

SLUG MAG



Get Outside

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Contributor Limelight

Nichole Huntsman Astrology Writer



We've looked into the stars this month, and all signs are pointing to Nichole Huntsman. As an adventurous soul and a spiritual guide, Huntsman's horoscope column lights the way to make sure every month is enriched with good fortune. Check in on your horoscope for July on pg. 32.



Get Outside Issue: The Beehive State is enriched with adventure and natural beauty, so why should we only stay within the valley? *SLUG* is scouring all edges of the map to get us outside and enjoy this summer heat. Artist **Anne Kaferle** honors Utah's geographic wonders with a majestic mountain range, streaked in a gorgeous Mother Nature color palette. To explore Utah's vast landscape, from Logan to the Four Corners, check out pg. 12-22.



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WHAT DO WE WANT IN A PARK? AND WHERE CAN WE GET IT?

By Pace Gardener • pacegardener@gmail.com

It all started on New Year's Eve 2023. Ali Vallarta, host of *City Cast Salt Lake* podcast and local expert on the Wasatch Front, decided she'd had enough of cliché New Year's resolutions. "I wanted something fun and community-driven, so I decided to have one drink at each bar in Salt Lake County: 216 bars in 365 days," Vallarta says.

The information that deep dive yielded for Vallarta — how to curate a vibe, increased knowledge on local liquor laws, how to run a bar — made her listeners hungry for an even bigger follow-up project. Thus was born the *Every Park SLC Project*.

The goal was simple: using a framework of 27 unique data points, track what services are available at every Salt Lake County park and compile that information in an easy-to-use format that residents, local leaders and city planners could access.

"I appreciate that it's zany. But anyone can embark on an observational journey and feel more connected to [their community]," Vallarta says.

The process was not simple. "You can't exactly have a picnic at 511 parks," Vallarta says. "It was equivalent to a Target lap. You need to return something to Target, so you do a lap to see what's new. Every park in Salt Lake County [has] a Target lap." What Vallarta learned, and what she shared with the listeners of her *City Cast Salt Lake* podcast, tells a story of what cities prioritize.

Despite access to green space being a top priority for Utahns, 26% of households along the Wasatch Front live more than a 10-minute walk from any park. In those parks, 69% have no year-round bathroom access. "I'm a single-issue bathroom voter," Vallarta says. "It's a disaster if a park doesn't have a bathroom."

Within her project, Vallarta developed a family-friendly hall of fame: parks with open bathrooms, a playground, a splash pad, picnic tables and a working water fountain. "Of all 511 parks, only 3% have all a parent wants. It makes you think, 'Who are we designing parks for?'" Vallarta says.

Surprisingly, wealth doesn't predict park amenities. "You'd expect wealthier cities to have more park amenities, but that's not true. Murray has an \$83K

median income and eight amenities per park, while Draper has a \$132K median income and only four amenities per park," Vallarta says.

Still, data for data's sake isn't what motivated Vallarta to start the Every Park SLC Project. It's also not what kept her focused to complete the project when the timeline ballooned from one year to two, or when she had to enlist the help of volunteers to get it across the finish line.

"Parks are the ultimate public good . . . They make our lives better; we get healthier just by association. Kids who spend time in parks sleep better. They have less screen time and lower obesity rates," Vallarta says.

When pressed, Vallarta, now a true Wasatch Front expert on parks, can list some of her personal favorites — *Big Cottonwood Park* in Millcreek for its space and *Dimple Dell* in Sandy for its trails — but in the end, Vallarta has a more expansive answer to the question, "What's your favorite park in Salt Lake County?"

"That's easy," Vallarta says. "Whichever one is closest to me."

To listen to Vallarta's daily podcast on *City Cast Salt Lake*, visit saltlake.citycast.fm, and for the complete Every Park Salt Lake filterable parks' map, visit saltlake.citycast.fm/parks.



Photo: Tyson Call @clancycoop

Ali Vallarta made a map of every park in Salt Lake County. Her favorite? Whichever one she's closest to.

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MORE BUTTS ON BIKES

Unplugged Wellness



By Dylan Bueche • dylanjbueche@gmail.com

Photos by Chris Berry

Whether it's their Bike Club or a four-day desert adventure, Unplugged Wellness is building a community for all.

Anyone who has glanced at a screen in the last five seconds has probably noticed the pervading sense of social malaise that follows, along with a frustrating urge to keep glancing. Many (like myself) took to outdoor sports for refuge, only to find that something is deeply amiss there as well. Every skier I know thinks they're one good clip away from getting sponsored. Between Netflix deals and whatever the hell is happening at *The Front Climbing Club*, everyone seems to have forgotten that no one was ever supposed to make any money from rock climbing in the first place. The marketing schema surrounding adventure sports has us all forgetting they're realistically just hobbies for most of us – with many convinced they need the newest, lightest, spendiest gear for marginal gains in performance that they don't actually have the skill to access. Whatever happened to love of the game?

Lucas Matelich and Marshall Opel are childhood friends who came together to start Unplugged Wellness and foster mindfulness and community through adventure sports and, more broadly, bring public health back to its roots. "As an organization, we're simply trying to help people feel more alive," Matelich says. "The bicycle is our primary tool. Our main recipe, however, is more basic: Move your body away from screens in nature with others."

The original vision was to host four-day desert adventures on bikes, but now three years on, their programming has branched in two directions. Their digital detox bike camping trips, for example, include skill-building workshops, circling practices and guided meditations on top of Unplugged's bread and butter: no screens, no booze, healthy food, challenging ourselves in nature. "That's how we started, but we realized we're only on these desert missions six times a year. The other 300 days of the year, we're living in our community, here in the dopest town in the West." Their response was to grow that community by hosting a huge range of events that capture their ethos of simplicity, fun and connection perfectly.

"The redbullification of adventure sports has trickled into Salt Lake and brought this elitist, egotistical, check-out-how-sick-I-am version of showmanship that is not inclusive," Matelich says. "It's not welcoming, and it doesn't speak to the roots of these soul sports." He's a former pro-skier, and Opel is a former competitive cyclist — giving them each a unique perspective to see through the bullshit and ego that seems to be plaguing the industry, as well as the credibility to speak about it. "Now we realize riding bikes through town, listening to music and wearing regular clothes is where it's at. At the core, what Marshall and I care

about is public health, and community and connection to place is the driving force behind it."

Even more credibly, Matelich once spent a full year entirely phoneless and never had an Instagram account until he downloaded it to promote Unplugged Wellness. The irony wasn't lost on him; rather, it seems to be a motivating factor to grow Unplugged to a sustainable enough level so that he can delete it again. "We design people-first events that focus on the psychological needs of the people, and it turns out when you take care of your community, they want to show back up." Their Discord has grown to 500 members, and you can find out about events and more in their weekly newsletter.

Unplugged Wellness is available to hire privately for group retreats, team-building exercises and more. "We evolved to be in nature, so we do everything in beautiful outdoor spaces," Matelich says. Even the professionals they bring in to teach workshops and lead group meditations can keep up on bikes for the whole trip. "One of the flags we wave is more butts on bikes. The more people riding, the cleaner our air is. The fewer traffic deaths there are, the healthier we are. The more exercise we get, the more connected the town feels. So yeah, with the bike you have, in the jeans you're already wearing, come to the Bike Club."



INSIDE NORKOVA Finding Happiness THROUGH COMMUNITY

By: Nicole Gaddie • nicolegaddie@gmail.com

Tucked inside a warehouse-style building on the corner of 600 East and Simpson Avenue, **Kate Allen** has created something increasingly rare: a place to simply be and connect. Disco balls hang from high ceilings as sunlight streams through a large garage door window. Along one wall, a woman settles into her laptop at a communal table. Nearby, a Great Pyrenees naps on the cool, stone floor. Just a few nights earlier, the space was packed with people dancing in their underwear before setting off on a Pride-themed bike ride through the city.

This is the *Norkova Community Center*, what Allen calls the “ultimate third place,” somewhere between home and work where people can connect, relax and engage with others.

The idea for Norkova began in 2019, after one of Allen’s friends, **Tereza Norkova**, died by suicide. The loss shattered her world, but it also sparked a profound shift in purpose. Determined to honor her friend’s memory and support those struggling with loneliness, hopelessness and mental health challenges, Allen set out to create something meaningful. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic. As isolation grew and opportunities for connection disappeared, the need for community became more apparent than ever.

After earning her Master of Health Administration from the University of Southern California and moving to Utah, Allen began experimenting with ways to bring people together. She started by hosting small, weekly gatherings. Before long, those meetups grew into yoga in the park and paint-and-sip nights. As interest grew, so did the offerings, with retreats and larger gatherings drawing more participants. Last winter, Allen opened a small studio in downtown Salt Lake. And just a few months ago, she took an even bigger step by renting the warehouse

that would become the *Norkova Community Center*. “It’s not something I necessarily intended to build, but people need it, and it just attracts really good people,” Allen says. “I’ve always had an entrepreneur mindset.”

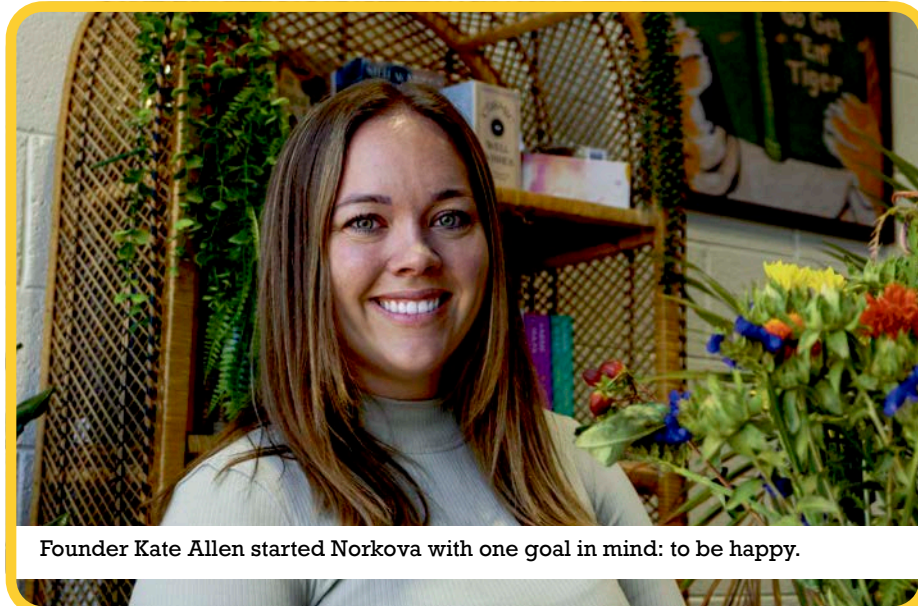
Seated beside Allen on the couch is **Diana Ibarra**, who jokingly refers to herself as Allen’s “right-hand woman.” Ibarra first discovered Norkova in 2023 while attending one of the weekly gatherings. She found the community she was looking for and has been helping Allen plan, organize and host events ever since. “Everyone just needs someone — and to not feel alone,” Ibarra says. “Norkova is kind of like the gateway to gather.”

In the beginning, Allen offered Norkova’s events free of charge. But as the community grew, the organization transitioned to a membership model to support its expanding programming. Today, memberships start at \$69 per month and include unlimited access to the coworking space, classes, events and offsite gatherings. For those looking for more flexibility, Norkova also offers \$10 day passes to the center and day of events, as well as individual event

tickets. “No one is ever turned away due to cost,” Ibarra says, noting affordability was always top of mind for Allen.

Upcoming events include: breathwork classes, yoga, acupuncture, hikes, crafts, kombucha, forest bathing, Pilates and Pancakes and offsite retreats. All ages are welcome to attend. Allen says one of the most popular staple events is the sound baths at the Bonneville Salt Flats. To keep up with upcoming events and offerings, members and newcomers alike can follow Norkova’s Instagram account, [@norkovahq](https://www.instagram.com/norkovahq), which has grown to more than 11,000 followers, or check the booking page on norkova.org.

Ultimately, Allen has one guiding mission at Norkova: help people be happy. “I think people can all agree we can all use a little bit more happiness,” she explains. “Appreciate the little things, like smiling at strangers or going about your day with purpose. Happiness isn’t a lack of problems but having perspective on those problems and the tools and community to work through them.”



Founder Kate Allen started Norkova with one goal in mind: to be happy.

Photo: Gavyn Cundari

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Slingshot CITY WEEKLY SLUG MAG

HELPER

ABOUT HELPER

Those who believe there's nothing past the Salt Lake Valley couldn't be anymore wrong. Although this is one of the smaller towns in this list, Helper brings more bang for their buck. With ghost towns explorations, museums to wander through and original foundations on every corner, it's a step into the past with a walk through Utah history.

Stuff to do:

- Helper Mini
- Spring Canyon Ghost Town
- Vintage Motor Company.

Place to stay:

- Greenwell Inn
- Roadside Motel
- Castle Gate RV Park

Good eats:

- Helper Beer Co.
- Balance Rock Eatery & Pub
- Pick & Rail Market



By Jordan Thornblad
jordan.thornblad@gmail.com

Illustrations by Wes Wood

It begins with a glance, then a squint, then curiosity crackles and you have to lean in and take a look. At first, you may not know exactly what you are looking at, but as you move closer, it comes into perfect view. Art that would traditionally be sequestered behind stone columns and grandiose glass doors instead finds its spotlight in an unexpected mailbox-sized place.

Kevin Perry had a vision: to make art more accessible, and what is more accessible than the side of the road? Nestled in the heart of Helper, Utah's historic Main Street is an art exhibit unlike those found in the buildings that line it. *The Helper Mini* art museum is a curated micro-gallery that has become another contemporary extension of the artistic spirit that runs in the community's veins.

What began in 2024 as a way for artists to step outside of their comfort zones has blossomed. Two years later, not only is *The Helper Mini* retrofitted for small works of art, but it has opened an entirely new avenue in the industry – allowing emerging and experienced creatives to experiment with unique ways to use the space. From holograms to three-dimensional cakes, their creativity has grown luxuriously.

Right now, if someone were to walk up to *The Helper Mini*, lean over and look inside, they would find an animalistic, comedic take on the atmosphere of a traditional art gallery. The micro-gallery has been transformed into an idea straight from the mind of **Socrates M. Medina**, the artist behind *Perro y Arena*. "He had this idea to create these little coyotes who are in an art exhibit of coyotes," Perry says. "His work is really



recognizable, so it's been a fun element to have him in there."

According to Perry, **David Richey Johnsen** was one of the artists who helped propel the art movement in Helper in the 1990s. "I remember David telling the story that he got off the train, saw all these amazing buildings and told the mayor at the time, 'If you let me put artwork in all of these empty storefront windows, in 20 years these will be real galleries,'" Perry recalled.

In fact, as the two-year anniversary of the gallery dawns, Perry and his team are readying for their second annual Mega Helper Mini Show. Held during their Helper Arts Festival, the show will serve as an encore for several of the gallery's veterans who will return to showcase larger-scale pieces of work alongside their original mini masterpieces.

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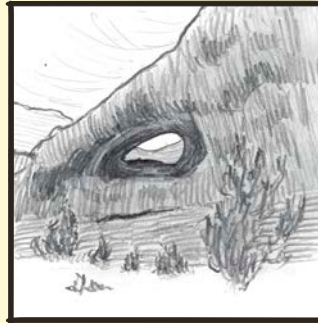
MONUMENT VALLEY

ABOUT MONUMENT VALLEY

Located on the border of Utah and Arizona, Monument Valley is the picture-perfect scenery stripped from the golden age of Western cinema. This valley of majesty is ornate with colossal sandstone buttes that scale up to 1,000 feet, nearly touching the heavens in such breathtaking natural beauty.

Stuff to do:

- Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park
- Mystery Valley Tour
- Artist's Point



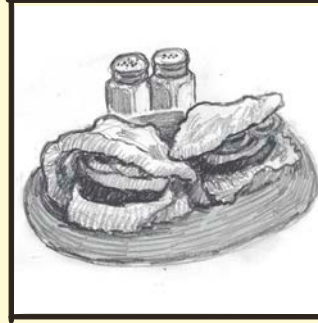
Place to stay:

- Goulding's Lodge
- Kayenta Monument Valley Inn
- Prospector Motor Lodge



Good eats:

- Linda's Fry Bread
- The View
- Stagecoach Restaurant



By Alton Barnhart
alton@slugmag.com

Illustrations by Dallin Orr

Oh, Monument Valley — there's no other place in the world that can bring such a majestic landscape into so many star-studded, iconic films. Perhaps you saw these towering buttes as **Tom Hanks** accomplished his cross-country run in *Forrest Gump*. Maybe they were the colossal backdrop as **John Wayne** stood stoically in nearly every single one of his westerns. Or maybe (just maybe) you were able to spot its otherworldly red landscape during the infamous monolith scene in the science fiction flick, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. No matter where you've seen this natural beauty, the only preferred way to witness Monument Valley is by seeing it in person yourself. The only way to do that is by visiting *The Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park*.

While standing on the Arizona-Utah border, the

park stretches over 100,000 acres along the Colorado Plateau. What may seem like your average hike through a desert wonderland takes you back to the time when the Diné (Navajo National) Tribe inhabited the area. The buttes alone carry many legends believed by the Diné people of how they were created. Starting out as a lowland basin, the buttes were created through a series of natural erosion. Through years of heavy winds and water, this erosion would carve its edges into the rock mountains and develop a gentle (but gradual) uplift. Over time, the buttes cemented their iconic and distinct look. The most infamous of these gigantic structures would be the Mitten Buttes and Merrick Buttes, reaching the remarkable (and literally breathtaking from such a climb) heights of 400-1,000 feet. Other notable buttes in the area are Elephant Butte, Totem Pole, North Window, Three Sisters and **John Ford's Point**, named after the



picture-perfect shot from the director's film *Stagecoach*.

Nowadays, *The Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park* is a frequent tourist spot, bringing thousands of travelers from all over the world year round. The daring type might find interest in hiking through Monument Valley. Self-guided hikes will take you along The Wildcat Trail, a 3.2 mile loop offering views on the sandstone formations. For those who might like to sit back and relax, there's also scenic tours brought to you by Goulding's Tours. The rugged drives can get you up close and personal with nature, where driving through the park could lead to some extremely rough roads.

If you have a knack for expeditions and are willing to venture out in the desert landscape, plan your trip to Monument Valley to rediscover the natural order of Mother Nature.



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BEARS EARS

ABOUT BEARS EARS

As a national monument with a presidential proclamation, Bears Ears is the home for natural resources. Here, Native Tribes come together in a joint mission of protection and preservation. For those who have the heart for rugged terrain and backcountry solitude, Bears Ears is a must-see spot for all your nature excursions.

What to do:

- Bears Ears National Monument
- Petroglyphs
- Mule Canyon



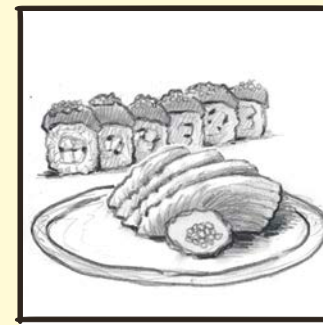
Place to stay:

- Glamping Canyonlands
- Canyon of the Ancients
- Atomic Blue Motor Inn



Good eats:

- Ja-Roen Thai and Sushi
- Doug's Steak & BBQ
- Gustavo's



By Braxtyn Birrell
braxtynb101@gmail.com

Illustrations by Dallin Orr

In 2015, five Native American Tribes joined forces to become the Bears Ears Inter-Tribal Coalition to protect the landscape surrounding what would become the *Bears Ears National Monument*. For 10 years, the tribes worked together on a land management plan, which came to completion in 2025. "The management plan was an important milestone, says Hopi Vice Chairman Kewanimptewa, "but the work did not end there."

Much of Kewanimptewa's work involves implementation of the plan, which is where the BEITC's conservation corps programs come into play. Not only do these programs serve to protect the land, but they also form relationships between the Tribal youth and Elders. "We help create space for knowledge, stories and responsibilities to be shared across generations," he says.

Practices of knowledge, stories, language and stewardship are used to help the

members of the Tribes engage with one another. Kewanimptewa describes how language is connected to place. "Many histories and teachings are rooted in the landscape itself. In this place, we create opportunities for knowledge to be shared across generations."

Hopi is a unique Tribe, and they take pride in their roles as stewards of the land. With artifacts and shrines tied to the landscape at Bears Ears, it is especially important to them that the land is cared for. "We are opposed to any kind of mineral extraction or destruction of the rock art, because it identifies who we are, and we don't want that to be taken from us," Kewanimptewa shares. One of the recent conservation corps projects involved installing barriers around social trails that have contributed to resource damage near a vital petroglyph panel, Newspaper Rock.

What makes the BEITC's work successful is the relationship between the five Tribes that



Kewanimptewa says gives him "hope seeing five Tribes work together around a shared responsibility to care for Bears Ears." The biggest challenge is the fact that important work takes time. "Building relationships, finding a common ground and working together across the Tribal nations requires patience and commitment," Kewanimptewa reveals. His wish is that visitors will educate themselves on the monument before they enter it. "For Hopi, Bears Ears is part of a much larger cultural landscape. This has been important to our people for generations. The region contains places connected to Hopi history, migration trails, cultural practices and ongoing responsibilities to the land. Many sites within Bears Ears continue to hold cultural and spiritual significance."

Kewanimptewa sees the BEITC's purpose as to prolong life, because "life is important." The Coalition is making the most of the life their ancestors – whose presence can still be felt on the land – set up for them and setting future generations up for success.

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BLANDING

ABOUT BLANDING

Blanding's motto is "Base-camp to Adventure," and one lookaround will solidify that claim! It's the rafter's adrenaline fix with their white-water rivers, the history buff's forte to explore Mule Canyon or the fuel for a kid's imagination at *The Dinosaur Museum*. No matter the thrill, the city of Blanding has an attraction for the whole family.

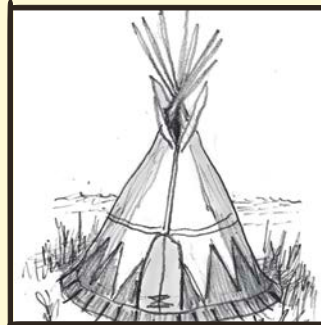
Stuff to do:

- 100 Years of Silence
- Ancient Wayves
- The Dinosaur Museum



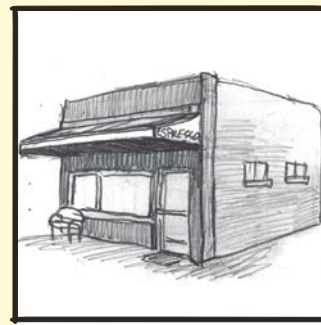
Place to stay:

- Juniper Ridge Family Cabin
- Rustic Western Wagon
- Authentic Tipi



Good eats:

- Homestead Steakhouse
- Destination Awake
- Smoke Pizza Co



By Braxtyn Birrell
braxtynb101@gmail.com

Illustrations by Dallin Orr

As a sculptor, stop motion animator and dinosaur enthusiast since the age of four, Stephen Czerkas found the perfect place to combine his passions at *The Dinosaur Museum* in Blanding. Now unfortunately deceased, his wife Sylvia Czerkas tells the story of how they opened up their dream museum together. Stephen and Sylvia met while both employed as life-size dinosaur model sculptors.

Originally from Los Angeles, they decided to take a day off from one of the many dinosaur books they published to get the paper and peruse out-of-state listings for their summer travels. It was there that they found what would later become *The Dinosaur Museum*, and they knew right away it was perfect. "We decided to move to Utah because it's so beautiful, and there are fossils from every time period here," Czerkas explains. "Blanding is a really nice

place to visit because it's a city of museums."

The building was not in great shape when they bought it, but they took it one step at a time and built it into something that has stood for over 30 years. It started as an overall introduction to dinosaurs, but as the museum evolved, the exhibits became more specialized. Some of the longest-running exhibits include "Feathered Dinosaurs" and "Dinosaur Movies." Czerkas reflects on the evolution of thought from believing all dinosaurs were scaly to understanding many had feathers. "Once we have the scientific information, we have to change our mind, no matter how much effort might be involved in that," Czerkas claims.

As for "Dinosaur Movies," that dates back to Stephen's early childhood. His father was a title artist in the film industry, and Stephen was inspired to make animation



of his own when he would join his father at the studio. "Now, children are exposed to dinosaurs at a young age, and it's part of our culture. But when Stephen started sculpting dinosaurs at a young age, that was quite unusual at the time," Czerkas reveals. "Stephen was truly such a fascinating person. He was a genius."

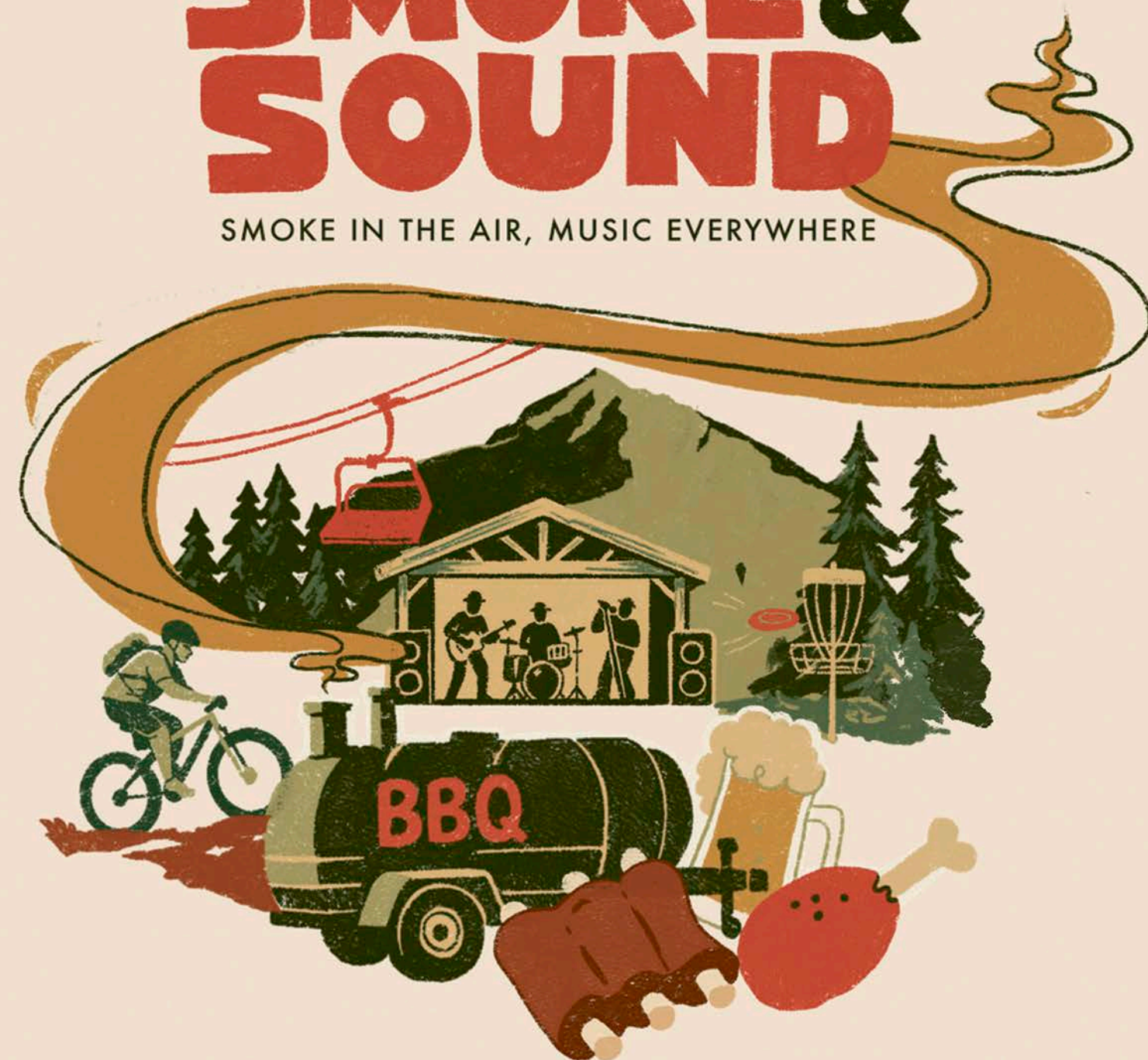
That lifelong interest eventually led to a "full-time hobby" of collecting dinosaur movie posters. Now, the museum has a hall filled with posters from around the world. "When the movie makes it to another country, that country designs its own poster," Czerkas explains. "So it's interesting to compare the American and the foreign version. They're fun, they're beautiful and they really convey the history of dinosaurs in the movies."

As the director of the museum, Czerkas wears many hats. Her favorite part of the job is seeing the school children visit. Both children and adults are encouraged to witness the magic of *The Dinosaur Museum*.



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BLUFF

ABOUT BLUFF

Placed in the Utah canyonlands of the Colorado Plateau, Bluff is a sparse city enthralled in both history and nature. From the fully-resorted Bluff Fort to the eye-catching Hole-in-the-Rock trailhead, Bluff has been coined by the Navajo people as "hozho," meaning peace and harmony.

Stuff to do:

- Fort Bluff
- Hózhó Spa
- Edge of the Cedars Museum



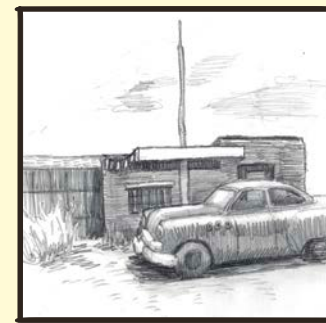
Place to stay:

- Mokee Motel
- Bluff Dwellings Resort
- La Posada Pintada



Good eats:

- Cow Canyon Coffee
- Comb Ridge
- Twin Rocks Cafe



By Alton Barnhart
altonboy2009@gmail.com

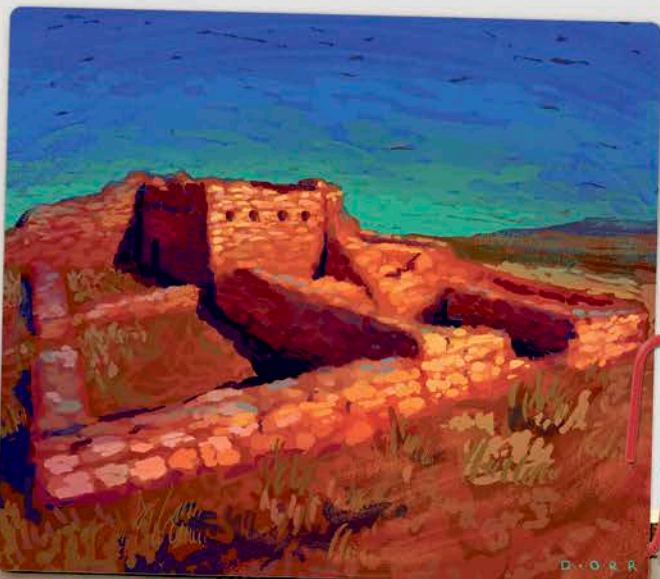
Illustrations by Dallin Orr

Taking a step into Bluff, you'll find that you're truly at the edge of everything in Utah — the edge of history, culture, natural beauty and even the edge of Colorado, New Mexico and Arizona. With the warm winds embracing the stillness and solitude of the desert landscape, you truly feel as if you're stepping into another time in history. However, taking a trip further north to scrape the surface of Blanding, you'll see a museum that is everything but ordinary. *The Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum*: a site of archaeological discovery and refurbishing that can only be seen in person.

Open to the public since 1978, the history of the museum itself ties back to the formation and settlement of the city itself, when American pioneer and writer Albert Lyman was one of the first settlers in the area.

Lyman would donate the area to the state, which grew to become one of three thriving and easy-to-access sites of Ancestral Puebloan archaeology in the Four Corners area.

The Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum has one of the largest Ancestral Puebloan pottery on display. For the pottery from the museum's "visible storage and Interactive Pottery Exhibit," visitors can delinquently interact with researched pottery pieces and use the nearby computers provided by the museum to learn about the origins and time period. The Museum's Director and Park Manager of the area **Chris Hanson** says the pottery is a permanent exhibit that visitors can check out year round whenever they're in town. For all updates regarding new exhibits, Hanson suggested that anyone interested should check out the museum's Facebook page for all things immersive.



As for current exhibits, Hanson says the San Juan School District is putting on something truly exciting all summer long. The annual "Art Stampede" is a juried art exhibit that has collected several works from the students across the entire county, with the goal to highlight some local talent. The exhibit showcases several pieces of many different mediums such as painting, sculpture and all manners of mixed media.

There's also something exciting coming down to the southwest part of Utah! Do you want to experience it for yourself? *The Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum* is open Monday-Saturday 9 a.m.-5 p.m. (times may vary during the winter). Tickets for entry are \$5 for adults and \$3 for children. For upcoming exhibitions or any other inquiries, visit the museum's website at statepark.utah.gov/parks/edge-of-the-cedars

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LOGAN

ABOUT LOGAN

Near the tippy top of the Beehive State, you'll find a snapshot of life that that can only be appreciated in person. Logan is a slice of Everytown USA, with the glimmer and charm of that old-fashioned Americana. Formed by Mormon settlers in 1859, the small city comes with its fair share of midwest hospitality and outdoor opportunities that traveler who needs a break can indulge.

Stuff to do:

- The Mushroom Society
- Zootah
- Woodsy Art Cafe

Place to stay:

- The Anniversary Inn
- The Riter Mansion
- Baugh Motel

Good eats:

- Herm's Inn
- Tandoori Oven
- Angie's



By Sofia Nyquist
sofia.nyquist@icloud.com
Illustrations by Wes Wood

One of the many gifts of mycology that the President of the Mushroom Society of Utah (MSU) Aimée Nguyễn describes is its valorization of slowness and connection. Nguyễn's own introduction to mycology was both intimate and cultural — as a child, her mother took her mushroom hunting in the forests of France, digging in the dirt together before preparing lunch. Mycology reentered her life during the pandemic when she began cultivating her own oyster mushrooms, reinvigorating her interest in fungi and leading her down the "black hole" that is mycology. An avid learner, Nguyễn created an after-school curriculum for her middle-school students and extended her lessons to MSU, continuing to develop her knowledge through forays, lectures, personal research and discussions with the MSU community.

Whether foraging for edibles, learning to cultivate or wanting to participate in citizen science, the "growth mindset" and curiosity that fungi inspire keep people coming back for more. The forays which MSU leads are particularly rewarding, with Nguyễn commenting that she's never known someone who felt sufficiently satisfied after partaking in a singular outing. "It's literally a treasure hunt," Nguyễn says.

While many Utahns who join MSU already enjoy the outdoors, forays require you to engage with nature in a different way. "A big part of mushroom hunting is slowing down and paying attention," Nguyễn says. "You're walking the same amount of steps as if you're going to that peak, but you're covering this tiny area because you are observing every single little inch of that area." It is this slowness that imbues childlike wonder and an intrinsic connection to the outdoors. "You're just sitting in the dirt, which we don't do as adults, right?" Nguyễn says.



Mushroom foraging also requires an attunement to nature — being conscious of precipitation, snowfall, the seasons and the health of forests. MSU advocated for the *Boletus edulis*, or Porcini mushrooms, to be established as Utah's state mushroom, as it denotes the health of the forests. There has been a decline in these mushrooms over the past several years, and MSU hoped that naming it as the state mushroom would "bring awareness to the fact that our forests can be healthy [and] have been healthy, we just need to pay attention and support that."

Amongst the many lessons to be learned through mycology are these: curiosity is spurred through attentiveness, and growth is forged while practicing the art of slowness. "Getting to be with the mushrooms, to look for them [and] to hold them, helps people appreciate that whole system a lot more, not just the mushrooms," Nguyễn says. Next time you're outdoors, try slowing down and see what it might inspire in you.



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Star Carmen



Photo: Logan Sorenson

By Jacob Huff
jacobhuff6@gmail.com

(L-R) Constantly reinventing their sound, bassist Jared Wasson, vocalist Sasha Heywood, guitarist Tyler Smith, guitarist Ben Meacham and drummer Hunter Flick (not pictured) make up Star Carmen.

The summer is heating up, so let's keep the good times going! July's edition of *SLUG Localized* is going dark with these sensational bands from beyond the realm. Start your worship with the punk-goth samplings of **The Lizard Lords**, get enchanted by the evolving sounds of **Star Carmen** and get electrified by some glamified rock with **Willöh**. Make your way to *Kilby Court* on Thursday, July 23. Doors open at 7 p.m., with the party starting at 8 p.m.! Be there or be square!

Despite how tempting it can be to wish for a band to stay the same forever, I'm inspired by artists who are always looking for ways to evolve. My conversation with Star Carmen gave me an exciting inside look into a band that has been embracing that kind of evolution! I can tell that Star Carmen's openness to explore its sound has helped the group find its identity and hit its creative stride.

After a few years of incubation, songwriting and performing live shows, the group released its debut album, *Blue Blue Woman*, on October 17, 2025 to a warm reception from the local scene. Star Carmen is very proud of what it calls its "baby album," and the band's members view the record as an important step in finding their voice together.

"There's something very authentic about the first album," says vocalist and keyboard player **Sasha Heywood**. "We wanted it to be our fresh, raw sound." *Blue Blue Woman* is a collection of songs from a couple different periods of the project, and the band feels that these tracks serve as an effective introduction to Star Carmen. Putting the album out also allowed the group to decide which creative direction felt right for the future.

The group has settled over time into its current lineup, which includes Heywood, guitarist **Tyler Smith**, bassist **Jared Wasson**, drummer **Hunter Flick** and guitarist **Ben Meacham**. Each member brought their own taste and influences that changed the sound of the project. "We found a really cohesive group where we're all able to really riff off of each other," Heywood says. "I think we're all just on the same page, and [our sound] just so naturally shifted to a more of a stripped-back, vocal-heavy, grunge vibe. It was so natural to all of us that there was no going back."

"If you liked [*Blue Blue Woman*], then too bad, because we're never gonna make music like that again!" Smith says with a laugh. Wasson says the debut album was "a little bit more straightforward and in-your-face," and they're focusing on adding even more musicality and uniqueness to their next album.

It's clear that Star Carmen is excited to be making music together. The members mentioned a few times that they felt like their songs sometimes wrote themselves, and they spoke about the project with passion without taking themselves too seriously. Our conversation was filled with laughs and comedic bits. At one point, Smith joked that the next album will be "Enya mixed with GG Allin."

Although the sound of Star Carmen is changing, its vision remains consistent. Heywood, the lyricist of the band, writes lyrics that anyone could find relatable, even if the exact meaning of the song isn't immediately clear. "What I love is the idea of somebody being able to have [my lyrics] align perfectly with their life because of the way that they interpret [them]," she says. Heywood finds herself drawn to harder or darker topics. "There's a lot of not-so-beautiful aspects of life, and I like to write about those in a beautiful way," she says.

Performing live shows is another central part of the band's vision. "There's power in connection," Wasson says. "Writing and playing something that people connect with... is something special." The members all agree that the experience of playing a song live for the first time is electric and brings life to the music. "The audience is such a crucial part of the music and the performance and what Star Carmen is," Heywood says.

Going forward, the band will be focusing on finishing its next album, honing in on the image of the band and creating a musical world for fans to immerse themselves in. If you want to see this next phase of Star Carmen and experience the band's music live, join us at *SLUG Localized* this month!



Photo courtesy of Nick Miller

Willöh

By Jacob Huff
jacobhuff6@gmail.com

(L-R) Willöh's fist-pumping sound is made courtesy of drummer Brooke McAfee-Tycksen, bassist Maelissa Hale-Robinson and guitarist / vocalist Allison Arana-Skvor.

Willöh is here, and Willöh is pissed off! Bassist **Maelissa Hale-Robinson** starts every live show by yelling the following declaration at the crowd: "We might not be what you wanted, but we're what you get!" This unapologetic confidence paired with carefully-crafted showmanship makes Willöh a force to be reckoned with. I sat down with the members of the band to learn what makes their music so invigorating.

When Willöh walks on stage, audiences are met with three women decked out in colorful, elaborate outfits complete with glamorous wigs and makeup. "We want it to basically be like we stepped off a spaceship," Hale-Robinson says. Before anyone can decide what to expect, they're hit with an aggressive mix of punk, classic rock and blues.

Some people might not expect such an intense sound because of the band's hyper-feminine visual style, but the combination soon makes perfect sense. "It's just fun to celebrate outrageous femininity!" says guitarist and vocalist **Allison Arana-Skvor**. Audiences grasp the concept pretty quickly. "We start playing and then [the audience] starts to tie it together," says drummer **Brooke McAfee-Tycksen**.

The band members feel it's their responsibility to establish the energy of a show,

which they say is always reflected by the audience. "The crowd is looking at [us] to give them entertainment... if you come out there and you're kickin' boots, they're gonna go crazy," Hale-Robinson says. If jaws are on the floor, they've done their job.

Willöh is pissed off, and Willöh is for the girls. "We're trying to be a voice for women who feel the way we do," Hale-Robinson says. "There's a distinct difference [between] femininity for the female gaze and femininity for the male gaze, and we very much cater towards the female gaze," Arana-Skvor says. These themes of empowerment have clearly meant a lot to audiences. It's become common for people at shows to dress up like the band, which falls right in line with the band's assertion that "anybody can be Willöh."

Once again, Willöh is pissed off. That energy is channeled into rowdy and exhilarating art. "We want to reach really high emotional highs, and the way that you get that is by reacting to really emotionally intense subject matter," Arana-Skvor says. Willöh views music partly as a reaction to political climates and the state of the world around us. As Arana-Skvor says, "the only reason we have **Rage Against the Machine** is because there was a machine that they needed to rage against!"

Willöh may be pissed off, but Willöh LOVES making music together. During our

conversation, the band was brimming with personality and a contagious energy of excitement and gratitude for each other. Since meeting at work and forming an all-female **Fleetwood Mac** cover band called **Sisters of the Moon** with two other coworkers, the members of Willöh have formed a close bond. "I wouldn't want to be in a band with anybody else," Hale-Robinson says. After impressive success in their first year of performing, they're looking forward to continuing to grow together.

What's next? Studio releases! The first Willöh EP is on the way, which will pave the way for a full album in the near future. Two singles from the EP have already been released, and the band is itching to release more music. "Our biggest reason for recording music in general is we want to bring the experience of seeing Willöh live to people who can't see us live," Arana-Skvor says. We pride ourselves that what you hear on the record is what you're going to see on stage." The band enjoys doing the work required to accomplish that. "I do love studio time just as much as the live stuff we do," McAfee-Tycksen says.

I'll be locked in and eager to witness what this band does next. Join us at *SLUG Localized* this month to experience the electrifying spectacle of a Willöh show!

★SHARING THE STARS★

How Two Observatories are Making Utah's Night Skies More Accessible

By Margaret Pugh | magspugh@gmail.com



Photo courtesy of HALO Observatory

The HALO observatory is a part of Compass Rose Lodge, serving hotel guests and community members.



Photo courtesy of Scott Roberts

HALO tour guides David Rady (L) and Scott Roberts (R).



Photo courtesy of Stacy Cox

Front row from L-R: Ella Elman, Natailie Brannon, Von Del Chamberlain, Eric Sims, Steve Medrano, Fran Mendrano, Mike Noel, Rich Csenge

Utah is home to more certified International Dark Sky Places than anywhere else in the world – making it the perfect stargazing destination. Whether you're exploring the mountains of Ogden Valley or the red rock landscapes of Kane County, these observatories are ready to introduce visitors to the universe with unforgettable night sky experiences.

Nestled in the Ogden mountains is the *Huntsville Astronomic and Lunar Observatory (HALO)*. The observatory offers Starwalk Tours Monday through Saturday, allowing guests the opportunity to experience the best of the night sky as it changes each season. Starwalk experiences vary. Some guests bring their own telescopes, while this is others' introduction to the night sky.

"A lot of people – especially if they come from somewhere by big cities – [have] never seen the sky like this," says **Scott Roberts**, a tour guide at HALO. For those beginner star-gazers, Roberts starts by showing visible planets before moving on to look at a few stars.

For visitors seeking a daytime adventure, there's the *Ogden Valley Planet Tour*. This 13-mile-long scaled model of the solar system starts with the sun marker, located on the southwest corner of the *Compass Rose Lodge* grounds. Each planet marker guides guests along to the next – from the sun in the middle of town to Pluto in a more secluded spot.

HALO connects the community of Huntsville to the cosmos, and Roberts loves the role he gets to play as a tour guide. "I am a child of the space race," Roberts says. "So space has always been really interesting to me. The chance to do this is just a dream come true. I love to tell stories, and I love people."

Roberts has plenty of memories of observatory visitors over the years; he recalled one man who returned for a second tour despite knowing the program would cover much of the same material. "He said, 'I don't care. You changed my life. The whole sky, the scope of the universe — it changed my life,'" Roberts says.

Roberts disagreed with the sentiment. "I didn't change your life," he told him. "Maybe the universe changed your life."

The *Stellar Vista Observatory* is preparing to be Southern Utah's new favorite stargazing destination. Construction is currently underway, with phase one currently expected to be finished by the end of this year. Once both phases of construction have been completed, the observatory will be open to the public and offer features including a removable roof and a large, outdoor viewing plaza.

The observatory currently operates without a building, instead using a Google Maps pin to direct guests where to meet up with guides for viewing experiences. "Giving people a place to go legitimizes it to the people that don't know us," says **Eric Sims**, vice president of the Stellar Vista Observatory Board.

The astrotourism industry is booming, according to Sims. Eighty percent of the world's population lives under light-polluted skies, meaning most of us don't see too many stars (if any) each night. "We have more demand than we can keep up with – and we don't advertise," Sims says.

The observatory also solidifies Kanab's spot as a Dark Sky destination – a location recognized for its unpolluted night skies – something that the community is very proud of. "A few months ago, we had a conference here in town and the city manager asked everyone to write a love note to your city," Sims says. Nearly every letter mentioned Kanab's red rocks or its night sky.

Not only will the observatory expand tourism in Kane County, *Stellar Vista* also seeks to benefit the community with educational opportunities like training for local teachers and after-school and summer programs for young people in the area.

"The sky is just as much yours as it is anybody else's," Sims says. "We try to help people understand that, feel it and connect to it so that they can make it their own."

CAFFEINATED CAMPING

By Rachel Brooks • rachel.brooks94@gmail.com

LOCAL EDITION

My favorite part of backpacking is drinking my coffee in the morning. Granted, the instant coffee itself is not usually anything to write home about, but the ritual and luxury of sipping a warm beverage, bundled up, watching the sunrise, is a huge part of why I backpack and camp. Some great local coffee roasters have jumped into the instant coffee world. I enjoyed three different brands of coffee in my backyard to reverently savor the experience.

Idle Hands Roasting Company is a Salt Lake City-based roaster that offers two varieties of instant coffee, an Ethiopian single-origin and one of their signature blends, Confluence. I chose the Ethiopian after experiencing a traditional Ethiopian coffee ceremony with Crack'n a Cup last weekend (another local coffee purveyor doing really cool things).

I liked this one a lot. It had a fruity aroma that was slightly acidic on the front, but overall really smooth, featuring notes of stone fruits and caramel.

The website provides a lot of information about the specific farm this coffee came from, such as the number of days the beans were dried. Idle Hands roasts their own beans, and then this one is made instant by Canadian company Hasty Coffee.

While the most expensive of our three options at \$16 for a box of five four-gram packets, I felt caffeinated and ready to hit the trail. I also just really appreciate the ethos of *Idle Hands* and am a convert to their roastery. (If you're looking for beans, you can find Idle Hands at *Loki Coffee*.)

Next up was Alpha Coffee and their Seven Summits, which is the only variety they sell.



Illustration: Wes Wood

When it comes to camping, SLUG Senior Staff Writer Rachel Brooks needs a little pick-me-up before taking on the great outdoors.

Described as a medium roast, the website lists this as a Honduran coffee with notes of honey, hops and chocolate. I'll be honest, the burnt aroma was too overpowering for me to taste much on this one. The second I started adding water, my house smelled like I'd burnt a marshmallow over a campfire.

This is also the coarsest of the three brands I tried. Maybe it was just my poor pouring skills, but I felt sticky after mixing. The packaging also didn't have a perforation or tear, and I didn't think it was easy to open.

While the least expensive option of the three brands at \$13.95 for a box of 12 3.6-gram sticks, this one was my least favorite but would definitely do as a local alternative to Starbucks VIA. Alpha Coffee is veteran- and woman- owned and donates 10% of their profits to "veterans, planet and community."

Last but not least is Tantalus Rapid Brew's Little Wild Horse Colombian. This is a Colombian single-origin and is a medium-light roast. This one features a strong aroma, with slightly bright acidic

notes at the front and a smooth taste with some sweet and citrus aftertones.

The second the hot water hit the freeze-dried coffee granules, I knew this one would be good. The aroma was STRONG. This is definitely the one that tastes most like a cup of coffee.

Most instant coffee experiences are about me trying to get some caffeine and start my day rather than me actually enjoying the coffee — Tantalus was a totally different experience. I didn't want it to end. This one was a clear winner and will be accompanying me on many trips this summer.

A chemist by trade, the owner of Tantalus uses a proprietary method to freeze-dry coffee and produce an instant coffee that can stand up to Utah's amazing outdoors. Tantalus comes in a re-sealable paper bag, with each individual packet also coming in paper instead of plastic.

This one is \$21 for a bag of 10 3.5-gram packets. There are five varieties available, ranging from one to five on the roasting scale (light to dark), two single-origins and three South American blends, all featuring outdoor Utah-inspired names. There is also the "Explorer" variety pack available.

blackjack and bombs away

24 HOURS IN WENDOVER

By Alton Barnhart altonboy2009@gmail.com

The summer heat is rising once more. The only cool, midnight breeze comes from a window-mounted box fan, and your favorite out-of-his-element journalist is eager for another adventure: one that'll test the might of man, the threshold of my mentality and the cavern of endurance. However, like such adventures, it's one that I must take alone. It was the desert sands that were beckoning me to a distant land (two hours away) at the end of the world, enriched by debauchery and its violent history. So, I'll go where the sirens sing, past the salt and straight on 'til morning to find the micro-Vegas of Wendover and "get outside" for 24 hours.

Our expedition began at 7:30 on a Saturday morning, where I snoozed past my six set alarms. I frantically drove to the freeway exit of 7200 South, where the "fun bus" was waiting for my arrival. Utah Trailways' luxury land yachts come stashed with prop plane seating and a built-in shitter with one of the loudest flushing mechanisms I've ever heard (for those early morning power squats). I naively expected a roomy travel, thinking no one's deranged enough to wake up at this ungodly hour just to run the slots. Oh boy, once we hit our final pick-up spot, our bus was cramped with burnouts and grandmas like packaged loin cuts.

We set off west, where the city asphalt soon molded to dirt and shrubbery, ultimately to a glimmering ocean of salt. The Bonneville Salt Flats became our tour guide, directing us farther away from the mainland. Rows of ancient telephone poles, half-crumbling and submerged in crystalline salt water, formed waves with the fun bus' acceleration. I tried looking for landmarks: a sea serpent made from blown-out tires, crusted shrines of highway fatalities, the notorious tennis ball tree towering over as a halfway marker. We were nearly there!

About an hour later and 15 dollars short from a bus ride raffle to hammer in the "fun" factor, we officially arrived in the desert town. I hopped off to find the mediocre fun zones: the liminal space of the *Wendover Nugget*, the minimally-renovated *Montego Bay*, *The Peppermill*, *Rainbow* and *Red Garter*. These were your high-stake opportunities — the big breaks waiting for me at the card tables or slot machines — but I knew I would be taking my chances with those later on this trip.

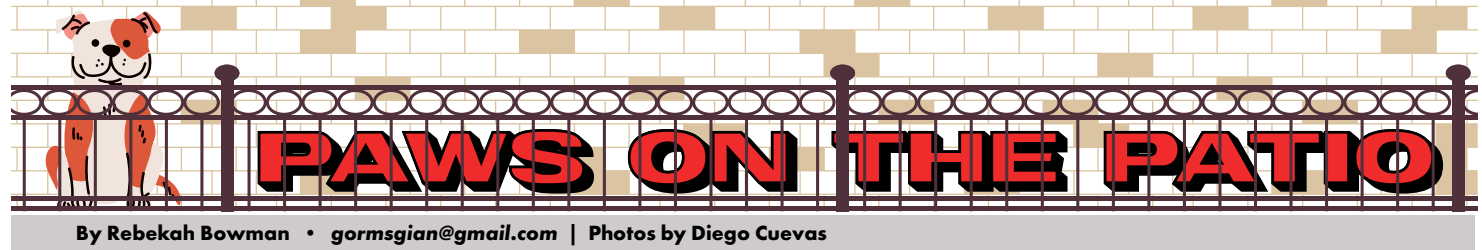


As both a travel back in time and journey into the unknown, Associate Editor Alton Barnhart is racing against the clock to tackle the city of Wendover.

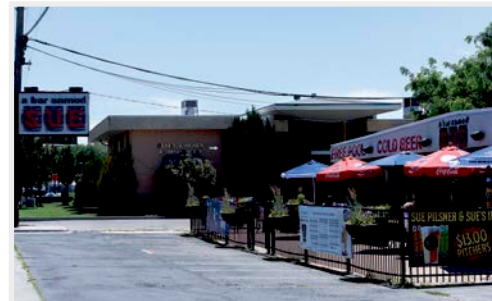
First was a history lesson. I walked south about a mile from the main strip, passing broken glass and a pile of discarded hotel keys to the *Historic Wendover Airfield*. Along the bone-dry runway of gravel, the 75-year-old reign of the *Historic Wendover Airfield* has indulged in a rich history of dogfighting and aerial combat. Its sun-stroked hangars and boxy structures outlasted through World War II, being used as a training facility for the US Air Force bomber crews. Its grand hall is ornate with the artifacts of a bygone conflict: tattered Stars and Stripes, olive green uniforms, framed documents yellowing behind the glass, even a replica of the "Little Boy" nuke that was dropped on Hiroshima. Aside from the crackling floorboard I walked upon, the silence was the main attraction. No heroic interlude soundtrack looping, no sound effects of fighter jets and battle cries, just a quiet building reflecting how precise and calculated brave souls must be to take on the axis of evil in uncertain times. What outshines such darkness, however, is America's love for movies, as I toured the gutted-out remnants of the Fairchild C-123 "Jailbird" from the film *Con Air*.

Hiking back to the strip and regretting my choice of navy blue Levi's and a linen Acapulco button-up for desert attire, I was refreshed by the air-conditioned casino of *Wendover Nugget*. The atmospheric darkness stayed still among the chainsmoke and half-corroded neon lights. The quiet stillness felt loud, especially as the card dealers stood stiff as mannequins. Yet deep down, I knew I had a presence following me, stronger than any ethanol proof. Lady Luck was with me...

Boy, don't you love cliffhangers? Continue this Wendover adventure (delinquency and mayhem included) at slugmag.com!

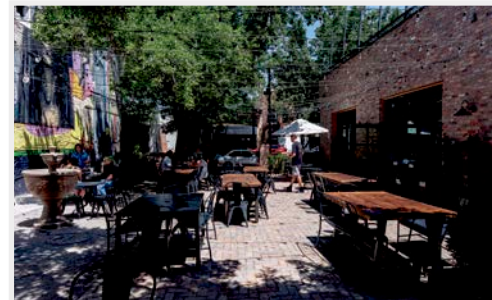


You're out with your dog and you get a hankering... but why would you want to leave your best friend behind? Here are a few bars and restaurants where you and your dog can sit together. *Please note: Your dog is required to wear a collar displaying a current city license and rabies vaccination tag.*



A Bar Named Sue

Located on State Street in Midvale, *A Bar Named Sue* is a comfortable neighborhood sports bar. Their food mission is simple: be delicious and affordable. They host live music twice a week and provide a plethora of games and dartboards, a jukebox and a patio where your dog can join you and your friends in kicking back and having fun while sipping your drinks. If you've ever sat in a sports bar and wished your dog could be there beside you, check this place out.



The Bambino

A family-owned-and-operated pizzeria in Midvale, *The Bambino* is a welcoming space for families and friends to gather — that includes all the bambinos, even the canine ones. Guests tend to linger like they're neighbors over for dinner instead of customers at a restaurant — in no hurry to leave the table with stomachs full of delicious food. That's the feeling of nostalgia and friendship *The Bambino* is going for, and it's not friendship without your best dog friend on the patio, too.



The Watershed Pub and Kitchen

Once *The Midway Bar & Grill*, *The Watershed Pub and Kitchen* is back with gluten-free and plant-based options, a brunch menu and a spacious, covered patio with misters and fire pits. In other words, it is the perfect place to relax in the summer! If you and your dog have been out in the sun all day and need a cold drink and a shady, misty spot, stop in here. I can practically see your dog's happy tongue-lolling-out face as they plop down beside you on the patio.



Taqueria 27

Taqueria 27 is a locally-owned Mexican restaurant with many locations around the valley, each with its own unique daily specials and food with traditional and non-traditional flavors. Their menu is kid-friendly and includes lots of gluten-free options. Dogs are welcome on their umbrella-shaded patios so they can lounge happily by your feet while you munch on the tacos of the day, sip a refreshing jamaica or margarita and cave to their sparkling eyes while they beg for scraps.

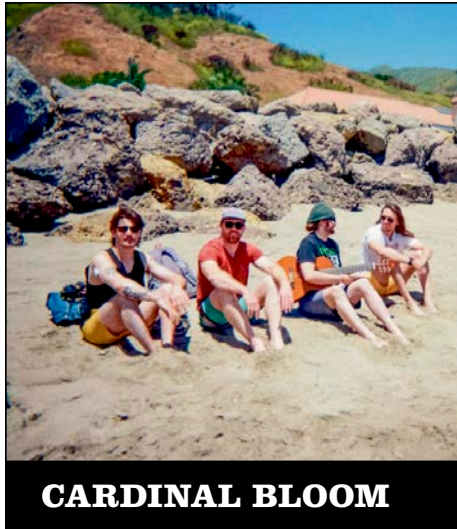


The Cotton Bottom

The Cotton Bottom is located on Holladay Boulevard, close to the mountains. They're known for their insanely delicious Garlic Cheese Burger — the perfect meal to grab after a hike or a long, sunny walk. Sitting on their large patio surrounded by big trees, eating your fries and sipping your drink — you'll feel like you're still out in nature. Your dog will appreciate hanging out with you in the leafy shade with the pleasant breeze in their ears.

Local Music Singles Roundup

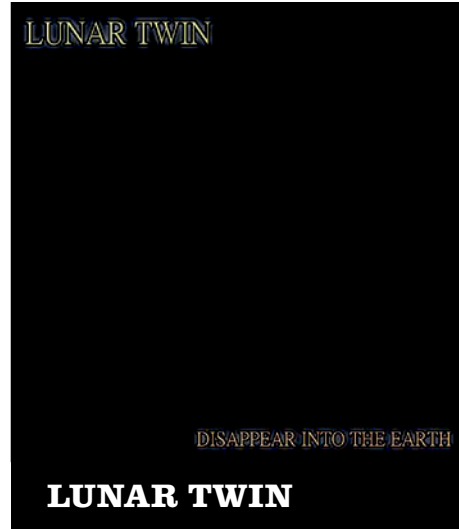
Do you smell that fresh air? Nope, it's the choking hazard of smog! Are you feeling tranquility from the blissful sound of bird chirping? Nope, because all we hear is the distant honking and idling from the Spaghetti Bowl. *SLUG* is here to help you leave this world behind, as we bring you the best of local music in this edition of Local Music Singles Roundup!



CARDINAL BLOOM



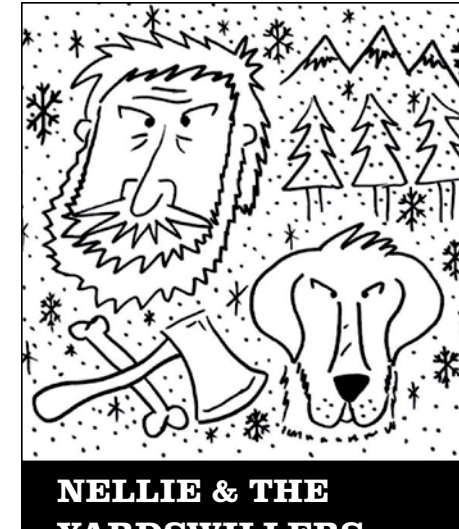
CATHODE



LUNAR TWIN



MORGEN CALL



NELLIE & THE YARDSWILLERS



THE JUGS

"Nice to See You"
Self-Released
Street: 08.26.2025
Cardinal Bloom = Summer Salt + The Backseat Lovers + Wallows

Picture this: it's a summer in the 70s/80s, and you're driving to the coast, ready for a beach day. No plans, thoughts or ambitions for the day except soaking up the sun with friends. The single by Cardinal Bloom, "Nice to See You," takes you right to the ocean. This indie, beach-rock song reminds me of the sand in my toes, running away from the waves on the shoreline and finding any chance I could to return. The energy from the song and the layering of instruments is contagious, especially with the upbeat drums and velvety guitar that melt together. The track is reminiscent of **Vista Kicks** with their free-spirited tone and effortless melodies. The catchy lyricism, contrary to a sea oasis, is about reminiscing and reconnecting. All good vibes – and the lyrics reflect that, along with the carefree moments shared with past connections. It's the kind of nostalgia that doesn't weigh on you, but it inspires you to keep creating new memories and rekindle old ones.

—India Bown

"Neon Above"
Self-Released
Street: 3.20.2026
Cathode = Vince Clarke + The Midnight

Cathode is a synthwave artist known for blending live analog glitch-style visuals, vaporwave beats and infectious vocals in a shiny, high-energy style. The project is active in the Salt Lake City scene, having done the rounds at *Kilby*, *Area 51* and with *Craft Lake City*. Cathode appears to be a dynamic act with a rather cloak-and-dagger disguise via no public record of their actual moniker or provenance other than being a homegrown effort. "Neon Above" is indeed as vaporwave as any single comes. In a 3:43 runtime, this track is about as celebratory and energetic as synthpop can aspire to be. If your upcoming summer is seeking a canonical soundtrack for hot nights, bright lights and sweaty dancefloors, this song may just be your new anthem. Prepare to spin this one on repeat, while you spill your mocktail in visceral celebration of another spicy season in yet another interminably strange year. Maybe this single is the perfect sound for a techno-feudalist pseudo-apocalypse.

—Paige Zuckerman

"Disappear Into the Earth"
Tropical Depression
Street: 05.05.2026
Lunar Twin = Mareux + Boy Harsher + Lebanon Hanover

If you're feeling moody and want to lean into it, listening to darkwave could be just what the doctor ordered. "Disappear Into the Earth" by Lunar Twin fits that situation perfectly! This synth-heavy single combines melancholic synth lines and soft, brooding vocals with the driving energy of electronic drums. Despite the somber harmonies and textures, the unrelenting pulse of the beat (especially the four-on-the-floor kick drum pattern) feels like it's encouraging me to push right through whatever nonsense might have me down in the dumps. Lyrics such as "Gonna cross these border walls / Gonna smash these border walls" and "We can be anything that we dream" support that sentiment. The song's infectious energy is also enhanced by classic '80s toms and a persistent backbeat snare. If you connect to the emotional core of this track, you may end up leaving feeling refreshed and determined. Lunar Twin: come for the brooding, but stay for the empowerment! —Jacob Huff

"Stay Here"
Self-Released
Street: 05.30.2025
Morgen Call = Adele + Sam Smith

A silk sheet slipping into a puddle on the ground. Beads of rain trembling on a car window. A string of pearls breaking from their clasp. These intimate moments flash behind my eyes as the honeyed voice of Morgen Call holds my hand through her latest single, "Stay Here." As heartbreaking as it is soothing, the song is a caress, as if each rich, controlled note is gently wiping a cheek free of tears. With a hint of gospel tone, a vibrato like a choked sob, soft ivory-toned piano — every layer of sound conveys the song's meaning better than lyrics ever could. "Can you stay here for a minute / Before we say goodbye forever," Call's voice sinks to an almost whisper in the chorus. In one moment it's the devastation of a breakup, two people simultaneously each other's comfort and pain. In another, it's any kind of loss, a storm cloud of grief, that universal hurt. But it's also a relief — the feeling of closing tear-swollen eyes, letting your face relax and finally rest. —Katie Hatzfeld

"Old John Thornton"
Self-Released
Street: 04.18.2025
Nellie & The Yardswillers = Meg Myers + The Cranberries x Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*

I've been feeling a bit pissy lately with the anxious state of the world. Between malicious mortars and mental health, deep state and data centers, I needed something to melt away into. However, when I stepped in front of the oncoming traffic that is the music submission form, I was completely careened by this saucy little number. Indie quartet Nellie & The Yardswillers spins a tweedish tale of self-alienation and compliance toxicity centered around a grumpy **Charles Bukowski** archetype named "Old John Thornton." The track may start off as melancholic bleakness, but as the gears grease up, the chorus chugs in a locomotive fashion, uplifting listeners with a "you can't stop us" message. It's a quiet sleeper, but if you listen really carefully, you'll hear a roaring call-to-action. Those who want to run everything must first deal with those who run away... or in some cases, run against the grain. —Alton Barnhart

"JUGS"
Self-Released
Street 02.27.2026
The Jugs = Dead Kennedys + Circle Jerks

Are you tired of being a bland, drab and stuck-up adult who has to pretend that jokes about boobs aren't funny? Do you also miss the type of punk rock that sounds like it came from a suburban house's garage and makes you want to crash through a wall? If you find yourself answering, "YES! I CRAVE HUMOR AND MOSHING!" then is this the band for you! This band is founded by three boys — nah, dare I say, MEN. **Griffin Gallagher**, **Jajue Gibson** and **Salem Hendriksen** are bursting out and onto the scene from Logan with this absolute show stopper of a single that sprints, thrashes and slams with so much punk ferocity and technical skill to the point where they only let up for a brief moment to sound like they just threw up. And then, right after that, they get right back into it, going even harder while saying how much they love everyone's jugs, including your dads. —Connor Kraus

SLUG MAG

ASTROLOGY FORECAST





Jupiter Rising


July 2026


By Nichole Huntsman • nicholehuntsman@gmail.com


The ancient tapestry has been unwoven, its threads gathered in ordered color as the weaver begins the restringing. A fresh design, perhaps no longer a tapestry. Restringing fibers bound with new purpose.

ARIES:  *You Decide*
What do you think of claims, blame and shame? Changes of opinion, direction and the mind? When that which was once understood comes to you with a new face, what are your obligations? How can you repurpose this into something mutually beneficial?


LEO:  *Self-Anointed*
Within you lies the power of regeneration. You radically own your thoughts as an independent agent, no longer a slave to blame or impersonation. In the end, you decide what you think about the world around you. It is in your nature to be courageous, so put that energy toward being courageously you.

LIBRA:  *Sweat Equity*
By the written word stored, you hold the memories of a never-ending tale. It's bitter and sweet in the discovery. Take pleasure in a more beautiful design. Sourcing and uncovering the forgotten treasures, play with the process and enjoy finding grace in the flaws.

TAURUS:  *Sitting at Nature's Feet*
In the field of potentiality, shimmering possibilities exist. Both to be had and to be lost, distracting your focus, longing to be brought into existence. During this divine redirection, take time to appreciate the rhythms around you. The ebb and flow of life has a mind of its own.

VIRGO:  *Inside Out*
You're standing here and there. You're outside, yet asleep in your bed. Replaying the script, remembering the sudden beat in time, you're in both places at once. Has the world changed so much that we no longer know where we are? Sometimes in the absence of answers, a better question arrives.

SCORPIO:  *Turning Point*
You've been waiting for incoming truths, and now you have them. Trust in your ability to lay a new and enduring foundation. As the clear note of a bell, the summer sun sings a new song. Light lands gently around you. You've taken action; now enjoy the clarity of this new season.

GEMINI:  *Moving Staircases*
Old doors are closing, new levels shifting. You've seen this before; you know the warnings by heart. But there is a determination to see this succeed, to take the lead and push for the alternative. After all, you're invested in the outcome and are the only one who knows the language of the machine.

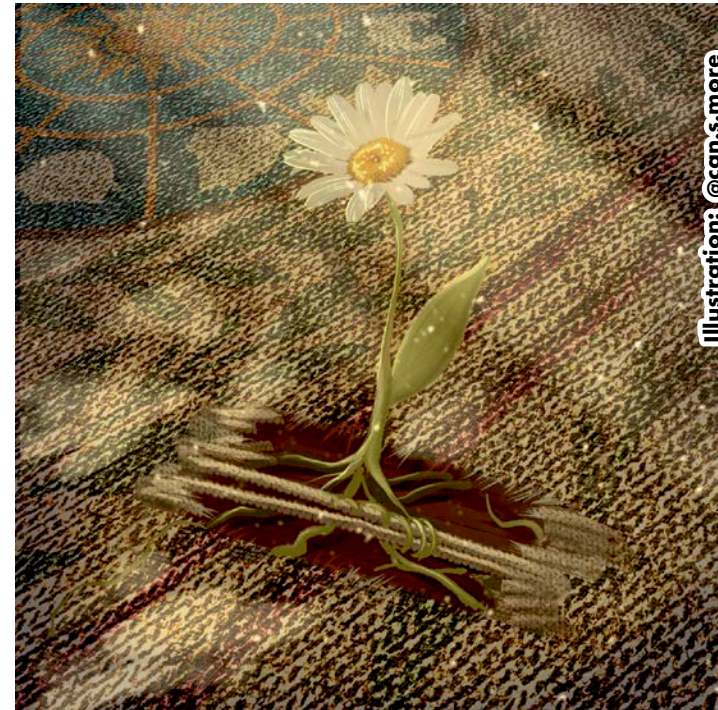






Illustration: @can.s.more

CANCER:  *Sunlight's the Best Medicine*
Voices are heard from the other room: the business of summertime. Someone is telling you to come outside, to sit on the grass under a blue sky while the world buzzes around. All of those things can wait when there is such sweetness to be had.

SAGITTARIUS:  *Worth It*
Old battles have resurfaced. Some seek vindication and others a retelling of the tale. Take stock of your year so far. Did this take less time than you imagined? The last few years' struggles seem to be falling away. Perhaps you crave a move toward a simpler, more familiar way of life.

CAPRICORN:  *Alternate Futures*
There are so many moving parts. This may be more trouble than it's worth. Your existing commitments may be preventing you from making further investments right now. But you also wonder, "Is this what you want?" Time reveals all. Give it a month and then revisit the proposal.

AQUARIUS:  *Light Bearer*
Be an influence for the greater good. I see you lighting candles and offering the words. In a moment of liberated thought, the spiritual truths flow through you. Honesty is powerful, but love saves us all. Sometimes, it's enough to have been the one who saw and helped when no one else could.

PISCES:  *Subjective Truths*
Was there something you learned this past season that has given you a story to tell of the break and the repair? Now that you know being fooled is part of the game, let the players play on, but don't forget when you entered stage left.

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Local stories from local musicians

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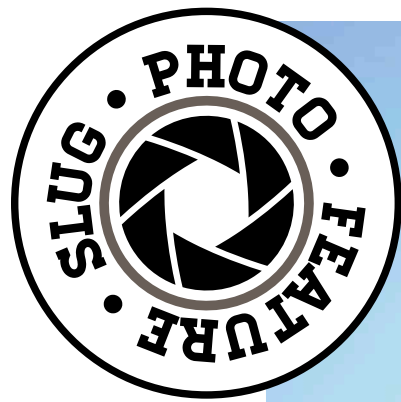
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SKATE

Sometimes with skateboarding, you have to drive around the city searching for spots. With some ingenuity and an old handicap sign, **Landen Fergus** (@skating_is_delightful) makes an impromptu pole jam off of a loading dock in the industrial district in Salt Lake City.

By Kevin TK Frantz • kevinfrantz1987@yahoo.com



Pole Jam — Landen Fergus — Industrial Park, SLC

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Daily Calendar



Looking for another adventure? Scan the QR code for more events and to add your own to our daily calendar!

- Thursday, Jul 2**
Monster Jam World Finals - Rice-Eccles Stadium
- Friday, Jul 3**
WILLÖH
- The Urban Lounge
Heaven Content
- The DLC at Quarters
Thunder Sak, Puke, Flip Forces & We Never Spoke Again
- Aces High Saloon
- Saturday, Jul 4**
Los Estramboticos
- Soundwell
Spencer Delava
- Sky Rooftop
Zion Forever
Project - O.C. Tanner Amphitheater
- Sunday, Jul 5**
Stoneyard - Kilby Court
- Monday, Jul 6**
Our Town
- Hale Centre Theatre
Always Her - Kilby Court
- Tuesday, Jul 7**
Dinosaur Children
Summer Art Camp
- The Local Artisan Collective Ogden
Invocation Ritual
- Aces High Saloon
- Wednesday, Jul 8**
Wynton Marsalis
- Red Butte Garden
- Thursday, Jul 9**
SLC Lunatics Presents Alec Bang & The Cult Classics
- The Urban Lounge
Total Chaos, Noogy, Debasers & Fail to Follow
- Aces High Saloon
- Friday, Jul 10**
The Aquabats!
- The Depot

- JJ Grey and Mofro
- Red Butte Garden
Sunfish
- The Urban Lounge
The Moonspinners
- Kilby Court
No Møtve
- The DLC at Quarters
ODDBALL - Sky Rooftop
Hedwig and the Angry Inch - Alliance Theatre
- Saturday, Jul 11**
Youth Entrepreneur Program popup market
- Downtown Farmers Market
Houndmouth
- Sandy Amphitheater
SINCERE ENGINEER
- Kilby Court
I'D RATHER BE
- The Pearl on Main
Fluorescents
- The DLC at Quarters
Muddy Dash
- Golden Spike Event Center
Lizard Lords, Doli & Fever Drift
- Aces High Saloon
- Sunday, Jul 12**
KALEO
- Red Butte Garden

- Monday, Jul 13**
Kids Circus Summer Camp! - Salt Lake City Circus Center
Gin Blossoms w/ Blues Traveler
- Red Butte Garden
- Tuesday, Jul 14**
Whitney Fenimore
-The DLC at Quarters
JZAC x Dylan Owen
- The DLC at Quarters
- Wednesday, Jul 15**
Rainbow Kitten
Surprise w/ Spacey Jane - The Great Saltair
- Thursday, Jul 16**
Danbert Nobacon
- The DLC at Quarters
Pinata Protest, The Apathetics & The Mutiny - Aces High Saloon
- Friday, Jul 17**
Hilary Duff
- Utah First Credit Union Amphitheatre
Freddie Gibbs
- The Gullivan Center
Stvler, Power Beer, Up to Something
- Aces High Saloon

- Saturday, Jul 18**
Glasses Malone
- Liquid Joe's
Hurtado - Kilby Court
Tomorrow's Anthem
-Velour Live Music
Gallery
SLC Creature & Feature's Market
- West Valley Performing Arts Center
Marcus King w/ Penelope Road
- Red Butte Garden
- Tuesday, Jul 21**
JOJI - Maverik Center
Jimmy Eat World
- Sandy Amphitheater
- Wednesday, Jul 22**
String Cheese Incident
- Red Butte Garden
No Cure - Kilby Court
LAST ACTION HERO
- SLC Pub
Megan Blue
- The Hog Wallow Pub
- Thursday, Jul 23**
SLUG Localized:
WILLÖH, Star
Carmen & The Lizard Lords -Kilby Court

- Friday, Jul 24**
Thornfield
- The Pearl on Main
Galo - SKY SLC
The Soakers
- Aces High Saloon
- Saturday, Jul 25**
Evanescence - Utah
First Credit Union Amphitheatre
Simple Balloon
- The DLC at Quarters
- Monday, Jul 27**
Suki Waterhouse
- The Gullivan Center
- Tuesday, Jul 28**
Post Malone
- Rice-Eccles Stadium
Death Cab for Cutie
- Sandy Amphitheater
- Wednesday, Jul 29**
Death Cab for Cutie
- Sandy Amphitheater
Ingested
- The Urban Lounge
- Thursday, Jul 30**
Wynonna Judd w/ Melissa Etheridge
- Red Butte Garden
Of Monsters and Men
- Ogden Amphitheater
Austin TV
- The DLC at Quarters
IMAGINARY FRIENDZ - Kilby Court
Young the Giant w/ Cold War Kids
- The Complex

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CHOIR**

Black Wick Scream Choir is a weekly song and scream circle for future vocal assassins. For women, femmes, and nonbinary folks of all singing/screaming levels who are done swallowing patriarchy with a smile.

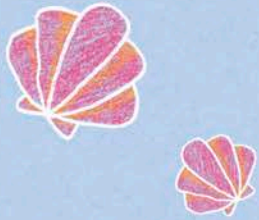
Thursdays
7:30 PM

Rose Park
Salt Lake City

SLUG MAG

LED BY BRONWEN BEECHER, THE FIDDLE PREACHER
info@blackwickcollective.com *FREE TO ATTEND

*Donations accepted to cover future noise violations.



S&S
PRESENTS

JULY 2026

LOW TICKETS
★ SOLD OUT

7.2 BUNT. | OGDEN TWILIGHT 7.13 OLD CROW MEDICINE SHOW | GALLIVAN CENTER 7.15 RAINBOW KITTEN SURPRISE | SANDY AMPHITHEATER 7.15 CHANCE PEÑA | COMPLEX 7.17 FREDDIE GIBBS | GALLIVAN CENTER 7.17 FIDDLEHEAD | CHURCH & STATE 7.23 KEVIAN KRAEMER | COMPLEX 7.25 BAD NERVES | COMPLEX 7.27 SUKI WATERHOUSE | GALLIVAN CENTER 7.30 OF MONSTERS AND MEN | OGDEN TWILIGHT 7.30 YOUNG THE GIANT | COMPLEX 7.31 THE STRIKE | COMPLEX



KILBY COURT

7.2 GIRL FROM THE INTERSTATE | 7.3 MOTHER OF NONE | 7.5 STONEYARD | 7.6 ALWAYS HER
7.7 DUSTBOWLCHAMPION | 7.8 BROTHERKENZIE | 7.9 LUNAR LANDING | 7.10 THE MOONSPIN-
NERS | 7.11 SINCERE ENGINEER | 7.12 SBRS KILBY COURTYARD TAKEOVER 4! | 7.15 I PROMISED
THE WORLD | 7.16 TIGER BIKE | 7.17 BELMONT | 7.18 HURTADO | 7.19 KILL BILL THE RAPPER
| 7.20 JONNY'S DAY OUT + OVER UNDER | 7.22 NO CURE | 7.24 SNOOPER | 7.25 VACATION
MANOR | 7.26 FAR FROM IT | 7.27 TOMMY NEWPORT | 7.29 STEREOSITY + MELANCHOLY CLUB |
7.30 IMAGINARY FRIENDZ | 7.31 RALLY

METRO MUSIC HALL

7.10 GUERILLA RADIO: TRIBUTE TO RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE | 7.11 ENTHEOS + CRYSTAL
LAKE | 7.16 SLOTH | 7.17 ME PORTO BONITO (REGGAETON PARTY) | 7.25 OF MONTREAL |
7.29 MATTE BLVCK | 7.30 VOODOO GLOW SKULLS + AUTHORITY ZERO

URBAN LOUNGE

7.2 FREE SHOW: MEN THE KITCHEN | 7.3 WILLÖH | 7.9 SLC LUNATICS PRESENTS: ALEC BANG
& THE CULT CLASSICS | 7.10 SUNFISH | 7.14 NETHER HOUR | 7.15 THE WORD ALIVE | 7.17 SAVE
FERRIS | 7.18 THE BODY | 7.25 BLACK MOTH SUPER RAINBOW | 7.28 HAUNT ME | 7.29
INGESTED | 7.30 SAVAGE HANDS + OF VIRTUE | 7.31 ALEJANDRO ARANDA

BLUE GENE'S

MONDAY: Magic The Gathering @ 7pm | TUESDAY: Trivia @ 7pm |
WEDNESDAY - SATURDAY: Karaoke @ 9pm
NEW! Hot Dog Happy Hour: \$2 Dogs 5pm - 6pm every day!



Save the Date

801

DAY CELEBRATION

GO FOR
Gold!

1st Annual Uinta Games

Individual and Overall
Champion Trophies
Tournament Registration link:
uintabrewing.com/uinta-games

Uinta Flash Tattoos
Live Music
Dirty Pop! Slushies
801 Experimental Brews
Meet Our Community
Partners

AND
More

Saturday, August 1st, 11am
1722 South Fremont Drive in Salt Lake City

Free event - 21+ only / valid ID required

THE 18TH ANNUAL CRAFT LAKE CITY

DIY FEST

PRESENTED BY
HARMONS
NEIGHBORHOOD GROCER®



AUGUST
7, 8 & 9, 2026

OVER 500 LOCAL
ARTISANS - VINTAGE
CRAFT FOOD - MUSIC
STEM - PERFORMERS
KID AREA - DOG PARK
YOUTH ENTREPRENEURS

UTAH STATE
FAIRPARK



McCarthy Family Foundation, University of Utah, Utah Pirate, Visit Salt Lake, Commerce and Craft, Lucero Hair and Wellness, Salt Lake Sewciety, Made with Harmony, Mountain West Hard Cider, Dented Brick Distillery, Libations LLC, Sugarhouse Distillery
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