it's like at *Thrifthood*, a vintage streetwear shop located in Provo and now in Salt Lake City.

Thrifthood started in 2018 by Alan "Albee" Bostrom who began selling on Instagram at @thrifthood_ until one day, when he got a request from a customer who wanted to browse in person. He came over, and the rest is history. Soon, word caught on about a unique shopping experience by DM only — as Bostrom lived with roommates — where customers explored his unfinished basement filled with vintage streetwear. As customers entered the basement, they'd see **Michael Jordan** posters along the stairs, neon signs, shoes spread across a pool table and clothes on racks. Business grew quickly and soon Bostrom opened a physical store in Provo.

Because Bostrom was born in the 1990s and grew up in the early 2000s, *Thrifthood's* inventory focuses on streetwear from those eras, as well as the 1980s. It reminds Bostrom of his childhood, but more than that, he loves the authenticity of it. He appreciates how clothing was made with cotton and wool over the polyester-driven fast fashion of today. Back then you could buy pieces that would last for years, not just for a season, and they ended up becoming memories, passed from generation to generation.

When *Thrifthood* first opened, inventory came from other thrift stores in Utah. Today it's wholesale, with every item personally handpicked by Bostrom and his team for quality, authenticity and style. When I ask Bostrom about the coolest pieces that he's found, he says that his favorites end up being the customers' favorites. What he loves most is when someone picks up a jacket and says, "Oh wow! My mom had that!"

and shows him family pictures. On a personal level, his favorite piece that he owns is a T-shirt that says "Smokey" in block letters on the front with a graphic of cartoon eyes on the back. He doesn't know where it's from or what brand it is — Bostrom just loves it for its uniqueness and for the conversations it can spark. After all, the most important factor to him is connection.

The core of *Thrifthood* is vintage sportswear, and Bostrom is passionate about it. He loves the connection sports fans have with each other and how sports unite people worldwide. *Thrifthood's* Provo location is by the BYU campus, and a lot of their customers are young people returning from missions. They browse the racks at *Thrifthood*, spot a team from the country or state they went to and feel nostalgic. In unfamiliar places, bonding over sports is a universal human experience, no matter where in the world you travel to.

Selling clothes that last for years is only part of the experience *Thrifthood* wants to give you — they want you to feel welcome to pop in for a visit, even if you leave empty-handed. The shop has couches, TVs and arcade games, making it feel like a third space rather than just a shop pushing you to buy. Bostrom wants people to spend hours inside, sitting on couches, browsing the racks and just having a great time with friends. He wants to foster a feeling of community regardless of where you're from, your age or your knowledge of vintage clothing.

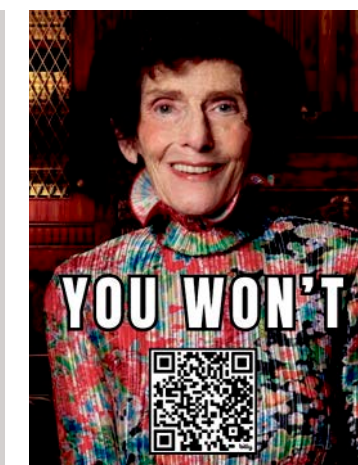
Along with their new second location in downtown SLC, *Thrifthood* has big plans for the future, including more events like their Utah Jazz pop-up in May. Just as SHEIN and Forever 21 have become synonymous with fast fashion, he hopes that when people hear "vintage," they think of *Thrifthood*.

Bostrom hopes to continue fostering a third space that transforms the thrift experience into something unique and welcoming — a place that stays in your memories like a well-worn vintage T-shirt.



Alan Bostrom loves the deep connections people have with vintage sportswear and built two killer spots to sell it.

Photo: Hayley Stoddard



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Cosmetologist **Benjamin Powell** first crossed paths with Afa Ah Loo in San Francisco, when Powell was producing a fashion show where Ah Loo was the featured designer. “We both have very creative backgrounds. We’re both immigrants here to the U.S., born and raised in the islands,” Powell says. “We also had the same struggle of trying to find ourselves and not seeing people like us in these spaces of work.”

When the two realized they both lived in Salt Lake City, they founded Utah Pacific Fashion with jewelry designer **Kalolaine Pahulu Rapp**. In 2024, Powell and Ah Loo split off to form Creative Pacific, a nonprofit with a focus on mentoring young creatives from Pacific Islander and other underrepresented backgrounds. “I was thinking, ‘How we can actually create pathways for them to find confidence?’ People are in the arts, they’re always lacking some type of acceptance,” Powell says.

On June 14, 2025, in the second year of Creative Pacific’s existence, Ah Loo was shot and killed at the “No Kings” protest in Salt Lake City. His sudden death at just 39 years old was felt through the local Pacific Islander community, as well as the global fashion industry. “These two years felt like 20 years,” Powell says, who is continuing to lead Creative Pacific with Ah Loo’s legacy at the forefront. “He was not just my partner in business, but he was also like my little brother.”

As a self-taught, up-and-coming Samoan designer, Ah Loo launched his career through Fiji Fashion Week in 2015. He moved to the U.S. and competed on season 17 of *Project Runway*, which further amplified his brand. “What an inspiration for many young people,” Powell says. “He was such a

Logan-based Indigenous designer **Codijo Chebon Yazzie** used a photo of Afa Ah Loo in his intricate beaded purse.



Designer **Roquin-Jon Quichocho Siongco** showcased delicately woven organic materials inspired by his Guam heritage.



CREATIVE PACIFIC

Keeps Afa Ah Loo's Legacy Bright

By **Asha Pruitt** • asha@slugmag.com
Photos by **Logan Sorenson**



Benjamin Powell speaks at Creative Pacific 2025.



humble guy that he never talked about the people he designed for,” who included stars of *The Real Housewives of Salt Lake City* and *Moana*.

“In the Pacific, we love big, bold, bright prints and flowers and all that,” Powell explains. Thinking that no one would buy clothing like that in the U.S., Ah Loo initially tried to match his aesthetic to that of American designers. When he realized he needed to stand out in a larger market, he went back to his roots and embraced the striking floral designs he became known for. “What he start-

ed to teach was be true to yourself, true to your culture, and let your work speak for itself,” Powell says. “[That is what] I think will be the impact of what he’s done.”

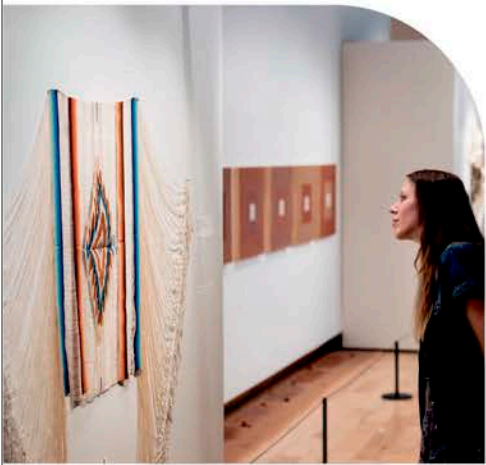
Powell and Ah Loo planned their second annual fashion show and creative conference for the weekend of July 31 to August 2, bringing designers from across the globe — including all three Pacific regions of Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia — to speak at panels, teach workshops and showcase their work on the runway at the *Natural History Museum of Utah*. “Those are the people we focus on, you know? The ones that just never get in that door,” Powell says. He knew Ah Loo would have wanted Creative Pacific to continue as planned, even in the wake of tragedy.

But there was a problem: They were short by one designer. When Powell found a collection of Ah Loo’s old sketches that had never been realized, an idea came to him. “Afa became the designer that filled the space,” he says. Each of the 12 designers took one sketch and brought it to life in their own style, creating the show’s opening collection and paying tribute to Ah Loo’s incredible body of work.

“Part of our message is to teach our community that whether you’re Samoan, Tongan, Fijian, Hawaiian, we can unite our work together,” Powell says. Arts education is the most important part of Creative Pacific’s mission. “When it comes to community work — because art is actually a work of service — we sometimes don’t realize the power we have,” he says. Afa Ah Loo inspired countless young designers, and Benjamin Powell continues to empower the next generation of artists with his message. Learn more at creativepacific.org.

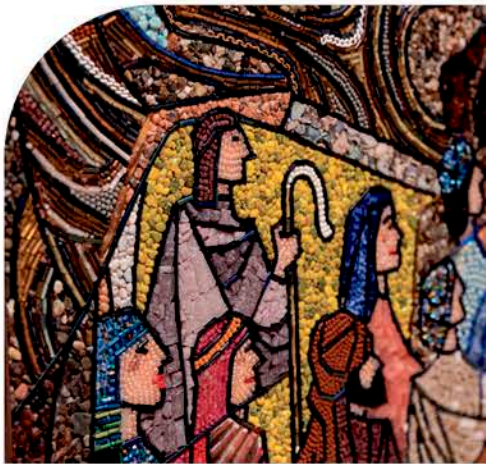
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When you meet Cindy Bithell, a licensed architect, mother of two and self-taught clothing designer, you quickly realize her story is about more than fashion. It's about design, the joy of process, passion, friends and evolution of the self.

Bithell's love of sewing began before she ever created pieces for local runway shows or designs for her brand. "My mother was a seamstress growing up," she says. "Couture wedding gowns, prom dresses — it was sort of her side job on top of being a mother, and I grew up hanging out in her sewing room." After taking sewing classes in her youth, Bithell pursued architecture in college, drawn to its blend of creativity and structure.

While in graduate school, she joined the DesignBuildBLUFF program, an experience that ignited her passion for sustainable, hands-on design and unconventional approaches. After a COVID-era layoff, she returned to sewing, starting with leather handbags, then took clothing courses and began creating her own unique patterns. Bithell launched her brand by growing an Instagram following of more than 270,000 through viral videos showcasing zero- and low-waste designs.

"I just started designing clothing. I didn't really know traditional [garment] drafting, and at that time I had discovered the idea of zero waste sewing," she says. "I began introducing these age-old techniques into my drafting so I kind of invented my own little way of drafting, loosely based on those zero-waste principles, and then [it] slowly evolved."

Her first breakthrough piece was the LeeLoo, inspired by the film *The Fifth Element*: a straight dress with cutouts, made entirely from rectangles and with a focus on form-fitting the body. Then came the Bog Jacket, a contem-

CINDY BITHELL OF THE SEW IS DREAMING OF A MORE SUSTAINABLE WORLD

By Carmen Valdez • desertstrategyconsulting@gmail.com

Photos by Tyson Call



Self-taught clothing designer Cindy Bithell has a knack for high fashion and pattern work with precision.

porary take on a 2,000-year-old garment discovered in archaeological digs. "It was a full-circle moment," she says. "Going back to the basics, reviving lost technologies." Another major turning point arrived when she began experimenting with textiles themselves. For her first runway show she created the Scrappy Dress from layered scraps of fabric stitched into a new textile. "It's more than just a garment; it's about adding another level of design, making the material part of the story," she says.

Sewing fabric into new textiles mirrors how Bithell lives: creating space by bringing different pieces together. "We're lacking third places, spaces where creative

people can gather," she says. "Art and fashion can bring a community together." Her collaborative spirit has led her to work with local artists, stylists and makeup teams on volunteer-run events like Shaped by Salt, a fashion show benefiting Great Salt Lake conservation.

Today, Bithell continues her work as a PFAFF sewing machine ambassador, a role that connects back to her mother's beloved 1981 model. She uses PFAFF models in her videos and creations, including a secondhand 1981 model that her mom found for her — another nod to zero-waste traditions. She's also submitted a lingerie-inspired collection for the August Brasileida Pool Party Fashion Show. As for the future, she's aiming for small-batch manufacturing, continuing designing and, eventually, a *New York Fashion Week* debut, but she's in no rush: "It's about doing the right work at the right time and not forcing it," she says.

Most importantly, joy guides Bithell's designs. That happiness drives her to share her sewing patterns publicly, a rare choice in the fashion world. "We can do better. We live in a high-consumption society," she says. "If I'm adding something to it, I want it to be unique, thoughtful and something people will keep. Slow fashion should be fun, a whole creative event."

For those discovering her work for the first time, Bithell hopes they notice the thoughtfulness behind each piece. "It's not just about wearing something pretty," she says. "I want people to think about what it was before it became a garment — the flat fabric, the lines, the process. That's where the magic is." To learn more about Bithell's magical sustainable dream, check out her Instagram @the_sew_sew and her website sewsewdesign.com.



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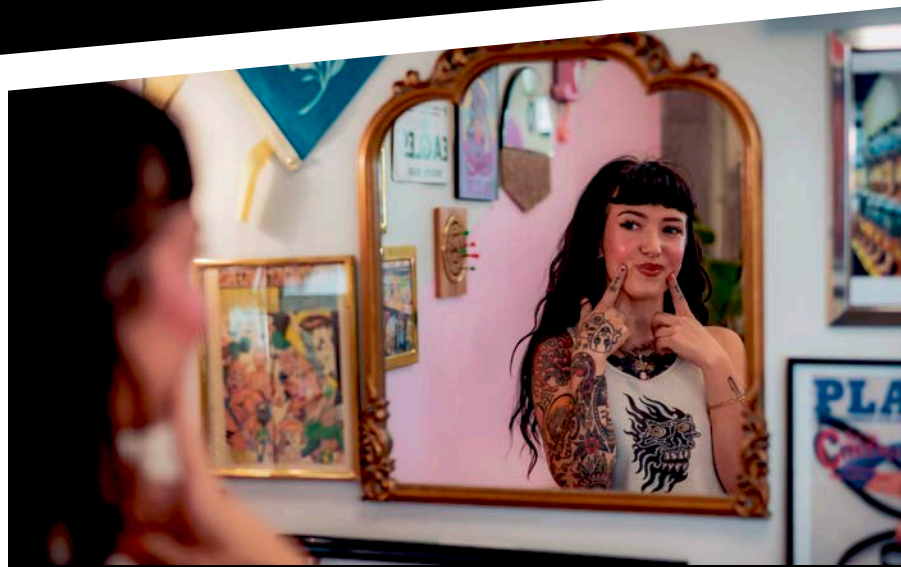
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Salon founder Alia Mathias believes that nails can be an important part of fashion and identity.

WICKED WEST NAILS: COUTURE AT THE CUTICLE

By Elizabeth Leach • elihanlea@gmail.com
Photos by Ashley Christenson

Alia Mathias, the founder of *Wicked West Nails*, is a nail artist and community builder based in Salt Lake City. Her studio stands apart from traditional salons as a space where nail art becomes a form of both personal and collaborative expression.

Mathias grew up in Wichita, Kansas, in a home where art was woven into everyday life. “My mom dabbled in the arts. She wrote poetry, painted murals and worked with charcoal,” she says. She was also an elementary school teacher, so I was raised in an environment where art was encouraged as a form of communication.” Spending time in tattoo shops and learning pinstriping at the age of 14, Mathias explored mediums most people don’t encounter every day, including large-scale mural painting and tattooing. As a Native American woman of Cherokee descent, she always saw body adornment as a way to culturally and artistically express yourself.

“I think people often miss how layered nail art can be,” she explains. “Traditionally, people think of nails as just painted red or matte versus shiny. But nails can be tiny, complex canvases of expression. You have ten little palettes to work with, and so many materials are available now.” Since nails intersect deeply with identity, they can often be one of the first places people explore their self-expressions. “Creating that safe space for people to explore who they are and feel confident is the goal,” Mathias says.

To Mathias, nails are an important part of fashion and identity. “The nail industry was shaped heavily by the Black community in the ‘80s and ‘90s — stiletto nails, gaudy styles. It’s about adornment and personal history,” Mathias says. “It’s also about play [and] connecting with your inner child. Everyone remembers playing with nail polish.” It can be as simple as a bold color or as complex as sculptured avant garde shapes, to give someone that extra oomph.

Client collaboration is central to her process. “It’s my favorite part of the job,” Mathias says. “I love giving people an opportunity to express themselves creatively.” Clients can bring in anything from Pinterest boards and color palettes to photos of furniture or fine art they love as inspiration for Mathias to create nail sets.

Mathias particularly enjoys working with color. “I’m a nerd about the color wheel,” she says. “I often start with building the perfect palette and then add texture and shape. I love sculpting nails and exploring Korean and Japanese nail trends — jelly colors, milky bases, holographic glitter, 3D elements. It’s very layered and intentional.” Her aesthetic is shaped by painters like **Henri Matisse** and **David Hockney**. “I love their bold colors and textures. I also pull from fashion runway shows, especially the more creative ones,” she says. Mathias often

looks for fashion outside the norm, pushing the boundaries of what is possible to do on the nail bed.

Wicked West Nails also hosts pop-ups, permanent jewelry events, markets and even book clubs. “Most of us [nail techs] have family out of town, so our clients become part of our extended community,” she says. Part of this closeness is born out of the time and effort these particular sets require; appointments often last over two hours because of the art involved.

Mathias hopes to do more community-driven work. “I want to step back from doing nails every day to focus on events and care spaces,” she says. Keep an eye out for the salon’s two-year anniversary pop-up in September. Visit wickedwestnails.com to read more about each nail tech, view their work and book directly.

The nail techs at *Wicked West Nails* create complex textures and shapes on tiny nail canvases.






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SLUG LOCALIZED

dj TYRINHA

By Parker Scott Mortensen | parkermortensen@gmail.com

Tyra Imbico, aka dj tyrinha, draws from her Brazilian and Diné culture as well as her early love for emo music in her DJ sets.

SLUG Localized on Monday, September 15 will showcase the electrifying sounds of VI:BRA, tyrinha and Spaz. With diverse inspirations and a fluid approach to music, these queer DJs have carved out their own space in the cis, white, straight bar and club scene. Sponsored by Riso-Geist, the show costs just \$5 for entry. Doors at Kilby Court open at 7 p.m. and music kicks off at 8 p.m.

As a resident DJ at *The SunTrapp* — Utah's historic, first openly gay bar that reopened last year under new ownership — Tyra Imbico (they/she) draws on an upbringing spent at the intersection of different worlds.

Known on stage as dj tyrinha, Imbico began honing their diverse musical taste as a child. Their mother is Diné and grew up on the reservation while their father is Brazilian and immigrated here with family, all of whom lived with Imbico growing up. "The Diné side is a more serious culture, while the Brazilian side is loud, full of big personalities, music and dancing," they say. Imbico existed between the two sides and learned to adapt and find themselves along the way, also spending a lot of time online and getting into emo music. "I was listening to *Paramore*, *My Chemical Romance*, *Sleeping with Sirens*, all of that stuff," they say. "So having these different worlds colliding was where I developed my music taste."

With the huge variety of influences came a tendency to compartmentalize. At home, Imbico was often loud. In school, she was quieter. Eventually, as she went to the University of Utah to study mathematics and contended with being in a male-dominated program, COVID-19 hit and change felt possible. "The pandemic gave me a

second chance to be like, 'I don't want to be quiet anymore,'" she says. "I don't want to be a quiet person. I want to be loud. I want to be heard."

Imbico started to take up more space — and to figure out where they belonged. When they turned 21, they began going out to local bars and clubs. Some places felt queer but too white, while others felt diverse but not queer enough. "It just felt like I wasn't fully myself in those spaces," Imbico says. Sometimes the vibe would be right, but then the DJ would do something weird. "Those moments where I [was] like, 'What was that? I could have done something better,'... And I [was] like, 'Wait, I could do this. Why not?'" They received a DJ controller as a graduation gift and began learning to mix, drawing on their diverse library of music and embracing their eclectic taste.

DJing has become a way for Imbico to create her own space in the world. "It was hard for me growing up trying to be like, 'Oh, I need to be a specific way in each of these spaces.' And being fluid, where I can be all these versions of myself at the same time, was something that really helped me," she says.

Now, they play at *The SunTrapp* a few times a month, usually from 9 p.m. to 1 a.m. Imbico starts the night with throwbacks for the older crowd and eventually moves to their own mixes, never sticking to any one genre but always looking to create a space that's welcoming to queer and trans people of color — which has been an important part of their identity as a performer. "That was a big thing for me that I wanted to make important for bars ... that I DJ at," they say. "I'm like, 'Okay, I am this person. I'm gonna let you know right now: This is what I play, and we need this.' Advocating for that was a big thing for me."

For her upcoming *Localized* set, Imbico plans to incorporate baile funk, the familiar Brazilian beats that she grew up hearing. "That's gonna be the underlying tone of all the music that I play," she says. "I always try to add those beats, but I also love house music. And I want to also bring in that queerness ... Chicago house, you know. That's very big and important to me."

As always, they'll make it all work together. Follow @dj.tyrinha on Instagram and listen to their mixes at soundcloud.com/dj-tyrinha.

SLUG LOCALIZED

DJ VI: BRA

By Parker Scott Mortensen | parkermortensen@gmail.com

Miel Franco Pérez, aka VI: BRA, is an agender, “agenre” DJ whose fluid self-expression and musical style makes them unique.

For Miel Franco Pérez, music is a process of self reclamation and connection. A nonbinary lesbian DJ, Pérez runs ¡DYKED!, a dance party and inclusive, affirming space for queer women and nonbinary individuals. Getting to the point where they can name their identities and where they belong has taken most of their life, and music has acted as a guiding star through it all.

“Music is a way for us to — when we’re younger — connect with others and fit in. And for the majority of my time growing up, I didn’t really know where I fit,” Pérez says. They spent the first 10 years of their life growing up in Mexico before moving to New Zealand, then Sweden and eventually Utah.

While each place brought its own challenges of assimilation, Pérez found that, through music, they could find a sense of peace and clarity. On dance floors, they’d hear snippets of songs that felt different, sounds that were true to them, and thought about how they could incorporate that feeling within themselves. “How cool would it be if I blended this style to these other styles that I’m also listening to?” they say. “It was always this tug of war of like, how can I find this in-betweenness and duality of how I experience and witness music and how it feels in my body? And how [does] it connect me to not only my body, but also

my surroundings in my community?”

Those experiences led them through a long process of self discovery and healing through music. Pérez started DJing in 2019 but felt like they didn’t belong in the largely white, straight, cis spaces they encountered. So they walked away. “And then 2020 came, and suddenly my world was turned upside down,” they say. “And I [was] like, ‘Well, I’m not just queer. I’m a lesbian. I’m nonbinary. I am also neurodivergent [and] autistic ... There are all these layers of myself that I [was] coming to really face and realizing that the community I was surrounded by were not really people that were holding any parts of those identities — that I was, once again, just assimilating.”

Pérez returned to DJing with this sharpened sense of identity and, sure enough, began to attract their people. “By 2023, I was so much more settled into all these identities and different communities for me to be like, ‘Alright, it’s time to reel it back in and start creating,’ because I then felt safe enough to create for the people that I had been longing to connect with,” they say.

Pérez adopted the DJ name VI: BRA, as in the Spanish word “vibra” meaning “to vibrate,” because their approach to music, and gender, is about using vibrations to

navigate. “I consider myself agender, and then I call my style of DJing ‘agenre’ because I feel like there’s a lack of genre, while still [having] a lot of fluidity,” they say, “and that’s also how my gender feels. That’s how my entire being feels.”

Their best sets, they say, create a “bell-curve experience” that starts slow and takes the crowd on an emotional journey through sound. “I’ll start at a lower BPM and then crescendo to the bell curve for that peak experience for people, and then reel it back.” Finding that hypnotic flow state for the crowd is key to a VI: BRA set, and getting there can even be a little emotionally taxing for Pérez.

While they’re still learning to balance the emotional part of music with the task of working as a DJ, through ¡DYKED!, they’re helping younger DJs find the foundation Pérez says they lacked when they first started. “Let’s put you up on the stage ... and let’s teach our subconscious that it is safe to play, that we are received and that we are welcome, and that we are able to take up space,” they say.

Follow Pérez on Instagram at [@mi111el](https://www.instagram.com/mi111el) and see their *Localized* set on Monday, September 15 at Kilby Court.



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Immediately upon entering *Cosmica*, I understood why it has that name. Walking through the front door immerses you in a spaghetti Western dining experience that is out of this world. The front is designed like an Italian countryside patio, with hanging plants on the pasta-yellow walls illuminated by the glow of pink and red neon lights.

I was seated toward the bar along a tile wall with the two sides separated by a curtain at the top to create a cozy slice of privacy inside a bustling restaurant. The already intimate lighting dimmed further at 9:05 p.m., adding to its allure.

Won over by the atmosphere, I was delighted to order a drink after being transported from the menial grind of the average American into an Italian cosmos of fine dining. I started with the Snake Bite Sangria (\$17) to take the edge off, which was served in a boot glass and garnished with lemon and mint. This cocktail, with its cloudy scarlet color, took a bite out of me. It was punchy, strong and sweet, just as advertised. Then came our appetizer, the Elk Carpaccio (\$22), which called to me as someone with Japanese heritage who deeply loves raw fish and meat (if done properly), and *Cosmica* couldn't have done it better. The thin cuts of elk melted in my mouth with



a velvety creaminess that was soft and buttery. The shredded greens topped with Parmigiano on top felt like the salad equivalent of cotton candy, also melting in the mouth (as much as greens can), giving a satisfying, peppery after-taste and building excitement for my entree with each succeeding bite. I felt like Tony Soprano pawing at gabagool.

After erasing any evidence that elk had been served at all, I ordered the Maccheroni alla Genovese (\$26) while my girlfriend chose the Linguine e Shrimp (\$25). I was elated to pair my main course with red wine, sipping on the Adegas Guímáro Mencia 2023 (\$16) from Ribeira Sacra, Spain, which was rich and dark, allowing a smooth and sweet finish.

My girlfriend allowed me to try her linguine and thank God she did, because it was a perfectly balanced ratio of sauce, shrimp and noodle. The sauce was garlicky and creamy, the noodles were close to al dente which gave a nice texture and the shrimp was fresh but didn't overwhelm the other flavor profiles.

The maccheroni ensnared me in its warm embrace on the first bite, as if wrapping me in a warm blanket after bracing for a snowstorm. The meat, a slow-cooked pulled beef in a rich onion ragu sauce with white wine and beef marrow joining the party, melded with the maccheroni noodles beautifully and was topped with a shredded Parmigiano powder reminiscent of Park City powder in the winter. Each bite reinforced my

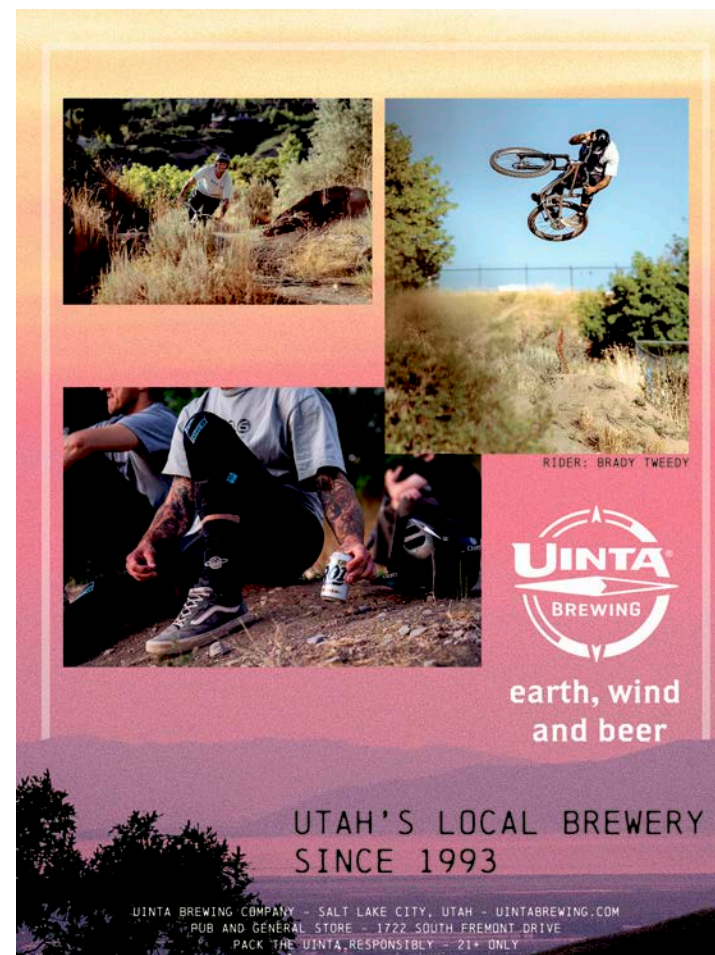
mission to clean my plate. The flavor was rich, the textures worked wonderfully together, and the only thing that made me upset with the meal was that it ended.

For dessert, I couldn't resist the Banana Split (\$11). Following the mountain of heartiness and savory delight that was the maccheroni, I was given its sweet and evil twin. Two large scoops of vanilla gelato formed sweet and creamy Alps, blanketed by candied peanuts, caramelized bananas, chocolate sauce, Amarena cherries and hazelnut. It was the perfect ending to a great meal that left me feeling satisfied but not overly gluttonous despite taking down a feast.

Cosmica certainly shoots for the moon and lands among the stars. Several dishes and drinks sparkle on a menu that just hit the spot, scratching an itch better than most can. When I heard jazz at the end of my meal, I realized I hadn't noticed the music serenading my subconscious. I surrendered to the richness of the food and delighted in the drinks. *Cosmica* is certainly at the top of the list for my next date night.

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cosmicasaltlake.com
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Sun: 5 p.m.-9 p.m.

(From L-R) Maccheroni alla Genovese, Snake Bite Sangria and Linguine e Shrimp.



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PRESENTS

SEPTEMBER 2025

Bright Eyes - 9.2 The Depot | **Japanese Breakfast** - 9.5 Twilight Concert Series - Gallivan Center
Riff Wood - 9.12 Soundwell | **90.9 KRCL Presents: Arc De Soleil** - 9.13 The Depot | **d4vd** - 9.13 The Complex
Anamanaguchi - 9.15 Soundwell | **The Flaming Lips** - 9.17 Ogden Twilight | **Sunny Day Real Estate** - 9.17 The Complex
Daisy the Great - 9.19 Soundwell | **David Archuleta** - 9.19 The Complex | **The Rapture** - 9.19 The Depot
Rosie - 9.20 Soundwell | **Big Thier** - 9.22 Twilight Concert Series - Library Square | **ThxSoMch** - 9.22 The Complex
Noah Cyrus - 9.23 The Union | **Spacey Jane** - 9.23 The Complex | **The Paper Kites** - 9.24 The Complex
Arcy Drive - 9.24 Soundwell | **Polo & Pan** - 9.25 Ogden Twilight | **K-UTE Presents: samia** - 9.26 Soundwell
Gary Numan - 9.29 The Complex | **Big Wild** - 9.30 The Complex

KILBY COURT

Leetham + Anna Jay + Dahbose 9.2
JIVEBOMB 9.3
Shadow Work + Modern Speed
+ Bonneville + Seeking the Sun 9.4
Over Under Album Release
+ Theoretical Blonde 9.5
Liahona Olayan + Heber Matüte
+ Detzany 9.6
Danny & The Kids + The Moody
Mammals + High-Five Hero 9.8
Wargasm 9.9
Always Her 9.10
Lagrimas 9.11
Dad Bod 9.12
Teethe 9.13
The Palms 9.14
SLUG Localized:
Vi: BRA, Tyrinha, Spaz 9.15
English Teacher 9.16
Hotline TNT 9.17
Kamiyada+ & Lit Lords 9.18
The Snares 9.19
Mind's Eye + Hot Flash Heat Wave 9.20
Caskey 9.21
Smokedope2016 9.22
Honey Waves + Ipseity
+ Calico + Glue Coast 9.23
harf. 9.24
Quannnic 9.25
Anyone Awake + Melancholy Club
+ Drusky + Harbor Patrol 9.27
James Marriott 9.28
Nourished by Time 9.30

METRO MUSIC HALL

Bit Brigade Performs "Mega Man X" 9.2
Twilight After Party: 9.5
Sauvignon Mami + Sarah Lies 9.6
Hot in Herre: 2000s Dance Party 9.7
Haus o' Waffles Pop Up Drag Brunch 9.8
Baroness 9.9
OSEES 9.10
90.9FM KRCL Presents: Santigold 9.11
Broadway Rave 9.12
Kornbread (of RuPaul's Drag Race) 9.13
VIVA LA DIVA 9th Anniversary Show:
Dolly and Friends 9.14
VIVA LA DIVA 9th Anniversary Show:
Dolly and Friends 9.15
Rhapsody of Fire 9.16
Tina Turner (of RuPaul's Drag Race) 9.17
Marlo Suzanne and the
Galaxy Band - Electric Fever 9.18
Beach Fossils 9.19
The Dandy Warhols 9.20
LANDMVRKS 9.21
The Legendary Pink Dots 9.22
Marlo Suzanne and
the Galaxy Band - No Chill 9.23
10 Years 9.24
CRYPTA 9.25
Panda Bear 9.26
XANA 9.27
Reverend Horton Heat 9.28
Demon Hunter 9.29
Marlo Suzanne and the
Galaxy Band - Witchy Woman 9.30

URBAN LOUNGE

HOUSE OF BEY:
A Beyoncé Celebration 9.5
Letdown. 9.6
Anthony Green 9.7
99.9FM KUAA Presents: TOPS 9.8
OMNI 9.11
Music For The Masses:
Dark 80's New Wave Nite 9.12
Alpine Loop 9.13
Castle Rat 9.14
Balduvian Bears 9.15
99.9 KUAA Presents:
Sextile + Automatic 9.16
Mr Gnome 9.17
Dance Romance:
A Lady Gaga Dance Night 9.18
TWRF 9.19
Mystery Skulls 9.20
Conan 9.21
The Callous Daoboys 9.22
INIKO 9.23
Slow Crush 9.24
The Symposium 9.25
High Vis 9.26
Cafuné 9.27
Arlie 9.28
Sappho After Dark:
Magic Masc Show + Dance Party 9.29
NILE 9.30
French Police 9.31
Blackbraid 9.32
NateWantstoBattle 9.33
Oliver Hazard + The Last Revel 9.34

ACROSS

2. Curious patients may schedule one with a WholesomeCo pharmacist
3. Percent of Utah cannabis patients served by WholesomeCo delivery
5. No need to park, we have a _____
7. Apple mobile platform where WholesomeCo's app runs
10. -cational materials are available at WholesomeCo
12. Utah city where WholesomeCo is located
14. Type of card issued to Utah cannabis patients, casually
16. Bringing it home
18. Aromatic compounds in cannabis
19. Like WholesomeCo's delivery, for privacy
20. WholesomeCo's is convenient & available on iOS or Android!
21. Medical card renewal is required after one _____

DOWN

1. Plant at WholesomeCo
4. Emote, or a kind of pickup available at WholesomeCo
6. Provider visit without the waiting room
8. WholesomeCo Pharmacy schedule, no days off
9. Common terpene with earthy scent
11. Non-intoxicating cannabinoid
13. Top rating for service quality
15. Cost of WholesomeCo delivery
17. Kind of order placed via iOS or Android
18. Psychoactive compound in cannabis

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