

floated

ISSUE 10



ALTERNATIVE CULTURE MAGAZINE

COMPOST

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HOME // WORK



Floated Mag is an **alternative arts and culture magazine highlighting up and coming creators, alternative lifestyles, and social topics.**

We aim to share the stories behind the artist and offer niche perspectives on emerging trends within contemporary culture, showcasing unique and obscure aspects of society.

As a collective of artists, designers, writers, and music fanatics, we produce quality content to ensure that our readers are engaged and well-informed with the best in upcoming entertainment. **We're here to show you what's dope today, and what's going to kick ass tomorrow.**

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Issue 10 - March 2020

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New Politics

Shot in New York, New York
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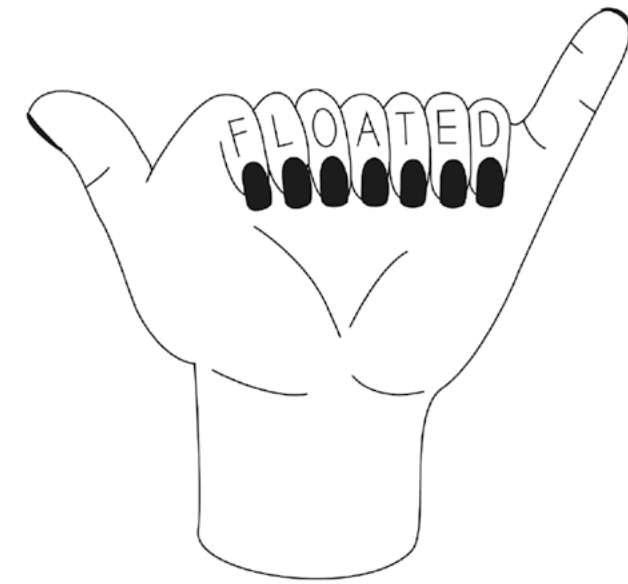
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If you ask Adam Maida what his most important work of art is, he will stop and think for a second, reflecting on certain times and feelings, specific projects, or special collaborations. But, if you ask him what's important about his work, he won't hesitate for a second. His work is loud enough to speak for itself, and his explanations are carefully chosen and cast light on who he is an artist. The man behind this modesty is fiercely intelligent. Adam is someone who lives locally in Rochester but is always thinking globally when it comes to his craft.

There's a calm control to Adam's voice, an easy metered rhythm that makes you feel at ease. There's confidence in his words absent of bravado. This is because he is a remedial thinker, and an intelligent and patient artist who has spent countless hours contemplating the convalescence of these modern times.

ADAM MAIDA

TEXT BY ANTHONY N. WHITE



Illustration for VOGUE Magazine. "How Trump Has Changed the Country So Far."

Adam grew up in Rochester, New York getting his start as an artist early on, drawing and painting, and eventually becoming part of the local DIY music scene. His work is what most of us would call mixed media, but that's not how he sees it. "I like to play with my work. It ends up looking like mixed media, but to me, it's all just graphic art," he says. He calls it a language, a blend of all things artistic, a blend of all of his influences, which leads him to be the most expressive.

If you are not familiar with Adam's work, it may still feel like you've seen it before. His work is striking and incredibly familiar, like you've known Adam and his work for years. His work also has a lasting effect, taking shelter in your psyche long after you've looked at them, a siren of art beckoning you to crash land on the shores of reality.



Photo by Adam Montoya.

A piece that Adam did for Vogue Magazine about the 2020 election shows Trump as a freight train, with the president's sloping nose and pursed lips making up the front of the train. When asked why Trump's lips are pursed, he laughs through his answer. "It's symbolic of all the bullshit he spews. I wanted to make something that looked fake. A fake piece of meat thing that just never stops moving. It's meant to keep the media spinning." He reminisces for a minute remembering his childhood and seeing Trump on WWF with Vince McMahon.

Adam's honest personality is refreshing; he candidly answers questions as if he was expecting them already. "Some of my opinions might be considered rebellious, or against the status quo,"



Poster for Adrei Tarkovsky's STALKER.

he says with a laugh when asked if he considers himself a rebel. "Social media has made going against the grain the norm, and that's a good thing," he says.

"You're sort of pushed out on to this wire, and you have to sway to both sides"

He sometimes has to turn down projects that don't mesh well with his beliefs, especially editorial illustrations. "Oftentimes artists have to put their beliefs on the back burner to make a paycheck," he says. He goes on to say that this is why too many artists are afraid to put their true opinions into their work. It makes for too much art that is safe and cute, failing to challenge anything, all very corporate and flat. "You're sort of pushed out on to this wire, and you have to sway to both sides," he says, his calm and metered voice giving truth and relevance to what most modern artists experience daily.

"What art does is take these moments of crisis; people can reflect on them critically. And that's for the better," he explains. To Adam there is no utopian society, some lost nostalgia that everything was once better because that too easily washes out the struggles of everyday people. That's revisionist history at its best, targeting certain memories for how good they are and targeting others for

their anger and distrust. Just like his art, it's not so easily labeled. It's one language and something we should be reflecting on and learning from as we continue to look out into the world.

For Adam, this outlook has been beneficial. Recently he had the opportunity to join forces with Andrei Tarkovsky's Estate to create a limited-edition poster for the movie Stalker. Tarkovsky is one of Adam's all-time favorite directors, his voice visibly beaming when he talks about the project. It was a joint effort with Mondo and Black Dragon Press, and White Duck made the final prints. "They look beautiful," he says, casting credit to everyone else as if he had almost nothing to do with the outcome.

There's undoubtedly more to come from Adam Maida. He is only just beginning to flex his artistic muscles and mind, but there's a quiet confidence about him that can't be denied. He loves what he does and it shows. "Put yourself into your work and have fun with it. Read up about the world and look out beyond your comfort zones," he says, as words of encouragement for the next rising artist.



Freedom for Palestine poster.



**Music is more
than soundwaves:
Channeling the
truth with**

MF

SKUM

Words by: Neal Kumar

Photography by: Krit Upra

**“Music was
me accepting
that while I’m
not in control,
I’m here to
speak truth”**

Ask yourself one question: what is the one thing in this world that makes you want to live here? For James Kegler, known musically as MF SKUM, the answer is music, the vehicle to which something larger than us resides, and the responsibility to channel the truth.

Kegler was born and raised in the east side of Rochester, and his upbringing was just as unconventional as his introduction to music. Kegler had been separated from his siblings and raised by his grandmother. His late older brother, an MC and multi-instrumentalist, introduced him to music. Also fond of his mother’s taste in ‘oldies’ like Maxwell and Eryka

Badu, he names the song On & On as an early musical inspiration. To Kegler, music was representative of real feelings and the natural world. He even compares the influence of music on him to that of a parent to a child. Kegler was captivated by the culture of empathy, music, and truth that good music created. These values formed the basis for his work as an artist.

Kegler described himself as “the type of kid that locked (himself) into a room with a computer in search of purpose.” Once again drawn to spirituality and the idea of a certain greatness existing beyond himself, he quickly formed an agenda for his music career:





not to create out of ego, but to provide a relating voice that many people don't have. Kegler recognized that popular lyrical content often relates to the desires of the flesh and indulging in earthly pleasures, but chose instead to focus on the pursuit of experiences relating to a higher power. Specifically, the song MOST HIGH (HEAVEN) was the result of Kegler reflecting deeply upon his life and understanding how individuals can be vehicles for the ideas of music.

It naturally follows that Kegler describes himself as a multidimensional artist with an experimental approach. Still, his music remains accessible and deep, two values which can often be at odds with each other. The balance of these values is crucial to his philosophy regarding performance. According to Kegler, humans naturally find themselves promoting their personal agendas when in the spotlight of performance. Kegler actively tries to separate himself from that by lifting his audience into the spotlight with him. Carefully curated beats and percussive lyrical flow invite his audience to partake in the feeling of oneness that he feels so deeply with his music.

Onstage, MF SKUM is as personal as he is performative; the audience becomes his family and concerts become a journey to which all are invited to embark on together. Kegler is not afraid to be vulnerable; he chooses to open himself up to his listeners to give them a chance to forge connections with his sound and the ideas that inspire it. People are always looking to make connections, whether they

know it or not. Personal expression is Kegler's method of connecting to his audience; he describes music as a tool to highlight the aspects of ourselves that we tend to hide because they're not popular.

Distilled to a single sentence, Kegler wants his audience to feel at home. Naturally, presenting the truth doesn't come without its challenges. Rochester's music scene can certainly play favorites, and being outside of the status quo can be discouraging. On the flip side, Rochester is home to many that aren't afraid to make their own choices and explore the sound that's right for them. Having experienced both sides of the music scene, Kegler has found that music with substance and honesty will shine through no matter what. It's an ongoing balancing act of being free to appreciate the music you want to and always pushing yourself to try something new.

Inspiration can strike at any moment, so Kegler keeps a notepad and voice memo handy, always ready to draw musical inspiration from the natural world. Currently, he's working on a project called Black Boy Noise, something he's willing to take his time with. His present focus is to establish a consistent and recognizable sound with room for growth and experimentation when needed. It's often said that change is the only constant in life. Like a cell in a body, MF SKUM is exploring what it means to be responsible for something greater than oneself.

WALL THERAPY

THE POWER OF PEOPLE AND PAINT FOR THE WALLS THAT SPEAK

WORDS BY: ALYSSA BRAULT

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: RACHEL COUTANT



Though a three letter word, art has the profound power to move and ignite. Without limitations or parameters, its reach is vast and its impact expansive. Finding its way onto walls, sidewalks, and everywhere in between, art can arise in unexpected places.

With the sides of buildings or underpasses serving as canvases, full cities can become art installations. Embarking on your daily commute and coming across a mural that has changed the landscape of your own city can bring about new breath. Encounters such as these instill something within us and leave a lasting impression. Some days we can pinpoint it, others we cannot, but regardless something is felt.

The restorative and healing power of art often brings to our attention messages that we didn't know we needed to hear. We begin to ponder, to contemplate, and ultimately are propelled to create. This is just

one of the many forces that drives Wall Therapy, a passionately pursued art and community project that uses the platform of public murals as a means of metamorphosis.

Founded in 2011 by Ian Wilson, Wall Therapy murals have exceeded far beyond the 585. Individuals from over two thousand cities and more than a hundred and four countries have made their way to Rochester to personally visit the Wall Therapy sites. Not only are people from all over the world coming to witness the art, but new mural artists from across the globe are asking to come here to paint as well. Pioneering the way, Wall Therapy inadvertently became one of the earliest city-based mural festivals in the United States. Besides that of Open Walls in Baltimore, Living Walls in Atlanta, and a few select others, mural festivals hadn't yet broken into the scene.

Creator Ian Wilson grew up in East NY, right outside of New York City, during the '70s. From a young age he was exposed to graffiti and its gravitational pull. Captured by the color, design, and content, he would make his way down to the train yard to view it. On difficult days, he would find himself yearning to be surrounded by this art form. After a couple moves, Ian ended up settling in Rochester for his medical residency at Strong Memorial Hospital. With the summer of 2010 unfortunately being riddled with youth-on-youth violence, Ian had a strong desire to help. Having experienced the birth of the iconic and influential '80s graffiti era, he remembered the healing impact that it left on him and decided to bring mural art to Rochester. This sincere appreciation for The Flower City is what started Wall Therapy, which has manifested into a week long festival with various pocket projects.

The first official Wall Therapy piece was the "Believe Mural", which was created in 2011 and still resides on Troup Street. In collaboration with a handful of locally based artists such as Kurt Ketchum and members of FUA Krew, Ian also welcomed DAleat, Faith47, FreddySam, and Mak1one, four South Africa based artists. By the end of 2013, the various artists and volunteer members had completed fifty murals. By bringing in internationally acclaimed artists, Ian also highlighted the medical philanthropy work that he was doing with "IMPACT!" (IMProving Access to Care by Teleradiology) to set up diagnostic imaging sites in developing countries. Ian shares that, "The connection between art and the medical philanthropy is imagery. Street murals enhance life. Medical X-ray imagery preserves it."



“ART IS FOR EVERYONE.”

“WE WANT YOU TO EXPERIENCE WHY WE LOVE ROCHESTER, AND WHY WE STAY HERE”

Whenever there is a strong and vastly growing initiative, there are deeply devoted individuals and team members supporting it. One of Wall Therapy’s devotees is Erich Lehman. Originally from Pennsylvania, Erich moved to Rochester when he was eighteen to attend RIT (Rochester Institute of Technology). Other than his brief move to South Carolina, has been in Rochester ever since. Erich has always had his hands within various creative projects, and is currently working at RIT while dabbling in other endeavors. In 2008 he started the company 1975, a pop up art gallery, which at one point became a brick and mortar before returning to its roots as a pop up. Showing steadfast support for individuals, artists, and businesses such as The Yards and more, Erich continually inserts himself within the Rochester art scene, having a huge role in adding to its layers of depth and vibrancy. Being out and about, Erich and Ian eventually crossed paths in Fall 2011. Having previously been told that the two had to meet one another, once they finally did Erich shares that, “It was like we had known each other for years.” Erich initially got involved with Ian and WALL\THERAPY to help with branding, website construction, and social media. Originally called “Visual Intervention,” he states that there were many sleepless nights, as neither of them had ever tackled such a project before. Not

long after Ian asked Erich to be co-curator. Having gone from working on the logo, to now helping run and organize full on events, Erich notes that, “There was a lot of excitement in 2012. We all had been building our audiences and then we all came together and it became this crazy renaissance.”

Fully embodying the ethos of allowing nurtured, organic ideas to take root, the Wall Therapy team worked endlessly to create a positive environment where people could build, create, and story-tell together. Echoing the phrase, “Rise Rochester,” it was important to the group to create healthy interactions between the international artists, local artists, and volunteers. Whether it was sharing meals together, or engaging in team activities, Erich and Ian wanted to stick true to having a family dynamic. “We want you to interact with our citizens because you are leaving something with them. We want you to experience why we love Rochester, and why we stay here,” Erich shares. He adds that after the festival has concluded, “Everyone leaves cheerleaders for Rochester.”

As Wall Therapy continues to grow, they want to emphasize the importance of providing a stage where minority and underserved populations can have their voices heard. During the festival week, or one of their many mural projects, the Wall Therapy team interacts with communities, speaking with its residents and taking the time to personally learn about them and their stories. Understanding the magnitude of their work and the huge responsibility that they are undertaking, the team is also energized by the fact that they are able to “...Bring art to people in their surroundings... We are breaking down the barrier between

arts and the artists and the community that lives in it and the people that might benefit from it.” This level of accessibility is a major component that differentiates this initiative from other art platforms.

With murals, it’s not solely about scale, but also the ease of approachability. Erich notes that, “Wall Therapy is the public’s art. It’s open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, rain or shine.” Being able to have those different points of access for people is essential, especially when also trying to challenge conventional thought processes and inviting the public to think. Coupling this, they believe in bridging communities together from its youngest members to its oldest. As a result, they try to involve the youth as much as possible by hosting talks, field trips, and other youth initiatives.

Since working together in the fall of 2011, Erich, Ian, and the Wall Therapy team have created one hundred and thirty-two official murals and have worked with ninety-three artists. Although many of these works have been lost along the way due to paint jobs, building renovations, peeling, and more, about one hundred of them still remain throughout the city. Since the very beginning, this has been a labor of love for Ian and Erich. Through every inch of trial and error, Erich shares that it’s important to remain open and to learn from every step of the process. “We’re just folks, trying to make the city better the way we know how.” Serving as the stewards for the walls of the city, Wall Therapy is elated to announce that their tradition will continue as they make their return this July. The city of Rochester looks forward to the new pieces that will be created and the messages that will be shared. After all, “Art is for everyone.”

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April 18th - Peoples Choice Patio Party

Three Heads Brewing - 186 Atlantic Ave

3PM-7PM - Peoples Choices Patio Party

3PM-5PM - Live Glass Blowing

3PM-7PM - Vendors, Munchies, Glass Blowing

5PM-7PM - Food Trucks & Sampling

7PM-Late - Music w/ Dirty Blanket

April 19th - FLWR CITY CUP

Anthology - 336 East Ave

3PM-11PM - FLWR CITY CUP (music all day)

3PM-5:30PM - Vendor Fair & Bake Off

4PM-5:30PM - Silent Auction

5PM-9:00PM - Food Trucks

6:30PM-7:30PM - Awards & Gifting

7:30PM-9:30PM - Music w/ The Medicinals

Tickets

(4/18) **\$20 - People's Choice Patio Party (Day 1)**

(4/19) **\$30 - Cup: Music, Bake Off, Vendor Fair (Day 2)**

(4/18 & 4/19) **\$45 - People's Choice, FLWR CITY CUP**

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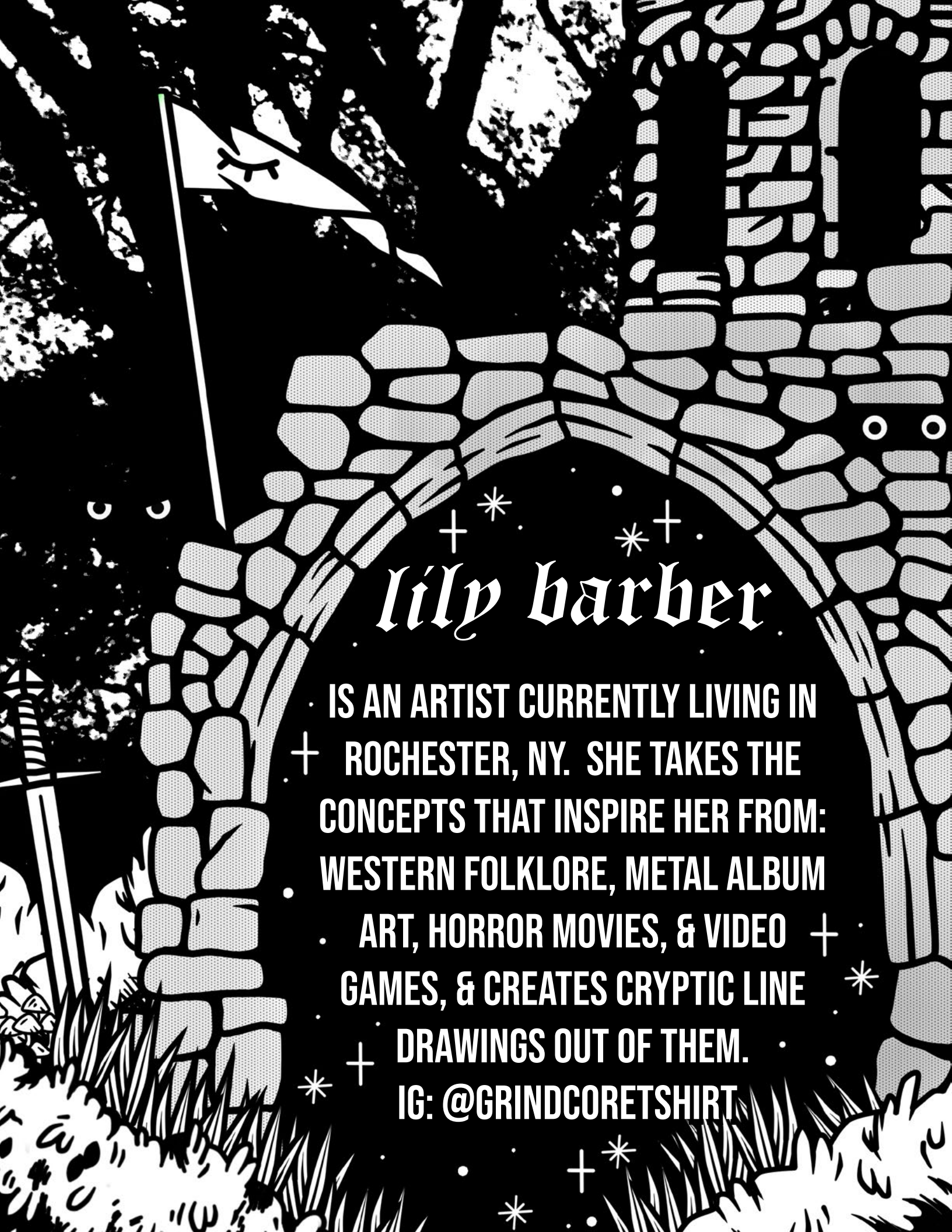
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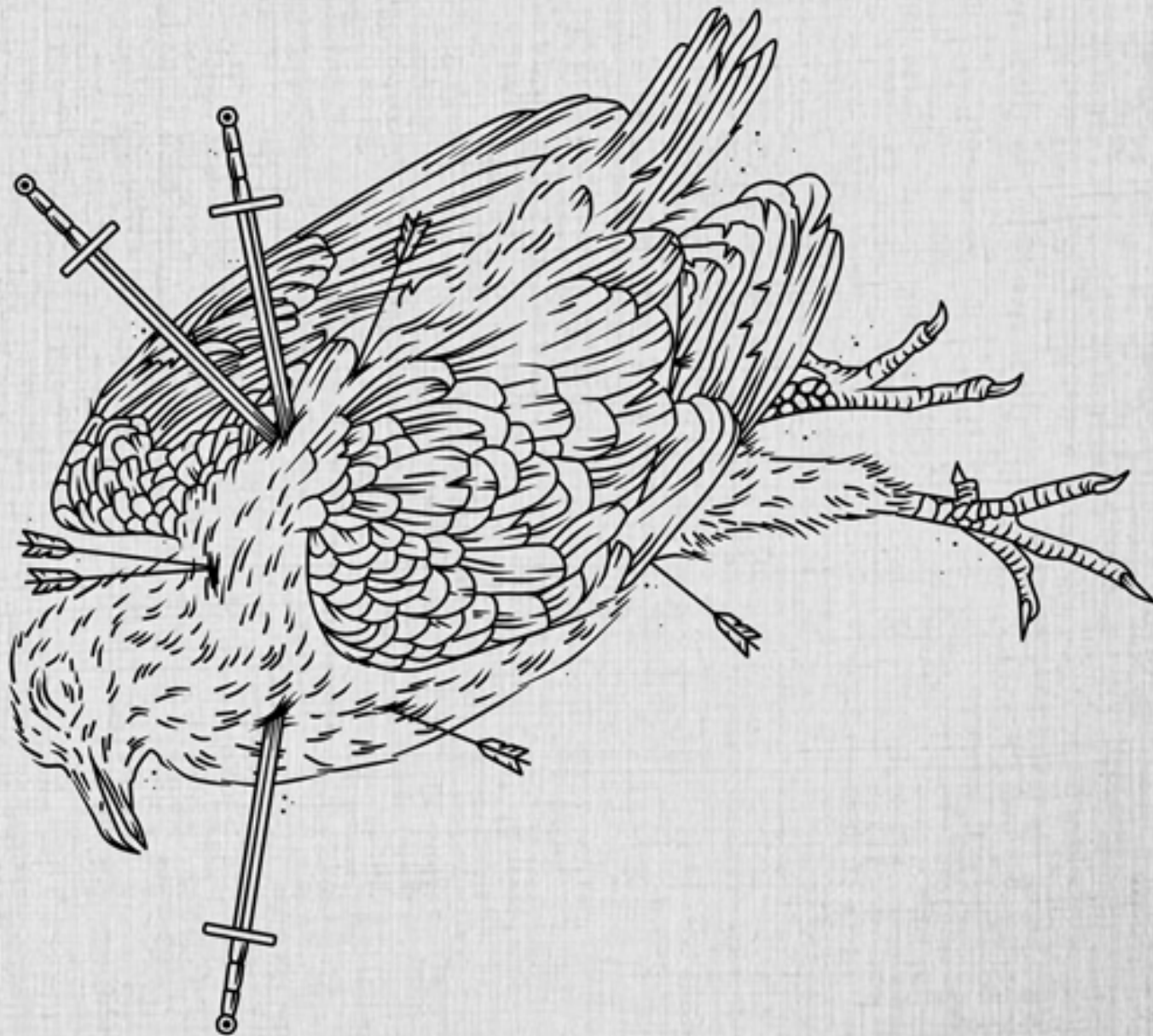
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KING BUFFALO

the band that formed from ashes

Words by: Matthew Huguley
Photography by: Krit Upra



King Buffalo is pieced together from past Rochester based bands who bring a unique take on psychedelic rock and transport you into the depths of space with their blankets of fuzz and ambient tones. With inspiration that spans from Rage Against the Machine to other wide range artists such as All Them Witches and Naxatras, it is easy to see how this trio can blend elements to push the barriers of this ever-expanding genre. We had the chance to talk to front man and lead guitarist Sean McVay about what is going on in the world of King Buffalo and what the trio has planned this year.

Sean explains that their previous creative process had been "...with the three of us just jamming and we'll just jam for a few hours then I'll take the rough recordings and go through it all to piece together new tracks." This free-formed creativity left listeners with euphoric and natural sounding music. However, a new process was needed in order to grow in the way that they wanted. Sean explains, "On this record we did things a little different, we went with a more traditional approach this time around." The group has utilized a family friend to help with recording all of their albums and currently practices at the popular venue The Main Street Armory. The guys have appreciated this spot's natural reverb and have

experimented by placing mics in different spots to capture otherworldly sounds generated by the building's infrastructure. When it comes to creating those sounds for new tracks, Sean explains that "Sonically we have all these pedals and synths, these instruments and we just kind of play with them until we come up with stuff that we find fun and interesting but then lyrically it's either pulled from life experiences or political climate, and stuff like that."

Contrary to the stereotype of rock bands from the 70's and 80's, touring is nothing like what people may expect. Sean explains that "you're traveling around in a van, lots of truck stops, lots of Walmart parking lots." It's hard to live the

“There’s depth and grit, a lot of it is creating cool lectures in our music”

rock and roll lifestyle and still put on good show because nobody wants to pay good money for a band to show up drunk and make a fool of themselves. Sometimes the road can help artists to find themselves, and as a growing band, King Buffalo really learned to push the boundaries of their comfort zone while they were on the road. There are many unknowns that go into touring, and it can wear on the band members. Sean jokes that “Sometimes on tour you play empty rooms but that’s just how it goes sometimes on tour.” While it’s important keep up with touring, the group enjoys coming back to their home base, and that’s just how Sean views his hometown here in Rochester, NY. He commented on

how nice Rochester is because it’s affordable and it has a nice pace that doesn’t get too overwhelming unlike a bigger city such as NYC.

All in all, Sean just wants his fans to enjoy the music for what it is. Without smoke and mirrors, just radiating plumes of atmospheric psych-rock and jazz-fusion. The group is focused more on creating material that sounds good regardless of how simple or complex the structure of it may be. “There’s depth and grit, a lot of it is creating cool lectures in our music.” By doing so, they hope to get more complicated with the sounds rather than with the notes. When people listen to King Buffalo, Sean hopes that their music leads to some self-

reflection. Whether it’s melting into their couch or exploring new and different emotions, King Buffalo’s songs can instill in listeners the power to become something new.

Sean wrapped up the conversation by letting us know that they have their eyes set on dropping their latest EP titled “Dead Start” in March. Following this, they will be kicking off their spring tour with 34 stops starting in Burlington, VT at Higher Grounds and ending in Chicago IL at Empty Ground. So, keep your eye on King Buffalo’s newest endeavors, as we expect the possibility of new and ever changing waves of sound from the Kings themselves.





Rella: A Chef-Driven Experience

Words by : Ian Phillips
Photography by: Scott Semler

Cruz Nieves knows about sacrifice: it comes in two forms, one form like the literal heart wrenching scene in Temple of Doom, and one form in the more ordinary sense, a sacrifice of one's time. Nieves has sacrificed his time and more to create a unique dining experience at the authentic-to-the-bone Rella.

“There is no person to better explain the food than the people who made it”

The authenticity at Rella comes from a place of passion, not from following tradition of any one cuisine. “I don’t do anything half-assed,” says Nieves. Indeed, as I walked from my car to the front door of the restaurant, he came running up, snow covering his black athletic wear. “And after I’m done with you, I am going to continue to run,” he said with a big smile. As I discovered over the next hour, this is who Cruz Nieves is.

Rella is a chef-driven restaurant. There are no servers or bartenders per se; Nieves and his sous chef wear all the hats by cooking, taking orders, serving drinks, and offering genuine hospitality. “I’m a people person,” said Nieves. “There is no person to better explain the food than the people who made it.” In this case it is a crew of three: Cruz, his sous, and his dishwasher, nicknamed “Señor Feliz” because of the positive attitude he brings to the kitchen. “Attitude is not something you can teach,” posited Nieves, referring to Señor Feliz. He recalled a time working in New York when both he and his station partner were written up by the chef because their poor attitude set the stage for a shitty service.



“If you’re going to ask me what I miss most about New York City, it is the competitive culture. People are proud to be working and want to be the best”

It's not that Nieves doesn't trust the front of house, it's that he wants to create the most personal experience possible. Mark Cupolo, the owner of Rella, had wanted a chef-driven and intimate style of restaurant for years. He had dreamed of a restaurant like this with a seafood program different from any other in Rochester.

After spending years cooking with Cupolo, Nieves shipped off to New York City. He ended up in some fantastic establishments such as Gabriel Kreuther Restaurant, where he recalled a langoustine tartar with cauliflower and macadamia puree, and at the industry favorite Del Posto, where he experienced fish cooked correctly for the first time in his life. "I remember eating a piece of olive oil poached salmon," he said, "When you eat it, it's like taking a bite of custard." But New York opened more senses to Nieves than that of taste. He had always been a competitive person, a self-described sore loser. "If you're going to ask me what I miss most about New York City, it is the competitive culture. People are proud to be working and want to be the best."

"Pride is a good and a bad thing"

"Pride is a good and a bad thing," said Nieves. You have to be proud in order to put out good food, but stubbornness can ruin the guest experience. Nieves told a story about being served an overcooked rack of lamb at a fine Boston restaurant. It happened in an open kitchen, where the food runner showed the chef the lamb as if in question, and the chef sent it out anyway, all while Nieves was watching.

Nieves explained he'd ordered the lamb medium rare and sent back the plate. A rack of lamb is not quick to prepare, being a huge, multiple bone-in chunk of meat. Rather than communicating with Nieves, the restaurant took a short cut and served the re-fired lamb super

rare. The chef's pride ruined the dinner. They could have easily sliced the rack and prepared perfectly cooked chops, satisfying the guest in a timely fashion, but the chef was too stubborn to change their dish.

Sacrifice has paid off in the case of Rella. Nieves' greatest kitchen tool is his imagination. He might have an idea stewing in his head for weeks, then one more ingredient is delivered, and voilà! If he has any doubt about a plate he is working on, it won't make it to the menu.

There is a wall sized portrait of the late Anthony Bourdain by the entrance of Rella, painted by a friend of Nieves. "If it weren't for him I wouldn't have the job I have today." He said that it was a terrible blow to the industry when Bourdain died by suicide, even going as far to say that he cried more over Bourdain than the passing of his own father.

Nieves lives in a dichotomy. He wants to participate in his non-working life, his relationship, and basketball on Sundays, but the siren song of Rella beckons him so deafeningly that it is difficult to have a full fledged life outside of the restaurant.

Experience Rella in vignettes: Chef Cruz instantly greets you as you walk in the front door; crimson Sangiovese decants from a bottle; dishes are delicately prepared and served, if you like, with carte blanche; a rich but palate cleansing dessert finishes the meal; then, farewell, 'til next time. The black and white painting of Bourdain stares at you on the way out, not only to remind you of the ultimate sacrifice, but also to remind you that when food is good, life is good.





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every Monday night in April
(6, 13, 20, 27) at 6:30pm.

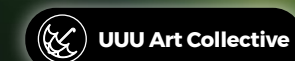


Communities & Cannabis
Expungement & Opportunity
(April 4)

Cannabis
& Media
WEDNESDAYS

Movie Night

Hosted by UUU Art Collective,
every Wednesday night in April
(1, 8, 15, 22, 29) at 6:30pm.

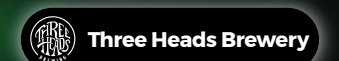


CannaBusiness
20/20 Legislative Outlook
(April 15)

Craft
Your Own
THURSDAYS

Business & Cultivation

Hosted by NY HempLab,
every Thursday night in April
(2, 9, 16, 23, 30) at 6:30pm.



The CUP
Cannabis for a Cause
(April 18th & 19th)

roc420.com

10 YEARS
OF

NEW POLITICS

1990s
in

the Danish National Radio Station P3's Karriere Kanonen competition selected the early formation of New Politics as one of several winners of their popular program. David Boyd had first discovered the competition while reading a newspaper on the bus, and again through the suggestion of friends. Having written and recorded a diverse set of songs with his bandmates-to-be, he decided that the sound files deserved a better fate than sitting idle on a hard drive. Their direction was uncertain, but their energy was palpable. It wasn't long before Boyd found himself in front of an audience with a microphone in hand.

NEW MUSIC
IS THE SAME
SOUND

THE FOUNDING OF NEW POLITICS REVOLVED AROUND THE ESSENCE OF CREATIVE SONG WRITING.

Some would call creating for the sake of creation the purest form of artistry, but there is also a clear outcome of this process: music that is full of energy, texture, and expression. Most artists enter the music-scene with a plan in mind, but Boyd described the band's inception as the universe reaching out to him, channeled through the music they wrote. Once they got going, they hit the ground running, performing in music competitions around Denmark while writing more music. Boyd sent favored songs like Yeah Yeah Yeah and Dignity, among others, over to contacts in New York and the band quickly signed to RCA and moved to America. They then released their first self-titled record and never looked back.

10 years later, New Politics has released their 5th studio album *An Invitation to an Alternate Reality*. You'll find their sound has changed since the release of New Politics in 2010, but the intensity and constitution of their music is as solid as ever. Their new album seamlessly binds multiple genres into accessible and enjoyable music. With elements of ska, punk, hip-hop, grunge and alternative rock, *An Invitation to an Alternate Reality* has a little something for everyone. The band has exercised expert creative control over the past 10 years, and there's no question of the incredible performance any of these tracks could offer.

As expected, songwriting hasn't come without its challenges. For Boyd and New Politics, change has been the only constant. They transitioned from living together in Brooklyn, NYC to spreading out across the country, both expanding their personal and professional lives. Boyd often worried how they'd manage when previously they'd been living, writing, and working in close proximity. The foundation they had built, and the security that came with it, seemed to have upheaved itself into a rather frightening reality. For Boyd, that fear almost won.

The foundation for *An Invitation to an Alternate Reality* was identical to New Politics; they weren't aiming for anything in particular. With their first record, they weren't concerned with the nuances of radio or the sizes of venues they were going to play at. The music was to come from the heart and this recent record was really no different. All of the previous worries seemingly evaporated when the band came together with the sole purpose of writing music. Boyd described it "like riding a bike...you stop thinking, start

On the receiving side of New Politics' music are their fans. "Our fans are fucking incredible; that's the one thing that always blows my mind," says Boyd. As ready as New Politics is to bring their music onstage, their audience is to receive and experience. Boyd recognizes how keen their fans are to engage with their music in genuine and transformative ways. From fan art, to tattoos, to personal essays, and unmatched social media vim, New Politics has earned every fan and concert goer with their explosive live performances.

For Boyd, dancing was always an important part of his performances. He was inspired by 90's grunge and hip-hop growing up and embraced the advent of genre mismatch. Memories of BMX, skateboarding, and good house music fueled the 'experimental generation' aesthetic, which further fed into his love for and fascination with dancing. Recognizing how so many people were taking challenging new approaches to music, dance became his way of engaging with that medium way before

THEIR NEW ALBUM SEAMLESSLY BINDS MULTIPLE GENRES INTO ACCESSIBLE & ENJOYABLE MUSIC.

his direct exposure to music composition. "I just loved (it)! I felt that you got to take on the character, you got to express yourself through music. It was the perfect way of being a musician without being a musician," Boyd says.

Presently, New Politics is on tour for their new album. They're working on releasing new music, looking for new ways to engage with their fans, and continuing to connect with audiences on stage.

"I would have done it independently. 100%" is the one thing Boyd would have changed if he had the opportunity to go back in time. "That's the future, especially if you can write...For me, and

from what I know, I would have definitely said to myself, 'take 3 months to learn about the industry, how things work, the legal and law aspects, and then do it independently.'" In reality, there's no going back for New Politics, and that's more than okay. If the past is any indication, even more great things are to come from them.





WHO ARE THE VELVET NOOSE?

WORDS BY: TAYLOR SOLANO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: SCOTT SEMLER

Evocative, emotional, and ethereal. Theatrical performance, written scrolls, artifacts, video projections, spoken word, and sound bath music. Who and what are The Velvet Noose?

I had the pleasure of watching a semi-rare performance of this elusive group at Visual Studies Workshop. The performance was the culmination of the group's six-week residency there, a multidisciplinary showcase that paid homage to author Steven Sherrill's writings about the famed Greek mythological creature the Minotaur (part-man, part-bull).

While the Minotaur was a central vehicle used to elicit thematic concepts, this showcase was most certainly an authentic creation of The Velvet Noose. Artistic director Harold Taddy and performing artists Alyson Trombulak and Rivkah

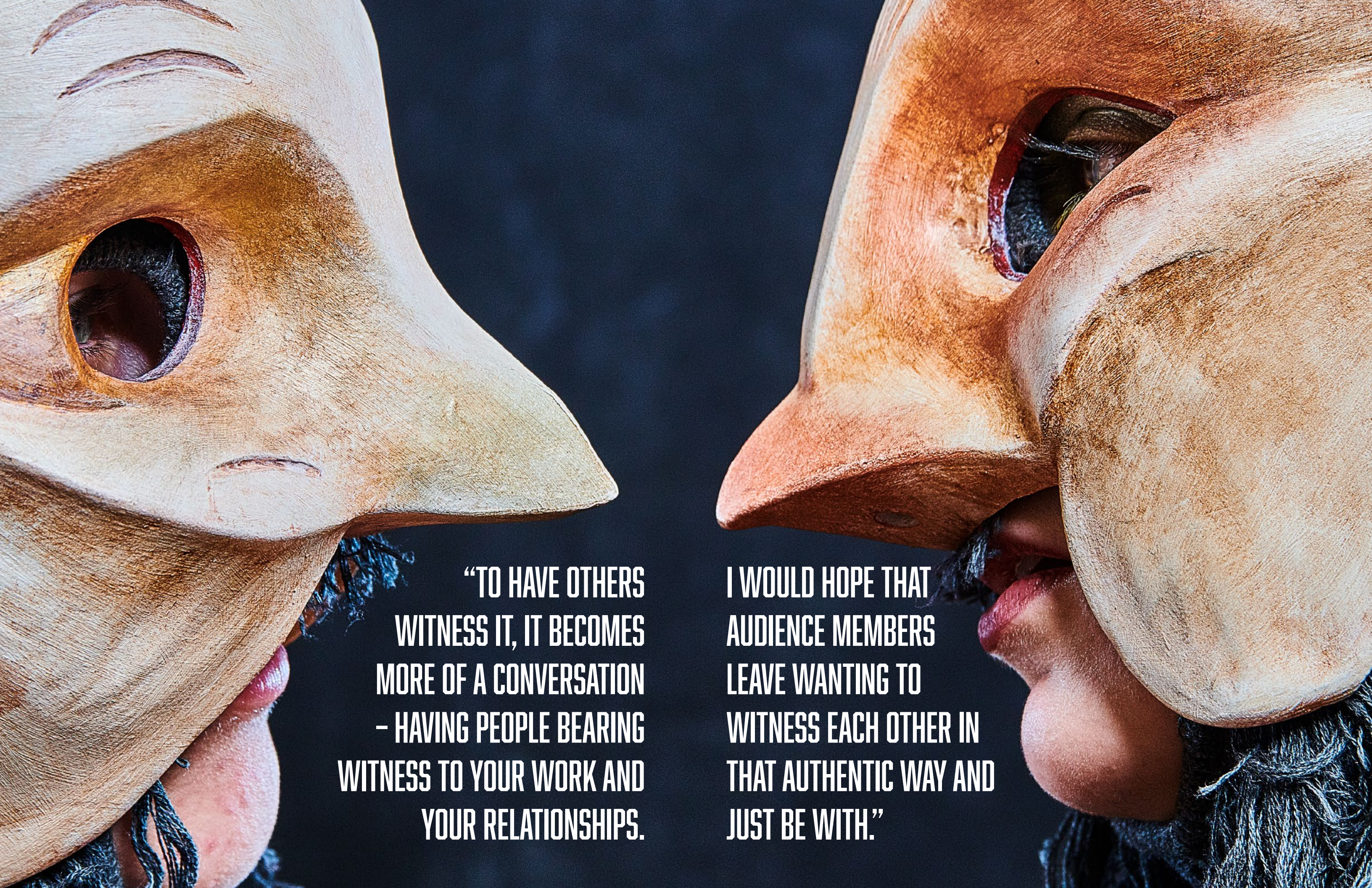
Simcha led audience members through rooms at Visual Studies Workshop, each revealing new original media, and guided them towards their own understandings of struggle and triumph.

"Everyone got a slightly different experience," affirms Trombulak. She elaborates by examining a concept of having a "shared experience, alone," in which spectators are in present company with both their peers and the performers, but are given ample allowance to examine themselves throughout the process.

Without revealing too much, I will share a few parts of the performance that I found significant. Taddy commenced the experience by abruptly throwing loud juggling balls against a wall, and then developing a scene of physical battle and struggle. Trombulak read excerpts with

a mesmerizing narration while navigating through the audience. The crux of the showcase, for me at least, was the final scene. Performers and viewers gathered in a large stage-like space, with the only some minor glowing lights that linked us together in luminescence. In actuality, we were threaded together by holding twine in hand. What followed was transformative. Simcha began to sing loudly and unabashedly while sound bath layering added peaceful vibrations. After some prolonged ritualistic and intertwined movement from all three performers, the singing stopped. The movement stopped. The performance was over. While it would be impossible to surmise each spectator's experience, it's safe to say we all left feeling a different way than when we arrived. A vital component to the work of The Velvet Noose is self-healing through confronting the darkness that we all carry within.





**“TO HAVE OTHERS
WITNESS IT, IT BECOMES
MORE OF A CONVERSATION
– HAVING PEOPLE BEARING
WITNESS TO YOUR WORK AND
YOUR RELATIONSHIPS.**

**I WOULD HOPE THAT
AUDIENCE MEMBERS
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THAT AUTHENTIC WAY AND
JUST BE WITH.”**

“WE’RE SOLID, BUT ACTUALLY EVERYTHING [IN OUR BODY] IS MOVING, AND SO THESE FREQUENCIES ARE MEANT TO REACH CERTAIN POINTS OF YOUR BODY THROUGH THE VIBRATIONS.”

Viewers will undoubtedly experience some discomfort throughout their performance, but this is welcome and intentional. The performers ensure security and consent by keeping a healthy separation from the audience, embodying the “fourth wall” convention of theater, television, and film. “We’re present, but we’re never quite attainable, either,” says Simcha. The artists are right in front of you – sometimes mere inches away – but are always “looking just past,” she explains.

All that said, spectators should anticipate that they will confront darker themes such as death, physical pain, and suffering. However, in a therapeutic way, audience members leave Velvet Noose performances feeling lighter and more centered.

In fact, therapeutic discovery is a shared experience that brought these artists together. “My interest in intermodal expressive arts therapy really intersected with what [Harold] and Alyson had been working on with The Velvet Noose,” reflects Simcha. In addition to being a performer of the group, a visual artist, a singer, and a poet, Simcha works as a counselor in a school setting, guiding students through

social-emotional learning. Taddy was drawn to music early on in life as an “early coping mechanism,” he states. He pushes past boundaries in his art, whether it’s through song, theater, or visual art.

Trombulak adds that the presence of an audience when creating art can be healing: “There’s a symbiosis that happens,” she notes, continuing that “our shows require an element of trust from the audience” and that there is enlightenment to be found within that trust and interaction. Simcha echoes Trombulak’s sentiment, explaining that “To have others witness it, it becomes more of a conversation – having people bearing witness to your work and your relationships. I would hope that audience members leave wanting to witness each other in that authentic way and just be with.”

If one feels reawakened after a performance of The Velvet Noose, it could be attributed in part to their use of sound bath, a layering of musical components that utilize vibrations. At the end of this particular showcase, the artists used loud shape-note singing, gongs, and sound bowls to signify a rebirth. Taddy relays a theory about

sound healing: “We’re solid, but actually everything [in our body] is moving, and so these frequencies are meant to reach certain points of your body through the vibrations.” While Taddy, Trombulak, and Simcha are the physical deliverance of The Velvet Noose, there is a circle of creatives who contribute behind-the-scenes to their artistic pursuit. Sherrill, the writer of the Minotaur works, has collaborated on musical and theatrical works with Taddy over the years. He also provided Minotaur-themed paintings to the Visual Studies Workshop showcase, which were exhibited in one of the rooms and added thematic consideration. Annalisa Baron created one of masks that adorn the faces of the performers as seen on page 42. Adam Schaefer filmed long vignettes for an ongoing visual projection, a component of the performance that compelled watchers with wonder.

Experiential theater? Immersive, multidisciplinary performance art? These things are better to experience than to analyze. The Velvet Noose are a thing to behold. Keep an eye out for a performance at the Spirit Room or Fringe Fest where you can experience The Velvet Noose firsthand and get yourself lifted.



**FINDING IDENTITY
THROUGH COMPANIONSHIP
AND MUSIC**

**TROUBLESHOOTER OFFERS A NEW TAKE ON
POST-HARDCORE WITH AN EMPHASIS ON
IDENTITY AND SELF-UNDERSTANDING**

WORDS BY: JOE LARKIN _____ PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT UPRA

After the boom of hardcore music in the 1980's in small clubs across the world and notably the East Coast of the United States, a variety of diverse sounding bands ranging from Fugazi to At The Drive-In began pushing the envelope of what it meant to be and sound like a "hardcore band" by adding different vocal styles, more complicated song structures, and reflective, emotional, lyrical content. These bands often played the same types of shows and had similar DIY beliefs and ethics, but the change of sound birthed the genre of "post-hardcore" as it was a product of hardcore music, but it definitely didn't sound or feel like Agnostic Front. The Rochester, New York quartet, Trouleshooter, continues the legacy of adding and expanding the sounds of hardcore music with new ideas about what it means to be and sound like a heavy band rooted in the DIY scene during the 21st century.

Trouleshooter is rounded out by members Scott O'Dell (vocalist), Casey Sanders (guitar), Jared Johnson (bass), and Christian Ortiz (drums). The group has a history and chemistry together that are tangible and affable. Sanders and Ortiz were both in the emo math-rock group California Cousins

together. O'Dell and Johnson were in the heavier band Night Terror. Sanders had been sitting on music that he wrote nearly two years ago and decided to show it to Ortiz. Sanders shares that their music is a "melodic hardcore-inspired take on heavier punk bands we liked in the early 2010's such as Title Fight and Polar Bear Club." Johnson and Sanders had tried to get projects going together before, but their ideas never panned out. Eventually, Sanders invited Johnson to come to play bass for the project. In turn, Johnson told O'Dell to show up at practice one night and designated them as vocalist after having them try out for the band by covering a Lifetime song. O'Dell, who was more accustomed to playing bass in projects, tried to do the "raspy yell thing" many of the aforementioned bands engage in vocally. However, they ultimately found themselves incapable of doing so as they would either end up coughing midway through a song or felt they personally botched it all together. Instead, O'Dell adapted their own vocal style. The group continued practicing and writing music and eventually played their first show last April at the now-defunct Vineyard Community Space.

After playing a few shows, the band decided to record last August and put out their first single "Snake Oil" on Bandcamp. Johnson explained that they "wanted the single to come across exactly how we sound live" and, in doing so, enlisted Ortiz to record, mix, and master the song. Ortiz, who invested the money he earned from working two jobs over the summer to buy proper recording equipment, jokes that the process was complicated, but ultimately it paid off. The band was able to capture their sound without having to worry about financial compromises of studio time, awkward interactions with an outside producer who doesn't know what they want sonically, and also had the luxury to re-record if needed. The song clocks in at just over two minutes, but finds the band gelling right off the jump. "Snake Oil" immediately begins with O'Dell howling about being poisoned and unable to sleep while Sanders lays riffs down with Ortiz's drumming. Johnson rides perfectly in the background and provides a solid groove for a band that sounds entirely in sync with each other. The track outro is reminiscent of something that would be on Title Fight's 'Shed' and is a perfect introduction for the band.

"GROWING UP, I HEARD NO PRO-QUEER LYRICAL CONTENT. I DON'T WANT TO BE CHEESY AND SAY THAT HOPEFULLY, MY WORDS CAN LATCH ONTO SOMEBODY ELSE, BUT I'M CREATING WHAT I DIDN'T HAVE."
-SCOTT O'DELL



The ability for Trouleshooter to sound this polished and poised on their first release showcases the promise and potential that they have as a group moving forward. O'Dell explains that as a literature major, they often wrote poetry and short stories. The band has been a way for them to delve back into writing verse. O'Dell, who identifies as a non-binary pansexual (a person who rejects the gender binary and is attracted to people

regardless of their sex or gender identity), has used writing lyrics to analyze their mental health and ideas about their identity. O'Dell explains that "growing up, I heard no pro-queer lyrical content. I don't want to be cheesy and say that hopefully, my words can latch onto somebody else, but I'm creating what I didn't have." Although New York is often seen as a beacon for progressive social ideas, O'Dell and Johnson

both grew up in the Southern Tier, with small rural populations often dominated by conservative beliefs. Ultimately, the art we create should reflect what we feel hasn't been done yet or is needed to be said in the world. In offering diverse lyrical content alongside impressive musical landscapes, Trouleshooter is a group to keep an eye on as they plan to release their debut EP and play more shows locally and across the East Coast in 2020.



Dewey's Domain and Wednesday's World—

A profile piece on Dewey Rice
& Wednesday Westwood

Words by: Alyssa Brault

Photography by: Maxwell Harvey-Sampson

If you have met Dewey Rice or Wednesday Westwood, you have surely been impressed with their artistry. But, you may not realize the extent of talent and creativity that this multifaceted artist brings to the Rochester scene with both their tattooing and drag performances. Originally from Watertown, NY, Dewey first moved to The Flower City in the summer of 2008 after finishing up college in Utica, NY. His romantic relationship, along with a desire to branch out from his small hometown, were driving factors for his relocation. Hailing from a small town, Rochester seemed like a “bustling metropolis” to the twenty year old artist. Dewey’s first job was located on Monroe Ave, which serves as one of the main streets and life lines downtown. This exposed him to not only fellow ROC citizens, but also to the local LGBTQIA+ community. Dewey shares that, “ I am so lucky to live in a city with such a rich and vibrant LGBTQIA community. It has always felt to me to be fairly large per capita and there are always so many events and opportunities for us to all come together. I love this community and it doesn’t matter where I go in life, I will call it home.”

Always having a passion for the arts, Dewey has actively engaged with it in multiple mediums throughout his life. Continuously captivated and curious, drawing and painting naturally took root from a young age and he has been tending to this craft ever since. Taking as many art classes as possible while in school, Dewey found himself gravitating towards the punk rock scene. Once entering into the scene, socializing and conversing with others, and watching bands perform, Dewey was drawn to many of its qualities, one of the most profound being the inked artwork on the bodies of the band members. Submerged in a world of tattoos, this initially sparked not only an interest in them, but a desire to actually become a tattoo artist himself. Currently, Dewey is a tattooer at Kamikaze Tattoo located on 98 Alexander St. Tattoos can either serve as a form of self expression, or can simply exist because one wants them to. Whether or not there is meaning behind a tattoo, a handful of technical factors come into play such as placement, stylistic design, sizing and dimensions, shading, color, and more. With each move needing to be carefully calculated and precise, this art-form requires expansive skill sets. In a serendipitous contrast to this technical skillset, another art-form entered into Dewey’s life, opening his eyes to a whole new world and creative process. The world of Drag.

“Get drunk. Tip the queens.”



The first time Dewey saw drag back in his hometown, he was immediately captivated. Leaning in, he was intrigued by the storylines, the color, the artistry, the craftsmanship, and the ability for one to live out their inner fantasies by working the stage to their liking.

Dewey shares that, “Growing up, I had many moments where I threw on a cheap halloween wig, or a towel around my head, and just danced and sang in the mirror to my favorite pop music. Those are my earliest moments that just screamed drag queen!” Being familiar with the concept, everything fell into place when he first saw an actual drag queen. Drag wasn’t initially something that Dewey saw himself doing, but it spoke to him in a way that he could genuinely connect with. Its qualities and characteristics produced resonating effects, noting that, “...It was a language I understood completely.”

The very first performance for Dewey was at a club out in Syracuse, NY called Red Light Lounge. Working there as a bar back, Dewey decided to go in on their amateur drag show night, performing to the song “It’s Been So Long” by Horrorpops. One of the prominent pillars of a drag queen is their stage name, but Dewey didn’t have one at the time.

He worked with the name Dewey Paige, but now goes by Wednesday Westwood. Wednesday’s first Rochester performance was held at Muther’s. Her performance to “Hot Kiss” by Juliette & the Licks, which included a stage dive, made for a memorable night.

“I love the whole process of creating and sharing my art with the world. Having a concept for a look, that starts out as a sketch, then gathering all the pieces, constructing, executing, then presenting that product to an audience, is a process that I love so much. Spending hours creating something, pouring your heart and soul into something, then presenting it to the world and seeing people react and get joy from it is something that is so tremendously rewarding to me.”

When it comes to the world of drag, Dewey shares, “I love the whole process of creating and sharing my art with the world. Having a concept for a look, that starts out as a sketch, then gathering all the pieces, constructing, executing, then presenting that product to an audience, is a process that I love so much. Spending hours creating something, pouring your heart and soul into something, then presenting it to the world and seeing people react and get joy from it is something that is so tremendously rewarding to me.” The start of this journey into

the world of drag brought some personal struggles to the surface for Dewey, however. “When I started there was still a slight stigma with drag queens. While people would enjoy being entertained by drag queens, a lot of guys wouldn’t want to date one. I

was worried how it would affect my love/sex life. It’s embarrassing to admit, but it was a legitimate concern of mine at the time and still kind of is today to some degree.” After the lights go off, the music stops playing, and the people leave, there is a different individual under all of the glorious hair, fabric, makeup, and jewels and that’s important to remember. For many people, but not all, drag is about portraying

a character and performing a crafted persona. It’s an investment, dedication, craft, and creative outlet, but not the entirety of their being. One can wholeheartedly embrace their drag queen, but that doesn’t mean that they have to fully embody it. For Dewey, “It’s taken me years to be comfortable with this duality.” Within this duality lies one of the most beautiful elements of drag, its varying meanings to different queens.

Leaving us with one last piece of advice, Wednesday shares, “Get drunk. Tip the queens.”



ARRESTED YOUTH

UNCOVERING THE UNKNOWNNS AND DARK TIMES

WORDS BY: JOSEPH MASSARO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY: MOLLY RICHARDSON

During the 2010's, there was a new breed of alternative music coming to airwaves. It fused and channeled elements of hard rock with punk, hip hop, and indie pop, with an emphasis on electronics. One of the new faces of this style was singer-songwriter Ian Johnson, who's behind the genre-blending project Arrested Youth. Hailing from Louisville, Kentucky, Johnson was incredibly influenced by the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Kid Cudi, and began writing lyrics at age 15. Soon after some encouragement from friends and family, he turned those lyrics into songs and released a string of mixtapes and a debut EP that gained popularity. That EP eventually climbed all the way to iTunes' Top 25 pop charts.

Johnson took a break from music while attending Indiana University, where he triple-majored in business. Even during this break from making music, his education didn't deteriorate his approach to it, even though he was unsure of his future career. When Johnson described attending college, he referred to it as a "necessary evil" that stimulated his approach to writing music.

"At the end of the day, college inspired me to create what I've created, so I wouldn't say it was a negative," Johnson said. "I would definitely say a lot of my frustrations with college and what was going on in my life outside of it slipped into my music, so it ended

**"WE'RE LIVING IN A TIME
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up being incredibly beneficial." But, as helpful as the college experience was to Johnson's songwriting, he felt lost and even described some of those years as "dark times."

"College was like a punch in the face to me," Johnson said. "I was just trying to figure out what I was there to do and where was it going to take me. Mix that in also with some questions of mental health. Like many people feel during college, I just felt kind of lost and had low self-esteem about what I was doing in my life."

After graduating from college in 2016, he accepted a coveted job at Anheuser-Busch's Global Management Program. Eventually, Johnson was offered a promotion that would've required more dedication and orkweeks. However, Johnson decided to live life by his own terms and denied the corporate job to pursue playing and recording music full-time. The song "My Friends Are Robots" reflects the lack of creativity and self-expression Johnson felt while working that job. Johnson isn't just making music to express his own frustrations, however; it's bigger than that. His music is a message to help those who are suffering from mental illness, violence, and extreme uncertainty cope with their feelings in an age of isolating technology. Through the hybrid of pop-punk and synth-rock soundscapes, Johnson's work is filled with dark undertones, expressing the feelings and emotions his generation is experiencing currently in this digital world.

"Obviously in music, mental health is a big conversation these days. But what I think could improve the conversation is helping people understand these words they are using and how to understand it," Johnson said. "There's a difference between mental health and just an emotion you're having because you're growing and learning about yourself in life."

Mental health is talked about more than ever today. With drug addiction, high rates of anxiety, and the widespread use of social media contributing to rising suicide rates, these discussions are more important than ever. Discussing these struggles may be difficult to some, but it's important to note that mental health has been better reported and paid closer attention to today than years prior.

“We’re living in a time where the statistics don’t lie. And we’re also living in a time where people are struggling with mental health more than ever before,” Johnson said. “But again, we have to rationalize what we’re talking about here and to not only rely on emotion, but really bring some logic to conceptualize how you’re really feeling instead of just labeling it and I think a lot of the new music pushes toward that.”

Johnson isn’t being cynical or by any means saying a person shouldn’t talk about their emotions; he believes that people need a healthy way to properly identify their emotions and understand what exactly they are feeling. But, Johnson also understands how tough this can be given the ever-changing styles of communication and connection in our technology-driven culture.

“A lot of us live these days with the ability to know what’s going on in the world every day to see what everybody’s doing. I mean these are basic things that have almost become cliché, but it’s still at the root of where a lot of these feelings come from. You know we live in a very comparative culture where it’s pretty tough to feel about who you are and what you are doing because of how easy it is to have doubts from purely just knowing how much is out there,” Johnson said. “But there’s smaller reasons than a lot of kids think that can really help with their struggles mentally and there’s a lot of good life to live. That’s the message I would like to see more out there and that’s where I’m pushing my work.”

As a musician, Johnson is also dealing with these struggles himself, but sees the new year as the perfect opportunity for personal growth and reaching an even wider audience with his music. “I plan on making more music and touring a lot more,” Johnson said. “It’s just going to be a year of a lot of growth and a lot more next steps to take for Arrested Youth. The live shows and of course the community we continue to build are the reasons why we’re in it. So it’s really exciting to see it grow and I can’t wait to see what happens next.”

Come for coffee, stay for community.

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SOVIET DOLLS

THE DAWN OF NOUVEAU RETRO

WORDS BY: PAULA CUMMINGS

PHOTOGRAPHY BY: KRIT UPRA

Music can take people to strange and wonderful places, both figuratively and literally. It was with some apprehension that I pulled up at a dark office building after hours one night, but the neon glow in the window was a beacon, a sign that I was in the right place to meet Soviet Dolls.

Shrouded in mystery and wrapped in enigma, Soviet Dolls has been an elusive band. For a brief moment of time, I was a guest in their studio, a shadowy lair filled with the ghosts of instruments past, juxtaposed with a sound booth equipped with modern computer software that was tucked in the corner. This contrast of old and new wasn't a surprise; long-time fans of Soviet Dolls appreciate the way they pay homage to sounds from the past while pushing forward into modern musical exploration.

You may have caught Soviet Dolls' rendition of "Cruel Summer," a Bananarama hit from the 80's. The cover is a satisfying nod to the original song's melody and sentiment, paired with their own signature mix of sounds. This was Soviet Dolls'

first and only cover song, and the perfect vehicle for introducing their new vocalist Emily Brown.

Brown was in the studio for the interview, accompanied by founding member Matt Cavallaro, and guitarist Greg Stella. Bass player David Timmons wasn't able to be there. We started talking about an early show at Bug Jar in 2013, where Soviet Dolls shared a bill with Joywave and The 1975.

"We didn't know who they were," Cavallaro added. "They were up and coming. They were touring with Joywave."

"It was an early show for The 1975. They had one song "Chocolate" that was a hit," said Stella. "Tim (Avery) just said he booked a band from Manchester, and Manchester England is where all of my favorite bands are from... Stone Roses, New Order, Oasis, The Smiths. I was psyched."

Soviet Dolls had been conceived only half a year before that iconic show at Bug Jar. Cavallaro and his friend Stephen Quinn started the

project together, and brought in vocalist Hannah Gouldrick. Soon after, Timmons joined them on bass and Stella joined on guitar. Quinn has since moved out of state.

Their retro sound is organic. Cavallaro said they didn't have a conversation about defining their genre.

"It just came out that way. I'm a child of the 80's and 90's so it's just the stuff that was good. I think naturally the influence just comes out. We can't get away from it. We say 'I think the next album's going to sound different. And it sounds like Soviet Dolls'."

Despite their consistent sound, each of Soviet Dolls' releases does have its own flavor, influenced by the contributing musicians and the interests of the band members at the time. Their debut synth pop EP *Secrets, Lies* was released in 2013 and featured Gouldrick on vocals. Two years later, they released their second EP *Hunters* with vocalist Alexandra Wendt. There was a darker vibe, and more sultry vocals to this one, as they leaned into the guitars more on these tracks.

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"NOT HAVING A DRUMMER MAKES THAT WEB OF COLLABORATION POSSIBLE BECAUSE WE DON'T HAVE A TYPICAL BAND STRUCTURE."

Despite the differences in tone, the songs all still work well beside each other on their 2018 LP *Dream In Rhythm*. The full length album hit the charts on *Feedbands* and, as a result, the label pressed a thousand copies on vinyl. They're sold out online, but *Soviet Dolls* still have a handful of copies in stock. They've established a loyal following, despite being elusive and hard to catch performing live.

"I was a big fan of *Soviet Dolls* before Matt asked me to do vocals," Brown said. She was hooked when they mentioned the idea of covering *Bananarama's* "Cruel Summer." She says "As soon as Matt sent me 'Cruel Summer,' I just thought of that scene in *Karate Kid*."

Members of *Soviet Dolls* could rival *Siskel & Ebert* in the number of 1980's movies watched, although it came out during our interview that Stella has still never seen *The Goonies*. Cavallaro often uses 80's nostalgia in show announcements. He says "I like to use as much *Breakfast Club* imagery as I can."

The music video for their rendition of "Cruel Summer" used scenes from the cult classic *Night of the Comet*. The film was a forerunner in the comedy horror genre, and the lead character provided the inspiration for the creation of the

character *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*. The post-apocalyptic wasteland pairs well with their version of "Cruel Summer," which has more of an industrial feel than the original *Bananarama* song.

"'Cruel Summer' was suggested by a friend years ago," Cavallaro said. "We started it and then just forgot about it. When Emily joined us, she fit the song, and that's how we got started."

"I was so excited to do that cover," Emily added.

"We had never done a cover before," Cavallaro explained. "It was a step out of the box for us." Some of their music has been made on instruments from decades past, mixed with modern tech. I was sitting beside a clunky old organ, which I was told sounds horrible, but might work if they funnel the output through some other gear. The group has fun collecting discontinued models of instruments and finding ways to breathe new life into them.

"We've had a lot of array - synthesizers, vintage ones. Some of the stuff on *Secrets, Lies* is gone. To reproduce some of those sounds, I'd have to buy it again."

Stella calls it *Gadget Acquisition Syndrome*. "There's a Roland

D50 in there that I use all the time because it was on *New Order's* *Technique*. I'm always looking for something that was played on a classic."

Cavallaro added, "The lead synth on "White Knights" off the first EP was a DX7 that used to take the entire power grid of the East Coast to power up. That's long gone. I got one of those because I saw Trent Reznor play one on stage at *Woodstock '94*."

He was glad that the DX7 was not available, as it forced them to be more creative with building "Cruel Summer" from scratch and making it their own instead of replicating the original.

The band's creative process is unique. It's very dynamic, with each member adding their own touches as it gets passed around.

"We're not getting in the room and writing music that way." Stella explained that they pass ideas around, sending the files to each other. In that way, they're not confined to only writing when they get together in their studio. "We're making music all the time."

Cavallaro added, "Not having a drummer makes that web of collaboration possible because we don't have a typical band structure. In some cases we've had different members at different times. We listed everyone on the album who was involved in some shape or form."

New *Soviet Dolls* music is on its way. They've been working with recording engineer/producer Sam Polizzi on a new release slated which will be out this year. The sound continues to evolve, taking on more of a late 80's to early 90's vibe, like in their cover of "Cruel Summer."





Beautiful works of Madness

Inside the mind of collage artist J.J. Pelechaty

Words by Matthew Higley Art work by J.J. Pelechaty

Collage art is a medium where creativity has no boundaries. Rochester's own J.J. Pelechaty is the mastermind artist behind some of the wildest and mind-bending works of collage that you will see.

Pelechaty has been working with collage since she was a small child. "I was cutting paper before I could speak and was only cutting paper, so my mother was actually concerned because I was always just cutting things up." At the young age of six, her first-grade teacher submitted a collage that she had done to the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, NY. J.J. jokes that this was the peak of her career at the age of only six years old. To this day, she still has that piece of artwork which depicts two folks staring out at fireworks bursting in the distance.

she gave us some personal insight on how "working with collage is like taking your brain out of your head and like smushing it and adding glue with some pink cookies." You could give ten people the same six pieces to work with and there will always be a different outcome. Some people rip and tape, some cut and glue, and it always leads to a different creation because everyone is wired a little differently.

Throughout her journey, Pelechaty split off from another group to form what is now "Mixedmessagesclub," an overarching collaboration that combines her love for music as a radio host and her love for collage as an artist. At the initial startup, there was some struggle with past personal relationships, but they still found a way to enjoy things and create art. Pelechaty is very encouraging of other artists and wants to push people and their creative mindsets, while still accepting them for who they are. "Anyone who makes art is brilliant! And if they can't see that in themselves then I have no problem telling them," she says.

Art can paint different ideas in each individual's mind. When asked what her most provocative types of work were, she says that she likes to keep things more on the dark side with skulls and butchered animals. This is her way of making people uncomfortable enough to make them really think. Pelechaty's life philosophy is not necessarily the same as her art philosophy, however. She says that, "If someone cut me open, they would find a lot of hearts and candy and cake, a lot of silver and gold sparkle." She goes on to explain that you should have positive

affirmations in life, but art should be a big "Fuck you" that gets you thinking and challenges you to open your mind a little further than what you are comfortable with. Speaking on pushing the limits of what we as people are comfortable with Pelechaty says that part of collage is the journey and she does not plan any of her work. "Every time I make a piece, I'm always shocked by it." Just like most living in the city, her works multiple part time jobs so her days are planned out from start to finish. That's another reason why she loves collage because of all the freedom it brings.

Regardless of the process, Pelechaty creates art for the pure enjoyment of it. Following a career that she enjoys, her goal for 2020 is to make art that she wants to make, at a reasonable price, without getting overwhelmed or distracted by deadlines. She questions, "At what point does Artwork become a job?"

If you are the type of person that seeks the unconventional then you may just find yourself falling in love with one of her pieces at <https://www.mixedmessagesclub.com/>



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KOPPS

Words by: Ben Cain

Photography by: Krit Upra

When asked about the state of sexual liberation in music today, singer Patricia Patrón says she thinks we, as a society, are “obsessed yet repressed.” The music of her band KOPPS, however, is anything but repressive.

The tongue-in-cheek, avant garde electro-pop group, hailing from the Rochester, New York area, began in 2011 with Patrón and bassist Kyle O’Hara. Through frequent collaboration with members of fellow Rochester indie rockers Joywave, the band molded into the fully realized and polished project it is today.

“If it were not for us originally asking for Dan of ‘Joywave’ to record us, I don’t believe KOPPS would exist today,” said Patrón of the band’s formative years, adding that their collaborations and attention to detail with their live shows contributed to their early success.

Though they’ve released several songs since 2012, their 2015 pulsating single “Dumb” marked their first major hit. The song currently stands at just under 3 million streams on Spotify.

While the aforementioned single is a pure club banger, many of KOPPS songs, such as the not-so-subtly seductive “Get Juicy,” take on sex and sexuality unapologetically. When asked about using these themes in her music, Patrón doesn’t hold back.

“Sex and sexuality have been a part of humanity since day f*cking one,” she says. “Thinking of it as something to be ashamed of or thwart or keep hush-hush is denying a fundamental part of who people are.”

While KOPPS’ music sheds the proverbial chains that society tends to place on sexually unapologetic female-fronted

projects, Patrón makes a point to acknowledge that the status quo is, albeit slowly, catching up to a similar enlightenment.

“I think we are getting there,” she says on the status of slut-shaming in the American art scene. “The world seems to be changing and I see it a lot in art; nothing is as shocking as it used to be, which I think is a good thing. People are just being what they are comfortable with.”

This progress extends naturally into the current era-defining #MeToo movement as women in entertainment, and women in general, have felt emboldened to share experiences of trauma in a way that was previously virtually impossible to do.

“Women of the past couldn’t do certain things for fear of major criticism and assumptions about their character and morality being determined by the presentation,” Patrón marks. “And in the past, we couldn’t talk about our trauma for fear of being blamed for it, either. Today, ‘speaking up,’ whether it be figuratively through sexual expression or an experience that happened to you that was not okay is breaking the immeasurable

“Sex and sexuality have been a part of humanity since day f*cking one”

silence women have been forced into for decades, and even centuries. We have a voice now.”

Patrón elaborates on how this movement applies to her artistic expression, “...wearing something that shows a part of my body or might look inherently ‘sexy’ to some people is a way of me expressing myself through fashion and what makes me feel comfortable, as well as what makes sense with that musical moment.”

She also touches on how body-shaming has played a role in her life, noting how it’s taken a lot of “personal work” to feel good in

her own skin. The personal work she mentions has brought her to new heights.

“If I want to wear a piece that’s fucking awesome and it shows my butt cheek I am doing that because, for me, it’s saying ‘Finally I can do this and not feel ashamed or not good enough.’”

While sexual expression is very important to the band, KOPPS is so much more than just Patrón’s physical presence. As she puts it herself, Patrón is “constantly writing.” She is a music fan, not a genre-specific fan. “Secretly, amongst songwriters, there aren’t really genres,” she says. “There’s ‘good’ and ‘not good.’”

When asked about KOPPS’ responsibility as a Rochester-area staple in the public eye, Patrón outlines the band’s approach to sending a message.

“We always try to have our music contain multiple messages,” says Patrón. “We work within a lens of humor and irony most of the time, which includes making fun of things that don’t make any sense in the world and things that are just kind of stupid. We hope people can see these messages and ultimately take something from them, I suppose.”



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